

**IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD: SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN HIGH SCHOOLS IN JAMAICA**

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Abstract

Research indicates that schools that involve the family and community in a mutual and collaborative relationship are generally more successful. This relationship is endorsed by all stakeholders as a launchpad to boost the academic performance of children, increase school retention, motivate students, and strengthen families and communities. However, despite the compelling case for school, family, and community involvement, there is relatively little empirical evidence documenting its merits (practice and subsequent outcomes) in developing countries including Jamaica.

A qualitative case study of four Jamaican high schools was employed to document the merits of school, family, and community involvement, and data was collected using interviews, observations, and document reviews. Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence and six typologies of school, family, and community involvement helped guide the research to facilitate the comparison of the ways in which schools that have been ranked high and low-performing by the National Education Inspectorate, Jamaica involve the family and community. The research looked at the strategies schools used, the possible outcomes of this involvement, and the challenges faced. The study offers a revised theoretical framework of Epstein's model applicable to the Jamaican context and, potentially, to similar developing countries.

Key findings reveal that both high and low-performing schools experience challenges in involving the families and communities, but the high-performing schools are intentional and make school, family, and community involvement a priority. The high-performing schools have strong leadership, and their involvement programmes are multidimensional and linked to particular areas of engagement. These schools exude an atmosphere of positivity and

commitment to the process; they are student-focussed; they build relationships, collaborate, and form partnerships with stakeholders; and family and community involvement is a school-wide initiative. This led the schools to experience the greatest overlap with the family and community based on Epstein's theory. In addition, this study shows that leadership is crucial to the success of a school, family, and community involvement programme. Therefore, it is proposed that leadership be embedded at the centre of Epstein's model.

This research provides some benchmarks for further similar studies in Jamaican or international school settings, especially in developing countries, and provides critical information for families, teachers, policymakers, and school officials attempting to design and implement family and community involvement initiatives. The study also identifies key implications for further research, policy, and practice for education policy planners.

Keywords: school, family and community involvement, school and family involvement, school and community involvement, low-performing schools, high-performing schools, high school, Jamaica.

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*I can do all things through Christ.
Philippians 4:13.*

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Dedication

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Chapter One: Introduction of the Study

This thesis compares how high schools in Jamaica that the National Education Inspectorate (NEI) ranks high in terms of family and community involvement differ from schools that are ranked low. It discusses strategies both groups of schools employ to get key stakeholders on board and what they have achieved; challenges they faced, how they have responded to these challenges, and what were the outcomes. In this chapter, the study is introduced. I provide a background to the study and explain my motivation for selecting this topic which is supported by the wider local and international literature. I then provide a rationale for choosing this topic, followed by the research questions, and a definition of key terms used in the study.

Background of the Study

While schools are entrusted with the main responsibility of formally educating a nation's children, the family and broader community are also equally responsible for the growth and development of our young people as a school cannot independently supply all the resources that students need to grow, develop, and become productive citizens (Otero, 2011). Therefore, since schools do not exist in a vacuum and are unable to carry out their responsibility alone, it becomes imperative that strategies are devised to involve and sustain a good tripartite relationship with the family and community whereby schools, the community, and the family are seen as co-equals and shareholders in the business of educating our children. To achieve this, schools must endeavour to ensure that the family and community are an integral part of the school community and that all stakeholders feel that their input is valued toward the overall development of the school and students. The literature is inundated with studies that show the positive correlation between the success of a school and the degree of involvement of the family and community which has helped to augment and enhance the

social, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual developments of students (Preston, 2013; Pushnor, 2007). These successes include improved school facilities, higher academic performance of students, improvement of the programmes and climate of the school, regular attendance at school, improvement in students' behaviour, retention of students, and overall effective school functioning (Epstein, 2011; Nettles, 1991; Sanders, 2003; Simon, 2001; Van Roekel, 2008.). The importance of schools engaging with the family and community has been summed up by Otero (2011) who postulates that “only when schools, students, families, and communities share responsibility for educating the young, can schools be said to be performing well” (p. 3).

The involvement of the family and community in the life of the school is a symbiotic relationship that encourages sharing and the maximum use of resources that promote the healthy development of students and the community (Michael et al., 2007). Schools that form a good relationship with the community are poised to benefit tremendously from the knowledge, skills, expertise, and resources of the family and community members. This good relationship can mature to help and support the teaching learning process and the quality of education while the family and community can benefit from the use of different resources at the school such as the schools' facilities and the expertise of staff (Hutton, 2017; Sprick & Rich, 2010).

There is, however, a paucity of research on school, family, and community involvement coming from Jamaica (Watson-William, 2011). From personal observation and experience garnered from teaching and being a grade level coordinator at the high school level, it is clear that there is much more that can be done by stakeholders to get the family and community involved. School, family, and community involvement programmes are limited, if not non-existent, and, because school administrators and teachers are not taught or trained on

how to develop a school, family, and community programme, this results in a lack of confidence in developing and implementing one.

Each year schools are required to prepare their School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the strategic objectives are predetermined by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Information (MOEYI). Schools are then required to develop and implement activities to achieve these objectives by providing the task, indicators, timeframe, resources needed, cost, and means of verification. One of the objectives of the MOEYI is for schools to demonstrate how they will maximise the number of partnerships with business owners, private sectors, parents, community, and the diaspora. However, based on observation and feedback received, some schools over the years have written elaborate plans but perennially have not carried through those plans, and not much guidance is provided from the Jamaican MOEYI. Notwithstanding this, some schools in Jamaica are doing a fairly good job developing innovative and creative ways to involve the family and community. On the other hand, some schools are having difficulties for various reasons. This is a cause for concern given the numerous benefits to be gained from such a relationship.

Personal Motivation for This Research

My interest in this topic was awakened while being a high school teacher for 12 years in rural Jamaica. During my tenure in teaching, my colleagues and I found it a herculean task to get parents and the community involved in the education of their children. The school would employ various measures to reach the parents and communities by sending out circulars, making telephone calls, sending text messages, and visits would be made by the Guidance Counsellor but to no avail. The residential community appeared uninterested, and persons would often say it is because they disliked the then principal. We would write several letters asking for support from the local business entities as well as corporate Jamaica but

were oftentimes unsuccessful. Parents would not support the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) meetings and other activities held at the school. I can remember vividly that the last PTA meeting called before I made my exit had to be aborted because only three parents came for the meeting. The school, a small one comparatively, had a population of almost 600 students. We had students who had graduated from the institution whose academic reports from grades 7 to 11 were still in the school's possession even though Parent Teachers Conference (PTC) was held twice per year. Many parents would not even turn up when they were called or given a letter to report to the school because of a misdemeanour or infraction committed by their child, even when they were advised that their child would not be allowed to resume until they had visited the school. It was also the norm for students to report to classes unprepared. Their homework would not be done, and they would report to class without their textbooks, notebook, pen, and pencil. It was during class time that they would be asking for permission to go and buy a pen or notebook.

Overall family and community support regarding the functioning of the school and students' learning were less than desirable. During my tenure experience, I noticed that the few students whose parents were actively involved in their children's lives both at home and school were the ones who were generally well behaved and performed creditably well. These parents would oftentimes come to the school unannounced to observe their child and speak to the teachers about their child's progress and, for the most part, their homework and projects were completed on time. Additionally, I wanted to know if there is a body that oversees the performance of schools in terms of meeting educational objectives and for children, families, and communities to engage in the achievement of such objectives. Then I learned that the NEI oversees the quality assurance of schools.

The National Education Inspectorate

The NEI was formed in 2004 when the National Task Force on Educational Reform recommended to the Government of Jamaica that a National Quality Assurance Authority be established to address performance and accountability issues in the education system. The NEI's main purview is to address the concerns highlighted and make recommendations to support the transformation of the Education sector (National Education Inspectorate, n.d.). One of the areas that schools were judged on was their relationship with parents and community even though there are no guidelines from the MOEYI, Jamaica as to how this should be enacted. In reading the reports for some of the schools, I noticed that some schools were rated high in the area of relationship with the family and community, and rich details were provided of the activities in which they were involved with the family and community and some of the benefits they derived. On closer inspection, I also noted that these schools were among the top-performing schools in the country. I then decided to read some of the results of the country's schools that were deemed to be "failing." This included my place of employment. Many of those schools were rated unsatisfactory in that area and upon deeper inspection of the NEI reports, I realised that the relationship among the family and community was generally weak.

After reading the NEI reports of the different schools and comparing the results of schools that were ranked high with those that were ranked low and, having heard, even without empirical evidence, that children whose parents are actively involved in their lives tend to do better, my interest was sparked to conduct further research. This was to ascertain how some schools have been able to develop and sustain a good relationship with families and communities while others have not been able to do the same. I also sought to determine if these schools that are deemed "high-performing" owe a part of their success to their ability to involve the family and community as suggested in the literature which reveals that one of the

characteristics of high-performing and effective schools is having high levels of community and family involvement (Berger, 1991; Cole, 2021; Perriell, 2015; Pushnor, 2007; Watson-Williams, 2011).

Wider Local Problem

Corroborating my experience are other researchers from Jamaica whose research not only found low levels of family involvement but indicates that they had had similar experiences (Murphy, 2002; Russell, 2012; Troupe, 2017). Troupe (2017) cited that of her four years as a high school principal, her most challenging task was to get the support and involvement of most parents in the educational programmes of their children both at school and at home. The school, according to her, implemented several programmes for parental involvement but less than one-third of the parents participated. Murphy (2002) conducted a mixed-method study on the attitudes of Jamaican parents toward parental involvement and found that at the high school level it was customary for parents to enrol their children in schools and then participate in minimal school related activities until grade 11 when the children were about to sit their exit examinations or graduate.

Additionally, fuelled by public concern from education practitioners, business people, policymakers, and other concerned citizens vis-à-vis the state of the education system in Jamaica, the then Prime Minister of Jamaica, Honourable Percival James Patterson, appointed a task force on Education in 2004. The report highlighted varied deficiencies in the education system and provided recommendations. Among the 15 areas highlighted by the report was stakeholder participation. The report revealed that parental involvement was insufficient because only a small percentage of parents were actively involved in their children's education or school life. Even though many schools had a PTA, the main function was fundraising to supplement the operational cost of the schools. There was some involvement and support from other stakeholders such as alumni, the community, churches, and

businesses but it was not systematic and consistent. Therefore, it was recommended that the government of Jamaica encourage parents and communities to play a greater role in education to strengthen the link between home, school, and the community (Davis, 2004; Hutton, 2007).

Similarly, a past president of the National PTA, Jamaica, lamented the low attendance at PTA meetings across the country which stood at 20-30 percent, and trumpeted the need for parents to play a greater role in the educational development of their children. He further explained that parents would oftentimes attend the first meeting of the school year, but the rate would decline severely for the remaining school year (Reynolds, 2008). Likewise, the Hon. Karl Samuda, immediate past Minister of the MOEYI, Jamaica, renewed the call for parental involvement when he challenged the MOEYI to focus more on families and communities. He mentioned that the MOEYI should place greater emphasis on parental involvement in the development of students. He was quoted as saying “forget about the overemphasis on buildings and focus on the human development, the family, the community, the involvement of the parents with the development of the child” (Murphy, 2020). However, despite the renewed calls from policymakers, education practitioners, and researchers, progress is dilatory.

Evidence of Problem From International Literature

Limited or a lack of involvement from the family and community in education is by no means unique to Jamaica or similar developing countries. It has also been a perennial problem in developed countries in the global north such as the USA, Canada, UK, and New Zealand (Bogenschneider & Johnson, 2004; Bower & Griffin, 2011; Epstein, 2010; Hornby & Witte, 2010). In the USA, research by Bogenschneider and Johnson (2004) revealed that nearly one-third of American parents are disconnected from their children’s school and students reported their parents to have no idea how they are doing in school and not caring

whether they earn good grades. Bower and Griffin's (2011) micro ethnography case study which looked at parental involvement at an elementary school in the USA, revealed that despite numerous efforts by the school, the level of parental involvement remained low causing frustration among administration and teachers. Similarly, Erdener (2016), used a mixed-method study to identify principal and teacher's perceptions about parental involvement in schooling in Turkey. Data were collected from 64 public schools and the result found that parental involvement was low. This finding was also supported among the least developed countries. Edamo (2018), conducting a quantitative study focussing on the level of parental involvement and its implications for student's learning in secondary schools in Ethiopia, found that there was very low parental involvement which was limited to sending children to school.

Sapungan and Sapungan (2014), who have been school administrators for over a decade in Bahrain and the Philippines, underscore the notion that over the years parental involvement has been on a steady decline much to the frustration of principals and teachers whose efforts to boost parental involvement are proving futile. The authors further lament the lack of interest that many parents display towards their children's education. According to the authors, some parents display a nonchalant attitude, are not visible on the school grounds, and refuse to participate in the school's expected goals.

The need and benefits of this tripartite relationship cannot be overemphasised as even policymakers in various countries have come to realise that it indeed takes a village to raise/educate a child. In some countries, policymakers have passed legislation mandating that schools develop programmes aimed at reaching out to parents in the hope of improving the relationship that exists between the school and families of students. Developed countries such as the USA, Canada, and the UK all have policies in place for the inclusion of the family and community. For instance, in the United States of America, the No Child Left Behind Act

(NCLB) was passed in 2001 giving parents significant chances to engage in their children's education. NCLB includes provisions for family involvement and claims that family engagement is a critical component of successful school reform. In addition, the NCLB has adopted Epstein's six categories of involvement (Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision-making, and Collaborating with the community) and outlines activities for the six types of involvement in its school, family involvement programme guidelines (Anfara & Mertens, 2008; Epstein, 2005; Magwa & Mugari, 2017). In the province of Saskatchewan in Canada, there was an amendment to the provincial/territorial Education/School Acts to mandate the implementation of a School Community Council in every public school to encourage the active involvement of parents and community (Preston, 2011). Such policies also exist on the continent of Africa in countries such as South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia (Edamo, 2018; Magwa & Mugari 2017).

Based on my experience, which has been corroborated by other researchers in Jamaica and the international literature, this study therefore seeks to compare family and community involvement in high and low-performing schools in Jamaica in the same study. Done in this manner, we are working towards gaining richer and deeper perspectives that will, in the long run, enable the capturing of a holistic view of school, family, and community involvement, with implications for developing countries, and more specifically for Jamaica. Including both high and low-performing schools in the same study context makes for a better understanding of some of the differences and similarities between the two types of schools, as well as what is going on in both groups of schools at the same time. Using the NEI report, some schools that were rated high on the indicator "family and community relations" and some that were rated low were chosen to participate in the study.

Rationale for Study

Existing research has illustrated that family and community involvement with schools can significantly contribute to improving schools and student achievement (Obeidat & Al-Hassan, 2009; Pushnor, 2007). However, not enough is known about school, family, and community involvement to inform policy and practice in a developing country context since the preponderance of research about school, family, and community involvement has been conducted in Western, industrialised, and rich societies such as the USA, Canada, and the UK where the circumstances are likely to be different from a developing country such as Jamaica which is resource-constrained and has to depend on assistance from other entities. Therefore, research conducted in the Jamaican context that is relevant and reflective of the schools, families, and communities in Jamaica will be more beneficial and informative to those communities.

In addition, based on the international literature, few studies have focused on family and community involvement in high schools (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Hartas, 2015; Hornby, 2000; Simon, 2001). Murphy (2002) and Watson- Williams (2011) also mention that a similar situation exists in Jamaica where there is very little empirical research on family involvement in the education of children at the secondary level, particularly since family and community involvement tend to decrease when children move on to high school where their needs may change; this is consistent with the international literature (Hartas, 2015; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Humphrey-Taylor, 2015; OECD, 2006; Park & Halloway, 2013). A study of this nature adds to the international literature on school, family, and community involvement at the high school level in a developing country context which has had little attention from researchers. Although the focus for high schools is in a developing country context, despite the differences, the results of the study may also apply to more developed countries that may

have similar characteristics such as neighbourhood, inner-city, or low decile schools, or lower socioeconomic groups with similar characteristics to schools in developing or poorer settings.

The results of the study reveal best practices on how schools can create and sustain this relationship and contribute to evidence-based policy-making to ensure that all schools are given the right support and equipped with the requisite skill set to successfully develop and maintain a family and community involvement programme. This has been underscored by Watson-Williams (2011) who, in arguing for a policy framework in Jamaica that supports school, family, and community involvement, suggests that schools and families cannot be left on their own, but need systems to be put in place where families can effectively engage with the children's schools and become more involved in the business of education.

Research Questions

The study is anchored on two main research questions with five sub-questions:

Main Research Questions and Sub-questions

1. How do high schools in Jamaica that are ranked high in family and community involvement differ from schools that are ranked low in family and community involvement?
 - 1a. How do the two groups of schools involve families and communities?
 - 1.b. What have the two groups of schools gained from family and community involvement?
 - 1.c. What challenges do the two groups of schools face in involving the families and communities; how have they addressed these challenges, and what were the outcomes?

2. What might be a framework for school, family, and community involvement in Jamaica?

2a. What components can be added to Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence framework used in the study?

2b. What components can be removed from Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence framework used in the study.

Operational Definitions

1. *Family/Parent* – All those sharing responsibilities for the care and raising of the child such as mothers and fathers, stepparents, grandparents, foster parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, friends, other relatives, and caregivers (Christenson, Rounds & Gorney, 1992; Daniel, 2011; Tran, 2014). The terms “family” and “parent” are used interchangeably in this research.
2. *Community* – A group of people who gather regardless of location or cultural background and work to support the management of a school. This includes business people, civic groups, religious groups, non-governmental organisations, international donors, neighbourhood groups, peer and friendship groups, and other organisations, associations, and individuals (Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Nishimura, 2017).
3. *School, Family Involvement* – Any type of connection between schools and families to support children's learning and development. This largely consists of activities such as volunteering at school, communicating with teachers and other school personnel, attendance at school events such as fundraising activities, PTA meetings, and conferences, and assisting with academic activities at home (Hill & Taylor, 2004).
4. *School, Community Involvement* – Any type of connection between schools and community members, organisations and /or businesses (e.g., educators, parents, school councils, businesses, social services, non-governmental organisations, civic

organisations, etc.), that directly or indirectly support the physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of students (Preston, 2013, p. 199).

Outline of Thesis

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. In chapter one, I present an overview of the research by explaining how I came to select this topic and its importance. I also present the research questions and sub-questions as well as the working definitions for the key terms in my study.

Chapter two provides a background to the education system in Jamaica. It gives a synopsis of the country and its location and then delves into the history of the education system, what the education system is like presently, and then closes with a description of education at the secondary level, which is the focus of this research.

In chapter three, I present a review of the literature bearing in mind the research questions guiding the study as well as the theoretical framework that underpins the study. The first part of the chapter provides background knowledge on family and community involvement in high schools. It sheds light on the different ways in which schools have been involving the family and community, challenges schools face, and some ways in which they have been dealing with the challenges and the outcomes. It then ends with the gaps in the literature. The second part of the chapter is a discussion on the theoretical framework used in the study.

Chapter four discusses the methodology of the study. I discuss the research paradigm, research approach, case selection, data collection tools and procedures, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

In chapter five the findings are presented. Data from interviews, observations, and document analysis are presented bearing in mind the research questions of the study. The

findings for each school are presented separately. Each case description is divided into five parts beginning with a background of the school followed by the different ways in which the schools involve the family, then the different ways in which the schools involve the community. This is then followed by the school's achievement with the family and community culminating with the challenges each school face involving the family and community and strategies used to overcome the challenges.

Chapter six presents a synthesis and discussion of the main themes that were generated from cross-case analysis.

In chapter seven a critical analysis of the key findings is presented. I then conclude the chapter with a discussion on the revised version of the framework used in the study—Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence that applies to the Jamaican context. This is based on the findings of the study in the Jamaican context.

The study's conclusion is presented in Chapter eight, which is based on the significant findings. The chapter begins by summarising the findings in light of the research questions, then explains the study's implications and contributions to theory and practice, highlights the study's limitations, offers suggestions for future research, and provides recommendations. The chapter concludes with my closing comments.

Summary

This chapter presented the background to the study and clarified my motivation for choosing this topic and the need for the study. The research questions are presented as well as operational definitions for the keywords used in the study. The rising realisation that the futures of our children are better ensured when schools, the community, and the family all work together, and that schools require the support of the family and community to achieve optimum success, has resulted in efforts to strengthen the alliance between schools, families,

and communities. Schools are already facing a daunting task, but it has been shown that when a real school, family, community partnership takes place, their task can become easier.

Chapter Two: Education in Jamaica

This chapter presents an overview of the education system in Jamaica. It is important to provide a background to Jamaica's education system to provide context for the study and enable a deeper understanding of the various nuances at play in education in Jamaica. It begins with a brief introduction to the island of Jamaica followed by the historical context of the development of education and what the present education system in Jamaica looks like.

Jamaica

Jamaica is the land of Bob Marley, Merlene Ottey, Usain Bolt, Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, Elaine Thompson-Herah, Rastafari, Jerk Chicken, Marcus Garvey, and a host of other globally acclaimed athletes, musicians, and academics. It is a small island developing state in the Caribbean and is the third-largest island of the Greater Antilles spanning 10,990 square kilometres (4, 240 sq. miles) in area. Jamaica is surrounded by Cuba which lies 90 miles north of the island, Hispaniola which comprises the countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic to the east, and the Cayman Islands to the northwest. With a population of about three million people, Jamaica is the third-largest Anglophone country in the Americas after the United States of America and Canada (Bryan et al., 2020). Even though Jamaica is small in size; its size belies its impact on the world. Figure 1 is a map of Jamaica that locates the country within the Caribbean.

Figure: 1

Map showing the location of Jamaica. Source of Map: (Google map online, 2020)



Jamaica was originally inhabited by the Tainos followed by the Spanish under Christopher Columbus in 1494. In 1655 the British violently took over the control of the country from the Spanish until Jamaica gained independence in 1962. Classism and colourism which exist in Jamaica today are a result of the sugar plantation society where a large labour force of African slaves, and to a lesser extent East Indian and Chinese indentured labour, were employed. The whites and fairer skinned occupy the top of the social ladder and are often descendants of the gentry. The majority, who are primarily of African descent, occupy the bottom of the social ladder and account for the semi-skilled, unskilled, artisans, and unemployed. The middle of the social strata evolved from a commingling of the upper and lower strata (Munroe, 2001). The majority of Jamaicans are of African or mixed ancestry, with substantial European, Chinese, and Indian ancestry. In Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, there is a substantial Jamaican diaspora. Trines (2019) claims that more Jamaicans are living overseas than on the island, resulting in a high level of brain drain.

History of Education in Jamaica

As a result of colonisation, public education in Jamaica is modelled after the British Education System and falls under the ambit of the MOEYI. The system was very selective and elitist as, during slavery and the decades immediately after emancipation, white and “fair-skinned,” Jamaicans were the ones with certain economic opportunities and the privilege to attend school. According to Miller (1999), no education was provided for the slave population, and slaves who taught themselves to read had to keep it a secret. It was only in the last decade before emancipation in 1838 that some limited instruction aimed at literacy was provided through Sunday schools. Emancipation and the collapse of the sugar plantations were the two main reasons for the development of the public elementary and secondary education systems when many white planters, browns, and Jews had to seek alternatives on the island because they could no longer afford to send their children to England for secondary schooling (Miller, 1988).

Jamaica then received the Negro Education Grant which was funded by an inheritance bequeathed to her nephew by Lady Mico in 1690 on the condition that he marry one of his relatives. The nephew in question never married his cousin, and in 1834, Thomas Fowell Buxton and other abolitionists successfully argued that the Mico inheritance should be used for Negro Education to assist with the education of ex-slaves (Coates, 2012). Education for the children of the black ex-slaves was however primarily a method of acculturation and to develop a docile labour force (Davies, 2004; Munroe, 2011; Watson-Williams, 2011). For the first two years, the Negro Education Grant was provided to religious organisations primarily to construct schools. The colonial Government paid two-thirds of the construction costs, while religious organisations paid one-third (Coates, 2012). From the grant, two types of schools emerged – the elite schools for the children of the aristocrats and the public-funded schools for children of the working class. The elite schools catered to those children who

were expected to become professionals, while the public schools were reserved for those children who were expected to become unskilled, semi-skilled, and artisans. Some of those elite schools established in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are still in operation today and were transformed into grammar schools in the nineteenth century. This stratified system became ingrained into the social fabric of Jamaica and is responsible for the two-tiered education system we now have, particularly at the secondary level spanning schools on a spectrum from high-performing to low-performing, despite several attempts at reformation by successive governments over the years (Davis, 2004; Miller, 1999; Russell, 2012).

Education Today

The MOEYI oversees education in Jamaica. There are a central office and six regional offices responsible for supervising and managing education in different regions of the country (Trines, 2019). Education in Jamaica is examination-based as entry into each phase of schooling is determined by the results of the previous stage. Jamaica's education system consists of four levels, beginning with the pre-primary or early childhood level which is made up of infant and basic schools and caters to children from ages 3 to 6 years. The infant schools are funded by the government and are free while the basic schools are mostly privately operated, many by the churches, and parents are required to pay a fee. The Early Childhood Commission, an arm of the MOEYI has oversight responsibility. Jamaica gained universal primary education after political independence and this level caters to children from grades 1 to 6, ages 6-12. In 2001, education at the secondary level was made free and caters to children from grades 7 -11, ages 12-16 years. Grades 7 to 9, also known as forms 1 to 3, make up the lower-secondary (junior secondary) part of secondary education, followed by grades 10 and 11 also known as senior secondary (forms 4 and 5). On the other hand, upper-secondary education (grades 10 and 11) is geared to prepare pupils for the external Caribbean

Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examination conducted by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC). This system is closely related to the British model. All students are required to study the core subjects Mathematics and English, but they also have to study six other electives that they plan to take in the CSEC examinations. Jamaican employers generally want to see passing grades in at least five CSEC subjects, and most students take at least eight subjects.

While the CSEC exams mark the end of secondary school, students who wish to progress to higher education may study for an additional two years in grades 11 and 13 (also known as lower and upper sixth form) to prepare for the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Exam (CAPE), a difficult exam that may be required in addition to the CSEC exams for admission into the undergraduate programmes at the University of the West Indies, the premier university in the Caribbean. Only select high schools and community colleges provide sixth-form programmes. They are usually expensive and difficult to get into. Applicants must achieve high scores in at least five CSEC subjects. Finally, there is the higher education or tertiary level. Education from pre-primary through secondary school is compulsory in government schools. The quality of the school system is monitored by NEI, which is responsible for inspecting primary and secondary schools in Jamaica and providing guidance and advice to school boards and administrators (Trines, 2019).

Education at the Secondary Level. Education has been touted in Jamaica as the great equalizer and the means for upward personal and social mobility. Children are encouraged from an early age to do well in school, so they can get a “good” job or move on to university (Nehaul, 1999). However, paradoxically, based on the design of the educational system in Jamaica, a social and economic structure has been perpetuated which excludes the poor and their children (Watson-Williams, 2011). For many, the opportunity to receive a “good” education, pursue certain

careers such as medicine, and get a job is dependent on the type of high school they have attended because of the elitism that exists among the high schools (Strudwick & Foster, 1991). The poor quality of schools to which a majority of the poor are sent has served to further perpetuate the inequality that exists in our education system and makes it harder for the poor to improve their standard of living. Many of the poor are then relegated to menial jobs with low wages and sub-standard living conditions.

At the end of primary school, students take an examination, the Primary Exit Profile¹ (PEP) Examination, which is used to place them to secondary schools across the country. Students list their secondary school preferences and are often assigned to one of the schools of their choice based on their PEP examination score. Secondary Education in Jamaica consists of Traditional High Schools and Non-Traditional High Schools or Upgraded High Schools. Traditional High Schools are government-funded elite schools, many of which were established by the church or missionaries for ex-slaves. The church still owns and/or plays an integral role in many of these schools although they are now all “public” schools in the sense that they receive government subventions. The churches comply with government policies and access is given to all children (Miller, 1999; Miller, 1988; Strudwick & Foster, 1991). Even though all sections of society seek to send their children to these prestigious schools, only students with the highest grades in the PEP Examination are assigned to these schools. The majority of the students in these schools are from the middle and upper classes. The curriculum of the Traditional High Schools is predominantly academic and modelled after the British Grammar School, with an academic emphasis targeted towards university admission.

¹ The Primary Exit Profile (PEP) is a series of assessments that have replaced the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT). PEP provides a profile of where the student is academically, the student’s strengths and weaknesses, and their readiness for grade 7. PEP assess students’ knowledge, in addition to placing increased emphasis on assessing 21st century skills including critical thinking and communication.

This type of school also provides considerably more opportunity for subsequent educational and occupational mobility as they are better resourced and funded (Bourne, et al., 2015; Strudwick & Foster, 1991). Non-Traditional High Schools or Upgraded High Schools are government-funded but students with low test scores on their PEP examinations are generally assigned to such schools. The curriculum of these schools is of lesser quality and strongly emphasises technical and vocational subject areas and for the most part prepares students to be skilled, semi-skilled, and artisans. Most children from the lower social class attend this type of school (Jennings, 2019; Spencer-Ernandez, 2011). According to Spencer-Ernandez (2011), Non-Traditional schools receive the majority of illiterate or barely literate students.

From the outset, the Non-Traditional High Schools received students who were not able to gain a space in the Traditional High Schools through the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) which was the exit examination taken by grade six students at the Primary level. Even though the CEE was replaced by the Grade Six Achievement Examination (GSAT) and more recently the PEP Examination, these examinations are still being used as a placement examination for high schools. Because of the stigma attached to Non-Traditional High Schools and the undue psychological stress placed on grade six students to perform well in their exit examinations in keeping with success, knowledge, competence, and societal expectations, the MOEYI decided to name all secondary schools as “high schools.” Even with this change, however, the stigma persists as the Upgraded High Schools continue to be inferior to the Traditional high schools in both perception and actuality as the gap between their outcomes remains the same. The change in name did not change people’s perceptions of the schools or the children who attended them.

Student's academic performance is used to rank schools, so elite schools are the preferred schools for both parents and students. Students who are not placed in one of the

elite schools are often shunned and made to feel like a “failure,” inadequate, and dumb (Bourne, et.al, 2015). According to Charles (2018), these children are stigmatised by teachers and they (the students) also place a stigma on themselves.

Reports from external examinations (CSEC and CAPE) consistently show that students who attend Traditional High Schools perform better than those who attend the Upgraded High Schools (Haughton Cameron, 2016). This is chiefly because the parents of the children who attend these schools are largely professionals who place greater value on education and can provide the requisite resources and support and create the learning environment for their child/children to succeed. Conversely, the children who attend the Upgraded High Schools are largely from homes with limited resources and parents are often unable to provide adequately for their children’s educational needs. Owing to their limited economic means and the limited value that many of their parents place on education, these children are frequently absent from school and are more likely to drop out. This is true for schools in both rural and urban areas (Caribbean Policy Research Institute, 2018; Cook & Jennings, 2016; Jennings & Cook, 2015).

The Traditional High Schools are not only prestigious, but they attract the most competent and qualified teachers. They have more resources because they can acquire support from parents, and the local and wider community such as alumni, PTA, corporate Jamaica, and international donors and are thus able to perform better in both academic and extracurricular activities. The Non-Traditional High schools lack resources and generally are not able to enjoy as much support from the family and community as the Traditional High Schools (Charles, 2018; Cook & Jennings, 2016). However, according to Epstein et al. (2009), it is possible to have a school that does well academically but disregards the family and community, and it is possible to have a school that is failing academically but involves the family and community in many good ways.

Summary

This chapter has presented an overview of the island of Jamaica, the historical development of the education system, and a brief overview of what the present education system looks like. Education in Jamaica is viewed by many as critical for personal and social mobility and children are encouraged from an early age to do well in school. However, despite several attempts at transformation, the two-tiered education system at the secondary level, comprised of Traditional High Schools and Non-Traditional High Schools, which had its genesis in colonialism, still exists. This has perpetuated a social and economic structure that excludes the poor and their children. It is this inequity at the secondary level which underpins this research which compares high and low-performing school's involvement with the family and community involvement in Jamaica. A detailed review of the literature on the topic follows.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

This chapter is divided into two parts. First, it presents a review of the relevant literature on school, family, and community involvement and identifies gaps in the literature; and secondly, it presents the theoretical framework that guides the study. There is not much literature on the Jamaican context; as such, there is a need for this research given the importance of the topic. Here, an overview of the school's need to involve the family and community is presented, different activities in which schools involve the families, what schools and families have gained by this relationship, and challenges schools face in involving the family. The literature then looks at school and community involvement highlighting the different ways in which schools have been involving the community and what both parties have gained. The different challenges schools face involving families and communities and strategies that have been employed to overcome these challenges are also presented. The literature section then culminates with the identification of the gaps in the literature that this study seeks to address. Following this is a discussion of the theoretical framework that guides the study.

Literature Overview

The growth and development of a nation's young people is not solely the responsibility of family or school, but of the entire community as indicated in the African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child." Schools do not exist in a vacuum and, owing to the myriad of physical, educational, and economic challenges they face and the children they are responsible for daily, cannot effectively do everything. Therefore, stakeholders' support is needed in every possible way to increase the physical, emotional, and academic achievement of children. Sharma (2008) supports this with an emphatic statement "successful schools do not operate in isolation, but they build connections to parents and communities to strengthen

relationships in support of the students, and to better understand students so that teaching can be tailored to them as individuals” (p. 73).

Sprick and Rich (2010) suggest that the family and community are equally responsible for assisting in the development and learning of children in school and at home. However, despite plentiful research that has shown the need for all the three stakeholders – family, community, and school – to work closely together, Van Roekel (2008) believes that there are still too many parents, policymakers, and community members who believe schooling is exclusively the responsibility of educators. This practice is prevalent in Jamaica as many parents shun their responsibility and leave everything up to the teachers (Murphy, 2004; Troupe, 2017; Watson-Williams et al., 2011). However, while educators take their professional obligations seriously, they have realised that it is a shared responsibility that requires the support of the family and community members, a point that this thesis aims to highlight and emphasise in the context of Jamaica.

There is a wealth of literature highlighting the numerous benefits of the involvement of family and community in the life of the school. These benefits include improvement in school programmes, increased parents’ skills and leadership, improvement in school climate, and assistance with teachers’ work (Barrera & Warner, 2006; Epstein et al., 2009; Gregoric & Owens, 2015; Sanders, 2003). According to Epstein et al. (2009), the key goal for forming and sustaining such a partnership is to help all children succeed in school and adulthood. The authors contend that “when parents, teachers, students, and others view one another as partners in education, a caring community forms around students and begins its work” (p. 7). Duckworth et al. (2009), Nyatuka and Nyakan (2015), and Emerson (2012) add to the discussion by pointing out that strong school, community partnership has been known to cultivate good school habits in students. Such habits include an overall positive attitude towards school, achievement of higher test scores, improvement in behaviour, increased

completion of homework, better social skills, lower drop-out rates, increased school attendance, and greater participation in academic activities.

The urgent need for the school, family, and community to unite and work together has also been emphasised by Hornby (2000) who mentioned that for schools to be effective in delivering the greatest possible education for the children they serve, significant levels of parental involvement must be established and maintained. This was supported by Molina (2013) who posits that the development and sustenance of relationships with schools, families, and communities is a prevailing problem that schools, and researchers need to explore. She points out that these relationships:

Take time, vigilance, a deep understanding, and a desire to bring together the schools, the families, and communities to identify needs and most importantly the abundance of hard and soft resources to support the one unifying mission for all—that is, supporting the aspirations of our children. Such powerful partnerships can support them not only academically but also socially and emotionally. (p. 235)

Schools have been purposefully designing programmes and activities to involve the family. Individual teachers have designed their activities to get the family involved while also working along with the entire school to design programmes for the involvement of the family. An extensive review of the literature on programmes and activities of involvement was conducted by Bryan and Holcomb-McCoy (2004). This review revealed nine school-family and community involvement programmes that schools typically implement; these are: mentoring programmes, parents centres, family/community members, parents and community volunteer programmes, home visit programmes, parent education programmes, school-business partnerships, parent and community members in site-based management, and tutoring programmes.

Family Involvement

Family involvement in a child's education starts at home with the parents providing a safe, healthy, and engaging environment, as well as suitable learning opportunities, support, and a good attitude towards school. This type of involvement, cited by Harris and Goodall (2008), makes the most significant difference to student achievement. Family involvement is not only crucial to the success of the child but the whole school. Authors have all agreed that it enhances school reform efforts, contributes to the improvement of school programmes and climate, offers assistance to teachers with their work, and promotes the building of social capital (Christenson et al., 1992; Davis, 2000; Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; Epstein, 2011; Tran, 2014). Several other authors such as Barrera and Warner (2006), Brownlee (2015), Calzada et al. (2015), Epstein et al. (2009), and Lopez, (2003), support this view and have mentioned the key role that the family plays in the school community and the need for schools to integrate and build a solid relationship with the family. Epstein et al. (2009) also stress that the family's involvement underscores the importance of school, homework, and other school-related activities and enhances students' skills and sense of success. As this thesis seeks to establish, research from Jamaica has shown that family involvement is more predictive of student performance than socioeconomic status (Watson-Williams et al., 2011).

Van Roekel (2008), president of the National Education Association (NEA) in the US mentioned in the NEA policy brief that in the past, parental involvement was primarily undertaken by mothers who would volunteer their time and assist teachers in the classroom, chaperone students and assist with fundraising. He contends that the traditional model has been replaced by a more inclusive approach as a school, family, and community partnership now includes mothers and fathers, stepparents, grandparents, foster parents, other relatives and caregivers, business leaders, and community groups, all of whom participate in activities to support the achievement and success of the children. Even though the literature is robust

with studies that link the involvement of the family and students' success, I am in no way saying that a lack of family involvement will lead to failure. Epstein et al. (2009) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) readily admit that many children do well in school without much family involvement, especially if the school provides a strong academic programme and support. These students' successes could also be attributed to guidance and encouragement from teachers, community members, other families, and personal resilience, among other factors. Nevertheless, Mahuro and Hungi (2016) who conducted a cross-sectional survey of 2,669 grade six students attending public and private primary schools in Iganga and Mayuge districts in Uganda on parental participation and student academic achievement purport that "if students are to reap the maximum benefits in their schooling, they must enjoy parental support" (p. 2).

The Jamaican education system, similar to those of many other developing nations, has generally been plagued by the scant regard that many parents portray in their child's education. Authors such as Murphy (2002), Troupe (2017) and Watson-Williams et al. (2011) lament the low level of parental involvement in education in Jamaican schools. This low level of participation prompted the Jamaican government to pass legislation in 2012 which saw the birth of the National Parenting Support Commission (NPSC), an arm of the MOEYI. The government of Jamaica mandates NPSC to support parents and assist them in developing the skills they need to improve parenting. NPSC also seeks to encourage a collaborative effort between home and school (Cole, 2021).

A similar situation also exists in the United States of America. Peter Hart Research Associates, Inc, and the Winston Group in 2007 conducted a national survey of 1,878 people and convened six focus groups comprising school administrators, parents, teachers, and other members of the public. The research was done to find out what people think about education in the US and whether there should be a reauthorisation of the No Child Left Behind Act.

One of the striking results of the research was that teachers, administrators, parents, and the public regard the lack of family involvement as the single biggest problem confronting American schools (Education Testing Service, 2007). This is very concerning given that sufficient research reveals that when parents are actively involved in their children's education, both children and schools perform better (Mahuro & Hungi, 2016; Van Roekel, 2008.). This has also been corroborated by Watson-Williams and Hobbs (2012) who conducted the Jamaican school effectiveness study which was commissioned by Jamaica's MOEYI on behalf of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). This study revealed that "effective schools were almost four times more likely to enjoy high levels of parental involvement than ineffective schools" (p. 6).

This thesis sets out to find out how effectively four Jamaican high schools have undertaken various levels of family and community involvement practices and to what extent these are reflected in the performance and ranking of these schools. Family involvement is needed at all levels of a child's development; however, interestingly, the literature has shown that internationally, family involvement in education decreases as children advance in grade with a sudden decline once children reach middle school (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008; Epstein, et al., 2009; Humphrey-Taylor, 2015; OECD, 2006; Simon, 2001; Van Roekel, 2008). A similar situation exists in Jamaica as identified by Murphy's (2002) study that looked at the attitudes of Jamaican parents towards parental involvement in secondary education. Parents were found to be more involved in their children's education at the primary level than the secondary level; this was to ensure that their children did well in PEP and were accepted into one of the prestigious high schools. Once students are placed in high school and are settled in, family involvement dramatically drops.

Similarly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2006) report on parent and community "voice" in schools found that in Finland and Hungary

when students move on to high school, there is a decline in the co-operation between home and school. Fan and Williams (2010), Humphrey-Taylor (2015), and Hoover-Dempsey (2005) have postulated that this could be attributed to parent's recognition of their child's increasing developmental need for independence. Berthelsen and Walker (2008) and Simon (2001) add to the discussion by mentioning that the complicated curriculum and the complex organisation at the high school level coupled with the pressure of adolescence are possible causes of the decline of family involvement. However, researchers are very clear that if we want to improve the life chances of all children, partnerships between families, schools, and communities are still critical for students' success at the secondary level (Bray, 2000; Campbell, 2011; Humphrey-Taylor, 2015; Simon, 2011). Hence the focus of this thesis is on high schools.

Family Involvement Activities

Family involvement is considered a multi-dimensional concept because of the various ways in which families may support their children's education. Consequently, persons may have varying perceptions of what constitutes family involvement (Brownlee, 2015). However, for this research, family involvement is categorised broadly as including home-based activities which relate to children's learning in school, and school-based activities which focus on activities between parents, teachers, and the school as suggested by Brownlee (2015), Humphrey-Taylor (2015) and Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler (1997). Family involvement in home-based activities includes reviewing the child's work and monitoring progress, providing assistance with homework, regular conversations about school and learning, the provision of enrichment activities relevant to school success, ensuring that the children are healthy, and a supportive and conducive learning environment is provided (Barrera & Warner, 2006; Clifford & Goncu, 2019; Emerson, 2012; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Kabarere et al., 2013). School-based involvement includes activities such as

attendance at a PTA, attendance at school for scheduled conferences or informal conversations, supporting school events such as sports day and fundraising activities, supervising field trips, volunteering at school, and serving on the PTA executive body (Barrera & Warner, 2006; Brownlee, 2015; Chen & Chandler, 2001; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Obeidat and Al-Hassan's (2009) study investigated the school, parent, and community partnership created in Jordan by 28 teachers who received the Queen Rania Award for Excellence in Education in 2007. The research revealed the activities that teachers undertake to get parents involved in the teaching learning process and foster their knowledge and skills. These include inviting them into the classroom and getting them involved in their children's homework, as well as asking them to donate. According to the authors, these means of parental involvement indicate that parents are partners and an important human resource that can be utilised by teachers as they possess money, time, skills, capacities, and experience that can help promote the teaching learning process. Barrera and Warner (2012) quoted other ways in which schools can get families involved. These include establishing mentorship programmes, parent centres, using family or community members as teachers' assistants, offering parenting training, forming partnerships with the business community, and encouraging parents and other community members to actively participate in school management and other programmes.

Benefits of Family Involvement

Studies reveal a correlation between family and community involvement in education and improved student academic performance and school improvement. Schools, families, and communities working together to support learning can motivate students to learn resulting in improved school attendance and grades. Family and community involvement is also seen as key to increasing school retention because a strong school family and community partnership

motivates students and fosters tertiary education ambitions. School and family involvement improves schools, strengthens families and communities, and increases student achievement and success (Van Roekel, 2008). This type of involvement is particularly crucial for low-performing students as according to Epstein (2011), they demonstrate the greatest gains academically when their families are involved. Swift-Morgan (2006) further mentions that teachers welcome parents' involvement, especially those who monitor their children's studies, regularly visit the school, and engage in dialogue with the teachers. This enables them to teach more effectively and get better results leading to improved morale. Researchers have posited that, for all these benefits to be achieved, a successful school, family, and community partnership is not a separate project or an add-on programme but should be integrated with the school's mission and goals. This will strengthen families, foster social capital, build community support, increase student achievement, and contribute to schools' overall improvement (Epstein, 2011; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Wood & Bauman, 2017).

School and Community Involvement

Schools that are successful in building a relationship with the family and community are those that do not operate in isolation but form partnerships with the family and community. This allows for the strengthening of relationships to support students and to better understand them so that teachers can customise lessons for them as individuals (Sharma, 2008). According to Jennings (1994), support of the community is vital for the school's work to succeed. School, community involvement has the potential to benefit many people and organisations. Given this benefit, policy-makers, scholars, educational leaders, teachers, and international agencies such as the OECD, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), World Health Organisation (WHO), and the

World Bank, emphasise the need for community involvement in schools (Gregoric & Owens, 2015). Governments are now recognising the importance of community involvement in the teaching learning process, especially in impoverished areas (Chen & Chandler, 2001). For example, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2005) has drafted policies and provided support for urban area schools to implement programmes in collaboration with their community.

Schools can form partnerships and linkages with the community in various ways, each with a different focus, scope, and content (Sanders, 2009). Gross et al., (2015) conducted a qualitative study using focus groups with community partners of five schools in the USA to understand better strong school, community partnerships, and what fosters their development. Their findings reveal that the schools formed partnerships with a diverse group of organisations and institutions. These include partnerships with businesses, universities and other schools, government agencies, faith-based organisations such as churches, government, and military agencies such as fire and police departments, parish councils, volunteer organisations such as Kiwanis, Rotary and Lions clubs, and other community organisations such as foundations, neighbourhood watch associations, alumni and service organisations. All these organisations and institutions are uniquely poised to provide resources and support to students and schools.

School and Community Involvement Activities

Community involvement in schools may mean different things to different schools and can vary in intensity and duration. It can range from simple, short-term connections such as fundraising activities or volunteering at sports days, to very complex long-term arrangements such as the erection of a block (Hauseman, et al., 2017). The literature has shown that schools have been involving and contributing to communities in many ways and vice versa. These include charitable outreach such as distributing care packages to the needy, hosting health fairs, evening classes, beautification, and road projects. These acts of

involvement encourage civic responsibility and empathy and make the students realise that there are needy people out there to help (Hand, 2008; Sanders, 2002). Based on the international literature, schools involve the communities in many other ways; for example, community members as guest speakers and motivational speakers for different functions such as graduation, PTA meetings, parents month celebrations, fundraising activities, community volunteer activities, cultural celebrations, mentorship programmes, recreational activities, professional development training, and sponsoring of awards at graduation or prize-giving ceremony among others (Epstein, et al., 2009; Gregoric, 2013; Preston, 2013; Sanders & Lewis, 2005; Sanders, 2003). Schools also partner with various health care facilities to provide social services to the community either free of cost or at a reduced cost. These include dental, medical, and vision services (Gross et al., 2015).

Benefits of School and Community Involvement

School and community relations are reciprocal as both entities benefit from this relationship. This view is supported by Hutton (2017), who mentions that communities at times provide support to schools, but there is also the case where the school provides support to the community. Some of these relationships include the school building being used as a community centre, or community members and parents cooperating to create meaningful after school programmes that are linked to students' learning (Sprick & Rich, 2010). Schools can also develop a mentorship programme with community members serving as valuable mentors to students. Research by McPartland and Nettles (1991) which focused on the use of community adults as advocates or mentors for at-risk American middle school students, found that mentoring programmes can have a substantial and positive effect on student's grades, attendance, and career opportunities. Hutton (2017) elaborates that "those schools which do a good job building relationships with communities are more likely to have successful schools" (p. 77).

The documented benefits of community involvement in schools also include behavioural and academic gains for children such as a reduction in negative behaviours, the building of resilience in students, improvement in attendance and lower dropout rates, the provision of needed equipment and materials in collaboration with local businesses, and provision of safety and security of students and property (Preston, 2013; Sanders, 2003; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Swift-Morgan, 2006). Some researchers also see community involvement in schools as a potential resource for solving some of the challenging problems in society with special needs and immigrant students as well as the discrimination and poverty that many marginalised groups of people experience (Van Roekel, 2008). Preston's (2013) study also revealed that the participants loved the idea of the school involving the community in various activities as they see it as a way of fostering social relationships through a welcoming atmosphere. Allowing teachers, students, parents, and community members to socialise at community events helps to build rapport and trust. There will be honest and open interactions among members creating a higher level of collaboration and communication, promoting community and student well-being, and building social capital.

Community involvement through the forging of school-business partnerships is connected to enhanced career opportunities for high school students because of the granting of scholarships and work experiences. Jennings (1994) found that schools in the Caribbean are relying more on the communities for support to offset expenses that their budgetary allocation cannot cover. Communities are providing support in the form of material resources and equipment, assistance in fundraising drives, and other volunteer support to the school such as financial, free labour to improve the school physical infrastructure, and expertise by assisting teachers in the classroom. Besides, Sanders (2003) argues that getting the business community on board can help produce a more capable workforce as business leaders and

managers are uniquely qualified to assist schools in preparing students for the changing workplace.

Preston (2013) conducted a series of 35 interviews with Canadian school council members, teachers, and community members on how community involvement in schools is influenced by the social relationships that exist or lack in a bedroom community in Canada. The study provided a few reasons for the need for school, community involvement. These include improvement in students' achievement, reduction in students' negative behaviour, and improvement in attendance. According to the author, students' overall health, attitude, and behaviour are positively impacted by school, community involvement. Gregoric and Owen's (2015) examination of the impact of school, community involvement on students, teachers, and the community in Australia revealed that communities can help develop the skills and capacities of students which in turn increases the learning achievements and well-being in school. International research reveals that school and students' capacity increase when families and community members volunteer their time and talent at schools (Sharma, 2008). Even though the literature is rich with evidence demonstrating the plentiful benefits of schools involving the community and vice versa, Schutz's (2006) study on how schools have been engaging inner-city communities in America revealed that school, community involvement remains relatively low, especially in marginalised communities.

Several other studies have provided many ways in which communities have been contributing to schools. A qualitative study conducted by Swift-Morgan (2006) which explored what community participation means to stakeholders in eight schools in Ethiopia, revealed the many and varied ways in which communities support schools and vice versa. These include monetary donations and in-kind contributions such as labour and material for infrastructural projects for the repairing of classrooms and the building of new desks. The community also assists in the monitoring of students and attends meetings at the schools. On

the other hand, the school allows the community to use the school building for community events, invites companies to interact and share with students and their families, information on employment opportunities, and hosts a community-wide career expo.

Similarly, Nishimura (2017), who studied community participation in school management in developing countries, found that communities contributed to schools through various donor assistance, allocation of public and private financial resources, hiring of teachers, construction of classrooms and pit latrines, and granting of scholarships for needy students. Communities are rich in unexploited human resources which can provide a variety of valuable resources for the school and the families it serves. These human resources can include volunteers, organisations that provide rich opportunities, companies that provide information related to career and internships, and organisations that provide various social services to students and families (Sharma, 2008). Therefore, schools benefit greatly from developing and sustaining a good relationship with the community.

Challenges to School, Family and Community Involvement and Possible Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

School leaders have maintained that one of the main challenges of running a school is to get families and communities involved in school life and that traditional approaches to attracting parental involvement have largely failed (Campbell, 2011; Troupe, 2017). The literature identifies several challenges/barriers to school, family, and community involvement that force families and communities to remain on the peripheral of their children's education. These include the socioeconomic status of parents, poor school climate which includes the attitude of teachers and principals, and parents' educational inadequacy (Gross, et al., 2015; Mapp, 2003; Sanders, 2003; Swift-Morgan, 2006). Schools must identify the barriers impeding a successful family and community involvement programme and devise strategies

to counteract them as, according to Moles (1999) “when school-related, family-related or community-related barriers deter parents from becoming involved, students lose an important source of support for their academic learning” (p. 31). Overcoming the barriers undoubtedly requires a lot of trial and error because schools are different and there is no “one size fits all” solution, but ideas and best practices can be shared so that other schools can replicate or adapt them to match their needs.

School and Family Involvement Challenges

According to the literature, the main challenges to schools involving families are due to families’ socioeconomic status – which includes their education level, how education is valued, work commitments, and transportation issues – as well as the school’s culture and climate. A discussion of each follow.

Socioeconomic Background

The family’s socioeconomic status can pose a challenge to their level of involvement in their children’s education. This, according to Magwa and Mugari (2017), relates to parents’ level of education, occupation status, and income. It has been referred to by Swift-Morgan (2006) as the single biggest constraint to family involvement in schools because “people are simply too poor” to do more for the school. Research has consistently shown that parents from lower socioeconomic status tend to face many more barriers to involvement than families from higher socioeconomic status. These include the lack of or inadequate resources, lack of parent interest, inflexible and demanding work schedules, low income, issues with transportation, and the lack of value for education, among other factors (Avvisati, et al., 2010; Cook & Ezenne, 2010; Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Povey et al., 2016; Hill & Taylor, 2004; Moles, 1999). An OECD (2006) report supports this

view by revealing that the poorer parents in Hungary stayed away from getting involved in school to avoid having to contribute monetarily for extracurricular activities.

Mafa and Makuba, (2013) conducted a qualitative case study of 15 school teachers from three primary schools in Zimbabwe regarding their schools' involvement of parents in their children's education. Data was collected using a focus group with the 15 teachers and interviews with the principal of the three primary school. The results found that a number of barriers limited the effective involvement of parents. This included lack of knowledge which includes the inability of parents to supervise and assist their children with their homework, time factor associated with working parents and parents who are farmers, child-headed families, economic problems associated with bus fares to visit the school especially where the school is not in the neighbourhood and communication problems.

Similarly, Mapp (2003) conducted a qualitative case study of the O'Hearn School in Boston, Massachusetts using in-depth one-on-one interviews with 18 parents whose children were eligible for free or reduced-price lunches based on family income levels. The aim of the study was to determine influencing factors for a successful educational partnership between employees and families. The study revealed that parents experienced several constraints to involvement including rigid work schedules, responsibilities to care for other children and aging parents, and lack of transportation. When these constraints prevent parents from being involved, the common belief by many teachers and principals is that the parents do not care about their children and nor value education (Evans, 2014). This view has been debunked by many authors such as LaRocque et al., (2011), Sanders and Epstein, (2005), and Schutz, (2006) but has been found to have some merit by the findings of Cook and Ezenne (2010). Cook and Ezenne (2010) conducted a study on the root causes of absenteeism in selected primary schools in Jamaica, investigating the influence of personal, educational, and community factors. They collected data using focus groups and interviews with parents,

teachers, students, and community members from 71 schools. Among the findings was that approximately 45 schools or 63% believed that parents and communities did not value education. Data revealed that parents repeatedly kept children at home on Thursdays and Fridays to work on subsistence farms, sell farm produce at the market, or as babysitters to care for the younger ones while parents went to work. Mapp (2003) supports this view by mentioning that the lack of involvement of low-income parents is also often attributed to the value they place on education, and lack of interest, time, and competence to be involved. Nevertheless, Epstein et al. (2009), revealed that even though wealthy communities tend to have more positive family involvement, this can be achieved in economically challenged communities also if schools and teachers work to establish positive partnerships with their students' families.

Swift-Morgan's (2006) study highlights the plight of many poor parents in Ethiopia who are required to make monetary contributions to the school to help offset the school's operational costs. The research revealed that even though these parents recognise the grave need for the contribution, they cannot help because of poverty. This has resulted in children being kept at home. The participants mentioned that they were willing to contribute in labour and material since they are unable to make a cash donation. What is noteworthy is that parents complained that their involvement was mainly about monetary contribution and not about decision-making or teaching and learning at home. This shows that parents are keen on getting involved in many ways.

According to the literature, to overcome some of these challenges associated with the socioeconomic status of parents and community members, schools will have to devise specific strategies (Lemmer, 2007; Moles, 1999). Baker et al. (2016) conducted focus groups with 50 families and 76 staff members of six schools in midwestern USA to elicit information on several issues concerning school and family involvement. Parents shared some of the

challenges that prevented them from being actively involved and provided strategies that schools can employ to assist them. Many parents noted that they could not be involved as they would like because of time constraints which involved conflict with work schedules and other events, having other children, and the difficulty of feeding them all before a school event. Parents suggested that schools consider hosting some of the activities on weekends or later in the evenings after work, providing child care for the children, and providing meals or food for families. These views have been supported by Moles (1999) who suggests that schools can overcome time constraints by providing childcare services, transportation, scheduling events at convenient times, and conducting home visits. Some of these suggestions are already being done, according to Lemmer (2007), whose study looked at how schools in South Africa were implementing Epstein's Model of Overlapping Spheres of Influence and six typologies of involvement. In Lemmer's study, it was found that teachers convened meetings in various church halls in different communities, arranged carpooling with other persons from the communities, and provided childcare facilities by asking older mature students to supervise the children to get the hard-to-reach parents involved.

Parent's inadequate education and low self-esteem may also pose an issue to their involvement. Parents who did not complete school or did not experience success in school may feel unqualified to help their children. They are unlikely to participate in school-related parent involvement activities such as volunteering in their children's classrooms or attending PTC day (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008; Cole, 2021; Moles, 1999; Povey et al., 2016). Cole (2021) conducted a sequential explanatory mixed method research to investigate the influence of parental involvement at the elementary level in Jamaica. A total of 248 parents participated in the quantitative phase and 49 in the qualitative phase. According to the findings of the study, some parents did not believe they were capable of assisting their children at home or at school. This made them fearful or embarrassed when they were invited

to meet with the teachers and therefore, they avoided visiting the school. The parents' educational level was also a barrier to their involvement in their children's education at school and at home. According to the principals, some parents would refuse to come to school when invited because they did not want teachers or other parents to know that they were unable to help their children academically since they were unable to read.

Evans (2014), conducted an ethnographic multiple-case study approach to examine the internal workings of three Massachusetts Community-Based Organisations engaged in education issues. Data for the case studies were gathered from interviews, observations of various CBO activities, and the collection and analysis of documentation between years 2006 and 2008. The researcher found that parents may have had more unpleasant experiences with schools and as a result, may often feel incapable of challenging the teacher or school. As a result, unless a special effort is made, the children who would benefit the most from involvement are those who are least likely to receive it (Durisic & Bunijevac, 2017; OECD, 2006). According to Campbell (2011), the converse is also true, parents who feel more competent and confident in their capacity to assist their children will demonstrate greater involvement in school-related activities, especially in the home. However, regardless of the limitations, it is clear that when parents make an effort to be involved in their children's school life to support their children's learning, the positives far outweigh the negatives.

Barrera and Warner (2006) point out that schools can provide support for families who are reluctant to participate because of educational inadequacy. This can be achieved by making a concerted effort to initiate and engage parents by providing family support and forming a collaborative relationship with public and private organisations that assist families. Such collaborative relationships may include partnerships with human and public health agencies, local companies, tertiary education institutions, youth organisations, religious, civic, and other community-based organisations. Schools can also offer adult basic education

courses to parents and other community members – for example, family math nights – so that parents can learn with their children and improve their self-efficacy (Moles, 1999). Campbell (2011) believes that schools need to be sensitive and open-minded enough to consider why some families, particularly low-income families, are underrepresented among those involved in schools. The author added that schools must be relentless in harnessing and utilising all the potential and strength that families have to offer because it is the underprivileged children who stand to benefit the most from school, family involvement. Regardless of these barriers, Miedel and Reynolds (1999) argue that parents who are less privileged with low education can still become involved in the school in many positive ways.

School Culture and Climate

The school's culture and climate can also influence family and community involvement. A safe, welcoming, respectful, inclusive, and collaborative environment is considered a precursor to family and community involvement (Best Practices in Family and Community Engagement, 2014; Hornby, 2000; Povey et al., 2016). Durisic and Bunijevac (2017) support this and mention that effective schools in which students are learning and achieving have a positive school climate. These schools make a concerted effort to reach out to the student's families to promote cooperation. The research conducted by Mapp (2003) adds support to this view by mentioning that families are more likely to get involved in their children's education when the culture of the school values and works assiduously to form relationships with families. Gross et al.'s (2015) study revealed that discussants in the focus group enjoyed visiting the school because of the inviting school culture. One participant noted that the school culture "infected the whole school, everybody is inviting" (p. 24). Therefore, the authors suggest that to experience higher levels of involvement, schools should always endeavour to have an inviting school culture.

According to Sprick and Rich (2010), meaningful parental involvement can only happen when the school culture values parent involvement and has the appropriate structures to promote it. Consistent with these views, Watson-Williams et al. (2011) suggest that schools create a climate in which parents can walk in and observe, volunteer, and assist their children with their classwork.

School, Community Involvement Challenges

The literature has revealed that many schools struggle to develop and maintain a relationship with the community for many reasons. Gregoric and Owens (2015) who conducted a qualitative study of two secondary schools in South Australia using interviews from students, staff, and the community, found that factors such as lack of time, limited resources, aspects of organisational structure, and concerns for the safety of children among others were challenges to school, community involvement at the schools. This has often resulted in short-term relationships or one-off events because there are limited resources to ensure enduring sustainable relationships. Both schools and the community mention that time is a major factor. One participant, who was a government agency employee, complained about the busyness of teachers and the lack of time to communicate with them. The participant mentioned that it was challenging to sit down, talk with, and plan with the teachers about the programmes or a student because the teachers were always busy with other matters. Furthermore, the research reveals that a lack of, or limited funding and resources also contribute to constraints experienced by schools in involving the community. To ensure well-executed and safe activities, adequate human and physical resources are necessary, and schools may not always have the resources available to execute the activities especially when schools are experiencing cuts in their budgets. This literature clearly indicates that to

overcome these challenges, schools need to allocate time to meet with community members and community activities.

Principal's and teachers' attitudes and practices have also been cited as barriers to school, family, and community involvement (Calzada et al. 2015; Swift-Morgan, 2006). Swift-Morgan (2006) conducted a qualitative study examining the form and scope of community participation in rural Ethiopia and found that poor relationships between the community and school staff can affect the level of community participation. Parents and other community members claim that teachers' attitudes can significantly influence a parent's perspectives on whether or not they can be involved, and a more appreciative attitude will encourage community members to be involved. Gregoric and Owen's (2015) research on the impact of school, community involvement on students, teachers, and communities found that whilst teachers agree that involvement can be beneficial and provide new experiences and skills, some felt this component of their job too demanding. A similar story exists for principals who have been cited by Mleczko and Kingston (2013), Povey et al., (2016), Sanders (2003), and Mapp (2003) as key people in the success of school, family, and community involvement. The principal's dedication, support, and active involvement are essential to the creation and sustenance of the school, family, and community involvement programme. This was revealed in a study conducted by Mapp (2003) which looked at factors that lead to successful educational partnerships between school staff and families at Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School in the US. Both staff and parents cited the principal's involvement as being key to a successful school, family, and community involvement programme. According to the respondents, the principal constantly stressed to the staff the importance of family involvement. Most importantly, he was committed to a high degree of family involvement which he expressed by his actions. Hauseman, et al.'s (2017) survey of 1400 Ontario principals in Canada on the influence of opportunities for school, community

involvement on the work they do daily and how involvement in such activities influences and impacts their workloads found that whilst principals acknowledged the benefits of forming a solid relationship with the community, and were not averse to doing so, they felt their hands were tied because of their already huge and demanding workload. Almost two-thirds of the principals reported that school, community involvement increases their workload and that it takes away from their time as instructional leaders and to direct school functions. Despite these challenges, it cannot be emphasised enough that one of the most important factors for the success of school, family, and community involvement initiatives is the support of school administration and staff (Mapp, 2003).

The literature indicates that to overcome these challenges, schools need to build and establish a trusting relationship with the family and community. Principals must have a vision for school, family, and community involvement and communicate this to the staff. They must also be responsive and support their staff in developing collaborative skills and model such behaviour (Mapp, 2003; Mleczko & Kingston, 2013). In addition, teachers and principals need training opportunities on how to build their skills in working with families and communities (Povey et al., 2016). Together, these would help to establish a solid school, family, and community relationship so that families and communities can start trusting staff, interact positively with them and feel welcomed at the school.

Gaps in the Literature

Although there is a considerable number of studies on school, family, and community involvement in the UK and USA, little research exists in other countries, particularly in developing nations like Jamaica, (Hartas, 2015). Yet, the empirical data emphasises numerous benefits of school, family, and community involvement. Notwithstanding this fact, the literature also reveals that many schools are unable to create and maintain this

relationship with families and communities. For example, research from Jamaica, as a developing country, corroborates the existing literature and reveals that many schools are failing in this respect (Murphy, 2002; National Education Inspectorate, n.d.; Watson-Williams et al., 2011). Few studies focus on those schools that have strong family and community involvement (Dryfoos, 1998; Sanders & Lewis, 2005). These studies reveal best practices, but these are not sufficient to address the problem. Little, however, has been done to examine those schools that find it difficult to involve family and communities. Therefore, it is important to examine well those schools that are facing challenges involving families and the communities to get to the root cause of the issues before attempting to offer solutions to the problems. Done in this manner, richer and deeper perspectives will be achieved in the long run, allowing for the capturing of a holistic view of school, family, and community involvement, with implications for developing countries, and more specifically for Jamaica.

This study is the first to compare high-performing and low-performing schools in a single study with the focus on how the two types of schools differ in how they involve the family and community. There have been a few studies that have looked at the challenges that schools experience involving the family and community, and others that have looked at showcasing what some schools are doing to involve the family and community in separate studies. However, this research examines both types of schools together in the same study to highlight what schools are doing to involve the family and community, what they have gained from this relationship and the challenges that they are having along with what they are doing to overcome these challenges. The study also examines the outcomes, both positive and negative, and provides opportunities for insights from lessons learned. Including both high-performing and low-performing schools in the same study context allows for a better understanding of some of the real differences and similarities between both types of schools in the same time frame.

Finally, the study is conducted in a developing country context which has not received much attention. To shed light on the developing country context, the study is conducted in Jamaica, itself a developing country that is facing many of the challenges identified in the literature such as those related to the socioeconomic background of the family and the community, and culture and climate of the school. In addition, while studies have shown that many of the schools face similar challenges, each country/setting has unique characteristics that influence the context within which schools operate and seek to engage their families and communities. The same applies to Jamaica; as such, research conducted in Jamaica is expected to be especially beneficial and informative for policy, practice, and further research in that setting while providing insights that are useful for other developing countries and settings where there are similarities to Jamaica.

Theoretical Underpinning of the Study

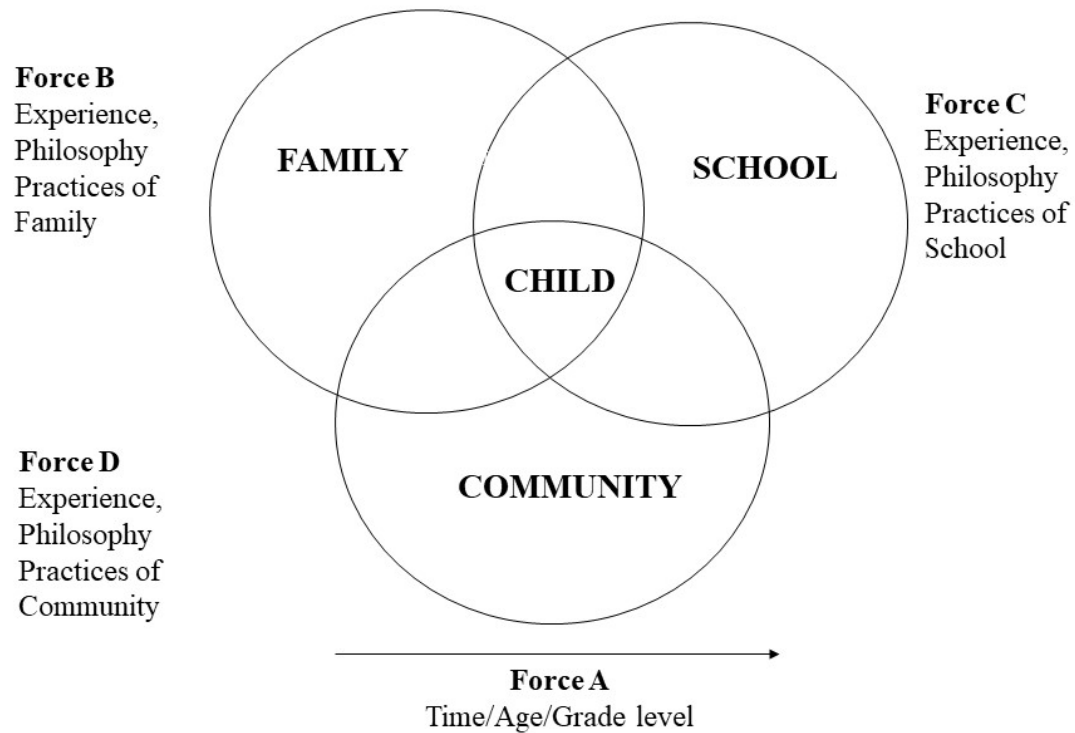
The theory of overlapping spheres of influence and six typologies of involvement developed by Joyce L. Epstein in 1995, one of the most influential scholars in the field of school, family, and community involvement, was used as the theoretical model to guide the study and served as the lens for data collection and analysis. Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence was influenced by the work of Urie Bronfenbrenner who developed Ecological Systems Theory which posits that "human development occurs in ecological systems where the individual interacts with various environments" (Ettetal & Mahoney, 2017, p. 2). To date, Epstein's framework has become the most widely used in school, family, and community involvement and has been useful in the development of family, school and community programmes in schools, the development of policy, and the structuring of research evidence in the field (Daniel, 2011; Mahuro & Hungi, 2016). According to Sanders (2009), "when schools integrate into their educational programs activities that

include these six types of involvement, they also create opportunities for meaningful interaction among individuals in students, schools, families, and communities” (p. 288).

The theory claims that students perform better in school when their families, schools, and communities collaborate to guide and promote their learning and development (Epstein, 2011). Children’s socialisation is a responsibility shared by the school, the community, and the family and it is successfully realised when teachers, community members, and parents work together, resulting in an overlap of responsibilities between parents, teachers, and the community (Lemmar, 2007). According to Epstein and Sanders (2006), shared responsibilities and overlapping influence mean that parents do not bear all the burden of becoming and remaining involved in their children’s education; rather, the burden is shared with schools who are responsible for developing programmes and providing the necessary conditions for families to participate in their children's education and development. Additionally, the community is not left to operate in geographic and social isolation but will work with families and schools to develop a cohesive plan to help students thrive.

Figure 2

Epstein's external structure of the model of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 2011).



The External Structure of Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence

The model of overlapping spheres of influence has two dimensions – the external structure and the internal structure. Figure 2 shows the external structure which consists of the three spheres/contexts in which children learn and grow – family, school, and community – which overlap and have distinct and combined influences on children through their interactions across contexts (Nyatuka & Nyakan, 2015). The model shows that some family activities and some community activities are conducted independently in the non-overlapping areas as not all school-based activities necessarily involve families or the community. Some activities, however, are conducted together by partners in two or more contexts. At the centre of the partnership is the child who is shared by all three. The ultimate goal of this tripartite relationship is to ensure that all children succeed in school because when all three work

together, students will realise that school is important, and they should do their work (Epstein, 2011).

The overlapping spheres of schools, families, and communities may be pushed together (more overlap and more combined activities) or pulled apart (less overlap and fewer shared activities). For example, when families and teachers work toward similar goals for the students, the two spheres of home and school are pushed together. However, when school and families do not work together and are not in contact, the spheres of home and school are pulled apart (Epstein, 2011; Epstein, et al. 2009). According to Simon and Epstein (2001), the spheres of influence are likely to be pulled apart as students mature and possibly think they are old and independent enough to not need as much help: likewise, if parents think that they are less able to support their child or if the school assumes that parents are less interested in supporting their child. The authors also mention that the number of activities that are shared among families, schools, and communities is dependent on the views and actions of teachers, parents, and community members which can change over time.

The degree of overlap is determined by three forces: time, experiences in families, and experiences in schools; and also, by the experiences, philosophies, and practices of families, schools, and communities (Epstein, 2009; Epstein, 2011; Simon & Epstein, 2001). Force A represents the developmental and historical times of students, families, and schools, the child's age, and grade level. For example, in infancy, the spheres may be separated because the child is learning at home and the family provides the primary educational experiences and environment. Parents and teachers do not interact directly about the child's learning. However, as the child grows, develops, and moves through grades, the influence and overlap of each sphere will change. For instance, as children move from infancy to preschool to kindergarten, the influence and the overlap between school and family tends to increase. According to Epstein (2011), the most significant overlap of family and school

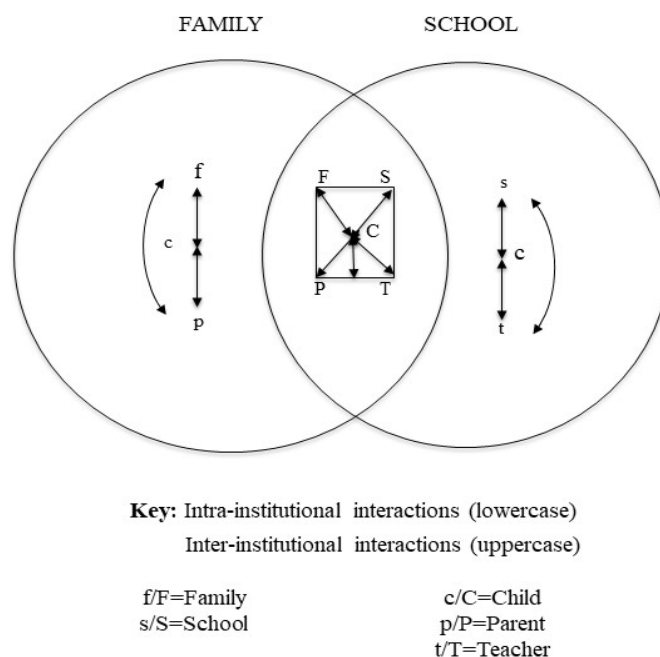
spheres occurs during the preschool and early elementary levels. However, due to different philosophies, policies, practices, and pressures from parents, teachers, or both represented by forces B and C, some children in all grades have a large overlap.

Forces B, C, and D, according to Epstein (2011), are the differences in philosophies, practices, and background characteristics between the various participants in each sphere. These forces will push or separate these spheres to produce more or less overlap of actions, interactions, and influences of the family and school along the timeline. For example, a family may be more willing to volunteer at school in part due to their socioeconomic status which increases the overlap between the school and the family, whereas other families may feel less welcome at the school or unsure how to help their child with a school problem, resulting in a decrease in the overlap. When teachers make parents a part of their regular teaching practice (force C), they will have greater overlap than usually expected. Communities (force D) vary in the policies of local governments, organisations, and businesses which either favour or prohibit cooperation with schools and families. The greatest overlap happens when schools and families work together as true "partners," with frequent coordinated efforts and clear, close contact between parents and teachers as part of a comprehensive programme of various sorts of parental involvement. According to Epstein (2011), there is never a "complete" overlap because the family has some activities and practises that are separate from the school's or teachers' programmes, and the school has other roles and practises that are separate from families.

The Internal Structure of Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence

Figure 3

Epstein's Internal Model of Overlapping Spheres of Influence (Epstein, 2011, p. 32)



According to Epstein, (2011), the model's internal structure shows the two types and levels of interactions. As shown in Figure 3, the two types of interactions are those within spheres (lower case) and between spheres (capital letters). The internal structure shows how and where social interactions and influences between the school, family, and community occur. These interactions can be studied at the institutional level (family and school), such as when a school invites all families to an event or sends out the same communication to all families, and at the individual level when a parent and a teacher meet in a conference or speak on the phone. Interactions between family (f) and parent (p) and school (s) and teacher (t) occur in separate spheres of influence within the organisation as parents, offspring, or other relatives conduct their family life and personal relationships or as teachers, principals,

and other school staff create school policies or conduct school or individual activities. In contrast, interactions between family (F) and school (S) and parent (P) and teacher (T) occur when members of the two organisations interact for the education of children (Epstein, 2011).

The connection between family (F) and school (S) is the interaction at the institutional level between family members and school staff or school programmes. For example, communicating school policies to all parents; holding workshops on child-rearing or child development for all parents; programmes for all parents to be involved at the school as volunteers; or family actions that may affect the schools, such as activities of parent teacher organisations, parent advisory councils, or community citizens advocacy groups creates shared communication and interaction structures between families and schools as organisations (Epstein, 2011).

At the individual level, the connection between a parent (P) and a teacher (T), refers to a specific interaction between parents and teachers related to a specific child. This may include, for example, a parent teacher conference about the child's progress; a note from the parent, or a phone call to teachers about the child's academic, social, or personal problems or needs; or the teacher's specific suggestions to the parents about how to help their child with learning activities at home (Epstein, 2011).

In this model, the child (C) or (c) is at the centre of all forms of interaction and influence. It is presumed that the parents' and teachers' motivations for interacting are the child's welfare and interest. For the child, school and family policies, parent teacher interaction, and the child's understanding and response to these connections will affect academic learning and social development. The model's multidirectional arrows depict how children interact with, affect, and are influenced by their families, particularly their parents, as well as by changes in their families and parental behaviour as a result of school actions. Children interact with, are influenced by, and are impacted by their schools, particularly

teachers, as well as changes in schools' and teachers' practises resulting from family behaviour.

The external and internal structures of the model are inextricably linked. When there is an intersection of the internal and external models of influence, students succeed at higher levels because they work together and learning and development are promoted (Griffin & Steen, 2010). The student's age and grade level, the prevailing practises of the period (Force A), and the behaviour, attitudes, experiences, and decisions of teachers and parents (Force B and C) all have an impact on internal organisational and personal interactions. The social and psychological distance between family and school members, their communication strategies, and the outcome of more or fewer encounters will be affected by the degree of overlap between family and school organisations and their aims and practises (Epstein et al., 2009; Simon & Epstein, 2001). Magwa and Mugari (2017), postulate that the greatest and most positive impact on a child's development comes as a result of the joint supportive efforts of the three spheres of influence. Therefore, when teachers involve parents in their regular teaching and learning activities, and when parents are more involved in their children's schoolwork, there will be more overlap.

Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Family and Community Involvement

According to Griffin and Steen (2010), the six types of involvement interactions that function within the theory of overlapping spheres act as a framework for the family, school, and community members working together to increase involvement and student achievement by outlining the behaviours, roles, and actions to be performed. According to Epstein (2011), the six essential involvement measures or techniques/approaches to assist principals, teachers, and other school authorities to develop a comprehensive and effective school, family and community involvement programme to help meet students' needs are Parenting,

Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision-making, and Collaborating with the community.

Parenting

This is where the school assists families such as parents and extended family members to develop parenting and parenting skills to create a positive home environment that supports children and their learning. This could include the sharing of information by conducting parenting seminars and workshops on nutrition, discipline, etcetera (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006; Mahuro & Hungi, 2016).

Communicating

This is where schools design an effective two-way communication channel to regularly keep parents abreast about school programmes and their child's progress. This could include regularly scheduled phone calls, text messages, notices, memos, and newsletters. Schools should also ensure that conferences with parents are held at least once or twice per year to keep them informed of their children's progress and behaviour among others (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006).

Volunteering

This involves recruiting, training if possible, and organising parents' help and support. Schools must ensure that they make use of the time, resources, skills, and experience of families and community members to help with school activities regularly. These could include asking parents to volunteer in the classroom, on sports day, with fundraising activities, selling in the canteen, or to be a mentor (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006).

Learning at Home

This is where the school provides families with information and suggestions on how to help their children with homework and other school-related activities. These could include assigning students homework that requires them to discuss and interact with family members

on what they are learning in class and providing information on how families can assist and monitor children's homework and projects (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006).

Decision-making

This refers to parents' participation in school decision-making and the formation of parent leaders and representatives, among others. This can be accomplished by involving families and members of the community in parent organisations such as the Parent Teachers' Association and school committees such as the safety and fundraising committees (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006).

Collaborating With the Community

This is where the school seeks out and integrates community resources and services to support school programmes, family practises, and student learning and development. Community businesses and organisations are encouraged to sponsor school activities and students are encouraged to participate in community activities (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006).

Criticisms of Epstein's Theory

While Epstein's framework, according to Mahuro and Hungi (2016), is very useful for linking parental participation with learning outcomes within the three overlapping spheres of family, school, and community and has been proven to be beneficial in not only research but also in policy and practice (Epstein & Sanders, 2006), there have been criticisms of it. Schutz (2006) asserts that Epstein does not include the community in her discussion of communicating and decision-making but focuses entirely on parental involvement instead. Schutz (2006) further articulates that Epstein's discussion of the community is narrow as she focusses only on the resources that the community can provide to the school and "the ways that communities can either reinforce school and family goals for student learning and success or redirect students away from school or family goals" (p. 704). The author claims

that this implies that communities are only beneficial to schools when they support the school's mission, and conversely are harmful if they criticise the mission of the school.

Similarly, authors such as Bower & Griffin (2011) and Schultz (2006) criticise Epstein's theory for its one-directional approach rather than a reciprocal school, parent relationship. These authors have noted that Epstein's theory places emphasis on schools providing knowledge to parents and not tapping into what knowledge the families, students and communities can bring to create more authentic and meaningful partnerships. Lawhorn (2021), supports this view by mentioning that considering students' funds of knowledge is one way in which schools can help break down barriers between the classroom and the home and between the teacher and the parent. Likewise, Moll et al. (1992) pointed out that there have been efforts to recognize students, families, and communities as possessing knowledge that can offset the traditional school, home relationship—a call for funds of knowledge through community networks. Building relationships based on students' funds of knowledge can produce greater understanding about family circumstances, reduce the uncertainty and lack of familiarity of the school, contribute to the collaborative creation of academic content, curriculum, and school policy, all of which are functions of parent engagement (Lawhorn, 2021).

According to Gonzalez et al. (1995), when teachers become more aware of the vast resources or funds of knowledge that can be gleaned from each household, the value of the family's experience and pedagogical skills are in turn validated. In addition, parents report feeling more comfortable in the school and having greater access to the school (Gonzalez et al., 1995). When viewed through the funds of knowledge concept, the diversity in schools provides a rich source of potential resources to assist in developing new ways to imagine parent engagement and education.

However, this one-directional approach to family involvement limitation of the theory proved a strength for my study which focuses on what schools are doing to involve the families and communities and the intentional activities they put in place to reach the families and communities. Moreover, within current Jamaican policy settings, Epstein's approach is the most relevant and practical one; enabling my study to contribute towards improving current Jamaican education policy and practice.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed literature underpinning family, and community involvement in schools as well as literature related to the theoretical framework that guides the study. The first part focuses on the various ways in which schools have been engaging the family and community, how this relationship has benefitted them, and the challenges they face with family and community involvement. The section then culminates with identifying the gaps in the literature which necessitates this research.

The second part of the chapter discusses Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence and six typologies of school, family, and community involvement – the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Epstein et al. (2009) underscore the merits that children can get from the support of the school, family, and community: students will feel safer and cared for, will be more motivated, will develop an appreciation for education, will work hard to achieve their full potential, cultivate positive attitudes and behaviours, and stay in school. Although no curriculum guide provides a step-by-step approach to building strong relationships between schools, families, and communities, the importance of developing and maintaining this relationship cannot be overstated, as a school's continued existence is dependent on its environment and interactions between its various elements. The literature suggests we should begin with pre-service teacher training and continuous professional

development both in schools and beyond through collaborative efforts with families and communities. These relationships take time, hard work, and commitment but school administrators must do all that is within their powers to develop and sustain such relationships for the growth and development of our youth.

Chapter Four: Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology, beginning with the research design and rationale and the paradigm. It then moves into the research methodology giving an overview of comparative case study research, the selection of cases and participants. Following this is the research methods which provides information on the data collection techniques, pilot study and analysis of data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical issues relating to this study. Table 1 gives a summary of the research methodology.

Table 1

Summary of Research Methodology

Element	Summary
Research Design	Qualitative
Paradigm	Interpretivism
Research Methodology	Multiple Case Studies
Research Methods/ Data Collection Techniques	Semi-structured interviews Document Analysis Observation
Data Analysis	Case Reports, With-in and Cross-case Analysis

Research Design and Rationale

According to Creswell (2014a), research approaches are plans and procedures for research ranging from broad assumptions to detailed data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Creswell notes further that there are three main research approaches: namely, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The distinction between quantitative research and qualitative research is normally made using words (qualitative) and numbers (quantitative). A mixed-method, on the other hand, involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. The basic assumption of the mixed-method approach, according to Creswell (2014a), is that combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies yields a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem than either approach alone. A

quantitative methodology asks questions regarding “how many,” “how much,” “how often,” “what,” “where,” or “when,” while a qualitative methodology asks questions relating to “why,” “how,” or “how do you feel about it?” (Pickard, 2013; Williamson & Johnson, 2013).

This study adopted the qualitative research method because it seeks to uncover how schools have been involving the families and communities, how they have benefitted from the interactions, challenges they face, and how they have been dealing with and overcoming the challenges. Adopting this research approach, allowed for full immersion and interaction with the schools and all participants in the study to gain their insights into the phenomenon and produce “rich, thick data,” to answer the research questions. In addition, addressing the gap in the literature resulting from inadequate understanding of the nature of family, school and community involvement in Jamaica would benefit immensely from a qualitative study. This is because a qualitative study allows the researcher to explore the rich narratives, descriptions, and experiences of participants in an in-depth manner. It allows the researcher to gain an understanding of the viewpoints of schools and their participants including principals, teachers, family, students, and community members that could not be gained by using a quantitative approach.

The information obtained was based on the experiences of the research participants which assisted in understanding the phenomenon as captured by the participants rather than via numerical or statistical data that can fail to take into consideration the contextual factors which cause the phenomenon. Silverman (2005) supports this view by mentioning that qualitative methods can provide a “deeper” understanding of social phenomena that would not be obtained from entirely quantitative data. Pickard (2013) adds that multiple individual realities can never be examined in detail using a quantitative methodology. Therefore, a qualitative approach using the comparative case study research methodology was considered best suited to achieving a deep understanding of the phenomenon and to fully understand the

context and answer the research questions. This approach enabled me to get insight and rich, thick data of the understanding and experiences of the participants regarding school, family, and community involvement in the respective schools.

Research Paradigm

All researchers must base their studies on philosophical assumptions about the nature of the universe and how information about it may be acquired and expressed (Myers, 2009). This is referred to as a paradigm or worldview. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define a paradigm as the set of assumptions or the worldview that guides a researcher in how to understand and study the nature of reality; it is a general perspective and a way to simplify the complexity of the real world. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) suggest that paradigms provide the largest framework or the worldview within which research takes place. This research has adopted the interpretivism paradigm which has its origin in hermeneutics and phenomenology. It is based on the understanding that knowledge is personally experienced and not a set of universal laws (Dean, 2018). Researchers using the interpretivism paradigm seek to understand social reality through the eyes of multiple participants rather than to explain it (Mack, 2010). A paradigm consists of the following components: ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

Ontological assumptions are concerned with what constitutes reality; in other words what is (Scotland, 2012). Ontology is relativism in nature and posits that there is no single reality; rather multiple realities are constructed socially by individuals because, invariably, people have different perspectives or interpretations of phenomena. Further, this individual reality is contextual rather than universal (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011; Mack, 2010; Merriam, 2001; Pickard, 2013; Thanh & Thanh, 2015; Williamson & Johanson, 2013).

Regarding epistemology, the interpretivism paradigm is concerned about what it means to know (Scotland, 2012). Interpretivism paradigm is subjective or transactional and

supports a close association between the knower and the known and whatever is known is because of their interaction (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2011; Pickard, 2013). The interpretivism methodological stance asserts that knowledge is created when there are interactions with the subject of the investigation with the primary aim to understand the entire context at both macro and micro levels (Pickard, 2013). It is primarily concerned with why, what, from where, when, and how data is collected and analysed (Scotland, 2012).

Methodologically, interpretivisms use a range of methods, techniques, and tools to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. Rather than generalising and predicting causes and effects, interpretivism scholars try to comprehend a phenomenon through the meaning, rationale, and motives that individuals attach to it (Myers, 2009).

I adopted the interpretivism paradigm because the field of school, family, and community involvement has a lot of grey areas, in that people's experiences, philosophies, and actions are determined by their realities and interpretations of the issues. Each participant is different and reports their realities differently based on their experiences. Adopting the interpretivism paradigm allowed me to interact with the participants in their setting and immerse myself in the data to better understand people's words, actions, and behaviour and to uncover their realities. In summary, the interpretivism paradigm supports the focus of the study and the methodology that was followed in answering the research questions.

Research Methodology

This section contains details about the research methodology. It begins with an overview of comparative case studies, then moves on to how the cases were selected and the participants.

Comparative Case Study Research

One of the guiding principles outlined by Yin (2014) in choosing a research method or approach is the research questions. Considering this singular factor, this study adopted the case study approach. Yin (2014) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (“the case”) in-depth and within its real-world context” (p. 16). Case studies focus on a detailed study of a situation which can be an individual, a family, organisation, setting, group, episode or events, a programme, activities, or a process. Case study research can comprise single and multiple case studies (Babbie, 2016; Gerring, 2007; O’Leary, 2017; White, 2000) and is appropriate when answering “how” and “why” research questions, investigating a contemporary phenomenon, and when the researcher has little or no control or when behaviours cannot be manipulated (Myers, 2009; Yin, 2014). Comparative case studies are the systematic comparison of two or more data points (“cases”) obtained using the case study method and allows researchers to make generalisations based on the findings. Comparative case studies allow for the inclusion of multiple cases which improves the external validity of research results and makes the research more robust (Kaarbo & Beasley, 1999; Yin, 2014). For this research, four cases (high schools) were used. Two high performing and two low performing schools were compared to ascertain how they involve the families, achievements, challenges faced and how they try to deal with the challenges that confront them. The following chapter provides details on each case.

Selection of Cases

For the study, I used multiple case studies to answer the research questions. This type of study involved collecting and analysing data from several cases (Merriam, 2009). The use of multiple cases allowed me to gather first-hand information as perceived by the participants which enabled the findings to emerge from four high schools to facilitate the robustness and

eventual comparative analysis of the findings. This approach is supported by Pickard (2013) who mentions that case study research always uses purposive sampling to locate information-rich sources since it is important to select a site that will provide rich and detailed insights. I intended to compare school, family, and community involvement in different types of high schools by examining the techniques by which schools aim to establish family and community relationships, the challenges they face, resolution of the challenges, outcomes, and the benefits derived. From the NEI, Jamaica website and office, I purposively selected four high schools– based on different characteristics such as location and type – to participate in the study. NEI, Jamaica uses three key indicators to assess schools’ relations with parents, and the local community. They are as follows:

- The quality of the school’s communication with, and reporting to parents
- Parents’ involvement with their children’s education and the work of the school
- The school’s links with organizations and agencies in its community (NEI website, 2018).

Of the four high schools chosen, two were rated high on the indicator relations with parents and the community, and two were rated low. To account for a range of socioeconomic backgrounds of families, contexts, and locations of schools, the selection also considered geographic location – that is, (rural² and urban³); and type of school – that is, Traditional⁴ and Non-Traditional⁵ as shown in Table 2.

² Rural areas refer to all parishes outside of the metropolitan areas of Kingston and St. Andrew.

³ For this research, urban areas mean Kingston and St. Andrew.

⁴ Traditional High Schools are government funded elite schools. Students with the highest grades in their PEP examination are assigned to these schools. Traditional high schools tend to be better funded and thus have more resources.

⁵ Non-Traditional High Schools are government funded but students with low test scores on their PEP examination are generally assigned to such schools.

Table 2*Summary of Case Types*

School	Ratings of Schools on Relations With Parents and the Community by NEI		Types of School		Location of School	
	High	Low	Traditional High School	Non-Traditional High School	Rural	Urban
Aberdeen High School	1		1			1
Hutt Valley High school	1			1	1	
Holy Cross High School		1		1		1
St. Fairview High School		1		1	1	

Participants

The study compares how schools in Jamaica have been involving the family and community. In every school (case), the main study participants were the principal, teachers, parents, PTA representative, student council president, alumni representatives, and community members. Table 3 summarises the number of participants from each school in each category and the number of educational experts. The range of participants was intended to gain diverse perspectives on family and community involvement in schools and to triangulate the data. An email was sent to the principals of the selected four high schools outlining the purpose of the research, participants and expected number of participants from each school, mode and timeline of data collection, ethical issues, and consent form. In addition, a representative each from the NEI, (Jamaica), NPSC, (Jamaica), and the MOEYI (Jamaica) were also interviewed.

Table 3*Summary of Research Participants*

Participants	Schools				
	Aberdeen High School	Holy Cross High School	Hutt Valley High School	St. Fairview High School	Total
Principals	1	1	1	1	4
Teachers	3	3	3	3	12
President of Student Council	1	1	1	1	4
Parents	3	3	3	3	12
Alumni Representatives	1	1	1	0	3
PTA Representatives	1	1	1	1	4
Community Members	1	2	2	3	8
National Education Inspectorate Representative					1
National Parenting Support Commission Representative					1
Community Education Relations Officer					1
Total					50

Selection of Participants

The participants for this study were chosen from the four schools identified in Table 3 above and their willingness and availability to be part of the study. The principals of Aberdeen, St. Fairview and Holy Cross High Schools designated one of the vice principals to be my main point of contact in recommending and recruiting participants for the study. At Hutt Valley High School, it was the principal who assisted in recruiting potential persons to

participate in the study. The vice principals and principal spoke to the teachers and asked them to participate in the study. They also made contact with parents, PTA representative, alumni representative and also furnished me with their contact details to follow up with them, speak to them personally about my research and arrange the meetings.

Principals. The principal is pivotal to creating a school environment and culture that supports family and community involvement. Principals are integral in facilitating collaboration among teachers and with other stakeholders. Therefore, the principal of each school was interviewed to gain insights as to the approaches that the schools have been taking to get the family and community involved in the school, achievements, the challenges they face and strategies they have been employing to overcome those challenges. The interview with each principal was conducted at respective schools (See Appendix D).

Teachers. Teachers are integral to this study because many of the involvement activities are sometimes spearheaded by them. These included PTC day, school's open day, fundraising activities, mentorship programmes etc. Therefore, it was important to get their perspective and feedback on how as a school they have been involving the family and community, challenges they face and what they have been doing to overcome these challenges. In three of the schools, the vice principals recommended the teachers to participate in the study while in the other school the principal recommended the teachers. A total of three teachers were interviewed at each school and the interviews were conducted on the school compound.

Parents. The literature is clear that the family has a key role to play in school, family, and community involvement (Otero, 2011; Epstein, et al., 2009). It was therefore imperative that I speak with them to find out how they have been involved in their child's educational life, challenges they are facing and their overall

relationship with the school. The vice principals of three schools and the principal of the other school were asked to recommend three parents to participate in the study. Contact was made with the parents, and they were asked to participate in the study. A total of three parents were interviewed at each school and most of the interviews with parents were conducted on the school compound in a vacant office made possible by the principal or vice-principal. One parent at Hutt Valley High school and Aberdeen High School requested that their interview be conducted at their place of employment.

Residential Community Members. One of the aims of this study is to get diverse views from different participants, therefore it was important to speak to community members because these people have a vast knowledge of what is going on. It was my intention to interview three residential community members from each school, however this was not possible because persons were unavailable or could not be reached. Only at St. Fairview High I was able to interview three community members, two vendors and a groundsman (See table 3). From the other schools, the community members interviewed included vendors and a taxi operator. Before the interviews, I met with each person for them to give me a time that was convenient for them. The interviews for the vendors were done at the school gate, on the school compound for the groundsman and in the taxi for the taxi man.

PTA Representative. For three schools the PTA president was interviewed and for the other school the vice-president was interviewed. The PTA representative was interviewed as a part of the school community. They were interviewed to get their take on what it means to be involved in the school, how they have been doing so, achievements, challenges they face and how they have been overcoming those

challenges. The interviews with the PTA representative were done at the respective schools except for one who requested that the interview be done at her workplace.

Alumni Representative. Three alumni presidents were interviewed because St. Fairview High does not have an alumni association. The interviews were done to get their take on what it means to be involved in the school, how they have been doing so, achievements, challenges they face and how they have been overcoming those challenges. The interviews with the alumni representative were done at the respective schools except for Hutt Valley alumni president whose interview was done at his workplace because he lives and works in another parish.

Representative of the National Education Inspectorate, Jamaica. A representative of the National Education Inspectorate, Jamaica was interviewed to gather information on what family and community involvement looks like in Jamaican schools on the whole. The interview was conducted at the office of the representative at the National Education Inspectorate, Jamaica.

Ministry of Education, Jamaica Representative. One of the Community Relations Education Officers from the MOEYI, Jamaica was interviewed to discuss the ministry's plans for a policy for school, family, and community involvement programme along with the support that the MOEYI gives to schools to develop their programme. The interview was conducted at the representative's office at one of the regional offices of the MOEYI.

National Parenting Support Commission Representative. NPSC an arm of the MOEYI was born in 2012 because of the low level of parental involvement in education in Jamaican schools. A representative from the NPSC was interviewed at her office to ascertain how the commission has been assisting parents and schools.

Research Methods

This section contains details about the research methods. It begins with an overview of the different methods used in the study. Following is a description of each method as well as information about the pilot research that was conducted. The section then ends with details on the data analysis.

Yin (2014) purports that a major strength of the case study method is that it allows for the utilisation of multiple sources of evidence. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) mention that utilising several data collection methods facilitate the strong credibility of the findings because the phenomenon is being understood from various viewpoints. Interviews, document analysis, and observation were the main sources of data collection techniques used to provide a comprehensive perspective, to ensure the robustness and credibility of the research, and to triangulate pieces of evidence. Drawing from multiple sources of information allows convergence and validation between data sources and methods. Doing so also reduced the potential biases that may have arisen in the course of this study.

Interviews

Interviews are the most common type of qualitative data collection technique because they allow for the gathering of rich data from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge (Myers, 2009; Patton, 1990). Myers (2009) lists three types of interviews namely: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. A total of 50 semi-structured face-to face interviews were done and used as the main data collection technique. Semi-structured interviews were used because according to Creswell (2014a) it allows the researcher to take “control over the line of questioning” by using a schedule of questions (p. 186).

A total of 47 interviews were conducted from the four schools (See table 3 for a breakdown of participants from each school) at the participants’ convenience. At the start of

each interview conducted, I re-introduced myself and gave them a summary of my research. I then provided a copy of the information sheet (Appendix B) outlining the study which was read prior to signing the consent form (Appendix C). Following that, I provided an overview of the interview process and build trust in interviewees as well as obtain background information about interviewees.

The opportunity was then afforded each interviewer to ask questions whether for clarification or otherwise before the formal interview began. Interview questions were geared towards eliciting from the persons how the school has been involving the family and community, the benefits if any of having such a relationship, the challenges, and how they have been able to overcome the challenges. A checklist of questions developed based on the research questions, theoretical framework and literature were used to guide the interviews (See Appendix D).

Each interview lasted from 45 minutes to one hour, except for one, which lasted over three hours. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants, followed by transcription. Only one participant declined the recording of the interview and so notes were taken. During each audio-recorded interview, notes were also taken to internalise what was being said by the interviewees and to follow up on new information and possible questions to ask for clarification. Notes were also taken of the interviewees' body language in order to add an extra layer of analysis. In order not to divert much from the topic, the responses of interviewees were guided by the interview schedule. At the final stage of the interview, a summary of interviewees comments was presented for confirmation and an opportunity was also given them to provide additional information.

Document Review

Table 4

Summary of Document Reviewed From Each School

Schools	Documents					
	School's SIP	Principal's Action Plan	School's Calendar of Events	NEI Report	PTA Agenda/Meeting Minutes	Students' and/or Parents' Handbook
Aberdeen	X		X	X	X	X
Hutt Valley	X	X	X	X		
St. Fairview	X	X	X	X		
Holy Cross	X		X	X	X	X

Myers (2009) purports that document review is important because it can provide some evidence that allows researchers to build a richer picture than can be achieved through interviews and fieldwork alone. The objective of employing documents in case study research according to Yin (2014), is to corroborate and complement evidence from other sources. For these reasons, I analysed different documents that the schools had provided access to related to family and community involvement. Some schools considered certain documents such as minutes of PTA meetings, and school and principal's action plan as confidential and did not provide access. At some schools I was able to review the SIP, calendar of events, principal's action plan, PTA meeting agenda and minutes, NEI reports, school bulletin boards, and other displays featuring aspects of family and community involvement and social development community profiles (See table 4). The examination of the different documents provided secondary data to corroborate evidence from the interviews, identify gaps that maybe present and gave a clear and rich picture of the importance that the school gives to the involvement of

the family and community. For example, the principal of Holy Cross High School spoke about how important it is to build a relationship with the family and community and how her job would be half done if the school could do so. However, when I reviewed the SIP for the years 2017-2020, none of the five objectives in the SIP spoke to building relationship with stakeholders. This demonstrates to me that the principal may not be serious about developing a relationship with the family and community. Some documents were also used for factual description of the cases.

Observation

Table 5

Summary of Events and Artefacts Observed at Each School

Events/Artefacts Observed	Schools			
	Aberdeen High School	Holy Cross High School	Hutt Valley High School	St. Fairview High School
PTA Meetings	X		X	
Schools' Open Day		X		X
Orientation Session for new grade seven students	X			X
School's Sports Day				X
Grade Level Meeting		X		
Community Activity-Patching of Roadways			X	
School's Notice Board	X	X	X	X
Trophies and Plaques	X	X	X	
School Compound/Buildings	X	X	X	X

Observations provided detailed information on people's activities, actions, behaviour, and interactions in a particular situation (Patton, 1990; Pickard, 2013). This approach has been supported by Baker and Solden (1998) who mention that the interaction between teachers, parents, and students is complex. Therefore, observational techniques should be used to better explore many of these processes to provide rich data. Participant observation, semi-participant observation, and non-participant observation are the three types of observations used in research.

This study used non-participant observation in which the researcher simply watches, records, and later interprets what was seen in the context of the research questions without participating (Pickard, 2013). Each school compound and event observed was documented with a description of the event and personal and analytical notes (See Appendix E for observational schedule).

Interactions were observed in different fora such as PTA meetings, grade PTA meetings, orientation for new grade 7 meetings, and other school activities – for example, sports day and school's open day, etcetera – to see the interaction between the school, family, and the community (See Table 5 for a complete breakdown of activities observed at each school). My presence at the various school events allowed me to see the school in relation with the family and community as it happens. I was also able to check for consistency between what is espoused and what is practiced. I observed the school compound for artefacts such as plaques and trophies that may have been contributed by the family and community and any other physical representation of the involvement of the family and community and took photos of them. In addition, since the research used case study approach, observational data provided context to the reader on the background to the schools.

Permission was sort from the principals to tour the schools. At Aberdeen High, one of the vice-principals gave me a detailed tour of the entire compound. During the tour I was able

to ask probing questions and seek clarifications especially regarding the naming of certain buildings/blocks after individuals and certain signs/symbols I saw on the school compound. For the other schools, after observation of the compound and artefacts I asked the principals for clarifications if needed. I recorded the observables in a field notebook. This was done to further triangulate what was said in the interviews, thus adding an extra layer of data for analysis.

Data collection spanned a period of six months (March 2019 – August 2019). Challenges were faced in scheduling meetings with interviewees and traveling back and forth to their institutions. Some sessions had to be rescheduled a few times as interviewees had unexpected changes in their schedules and were therefore unavailable for the interview.

Pilot Study

Conducting a pilot study is an important step in the data collection process. Gorman and Clayton (2005) say that a pilot study is essential because it enables the researcher to test certain variables and address any potential issues. It allows the researcher to gain valuable feedback on the research process, interview schedules, and observation methods. For this study, one pilot study was conducted in Jamaica with a school that is ranked satisfactory. Convenience sampling was used to select this school based on geographic proximity and the school's willingness to participate. A school ranked satisfactory was chosen because it gave me a more balanced perspective before approaching the schools, that is, high and low-ranked schools. Based on the findings from the pilot target study, changes were made to data collection procedures and interview protocols. Some questions were deleted, and others were added or reworded to elicit better responses and avoid repetition. For example, after interviewing the PTA president at the pilot school and learning that she had received no training and had little knowledge of her roles and responsibilities, which had hampered her ability to perform her duties, in the interview protocol for the PTA representatives, I included

a question related to the provision of training for PTA executives. By adding this question, I was able to get more information and a better understanding of some of the challenges faced by families and community members and how schools have been responding.

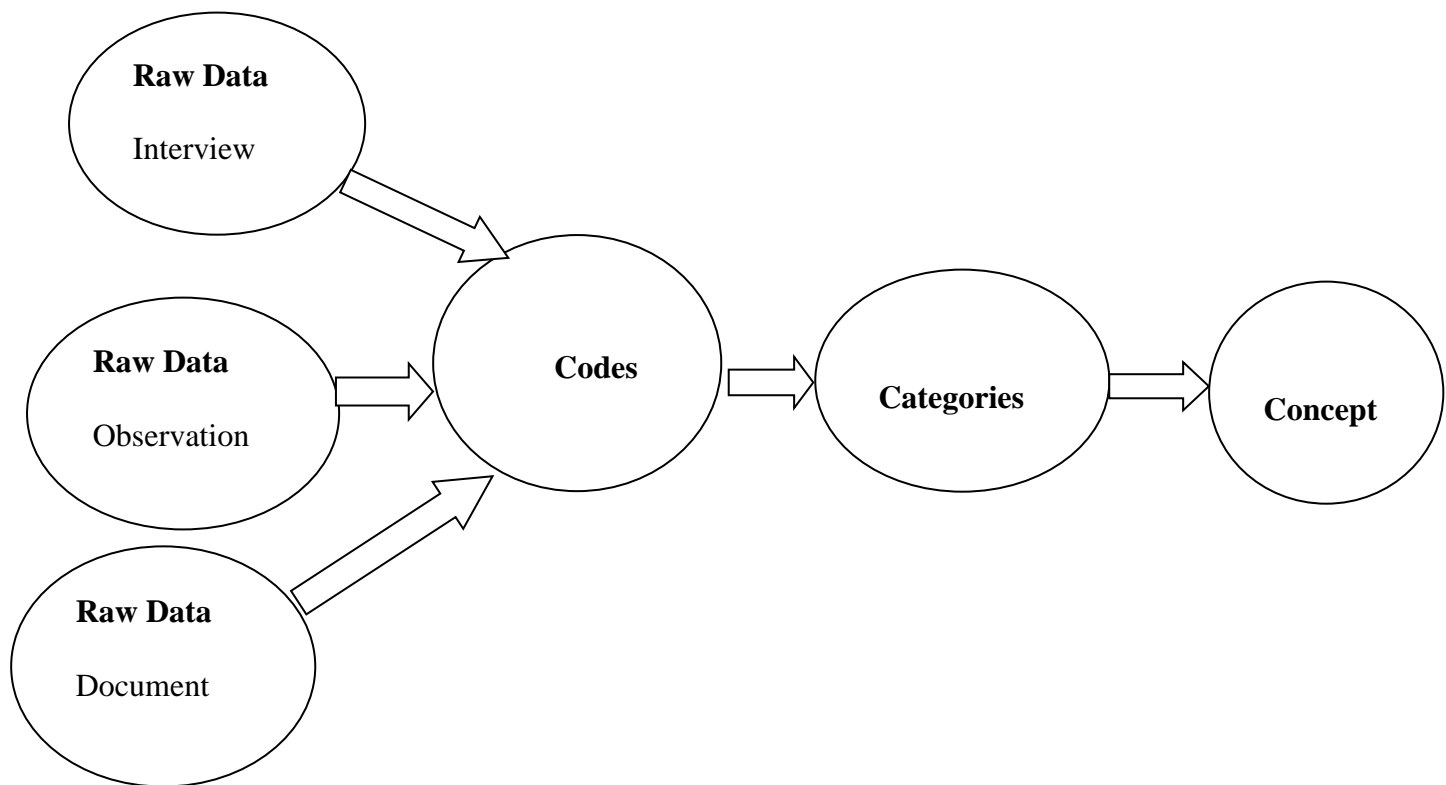
Further the pilot study revealed issues related to the reliance on 'gatekeepers' which was addressed once I started collecting data. In some cases, because of the busy schedule of the key people I contacted (principal and vice-principals), they were not always reliable. Therefore, to reach the participants I could not rely solely on the gatekeepers. For one school in particular, I had to acquire the mobile number of every recommended person in order to contact them later to ascertain their willingness for participation in the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an important part of the research. It involves “understanding how to make sense of text and images so that you can form answers to your research questions,” (Creswell 2014b, p. 260). In this study, data from interviews, observations, documents reviews, and field notes were analysed manually using inductive and deductive approaches. This means that the data were analysed inductively based on emerging themes as well as deductively from the literature. The process of data analysis included individual case analysis and then a thematic across-case analysis. The within-case analysis identified key elements while the across-case analysis identified commonalities and differences across the cases (Ayres, Kavanaugh, Knafl, 2003). For data analysis, I adopted the three Cs of analysis outlined by Lichtman (2010) as shown in Figure 4. These are from coding to categorising to concepts.

Figure 4

Three Cs of data analysis: Codes, Categories, and Concepts (Lichtman, 2010, p.196)



Individual Case Study Analysis

The purpose of analysing individual case studies is to describe, understand, and explain what has happened in a single, bounded context (Miles, et al., 2014). Data emerging from the 50 semi-structured interviews were captured using audio-recording and were transcribed by me to refine them into text to facilitate data analysis. An electronic folder and files were created for each case which housed all the transcriptions, audio files, and other relevant documents about the case. Throughout the data collection phase, I simultaneously transcribed and analysed transcripts to identify areas for further examination or probing in future interviews, observations, and document reviews. As needed, reflective notes about nonverbal communication and researcher answers were incorporated into the transcripts. The transcribed data was read carefully then sent to all participants for member-checking. Due to

the onset of covid-19, member-checking took longer than anticipated, but eventually, after much persistence, all the participants sent their feedback regarding the transcribed data.

Coding. Before coding the data, I read and reread the transcripts and field notes for each case several times to get an understanding of them and to make myself familiar with the data. While reading, I also noted down salient ideas and patterns and highlighted phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that were striking. This enabled me to become familiar with the data and prepared me for coding. Coding the data is the first step as outlined by Litchman (2010) and is a vital step in thematic data analysis. It involves categorising segments of data by a word or short phrase (Saldana, 2016).

I did the coding manually and started the process by marking and labelling each data chunk with codes written in different colours. This strategy of coding was repeated for each case. This also made it easier for me to compile the list of codes and search for reoccurring themes. Throughout the coding process, I kept reflective notes about the data and continued to reflect on my understanding and interpretation of codes or segments of transcripts, which helped me to remember, question, and understand the data. Codes were developed not only deductively from the literature review findings, but also inductively from the data itself. Both descriptive and in-vivo strategies were used to code the data. Descriptive coding was utilised to assign a label to chunks of data to summarise it in a single word or phrase. These codes were then applied to similar data chunks in the transcripts and field notes. For in-vivo coding, I used words or phrases from the participant's language in the data to produce codes. For example, some initial codes were, principal meets with senior staff regularly, yearly evaluation meeting, visionary principal, principal gives up easily, staff is held accountable, inconsistent effort, principal communicates vision and mission to all stakeholders. After

many iterations, some codes were dropped, and similar ones were merged and renamed to identify categories and patterns.

The analysis of documents allows the study to uncover meaning, develop understanding, give insight to relevant information, and produce rich descriptions of a phenomenon (Yin, 2014). For the coding and analysis of documents, I first selected documents related to my research questions. Some of the documents that were analysed were SIPs, the principal's action plans, and the school's calendar of events. Coding and analysing documents consist of reading, finding, selecting, making sense and synthesising information found in documents. The list of codes that were generated from the interviews was used as a guide to code the documents from the four schools as well as the literature review and my own experience in the field. New codes were added to the code list.

Coding of observations of the interaction of the school with the family and community were done at the four schools in different fora. Some of these include PTA meetings, sports day, open day, orientation session, and grade meetings. I applied coding across observational notes taken from the four schools using the list of codes that were generated from the interviews and document review as well as the literature review and my own experience in the field. New codes were added to the code list.

Categorising. After completing the initial coding, I moved on to the second stage – categorising the codes in each case to prepare a complete description of each case. I began by grouping codes with some similarities into larger potential categories. Then I compared codes to determine if any appeared across cases. Related codes were organised into categories that explained the meaning of the code patterns. For example, the list of codes above was condensed into categories such as accountability and evaluation, visionary principal, supportive principal, perception about the principal. These categories were labelled and examined to provide detailed

information for the development of themes. Potential themes were chosen from the categories that covered frequently repeated codes. Some categories were discarded, and others were consolidated as part of the iterative process.

Cross-Case Study Analysis

This section presents an overview of the cross-case analysis stages that led to the generation of themes from the data.

Concepts/Themes

Cross-case analysis was conducted to deeply understand and clearly explain multiple cases (Ayres, Kevanaugh & Knafl, 2003). This helped to identify both similarities and differences across cases, patterns, and interrelationships of two or more concepts across the cases. Cross-case analysis highlights the unique qualities of each case by emphasising the impact of a particular context or situation on the phenomenon (Bazeley, 2013; Miles, et al., 2014). The next phase was to create concepts or themes. I began by grouping categories that shared certain commonalities into broader possible themes. Categories containing frequently repeated codes were investigated as prospective themes. All possible themes were described and defined in detail so that they may be reconsidered in the next step. I then went back to the literature review and compared all potential themes to the ones in the literature review. This assisted me in coming up with appropriate theme names, which I then described to ensure that they were analytically valuable in answering the research questions and reflects the participants views rather than the researchers. For example, I grouped the categories to reflect the theme “The role of leadership,” and some of the categories were then used as sub-themes such as “leadership and vision,” “leadership and accountability,” and “evaluation and perception about leadership.”

To ensure inter-coder reliability and reduce bias, a second person was asked to code the data, generate categories and themes and then the results were compared. We met and

discussed the codes, categories, and themes that had emerged from both analyses of the interview data. There were many similarities and a few differences that emerged from our analysis and so to ensure consistency we both went over those codes that were different, discussed them, and then accepted, rejected, merged, or derived new codes, categories, and themes. We met several times thereafter to refine the code list, category list, and themes list.

Reporting Findings

The outcomes of this study were supported by evidence derived from within-case and cross-case analyses of data obtained from participants' interviews, observations, and document reviews. This made it possible to conduct methodological triangulation in ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the findings. I then discussed the findings using the research questions, themes, literature, and theoretical framework. Quotations were used to illustrate these themes and report thick descriptions of the data.

Trustworthiness of Study

Qualitative studies normally raise issues of validity and reliability. Authors have disagreed as to whether the terms validity and reliability apply to qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Pickard, 2014) which is too reliant on context and the interpretation of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 2011). Lincoln and Guba (1985) have proposed that instead of reliability and validity, the terms dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability be used as shown in Table 5. However, Pickard (2013) emphasises that whichever paradigm one associates the research with, and whichever methodological approach is taken, it is paramount that the value of the research is demonstrated. This is to ensure that persons have confidence in the research.

Table 6

Methods of Judging Value in Research (Adapted from Lincoln and Guba, 1985)

Conventional or Quantitative Term	Proposed Qualitative Term
Internal Validity	Credibility
External Validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

Credibility

Credibility is one method used by qualitative researchers to establish trustworthiness. It refers to the degree of truthfulness or reliability of research results. This means ensuring that the findings and interpretations take into account the diverse experiences of research participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Williamson & Johanson, 2013). To ensure credibility in this study, member checks were done. This involved sending interview transcripts to the participants to check for accuracy of the conclusions drawn as well as for clarification if necessary (Creswell, 2014a; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles et al., 2014). I also supplied contact information so that the participants could contact me at any time during the six months of field work and after the interviews, if there were any changes, they wanted to make to the information they gave. Finally, I triangulated data received from interviews with observation and documents reviews to help understand the research phenomenon. For example, the president of the PTA association at Aberdeen High school stated that they typically have 250 to 300 parents in attendance at the general PTA meetings. I was able to triangulate this piece of information by attending a PTA meeting and conducting my own count and checking the register, as well as reviewing the minutes of the previous PTA meeting where the number of parents in attendance was mentioned.

The triangulation of data allowed for the identification of similarities and differences as well as the validation of the information obtained from the participants.

Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which a study's findings can be applied to other groups and situations. In other words, are the findings transferable to other contexts? (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles et al., 2014). To achieve this, I provided a full and rich description of the research sites, participants, and processes used to collect data, which may be examined by others to determine the possible transferability and appropriateness for their environment (Creswell, 2014a; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles et al., 2014; Zach, 2006).

I also described the context, the participants' profiles, and the data collection and analysis procedure carefully. This detailed description will assist readers to determine which part of my study is relevant for their context and their research.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the level to which similar results would be obtained if the work was repeated with the same method, in the same context, and with the same participants (Babbie, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure dependability in this research, a data collection protocol that outlined the procedure for carrying out and recording the data was designed to ensure consistency in procedures. It included, for example, the resources for the interviews, the interview schedule, and the procedure for conducting the interviews. I also ensured that consistent notetaking was done to ensure that observations and conversations central to the research were recorded.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the objectivity or neutrality of the research findings (Pickard, 2013). Naturally, researcher bias can occur; therefore, to ensure confirmability, a variety of sources of data collection was employed and details of the study's methods and procedures

were recorded. To ensure confirmability, a second person was used to code the data which ensured inter-coder reliability and reduced bias. Guba (1981) also suggests practicing reflexivity by documenting personal reactions and beliefs about the data. For this purpose, a reflexive research diary was kept. It explains how interpretations were formed and contains key reflections on my field notes that influenced the write-up and conclusions of my study. This helped me in minimising personal biases and viewpoints to guarantee that the data collected accurately reflected the experiences and opinions of the participants.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are very important when the research involves human beings, or it affects people's privacy. According to Gorman and Clayton (2005), this is even more important in qualitative research which involves in-depth research on subjects that can lead to the revelation of private information. Furthermore, many qualitative research methods generate data that could harm the subject or organisation, leaving the data vulnerable to misuse. To ensure that the participant's rights were protected, I first sought approval from the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee, and an Ethics Approval Letter was obtained with the registration number **27044** before I commenced data collection. This was granted on March 18, 2019. Once approval was granted, an email was sent to the principal of the four schools briefing them about my study and seeking permission for their school to participate in the study (See Appendix A). After receiving permission from the principals, I made appointments with them for the initial meeting. At the initial meeting, the principals were once again given information detailing the purpose of the study, types and number of participants required, data collection techniques– interview, observation procedures as well as documents needed for analysis and the time frame for the collection of data. Once permission was obtained, contact was made with all participants and their consent

was gained. Upon meeting in person, participants were all given a verbal and written overview of the study and their rights which included voluntary participation and withdrawal (See Appendix B). A consent form was also issued to each participant to sign granting permission for their data to be used in the research (See Appendix C). The anonymity of the schools and participants was of high priority and therefore pseudonyms were used for both the schools and the participants. Also, photos taken during the observation sessions were only used to assist in the analysis and write up of the study and they were not used in the research report. All written materials were kept in a secured file and accessed only by the researcher. All electronic data was password protected and accessed only by the researcher.

Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the research methods used to determine how four high schools in Jamaica engage the family and the community. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to suit the research aims and the theoretical perspective. Data collection – from interviews, document reviews, and observations – and data analysis techniques are described. Information regarding ethical considerations is also presented.

Chapter Five: Single Case Data Description

The overarching aim of the study is to compare four Jamaican High Schools that are ranked high and low by the NEI in terms of school, family, and community involvement, their achievements resulting from their involvement with the family and community, challenges faced involving the family and community, and strategies used to overcome those challenges. This chapter presents the findings of the four schools conducted in the study obtained from interviews with the principal of each school, teachers, parents, PTA and Alumni representatives, Community members, and the President of the Student Council of each school. Data were also obtained from observations of different school events, artefacts, school compounds, and document reviews.

Each case description is divided into five parts beginning with a background of the school followed by the different ways in which the schools involve the family, then the different ways in which the schools involve the community. This is then followed by the school's achievement with the family and community culminating with the challenges each school face involving the family and community and strategies used to overcome same.

Hutt Valley High School

This section on Hutt Valley High School provides some background to the school, explores the involvement of family and community, discusses the achievements concerning family and community involvement, and identifies the challenges encountered.

Background to the School

Nestled from the hustle and bustle of the parish capital in an economically depressed area in the north-western side of rural Jamaica, is the Hutt Valley High School. It is a Non-Traditional High School with a population of 1,074 students and 54 teaching staff. The majority of the student population lives outside the immediate area. Although Hutt Valley

High is a public school, it is associated with the Roman Catholic Church, and it is the church that donated the land on which the school is built. The Vicar of the church is the chairman of the school board. Many of the students are beneficiaries of the Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH).⁶ The school is relatively new having opened its doors in September 2004. Initially, it had the stigma of what Jamaicans referred to as a “dunce school,”⁷ whereby parents, community members, and children would shun the school as parents would seek to send their children to more established and well-performing schools in and outside the parish. According to teachers and the principal, children and parents would not choose Hutt Valley High and when a child was placed there by the Jamaican MOEYI against their will, there would be much crying and anguish. Children who attend these schools are typically the weaker ones academically and they often feel like failures and a big disappointment when they enrol in these schools. In many cases, residents of the communities would also laugh at and mock these children (Bourne, et al., 2015; Charles, 2018).

However, over the years with strong governance, leadership, committed teachers, parents, and community, the school has been transformed and has been able to improve its academic ranking and is fast eradicating the stigma (Tingling, 2016). According to the teachers, the school is now among the schools of choice in the parish and is experiencing tremendous success academically. According to the principal “the leadership of the school knew from the outset that to remove the stigma and grow the school we would need to work as a team and get the help of the family and community.” With this objective in mind, the school laid out an intentional programme in terms of involving the family and community. The principal credits the school’s success to the staff’s penchant for working as a team and

⁶ PATH is funded by the Jamaican government, and it provides cash and other benefits to the most needy and vulnerable in the country. These children also receive free or reduced-price lunches at school.

⁷ A “dunce school” is a colloquial label given to a low-performing school mostly attended by students who did not do well in their exit examination at the primary level.

speaking with one voice, saying:

No man is an island and as such I see leadership as a supporting role and the school's success is not defined by the principal but the team. So, I take a rich blend of the different ideas of the members of staff.

Parents describe the school as caring, Christian, and family-oriented that provides a supportive and inviting environment — from the security guard at the gate to the principal.

One parent had this to say:

This is a caring school and believe me as I said before and I will say it again, I will say it over and over, this school is a caring school, and I was happy when they said my son is coming to this school. Teachers are united and they make everyone feel welcomed and a part of the school family.

The school was last inspected by the NEI in 2019 and was given the highest possible ranking of “exceptionally high” for both the overall ranking of the school and the school's involvement with the family and community. The school was able to achieve this feat because of the good relationship with the family and community that they developed over time. According to the principal, a good relationship with the parents and community is very important because “they are the ones who drive the image of the school. They are the spokespersons. The way people talk about the school outside is the impression that people will get forever.” The principal is described by parents as visionary, innovative, positive, enthusiastic, bold, and transformational. One parent had this to say:

I love his positivity, his passion, he does not see obstacles or negativity as he feels there is always a way. No matter how you tell him no, yes is resounding and he finds a way. He will even help you to work it out. “Let's think about it, if you do that and that and that.” If he gets you alone for 5 minutes you will be here to support him.

A teacher shared her perspective about the principal's leadership:

It is excellent, I can't even find the words to describe it. Because as a senior member of staff I see where we don't have an autocratic system here whereas the principal he just dictates, No. He will have an idea yes, but then he shares it with staff and so we will see where the vision is and then we will work with him to see how best we can carry out the vision, so he really relies on his staff for that kind of support, as well as he too he will have times when he has to be firm so we have that kind of mixture that works very well because we have a very good relationship among staff members and administration.

The school has a rich culture of excellence in everything they do and success in academics and other spheres of education are hallmarks of Hutt Valley High school. Over the years they have won numerous trophies, plaques, medals, certificates, and cash in various extracurricular activities such as 4-H, Tourism Action Club, Debating, Science, Sports, and the Performing Arts. The school has also received the award for being the top high school in the parish. The administration not only expects excellence from the students but the teachers as well and when both groups do well, they are highlighted, rewarded, and celebrated by the school. The pictures of top-performing students and teachers are highlighted all over the school compound. As one approaches the school entrance they are greeted by affirmation and reminded of their greatness and success. Some of these affirmations include "anything the mind can conceive and believe it can achieve," and "someday is not a day of the week, so excel today." Staff members have received national awards such as the Lasco⁸ Principal of the year, Lasco teacher of the year, and Lasco runner-up teacher of the year. The school has been known to have good leadership as the immediate former principal was inducted into the

⁸ Lasco – a Jamaican holding company with operations in food products, financial services and distribution – partners with the Jamaican Ministry of Education, Youth and Information to recognise the outstanding performances of educators at the primary and secondary levels. Each year, Principals and Teachers are nominated and then shortlisted to compete for the top spot. They are judged based on classroom competency, commitment to education, professional development, and community involvement.

National College for Educational Leadership's (NCEL) Executive Principal League⁹ in 2015 and the current principal is a Master Teacher.¹⁰ The students have also been doing well academically; in the 2017 sitting of Entrepreneurship at CAPE level, the school received six of the Caribbean's top ten places on the merit list. One parent shared her surprise and joy when she visited the school the first time and realised the school's academic achievement:

One of the things that also, I remember the first time I came here and saw the board out there and the school was top school at CXC at one year and I said wow! Look at that, they highlight everything, and it was highlighted. When I went back and told my child's former school and my church about the achievement, they say they did not know that they achieve, I said yes, it's there, the top CXC school.

It is clear then, that this school now enjoys a strong relationship with its families and community.

Family Involvement Activities

This section explores the ways in which the school has involved families. These include PTA meetings, Parent trained as police, Seminars workshops, Class mother, PTC day, The use of technology – WhatsApp and other activities.

Family Involvement. The school's approach to gaining the support of the family and community is multipronged and intentional. The school sees the family and community as integral to their success and as a result, deliberate attempts are made to include the family and community in every aspect of the school. According

⁹ The Executive Principal League was developed by the National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL) as a means of promoting excellence and quality leadership to highlight principals who have demonstrated exemplary leadership qualities as well as sustained acceptable levels of academic performance within their respective schools and modelled excellence for their colleagues.

¹⁰ A Master Teacher is a professional teacher who had demonstrated the mastery of the art and craft of teaching, by allowing excellence in current practices, through a comprehensive assessment process. Master Teachers are therefore required to significantly impact the teaching learning process.

to the principal “we have a very close relationship with our parents. Our parents are one of the most influential stakeholder groups because we run to them for every and anything. We run to them for support.” According to the principal:

The school, family, and community involvement programme is an essential component of the school. It is a part of school life, not something that is extra and added on. It is a part of the teacher’s professional work and so when teachers are employed, they know that their responsibility is not only with teaching, but they will be expected to assume additional responsibilities and work closely with the parents and community. The family and community are given every opportunity to be involved and to function.

The school developed a partnership with the residential community, key stakeholders in the school community, corporate and civil society organisations, and established a strong programme for family involvement. The school has been described by the principal, teachers, and parents as a “family school,” which communicates the vision and mission of the school to the family and community and gets them to buy into it. This, according to one teacher, will ensure that parents will reinforce certain values at home and the children will see that school and home are speaking with one voice:

I don’t think there is any parent from Hutt Valley High who doesn’t know the vision and mission of the school and know what we are about so when they realise that their child is deviating from this, they say “no, no, that is not what Hutt Valley stands for, not that.” So, they know, so there is nothing that I can call a parent and I am speaking for my grade eleven. I have never, ever called a parent to say x, y, z about a child, and the parents takes me on or come up to fight. No, I don’t have that.

The school environment is clean, welcoming, and staff seem approachable, resulting in most parents reporting feeling confident to approach the principal or staff on any matter.

The well-being of the students is paramount, and the school looks out for students and parents. Here one parent shares her experience:

You can come anytime. I am here like sometimes every week in a month. Every week I get a day off; I am always here checking up on my child because my child is in grade 11 now, and, believe me, the teachers are never ever tired of seeing you. They always welcome you with a warm smile as you come up, even from the security post coming to the administrative office, I have absolutely no problem with them. I tell you, this is one of the best schools I have ever come to, where I rap with the teachers, the principal, the administrative officers, even the people that does the janitorial work. Everybody is just so nice, not because my son comes to this school why I am saying this, honestly; he who feels it knows it, and I have had a good rapport with everyone here, janitorial workers, everybody.

The school involves the family in several activities and has implemented a variety of activities to include everybody. However, the principal has admitted that irrespective of the numerous programmes that they have in place there are still a few parents that they have not been able to reach; notwithstanding this, they are committed to continuing trying. The school creates a yearly calendar of events which is given to all parents and students at the beginning of the school year. The calendar of events outlines the various school activities for the year and serves as a notice to parents. The school, while not having a documented school, family, and community involvement policy, has several initiatives geared towards involving the family. The school begins each school year with a “getting-to-know-you,” event. This is a social event for all the parents to attend, meet, greet, and get to know other parents. This according to the principal “is to foster bonding and camaraderie among the parents.” Parents familiarise themselves with each other, get to know each other’s child/children so that they can look out for each other, share information about school events and the importance of their

participation and get to know the communities/neighbourhoods that some of these parents live in.

PTA Meetings. The school has an active PTA with a fully functioning executive body. The president of the PTA represents the interest of the parents on the school board. According to one teacher:

The executive body is really active, they are an active body. I think currently the PTA president is a parent, she has two children who are currently in grade 10 and so you will see her from time to time here with meetings with the principal and so majority of the things that we decide on its usually a collective decision that is made with their [PTA body] input.

The school has a two-tiered PTA system which consists of general PTA meetings and grade PTA meetings. This idea of grade PTA meetings arose as according to the teachers and principal, the school was not getting the desired representation at the general PTA meetings, so they decided to have grade PTA meetings which are attended by parents of the respective grades, teachers, grade coordinator, and the principal who is ex-officio. These meetings are normally held in the mornings at approximately 9 am and focus on issues specific to the grade. They generally have a higher turn-out than the general PTA meetings. The general PTA meetings are held in the evenings at approximately 4 pm to accommodate those parents coming from afar, and those who must work. At the general PTA meeting I observed, there were over 100 parents in attendance.

According to the PTA representative, the general PTA meetings at Hutt Valley High focus on school development and informing parents about upcoming events, not for the usual complaints that are characteristic of PTA meetings in schools in Jamaica. It is also used as an empowering space where persons from government entities such as the Office of Disaster

Preparedness and Management, Major Organised Crime, and Anti-corruption Agency come in and speak to the parents. The forum is also used to solicit ideas from the parents regarding fundraising activities and to inform parents about the overall progress of the school.

Through the PTA, the school also organises social events such as domino tournaments. These tournaments normally feature teams from the school, families, community, and students. They engage in good wholesome fun while enjoying music and food. It is clear, then that the school has made conscious efforts to engage the families via PTA activities. According to the principal and teachers, the success of the various formats of PTA meetings (general and grade levels), as well as the social activities organised by the school to allow parents to socialise, is indicated by increased interest and attendance at PTA meetings.

Parent Police Training. The school also gets the parents involved by training them to be parent police. Parents volunteer and then the school trains them for 11 weeks. The school works in collaboration with different organisations such as the Jamaica Constabulary Force, The Fire Department, Centre for Drug Abuse, Child Development Agency, and the school's Guidance Counsellors to train and certify the parents as Parent Police. The school provides uniforms and a stipend to these parents and dispatches them into the different communities in which the students reside. These parent police are deployed to the community, and they observe students' movements to ensure they are not loitering and that they get to school or home on time. This according to the principal has resulted in improvements in students' punctuality and behaviour.

Seminars/Workshops. As a part of its mandate, the school makes it its responsibility to provide parenting seminars throughout the year to provide support to the families. Even though the MOEYI has a "parent month," the school has

different activities for the parents throughout the year based on the identified need. The school partners with government entities such as the National Insurance Scheme, Inland Revenue Department, Medical Personnel, and persons from the Police Force who often come in and participate in the various seminars. They will give motivational talks to the parents, empower them, and give information and advice on how they can best help them and their children. Presentations include topics on matters such as hygiene, dealing with changes in children, budgeting, and counselling sessions. According to the principal, the success of this is demonstrated by the high level of attendance at these sessions on a regular basis.

Class Mother. The school also assigns a class mother to each class. The class mother acts as the middle person between the students and the administration. She listens to the concerns of the student and parents of that class and works alongside the school administration to find solutions to the concerns/issues. Parents are also invited to sit in classes and help with class control and other activities.

Parent Teacher Consultation Day. The school has a yearly PTC day. The consultation day presents the opportunity for teachers to discuss academic and behavioural progress with the parents and students. Parents are encouraged to speak with as many teachers as possible, as this is sometimes the only opportunity the teachers get to talk with the parent in-depth and find out what is happening with the student and can make suggestions as to how the parent can better help the child. They also have a monthly distribution of report cards and parents can speak briefly with teachers.

The Use of Technology-WhatsApp Groups. The school creatively makes use of technology in the form of WhatsApp groups to involve the parents. Each form teacher forms a group with both students and parents in which they post assignments

and School-Based Assessments (SBAs). Parents are encouraged to be silent participants; they don't talk much but they monitor. This keeps parents abreast of assignments and SBAs and their deadlines so parents can assist and check with the child to ensure the work is being done and handed in on time. The school also uses the WhatsApp group to upload letters for different meetings such as PTA to communicate with parents when on field trips etcetera.

Other Activities. The school provides several other opportunities for the family to be involved in and support the school. For example, the school utilises the various skills and talents of the parents by having parents assisting teachers with the teaching of certain subject areas. In one case, a parent and his father who is a retired Visual Arts teacher assist the school's Visual Arts teacher in the teaching of the subject. The said parent also assists in doing the murals on the walls around the school and is involved with the marching band. Parents also come in and assist on the school's farm and other work-related activities that the school is involved in. The school also normally hosts an annual careers day for the students in the upper school, and parents are integral to this. Parents who have expertise in areas such as cosmetology, woodwork, and housekeeping are asked to come in for that day and be a part of the day's proceedings. The parents come and do demonstrations and explain certain aspects of the skill to the children, particularly those who are contemplating a career in said field. One parent shared:

Careers day is next week Tuesday, they ask parents, those who are skilled and want to come and share their skill so if you do housekeeping or a chef you can come and have a display, you can show the students how to do stuff. So, they give us the opportunity to come in and share our expertise and our skills along with other professionals. They do.

Parents also volunteer as mentors for students. This is especially important for those students who are displaying deviant behaviours. The principal shared that because of the “turmoil” that grade nine students normally experience, which in some cases affect their academic work, the school also has a programme called “Save our nine graders.” The school invites the parents to come in and sit in the classes and learn what the children are learning at school so that they are better able to assist them when they come home. This, according to the principal “allows the students to see that the school and the family are one and improves the level of discipline in the school.” Dubbed as a Christian school by the parents, the school often asks different families to conduct devotions and give exhortations and motivational speeches to the children. Parents also participate in award ceremonies through the badging of their children who have done well throughout the school year. Parents are also given the opportunity to serve on different committees in the school such as the School Improvement Committee which allows them to provide suggestions and contribute to the development of the school.

Parents also give of their time, donate items, and assist with cooking whenever the school has special functions such as the annual prayer breakfast, which is a fundraising activity, as well as weekend and holiday camps. The school hosts several weekend and holiday camps free of cost, especially for the students preparing to sit their external examinations. The school gets the parents involved by asking them to donate food items and to volunteer their time/services. Parents come in and cook, serve, and clean up while the teachers are busy teaching the students. Parents who are a part of the security forces also often provide security free of cost, when the school hosts different competitive football matches. It is noted that the school does not have a stratified type of involvement or contribution by the family and community.

The diversity and creativity of family involvement activities organised by the school

such as Parent Police Training, Class Mother, ongoing seminars and workshops, the use of technology such as WhatsApp etcetera, have demonstrated that the school is serious about getting the family involved. It has also shown the multidimensional nature of the involvement activities. According to the principal “the emphasis is not on a specific type of involvement, but rather on ensuring that the family becomes involved in whatever way they are able.” This means that all forms of involvement/contribution are treated as equal.

School, Community Involvement Activities

As with its approach to engaging families, the school’s approach to gaining the support of the community is multipronged. According to the principal, the school saw that this relationship was necessary if they were going to be effective. The school actively cultivates several relationships with the residential community, other key stakeholders such as the alumni association, government agencies, business/private organisations, PTA, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and so can be described as in a privileged position with high levels of community involvement.

Residential Community. The school is situated in an informal community¹¹ and, because of that, certain key amenities such as good roading is lacking. The school, however, ensures that it identifies with the residential community by using the informal name of the community and strengthens its support for the local community. According to the principal “this was deliberate so that the community will know and feel that they are a part of the school, and we are one.” As an example, the school often works alongside the community to patch the road. In this situation, the community informs the school when they will be doing work on the

¹¹ An informal community is one where the residents are not legal owners of the land. The housing is rapidly constructed with inadequate access to a safe water supply, inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure, poor structural quality of housing, over-crowding, and insecure residential status. This can express itself, particularly in developing countries, as ‘informal urbanism’ (Konadu-Agyemang, 1991, and Jones, 2016).

roads and the school joins them and makes different contributions. These are often the donation of materials such as sand, cement, or gravel or the preparation of lunches by the Home Economics Department.

The school also employs persons from the community to work at the school. The ancillary staff and some of the administrative staff are from the community. The vendors at the gate are from the community, and every year the school has a vendor and taximen appreciation ceremony where they invite them to devotion and present them with little gifts and students express their appreciation to them for taking care of them throughout the year. According to one teacher:

The school has a really good relationship with them [vendors and taximen] because they are all stakeholders in education...what we do is have an understanding...the time that school starts is communicated to them, so the vendors are aware of the times that they are allowed to sell, so if they see a child coming to them outside of the time that is allotted, they will know they can't be buying now that the bell has gone. So, it is really a good relationship and, as I said, the appreciation yearly is one thing that we do to ensure that we always have them on board.

The vendors and taximen are also rostered each year to conduct devotion. The school also gives the residents of the community free access to the school's wifi, a deliberate attempt, according to the principal, to get the community to protect and look out for the school.

Volunteerism is an important part of the school's ethos and each year the students put together care packages and distribute them to the indigents in the community. They often walk about the community and help those in need such as the elderly. The school has also partnered with some elderly men from the community who they have been using to mentor some of the boys who are displaying deviant behaviour. The elderly men sit with these boys and provide sound advice to them to try to get them to fall in line. The school has also

“adopted” an early childhood school in the community where they will paint the school, share food items with them for their breakfast and lunch programmes, and assist them with printing and laminating.

Each year the school also hosts a community devotion at a central location in the community and invites the community members. The school usually brings their drum set, keyboards, and has worship with the community. Residents, taximen, and other schools in the environment often stop by and participate in the event. It is clear, then, that the school has developed strong relationships with its community. In fact, according to the principal “the residential community supports us to the point that sometimes we really have to deny them entry.”

Relationship with Other Stakeholders. One feature that sets Hutt Valley High apart, is the partnerships that they have formed with the families and other key stakeholders from which they have been able to reap numerous benefits. Their school community includes alumni, churches, business communities, NGOs, several government entities such as the police, fire brigade, and hospitals. Each year the business community donates trophies to be used at graduation as non-academic awards such as “most helpful,” “most courteous,” “community service award,” and “outstanding citizen award.” The business community including banks offers their services each year whenever the school conducts their mock interviews for the grade 11 students who are on their way into the working world. The school also arranges for government agencies such as the Inland Revenue Department and the National Insurance Scheme to come in and participate in the school’s annual careers day.

Alumni Association. Representatives from the alumni association, which is still in its infancy, visit the school at different times throughout the year at the request of the school to conduct devotions and give motivational speeches in the

different classes. Alumni have been guest speakers at graduations and different functions such as grade nine dinner. Further to this, alumni have also been giving back through mentorship and providing monetary assistance through several fundraising activities.

Government Agencies. The school collaborates with government agencies to train parents, ancillary workers, and community members in areas such as data operations, housekeeping, and crop production. This was born out of a need to educate, train, and empower the families so they are better able to help their children. The Human Employment and Resource Training/National Service Training Agency¹² (HEART/NSTA Trust) certifies them after they have done their written and practical examinations. With this training and certification, many ancillary staff members were able to move on and get better paying jobs, some even went on the farm work programme overseas in Canada.

Business/Private Organisations. The school was chosen by the British Council¹³ in collaboration with the Victoria Mutual Foundation Limited and the MOEYI to participate in the social enterprise programme which aims to increase students' knowledge of social innovation and entrepreneurship. Through the school's Entrepreneurship Club, the students were provided with an awareness and understanding of how to start their own business and how this can help to address social problems; they were also offered practical experiences in planning and setting

¹² The largest provider of Technical Vocational Education and Training in Jamaica and the Caribbean, HEART/NSTA Trust focuses on practical, competency-based training.

¹³ The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. They create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries they work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections, and engendering trust.

up their social enterprise. The students made placemats and cupholders to sell to parents, community members, and banks, with the revenues funding community social activities. In addition, students prepared care packages and distributed them to persons in the residential community and worked on patching the roads. The school benefits from donations from numerous other private entities such as the hotel industry which provides work experience, scholarships, and mentorship to the students. They have also partnered with Tastees, Jamaica, a major food conglomerate, to provide uninterrupted concessionaire service in exchange for support. According to the principal:

Tastees came and I said to them “guess what? If you are going to come as the new concessionaire, you will have to tell us what is it that you are going to give to the school.” We were able to get a contract from them that is like no other school. The board and all the students in the sports department get free meals and the school gets a cheque each month for rental. Tastee also refurbished an area for staff dining and outfitted it with tables, chairs, plates and forks, air conditioning, and a flat-screen TV.

The school also hosts a yearly health fair on the grounds of the school for the community. Doctors, nurses, nutritionists, massage therapist among others, donate their time and offer services free or at a significantly reduced cost. Persons get their eyes tested, blood pressure and sugar levels checked, full-body scans, dental checks, and massages.

Community Tour. The principal and staff do a yearly community tour in the different communities in which the students reside. They do walk throughs, meet, greet, and interact with the parents and other community members, listen to their concerns and challenges and try to assist where possible. The tour then culminates with the school having a PTA meeting in an available town hall in the community. The students come from all over the parish as well as neighbouring parishes of

Jamaica and because of the distance and limited funds, some parents are not able to attend the usual meetings, so the school goes to the parents.

Hutt Valley High School has made a concerted effort to involve and develop a relationship with the community. They have been deliberate in identifying and involving the residential community, alumni, the business community, government agencies, and other stakeholders and have been reaping benefits of doing this. A discussion of the school's achievement in involving the family and community follows.

Hutt Valley High School Achievement in terms of Family and Community Involvement

The achievements of Hutt Valley High School in terms of family and community involvement include relationship building and development of trust; increased safety and security; improved academic performance; changes in school profile (status) from parents, community, and MOEYI; improved student behaviour; and increased partnership with stakeholders.

Relationship Building/Trust

One of the biggest achievements of Hutt Valley High school has to do with relationship building and the strengthening of trust. The leadership and staff of the school, through their hard work, were able to gain the trust, confidence, support and loyalty of the family and community. The strong relationships and trust that have developed have resulted in parents being willing to cooperate fully with the school and enabled the school the opportunities to provide various services to the children. The principal shared that:

You find that more and more they are trusting us, they are giving us that space to really provide the services to their kids, and when we say you need to come to school, we have no challenge. The only thing they will say is "Mr. Principal, I am not coming

back up here unless it is something good,” and then now, they pass on that responsibility to their children, to behave themselves.

A teacher supported the principal’s story by mentioning that:

One of the things that has helped us to gain the support of the parents is our track record. So initially persons would have been resistant, but they would have seen the growth of the school even above traditional high schools so now they do not really resist, they would have seen the evidence. They would mostly say “whatever they say make me go along with it,” because they want their children to come here.

Another teacher supported the principal and teacher’s story and shared how building a relationship with the parents and getting their support has made her job easier:

I must say it has had a major impact on my job in the sense that when I have my parents support, my job becomes easier, way easier because once I know that I can call such and such parents to get some action taken then it makes my job 100 times easier. Pointing fact is, just the other day a student of mine did the SBA, I gave it back to her and told her to make the corrections and bring it back to me. She made the corrections but was just not handing it back to me, and I got so frustrated. I called the parent the night to say that “Mommy I have spoken to x,y,z on numerous occasions, everybody else gave me theirs’ except this one student and I am not going to allow this person to bring down my grade so you need to ensure she brings the SBA. The next day I had my SBA, yes and she was running me down this time, so that is just one point to show that once I have the parents support my job is easier.

Safety and Security

Improvements in safety and security are an important achievement for Hutt Valley High School. In the past, the school struggled with issues related to theft and vandalism, more so, because it is situated in an impoverished community. The school often lost produce from

the farm and poultry even though there is a high perimeter fence and security guards. Thieves had broken into the school in search of money and when their need was not met, they vandalised the school property. According to the principal “this is no longer an issue as the school has made a deliberate attempt to build a relationship with the residential community and now the community looks out for and protects the school.” Community members often call the principal if they see anything suspicious on the school compound. For example, the principal mentioned a break-in some time previously where the security guard was tied up, bound, and taken away in the hills. It was members from the community who noticed that the security guard was not at his post and called the principal to report it. The principal then called the police who launched an investigation and found out that the school was broken into.

Members of the residential community also look out for the school by reporting on students who engage in misdemeanours while in their uniforms. These include the presence of students at bars, gaming shops, engagement in fights or quarrels on the road, loitering on the road when they should be in school or at home, and using an alternative route to get into the school apart from the main entrance when they are late. Community people often call and report students if they see them engaging in activities that are not in line with the ethos of the school.

Improved Academic Performance

The principal, teachers, and parents mentioned that the school has seen a tremendous increase in the academic performance of the students particularly in external examinations. One parent shared that she has had no regrets sending her daughter to the school. According to her “I have no regrets, she has improved. She has been class monitor, student assistant and has maintained her average and is on the Ivy League.” The teachers and principal attributed

this to the strong emphasis the school places on academics and the strong support system cultivated by the school, which involves the family. One teacher shared that:

We place a lot of emphasis on academics, a whole lot of emphasis and so you find too that a plethora of strategies and programmes have been implemented to ensure that students are performing to the best of their abilities.

The teacher's story was corroborated by a parent who mentioned that:

People think that Hutt Valley High is a “dunce school” but when I look at the CXC passes, I am proud of this school and if the teachers along with the principal wasn't working together with the children and the parents, we wouldn't have such success and I commend the school for their great support towards parents and children.

One way in which parents are kept accountable for their child's success is using a parent score. Each parent is granted 100% at the beginning of the school year and the parent's score increases when the parent gets involved in activities such as attending PTA meetings, ensuring that the child's homework is brought in on time, and the child arrives early for school. On the other hand, when the parent fails to play their role, they lose points. It has been very popular among parents who are always trying to be on top. The parent who has the highest score is rewarded at the school's annual prize-giving ceremony. This ensures that the children are always prepared for school and the necessary assistance is given for them to perform well. Other outstanding parents are also rewarded at the school's annual prize-giving ceremony. According to one teacher “this gives the parents the idea that the school cares about them and need their support for the school to operate the way it does.”

Change in School Profile (status) from Parents, Community, MOEYI.

The school once grappled with the stigma or reputation of being a low-performing “dunce school” that was shunned by both children and community members. However, since deliberate attempts have been made to engage the family, teachers are now saying that “gone

are the days when Hutt Valley High School would be scoffed at by parents of students entering secondary school, as the school is now one of the schools of choice in the parish.”

Another teacher elaborated by saying:

The notion that most persons had of Hutt Valley as a “dunce school” is gone and having seen the progress that we would have made over the years you will realize that truly there has been value-added not just to the students but to the brand Hutt Valley because now Hutt Valley is now a place of choice, a lot of persons are choosing to come to Hutt Valley you understand because we would have improved the brand in so many ways.

According to the teachers and principal, the demand for places at the institution has been growing at a rapid rate as word of Hutt Valley’s successes continues to spread quickly. The principal shared the story of one parent who brought her child requesting for him to be given a place at Hutt Valley High School. The parent came and said “Sir, I know that he is not bright, I know that he is not bright, but Hutt Valley makes any child pass.” The MOEYI has also been sending better quality students to the institution.

One of the ways the school was able to get rid of the stigma was to be deliberate about marketing the school and its programmes. Teams from the school visited the different feeder schools and made presentations on the day when parents and children in grade six were choosing high schools before sitting their external examinations. The presentations involved playing a video of the principal’s report from the last graduation which captures everything from the previous academic year such as the school’s and students’ achievement. The principal claimed this practice has enabled the school “to reap a lot of success because we are now getting students with good averages from the PEP examinations and children are now choosing Hutt Valley High School instead of the MOEYI forcing them.”

Improved Behaviour of Students

According to general agreement expressed by staff and parents, the school has experienced an improvement in the behaviour of the students. One parent shared with me that the reason she chose Hutt Valley High was because of the discipline. According to her:

When I was choosing schools, I said it was between Hutt Valley and School X. I chose Hutt Valley High School because of what Hutt Valley High was doing in terms of discipline, it was way above school X, way above, when I say way above in terms of discipline. I looked at how school X use to be for a traditional school almost 100 years old and the discipline had fallen so much and I thought Hutt Valley has more discipline and they were doing not so bad and anywhere you go you can bloom if you prepare yourself and the climate is conducive to learning and I see the possibility in Hutt Valley High not because they were not doing bad but they were not doing as great as how they are doing now and I said to my son I need you to go to Hutt Valley High, I need to be able to come up there and see what you are doing because we know as a child my child is easily led and would get caught up so I have to be able to monitor his school life and his school activities and his friends them that he keep. I always say 90% of the problem of any parents is the attitude but 10% is the friends that they keep and so you have to monitor the friends that they keep.

Another parent shared a similar view regarding the discipline of the school, “in terms of the level of discipline and so forth I realize that they [Hutt Valley High] are on top of it than other schools that I have seen with it and he [principal] is a very strict individual.”

Due to the accommodating, inviting, and enabling environment that the school provides, many parents visit the school regularly to check on their children. According to one parent:

I can go to the principal at any time, talk to the teachers at any time. Sometimes even on the streets, [when] I see them I am asking how my son is doing? How is this going? How is that going? Because they are going home and not at school they don't have to answer, but they find time to stand up and talk to me. They are never too busy for a parent; they are never too busy for a child.

Parents also often sit in classes to observe and assist with class control. So, when children know that their parents will visit the school and are in constant dialogue with teachers they tend to behave better. For some students, it requires only the knowledge that a parent might come in to talk or call the teacher. One parent revealed that “my son knows that his form teacher's number is on speed dial in my phone, so he behaves himself.”

Increased Partnership with Stakeholders

The school has greatly benefitted from partnerships with stakeholders such as parents, residential community members, the alumni association, corporate Jamaica, NGOs, the chamber of commerce, and universities. These partnerships have enabled the school to benefit from mentorship, volunteerism, work experience opportunities for the students, and scholarships; erection of buildings such as the Physics lab; donations of resources such as computers, printers, books, and food supplies; and several sponsorships for the different events such as the school's Health Fair.

It can be seen then that Hutt Valley High School has achieved much in terms of family and community involvement and increased partnership with stakeholders. Deliberate relationship building and development of trust has also resulted in increased safety and security; improved academic performance and student behaviour; and changes in the school's profile. However, there have also been challenges to overcome which are discussed below.

Challenges to Involvement and Strategies to Overcome

While Hutt Valley High School has achieved much, this has not been without challenges even though they have developed strategies to try and overcome these. The main challenges have been in relation to poorly attended meetings; a lack of involvement of fathers; differences in values; and work obligations.

Low Turn-Out at Meetings

As one parent pointed out “it is not all perfect, there are issues that need to be dealt with,” but the school makes a deliberate effort to address these. For example, the school like other schools has challenges with a low turn-out of parents at meetings and other school events. The school has parents who, over the years, have never collected their child’s report or attended PTC days and PTA meetings. One parent remarked that:

The first PTA meeting will be crammed and just the same way when they are placed in a class you see them, after that they don’t know what is happening at the school, none at all; they are not involved.

A teacher described the turn-out at meetings as average:

Average, average, you have some parents who when we have general PTA, when we PTC day that they collect report and that is well attended. When we have graduation, we are oversubscribed, when we have commencement service for the grade seven. But when we have like meetings for those who are underperforming who would have gotten the red report and I guess that’s why those students get red report because the parental support is not there so when you have those kinds of meetings, meetings for academic probation you don’t see a lot of parents.

A common consensus among the teachers and principal is that there are parents who, when they drop off their child on the first day of school, disappear after; but the difference is that the school is always trying to reach those parents and have been putting programmes and

measures in place to connect with those parents. As the principal reported “no matter how hard we try there are still some parents that we are unable to reach.” This low turn-out at meetings or school events is further exacerbated by the fact that there is no zoning in Jamaica and many of the student population live outside of the immediate area. This makes traveling to and from school costly and difficult for many of Hutt Valley’s families, which negatively affects family involvement at school such as volunteering and attendance at school meetings.

The school tries to meet these parents by having a community tour every year. Each year the school targets a different community that their students are from. The faculty drive to and stop at the different communities along the way. They meet and greet the community members, provide contact information for the school, (school’s telephone number, email address), pictures of the school’s uniform, and ask the community members to look out for their students and to call the school if they see anything disturbing. The faculty members listen to the challenges the parents are having and try and provide solutions to the issues. The school then culminates the tour with a PTA meeting at a church or community hall in the target community, for which they have obtained prior permission. In addition to the community tour, on Sundays, staff from the school occasionally visits different churches in the areas where their students live. They request a few minutes from the pastor to address the congregation and speak to the parents and community members about the school and its programmes and conduct a brief question and answer session.

The school has sought to increase attendance at PTA meetings by having grade-level PTA meetings. According to the principal “when we have the large PTA [meetings], we do not get the representative group, so when we have grade level PTA that is when we get a better representation from parents.” Another strategy they use is to incorporate important information about school operations into well-attended meetings. PTA meetings related to grade dinner, cocktail parties, or graduation ceremonies are well attended due to the fanfare

associated with these events; therefore, the school takes the opportunity to discuss other important matters about school operations at these meetings.

Poor Involvement of Fathers

The school, like probably all schools, has an issue with the poor involvement of fathers. Most times if a parent is involved, it is the mother. When they were asked what improvements, they would suggest for school, family, and community involvement, parents expressed the need to see more fathers attending the functions and being more involved. One parent said:

More fathers. Mostly females are coming. I commend the men who are coming but we need more of the men, the boys need to see. The schools need to put in more programmes like a father-son day to get the males out. Impress mainly that this career day, all fathers, men alone. This particular career day you could do that.

According to the principal, although it is not a yearly programme, the school has in the past taken initiatives to reach more fathers and get them involved:

We have the boy's academic ambassador programme that is what it is called. We invite the fathers to devotions, so they come and take over devotions. Everything about the boys we want the father to come. At the end of the month when they are getting their monthly report card, we hold the monthly report cards, the fathers have to come for them. We have a domino tournament, boys and their fathers with the male teachers.

Differences in Values

One teacher noted that the biggest challenge the school faces is to sell certain decisions to the parents, and this she claims has to do with the culture and locality of the school. The culture and value system of these parents are different from the school, and it is sometimes difficult to get the parents to support some of the decisions taken by the school.

As an example, the teacher referred to the “no tight pants” policy by the school and noted that many parents do not see anything wrong with their sons wearing tight pants to school and that this has to do with their culture. The school has to now try and educate the parents and get them to buy into the policy before they can convince the students. This means that the school has to be strategic about how they put across the information so that they get the parents’ support. Once they get the parents’ support, the children are likely to conform because both home and school are speaking the same language.

Job Obligations

Job obligations also pose a challenge to the level of involvement that the school receives from some parents. According to the principal:

I would say, too, some parents in their attempt to provide for their kids, don’t make themselves available because they are always thinking about their job, not wanting to miss the job. Like this particular parent who came this afternoon said that she really could not have attended the meeting because if she had attended the meeting, she would have lost her job, so she was explaining, so we have to consider all of those challenges too in treating with the kids.

The school has sought to vary the times of meetings to accommodate these parents. Many of the parents work in the hotel industry, so they normally tell the school that they are unable to attend an afternoon meeting because that is usually a busy time in the hotels. The school then schedules meetings for 9 am or 10 am to accommodate them which has resulted in increased attendance at meetings.

Conclusion

The Hutt Valley High School is a Non-Traditional High School and, historically, children that went to this school were considered weak academically. However, over the

years with strong governance, leadership, committed teachers, parents, and community, the school has been transformed and has been able to improve its academic ranking and is fast eradicating the previous stigma. The school is now among the schools of choice in the parish and is experiencing tremendous success academically. As indicated by the findings presented above, Hutt Valley High School has achieved much in terms of family and community involvement and increased partnership with stakeholders. Despite challenges encountered, the school has developed strategies to overcome these. Deliberate relationship building and development of trust has resulted in increased safety and security; improved academic performance and student behaviour; and a change in the school's profile.

Aberdeen High School

This section on Aberdeen High School provides some background about the school, discusses the involvement of family and community, presents the achievements in relation to family and community involvement, and identifies the challenges encountered.

Background to the School

Aberdeen High School, one of Jamaica's prestigious high schools, had its genesis in 1927. The school is classified as a Traditional High School and is owned by the Church of God in Jamaica. Its operations are guided by the Christian values and virtues of the church. The school attracts top performing students in PEP examinations and is one of the schools of choice in Kingston and St. Andrew. With a present enrolment of over 2,000 students, the school is multicultural with students from different races and socioeconomic backgrounds, even though a majority of the students who attend are from the middle and upper classes. The school has a culture of excellence and is known for its stellar performances in academics, sports, school challenge quiz, national schools' debate, performing arts, and music.

According to one of the vice-principals:

We have a culture that emphasises excellence in all that we do. So, whether we are on the field of play, we aspire to be our best. Whether we are involved in educational competitions we want to win as well, and it stands to reason that in the classroom excellence is also emphasised, so we teach with a purpose to help our students to be their best academically.

The vast number of trophies, plaques, framed certificates that decorate the waiting area outside the principal's office is a testament to the school's prowess in academics and extracurricular activities. There are 86 students on PATH and an additional 56 on the welfare programme. The school is rated as having an effective cadre of leaders and a strong

governance structure (NEI, 2018). The principal is described as a visionary. Her ideas are said to be endless, and she believes that there is always a way. One teacher describes her this way:

Absolutely, overwhelmingly brilliant. I have worked with five principals before and never in all my years I have seen someone so brilliant and innovative. She came here, the school was at a certain level, and she took the school at least 4-5 notches higher. An amazing visionary that even when 90% of the staff says “Miss, it doesn’t look practical,” she would say, “it is going to work.” Could give you an example, she came to us one day and said, “teachers, let us look at this thing called E-testing so that you don’t have to sit down under an avalanche of paper, let us look at E-testing, eliminate the paper, they do the test on computers and the computers will also mark.” I remember I was in that meeting. Everybody gave a reason why it couldn’t work and every time they gave a reason, she gave a rebuttal. Today, as we speak, the grades 12 and 13 students have completed some of their semester exams using E-testing. The same teachers who said it couldn’t work are the first ones to use the system. A true visionary, extremely brilliant, no-nonsense, and very critical of you if you come short of glory. Not to eliminate you, but to help you grow.

The president of the student council also has kind words about the principal:

I think the students especially my year have a good relationship with the principal. I think students on a whole have a good relationship with her because she is never in her office, she is always walking the campus, interacting with students, talking to us about everything really, life, how we are doing, how we are feeling so she makes it just really easy for us to have a good relationship with her.

The principal was also inducted into the NCEL Executive Principal League in 2016.

The school attracts and retains some of the best teachers in Jamaica and the board holds the

staff accountable at all levels. The school has a very good relationship with the family and community which has allowed them to offer a wide range of support to its students that it would not have been able to accomplish on its own. The latest NEI inspection ranked the school's overall leadership and management as good, and its relationship with the family and community as exceptionally high.

Family Involvement

This section explores the ways in which the school has involved families. These include PTA meetings, PTC day, Workshops/Seminars, Parent Representatives, Use of Technology, and Other Activities.

Aberdeen High School according to the principal has an excellent relationship with the families. This is partly due to the type of parents. Not much effort is needed to convince the majority of the parents of the importance of engaging with the school. Most of the parents are from the middle and upper classes and are in leadership positions in the country, so they presumably know the value and importance of education. These parents ensure that their children get all the support needed to get the best education possible. Most of these parents are deeply involved in the educational activities of their children and hold the staff and principal accountable. One of the vice-principals mentioned that:

Many of the things I do as vice-principal I have to exercise caution. Sometimes I will delay my decision and I will delay action until I have consulted others until I have slept on it. In some instances, you will look at legal proceedings. That is how serious these parents are about education.

Another staff member says that Aberdeen is his sixth place of employment and what he has seen happening there, he has never seen happen elsewhere. He mentioned that "parents are so involved in the life of the school; parents are always asking about what they can do. The

parents are so serious about their children's education so much so that they are guilty of nit-picking." The President of the Student Council also supports the views of the teachers regarding parental involvement:

I think all parents try to be as active in the life of their children especially in their school lives. I know for a fact that parents have volunteered their services, or they have contributed in many ways to make sure their kids' life and other kids' lives are comfortable here. Parents will come in and help teach like on Teachers' Day or they will help with the breakfast programme that we have at Aberdeen, things like that. Volunteer to go on trips with the kids and their contributions are mostly monetary so if the school needs funding in any sorts of way they will contribute if they can.

PTA Meetings

There is a very organised and involved PTA that ensures that the interests of parents are well-served. The PTA is a separate arm from the school and operates independently. They call their meetings, plan their activities, and often invite the principal and staff to address whatever concerns they may have at the meetings. This is a different model from what is characteristic of the traditional PTAs. The PTA has different sub-groups/committees, and each committee head reports to the president. There is a Treasurer, Public Relations Officer, Spiritual Leader, Secretary, Programmes Coordinator, etcetera. The school and the PTA have a very good relationship and the principal is actively involved with the PTA and there is also a teacher representative on the PTA executive. According to the PTA president:

We have an excellent relationship with our principal. I think we have the best if I may tout our own horn, yes, yes. She is a very integral part of our executive committee; she attends most meetings. If there are instances where she is not able to attend, she usually advises me at least and I would ask her if there were anything that she would like to be raised at the meetings, any concerns and she would share with me some

things that she would like for us to advise our parents. Also, whenever concerns are coming from our parents even outside of the forum that we had on Thursday, I usually take that information. I would pass it on to her to get some feedback to answer some questions, what happened here, what can we do to improve, what do you suggest, and we have that open dialogue.

The PTA president sometimes attends staff meetings. Furthermore, a PTA report is tabled in the monthly meetings of the board. Such is the commitment of the PTA that they maintain an office on the compound that is open Monday to Friday and manned by two parents. According to the PTA president “the purpose of having the office on the school compound is providing our own space, it is branding us, we are actually making our own mark, so our presence is felt more.” Parents and students can go to the office and voice their concerns and seek assistance. Additionally, some parents visit at various times during the day and are integrally involved in several of the school’s activities. The school also has regular contact with parents at the PTA meetings as well as grade meetings. In these fora, they are updated on their children’s progress and development. They are also updated on other matters including disciplinary concerns, internal and external examinations, and general school activities. Parents also have the facility of reporting issues to the executive body; these are taken up with the administration and the outcomes are reported.

Each year the PTA has three general meetings, one per term, and one annual general meeting while the executive meets every month for planning and discussion. According to the PTA president, the PTA meetings are more of an empowering space whereby guest speakers are invited to come in and motivate parents. Different topics of interest to the parents are dealt with. These include bullying, sexual conduct or misconduct, and the use of marijuana in society.

Parent Teacher Consultation Day

The school has PTCs twice per year after each major term result. The school requires that students be accompanied by a parent when they collect their performance reports. The student is expected to take his/her parent to as many of his/her teachers as possible for a discussion on the child's academic and behavioural progress throughout the term in the respective subject areas. Following this, the report is then given to the parent. These PTCs ensure ongoing contact and involvement between families and school.

Workshops/Seminars

The school as well as the PTA organises parenting seminars on different topics. According to the vice principal the topic is normally chosen based on the need. So, the school may organise a seminar on conflict resolution, life after CSEC, preparing for examinations, or becoming a teenager, and get resource persons to come and conduct the seminars. In many cases, the school utilises its very own parents to conduct the seminars. According to one teacher:

Many of our parents are professionals from all walks of life. We have like a database, and we know what professions they are in, so we are able at all times to find somebody to come in and work with us so that we don't have to spend money to get persons from outside the school while, at the same time. That is why I made the point earlier. They are very, very supportive of the school and its programmes.

The use of qualified and competent parents to conduct seminars provide another avenue for school and family involvement.

Parent Representatives

The school, through the PTA, uses parents as class and grade representatives. Each class has a class mother and father, and each grade has a grade mother and father. The mother and father of each class are in charge of preparing activities for the class and they act as a

liaison between the administration and the students. Two grade representatives – a male and female – are chosen from among the class representatives, and they are responsible for supervising the class representatives. The principal often meets with the grade representatives to find out and discuss issues the grades may be having or issues the school may be having with the grade. For example, at one point the principal had to call the grade representatives of a particular grade to a meeting because inappropriate touching was constantly being reported. Following the meeting, two parents who are lawyers were asked to address the grade on the legal ramifications of such an act.

Other Activities

The school often invites the family to their annual prize-giving ceremony, school leaving ceremony, different social events, church functions, and sports days where parents assist with judging and provide hydration. The school invites parents to conduct devotions, make presentations to students, and to socialise and interact with the children and teachers of the different classes. The parents also participate in the school's annual labour day project. They provide lunch and gifts to the teachers on Teachers' Day and provide a monetary donation to the teachers' annual trip. The PTA has a staff incentive programme that has been in existence since 2008 whereby each year end staff is given a bonus on their salary. According to the PTA president "this is just a way to say thank you for the job well done throughout the year. This staff incentive is not only limited to the teachers but all staff members—from ancillary, administrative to academic."

Use of Technology–RenWeb Platform

The school uses technology creatively in the form of the RenWeb platform to involve parents. This enables parents to communicate with teachers anywhere in the world. When parents enrol their children in grade 7, they provide their email addresses to the school, and they are added to the platform. Parents then log in with their email address and password to

interact with any teacher online and keep abreast of what is going on in their children's subjects. So, when the teacher gives an assignment in class, a copy of that assignment is sent to the RenWeb technical person who uploads it for the corresponding classes each week. Parents can now assist their children to complete their homework and monitor the child to ensure the homework is done and handed in on time. Important information, such as meeting dates and times, are also posted on the platform by the school.

Aberdeen High School has shown innovativeness and diversity in family involvement activities through different initiatives such as PTA Meetings, PTC day, Workshops/Seminars, Parent Representatives, Use of Technology, and Other Activities. This shows that the school is making a concerted effort and values family involvement.

School, Community Involvement Activities

The school has over the years cultivated a good relationship with the community and has benefited tremendously from the kindness of the business community and other stakeholders. At Aberdeen High, efforts are always being made by different communities/stakeholders to work together or partner together. For example, the PTA and alumni have come together and worked on joint programmes for the benefit of the school.

Residential Community

The school does not benefit from the privileges of a residential community as it is virtually situated in a business community. In addition, the nearby community consists mostly of retirees who rarely leave their homes. The school, however, has a representative from the community on the board who acts as the middle person. If the school is having a function that may cause some disruption to the community, they normally notify them and if the community has any grievance with the school, they relay the information to the community representative who notifies the school. Other than that, unlike Hutt Valley High

School, the school has little interaction with the residential community, and no deliberate effort has been made to get them involved in the school and for the school to do likewise in the community.

Alumni

There is a very active alumni association with different chapters all over the world who are very proud of their school and who speak glowingly of it. The alumni association has been around from 1987 and are a steady presence and source of support. Many of the graduates are very successful in Jamaica and abroad and are in the leadership of some of the country's most powerful institutions. The immediate former Ministers of Education, Youth and Information, and Health and Wellness are past students. The support that the alumni association gives to the school is multi-pronged and ranges from mentorship to financial assistance. The president of the alumni association also serves on the school board. The different alumni chapters do annual fundraising and contribute monetarily to the school through scholarships and supporting various projects such as the refurbishing of the Arts room, and state of the art science lab. Nevertheless, the alumni president mentioned that "our major achievement project has been the solarisation of the school, cutting the school Jamaica Public Service bill which is over millions by nearly 70%, which is a great accomplishment because that saves the school some funds."

Past students are invited to participate in the orientation of the grade seven students. They offer words of encouragement and share their experiences from their student years. They normally participate in teachers' day activities by not only giving the teachers a treat but taking over the classes for that day. Past students also give their time and assist in various extracurricular activities. The coach of the basketball team is a past student and the coaches of the school challenge quiz team which is the reigning champion are past students. Past

students are also often called upon to be resource persons in the classroom and to give presentations in various fora.

Church

The school is owned by the Church of God in Jamaica which is very integral in the operations of the school. The chairman of the school board is a Pastor of the church. The church is very involved in the spiritual aspect of the school and convenes regular Christian programmes at the school. For example, each year the church organises Christian emphasis week whereby they visit the school and minister to the students. The chaplain of the school is also from the church, and he conducts worship every Monday. Other members of the church often visit, counsel, interact and speak with the lower school students in their form classes.

Corporate Jamaica/Government Agencies

The school benefits from the goodwill of corporate Jamaica and the business community. According to one teacher:

We have a lot of business partners in the community generally. The National Commercial Bank (NCB) for example they border with us, so we interchange, we use their pool, they use our court, our football field. We have a new building. It is our most recent addition to the school. It was sponsored in part, well it was a fund matching arrangement so every dollar that we spend, NCB matched it, so the building was branded for them as well as one of our past alumni.

NCB also contributed to the state-of-the-art science centre opened in 2011 named after the school's fifth principal. A donation of books was made to the school by Carlong Publishers. The school also allows Scotiabank to use their netball court and the alumni use the basketball court to train. The school gets other stakeholders involved in activities such as their annual careers day. The school would normally invite universities, colleges, government agencies, and alumni to sensitise students regarding career choices.

Giving Back to the Community

The principal, parents, and teachers all describe Aberdeen High School as a caring school and one of the ways in which the school has demonstrated this is by giving back to the less fortunate. One teacher had this to say:

We look out for others. We try as much as possible to be a caring community. We try as much as possible to extend the olive branch if something goes wrong. So, in a nutshell, if someone should say to me, give me one word to describe Aberdeen's community, one word, I would choose the word caring.

Volunteerism is one of the core values at Aberdeen High and as practice, every student, once they reach grade nine and upwards, has to participate in 30 hours of compulsory volunteer service per year. The students without even being told often form themselves into different groups and organise projects and raise funds to create care packages to give to the less fortunate such as those in children's homes and old people's homes etcetera. The teacher elaborated by saying:

We are known for that. We are known for helping the less fortunate. Maxfield Park Children's Home. Children with Terminal illness. I remember some girls organize a club they called themselves "Angels of Love." Those girls went collecting cash and kind to help children in hospital with terminal illnesses. Trafalgar Boys home, Maxfield Park Children's Home. So, we reach out to those in homes, places of safety, orphans, we strongly believe in extending help wherever help is needed. That is a part of our middle name. Reaching out because it is not all about us it is also about others. All member of staff and students are on board. It goes right back to what I said initially, if you say give me one word, one word to describe Aberdeen, caring.

Similarly, the different clubs and societies at the school also do their collection during Christmas time, pack barrels, and make donations. When there is a disaster in other countries,

the students collect funds and give them to the collection agencies such as the Red Cross. According to one of the vice-principals “our children, you get the best out of them when there is a disaster. They are like that – especially if it involves children they will assist.” Each year the school allocates a day where the entire school caters to those in need and donations and contributions are solicited from parents and other well-wishers. Sometimes the collection will last for a week.

Aberdeen High School has been intentional about involving and developing a relationship with the community. They have forged relationship with the alumni, church, corporate Jamaica, government agencies, and other stakeholders and the results have been positive. The school’s achievement in family and community involvement are discussed below.

Aberdeen High School Achievement in terms of Family and Community Involvement

The achievements of Aberdeen High School in terms of family and community involvement include mentorship, cash donation/scholarship, established partnership, engendering empathy, and infrastructural development.

Mentorship

The school benefits tremendously from mentorship from different stakeholders such as alumni, parents, and persons from corporate Jamaica. Successful past students often return to give career talks, share their experiences, and provide guidance and support to current students. One parent and alumnus who is very active and supportive of the school shared why he is motivated to support the school. He mentioned that “I love the school, I want to see the school do well, I want to see the students do well.” Some past students have adopted a girl or a boy and provide tutelage. The alumni president sees mentorship as very important and is

hoping that the organisation can play a greater role in the ensuing years. According to him “I think we can play a greater role in terms of mentorship. The students need mentorship.”

Cash Donation/Scholarship

The school has benefited from the donation of cash from the PTA, alumni, corporate Jamaica, and other well-wishers to aid in different projects. These donations have been used to not only develop the school, but to provide support for the less fortunate students by way of the school’s welfare programme. The business community and alumni often donate and underwrite the cost associated with tuition and books for different students. They also provide scholarships and sponsor different students who represent the school locally and internationally in different fora.

Established Partnership

The school has been able to establish partnerships with key stakeholders and this has enabled them to access help in various forms. As a result, these stakeholders are always looking out for the school and assisting wherever necessary. For example, according to the PTA president, the PTA has been operating a breakfast programme for the past 15 years. This programme provides a daily warm meal to students who live very far and have to leave home early without breakfast or whose families are not able to provide meals for them in the morning. According to the PTA president “we cater an average to about 100 students per day, it has gone up a little bit more – it had kind of gone down to about 80 but in the last few weeks it has been at about 120 per day.” The school has also established partnerships with corporate Jamaica such as Island Grill, Facey Commodity, and Food for the Poor who readily assist whenever they are called upon.

Engendering Empathy

One benefit of the involvement of the family and community is the development of empathy among the students. When students see their parents getting involved in the affairs

of the school, volunteering their time, making contributions, the children are encouraged to walk a similar path. Aberdeen students without, even being asked, usually engage in volunteerism and organise projects to assist the less fortunate. As one parent said:

It is important to have a solid foundation of empathy built in students since they are going to be future teachers, managers, decision-makers, and people in high places who will be approached to render assistance or services. If they don't understand how empathy works as students, how are they going to understand when they become adults? We are training them to become managers.

Infrastructural Development

The school's infrastructure has been boosted by the support of the family and community which has contributed to the school's ability to support its students. The school has also benefited from the benevolence of the business community. As mentioned above, the school has a state-of-the-art science centre which was built with the help of NCB. The bank partnered with the school and matched the amount of money the school was able to raise. Food for the Poor gave the school a Green House, Hi Pro and the Ministry of Agriculture contributed a chicken coop and a slaughterhouse respectively. Similarly, the PTA contributed 50 percent of the cost of the surveillance camera for the school and has contributed to the repairs and maintenance of the physical infrastructure of the school such as the rehabilitation of the playfield, painting of classrooms, and the outfitting of fans in the classrooms. The refurbishing of the Performing Arts room was done by the alumni association.

Aberdeen High School has achieved much in family and community involvement. These include mentorship, cash donations/scholarships, established partnerships, engendering empathy, and infrastructural development. However, there are some challenges to overcome.

Challenges to Involvement and Strategies to Overcome

Even though the school enjoys support from the family and community there is still room for improvement as not everybody is on board. Some of the challenges faced by Aberdeen High School include low turn-out at meetings, lack or limited support from parents, and job obligation.

Low Turn-out at Meetings

The PTA president, some executive members, as well as parents complain about the low turn-out at meetings such as PTA even though attendance is far better than at many other schools. On average the school normally sees an attendance of approximately 250 parents with a mixture of both males and females. The PTA president had this to say when asked about what the support at PTA meetings is like:

Not enough to hold, we could easily hold up to 700 parents. The attendance can be anywhere between 250, 350, 400 at most which is just a mere 10% which is not enough. I know the hall is small but at least we would love to see some standing. We always want to see greater support in terms of attendance.

This view has been supported by other parents. One parent commented:

There could be more parent involvement because, as we said, some of them you only see at orientation when the child just enters the school. After that you see a whole heap of them come graduation and when you check the PTA meetings, it is sparse. The same people every time, always the same person every time, and we have not even seen a tenth of that. Not in my opinion. It could be more because whenever something happens, they always say “you are preaching to the converted,” because you know parents who are consistently attending PTA and remember that PTA is like once every semester. The turn-out to me is kind of poor.

With the view to ameliorating the low turnout, the school rotates the day of PTA meeting and begins each meeting at 5 pm since most persons work from 9 am to 5 pm. They also serve refreshments at every meeting so the parents have something to eat that will sustain them until they get home. The school also gives away prizes at the meetings to those parents who can answer questions correctly. The executive also ensures that parents are given adequate notice and reminders about meetings through a variety of media. This is in a bid to improve the turnout at meetings. To improve attendance at the meetings, one parent made this suggestion:

The only thing I always say is, maybe there should be some kind of rule to say you need to attend x number of PTA before your child can graduate. Make that a rule. You have to come to at least one PTA meeting a year before your child can graduate because remember, there is a register and I have always said that put that out there and I bet you will see how many more persons come out, yeah man, yeah man. Remember say it is your child and it is like them just drop them off here a daytime and that's it, and you don't really know how the child is progressing and what the school is doing towards the child's development. You need to be involved.

Limited Support from Parents

While the school has a large percentage of its parents involved in the life of the school, it is challenged to reach some parents. One of the vice-principals mentioned that:

About 30% of the parents are not being as supportive as we would have liked.

Unfortunately, some of them have no business being parents because they really do not know how to parent. In many instances those are the parents that the school needs to reach urgently but finds it difficult because their children are the ones who tend to display deviant behaviours.

The school has tried to reach these inactive parents through the various media and encourage them to come in and talk to the school so support can be given wherever necessary. The PTA is also struggling to get parents to volunteer in its flagship programme, namely the breakfast programme. Parents are willing to make a monetary contribution but not volunteer their time. One parent remarked that:

I would like to see more parents taking charge. I would like to see more parents being involved. You find that a lot of the parent just come in the mornings, just drop off their children, some even park because of traffic and they don't come out.

Job Obligations

Job obligations also pose a challenge to the level of involvement that the school receives from some parents. One of the vice-principals admitted that for some parents who are not in a formal job attending a PTA meeting is not high on their list of priorities. She mentioned that “for some parents it [school involvement] is poverty related because they have to hustle here and hustle there so to come to a PTA meeting is really not on their list of priorities.” According to her, the school has tried to reach out to those parents by “inviting them to come in and have a conversation, to join the PATH or breakfast and lunch programmes that we have here,” but some still have not taken up the offer.

Summary

Aberdeen High School, one of Jamaica's prestigious high schools, attracts top performing students in PEP and is one of the schools of choice in Kingston and St. Andrew. Over the years, Aberdeen has engaged the community, family, and stakeholders through various ways and in several proportions. Even though it is rated as one of the best schools in Jamaica and enjoys a fairly good relationship with the family and community, it is clear from the findings of this research that there are challenges to the level of involvement it has achieved so far and there is still more to be done.

St. Fairview High School

The third school in this study is St. Fairview High School. As with the other schools, this section of the chapter presents background information about the school. This is followed by the findings in relation to the school's involvement with the family and community. Then the achievements and challenges related to family and community involvement are identified and discussed.

Background to the School

St. Fairview High School, located in a rural community in eastern Jamaica, opened its doors in 1970 and has seen several transitions in name from a Junior High to a Secondary High and now a High School. The school is on an elevation overlooking the Caribbean Sea precisely in the middle of several adjoining communities. The school is home to approximately 700 students and 43 teachers. Of the 700 students, approximately 558 are enrolled in the PATH programme. Residents depend mostly on subsistence farming for survival with a few working in the tourism industry. According to Bennett (2014), the formal education level of the communities is generally low, rates of poverty are high as many residents are unemployed, and very few community members are professionals.

Some students live in adjoining communities, while others live in other parts of the parish and must travel long distances to and from school. Some students travel from neighbouring parishes which is quite challenging because of the high cost and unreliability of transportation, especially in the deep rural areas. The school has a perennial problem of students coming to school late even though classes begin at 8 am; the principal attributes this to the students don't care attitude towards education. He mentioned that "the students have a don't care attitude towards education overall. They believe that they can do as they feel like. They want to come to school anytime. There is not that love for school nor education." One

teacher corroborated the principal story of frequent lateness “Miss, sometimes when you come in the mornings if you have 20 students in the class you will see five.” The school has resorted to closing the gate at certain times in the mornings, but this has not helped the situation.

The children that are placed at St. Fairview High School are children who did not do well in their exit examination in grade six and so could not have gotten a place at a Traditional High School. According to one teacher:

Most of the students that are sent here [St. Fairview High] they are students who have, I should say learning difficulties and they also have behavioural problems, therefore, it kind of create a problem with teaching and learning. You know that once they have behavioural problems and once, they have learning difficulties then it creates a challenge.

This has been supported by the principal who mentioned that the students mostly average 20, 30, or 40 percent and are unable to function at their grade level and this has resulted in the “dunce school” stigma that plagues the school. While the school gets weaker academic performers, the principal noted that they are not given enough resources to help the students improve their performance and the parents appear not to care about this. This perpetuates a commonly held view that “failure” on the placement tests is an indication of inability to do academic work and, hence, these students must focus only on technical and vocational areas which, in most cases, are poorly resourced and taught. This stigma seems to affect all those who are associated with the school, as upon my many visits to the school and interactions with staff and students, the atmosphere has always been one of pessimism that seems to be internalised by both staff and students.

During my first encounter with the principal, he spoke in terms of crisis with little hope for the children and the school in general. He was very pessimistic, having nothing

positive to say about the school and blaming the parents and students for everything. He even accused me of just wanting to highlight the school because he claimed I was aware that the school is a low-performing school. One teacher mentioned that the rating of the school remains very bad despite their efforts over the years. She shared experiences whereby parents would come to her and ask her to work closely with their child so his/her grades could improve, and he/she could be transferred to the top performing school in the parish. In the last inspection conducted by NEI, the overall effectiveness of the school including leadership and management, and the school's relationship with the family and community were rated unsatisfactory.

Family Involvement Activities

Parents have limited meaningful engagement with the school. One teacher mentioned that "we don't have a lot of parental support. Probably 10% of the parents actually support the students here." Based on data collected and through observation, it may be concluded that both the school and parents are responsible for the limited engagement. The school appears, however, to have resorted to playing the blame game, faulting the parents for everything, even though the principal admitted that not much has been done to woo the parents and get them involved. The principal mentioned that "there is not really a close relationship between staff and parents. We call in the parents and only a few will come. There is not that great interest in what happens here at St. Fairview High School." When the principal was asked to expound on why he thinks the parents are disinterested in the welfare of their children, he further explained that:

That might be so because of the outcome that the parents expect from their children.

They are not expecting that when they come here, they are going to come out with

eight and nine CSEC subjects like other schools and so they pay scant regard to their children and their education.

While the school has a calendar of events that outlines the different events and activities and dates which are made available to all parents – PTA meetings, parent month celebration, PTC day, and other activities – their support has always been poor, and the findings show that these have not been very successful at engaging parents.

PTA Meetings

PTA meetings are scheduled monthly; however, the school has not been having regular meetings or providing timely reminders to parents. Very few parents turn out at PTA meetings. The lack of support at PTA meetings has been a perennial challenge. One teacher who has been at the school for over 25 years mentioned that:

When it is PTA, 25, 30, but never 50 and it doesn't matter what you do, refreshment or whatever, they just not coming so it is rough, it is rough on the school. Parents come twice in the lives of the students when they [are] coming to school for the first time in grade 7 and at graduation.

The principal mentioned that the lack of support from the parents at PTA meetings is because of the “lack of interest that these parents have because we know that parents will go to other PTA at other schools.” His view was supported by one parent when she was asked about the support parents give to the PTA meetings:

I feel it is just neglectful they neglectful, a nothing more or some of them don't care about their child. Your child is here so you have to find time, just like how you would go to work for money to send them to school you have to find time for PTA.

The poor turn-out at PTA meetings was corroborated from my own observations, as during the six months I was collecting data, only once did the school call a PTA meeting which had to be cancelled because they never had a quorum. The school has over 700

students and only six parents turned up for the meeting. From the interview with the PTA president, it was revealed that the school does not have a fully functional PTA executive board and she has limited knowledge about what her role and functions are as no training was provided by the principal. In fact, she was never even aware that she is a member of the board and should have been attending board meetings. The PTA president expressed the need to be trained so that she could be more knowledgeable and effective in discharging her responsibilities as she had never been a PTA president before. According to her:

I think I need some more motivation because I have never been a PTA president before, so I need to be strong. I think I should be stronger, more powerful. So, I was asking for a mentor who can lead me along the line so when I go in, I know just what to do because I need to be stronger. I need somebody strong to say “come, girl, when you go now this is what you are going to do,” and then now I will work at it.

The PTA has not engaged in any activities to support the school. From talking to the PTA president, she mentioned some initiatives that she would like done but so far none has come to fruition.

Parent Month Celebration

Parents’ month is celebrated in November each year and the MOEYI, Jamaica sends each school the theme and allows schools the latitude to plan their activities for the parents. St. Fairview High would often plan activities around the theme for the month. These activities include presentations wherein they would get resource persons to come and speak on different topics, serve refreshments, and give away prizes. This however is not ongoing. According to the principal:

Well, the only time that we meet with the parents to talk to them about those sorts of things would be like in Parent Month. It is not ongoing. So, Parent month we would carry them in, that is November and have sessions with them.

Parent Teachers Consultation Day

The school has a yearly PTC day and even that is poorly attended. According to one teacher “the turnout at parent teachers conference is very bad, especially at the upper school levels and most times the ones that attend are always in a hurry and so the teachers are unable to talk to them as much.” At the last PTC, the school resorted to threatening the parents that, if they did not come to collect the child’s report, the child would not be allowed to return to school until it was collected.

Other Activities

The school invites the parents to their annual prize-giving ceremony, sports day, open day, graduation, and fundraising events such as Mr. and Ms. St. Fairview High, but, in most cases, the support is poor. The school also tries to get the parents involved in other fundraising activities like a bake sale. Parents were asked to donate items towards the baking of certain Jamaican foods such as pudding, toto, cake, drops and to participate in the buying of tickets and the preparation of these items. However, according to the teachers these also have been poorly supported by the parents and community.

From the findings then, it is clear that St. Fairview High School has some work to do to reach the family. The school will need to be more innovative and creative at organising programmes to reach the family.

School, Community Involvement Activities

This section presents the ways in which the school has involved the community. These include the residential community and other stakeholders.

Residential Community

From conversations with the principal, teachers, employees such as groundsmen and other community members such as vendors, the school does not have a relationship with the

residential community and has a poor reputation on the road. The President of the Student Council mentioned that the school is despised by the community and does not engender broad-based support from the community and has not been doing much to nurture a relationship. Similarly, the principal shared that “the school is like an island, there is no relationship with anybody. We just come to school and the school just operates here and the people as well.” The principal and teachers also admitted that over the years the school has not done much to involve the community. One teacher mentioned that “the community is not that involved. But I think we are trying to work on it, so hopefully things will improve.” As a result, the school does not get much support from the residential community except when the school is having football matches when community people come to watch. The school also allows the community to use the playing field for their football competitions and the court for netball practice or competition. The support from the community is sports-related.

The school also supports the local farmers, particularly poultry farmers by buying chickens for the canteen. Administrative and ancillary staff, as well as the vendors at the gate, are from the community. According to the vendors, however, the school’s relationship with the vendors has become sour over the years with the present principal. The vendors described him as “wicked” because he changed the vending rules. Previously at lunchtime, the school gate would be opened, and students would be able to buy from the vendors at the gate, but the principal changed the rules and so no student is allowed to go by the gate and buy from the vendors. Both students and vendors are unhappy and have chosen to break the school rule. The vendors use a ladder and climb against the school wall and throw food items over to the students, while the students toss the money over to them. The vendors are discontented with the new rule and have chosen to break it because, according to them, it is their livelihood and how they can provide for their families and send their children to school. One vendor

commented that “he is wicked, he doesn’t think about the other people who have children to go to school and not everybody can have education and be a teacher.”

Involvement With Other Stakeholders

While there are no sustained partnerships with local agencies, the school receives some support from individuals and local businesses during events such as sports day. The school does not have an alumni association because, according to the principal, the students do not want to identify with the school even if they did creditably well academically. An international group in New York built and donated a computer lab to the school. The project was started and spearheaded by the son of a community member, and the lab is named after her. The school also tends to use resource persons from certain government agencies such as the Ministry of Social Security, Ministry of Health, PATH, as motivational speakers or resource persons or principals from other schools at parents’ month activities and their PTA meetings. The school has tried collaborating with HEART/ NTSA Trust to use the school as a centre to offer certification in skill areas such as carpentry, general construction, food and beverage, and electrical maintenance. This project did not materialise because they were never able to get enough persons to participate in the programme. According to the principal “the school wanted to do something which would improve the infrastructure of the community and lift the image of the community, but we have not been able to get enough persons to participate in the programme.”

St. Fairview High School Achievement in Terms of Family and Community Involvement

It is clear that this school has much to do in terms of developing strong relationships with families and communities and much to gain from this. As the findings above show, Fairview High School has not benefitted much from the family and community as there is no

sustained relationship. The school has, however, benefitted from the donation of a computer lab from the son of a former resident of the community. The school also gets some amount of support from businesses and the community regarding their sports day or other fundraising activities. These are usually one-off and primarily related to fundraising or sports.

Challenges to Involvement and Strategies to Overcome

Although the school has to deal with various challenges involving families and communities, there was little evidence that it has done much to overcome them. It appears that unlike Aberdeen High and Hutt Valley High School, St. Fairview High School is not deliberate in reaching out to the family and community. One of the strategic goals from the MOEYI regarding the SIP is for schools to build a partnership with donors, the private sector, the community, parents, and employers. Schools are then expected to come up with activities to achieve this goal. They are to outline the specific task, indicator, timeframe, responsibility, resources, cost, and means of verification. A review of the SIP of St. Fairview High School shows that the school had some elaborate plans such as conducting community meetings with parents and the community and designating a coordinator for community involvement. However, when the principal was asked how much has been achieved his response was, “Nothing.” This is an indicator that the school appears not to be serious about getting the parents and community involved.

The particular challenges that the school has to grapple with are related to stigma/reputation; low turn-out at meetings; lack of value for education or identification with school; and the low socioeconomic status of families.

Stigma/Reputation

The biggest challenge that faces St. Fairview High School is the stigma of a “dunce school.” The principal admitted that “there is a stigma attached to the school and the parents

and students buy into that stigma instead of working with the school to end the stigma.” The family and community have kept promoting this negative image over the years and even though subsequent principals, based on their strengths, have been able to improve the standing of the school for some time, as things stand presently, the school has been plunged back into that past image. The residential, and extended communities, even the employees, have disparaging remarks about the school. While I was at the school collecting data, I overheard one of the groundsmen from the school conversing with a community member about the state of the school system in Jamaica. The groundsman proceeded to tell the person that St. Fairview High is a “dump, a place where all the refuse goes to.” He went on to say that he believes the school should be closed and all the students be sent to a boot camp. According to the principal and teachers, teachers at the primary school from which the students come often tell the weak students that the only place they can go is St. Fairview High. According to the principal:

We talk about stigma; not everybody wants to be associated with St. Fairview High because that is what they are told at primary school. That “you are going to waste your time and end up at St. Fairview High,” so St. Fairview High is just someplace that persons who are not bright come to. They think that the teachers here are not bright either and that is why they were placed at St. Fairview High because they are not bright.

This stigma has affected the interest that parents show in their children because they do not see hope or promise in them. They do not see where this child will be able to get a good job or continue to university. The President of the Student Council body had this to say:

Many parents do not support their children coming here because you know when a parent knows that their child is doing extremely well, they would push out the next effort and a step over the line to ensure certain things are done but when a parent

knows that their child is not doing well, they tend not to push that extra work because they say like there is no reason for that.

The principal and teachers also noted that if a parent has one child going to St. Fairview High and another going to a Traditional High School, all the resources will be spent on the child going to the Traditional High and all effort will be made to be involved in the child's education. According to one teacher, parents often come and say to her:

Miss, help out my daughter or son for me because I want them to get good grades so I can move them to Trotman High. So, we build them and then they go. The rating for the school is bad. No care how we try.

As a result of the stigma, the students do not even support programmes or activities put on by their school, but gladly support neighbouring schools. This was one teacher's response when she was asked about the low turn-out by the students at the school's sports day:

I don't know what the students go home and tell the parents sometimes because even like for Sports day or Jamaica day the student population is very small. It is as if they are not interested, but funnily they support other schools. So, we are not sure but that is something that we are working on as well because you know there is a stigma out there to belittle the school's name and what the school has to offer and so the students would prefer if somebody from Trotman High School or somebody from Haldein High say 'you know that this is going on at my school,' because they are the "top" schools they would prefer to go. But they are not spending time to say alright, let me help build my school because it is very important that everybody works together. So that's the problem. The stigma is here even before they come.

The principal mentioned that even past students do not want to identify with the school, even when they have done well, and because of this he is having a difficult time starting an alumni association. In support of this point, one teacher mentioned that "that is

one of our sore points here. We can't even develop a past student association. Sometimes I wonder if we are just a little island. When persons leave, they don't normally come back." According to the principal over the years there are students who have done well in their CSEC examinations and gone on to do sixth form at a Traditional High School in the same or neighbouring parishes, but these students never tell anybody that they have attended St. Fairview High school. Additionally, the principal mentioned that "some of the past students are working in different areas but not many own the school. Not many persons tell people they came to St. Fairview High School."

Based on findings, the school has not been successful in eradicating the stigma and building a relationship with the parents and community. There appear to be no programmes or deliberate attempts to change the mindset of the public. At the orientation session for the new grade seven students, the principal, vice-principal, guidance counsellor, and reading specialist all encouraged the parents to be involved and assist their child, but it seems that is where it stops. No deliberate attempt or programme is in place to work on getting rid of the stigma. From my conversation with the principal and teachers, they constantly blame the parents for not being interested in their children's life. However, as I have observed, as a school, they seem not to be doing much to solve the challenge of stigmatisation that plagues the school. The principal has made attempts at letting parents and the wider community know of the school's successes during his speech at graduation so that parents, community, and students' interest will be boosted. The school also displays information on the school compound regarding past students who are excelling, but clearly, this is not enough. When the principal was asked what the school has been doing to get rid of the stigma, his response was "all we can do is work with the children that we have and see how best we can help them to produce good grades and be able to pass their CSEC subjects and all of their exit exams."

Low Turn-Out at Meetings/School Programmes

Whilst low turn-out at meetings and school programmes is a perennial problem with many schools, the situation is severe in some schools. At St. Fairview High, families have limited meaningful engagement with the school. Very few parents turn out at PTA meetings and support other school programmes. Regarding PTA meeting one teacher shared that:

I don't even remember how many students are here but maybe the most parents that you would see, let me put it at 30 not more than that you are going to see. It's not a lot, it's not a lot. If you have a PTA meeting inside here, it holds all the parents plus the teacher that we have in here, you understand what I am saying so you know it's not a lot. Even though we try to provide lunch and whatever for them. It's normally the same set of parents coming out.

The yearly PTC has always been poorly attended; however, the principal, teachers, and PTA president all agreed that the last one was so much better than in previous years.

According to the PTA president:

Report day was the best report day we have had because you had to come with your parents for your report. It was good because a lot of reports are still there that many parents haven't collected because they send their child to school, and they don't care what they want to do. Well, I said to myself, because if every year you don't collect the report that simply means you don't have anybody coming to school. So [that] simply means that the child is not enrolled.

The principal and teachers indicated that they scheduled a community PTA meeting and went out to the community to reach out to the parents because they were not coming, but no one showed up for the meeting. The school has since discontinued the community PTA meeting. At the school's open day which displays the work of the students over the year and showcases some of the activities that the children are engaged in, even though the school sent

out memos and text messages inviting the parents, only three parents were in attendance and all three left within half an hour. It appears that the students were also not interested as very few were in attendance and teachers were the ones seen manning the different areas of the programme. At the schools' sports day which is normally a big event in schools in Jamaica, I only saw one parent supporting her child and two past students. There was nobody from the residential or adjoining communities. The majority of the staff were also not in attendance. One teacher was overheard saying "even a basic school sports day is better than this."

The school, mindful of the fact that many of the parent's source of income is the selling of farm produces at the market on a Thursday, tries not to schedule any function or meetings on a Thursday or Friday to accommodate the parents, but, regardless, the parents are still not showing up. Even though there seems to be a lack of interest on the part of the parents, a part of the problem seems to be an inconsistent effort by the school. One teacher made the point that "sometimes the parents are not to be blamed because the school is not consistent. All we do is talk and no action."

Lack of Value for Education/Identification with School

The school grapples with limited or lack of interest in education displayed by both parents and students. The data collected indicate that St. Fairview High School's principal and teachers are convinced that parents and students do not value education and are disinterested in their children. The principal mentioned that the parents "believe that their children attending the school are already a failure and that is why they were placed there. The children, too, do not care and do not value education and want to identify with the school." The principal's view was supported by another teacher who mentioned that:

Most of the parents think the students are slow and "good for nothing" and "have no use," and because of that, they believe them. Once they pass for St. Fairview, they are

“dunce” and that is the reason why the parents don’t want to come. They don’t even want anybody to know that they have children coming to St. Fairview High School. Other teachers mentioned that, for many of the children, the school sees the parents twice in the life of the child, at orientation the first day of the school in grade 7 and graduation in grade 11. One teacher shared that:

Well basically the parents, the parents are not playing their role, I strongly believe that the parents are not playing a strong role, the majority of them, I don’t think they are playing a strong role in their children’s life, and it affects their performance. For some of them there are parents who don’t even check their child’s book to see what they are doing at school, if they are doing anything at school. The parents once they come and they bring their child September, you don’t see them back until graduation.

The school is even unable to get many parents to come in and pick up their child’s report. One teacher reported they have had students who have left the institution and all their reports from grades 7 to 11 are still at the school. The school, however, does not make a concerted effort to reach the parents and this was admitted by the principal when he was asked directly. The school has given up on the parents. According to the principal:

You have to look at what you have to see how it works best for you and if we can’t get them to PTA meetings, we can’t get them to come to any of our functions, then you should know when you should call it quits.

Low Socioeconomic Status of Parents

St. Fairview High School is situated among and surrounded by several farming communities. According to staff members many of the parents are unemployed and those who are employed mostly earn minimum wages. Most of the students are being assisted by the government through the PATH programme as of the 700 students on roll, 558 are enrolled in PATH. One teacher shared that “like 90 % of the parents are unemployed. We probably

just have 10 or 15 that are employed, only a minority of the parents work and then those employed parents they earn minimum wage.” This results in the children not being able to attend school with their tools and being frequently absent. One teacher shared her experience when she just started teaching:

I remember when I just came here, and I ask a particular guy why is it that he is not at school so often and he said that he has to work on specific days before he can get money to come to school, and I just found it very strange. Sometimes to again, the home. They don't eat anything from morning, and they come and all they think about is the PATH lunch. You know because that is probably the only meal that they get for the day.

According to the teachers, many parents engage in farming and/or sell at the market and because of this, some of the students do not attend school on Thursdays and Fridays because they have to go to the market or help their parents prepare for the market. The education level of the communities is also low as reported by Bennett (2014), and because of this many parents are unable to help their children. This has been supported by the principal who mentioned that it is one of the challenges he faces:

One of the challenges I find is that the education level of the community is low. We have a lot of persons who are non-readers and that is why we get a lot of children also who are not functioning at their grade level. I think that is why the ownership of the school is not going to be there because you can't own an education, so you can't own a school.

Different teachers have sought to encourage parents whenever they see them to check the children's books or get an older sibling or neighbour to assist. According to one teacher:

You try to tell the parents that alright maybe you don't know, because some parents they are definitely unable to read or to really assist the child. You tell them, you can

ask a neighbour, you can ask a sister or somebody like that in the house to help them, you can come to me [teacher].

Another teacher echoed a similar sentiment:

When they are here, we encourage them when they come to PTA, we encourage them. We tell them if you even can't manage what is in the book, look in it because some parents in way back when couldn't read but children didn't know, children didn't know that they couldn't read so we encourage them to check the books, look at the date. If you even can't read, you can see the date to see that the child did something for the day. So, they are encouraged with that.

One teacher, however, remarked that it is difficult to help these parents who are struggling because they are not seeing them or can't reach them. She mentioned that "in order for the school to help these parents who are struggling they have to come in for us to help them and if we are not seeing them, we can't say well do this or do that." The socioeconomic status, rigid work schedules, family obligations, distance and issues with transportation have affected some of the parents' ability to participate and to attend meetings or events.

According to the PTA president:

Well, sometimes the parents ... don't have the money, to [travel] the distance that they are coming from. And some of them, when they leave work, they have to go home to prepare food for husband because you have some miserable man.

She mentioned a parent who once attended a PTA meeting and because of the distance and issues with transportation, did not reach home until 11:30 pm and because of that vowed never to attend another PTA meeting. She encouraged her to return but shared with her how to approach the matter:

She was saying she was not coming back, and I said, "no, you are going to come back. What you are going to do, the most important part you catch and then you go

because 11:30 pm is really late for true. You don't have to stay to the end." She said, "all right then, I will come back."

She further elaborated that it has been a real challenge getting the parents to pay the minimal PTA dues which is what is used to provide refreshment at PTA meetings. She also mentioned that if parents were paying their dues, the PTA would be able to offset or subsidise the transportation cost of some of the parents who are facing financial challenges. When he was asked about the support that the family and community give to the school, the student council representative corroborated the PTA president's story:

You should understand that the majority of the parents too are not in a 9-5 job, or a job where probably they can call the manager and say they will be at their child's school for such time. The majority are just entrepreneurs, vendors, trying to make a daily living and cannot reach, cannot make it, don't have the time.

One of the teachers interviewed shared her experience:

Well ... when parents come to my office and say this is the case, my son will have to stay home tomorrow because I used the lunch money to come up here ... what I do is say "don't worry yourself I will get a PATH ticket." So, I get a PATH ticket for those children to come. But sometimes they genuinely don't have the money, but what I do, the children know once they don't have the money, find me.

In support of the teacher, the President of the Student Council also shared that many of the students are unable to afford lunch at times and have to resort to selling goods on the school compound which is illegal. This often gets them into trouble with the school administration. He shared that "majority of the students tend to don't have any money at times, so they sell to earn a profit to buy a lunch."

These views however have been debunked by the principal, some parents and teachers who feel that it is not mainly because of financial reasons that parents do not support the

school, but lack of interest as some of them live nearby where they can walk, and they support their children who go to Traditional High Schools. He mentioned that:

It is not financial; it is the interest that they have because we know that parents will go to other PTA [meetings] at other schools and many of them are not working and just sit at home doing nothing even though they live within walking distance.

Teachers supported the principal's claim about apathy but also provided additional information. According to one teacher:

I don't think the parents are responsible. Most of them give up, the children give a lot of trouble, most of them give up on their children. If they come here and you talk to them, they tell you, they can't bother. But we have to be here and trying so hard. We have students smoking and you can't get the parents to come in to talk to them about it. We are going through some hard times and then we cannot get them to come. It is not a matter of the school, the schools send out letters, they have the SMS messaging, so if they want to come, they will come and they are told that they can come at any time, it is just that they don't care.

Whilst this apathy may not be entirely true for all the parents, one parent I interviewed whose child was in grade eight had never been to a PTA meeting or supported the school in any way, said it was not financial or transportation issues because she lives close by and could walk. When quizzed as to why she has never been to a PTA meeting or support the school in any way, she was unable to answer.

Summary

The extent to which schools create and nurture relationships with the family and community will determine the support they will receive. Therefore, St. Fairview High School needs clear and intentional strategies to engage the family and community. Whilst the school

is challenged in several areas, the only way to address these challenges is to reach out and engage the family and community in deeply meaningful ways. Involvement does not come naturally for these types of parents who most likely, are not privileged to have had models of involvement—hence their inability to comprehend fully what their duties are towards the concept of school, family involvement. The assumption that the families and communities are not interested in their children's education made by the school is likely to inhibit the positive interactions with parents and communities. Based on the findings the school need to exhibit greater intentionality, persistence, and creativity to reach these parents and community members and gradually eradicate the stigma.

Holy Cross High School

This section provides some background information on Holy Cross High School. It then delves into the various ways in which the school involves the family and community, identifies their accomplishments because of this relationship, and concludes with a discussion of the challenges that the school has faced involving the family and community.

Background to the School

It was about 8 am as I approached a solid iron gate that was ajar and walked down a short pathway to another iron gate manned by two security guards—the entrance to the school. On my way to the gate, I noticed that the school was enclosed by a very high wall with barbed wire atop. I instantly had the feeling I was entering a prison. As I got nearer to the gate, I noticed there were students outside this entrance pleading with the security guard to let them in because they were late. After I went through the school's security checks, I was escorted into the administrative area. Whilst there waiting to speak to somebody, I could hear a lot of noise often punctuated with expletives. This is Holy Cross High School.

Holy Cross High School is a Catholic institution surrounded by several inner-city communities in urban Jamaica. The school has a population of 1150 students, and according to the principal more than half of those students are on PATH while others benefit from the school's welfare programme. A large proportion of families are unemployed and unskilled. Many parents engage in "hustling" to survive and send their children to school. One teacher describes the socio-economic status of the parents as this "I would say is there something lower than low? I think from low to abject." The teacher then mentioned that this has created a lot of economic and social issues for the school:

Irregular attendance, unusual family structures, uncle and that kind of thing, friend, friend of the family taking care of them. A lot of them are products of the barrel

situation¹⁴ so a lot of them just don't have that guidance at home, the sort of nuclear structure with mommy and daddy and you can clearly see sometimes. You see a student and their mannerism and even to some extent how they communicate, you can tell that the structure at home is stable, and I would often sometimes even just sort of bet myself and I would say "you live with mommy and daddy" and if I get a yes, I feel like I win because that is what I had guessed.

Unlike the other three schools I have visited, this school does not have that warm, clean, welcoming atmosphere; rather one that feels hostile. The school grounds lack the familiar aesthetic of plants, trees, and murals that is characteristic of most schools in Jamaica. Based on the results of the PEP assessments, students assigned to the school are generally performing below the national average. According to the principal, the students come with averages ranging from 0 to 50 and are reading at grade levels of 5 and 6. She also mentioned that "if by some 'miracle' we get a student with an average of 70%, the parent would quickly transfer the child to a 'better' school." A teacher supported this point by commenting that one year he got a student in his form class whose average was 3% and could not read or write.

Holy Cross High School, for most, if not all the students, is not their preferred choice of school. The majority of the children who attend come from the immediate area, primarily inner-city areas, with a smaller percentage coming from the wider environs and neighbouring parishes. There is a lot of violence in the local communities and surroundings which often spills over into the school. The principal lists indiscipline and violence as her greatest challenges because, according to her "the communities have already formed the students in a

¹⁴ Barrel children are children who are abandoned or "left behind" by their parents who are seeking a better life abroad. They receive material resources in the form of food and clothing in lieu of direct care. These children have surrogate parents who are often unable to give them the emotional support and nurturance that they need, most of these children may be instead raised by grandparents or close relatives.

particular way.” Students generally get into a lot of fights over simple things like a person stepping on another person’s toes and often go for an older family member, friend, “area leader, or community dons¹⁵” to fight students on the compound. The principal mentioned that she has to constantly remind them that she is the only “don” in the school and because of that she is probably the only person who gets respect at the school as the students often disrespect the teachers and everybody else. A teacher corroborates the principal story:

The challenge that we have is that our students don’t know how to deal with conflict. Some little simple things that they could talk over and reason it out and what I realize is that it is coming from the community. However, the act is a reflection of the community and that is it.

Another teacher describes the behaviour of the students as a vicious cycle:

It is a matter of a vicious cycle, the parents themselves are poorly behaved, they are maladjusted. You see them coming with the red, pink, green hair, old slippers dragging, “wey the boy do?” [what has the boy done?] That kind of a thing, so it is the same kind of behaviour. It is a lot of dysfunctions going on.

The principal laments that because of the difference in culture and values “many of the teachers especially the younger ones just don’t know how to relate to the students and parents.” This has resulted in a high attrition rate among the teachers. Students and parents do and say things that teachers are either not familiar with or find it difficult to deal with, so they leave. As one vendor puts it “Holy Cross High School students don’t deserve those teachers. They are too nice for them.” The principal further explained that “this is a part of Jamaica

¹⁵ “The concept of ‘don’ in local Jamaican parlance is synonymous with masculine designations such as ‘big man’ or ‘fada’ (father). These titles refer to individuals possessed of material wealth, popularity and influence such as entertainers, politicians and drug lords. However, although denoting affluence, rank and authority, a don is not merely a person in charge. Instead, he is a self-styled ‘politically connected local leader who wields power, status and prestige derived from multiple sources and activities, legal and illegal’. He also assumes leadership over specific geographical areas called ‘garrisons’, hence the current popularity of the title ‘area leader’ (Johnson and Soeters, 2008, pp. 170-171).

that many people don't know about; many people don't know about it, they just hear." This challenge regarding values has been supported by one of the CREOs at the MOEYI as a major challenge many schools face in involving the families and communities:

There are challenges where values are concerned so valuing is a big challenge. The changing dynamics of our society where you trying to teach certain values within the school, but the community is not sharing in that value system. The influx of social media where other cultures is now infused within our own culture. You share certain values in the schools and when they go home it is a completely different thing also.

The school's reputation has been a roller coaster journey as it has witnessed a gamut of different images over its 70 years of existence. While it has always been a Non-Traditional High School, the school enjoyed some good times with many past students singing its praises. Gradually with the violence increasing and the lower performance of the students, the image of the school has progressively declined. According to one teacher who has been with the school for over 33 years, the school has taken a "nosedive" in its reputation. According to her:

I have seen several changes. We have always housed the children from the inner-city, so education primarily has never been the top priority; however, things were different from now in that you had a greater majority wanting to learn and were more respectful. Now it is really horrible, the disrespect, the blatant disrespect, disregard for authority, not wanting to learn, truancy, it has really taken a nosedive.

The principal is, however, more optimistic and describes the school as "becoming," as they try to improve the image of the school through sports, especially football, performing arts, and technical and vocational subjects as evidenced by the myriad of trophies and plaques that decorate her office. In the last NEI inspection, the school was rated in need of immediate support for leadership and management, and unsatisfactory regarding involvement with the

family and community. The school has since been making some progress to get the family and community more involved; however, it seems to be enjoying a better relationship with the community than the family. Efforts have been made to resurrect a PTA body and the school was successfully able to start an alumni association three years ago.

Family Involvement Activities

In this section, the different ways in which the school involves the family are presented. These include PTA and other meetings, seminar/workshops, committees, and other activities.

The school has an amicable relationship with the family; however, there is very little family involvement at school. Teachers, students, and the principal complain about the apathy that most parents display towards their child's education. The only time a parent will visit the school is when they are called in for a misdemeanour that their child committed after they have been told that the child will not be able to report to school until they come in. The principal shared that she really wants the parents to start supporting the school so that the students can see that home and school are one and not the school fighting against them.

According to her:

The improvements I would like to see is parents not just coming here for disciplinary issues but integral in the decision-making and integral in the implementation of the actions that we have taken and seeing them to fruition. If I say one, we are going to be doing this for first form for discipline, or this we are doing for second form, our parents are there with us, so the children see that it is everybody on board and not just the teachers and principal fighting against them. What will that do also when the students go home and say "you know that the grade supervisor say that anybody who comes late

is going to get a detention?” The parents are there so the other parents are going to say, “guess what, you have to go because it is all of us in it.”

Additionally, the majority of the students report to school every day without their necessary equipment, homework, and projects undone. There are however no school-wide initiatives to involve the family apart from what the PTA is doing; those that exist are from a few teachers who do their own thing.

PTA and Other Meetings

One of the main programmes that the school has in place to involve the family is through the PTA which has been dormant over the years and has not made much impact. According to the teachers, there was no existing PTA body with a president and executive body. The present principal is now trying to revive it and there is presently an executive committee that meets and plans activities and programmes for the parents and school. PTA meetings are scheduled to be held monthly, but this does not always occur; during my six months of data collection, no general PTA meeting was held. On Teacher’s Day, the school invited some parents to be a part of the teaching for that day, but only the vice-president of the PTA and one other parent turned up and participated. The PTA vice-president admitted that they are having problems with execution of the activities:

I must confess that we have had challenges in terms of execution because of more reasons than one. Sometimes it is financial, sometimes it is a, should I say it is a lack of will on the parents, I don’t know, but it might just be too. I would like to think that if we have something that we consider important enough we will move heaven or hell to get it done.

The school tries to involve the family in other programmes or activities put on by the school. The school held its open day to showcase student’s work throughout the year and invited the parents to participate, but no parent showed up. The school has its annual PTC day

for parents to come in and collect their child's report for the previous term's work. At these events, it is intended that the parents go around and speak to the different teachers who provide feedback on the child's performance and behaviour in the subject. However, according to the teachers, the turn-out has always been poor, especially at the upper school. One teacher mentioned that there are children who are in grade nine whose reports from grade seven are still with the school.

Seminars/Workshops

The school through the Guidance and Counselling department normally puts on different workshops/seminars at least twice a year and invites the parents. They have a theme and plan programmes around that theme. Resource persons are invited to come in and share with the parents different aspects of parenting such as coping skills, child abuse, how to prepare a balanced meal. The turn-out at these events is always poor and according to one teacher "the parents are always the same, the saved and the converted that you would get."

Committees

The school also gets the family involved by inviting them to sit on different committees so that they can be a part of the decision-making in the school. According to the principal, the PTA president sits on all the school's committees. These include development, safety and security, and curriculum committees. The PTA president also sits on the board which is the highest decision-making body in the school and is expected to present a report at each meeting.

Other Involvement Activities

The school has attempted to get the parents involved in the school by asking them to come in and do devotions. Not many are willing and only a few like the PTA president and vice-president normally turn up. The school also invites other parents on the PTA executive

to give motivational speeches to different groups of students. One parent shared with me that sometime in the recent past she was asked to do a motivational speech to a group of students:

I did motivation speech in third form last year. I spoke to a group of grade nine students. It was all girls. I remember one of the messages I gave them “I can do all things through Christ who strengthen me,” so that message is supposed to help them to support them. I know that they are going to remember that verse and to help them.

Through the PTA, the school also invites the parents to support their Labour Day projects. On most of these occasions, there were a few parents who came to give their time. From the research findings, Holy Cross High School has a lot of work to do to encourage the family to become involved. It is also clear that the school needs to be more innovative and creative in organising activities to get the family involved.

School, Community Involvement Activities

From my observation, community involvement is limited but the school seems to have a better relationship with the community than the parents. One teacher remarked however that:

The community is not involved because when we talk about the community, we talk about the business community, local residential community, church community, so we don't get that great support. Well, I am not going to say there is none, but we don't get that great support.

The principal echoed a similar sentiment citing that the performance of the school and its students are a major determinant of the level and type of involvement the school receives. She elaborated by saying that:

Everyone wants to associate with a winner and people will support things that they can benefit from, so it is very difficult to get support from the businesses, you won't

get it so easily. You will have one or two persons, as I say, who will come in and just do it for the love, yes, but you won't get it wholesale, I can tell you that, you are not going to get it.

Holy Cross High School seems not to have a good relationship with the residential community. There are however some relationships with the church community, alumni, and other stakeholders.

Residential Community

As indicated by the following words of one teacher, the feedback from the residential community is more negative than positive and the community does not respect the school:

Well in terms of the residential. My thing is that I don't know how much they really do respect our organisation in terms of giving us the kind of support that we would want. The feedback from them is more negative than positive.

The school's perception of the community is also negative because they believe that community members will break into the school and steal school property whenever they get the chance. The residential community uses the school for band practices and sporting events, so it is more of a relationship with the physical structure of the school. There is no real relationship with the school community. As it stands, the relationship between the school is one-sided, benefiting the community.

In the past, the school partnered with HEART/NSTA Trust and offered an evening skills programme in data operations for the young people in the surrounding communities who were unemployed. Participants of the programme were given a stipend from HEART/NSTA Trust. Some of the teachers at Holy Cross High school were asked to teach the course along with Maths and English as support subjects. HEART/NSTA Trust would then come in and certify them after they had completed their written and practical

examinations. The programme had to be aborted, however, because HEART/NSTA Trust discontinued the stipend and persons stopped attending.

Church Community

The school is under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church. The Chairman of the school is the Vicar of the church. The church occasionally visits and conducts devotions and provides motivational talks to students and has Catholic hours but according to teachers that has also become quite infrequent, and the church is not deeply involved in the school apart from providing spiritual support. According to one teacher:

From the church, we get support, the Roman Catholic church. In terms of what I should say now. From our perspective, the support is not great. The support could have been much, much better knowing that our school is a Catholic school, and we are founded under the Catholic umbrella, and we should have at least got a lot more support financially. We get the spiritual support but outside of the spiritual, they come in and do devotions, so we get that support, but that has fallen off lately, so the support is not there. But outside of the spiritual support, the support is a very small percent.

Alumni

The school's greatest involvement with the community is with the alumni association which was established three years ago and has since been supporting the school. Individuals from the alumni association often meet with the principal and individual teachers to ascertain what the needs are and provide support. They have been mentoring students and contributing to the school in cash and kindness. Members of the association visit the school and participate in devotion; they go to different grades and give motivational talks. Quite often students approach them after their talks to find out more about how they were able to achieve what they have achieved. The alumni have made cash donations, painted portions of the school,

and donated tablets to the reading room as well as a stove to the Home Economics Department. They have also sponsored members of the football team and have contributed to the music department. Many of the recent graduates, however, are not involved and are not showing any interest in being part of the alumni. The alumni representative believes that where persons end up in society is related to apathy, saying “those who are doing well for themselves are eager to be associated with the school, but those who are not doing well financially prefer to stay away because they are embarrassed.” The alumni representative also sits on the board and makes a report to the board at each meeting.

Involvement With Other Stakeholders

The school has established few links with the business community and other stakeholders. For example, the school’s auto mechanic and cosmetology departments have partnered with Jamaican German Automotive School (JAGAS) and HEART/NSTA Trust respectively, whereby the students can do up to level 2 in their certificate programmes at school and then enrol directly into the level 3 programmes at these institutions after completion of high school. The school uses resource persons from different organisations and institutions such as the Family Life Ministries – a religious non-denominational organisation and principals from other schools to come in and provide motivational speeches to parents, students, and teachers. Overall, it can be seen that Holy Cross High School needs to be more proactive and relentless in reaching the family and community. Considering the school's proximity to several large businesses, it is likely that more can be done to build connections, particularly with corporations that could help the school through sponsorship or mentorship.

Holy Cross High School Achievement in Terms of Family and Community Involvement

The achievements of Holy Cross High School in terms of family and community involvement include support for sports programme, donations, and increased partnerships. From the data, it is clear that the school has a better relationship with the community than with the family as the little support that the school gets is from the community.

Support for Sports Programme

Jamaica is a sporting country and corporate Jamaica is always keen on supporting schools that do well in sports. Holy Cross High has been doing relatively well in football and has been getting some amount of support from corporate Jamaica and other individuals regarding their football programme. A medical doctor takes care of the medical needs of the football team free of cost. Some individuals coach the football team and assist the boys in getting scholarships overseas. There are also a few small businesses that assist and support the football team by providing water and food supplies when the boys are camping over at the school. The school and the sports programme also benefit from the sponsoring of awards at graduation.

Donations

The school benefits from assistance from different well-wishers including the alumni association. The alumni association has a bi-annual fundraising event, and all proceeds go towards the development of the school. Since the inception of the association, they have refurbished the reading room and outfitted it with tablets; they have donated a stove to the Home Economics Department, and have done some work on the music room, etcetera.

Established Partnerships

The school has established partnerships with a few institutions such as JAGAS, HEART/NSTA Trust, and individuals who provide some amount of support to the school.

Overall, however, Holy Cross High School has not achieved much in family and community involvement. It behoves the school to be more intentional about involving the family and community. The school is also surrounded by several big businesses, presenting an opportunity for it to more proactively work to establish other links so support can be given to the school in the form of sponsorship and mentorship.

Challenges to Involvement and Strategies to Overcome

While Holy Cross High School has had to contend with several challenges involving the family and community, it is clear that not much has been done to overcome these challenges. These challenges include stigma/reputation of the school; low turn-out at meetings; disinterest/apathy/lack of support; different/clashing value system; violence and economic/job obligation. The school does not have school-wide programmes to tackle these challenges.

Stigma/Reputation

The school grapples with the stigma of being a “dunce school,” which has been seriously impacting the support that students, parents, and community members give to the school. According to one teacher:

I remember not long ago, a former principal here, we were having a first form meeting and when the principal asked for a show of hands of those persons who had selected this school as first preference, no hands went up; second choice, no; third choice, no; fourth, no. So, there were no hands in the air. Nobody selected this school. Every child that was sitting in that auditorium at that time got placed here and had no say in the matter.

So generally, the school gets students who were placed there against their will and so they come to the school with resentment, frustration, and disappointment. According one teacher

“these emotions are not only coming from the children but are exacerbated by the parents and community as well, so you will see maybe a 90% turnout at that first meeting and then it dwindles and dwindles.”

I asked the four parents I interviewed, including the PTA vice president if they chose Holy Cross High School for their child and they all said, “no.” I asked the President of the Student Council if he chose Holy Cross High school and he too said “no.” So, it is safe to say that majority of the students who attend Holy Cross High School were placed there by the MOEYI, Jamaica. The parents and community also look down on the school and see the students who attend the school as “failures.” This affects the levels of interest the parents show in their children. One parent remarked “some of the parents stay away because they do not want people to know that their child goes to that school.” From my observation, and the comments from teachers, parents see no hope or promise in their child and are only forced to send the child to school because the government may intervene if they do not. One teacher had this to say when asked about the challenges the school experiences getting the family onboard:

Lack of interest, lack of interest on the [parents] part in education. That is it. I don't have to go any further. They are really not into education; they send the children to school because Government might carry-on if they don't send the children to school but that is it for them and for the children.

As a result of this stigma, parents would beat and curse their children when they are placed at the school. One child recounted her experience of her father's reactions when he found out she was placed at Holy Cross High School. The child said in all her life she had never heard her father curse and use expletives but the day when her name was printed under that school, he cursed her and disowned her. As a result of the stigma, then, parents are sometimes ashamed that their children attend such a school, therefore they stay away. The

school has been trying to improve its image by focussing on the strengths of the students. They are investing in sports, performing arts, technical and vocational subjects, and, hopefully, as they excel in these areas and their reputation grows the family and community will start respecting the school.

Low Turn-Out at Meetings

The school grapples with low turn-out at the different meetings and other events. Parents are not supportive of the different programmes put on by the school except for sports. The school has been doing relatively well in football and so there is some amount of support given by the family and community. However, regarding other activities such as PTA meetings, PTC days, and the school's open day, the family, unless forced, are noticeably absent and this has been a perennial problem. According to the PTA president, only about 20% of the parents normally turn out for PTA meetings. There is also very little support for fundraising activities or other social events that are put on by the PTA. At the PTC day, parents do not turn out either and the school reports that they are still in possession of reports for students from grade seven who are now in grade 11. The turn-out at meetings is also dependent on the work that the child is doing. According to one teacher:

Those children who make the results are the ones whose parents are giving support at home and so, therefore, are the ones who are much quicker to turn out for consultation days versus the students who are working below their grade level – you often find that there is no support at home and so when it comes to consultation days nobody turns up.

However, what all the teachers agreed on is that the turn-out is greater at the lower school but as the children move up in the grades the support wanes.

The school has started to have grade parental meetings to enable them to reach more parents. The grade coordinators along with the teachers for that grade sometimes invite the

parents in for an early morning meeting for about 2 hours. The teachers also use the opportunity to get resource persons in to speak to the parents. One teacher mentioned that he had a grade meeting and invited parents to come in and listen to some of the complaints that they did have. The teacher also brought in a resource person from the Family Life Ministries to speak to the parents regarding the “rights and responsibilities of the children.” He said they had roughly about 50% turn out. So, the school has been trying to find various means to get more parents involved. Other teachers are complaining bitterly that the turn-out is still very poor even at the grade level meeting and they sometimes have to resort to sending threatening messages to get some parents out. According to the grade coordinator for grade 10:

Well, what we did last year in grade 10 when we called a grade PTA meeting it was only 20 parents who came out and there are over 250 grade 10 students. We did that meeting with those parents, but we called another one and what we did is to make telephone contact and send out a very strong letter to say that if “you don’t come...” and then we realise that a lot more came.

According to the PTA president, the body has been looking at possible strategies to get the parents more involved. These include serving refreshments at the PTA meetings and using those parents who normally attend meetings to mobilise the other parents and get them to come out and support the school.

Disinterest/Apathy/Lack of Support

According to the teachers, parents and community members are not interested in anything the school organises or asks them to be involved in and this has made their jobs even more difficult. According to one teacher “the level of support is simply not there.” One other teacher likens the support to having relatives overseas that we only get to see on certain occasions:

You know when you have relatives overseas and you only get to see them when something bad happens, funerals; that's kind of like how I feel the relationship with our parents are. We don't often get to see them on celebratory occasions. They are, however, quite often here because of the misbehaviour of the children.

Another teacher shared that the lack of support has impacted her job in a negative way.

According to her:

It impacts us because we are not getting enough support from the parents. We do not get enough out of the children. When the children know that their parents are on board or their guardians, you get better out of them. They [children] know they [parents] really don't care and that is not their [parents] priority then you have a hard time, so my job is made even more difficult because of a lack of support from the parents.

The school is of the view that in many cases the lack of interest in the child is because the likelihood of that child becoming successful and assisting their parents out of poverty is very slim. One teacher who has been at the school for over 15 years said he has had the opportunity to speak to several students over the years about the treatment that they get versus the treatment their siblings who attend Traditional High Schools get:

The child would admit that all the attention and the money would be spent on the child going to the Traditional High and the parents will show up at meetings because the parents would want to sort of "rub" shoulders with some of those other parents. It is sad, but it is the reality. Often, I think a lot of these parents from these areas do see their children as a "ticket" and obviously, if you get placed in a school that has no repute then the likelihood of them leaning on you to help bail them out of that cycle of poverty is very slim.

The president of the student council supports this view. When he was asked if he thinks the parents are playing an active role in their child's life, he gave an emphatic "no" answer and

when asked to elaborate he said “because parents have to be pressured to participate and it is their child. Not every parent has a good relationship with their child because some parents don’t care about their child.” According to teachers and students, many of the children are crying out for love from their parents, many of whom lack parenting skills. One teacher shared that “some parents blatantly come and say they don’t care. They openly come and say they don’t business with the child, so anything the child wants to do, he/she can do it. I don’t care.” This was also supported by the vice-president of the PTA who shared that “some parents do not care and that results in the children not caring either and the flip side to that is the children do not show any interest, so the parents think they are wasting their time.” The principal also revealed that not only are the parents reluctant to be involved with their presence, but they are unwilling to support the school financially. Only 3% of the parents paid the auxiliary fees charged by the school and some even came back requesting a refund even though she (the principal) keeps stressing the importance of the contribution to the development of the school which enables the school to serve the students better.

Different/Clashing Value System

There is a marked difference between the value systems of the school and of the homes from which many of the children are coming. This was a major factor when the school was contemplating inviting parents to participate in the teacher’s day function. According to one teacher “we have to be very careful who we allow on the compounds of the school to participate in the teacher’s day event because of the difference in value systems which may do more harm than good.” For example, a parent may come on the school compound smoking, drinking, and using expletives. Additionally, the school finds it very difficult to get the parents to buy into the vision and mission of the school so that both home and school will be on the same page. This, according to the teachers, is because the parents are not interested

in their children. The teacher was asked to explain how he came by that conclusion and his response was:

Let me tell you why I formed that conclusion. Because if you have a grade where report day come, and you have three years passed and for those three years you don't come and collect a report for your child no time at all. That speaks to the fact that you don't care about what your child is doing, you don't have any interest in what your child is doing.

This difference in value systems regarding education makes it very difficult for the school to reach the families and communities and get them involved. It appears that both the family and the residential community do not see the importance of education and investing in the children.

Violence

The volatility in the communities makes it difficult for the school to involve the family and community. According to the principal "the violence, that is another challenge, a big challenge which has also affected the image of the school." The school is somewhat apprehensive in getting too close to the community out of fear that they will break in and steal from the school which according to teachers has been common. The violence is also a reason given by some parents for their non-attendance at meetings and other events especially when the meetings are held in the afternoon and continues into the night. The school feels that if they open too much to the community and parents, they are leaving themselves vulnerable to break-ins, theft, destruction of property, and other problems. For example, it is likely that when the community comes to support the school at a football match, fights will break out which may result in people being seriously injured and possibly dying. It is also feared that community members could bring illegal weapons and cannabis and share them

with students. So, while the school is somewhat willing to involve the family and community, they are more apprehensive because of the possible negative repercussions.

Economic Situation/Job Obligations

Many of the Holy Cross High School parents are in jobs that do not allow them to be away for too long or at a particular time in the day. Most of the parents are from the lower socioeconomic status and are unemployed or underemployed. Many of them are vendors and so if they take a day or a few hours away from their work they will probably be losing income and, therefore, not able to send their children to school the next day. This economic situation of these parents has been preventing the school from being able to effectively involve the parents. So, some parents are unable to attend meetings, participate in certain activities that the school puts on, or attend events such as Open day. One parent shared with me the reason she is not involved in school-related activities even though she sometimes asks her fiancé to fill in for her:

Well, I never come to any function because some of the time I have to work. Well, I am not working now and when I am not working, I can tell you it is very difficult for me because I am a single parent now and I have other kids so sometimes it is challenging for me.

Another parent shared that:

I won't tell you "Yes," I am honest, I am telling you "No." Most times I do not even know when they are having anything at the school. Sometimes let me tell you, higglering is a hell of a thing. It takes a lot out of you, subjects you to the business. You spend your money, and you are trying to get it back, sometimes you don't really have the time to really come to some of the things them.

This economic situation has also resulted in students attending school infrequently and without their necessary equipment. To address this, whilst acknowledging that this may

not work for all meetings, the principal said she is willing to consider having PTA at 5 pm to try and reach more parents but according to her it may pose a problem for teachers who may not be able to stay back late. Similarly, the vice-president of the PTA mentioned that “the environment doesn’t lend itself to meetings at night,” so that maybe an issue for other parents.

Summary

Holy Cross High School is a Non-Traditional High School and historically, children that attend this school are those who performed poorly in their PEP examinations. Worse, the school has been plagued by several challenges such as violence and poor reputation which has hindered progress in involving the family and community. Although Holy Cross High School has always housed children who are low- performers, hence its low rating over the years, this difficulty appears to be compounded by the current leadership.

The findings suggest the school needs to adopt a clear strategy for family and community involvement and to be more creative and persistent in getting the family and community on board.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the findings from each of the four case study high schools. The chapter provides a background of the four schools, shows how each of them has been involving the family and community, and identifies and discusses the outcomes, and challenges they face in relation to this. From the findings, it can be seen that the high-performing schools make school, family, and community involvement a priority and have more multidimensional activities to involve the family and community than the low-performing schools. The high-performing schools are more intentional and relentless than the

low-performing schools about involving the family and community. This is expounded on in the discussion chapter.

Chapter Six: Cross Case Analysis

This chapter presents the major themes generated from the data across the four cases and aligns them with the research questions. The four themes that were generated from the data are: The role of school leadership, school culture and climate, relationship building, and challenges to involvement. Table 6 gives a summary of the themes and sub-themes generated from the study.

Table 7

Themes and Sub-themes Generated From the Study

Theme	Sub-themes
1. The Role of School Leadership	Leadership and Vision Leadership and Perception Leadership and Accountability and Evaluation
2. School Climate and Culture	Welcoming and Enabling Environment Culture of Excellence
3. Relationship Building	Building Trust Collaboration Among Stakeholders
4. Challenges to Involvement	Poor Parenting Skills Perception About Involvement Stigma of School Family-related Factors

Main Research Questions and Sub-questions

The presentation of themes addresses research question one and its sub-questions.

1. How do high schools in Jamaica that are ranked high in family and community involvement differ from schools that are ranked low in family and community involvement?

1a. How do the two groups of schools involve families and communities? This is addressed by Themes 1 and 2 (see Table 4).

1b. What have the two groups of schools gained from family and community involvement? This is addressed by Theme 3 (see Table 4).

1c. What challenges do the two groups of schools face in involving the families and communities, how have they addressed these challenges, and what were the outcomes? This is addressed by Theme 4 (see Table 4).

Sub-research Question 1a: How do the Two Groups of Schools Involve Families and Communities?

The data show the importance of schools having strong leaders who are clear on their roles and responsibilities in developing a school, family, and community involvement programme. Schools with strong leaders who understand their roles and responsibilities in building such a programme are more likely to benefit from this relationship. These schools were found to be more successful when they were able to encourage the family and community to buy into the school's vision and mission, hold staff accountable, and conduct continuous evaluation. The findings for sub-research question 1a are presented in this section.

Theme One: The Role of School Leadership. The significance of the role of school leadership, in particular the principal's leadership, was a prominent theme generated from the data. The data revealed that the principal is crucial in determining whether and how families and communities participate in school activities and vice versa. Strong family and community involvement can translate into increased academic performance and student outcomes as well as positive outcomes for schools, families, and communities. From the data of both groups of schools, it can be seen that the high-performing schools have strong leadership, and the principals possess certain personal attributes such as ingenuity and the ability to collaboratively work with key stakeholders. The principal of Hutt Valley High School shared how he had to be ingenious in getting the support of the parents to fix the playing field:

I remember we had to keep PTA sometime up on the playing field and we carry the parents up there and we say “look here, this is where your kids are and we cannot expose them to the stones, a lot of stones,” so we say we need to level off the place and get jackhammer to come and dig out the stones and get topsoil, so we need the money, so when they see for themselves, they will contribute.

These principals also value and respect the family and community. For them, the school and their success as leaders and administrators depends on their relationship with the family and community. These two principals have both been described by staff, parents, and community members as strong leaders. They have also emphasised that these schools have been successful because of strong leadership from the principals who lead from the front. While one principal is new to the role, the other has been a principal since the year 2000 and she has had previous experience of this role in another school.

Conversely, the data indicates that the leadership at the low-performing schools is weaker, and the principals have difficulty unifying and commanding the respect of the staff. The staff at these schools also seem to be resistant to any form of change. At St. Fairview High School, one teacher admitted that they have been having some challenges with the principal. When asked to elaborate, she declined but said “we are working on it.”

The high-performing schools (Hutt Valley and Aberdeen High Schools) involve the family and community in numerous activities spearheaded and overseen by the principal; this strong involvement and proactive leadership are key to their success. Their initiatives are school-wide, and the principals are very instrumental in them. Principals not only “talk the talk,” but “walk the walk,” and take responsibility for getting the job done. These principals have a real passion for family and community involvement. The principal at Hutt Valley High School emphasised that “you have to really put your heart behind it and say to yourself that you are not doing it for yourself, you are doing it for the students.” Teachers are

assigned different responsibilities; training is provided in some cases; there is accountability and evaluation of programmes; and action is taken to improve standards. In the high-performing schools, the principals have defined the role of teachers more broadly than the low-performing schools because they expect staff to take on tasks other than classroom teaching; that is, to contribute to family and community involvement initiatives. The staff is made aware from the outset that participating in the family and involvement programme is part of their professional responsibility and not something ancillary.

The low-performing schools (St. Fairview and Holy Cross High Schools) do not have that strong leadership that promotes the school's connectivity with the family and community.

Based on observational fieldnotes and interviews with teachers, there is no school-wide initiative, and the few activities that do exist in the low-performing schools are primarily teacher-led which, in most cases, is related to the personality of the teacher. So, if the teacher is an outgoing and effective communicator, he/she is likely to have a good rapport with the family and community and may initiate certain activities. This was quite evident because many of the teachers I spoke with at these schools were not able to tell me about the activities that the school implements to engage the family and community and would often refer me to the Guidance Counsellor or another staff member. Most of the teachers do the bare minimum which is to teach and return to their homes on completion of their teaching. From observation and interviews, most of them do not support the extracurricular activities that the school organises. For example, at St. Fairview High, the PTA president lamented the poor turn-out of teachers at PTA meetings:

Well, we want more involvement with teachers at PTA. That is what I want to see.

The principal is always there, the vice-principal is always there, few teachers. Every

class has a teacher, more teachers are wanted; that is all we want, more teachers, more teachers.

My observation corroborates the lack of involvement from the teachers, as at the school's sports and open day there was just a handful of teachers, and some were even criticising the day's proceedings. The data generated describes the role of leadership in three main ways: leadership and vision, perception about leadership, and leadership and accountability and evaluation. It is the kind of leadership and support from the principal that determines the quality of involvement from the family and community. Below is a discussion of the themes.

Leadership and Vision. Research has shown that leadership in schools should have a clear vision of how the school can effectively involve the family and community, and all who are concerned with the school's undertakings should also own the vision (Edamo & Netshitangani, 2018; Gross et al., 2015). Sanders and Sheldon (2009) are of the view that principals should not impose their vision, but it should be created with the input of all key stakeholders. The high-performing schools in this study have a clear vision of the type of relationships they want with the family and community, what they want to achieve and how to get there, and this is owned by all stakeholders. In these two schools, leadership is distributed, and the input of staff, parents, and community members are valued and implemented if necessary. The leadership team effectively sets clear targets and strategies and inspires and collaborates with all stakeholders towards achieving the shared vision. Staff and parents of the high-performing schools describe their principals as visionaries.

One teacher at Aberdeen High School describes the principal as “a true visionary,” another describes her leadership as “leadership by listening, leadership by looking.” Parents at Hutt Valley High School describe the principal as being “visionary, innovative, positive,

enthusiastic, bold, and transformational.” At Hutt Valley High School, all stakeholders, from the vendors and taximen to the Chairman of the Board, buy into the vision and work together to achieve the vision of the school. All stakeholders understand that supporting children's learning is their responsibility. One of the teachers mentioned this:

I don't think there is any parent from Hutt Valley High who doesn't know the vision of the school and know what we are about, so once they realise that their child is deviating from this, they say, “no, no, that is not what Hutt Valley High stands for, not that, not that.”

The high-performing schools have outlined specific areas that they would like to target based on their needs and put plans in place to achieve this. As a result of their visions, the principals at the high-performing schools were able to initiate programmes/activities and get stakeholders on board in several activities. Hutt Valley High School from the outset had several cards stacked against them. Being a relatively new school located in an economically depressed community and plagued by the “dunce school” stigma, the leadership and staff knew that to improve the school and get rid of the stigma, the involvement of the family and community would be crucial. In the words of the principal “our parents are seen as one of the most influential stakeholder groups because we run to them for any and everything.”

Hutt Valley High School was deliberate about its approach to getting the family and community on board. As shown in chapter five, the principal believes the family and community will drive the image of the school. The school strategically impressed this upon the family and community members by initiating several activities specifically geared towards raising the image of the school. For example, each year the principal and his team would visit the different feeder schools and market the school and its programmes to prospective parents and teachers. Initially, they had issues with discipline and knew this had to improve so they used the parents as parent police. They knew they could not exist without

the support of the local residential community, so they made sure to use the informal name of the community when mentioning the location of the school and work with and provide assistance wherever necessary for the development of the community. This assistance included the patching of the roads and distribution of care packages so that the community would start owning and supporting the school.

Even though Aberdeen's High School's story is different from Hutt Valley High's, Aberdeen's High School principal noted that they would not have been able to achieve what they have without the support of the family and the community. Their parents are always there and very active. As stated in chapter five, the PTA even has an office on the school compound and, according to the president, this was to make their presence felt. So, whilst they are more privileged with family and community support, the principal admitted their success is attributed to the involvement of the family and community. One teacher corroborated the principal's story by mentioning that:

At various stages of Aberdeen's life since I have been here, I have noticed the communities' involvement with the development at Aberdeen. It might not be at the grandiose scale that we would want it but at least it has allowed us to develop and move past where we are.

Similarly, at Aberdeen High one of their three objectives for the 2017-2020 SIP is to increase parental involvement. They clearly outline their goals, imperatives, and initiatives for this objective and align them to Epstein's six typologies for family and community involvement. This provides a blueprint to guide the stakeholders and shows that the school is intentional about including the family and community.

The leadership of the low-performing schools have their vision of where they want the school to go, but from the findings of the study, their efforts are not purposeful and intentional enough and the vision is not shared with all stakeholders. As a result, they have

not been able to get the buy-in from the teachers, parents, and community, and not much attempt is made to involve the family and community. One teacher at Holy Cross High School noted that the school has a problem of getting the parents to connect with the vision and mission of the school and so the parents are not able to help them realise their goals. As shown by the data presented in chapter five, staff members are not proactive and consistent with their plans for including the family and community. The leadership of these low-performing schools has difficulty unifying the staff and commanding their respect. Staff tends to resist the simple directives of the principals, are resistant to change, and are unwilling to cooperate and take on additional responsibilities. One teacher at Holy Cross High School laments the level of disunity that exists at the school now. He mentioned that:

Well, the culture is one where when I just came there was a culture of unity more than now. Persons use to work together and of course in my time coming here as a young teacher we had senior teachers who really groomed and mentored. I fell in love with the school and that is why I am here until then. So, there was a culture of harmony and unity back then but now it is a bit different.

The principal of Holy Cross High School also commented that teachers there do not readily attach themselves to parents.

The leadership of the low-performing schools is also not consistent in their strategy to involve parents and the community— they give up after one failed attempt or the first couple of weeks of trying. As one teacher at St. Fairview High mentioned “we are sometimes not consistent, so sometimes we can’t even blame them [parents].”

Perceptions about Leadership. Stakeholders’ perceptions about leadership and the perception of the principals about their role in building a relationship with the family and community members also differ between the two groups of schools. Parents, teachers, community members, and other stakeholders of the high-

performing schools are impressed with their principal's leadership and what they have been able to do to involve the family and community and grow the schools. The teachers, community people, and other stakeholders speak glowingly about the leadership of these schools. This is not the case with the low-performing schools. Teachers and community members do not see them as effective or as displaying willingness to forge a relationship with the family and community.

Teachers, parents, and community members in the low-performing schools recall a time when the school's leadership was strong. The schools held various activities, and students, parents, teachers, and community members such as alumni were all highly supportive. One teacher at St. Fairview High School who has been there for over 28 years reminisced about the good times when different principals were at the helm and the school was vibrant and doing well. According to her:

Well, let me tell you in the first place, even before I started. I went to primary school up in Comma Pen. Most parents did not want their children to come to Tella school—that's what they called here. It was Tella school, secondary school and so they would send them to Haldein and Trotman High Schools. The ones who came here, they came because they couldn't pass the Common Entrance Examination. After a while I remember, Ms. McPherson was here. In early 2000 we were doing so good. We started doing CXC and we were entering festival, and everybody know about St. Fairview High as a result of JCDC festival and passing exam now. Ms. McPherson she was doing well, and we had sixth form too, yeah, we had sixth form. Students leaving from Trotman High to come to sixth form, leaving from comprehensive to come to sixth form, leaving from everywhere to come to sixth form.

She further shared that “other principals were more involved in the lives of the students and community and so forth. Not that he is not doing anything, but the others were more

involved. Other principals would be up and around.” She elaborated, saying “what I am happy for, I was in the good times, but knowing the good times and where we are now makes me feel sad.”

One vendor who has been selling at the school for years shared a similar view and mentioned that during the time of two particular principals, the community and family would come out in droves to support the school, but from the time the principalship changed to the present principalship, the school has not been getting any support from the family and community. This according to the vendor is because the present principal is not sociable. According to her:

Sometimes when he is passing, he doesn't even say hello; the rest of the teachers would say hello and come out and buy, but the principal is there and for one month, two months you don't see him. He only drives in, and you don't see him.

Another community member who was born and raised in the community shared her view:

First time you have a past principal name Ms. McPherson and when they make a function, over there would be full, the entire community would come, but now you see nobody, you wonder sometimes what is going on. The past students loved that principal so when they make a function, they come back and support them.

The high-performing principals' perceptions about the family and community's involvement is also different from the low-performing principals in that the principals of the high-performing schools see it as an important responsibility to involve the family and community and are open to trying everything to get the parents involved. As the principal of Hutt Valley High shared:

I always say to them, if it is that I have to preach you into saying yes, I am willing to do that, but it needs a partnership, the school cannot stand alone. So, it is a lot of coaching.

As shown in chapter five, the principal of St. Fairview High School has taken a different approach and feels that if parents are apathetic and unwilling to support, it is not worth the bother of making a concerted effort to involve the family and community.

It can be concluded that the perception of the leaders about their role in developing a relationship with the family and community differs between high and low-performing schools and this has affected the priority that the principals place on family and involvement activities. One principal at one of the high-performing schools is willing to do whatever is in his power to reach the family and community, while one at a low-performing school feels that it is not worth his time and effort if parents and community members are displaying apathy. This demeanour has contributed to how school, family, and community involvement activities are prioritised. The high-performing schools intentionally and persistently reach out to the community and family while the low-performing schools display a “don’t care” attitude.

It can be concluded that principal's perception of their role as leaders has a significant impact on the importance they place on developing school, family, and community involvement programmes.

Leadership, Accountability, and Evaluation. The leadership of the high-performing schools has a cadre of senior staff who are not only united in support of the school’s vision but promote and model such behaviour to other staff. Together these two schools provide meaningful opportunities for the families and communities to be involved in the school and make an impact. These schools have also been successful in the family involvement programme because there is a system of accountability and evaluation in place.

When principals establish a system of accountability, the people involved are more likely to take the school, family, and community involvement programme seriously.

Generally, when people know that they are not being evaluated on something they tend not to spend their time on it. Schools must evaluate their successes and challenges frequently so that they can improve and develop their programmes to reach more students, families, and communities in meaningful ways. In the high-performing schools in this study, there is a high degree of accountability and evaluation. The middle managers work alongside the principal and ensure that plans are carried out and there is an evaluation to see where they have fallen short and how they can improve the programme's effectiveness. Time, money, and staff are allotted for these activities to take place. At Hutt Valley High, one teacher mentioned that their system of evaluation involves a lot of action research:

You will find that we do a lot of action research, so based on the challenges that arise, we always try to see alright how then we can address these challenges. We come up with innovative strategies and ideas to match the needs.

Similarly, the principal shared that he meets with middle managers every Monday at 7:45 am to discuss the past week and make plans for the upcoming week and remind teachers of their deliverables each week or month. The plans are centred around academic matters as well as other activities that rely on the involvement of the family and community. The principal considers it a great sacrifice for the senior staff but mentioned that it is important for accountability and evaluation. At the end of the school year, there is an evaluation seminar where a representative from each stakeholder group is present, and discussions are held regarding the past school year and the upcoming school year. Plans are put in place and every stakeholder group gets to be part of the decision-making process. According to the principal:

It is a system that is supported by the board, by administrators, by parents, and each stakeholder is given a voice. No one stakeholder group is allowed to feel as if they are not a part of the school development and programme to involve the family and community.

Aberdeen High School also has a robust system of accountability and evaluation where there are frequent meetings with the principal and senior staff. The principal frequently meets with staff, PTA, and alumni presidents, as well as each grade mother and father to discuss issues that may arise in the grades. According to the principal “this is to ensure accountability as I am accountable for everything and everyone that falls in my portfolio.” As discussed in chapter five one teacher mentioned that the principal is very critical of her staff, not to eliminate them but to help them. This was supported by another teacher who shared that:

If she is not pleased with how you are performing, she is not afraid to say that you need to improve but overall, I do believe that she is very vision-driven and based on her vision we move along with her.

At the low-performing schools, there is limited accountability and evaluation in place. So even when the school would have discussed certain strategies to involve the family and community in their staff meetings or departmental meetings, many times they do not follow through or they give up after the first attempt. In the case at St. Fairview High School, they decided to do a community PTA meeting because the parents were not coming out to the meetings. No parent turned out, but instead of researching and doing an evaluation of where they went wrong and what to do differently, they gave up and discontinued the programme and resorted to blaming the parents for not being interested in their children. Similarly, a review of the SIP and the principal’s action plan shows the school and principal had some elaborate plans for the family and community such as the establishment of a coordinator for community involvement, a committee for community involvement, monthly PTA meetings, and community meetings but none was activated or achieved. Likewise, at Holy Cross High School, a review of their SIP for the years 2017-2020 revealed that of the five objectives listed, none spoke to the involvement of the family and community even though this has been

a perennial problem for the school and the principal admitting that “my job is half done if I get them [family and community] on board,” when she was asked what improvements she would like to see regarding the relationship between the school, family and community.

One of the reasons for the high-performing schools’ success, according to their principals and staff, is that they hold people accountable and take the time to evaluate the programme. As a result, people are able to reflect and identify areas of improvement. Based on the findings of the research, the low-performing schools need to improve in this area.

From the findings, it can be seen that schools that take the time to hold people accountable, assess, evaluate, and thoughtfully develop better ways to involve the family and community are generally more successful.

Summary

The results of these case studies emphasise the importance of the role of leadership, specifically the importance of the school principal in creating opportunities for family and community involvement. It also shows the difference in perception of principals at both high and low-performing schools and how that affects the level of interest that principals show towards school, family, and community involvement. It discusses the importance of schools having a system of accountability and evaluation in place to ensure that persons take the school, family, and community involvement programme seriously and improvement can be made.

Theme Two: School Climate and Culture

The school’s culture and climate were another theme that was generated from the data. Those schools that have a positive school climate and culture and make the family and community a priority were the ones that saw greater involvement from them. The theme was

manifested to different degrees in the four schools as some were more intentional about engendering a positive school climate and culture than others. At both high-ranked schools, the principals spoke about the importance of ensuring a school climate and a culture that is supportive, welcoming, and celebratory for everyone. Both schools have an ethos of warmth, camaraderie, support, and celebration and are intentional about this. For the low-ranked schools, this is not a priority, and their warmth is not so easily felt. These schools exude more of a negative aura. The theme of school culture and climate was manifested in two ways from the data generated from the study: welcoming and enabling environment, and culture of excellence.

Welcoming and Enabling Environment

The high-ranked schools have a positive school climate and culture and exude a welcoming feeling. This is manifested from the entrance to the school. The parents and community members at Hutt Valley High School noted this, and my observations concurred with the welcoming, caring attitude and approachability of the staff. Hutt Valley High School was the school that gave me the best reception during my six months of data collection. Teachers would pass by and stop and ask how I was doing and if I was getting through. The atmosphere was very friendly and helpful—from the security guard at the gate to the principal. At Hutt Valley High School, a husband and wife shared with me how they felt the first time they saw the school's property:

It was clean, well taken care of. It was maintained and the different showcase with the teachers and students averages and the grades and averages. It was very welcoming, and I felt very comfortable the first time my daughter came here. I felt like Wow! I think she is in a good place.

Other parents spoke about the unity and family feeling that exist at the school. One parent had this to say:

It is like a family, I like that. It doesn't really matter who the parent is, they make you feel like you are a part of the school. Once you come on the property is like they grab you and say "come, you are ours now, come," and I like that.

The president of the student council also shares a similar experience:

The culture of this school is quite elevating, uplifting because you can go to the principal and speak to him about any situation. I can go to him and speak to him about any little thing that is happening. Also, the teachers here are very friendly you can go to them and voice complaints and anything.

A similar sentiment was echoed of Aberdeen High School. Parents and teachers praised the principal and school climate for being personable, accommodating, and caring. One teacher mentioned that if he is to use one word to describe the school, it would be "caring." This was supported by the alumni president who mentioned that:

The principal is very welcoming, and she is always supportive of all our activities, and she always welcomes and host her past students, she always loves when past students pass through, come to her office and you know that she takes her pictures and post them on facebook.

The principal herself said "I do my best to have a caring school. I want people to know that I care about them." Both high-performing schools were described as caring when interviewees were asked to use one word to describe the schools.

This welcoming environment is one of the reasons families and community members readily become involved and stay involved in these schools. Hutt Valley High School, despite being in an economically challenged community, was able to establish a positive school climate. Parents spoke about how they readily volunteer their time and look out for the school and its students because of the environment and how the staff makes them feel. One parent mentioned that "the family feeling you have makes you want to come and support because

you want your school to be soaring.” Hutt Valley High School also shows respect for parental concerns and suggestions by having a suggestion/feedback box at the front of the school while Aberdeen High meets with parents regularly to respond to or resolve any concerns they may have. The two schools also show the family and community their appreciation by giving them a certificate of appreciation as well as gifts at the school’s annual award ceremony and PTA meeting.

The low-ranked schools, on the other hand, do not have a familiar warm atmosphere. Holy Cross High School lacks the familiar aesthetics that is characteristic of schools in Jamaica. There are no plants or well-kept yard; the schoolyard was always dirty, the compound noisy, and children could be seen outside of their classes walking up and down, some hurling expletives and engaging in abusive arguments and fights. The atmosphere is not welcoming, but hostile. Although St. Fairview High School’s physical environment was more conducive than Holy Cross’s to learning, the atmosphere was one of pessimism. The principal, teachers, and students were a picture of doom and gloom. The negative perception of the school seems to have affected everyone associated with it. At both low-ranked schools, the teachers and principals spend the time blaming the parents and students and they were often complaining. Despite the challenges at Holy Cross High School, the principal was, however, optimistic. She is hopeful that things will improve as they start to build relationships with all stakeholders. Parents and students speak highly about her warm and supportive personality. One parent spoke about how she made her feel good when she called about the PTA meeting “she is very accommodating because I remember once I called the phone to ask about the PTA meeting and she said that is so good. I have a parent here calling to find out when is PTA meeting.”

The principal at St. Fairview High school, however, is not so optimistic and seems to have given up. The school does not have a good relationship with the family and community

and does not make a concerted effort to involve them. The principal admitted to this, saying “I don’t think that we have put out enough effort to reaching out to the parents. I don’t think that we have reached out to them enough.”

As the study shows, when schools create a welcoming environment, the family and community are motivated to become involved.

Culture of Excellence

A culture of excellence is the hallmark of the high-performing schools. Excellence is expected from everyone associated with the school and it is nurtured and ingrained. In everyday interactions, students are reminded of their greatness, purpose, and ability to do great things and become better and world-beaters despite the odds. At Hutt Valley High School, there is a philosophy that no child should graduate without hearing several times that they are special. The principals invest in their students and staff and celebrate their successes. Staff members are encouraged to enter different professional competitions such as the Lasco Teacher of the year award and enrol in different professional and academic courses such as NCEL to aid their professional duties. The principal at Hutt Valley High spoke about several teachers who have moved on and are now principals and Education Officers. When you walk into the high-ranked schools, even if you feel like you are a failure once you enter the gates you feel encouraged and you are reminded of your greatness.

The staff at the high-performing schools are expected to promote and model excellence and the principals encourage and support all students and staff in their quest to be excellent. As one approaches Hutt Valley High, affirmations are lining the walkway and dispersed all over the compound. There are pictures of top-performing students and teachers all over the compound and there is even a wall dedicated to top students in the School’s Ivy League. The student’s names, photos, and averages are placed there culminating in a big ceremony where the parents are invited to come in and badge their child with the Ivy League

Pin. This is also one of the many reasons parents gravitate towards the school and get involved. Parents spoke about coming to the school compound for the first time and seeing the name of the top-performing students and teachers on display. The parent observed that “the Ivy League thing, it pushes students and parents to work with their children and let them aspire.”

According to the principal of Hutt Valley High “new teachers are made to understand that this is a school of excellence, and they are required to demonstrate the same attitude.” The leadership teams of both schools, Hutt Valley High School and Aberdeen High, effectively inspire and collaborate with all stakeholders towards achieving a shared vision of a school of excellence where both students and staff are encouraged to do well. When this culture of excellence is not being maintained or depicted, the relevant authority will step in and provide training. For example, an ancillary worker in one department at Hutt Valley High School was not demonstrating this excellence and so, after getting permission from the principal, the teacher in that department partnered with HEART/NSTA Trust and trained all the department’s ancillary staff and then HEART/NSTA Trust came in and certified them. The school also partnered with HEART/NSTA Trust and certified their groundsmen, parents, and other community members in crop production and data operations. Excellence is expected from parents and community members as well and that is why the school has a yearly award ceremony for the top parent in the parent score competition as well as other outstanding parents. They also award their vendors and taximen for their partnership and the outstanding service they render to the students throughout the school year.

Similarly, Aberdeen High School has a rich history of academic excellence which is also ingrained in their culture. As shown in chapter five, according to one teacher, this excellence is demonstrated in every sphere whether on the playfield, in educational competitions, or in the classroom. Likewise, the principal of Aberdeen High School describes

the school as “success-driven and staff and students are highly motivated and raring to go.” This culture of excellence has resulted in Aberdeen High School getting the support of the family and community in every aspect of school life. They give unreservedly because they always want their school to be on top in everything. The coach of the School’s Challenge Quiz team, which is the reigning champion, is a past student and current president of the PTA.

At the low-ranked schools, based on interviews and observations, principals and teachers care about their students and do encourage the students to work hard. They are interested in their success and will sometimes go the extra mile, but it is not ingrained in the students, and they do not seem to buy into it. That rich culture of excellence that consumes the very ambiance of the school compound and which forms a part of everything the teachers and students at the high-ranked schools do, does not exist in these schools. This may be due in part because, at the low-ranked schools, both the teachers’ and students’ morale are low, and many teachers seem to be pessimistic resulting in them being unable to engender this culture of excellence. At St. Fairview High, for example, observations and interviews with the principal and teachers suggest that they are very pessimistic, and students act and believe like they are failures. This is perpetuated by the community and parents. According to the principal:

Parents themselves don’t really, I don’t know if it is value education, or it is that they don’t believe that the school can offer what they want for their children. They believe that their children coming here are already a failure because that is why they were placed here and so we don’t have enough effort from them to change their impression of the school – to say “although my child is here, I am going to make certain that this is the best school that my child is going.” We are not getting that from them. In terms of the students, they have a don’t care attitude towards education overall. They

believe that they can do as they feel like. They want to come to school anytime. There is not that love for school nor their education.

At Holy Cross High School, even though the principal is very optimistic and uses every opportunity she gets to motivate and remind the students of their greatness, their uniqueness, and their gifts, the school has difficulty getting the students to buy into this, especially since for many of them it is not reinforced at home or in the community. The school has not been able to get the family and community on board to support their vision, so the students do not get that sort of support from their parents which is further perpetuated by the “dunce school” stigma. The teachers are also pessimistic. It seems like the only positive person there is the principal which translates to limited or lack of support from them.

According to the findings of the study, a school with a culture of excellence attracts families and communities who are more eager to contribute their time and effort in developing the school.

Summary

The findings reveal the importance of creating a positive school climate and culture and the difference this makes in terms of commitment and involvement of family and community, as well as the staff at the school. The findings support the notion that human beings like to know that they are valued, respected, and appreciated. This study shows that schools that have developed this ethos via a welcoming and enabling environment and a culture of excellence can attract the involvement and support of the family and community.

Sub-research Question 1b: What Have the Two Groups of Schools Gained From Family and Community Involvement?

The data show that schools that have a good relationship with the family and community are poised to benefit from this relationship. The research findings show these schools were able to develop a relationship with the family and community by getting the family and community to trust them which led to various collaborative efforts. This section presents the findings related to sub-research question 1b.

Theme Three: Relationship Building. There is the premise that the success of a school, family and community involvement programme is relational. Schools that can build a relationship with all families and communities are supportive and encouraging to the family and community and set a strong foundation for involvement as it builds personal trust (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008; Jeynes, 2011; Hill, Witherspoon, & Bartz, 2018; Mutch & Collins, 2012). The findings of this study revealed that all schools believe that it is important to build a relationship with the family and community; however, the high-performing schools are those schools that devote time and energy to providing various opportunities for interaction and relationship building. Such opportunities include domino nights, socials, parties, sports competitions, and community devotions. These schools that have been able to establish and maintain good relationships with the family and community have benefitted tremendously in many varied ways. These include safety and security, improvement in grades and behaviour, infrastructural development, and the establishment of partnerships. One teacher at Hutt Valley High School elaborated on some of the benefits the school has gained because of the relationship with the family:

Trust me you see once they [students] know you are in communication with mommy, you will be surprised to see how well they [students] behave. You see the students who know that I am in contact with their parent, their grades are normally very good because they know that we have the support and that's one of the things too with the grade 11 parents which is what we do every year we call them at the beginning so we want them to know that I can't do this alone and I am sure you need my assistance, so let us work together, let us work together and as a result of that when it comes down to the SBA, if I call you and say Mrs. McPherson, Joel McPherson is not submitting the SBA, Joel knows that tomorrow morning the SBA has to come in because mommy is now aware of it. You see the students who know that we are in dialogue with their parents they normally do well, and they normally behave well.

At Hutt Valley High School, even the vendors have bought into the vision and mission. They adhere to the school's rules and regulations because of the relationship that the schools established with them.

The low-performing schools on the other hand have challenges getting the support of the vendors who continuously break the school rules. The relationship with the family and community differ in all four schools as some schools are more intentional, deliberate, and persistent than others. However, what was obvious in all four schools was that relationship with the family and community matter.

The data shows where the leadership of a school is strong, and where they make building relationships with the family and community a priority, the school does better, but when the leadership changes to someone who does not make relationship building a priority, the involvement, and support from the family and community wane. This goes to show that relationship building is crucial for schools to initiate and sustain and for them to reap the benefits from a good relationship with the family and community. It was through this

intentional relationship building that the schools were able to reap the many benefits from the family and community. Relationship building was manifested in two ways in the data: Building Trust and Collaboration.

Building Trust. To create a relationship with families and communities so that they feel welcome to engage in school activities and work on programmes, schools must gain their trust, which can only be achieved through deliberate and continuous effort. From the data, the high-ranked schools are more successful at this than the low-ranked schools. To build trust, the two high-ranked schools place great emphasis on communication by ensuring that there is timely and effective communication between the school and the family and community. Communication is not limited to only giving the family bad news about their children, but the family and community are kept abreast of everything that goes on at the schools through the various media such as WhatsApp groups, social media pages, telephone calls, circulars, platforms such as RenWeb and Edmodo, print and broadcast media. This is in keeping with Epstein's typology of communication which speaks to schools designing effective forms of communication of school to home and home to school.

The principal at Hutt Valley High explained that the school has a very close relationship with the family and community because they have made it a priority to sustain this relationship. Parents started trusting the school more, so whenever the school calls on them to be involved, they have no challenge. The principal said that "we allow them to be comfortable by establishing that environment where they can share and so you find that they are trusting us more." This is manifested in parents supporting and always looking out for avenues to support the school. They willingly offer their time and services for free, providing donations, volunteering to cook and clean up while the teachers teach at camps, undertaking mentorship programmes, being a teacher's aide, parent police, and serving on school committees. The

school was also intentional about strengthening the ties with community members and gaining the trust of the residential community. They started this by adopting the informal name of the community which showed the community that they value them and identify with them.

According to one teacher:

We try to ensure that because we don't just say Hutt Valley, St.Martin, but Hutt Valley, Deeside, St. Martin so they know that we identify ourselves with them and our success is Deeside's success. They know that we really need them, the relationship that we have will be what speaks to our success.

The relationship between Hutt Valley High School and the community is symbiotic. This relationship is built and maintained in many different ways resulting in the school and the community working on several projects to improve the community such as the patching of the roads and distribution of care packages to the needy. The school has also partnered with some older men in the community to mentor some boys that were displaying deviant behaviour. Safety and security of the school also improved so instead of members of the community stealing from the school they now look out for and protect it. The principal reflected that:

It is relationship building that will allow us to have an easy life and to really function incident-free, relationships. It is relationship too why we have been able to have a set of chicken to its six weeks. Plantains, all of that we use to lose that, and we are not seeing that anymore.

The behaviour of the students has improved because students know that the community and school are on board and whenever they do anything wrong members of the community will report them to the school. The principal also makes it a point of duty to have regular meetings with the vendors and taximen to ensure that they are on board with the mission of the school.

A symbiotic relationship also exists at Aberdeen High School where the school has been able to develop and sustain a trusting relationship with the family and community. All

the stakeholders spoke about the excellent relationship that exists with the school, so much so that the staff at times feel that the parents are very unreasonable in some of their demands of the school. The families and community are very involved in the school and support the school in many ways. As stated in chapter five the PTA has an office on the school compound and manages the school's breakfast programme. This strong rapport and trust results in the school benefitting tremendously from the goodwill of the family and community who provide infrastructural support, mentorship, and donations, among other things. Conversely, the school provides support to their community who are in need such as the Children's Home, and to people in Jamaica or other countries who have been affected by natural disasters. According to one of the vice-principals, the relationship at the school is at such a high that parents frequently call and ask how they can be involved and be of assistance. He elaborated, saying:

The relationship with the parent and community is as vibrant as it could be. The rapport is strong, the relationship is at its highest level. I could not...I would be unreasonable to ask for more, and that is how I see it.

The low-performing schools on the other hand are struggling with building a relationship with most of the families and community and gaining their trust. In most cases, interaction with the family and community is about bad news. According to teachers at St. Fairview High School, the only time parents come to the school is when their child has committed some misdemeanour and is forced. One teacher shared that "in most cases, when you see parents come, it's because their child has actually done something bad that requires them to come in, and they get a letter for them to come here." As shown in chapter five, one teacher at Holy Cross High School likens the school's relationship with the family as having family overseas that they only see when something bad happens. Teachers at the low-performing schools think that if the schools improve their relationships with the family and

community, some of their problems will be improved. One teacher at St. Fairview High School had this to say:

For one, I believe that if we have a good relationship with the parents and the community, I think it will improve the behavioural problems that we have here, and it can also help to improve the attendance and to some extent it might be able to improve the academics because at least they will have more interest in the lives of their children.

Building relationships is not an easy task, and it will not happen immediately, so schools must be willing to make the effort and put in the work to earn the trust of the family and community. The principals and staff of the low-performing schools appear to be more concerned about engaging in the blame game and they lament how uninterested the parents and the community are. When the principal of St. Fairview High was asked about the relationship with the family and community his response was “you can’t have a relationship with somebody who you don’t see very often, so there is no relationship between parents and the community.” However, one teacher at St. Fairview High acknowledged that parents cannot be blamed all the time. According to her “sometimes we are not consistent, can’t even blame them all the time. We talk too much and no action, only mouth we have.” So, it seems that, at St Fairview, while some attempts are made to build a relationship with the family and community, these attempts are not consistent and purposeful.

At Holy Cross High School, the principal stressed the importance of building a relationship with everybody to be successful. Her main aim is to build a relationship with everybody so that parents and the community can be more responsive and involved:

For me, I am trying to build relationships because I believe that when persons are happy when persons feel like they are a part of a vision and a mission, they are a part of something, a part of a family because that is what I call relationship, then your job

is half done, it is half done. Even the children, when I find that I build a relationship with the parents, I build a relationship with the students, with my teachers, with the board, with all stakeholders, then that is when I find that my job now is then just to sell the vision, and that is what I am trying to do.

As the study shows, when schools build a relationship with the family and community and gain their trust, they have no challenge in getting them to become involved. The family and community are eager to contribute their time and resources to help support and build the school.

Collaboration Among Stakeholders. Relationship building is the cement that holds people together and once they realise that they share common values and ideas, they willingly collaborate on various projects. The high-ranked schools under discussion have established a working relationship with the family and community and have been able to collaborate on many projects for the benefit of all. For example, Hutt Valley High School collaborates with the family and community in many ways and has been able to reap many benefits. These include the facilitation of work experiences, scholarships, mentorships, volunteerism, and outreach activities such as free health services from doctors, nutritionists, and nurses at their health fair, parents volunteering to dig a long jump pit free of cost, among others. As shown in chapter five, the school has greatly benefitted from collaboration with a major food conglomerate in Jamaica, and collaboration with the residential community on community improvement projects. This has resulted in the school and community engendering a good relationship.

Similarly, Aberdeen High School through its collaborative efforts has been able to gain tremendously from the support of the family and community and form partnerships. The data reveal that parents and community members are eager to collaborate with the school.

Alumni and PTA work on projects such as solar panel installation. As shown in chapter 5, the school collaborates with companies such as the National Commercial Bank of Jamaica. They allow them to use their playfields in exchange for the school using their swimming pool, tennis court, and gym. The PTA collaborates with Facey Commodity, distributor of Consumer products and Food for the Poor that provides them with food items for their breakfast programme.

At the low-ranked schools, there has not been much collaboration. Holy Cross High School has opportunities for collaboration but has not capitalised on these. The school is located in a business community with several large corporations, but they have not exploited this opportunity. When asked about this, some of the respondents started to construct barriers before attempting. For example, the PTA vice-president mentioned competition from other schools in and around the business community who may be asking the same persons:

Everybody will be asking the same people and so, it is a tight area to operate in with just a few of the persons who would be able to give. That doesn't mean we couldn't be asking but they would have a list of persons who are a priority for them, so it doesn't necessarily mean that having asked you are even going to be an appendage on their list.

The principal has a similar view:

You find that people will support things that they can benefit from and so it is very difficult to get the support from the businesses, you won't get it so easily. You will have one or two persons, as I say, who will come in and just do it for the love, yes, but you won't get it wholesale, I can tell you that, you are not going to get it. I haven't seen it materialise then.

So even though the school has done some collaboration such as with HEART/NSTA Trust, there is much more that can be done especially with the family. Of all the schools, St.

Fairview High has the least amount of collaboration with the family or community. Building relationships and collaborating are important as even the low-ranked schools have demonstrated this importance. As the study shows, when they can collaborate, they benefit tremendously from the support of family and community and vice versa.

Summary

The results of the research show the power of a symbiotic relationship between the school, family, and community, the importance of gaining the trust and support of the family and community, and the benefits this can produce. Schools were able to benefit from increased safety and security, improved behaviour, infrastructural development, donation, work experiences, mentorship, and scholarships. Relationship building, however, takes time, commitment, and much effort; therefore, schools will have to be persistent in building and sustaining relationships with the family and community. To do so effectively, all hands have to be on deck. Once these relationships are established, all indications are that there will be much to be gained from collaboration with the community and family.

Sub-research Question 1c: What Challenges do the two Groups of Schools Face in Involving the Families and Communities; How Have They Addressed These Challenges, and What Were the Outcomes?

This section discusses the final theme - Theme four, challenges to involvement – and four associated sub-themes. These include poor parenting skills; stigma associated with the school; differences in perception about involvement and family-related factors.

Theme Four: Challenges to Involvement. All four schools in the study grapple with different challenges to involvement which, in some cases, have affected their ability to reach out to the family and community and develop a relationship.

Some schools have devised strategies to deal with the challenges along with being persistent and have been reaping benefits. However, even the high-performing schools admitted that despite their best efforts they just cannot reach some parents.

Poor Parenting Skills. All schools identified issues with parenting that have affected their ability to get the parents and community involved. Many parents are unaware of their parental obligations, and this has been a perennial problem which has been corroborated by all three experts that were interviewed for this study; namely, the representative of the NEI, NPSC which was born because of the prevalence of poor parenting skills and the need to fix it, and the MOEYI. The representative from the NEI had this to say:

Parenting is a big issue on the Jamaican scene, not simply because parents want to be bad parents but, I believe where I am now that parenting education is something that has to be taught because many of the people who have children are children themselves. Their childhood was aborted and because of that, they lack the skills to take on another human being that looks like a doll and so it is self-perpetuating – and so it is why it is such a big issue and why it is one of the prominent key things in our framework.

At Aberdeen High School which enjoys the support of most of their parents, one of the vice-principals also mentioned that parenting is a problem that they face because according to her “unfortunately, some parents who are parents have no business being parents because they really don’t know how to parent.” This is reflected in the apathy that these parents show towards their children’s education. The school has not been able to get these parents involved and, according to this vice-principal, in most instances the children of these parents are the ones who break the school rules in terms of deportment, truancy, and bringing contraband into the school.

Teachers at Holy Cross High School also observe that there is a serious lack of parenting skills, with many of the students coming from broken homes and crying out for love. According to one teacher, many parents blatantly come in and say to the school “I don’t care, I don’t care, so anything you want to do, I don’t care about him.” This teacher’s experience was corroborated by the President of the Student Association who also sits on the school board. He mentioned that many times he has been in meetings with a child and her parent along with the principal when the parent will say things like:

She is alright, I don’t care, she can go about her business. When the principal asks the child, what is it that she wants, the child's response is “all I want is some love from my mother.” All the principal start cry. Not every parent has a good relationship with their child because some parents don’t care about their child. Some of them need to take the time out to find out what their children are doing; only certain parents do those things, so you need everybody to just try find out what is going on for their child. You have some parents who never come to school yet and they have children coming to school. Every time you call them, they can’t come. Always have a reason, they can’t make it, they have work, all when they don’t have work. To me it is some lie they are telling. If you care about your child, you will find the time to come, that means you don’t care about your child then, you will find the time for him or find the time for her to come school.

Similarly, teachers at Hutt Valley High lament the challenges they face with poor parenting.

One teacher shared that:

Some of our students are from broken homes and some of the challenges too is that you really can’t find anybody to hold accountable, you really can’t find that one parent to hold accountable because the situation is just so bad, the situation is just so bad. It is just today before I came over to you, I was handling one such situation

where I had one of my students who has been out for a while, I have been trying to contact the parent and we are recognizing now that the number on file has changed and because the student has been out for so many times you know you have to get now the parent to find out what has been happening and stuff like that and so that's the challenge. What I have to do now that the child is here is to grab the child and say, "you can't leave, I need to talk to you, I am going to dig it out of you, I need a number for somebody, it might not be the mother, but it must be your aunty, uncle, somebody," I need to get that. So, the challenge is sometime because of the home situation you really can't find that one person to hold accountable and then the story that you get is that you know I can't give the details it's so crazy. The home situation can be so crazy that it makes it difficult for you to hold any person accountable and so that's a situation I had to turn over to the Guidance Counsellor for them to either do a home visit or some other form of intervention, so those are some of the things we face. Sometimes where students are from these broken homes and because of that it poses a challenge in terms of how the child functions at school and so I must say majority of these things now I will turn over to the Guidance Department for them to take the necessary actions to address them.

The Guidance and Counselling office tries to help the parents by offering different training sessions, but, in most cases, the sessions are poorly attended, and they are not able to reach the parents who need the information. Teachers often say "we are preaching to the converted because who we really want to see are not sitting in front of us." At both low-performing schools, the interaction between the home and school, is in most cases, because of something negative such as when the school calls the parents in when their child has committed some infraction. The issue of poor parenting has affected the interest that parents display in the education of their children.

Stigma Associated with the School. The “dunce school” stigma has seriously affected three of the four schools studied, two of which have not been able to eradicate the stigma. From the findings of the research, parents and the community have a negative perception of these schools and the students who go to these schools are seen as failures and, generally, parents do not see any hope or promise in these children. Many poor parents see their children as a ticket out of poverty and when their child is placed at these schools, they do not see any hope of them doing well, going on to university, or getting a “good” job. As results of the study show, this has resulted in a lack of interest and, if the parents have other children going to Traditional High Schools, all the money and resources are spent on those children: the evidence shows that parents tend to be more supportive of those children and involved in their schoolwork and progress. This view was supported by the NEI and MOEYI representatives that were interviewed. According to the MOEYI representative:

The support a parent may give to a child attending a Traditional High School may not be the same support they give to the child attending a Non-Traditional High School.

We find that you have parents who may have children at a Traditional High School and also a Non-Traditional High and they will spend more time in the Traditional High School, and they will put the resources on that child and the other child suffers.

Teachers even share instances of parents approaching them and asking them to work with their children to improve their grades so they will be able to be transferred to the Traditional High School in the parish. This characteristic is considered a contributing factor to the school’s traditionally low level of family and community involvement. One parent at Holy Cross High School mentioned that some parents often stay away and avoid getting involved because they are ashamed to let people know that they have a child attending such a

school and believe it is a waste of their time. This stereotype has been maintained by the community, as academically weaker children are frequently told by members in the community as well as by teachers in primary schools that they would end up in one of the “dunce schools.” This experience was shared by the principal and teachers at St. Fairview High School “so people would say, ‘oh the school dunce, so go on up there, you not going anywhere than St. Fairview High School,’ so the students come with the mentality that there is nothing good at St. Fairview High.”

The data shows that all three of the schools in the study have grappled with the “dunce school” stigma which has impacted their capacity to involve the family and community. However, it shows that while one principal appears to have given up, another has not, and a third school has gotten rid of such stigma and moved from a low-performing to a high-performing school and, as the study indicates is reaping tremendous success.

Differences in Perception about Involvement. Differences in perception about involvement is another challenge that affects how involved the family and community are, and how much schools reach out to the family and community. Principals, teachers, parents, and community members from all four schools have varying perceptions of what it means to be involved. These differences in perception particularly that of some parents, poses a problem.

For the teachers, principals, and some parents, involvement means the parents participating in school-based activities such as attending PTA meetings, PTCs, or any other meetings or event to which the school may invite them. Whilst there are some teachers, especially at St. Fairview and Holy Cross High Schools, who lament that parents are not involved in home-based activities such as ensuring that the homework is done and children are prepared for school, much of their concern was centred on parents not participating in school-based activities. The teachers contend that the parents only come to the school when

they are forced to, as in the situation when their children are going to be suspended or expelled.

However, most of the parents I spoke with at all four schools also spoke about the different ways they are involved at home. This ranged from providing verbal encouragement to physically helping the child and ensuring that there is a conducive home environment for the child to study and get schoolwork done. The findings also reveal that the principals and teachers of the low-performing schools categorise involvement. The schools limit contribution to just attending meetings or those who can make a significant cash donation. But they overlook the parents who can only contribute their time for projects such as to dig a hole, build a fence or paint the school. Parents at all four schools agree with the perception that involvement in school activities mostly means that parents should be at meetings and other events and regard it as a parent absconding from their responsibilities when they do not attend meetings or other events organised by the school. Some even believe that attendance at PTA meetings should be one of the criteria for graduation.

However, the study's findings reveal that some parents have a different perception about what involvement entails. Some parents are of the view that their involvement as parents is mostly home-based and ensuring that the child can go to school as often as they are able. One parent at Hutt Valley High School and another from St. Fairview mentioned that even though they do not attend meetings at the school regularly, they often stop the teachers on the road and ask how the child is doing. Even though these parents may not be able to attend a PTA meeting or PTC day, they are using other opportunities to check up on their children. This shows a gap in perception and behoves the schools to be clear on what family involvement means to them and communicate this to the parents as well.

Family-related Factors. One of the most cited reasons for family and community not being involved in schooling is family-related factors such as the

socioeconomic status of families, work schedules and commitment, transportation, and level of education. When parents, especially those who are poor, are unable to attend meetings or events at the school, they are referred to by schools as being “disinterested” in the welfare of their children. Having spoken to some parents at Holy Cross High School who are vendors, whose daytime is consumed with selling on the streets, it is clear that it is not because some of these parents are disinterested, but because their jobs do not allow them the latitude to attend meetings at school, especially during the day. These parents are trapped in a cycle of poverty, struggling to make ends meet daily. As a result, they are forced to choose between attending a meeting and losing money or “hustling” to put food on the table and send their children to school the next day.

Based on the constraints, these parents will only attend a meeting when it is very important such as if the child may be suspended or expelled. One of the parents I spoke with shared that because of her job as a vendor she has never been to a meeting or event at the school. The reason she was at the school that day was that her son was caught selling sweets in violation of the school rules. The selling of products is common in many schools as many poor students engage in it to support themselves. Issues like these will force a parent to drop in at the school because of the fear that the child will be suspended or expelled from school if they do not show up. This parent also said that she assists at home as best as possible. Sometimes in the nights when she gets home, or early in the mornings, she checks his bag and his books. She shared that:

In the nights as I tell you about my business, in the nights when I go in, I will stay for all an hour and go through the bag, and I would say, “but this is not right, or that is not right – you need to do the corrections, or you need this assignment to be done.”

More time I will send him up to the bigger sister, so she will help him because I don't understand the work.

This one account reveals several factors that prevent many parents, especially from poorer schools from supporting their children as they would have liked. It reveals poverty, a rigid work schedule, and a lack of or inadequate education.

Whilst it is clear that some factors prevent some parents from being involved whether, at home or school, my research also reveals that some parents display apathy towards the education of their children. Two parents I spoke with at St. Fairview High School admitted that they do not attend meetings or interact with the school and, when quizzed as to why this is so, they had no reason. Both readily admitted that there are no constraints as they both live within walking distance of the school, and one is unemployed presently while the other is self-employed. One also admitted that her niece, who also has a child attending the said school, often reminded her, and invited her, while the other mentioned that most times she does not receive the circular from her daughter because the daughter said she knows she will not attend. So, while in some instances, it is not apathy as there are some serious constraints, in other cases, as my research reveals, some parents are disinterested in becoming involved at school.

Transportation is another problem that plagues schools and their ability to involve the family and community. There is no zoning in Jamaica and because of the two-tiered education system that exists at the secondary level, many parents seek to send their children to more established and prestigious schools. This results in many children living outside the immediate area which sometimes is far away from home. For those, especially in the rural areas, transportation is unreliable, and cost is expensive. This prevents many parents from being able to attend meetings or to be involved as they would like. One of the CREOs at the Ministry of Education also noted this as a challenge. He mentioned that:

One of the problems that we find in the region is that you have students not living in the zones where the school is. The majority of the students do not live directly in the community and so parents find it difficult to go to the various PTA meetings because of the long distances and many of them are working, some of them are working in the hotel industry. Many of them are not in a position to get time off from work.

As described in chapter five, one parent at St. Fairview High School attended a PTA meeting and did not reach home until 11:30 pm. She vowed never to return to another PTA meeting. So, some parents are not able to be as involved because of the cost of transportation as well as the unreliability of transportation, especially for those living in the rural areas. Hutt Valley High School's principal also spoke about being faced with a similar problem which prompted them to start having community PTA meetings, while Aberdeen High school has its PTA meeting at 5 pm to accommodate those parents who are coming from work. This seems to work for many parents especially since most of them are in a stable job. However, while I was observing the PTA meeting, one of the parents sitting beside me was complaining that he needs to leave because persons need to remember that not everybody drives.

The parents' level of education also affects the level of involvement especially in home-related activities. One parent at Holy Cross High School admitted to this reality "I cannot help him much; I don't understand the work. These kind of Math and thing, they are different from my days." She however mentioned that she often sends him to his older sister for assistance "the sister as I tell you, she is mostly the backbone because she goes so far up, she went to university, whatever work she helps him." As shown in chapter five, the principal and teachers at St. Fairview High School also acknowledged that many of the community members and parents are non-readers which is a reason for their lack of involvement at both home and school.

The results of the study show that there are some serious challenges that some parents face which have affected their ability to be as involved as they would like. Some of which forces them to choose between attending a meeting and losing money to put food on the table and send their children to school the next day.

Summary

The findings from these case studies highlight the importance of leadership particularly the principal's role – in creating opportunities for family and community involvement, creating a positive school culture, and building a relationship with the family and community. It also reveals the numerous challenges that schools face in their quest to involve the family and community in their children's educational experience. The findings show that the high-ranked schools are more intentional and persistent, and place high importance and value on their family and community involvement programme. The findings also reveal that some families experience real challenges that prevent them from being as involved as they would like. The study reveals certain gaps in perception about why parents are not involved – knowledge that all schools may find useful. However, it can be seen from the high-performing schools – especially Hutt Valley High School which changed its status from low to high-performing – that with effective leadership and by being innovative, creative, and thinking outside of the box, relationships can be built, a positive school climate and culture can be developed, and some of these challenges can be overcome.

Chapter Seven: Discussion of Findings

This chapter discusses major findings in the study aligning them with the research questions, literature review, and theoretical framework that underpinned the study. Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence and six typologies of school, family, and community involvement was used to guide the study in data gathering as well as analysis of the findings. This chapter begins with a discussion of the findings for the sub-research questions of research question 1. It is followed by a summary of research question 1 and then the presentation and discussion of the modified model for research question 2.

The main aim of this study was to compare high and low-performing schools' involvement with the family and community to unearth and ultimately share best practices for the benefit and development of students. The following are the main and sub-research questions:

1. How do high schools in Jamaica that are ranked high in family and community involvement differ from schools that are ranked low in family and community involvement?
 - 1a. How do the two groups of schools involve families and communities?
 - 1b. What have the two groups of schools gained from family and community involvement?
 - 1c. What challenges do the two groups of schools face in involving the families and communities; how have they addressed these challenges, and what were the outcomes?
2. What might be a framework for school-family and community involvement in Jamaica?
 - 2a. What components can be added to Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence framework used in the study?

2b. What components can be removed from Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence framework used in the study.

Whilst the literature (Henderson et al., 2007; Santana, Rothstein & Bain, 2016) is clear that family and community involvement in education does not guarantee success, the findings from this research show that the two schools that have continued to experience success are those that prioritise family and community connection and have received strong support from the family and community. Their programmes are well-planned and executed. These schools are intentional, persistent, and consistent in their efforts to involve families and the community. Developing and sustaining a family and community involvement programme requires much work and tenacity as people are different and can be hard to get along with. Teachers and principals of Hutt Valley and Aberdeen High Schools acknowledged these realities. A discussion of the findings relating to Research Question 1 follows. First, I answer the sub-questions relating to Research Question 1, which is followed by a summative answer to Research Question 1.

Sub-research Question 1a: How do the Two Groups of Schools Involve Families and Communities?

The findings of my research show that high-performing schools involve the family in many ways. In particular, the high-performing schools provide more multidimensional activities than low-performing schools, and these range from home-based to school-based activities. Their activities align with Epstein's six typologies. These activities include inviting the family and community to volunteer in school activities such as painting the school buildings; refurbishing school property; providing mentorship; being guest speakers at school events; taking on roles such as parent trained police, class mother, or coach for extracurricular and academic programmes such as schools' challenge quiz team, basketball,

and netball teams; sponsoring of events and awards; making financial and in-kind donations; serving on various committees; assisting with fundraising events; assisting with classroom instructions; skills training and certification; and assisting parents in helping their children complete homework. These involvement activities by the high-performing schools are also some of the activities that are highlighted in the literature as being effective (Barrera & Warner, 2012; Chen & Chandler, 2001; Obeidat & Al-Hassan, 2009).

The high-performing schools recognise the importance of maintaining close links with their families and communities, so they connect with them in various ways. Successful school, family, and community involvement necessitate continuous collaboration, support, and participation from school personnel, families, and communities at home, school, and in the community in activities that can directly affect children's learning success. In positioning this to the theory, the high-performing schools experience the greatest overlap of the family and community working together in the development of the child even though each sphere is affected by certain challenges such as work schedules and time constraints. The high-performing schools try to meet the families where they are; not where they think they ought to be.

The high-performing schools do not only try to get the family and community involved in the school but also ensure that the staff and the students are involved in their communities. At both high-performing schools, a criterion for graduation is for students to complete 30 hours of service in their community. The schools engender empathy in the students and impress on them the need to give back. Although the students at Hutt Valley High School are generally from poor economic backgrounds and many times staff assist needy students, the school emphasises the importance of giving back and looking out for others. Through various clubs and societies, the students walk the community, greet community members, visit the Girls' Homes and infirmaries, and distribute care packages to

the less fortunate. Participants in the study were clear that these activities have enabled the schools to build strong relationships with the family and community. This finding supports the literature as, according to Hands (2008) and Sanders and Harvey (2002), when students get involved in their community it encourages citizenship, civic responsibility, and builds their self-esteem. This ensures that these children will be able to contribute productively to their communities and country later in life.

The low-performing schools, on the other hand, have done little to reach out to the families and communities, and most families and communities are not involved in the schools, so there is little overlap of the three spheres of influence in children's lives. The few activities these schools did engage in were mostly focused on school-based involvement with a limitation to attendance at PTA meetings and PTC day. Both schools acknowledge the issues they are having with family and community involvement, but they have not intentionally and consistently created opportunities for the family and community to be involved. They have resorted more to putting up barriers before even attempting. The principal at Holy Cross High School is, however, keen on building relationships with the family and community and has been experiencing some overlap with the community. Both alumni and PTA representatives told me that the principal was the one who reached out to them for their support in strengthening both associations. There is, however, much more that needs to be done by both low-performing schools to involve the family and community. The different ways in which the four schools involve the family and community according to Epstein's six typologies are outlined in Appendix F.

Sub-research Question 1b: What Have the Two Groups of Schools Gained From Family and Community Involvement?

The high-performing schools have benefitted the most from their relationships with the family and community. Over time they have been able to build relationships and establish partnerships with key stakeholders. There are family and community members who are always around supporting and looking out for the school. Some of these partnerships have been established for over 17 years and others readily assist when they are called upon. These established partnerships have enabled the schools to benefit tremendously from the goodwill of these people in the form of donations, mentorships, work experience, and infrastructural development among other things. At Hutt Valley High School, the principal mentioned that the school having a relationship with the family and community has resulted in an increase in academic performance, improvement in behaviour, improvement in safety and security, the forming of partnerships, and the big one – a change in school status. Of all the three schools with the “dunce school” stigma, Hutt Valley High School is the only one that has been able to raise the profile of the institution and shed the stigma. This was done through hard work, dedication, and the relationship that the school engendered with the family and community. All the parents I spoke with stated that they chose Hutt Valley High School for their child for a variety of reasons, including improved academic and student behaviour. All the benefits outlined above are consistent with the literature which states that schools that engender a positive relationship with the family and community benefit from increased academic performance of students; improvement in students’ behaviour; safety, and security; and the engendering of civic responsibilities (Epstein, et al., 2009; Sanders, 2003; Simon, 2001).

Conversely, the low-performing schools have not been able to benefit much from family and community involvement because they have not been able to build relationships with them and form partnerships. Holy Cross High School has recently been getting some

support for its sports programme. The school has been doing creditably well in football and so there is some support there from corporate Jamaica and individuals. They have also been getting some support in the form of mentorship, infrastructural development and cash donations from the alumni association, having been successful at forming one over three years ago. St. Fairview High School, on the other hand, has been struggling to form a relationship with the family and community and has not been able to benefit much. The school's PTA is inactive, they have not been able to form an alumni association despite attempts, and the family and the residential community are not involved in the activities of the school. Interestingly, St. Fairview High School is situated in rural Jamaica and the literature shows that rural schools often have a strong sense of community and are closely connected to the communities they serve (Bauch, 2001). Thus, the findings from St. Fairview High School do not support this literature. The school is basically like an island with no attachment to the family and community. There is no sense of pride from the community members; instead, they readily “tear down” the school.

Sub-Research Question 1c: What Challenges do the Two Groups of Schools Face in Involving the Families and Communities; How Have They Addressed These Challenges, and What Were the Outcomes?

The challenges to family and community involvement in the schools are many and varied as the context of each school is different. These challenges have resulted in a decrease in an overlap of the school, family, and community at times. The two groups of schools mentioned different challenges, most of which are also found in the literature. Some of these include low turn-out at meetings (Erdener, 2016), family-related issues which have to do with the socioeconomic status of the family such as low education level of parents, transportation issues, poor parenting skills (Cole, 2021; Kimaro & Machumu, 2015; Lareau & Shumar,

1996; Shakur, 2012), job obligations and times of meetings, (Cole, 2021; LaRocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011; Mafa, & Makuba, 2013; Murray et al., 2014; Munje & Mncube, 2018), disinterest (Lareau & Shumar, 1996; Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014), and school's stigma/reputation. While the literature does not identify school stigma or reputation as a challenge to school, family, and community involvement, my study has found that it is a major challenge to involvement for schools in Jamaica that grapple with the "dunce school" stigma. The results of the study show that some parents stay away because they claim the children are not learning and are embarrassed that their children attend such a school, while other parents stay away because they perceive little hope or potential in that child making it meaningless for them to get involved and support the child.

While the study confirms the literature's claim that, despite the challenges these parents face, they do care about their children, it also reveals that there is apathy among some parents. Notwithstanding the challenges, the high-performing schools have been doing a good job involving the family and community. They are more creative and innovative and have done creative things such as arranging community PTA meetings, appointing class and grade parents, and parent trained police, rotating PTA meetings time, and the integration of technology such as WhatsApp and RenWeb. They have been able to reap benefits such as increased attendance at meetings, improvement in behaviour and academic performance of students, increased support for home-based activities, and change in school status. However, the principal of Hutt Valley High makes it clear that no matter how hard they try there are still some parents who display apathy, and that they have not been able to reach. The findings corroborate previous research that shows that, although most parents care about their children, some do not participate in their children's education simply because they do not want to and frequently express an "I don't care" attitude (Munje & Mncube, 2018; Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014; Shakur, 2012). The literature is inundated with studies that characterise

poor rural and urban families as the disinterested ones (Coleman & Churchhill, 1997; Magwa & Mugari, 2017), but my study has revealed that disinterested parents are found in every school and among every social class.

The low-performing schools also grapple with the “dunce school” stigma which the data reveals is a serious issue in Jamaica and is a major challenge to school, family, and community involvement. The “dunce school” stigma in Jamaica is similar to the neighbourhood school stigma in the US. According to McWilliams (2017), in the US these schools are characterised as “bad schools” with “bad kids,” a reputation which has been perpetuated by the media, legislators, and policymakers. In Jamaica, the children who attend such schools tend to perform poorly in national examinations in comparison to students from Traditional High Schools. Many of the students who attend these institutions in Jamaica do not go on to university and do not have good employment opportunities (Bourne, et al., 2015; Cook & Jennings, 2016).

The “dunce school” stigma according to Charles (2018) and the findings of this research has even caused the students in Jamaica to internalise this negative label or perception of their school and themselves and so they continue to perform poorly and do not want to associate with their school. This is consistent with the literature by McWilliams (2017) who states that when a negative label is attached to students regarding their school, they tend to internalise the stereotype and perform worse. The teachers and principal at St. Fairview High mentioned – and my observation corroborated – that students do not want to support, and be identified with their school and prefer to support the Traditional High Schools because they want to fit in. This finding is backed up by McWilliam (2017), who claims that students' impressions of the school environment have a significant impact on their social and academic participation. However, unlike Hutt Valley High School which has worked hard to grow the school and get rid of the stigma through various marketing

strategies, both principals of the low-performing schools have accepted their reality. Nevertheless, Holy Cross High School's principal is optimistic that even though they may not be able to eradicate the stigma, the school is "becoming," and it is in a transformative mode. She is hoping that the school will be able to make a comeback with Sports, Performing Arts, and Technical and Vocational subjects.

Many of Jamaica's Non-Traditional High Schools are performing admirably in many areas, but parents, community members, and prospective students are unaware of their accomplishments, necessitating intentional marketing and public awareness campaigns. It will take some time for these schools to shed the stigma, but the findings of this study show that this is possible when they aggressively market themselves and their programmes to prospective students and parents.

Main Findings of General Research Question One

In answering the main research question (RQ1) on how high schools in Jamaica that are ranked high in family and community involvement differ from those that are ranked low in family and community involvement, the main findings are as follows: the high-performing schools are intentional and make school, family and community involvement a priority; they have strong leadership; their involvement programmes are multi-dimensional and linked to particular areas of involvement; they exude an atmosphere of positivity and commitment to the process; they are student-focussed; they build relationships, collaborate, and form partnerships with stakeholders; and family and community involvement is a school-wide initiative.

The High-Performing Schools are Intentional and Make School, Family, and Community Involvement a Priority.

The high-performing schools are intentional. As said before, these two schools make family and community involvement a priority. Even though there is no written policy, they have a structure in place with the input of key stakeholders. They also have a system of accountability and evaluation in place which is reviewed frequently. The principals hold staff accountable and are not afraid to criticise the staff if they are not operating at the level that is expected. The relevant training is also provided if necessary. The need for evaluation of the school, family, and involvement programme is supported in the literature by Van Voorhis and Sheldon (2004) whose study looks at the principal's roles in the development of programmes of US schools, family, and community partnerships. Their study found that constant evaluation of the school, family, and involvement programme is crucial regardless of the quality and that schools that engage in continuous and yearly evaluation of their family and community programmes report increased programme quality over time.

Both high-performing schools in my study are so serious about developing and maintaining a relationship with the family and community that, according to the principals they only recruit and keep staff who are committed to the vision and mission of the school. Participation in the school's family and involvement programme is a part of the teacher's professional responsibilities. The importance of this is supported by Epstein (2001) who argues that a school, family, and community involvement programme is not some added on task or duty but should be a part of the responsibilities of a teacher. The two high-performing schools in the study make family and community involvement a part of their school improvement plan and try as best as possible to provide the necessary resources for the programme. A review of the SIP for Hutt Valley High School as well as the principal's action plan shows that family and community involvement were major areas of priority. Aberdeen

High School also made it a priority. According to a review of the SIP for the academic year 2017-2020 parental involvement was one of the three areas of priority for the school. It was discussed at their staff retreat and Epstein's six typologies of involvement were used as a guide to develop and organise specific activities to involve families and communities in the children's education.

The picture at the low-performing schools is very different. Even though limited family and community involvement is a perennial problem at Holy Cross High School, there was no objective related to family and community involvement in their 2017-2020 SIP. St. Fairview High School had a long list of initiatives to gain family and community support, but when the principal was asked what percentage was achieved, none was achieved over the past three years. When contrasted with the high-performing schools, this clearly shows the seriousness of the impact of purpose and intentionality. This gives the impression that both low-performing schools have not considered or seen this as an important factor and are not serious and intentional about involving the family and community. They cannot say they are serious about family and community involvement when there is no mention of this in their SIP. This finding is consistent with the literature that some schools are just about lip service and make half-hearted attempts to involve the family and community (Mapp, 2003). Due to the importance that is placed on family and community involvement by the high-performing schools, there is a great overlap in the educational responsibilities of children between the school, families, and communities. This confirms the theory that the degree of overlap is greatest in schools where families are partners in the educational process (Epstein, 2011).

The High- Performing Schools Have Strong Leadership

The data shows that leadership is central to effective school performance. Both high-ranked schools have strong leaders who have been able to get the staff, family, and community to buy into the vision and work together. The principal does not necessarily have

to be the one leading the programme, but there must be a moderator or champion for the programme with the full support of the principal. This is consistent with the literature that maintains that the support of the principal is essential for schools to develop, grow, and maintain a family, involvement programme so that teaching and learning can be improved (Hands, 2005; Mapp, 2003; Mleczko & Kingston, 2013; Sanders & Sheldon, 2009). The principal must be involved and provide strong support for involvement among staff, families, and community members (Michael, Dittus & Epstein, 2007; Sanders & Harvey, 2002).

The High-Performing School's Involvement Programmes are Multi-dimensional and Linked to Particular Areas of Involvement.

The high-performing schools involve the family and community in varied ways. They have a definition of what family and community involvement means to them which is communicated to everybody. There is no hierarchy or prominence given to any specific involvement activity. Volunteering is very important at these schools and parents and community members are not made to feel that their contribution, regardless of how small it is, is not important. In keeping with the typology of volunteering by Epstein, which speaks to schools recruiting and organising parental support and help, the schools get the parents and communities involved in a myriad of ways.

The literature has shown that many schools place a hierarchy on involvement and so parents often feel bad when they cannot contribute monetarily (Bakker, Denessen & Brus-Laeven, 2007; Munje & Mncube, 2018; OECD/CERI Secretariat, 2006; Swift-Morgan, 2006). A similar situation exists in Jamaica as in the low-performing schools, many persons equate involvement and contribution to attending PTA meetings or being able to write a cheque for thousands of dollars. However, at the high-performing schools, there is no ranking of involvement. At Hutt Valley High School, the principal and teachers described the different ways in which parents and community members become involved and contribute in

a hands-on way. Teachers spoke about parents willingly assisting their children with homework and monitoring their work at home and community members who give their time for mentorship. Parents and community members also sit on committees to offer their input for the development of the school. This is in keeping with Epstein's typology of decision-making. At Aberdeen High School, parents mentor students, coach sports teams, and those who contribute to the breakfast programme are at school from 5 am to prepare the meal so that breakfast can start at 6:30 am. While there are other families and community members who can make a big financial contribution, these different types of contributions are all regarded as important; just different.

Swift-Morgan's study (2003) found that "when parents and other community members contribute material resources, they do indeed feel a greater sense of investment and ownership over the school and this initial kind of participation may lead to a greater depth of participation in other domains" (p. 365). Similarly, most of the parents I spoke with shared the many ways in which they assist their child at home by creating a home environment that encourages learning, checking the books, encouraging and motivating their children, establishing family routines that include time for learning, etcetera. This, too, is consistent with the literature, which shows that some parents regularly communicate informally with teachers, such as at the grocery store, and participate in activities at home – even though this may be classified as less direct involvement because the parents are not present at the school (LaRocque, Kleiman & Darling, 2011).

The high-performing schools also link their involvement activities to a particular need or area for improvement. For example, at Hutt Valley High, some of the grade nine students' averages were dropping. The school devised a programme called "Save our nine graders." The parents were invited to sit in Math and English classes with the children and learn the concepts of the topic being taught so they could better help their child at home. According to

the principal, he tries to encourage the parents to come and learn what their children are learning at school so that they can be better able to assist them when they get home. This aligns with Epstein's learning at home typology which speaks to schools providing information and ideas to families about how to support students with homework and other curriculum-related activities at home. As a result, there is a rich blend between home-based and school-based involvement activities at the high-performing schools.

The low-performing schools do not have a wide range of strategies to involve the family and community. Furthermore, they generally have a limited definition of what involvement means to them as a school, with most of their emphasis being on school-related activities such as attendance at PTA meetings and PTC day. While the principal at Holy Cross High School acknowledges the input of everybody, the teachers do not share a similar view and constantly complain about parents not being interested in their children because they do not attend PTA meetings or PTCs. This is consistent with the literature which reveals that schools tend to limit their involvement activities to those that are school-based and label the parents as being disinterested in their children when they do not show up for these school events (Anfara & Mertens, 2015; Bakker, Denessen & Brus-Laeve, 2007; Bower & Griffin, 2011; Mapp, 2003; Swift-Morgan, 2003). This also points to the importance of schools having a clear definition of what family and community involvement means to them and principals getting all staff to buy into the vision of the schools, so they are speaking with one voice.

The High-Performing Schools Exude an Atmosphere of Positivity and Commitment to the Process.

The high-performing schools' approach to involving the family and community is appreciative, not condemnatory. The educational experts have all agreed that Jamaica has a problem with parenting. Many of the parents need guidance and support to carry out their

responsibilities. However, what I noticed is that at the two low-performing schools, the staff are always blaming the children and their parents and are very critical of their behaviour. At St. Fairview High School the atmosphere is heavily punctuated with pessimism on the part of the principal and staff who seem to be merely going through the ritual. They seem to have accepted their reality and do not seem to be willing to put in the hard work to turn things around. Holy Cross High School exudes a similar atmosphere; however, the principal is optimistic and hopes that there will be improvement once she starts building relationships with the stakeholders. She will however need the support of the teachers who, at the moment, do not demonstrate much commitment to the task.

The high-performing schools also have parenting issues, but they do not play the victim game. They exude positivity as revealed by staff, parents, and students. They make it a priority to create the right climate and culture to ensure students are given the right support and guarantee success and earnestly reach out to the family and community. The parents and community are keen on getting involved because of the positive and warm atmosphere. This is in keeping with the literature which suggests that the openness of the school's environment, caring attitudes of school staff, positive interpersonal relationships, a simple smile, a friendly gesture, and respect, encourage parents to become partners in the difficult task of educating their children (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008; Henderson et al., 2007; Sanders & Harvey, 2002; Scribner et al., 1999). All schools, however, try to assist these parents with parenting tips through hosting seminars on different topics. This is in keeping with Epstein's typology of parenting which speaks to schools providing family support programmes to assist families.

The data revealed in so many ways the commitment of the teachers at the high-performing schools. It was through commitment and dedication that Hutt Valley High was able to eradicate the "dunce school" stigma and is now among the schools of choice. The

low-performing schools are more about lip service; they are not consistent, and they give up after one failed attempt. School, family, and community involvement takes time and effort and requires dedication from all involved. This also corroborates the literature by Griffin and Galasi (2010) who used focus groups to find out twenty-nine parent's perceptions of barriers to academic success in a rural middle school in the USA. The research revealed that even though teachers used a variety of strategies to involve the parents, once they failed, they gave up and considered the parents disinterested. Sanders and Lewis (2005) used case studies to look at the motivation for community partnerships in three high schools with successful community partnerships. The results revealed that schools need to take time and have to be dedicated to engaging with the family and community. The leaders of all three schools had these words of advice:

They need to take the time; they have to be dedicated. Don't give up after the first couple of months of trying. Initially, it looks like a big undertaking, but don't be discouraged. Time is needed for identifying school and community needs, contacting potential community partners, attending planning meetings, and evaluating and reflecting on past activities to better design future ones. (Sanders & Lewis, 2005, p. 8)

The High-Performing Schools are Student-Focused

At the high-performing schools, everything revolves around the students. The needs of the students are placed at the forefront and are they are regarded as the most important stakeholders, so everything the schools do from the way the students are treated is in keeping with improving the lives of the students. Students' outcomes are a priority at these schools with effective systems to support this priority which are reviewed regularly. This strong dedication to students' success motivates the family and community to get involved and support the schools. This is why family and community involvement are a priority in these schools – so that all stakeholders can contribute to meeting the needs of students. The

principal at Hutt Valley High mentioned that students are placed at the forefront, students are the most important element, everything revolves around the students, and teachers are aware. The President of the Student Council at Aberdeen High School also stated that the principal takes matters concerning students seriously and values their opinions. High-performing schools involve the families and communities in activities that have demonstrable effects on student outcomes. This is consistent with Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence which situates the child at the centre of all interactions between the school, family, and community. Everything is about the child and the child is the reason for the interaction of the three spheres (Epstein, 2011).

The High-Performing Schools Build Relationships, Collaborate, and Form Partnerships with Stakeholders

Instead of merely inviting the family and community to be involved in school events, the high-performing schools build relationships with the family and the community, to collaborate and form partnerships. Three of the four principals spoke about the importance of building relationships but only the two high-performing schools have been successful thus far. The building of relationships with the stakeholders has been one of the reasons for their success. The principals, teachers, and staff are encouraging and supportive and the family and community have come to trust them and so they do not hesitate to collaborate with the school. This trust and confidence have translated into many partnerships. Hutt Valley High School's principal repeatedly mentioned that it is through partnerships that they have been able to achieve what they have – and letting the family and community know that the school cannot stand alone, and they need the help of the families and the support of the community. Holy Cross High School's principal acknowledges the importance of building relationships and forming partnerships and is very hopeful that this will happen. This is in keeping with the research that suggests that one of the factors that promote the development of strong family

and community partnerships is collaboration among partners (Gross et al., 2015). The literature has shown that in schools where there is strong collaboration between school, family, and community, the performance of the school will improve (Edamo & Netshitangani, 2018).

The importance of schools building a relationship with parents and the community was also underscored by the findings of Bower and Griffin's (2011) microethnography study of an urban elementary school in USA. The study applied Epstein's model of parental involvement in a high-minority, high-poverty school. The findings of the survey revealed that parental involvement at the school continues to be a challenge since schools and teachers were failing to build effective and collaborative relationships. The authors proposed that the school's initial strategy be relationship building, since it would boost involvement and impact existing school strategies by strengthening ownership, accountability, and social networks.

At the High-Performing Schools, Family and Community Involvement is a School-Wide Initiative

The high-performing schools have been able to get the support of all staff. It is a school-wide initiative with the involvement of all teachers and staff. All hands are on deck, and this was achieved because the leaders were able to get everybody to buy into the vision of the school. Conversely, at the low-performing schools, there is not much school-wide initiative; instead, you may have a single teacher who devotes his/her time and energy to building a relationship with families and communities and engaging them, while the majority of teachers withdraw and do the minimum to keep their jobs.

Research Question Two.

This section of the chapter answers research question two:

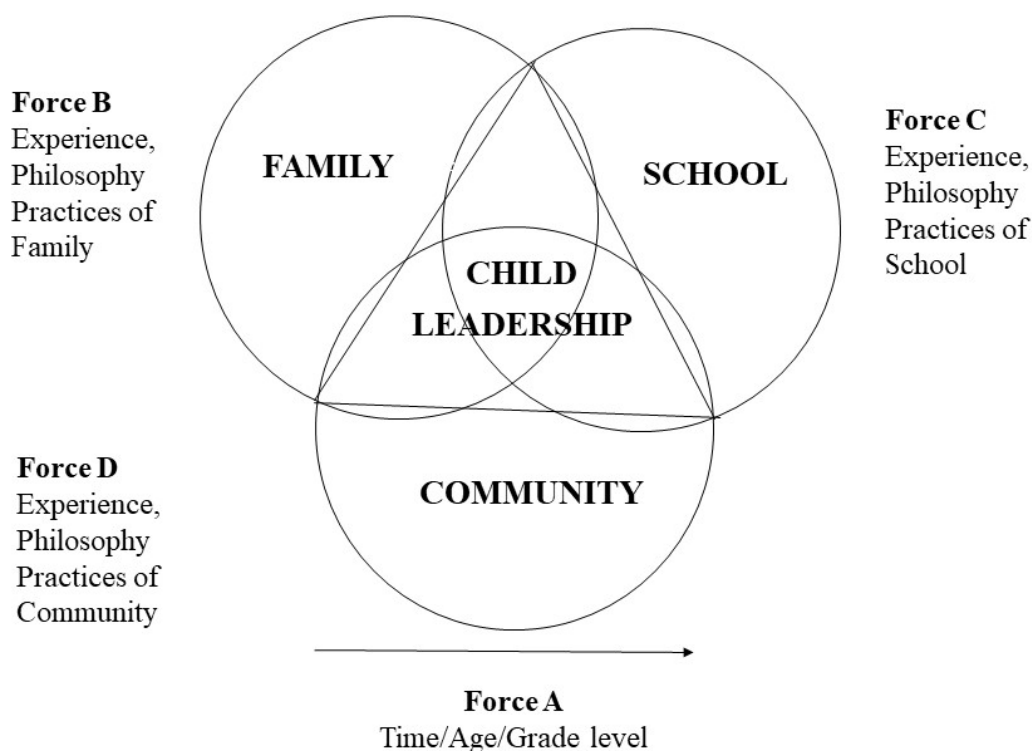
2. What might be a framework for school-family and community involvement in Jamaica?

2a. What components can be added to Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence framework used in the study?

2b. What components can be removed from Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence framework used in the study?

Figure 5

Modified Model of Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence



Epstein's theory proposes that for children to reap the maximum benefit, the school, family, and community must work together resulting in an overlap. The family, community, and school cannot operate separately—they must communicate and collaborate. This ensures that all the stakeholders are speaking with one voice which will send the message to the child that school, home, and community are one. This collaboration will guarantee that the child feels safe and cared for, understands the importance of education, and is better able to realise

his/her full potential. According to Epstein (2011), the child is at the centre of the overlap as the primary reason for the partnership (See chapter three). However, while the child is still at the centre of the model and everything revolves around the child, for the three external forces to work together and overlap they need leadership to pull them together individually and collectively. There is sparse literature on the importance and role of leadership in developing and sustaining a school, family, and community involvement programme. A few authors have written on it briefly as an ingredient to a successful family and community involvement programme; however, this study has revealed that leadership is the key in the Jamaican context.

This research has shown that leadership impacts school, family, and community individually and collectively. This does not mean that there are no activities that occur in the three contexts without leadership influence, but its importance cannot be overstated and should be made prominent in the model. Leadership does not have to come from the principal/senior persons only but can come through teachers and people in the community: for example, proactive alumni president, PTA president, supportive businesses, and families. The study shows that principals are extremely busy, and a school, family and involvement programme takes a lot of time and effort. All schools are different and so it may not be possible for the principal of a particular school to take charge of the programme because of his/her already huge workload. Therefore, I am not advocating for the principal to necessarily head the programme or be in charge of its daily operations. It could be an individual teacher who may be given a lighter teaching workload so he/she can focus on the school, family, and community involvement programme; it could be somebody else employed specifically for that role, or the school could establish a committee. It is up to the school to decide how to develop their programme because each school's situation is unique, and they are better informed about their situation.

However, for this alliance with the school, family, and community to take place there must be a moderator championing the programme with the full support of the principal. The principal can make it a priority since they control the budget, school schedules and timetables, workload, and responsibilities of teachers as well as the composition of influential committees. The principal has the most decisive impact on the school's role in building a relationship with the family and community since he/she has the power to encourage cooperation between teachers, the family, and the community. In addition, where the principal fosters collaboration/involvement, the teachers are more likely to collaborate with the family and community. For example, a teacher's ability to collaborate with the family and the community is influenced by the school schedule (which the principal manages) and how well the principal fosters family and community involvement. Equally important is the principal's role in creating a school environment that values and promotes the interaction of teachers, families, and communities. The principal is key in any reform because "they legitimize the programme by mobilizing the resources necessary for strong implementation. Without principal leadership, the implementation of any programme is not likely to be successful or sustained," (Sanders & Sheldon, 2009, p. 28).

Based on the results of my research, I have added a triangle to Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence Model (See original model in chapter 3) representing leadership as well as placing leadership in the centre with the child (See figure 5). The findings from my research have shown that it is the quality/nature of the leadership that is significant for the school, family, and community to work together in the best interest of the child. Of the four schools studied, the data reveals that the two schools that have a good relationship with the family and community (Hutt Valley High and Aberdeen High Schools) have been able to sustain this relationship because of a strong principal and leaders. The principals were able to put together a strong cadre of middle managers as well and unify the

staff, so everybody works together. The importance of the principal to the programme was also manifested in the low-performing schools (St. Fairview High and Holy Cross High Schools) because the study reveals that in instances where St. Fairview High School had had good leadership, the school had done much better. The participants revealed that enrolment was higher, there were a lot of activities to attract the parents and community, the principal and staff had a good relationship with the family and community, and there was much support from them. So even though the school had always housed the weaker students and the stigma was there, there were times in the past when the school was able to enjoy and benefit from a good relationship with the family and community. According to the participants, the last 10 years have been on a declining trajectory since the change in the principalship. The principal has been criticised for being aloof and not involved in the school and community.

Hutt Valley High School is a good example of the importance and value of leadership. A school that is a Non-Traditional High School that is resourced poor, yet with strong leadership, it was able to rise and become a school of choice. Aberdeen High School has always had strong leaders which also shows the value of leadership. The difference in the performance of the schools has to do with how the leaders can bring the three together—school, family, and community – or push them apart by the activities they do or do not do.

In the original model, the overlapping spheres of schools, families, and communities may be pushed together (more overlap and more combined activities) or pulled apart (less overlap and fewer shared activities). However as shown from the literature, when there is strong leadership, the spheres will be pushed together. For example, at Hutt Valley High School, because of strong leadership at the school and the community levels, there is an overlap between the school and the residential community. The school and community frequently collaborate on projects such as road repairs, and the school has enlisted the help of senior community men to serve as mentors for boys who exhibit deviant behaviours resulting

in an overlap of the two spheres. At Aberdeen High School, there is an overlap between the family and school because of the strong leadership at the helm of the PTA body and the school. The PTA body is organised and very involved in the school so much so that they even have an office on the school compound which is manned daily by two parents. This strong PTA leadership has enabled them to collaborate and work with the school on several activities, programmes and hold the school accountable in many respects. For example, the PTA has been running the school's breakfast programme for over 17 years resulting in an overlap of the two spheres.

On the other hand, St. Fairview High School although having a PTA president does not have a functioning PTA. The PTA president lacks the knowledge and capabilities and expresses the need to be trained as she is ignorant of her roles and responsibilities. This has resulted in limited support from the family, so the spheres of the family and school have been pulled apart in this respect and there is less overlap between the family and school.

In the original model, the degree of overlap is determined by four forces: Force A, B, C, and D. Force A represents the developmental and historical times of students, families, and schools, the child's age, and grade level. Forces B, C, and D are the differences in philosophies, practices, and background characteristics between the various participants in each sphere. These forces will push or separate these spheres to produce more or less overlap of actions, interactions, and influences of the family, school, and community along the timeline. Strong leadership can impact the forces in each sphere. For example, due to their socioeconomic condition, such as a lack of transportation, some parents may be unable to volunteer or attend meetings at the school (Force B). An innovative and creative leader whether at the school or PTA levels, who prioritises school and family involvement will put in place contingency measures such as using the school bus to transport parents or make arrangements with taxi or bus drivers in the area to provide transportation. Similarly, Hutt

Valley High School has community PTAs to reach those parents who are not able to attend PTA meetings because of various socioeconomic factors. Leadership will also ensure that teachers (Force C) are involved and make parents a part of the teaching learning process.

Although the literature mentions the role of the principal's leadership in a successful school, family and involvement programme, the findings from this research show that strong leadership is essential to getting the family and community to work along with the school. Therefore, based on the findings of this study which shows that the two high-performing schools have strong leaders who were able to unify the staff and get them to buy into the vision and mission of the school, my argument is that leadership needs to be embedded in the model at the centre. This illustrates the importance of leadership at the intersections and shows that leadership impacts family, school, and community individually as well as at the intersections.

Summary

This chapter discusses the major findings related to the difference in how high and low-performing schools in Jamaica involve the family and community and aligns them to the literature review and theoretical framework used to guide the study. The findings from the research show that the two schools that have continued to experience success are those that prioritise family and community involvement and, consequently, have received strong support from the family and community. Based on the evidence gathered from the findings, for schools to have a successful family and community involvement programme, strong leadership is central, and schools need to be innovative, creative, and persistent. Therefore, the chapter concludes with a proposed modified model of Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence that places leadership at the centre.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

This chapter presents the conclusions derived from the study which compared high and low-performing high schools regarding family and community involvement as reported by NEI, Jamaica. The chapter begins with a brief overview of the study. It then presents the contributions that the study's findings bring to the research area, discusses limitations of the study, offers suggestions for future research, and makes recommendations that can be pursued by schools seeking to develop a family and community involvement programme.

Study Overview

The study was conducted at four high schools in Jamaica, two from rural areas and two from urban areas. Two high and two low-ranked schools were purposively selected from the NEI, Jamaica reports. The study employed the qualitative research method, and data were obtained from interviews with teachers, principals, parents, students, community members, and educational experts, as well as from observations, and document reviews. Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence and six typologies of school, family, and community involvement was used to guide the study in a developing country context (Epstein, 2011).

It was found that there were a variety of family and involvement activities in the schools but more so at the high-performing schools. There were some initiatives that all schools used, such as the PTC day, PTA meetings, seminars/workshops and some examples of innovative and effective practices, especially at the high-performing schools. Some of these innovative practices include the appointment of class mother, grade parent, community PTA, parent trained police, taximen, and vendor appreciation day, community devotion, and the use of a parent score. The majority of the study's findings confirm and extend the scope of the present literature as well as the theoretical framework that guided the study. The

findings also contradict previous research that suggests that rural schools generally have a strong sense of community and are closely related to the communities they serve. This study found that St. Fairview High, a rural school, has no attachment to the family and community and there is no sense of pride from the community members; instead, they readily tear down the school. The study adds to the body of knowledge by showing that school stigma affects family and community involvement. The findings show that some parents stay away and refuse to get involved in the school or their children's education because of the school's stigma. They feel that their involvement is futile because their children attending such a school offers no hope or promise.

The importance of the role of leadership was a key finding from the research and, while there are a few authors who have written sparsely on the role of leadership in developing a school, family, and community involvement programme, it has not been made to stand out or be dominant in the literature. The findings from the research have revealed that for the three external forces – school, family, and community – to work together and overlap in the best interest of the child, strong leadership is required. Therefore, it can be argued that, in the Jamaican context at least, leadership is the “glue” and, for this reason, should be included in the theoretical framework that guided this study. The two schools that were ranked high were found to have good leadership. One of the schools that was ranked low has demonstrated that leadership is important because, in mapping its journey, it was found that in the past, when there were periods of good leadership, the school had done better and enjoyed a better relationship with the family and community.

The backgrounds of these schools have similarities and differences; although some schools may face more challenges than others, such as the “dunce school” stigma, insufficient school resources, the concentration of poverty, high teacher attrition rate, violence, and low teacher quality. The results of this research show that schools can establish and maintain

relationships with families and communities. The experience of Hutt Valley High School shows that schools can engender a relationship with the family and community and discard previously held stigma. Whilst the data shows that all four schools employ Epstein's six typologies of school, family, and community involvement (See Appendix F), it also shows that the low-performing schools are not doing enough to involve the families and communities. This is not a one-time or overnight event, neither am I proposing a "one-size fits all" solution, but best practices can be adapted to suit each school's unique situation. The high-performing schools are intentional about making family and community involvement a priority and they are committed to the process.

The data reveals that establishing and maintaining a school, family, and community involvement programme takes much time and effort, and the two high-performing schools have been very strategic in ensuring that they employ and keep staff who buy into the ethos of the school. In both groups of schools, there were notable gaps such as the absence of a school, family and community involvement policy, and limited or lack of training for teachers and staff. As Wheeler (1992) points out, for schools to be successful, principals and teachers must work together with the family and community, conduct frequent evaluations, and be adaptable, persistent, and willing to explore new ideas. The contributions of the study are discussed next.

Contributions of the Study

This section discusses the theoretical and practical contributions of the study findings.

Research Contribution to Theory

This study modifies Epstein's existing model and extends its application to a developing country context, specifically Jamaica, which has received little attention in the literature. The study revealed that the major deciding factor in whether schools, families, and

communities can collaborate and work together is the quality of leadership which starts with the principal. Based on the influential role that the principal has, it may be argued that leadership must be embedded in the model as the glue that ties and brings all stakeholders together. It takes strong leadership to unite all three and make them work together. The study extends the model by the addition of leadership in the centre to bind the three key stakeholders-family, school, and community. Based on the evidence, it can be claimed that without this glue, it will be very difficult to have a successful school, family, and community involvement programme in Jamaica. The findings of my study clearly show that this factor is necessary for this to take place.

The theory was tested in a developing country setting (Jamaica) that has received little attention in the literature. The study's findings support the theory as the study shows clearly how the interaction among the three contexts directly affects a child's success. The results also show that high-performing schools either intentionally, as in the case of Aberdeen High, or inadvertently design their involvement activities after Epstein's six typologies. The high-performing schools were much stronger than the low-performing schools in developing activities for the six typologies. However, based on the six typologies, all schools need to strengthen their parenting and learning at home activities.

Contribution to Research and Methods

Although previous studies have looked at school, family, and community involvement in schools, they looked at high-performing or low-performing schools separately, limiting the insights that may be gained. However, this study examines school, family, and community involvement in both high and low-performing schools in a single study. This allowed me to compare and contrast different types of schools and gain a better understanding of what is going on in both at the same time. The study looks at schools in different contexts—one urban prestigious school in a middle-class area attracting mostly

students from the middle and upper socioeconomic groups; and another urban school but surrounded by volatility with students from the lower socioeconomic groups. It also includes one rural school in a depressed community, attracting students from the lower and middle socioeconomic groups; and the other, a rural school in a poor community mostly with students from the lower socioeconomic group. This range of contexts enables a better understanding of the impact of the environment in which the schools are operating and the challenges that confront them and how these challenges impact the school's abilities to involve the family and community.

In the study, to gain different perspectives, I interviewed a wide cross-section of people in different roles, not just the traditional groups of people. Apart from the principal, teachers, and parents, I interviewed groundsmen, vendors, and taximen. It was important to speak with the persons on the ground because these people have a vast knowledge of what is going on which reveals similar and different worldviews and insights.

Contribution to Practice

The study's findings also have the potential to make important contributions to practice. Schools forging a relationship with the family and community is not an easy or quick undertaking. To make it work, will require a lot of effort and time and the input of everybody. For schools to ensure the development and continuation of the family and community involvement programme, they must be deliberate, persistent, and unrelenting. In these situations, authentic leadership is essential, as well as the ability for principals and other leaders to learn from their own experiences to improve effectiveness and performance. No two schools are alike and no "one size fits all" solution exists. Schools must consider their unique circumstance and environment. The approach taken by schools will vary depending on their situation and context, but one thing is certain; schools must make it a priority, be intentional, and put in ongoing effort because the support of all three – school, family, and

community – working together is needed for schools to reap the maximum benefits.

However, schools can adopt certain strategies such as:

1. Taking the PTA meeting to the community. The ideal is to have the family and community being involved in both school-based and home-based activities so at least once per term schools can adopt this strategy of choosing one community which the students are from and taking the PTA to them. This means that some schools may need to aggressively market this and be consistent if the first few attempts fail. Hutt Valley High School has done this, and it has been working. Therefore, as long as a school assesses its situation, markets aggressively, and is relentless, such a strategy should work to bring school, family, and community together.
2. Schools could provide mandatory training for PTA executive members so that they are clear about their roles and responsibilities, resulting in more effective PTAs.
3. Schools could start looking at revamping their PTA meetings and make them into an empowering space. They could consider holding online PTA meetings. Some schools have been doing this since Covid-19 and the response has been far better. Parents mentioned having over 400 and 600 parents in attendance at online PTA meetings which has never happened when they had face-to-face meetings (McIntosh, 2021).
4. Schools could look at using technology more to inform and keep parents and community members in the loop. Aberdeen and Hutt Valley High Schools have been making strides in this area and have used technology a lot. Students' grades are posted via their Renweb system; they also post information for upcoming meetings, and parents can be anywhere in the world and interact with teachers. Hutt Valley High School uses WhatsApp to connect with parents. They use it to post information about assignments, SBAs and to keep parents abreast of what is happening. This is likely to reach a wider cross-section of parents.

5. The study identifies several examples of parents and communities being unaware of schools' accomplishments and achievements. It also highlights instances of schools successfully marketing themselves and making parents and communities more aware of what they have to offer. Therefore, schools could begin promoting their programmes and successes so that people are aware of what is going on in the schools. This can be done through partnering with primary schools so that grade six children can tour the facilities and see for themselves what is going on instead of depending on what others say. Schools could also start using different social media and other technologies to promote their schools and what they have to offer.
6. Schools could consider establishing a family and community involvement committee. This committee would consist of a representative from all stakeholder groups so ideas and inputs can be generated from all. One representative would be chosen to spearhead activities and mobilise the others. Schools would then require all members of the committee to attend obligatory training so that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities.
7. Schools could start focussing more on home-based activities as part of their involvement programme. Most schools value only school-based activities such as attendance at school events or volunteerism. Not much emphasis or credence is given to home-based activities and if families are not able to be involved in school-based activities because of various constraints they are deemed as uninterested in their children's lives. The data has shown that some persons are active in their children's lives at home. They assist their children with their homework, provide the necessary resources for them to complete their homework, and ensure that the assignment is done and handed in on time.

8. It is also important for schools to strive to have something going on that the family and community want to be associated with and be proud of. Even though the involvement of the low- performing schools is low, there are times when schools get support from the family and community. For instance, Holy Cross High School has been doing relatively well in football and, whenever they are playing the community would come out to support them. At St. Fairview High School, when Performing Arts was a part of the school's curriculum, it attracted many students and parents, and people would come out to support them whenever they were performing.

Limitations

Concerning the goals of the study, the findings provided significant insights into how schools have been involving the family and community, what they have gained from the relationship, and the challenges they face. However, there were some limitations of the study that are critical to comprehending and interpreting the study and applying its findings and recommendations.

1. Even though the research aimed to get rich, thick data, the study could have made use of a mixed-method approach to reach a wider cross-section of people such as parents and students. A questionnaire could have been developed based on the qualitative phase and then distributed to parents and community members to get more feedback on how the schools have been involving the family and community. Similarly, while the president of the Student Council was interviewed in all schools, a questionnaire would have allowed a larger cross-section of students to provide feedback on school, family, and community involvement and how it affects them since the interaction between the three contexts is about them.

2. Even though qualitative research in general aims to focus on depth rather than breadth, the sample was small and so could not be considered a generalisable representation of the entire school population within the Jamaican educational system. However, it does suggest that the problems being experienced at these research sites may well be issues being experienced in other school systems since the four schools studied are representative of the different school environments and contexts in Jamaica. This limitation implies that there is a need for further large-scale studies into the subject of school, family, and community involvement in Jamaica and elsewhere.
3. Some schools were not keen on allowing me to review certain documents such as the agenda and minutes of past PTA meetings, and principal's action plan. It is possible that the study could have been improved if I had access to a range of documents to review to enable better triangulation of data.
4. The timing when the research was done proved to be a limitation though minor. If the research had been done closer to the start of the school year, I believe I would have been able to observe more activities and get a better picture of the school's interaction with the family and community. This data was collected in the last school term when most of the schools had already slowed down on activities and teachers and students were busy with last minute preparation for external examinations. So, there were not many activities to observe and participate in.
5. Participants were asked to recall specific details and it is possible they may have forgotten certain crucial information. Similarly, some respondents may be biased and give only favourable information, while others may hide information. I attempted to overcome these limitations by obtaining data from multiple sources.

Future Research

Given the limitations outlined above, there is a number of ideas for potentially useful research arising from the study as well as the limitations.

1. There is a need for research on how the school's environment such as violence affects what goes on in the schools. As my research shows, the environment does affect the quality of the schools' involvement programme.
2. One of the major findings of this research is that the stigma/reputation of a school is a deterrent to the level of involvement that family and community display in the student's education. Therefore, there is need for further wide scale research on how the stigma of a school affects school, family, and community involvement.
3. Further research needs to be done on the nexus between the role of leadership and a successful school involvement programme. Not much research has been done to unearth how much influence the role of leadership at the home, community, and school levels impacts a school, family, and community involvement programme.
4. A mixed-method approach could be used in future studies to reach a wider range of people. Parents and community members could be surveyed to get more feedback on how the school involves families and communities.
5. Future research could be conducted at different times during the school year. For example, in the first half of the school year when most schools would have more activities to observe. This allows for a better understanding of the interaction between school, family, and community.
6. To extend the findings, future studies could look at more schools. In addition, future research could further extend the comparison to the context of both developing and developed countries in a single study.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations from the study:

1. To effectively engage families and communities, it is recommended that schools define what family and community involvement mean to them and communicate this to all stakeholders as this is a broad and multidimensional concept. The research has shown that the school's definition of family and community involvement differs from that of the parents. Even within the schools, family and community involvement means different things to different teachers. Therefore, schools need to be clear on what this means, purposively develop a vision and communicate this to all stakeholders. It should also be clearly defined in their policy and SIP. When all stakeholders are clear on what involvement means, then people will be united and know what they are working towards.
2. Evidence in the literature and study shows that many schools do not have a policy to guide their family and involvement programme. Therefore, it is recommended that schools consider drafting a family and community involvement policy to support their day-to-day activities. Such a policy would serve as a blueprint to guide the programme and contain the vision statement of the school, family, and community programme; the roles, responsibilities, and day-to-day activities involved in the programme, resources, etcetera. It would be desirable to have an outline or template from the MOEYI, Jamaica since schools are assessed by NEI on their involvement with the family and community. Each school would then modify the policy to suit their unique situation. It is further recommended that funds be allocated to support the implementation of the policy because a written policy is not enough. Support in the form of human and financial resources are critical for the development, implementation, and maintenance of the programme.

3. In developing the policy, it is recommended that the MOEYI uses Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence and six typologies of school, family, and community involvement as a core theoretical framework and guideline for schools to develop their family and community involvement programme. This framework will serve to enable NEI, MOEYI, and schools to check what needs to be in place for a school to improve its relationship with the family and community. For example, in the US, the NCLB has adopted Epstein's six categories of involvement and outlines activities for the six types of involvement in its school's family involvement programme guidelines.
4. Even though there is a Community Relations Education Officer (CREO) in each region at the MOEYI, Jamaica, this is not enough to make an impact. These CREOs have several schools and many other things to do and are not able to provide the assistance that schools need to develop their family involvement programmes. Many schools are struggling and do not fully know their responsibilities. It is therefore recommended that the MOEYI employ more CREOs and assign them to fewer schools so that they can help the schools develop their family and community involvement programme. This person would also ensure that schools are given the necessary direction, resources, and training; oversee the various programmes; hold the schools accountable and do ongoing evaluations.
5. It is recommended that all teacher training institutions introduce a course in school, family, and community involvement and that there be mandatory yearly training for in-service teachers and staff. The literature has shown, and my findings have confirmed, that teachers are thrust into a situation that they know little about. They all accept the fact that family and community involvement in the school is important; however, most teachers do not know how to meaningfully engage families and

communities for the benefit of all children. The literature reveals that teachers are at the core of a successful school, family, and community involvement programme.

These are teachers who are not just dedicated, but also possess the essential knowledge and skills necessary to successfully do the job (Brown, et al., 2014). This is not an easy task as it requires working with different personalities. Therefore, specific training is needed to train all those involved in how to deal with and manage such a portfolio.

6. It is recommended that teachers and principals be required to include in their yearly action plan one goal linked to how they will involve the family and community for which they will be evaluated in their annual staff performance appraisal. This would hold the teachers and principals accountable and inspire them to become more involved. This lack of accountability may be one of the reasons some teachers and principals do not take family and community involvement seriously. Teachers and principals will be obliged to participate if they are aware that they will be held accountable.
7. School boards must be deliberate about employing transformational leaders to head schools. In many instances in Jamaica, the choosing of the principal is based on political or religious affiliation and social connections which means that the best person for the job may not be necessarily chosen (Miller, 2014). If we are serious about family and school involvement, we must employ the best person for the job, one who has vision and will ensure that a relationship with the family and community is a high priority. In association with this, it is recommended that frequent training also be provided for the principals, and they be appraised and evaluated on their performance.

Concluding Comments

The research aimed to compare how high-performing and low-performing schools in Jamaica involve the family and community. It looked at their achievements resulting from their involvement with the family and community, challenges faced in involving the family and community, and strategies used to overcome those challenges. Four schools were chosen to participate in the study; their selection was based on NEI, Jamaica reports, the types of secondary schools, and their location. Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence and six typologies for school, family, and community involvement were used to guide the study. The study confirms, contradicts, and adds new knowledge to the extant literature, and expands the external structure of the theoretical model.

This research shows that all schools, irrespective of their ranking by the NEI, Jamaica care about their children and want them to succeed. However, for children to reap the maximum benefit academically and otherwise, the family and community must be involved. The study has demonstrated the numerous benefits of schools building relationships with families and communities. Increased safety and security, higher academic performance, a change in school profile, and improved student behaviour are just some of the many outcomes that this collaboration has brought to schools. The principals of the high-performing schools acknowledged that they would not have been able to achieve as much as they have without the support of the family and community which clearly shows that it indeed "takes a village."

The study found that all four schools experienced challenges involving the family, but the two high-performing schools were deliberate in their approach; they worked hard, were persistent and committed, and prioritised family and community involvement. Both high-performing schools have strong leaders who have been able to unify the staff and create an ethos of warmth, camaraderie, and excellence. This led them to experience the greatest

overlap based on Epstein's Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence. In the high-performing schools, all three spheres overlap but in the low-performing schools, there is minimal overlap of the three spheres. Holy Cross High School has a greater overlap with the community than with the family, and St. Fairview High School has minimal overlap with both family and community. Though all four schools had activities supporting Epstein's six typologies of family and community involvement, the high-performing schools had many more multidimensional activities. Establishing and maintaining school, family, and community involvement requires hard work and dedication, so schools must be intentional and not give up after a failed attempt. A school, family, and community involvement programme require constant evaluation and accountability. All this can be done with a strong leader.

Based on the findings generated from this research, leadership is critical for a successful school, family, and community involvement programme, and, in the Jamaican context, effective leadership is the glue that binds the external model – school, family, and community– together. The data also show that when the low-performing schools previously had strong leaders, they were doing much better. This supports the argument that the quality of leadership is very important and, thus, justifies the embedding of leadership in the external model.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Letter to Schools

January 21, 2019

UniLodge Stafford House
40 The Terrace
Wellington 6011
New Zealand.

(Principal's Name)

Principal

Address of School

Dear (Principal's Name):

Request for Permission to Conduct Ph.D. Research in your School

My name is Marisa McPherson, and I am a Jamaican student at the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. I am currently working on my Ph.D. thesis and use this medium to formally seek your permission to conduct the research in your high school.

My research interest is in school, family and community involvement with a focus to compare how high schools in Jamaica have been involving the family and community, their achievements, the challenges they face, and how they have been able to overcome those challenges. A framework for school, family and community involvement will also be developed from data collected as well as the literature. As it currently stands, my thesis will be four case studies of Jamaican high schools.

It is my intention to commence data collection from March 01, 2019, to June 30, 2019. During this time, my presence at the school for data collection will vary from periods when I am not around to others when I am 'ever-present,' depending on the data that I am collecting. I intend to conduct interviews with you the principal, teachers, PTA, and Alumni presidents, and I will also require you to recommend three parents and community members who I can

speak with. I will also be observing school events and reviewing school documents that could help create a picture of how the school engages with the family and community.

If you agree to allow teachers to take part in the study, the expected impact on your students and teachers will be minimal. I plan to interview teachers individually. Each interview will be negotiated on the available time slots of teachers and should last from 45 minutes to one hour. All those involved in the study will sign a consent form. Your school will not be identified in any work generated from this study. All files generated from this study will be securely stored on a password-protected computer, and hard copies will be kept in secure storage for five years after the conclusion of the research before being deleted or destroyed. This project has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Ethics committee. I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this overview of the project and hope you will agree to allow your school to take part in the study. If you have any questions about the study now or at any time in the future, please feel free to contact me at telephone number +64 22 130 4557 or email address: marisa.mcpherson@vuw.ac.nz.

This research project will be conducted under the supervision of Associate Professor Kabini Sanga and Dr. Fuapepe Rimoni of the School of Education, Victoria University of Wellington. The results of the study will contribute to evidence-based policymaking, practice and research.

Thanks in advance and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours truly,

.....

Marisa McPherson

Appendix B

Participants Information Sheet

It Takes a Village to Raise a Child: School, Family and Community Involvement in High Schools in Jamaica.

Thank your interest in this research. Please read this information before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, thank you. If you decide not to participate, thank you for considering this request.

Who am I?

My name is Marisa McPherson, and I am a Doctoral student in the School of Education at Victoria University of Wellington. This research project is work towards my thesis.

What is the aim of the project?

This project aims to explore school, family and community involvement in Jamaica. The research will reveal the different innovative and creative ways in which schools have been involving the family and community. This is a new area of research for Jamaica and will reveal best practices and contribute to evidence-based policy-making. A framework for school, family, and community involvement will be developed from the literature and data gathered.

This research has been approved by the Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee

How can you help?

You have been invited to participate because you have a child/children attending the school. If you agree to take part, you will be involved in an individual interview. I will interview you preferably at the school or anywhere that is convenient to you. I will ask you questions about school, family and community involvement such as the different activities in which you are involved, strategies used by the school to involve the family and community, challenges you face getting involved, and how you have been able to overcome those challenges. The interview will take from 45 minutes to one hour. I will audio record the interview with your permission and write it up later. You can choose to not answer any question or stop the interview at any time, without giving a reason. You can withdraw from the study by contacting me at any time before June 30, 2019. If you withdraw, the information you provided will be destroyed or returned to you.

What will happen to the information you give?

This research is confidential. This means that only my supervisors and I will be aware of your identity. The research data will be summarized during reporting. Pseudonyms for schools will be used and participants will be referred to by role rather than by name. Your identity will not be disclosed in any reports, presentations, or public documentation. The interview transcripts, summaries, and any recordings will be kept securely and destroyed five years after the research ends.

What will the project produce?

The information from my research will be used in my Ph.D. thesis, articles, and conference presentations.

If you accept this invitation, what are your rights as a research participant?

You do not have to accept this invitation if you don't want to. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- choose not to answer any question.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview
- withdraw from the study before June 30, 2019
- ask any questions about the study at any time
- receive a copy of your interview transcript
- read over and comment on a written summary of your interview
- be able to read any reports of this research by emailing the researcher to request a copy.

If you have any questions or problems, who can you contact?

If you have any questions, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Student:

Name: Marisa McPherson

marisa.mcpherson@vuw.ac.nz

mcpherson.marisa@gmail.com

Supervisors:

Name: Associate Professor Kabini Sanga

Role: Doctoral Supervisors

School: Education

Phone: + 64 04 463 6894

Kabini.sanga@vuw.ac.nz

Name: Dr. Fuapepe Rimoni

Role: Doctoral Supervisors

School: Education

Phone: + 64 04 463 9692

Fuapepe.rimoni@vuw.ac.nz

Human Ethics Committee information

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research, you may contact the Victoria University HEC Convenor: Dr. Judith Loveridge. Email hec@vuw.ac.nz or telephone +64-4-463 6028.

Appendix C

Consent to Interview

It Takes a Village to Raise a Child: School, Family and Community Involvement in High Schools in Jamaica.

This consent form will be held for 5 years.

Researcher: Marisa McPherson, School of Education, Victoria University of Wellington.

I have read the Information Sheet and the project has been explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions at any time.

I agree to take part in an audio-recorded interview.

I understand that:

I may withdraw from this study at any point before April 31, 2019, and any information that I have provided will be returned to me or destroyed.

The identifiable information I have provided will be destroyed five years after the research is finished.

Any information I provide will be kept confidential to the researcher her supervisors.

I understand that the results will be used for a Ph.D. thesis, academic publications presentation at conferences.

My name will not be used in reports, nor will any information that would identify me.

Please indicate (by ticking the boxes below) which of the following apply:

I would like a copy of the transcript of my interview

I would like a summary of my interview

Name of participant: _____

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Contact details: _____

Appendix D

Interview Schedules

Interview Schedule for Principals

1. Background Information: By way of introduction, would you explain your educational background and principalship at this school:
 - Length of time in school?
 - Length of time as a principal?
 - Approach to management and leadership?
2. How would you describe the culture of your school?
3. How would you describe your staff regarding their penchant for involving the family and community?
4. How would you describe your school's relationship with parents and community?
5. Who constitutes the school community? Why?
6. How does the school communicate with the family and community? How do the family and community communicate with the school? On what and why/why not?
7. What support does the school provide to parents to educate and encourage them to assist their child/children?
8. What strategies have the school devised to encourage the family and community to volunteer in the school?
9. What activities do the school organise to involve the family and community?
10. How does the school involve the family and community in decision-making? Why/why not?
11. What support does the school provide the local community? For what and why?
12. What partnerships if any, do you have with the community such as business people, NGOs, corporate Jamaica, etc?
13. What are the impacts of the involvement of the family on your school?
14. What are the impacts of the involvement of the community on your school?
15. What strategies have you devised to ensure that families and communities continue to be involved?
16. What challenges, if any, are you facing when involving the family?
17. What challenges, if any, are you facing when involving the community?
18. What strategies are you employing to overcome those challenges?
19. What issues, if any, are you encountering with school improvement?

Interview Schedule for Teachers

1. Background Information: Tell me about your educational career and background.
2. How would you describe the culture of your school?
3. To what extent does the school involve the family and community?
4. How would you describe the school's relationship with the family and community members?
5. What are some of the activities the school has initiated to involve the family and community?
6. What are some of the activities the school organises to assist families to support their children?
7. How does the school communicate with the family and community? How do the parents and community members communicate with the school?
8. How does the school encourage the family and community to volunteer in the school?
9. How does this relationship with the family affect the students?
10. What support does the school provide to families to encourage them to assist their child/children at home?
11. How does the school involve the family and community in decision-making as this relates to your students?
12. How does the school encourage support from the community?
13. What are some of the benefits you have seen of forming a good relationship with the family and community?
14. How is the relationship that you have established with the family and community impacting your job as the teacher?

Interview Schedule for Family/Parents

1. As a parent, how long have you had an association with the school?
2. How many children/family members do you have attending the school?
3. How would you describe your relationship with the principal?
4. How would you describe your relationship with the teachers?
5. Do you have the same kind of relationship with every teacher? If no, why not?
6. What are the things you do to support your child at home and school?
7. What are the things that you do to support the school?
8. What motivates you to become involved with the school?
9. To what extent does the teachers/school involve the family and community in their teaching?
10. What support does the school/teachers provide to families/parents to assist and encourage them to help their child/children at home?
11. How does the school communicate with the family/community? How do you communicate with the school?
12. How does the school encourage the family and community to volunteer in the school?
13. Does the school involve the parents in the decision-making process? If yes, how?
14. How would you describe your relationship with the other families and community members?
15. What improvements to school, parent involvement would you suggest?

Interview Schedule for Student Council President

1. Please state your name and position?
2. How did you get this position?
3. Describe your responsibility as the president of the Student Council body?
4. Did you choose to come to this school?
5. Describe the culture of the school?
6. What is the relationship like with the school and family?
7. What is the relationship like with the school and community?
8. Do you feel that parents are active in the life of their children? Explain your answer
9. Do you think the community is playing their part in assisting the school?
10. Do, you think the school is doing enough to reach out to the family to get them involved? Explain your answer
11. Do, you think the school is doing enough to reach out to the community to get them involved? Explain your answer
12. Overall, what would you like to see improve regarding the relationship with the school, family and community?

Interview Schedule for PTA Representative

1. How long have you been in this role?
2. How did you come by this position?
3. Were you given any training?
4. How often are PTA meetings held?
5. Explain the format of the PTA meetings.
6. Describe your relationship with the principal?
7. Describe your relationship with the teachers?
8. What role do you play in decision-making in the school?
9. What opportunities are given for the PTA body to shape school policies?
10. What activities if any, have you organized as means of being involved with the school?
11. What challenges if any do you face in enacting those activities?
12. How often do you meet as members of the PTA body to organise activities for the school?
13. How are you able to get other PTA members/families involved in the school?
14. What challenges if any do you face in getting the families/community involved?
15. What are some of the assistances given to parents to encourage them to play a greater role in their children's life?
16. What improvements would you like to see in the PTA-school relationships?

Interview Schedule for the Alumni Association Representative

1. Describe the Alumni Association's relationship with the school.
2. How do you recruit members to become involved in the Association and school?
3. Describe the association's relationship with the school.
4. How is the alumni association involved in the school?
5. What opportunities are given (by whom) to the association to shape school policies?
6. How does the school communicate with the Association?
7. To what extent is the association contributing to decision-making in the school?
Why/why not?
8. What are the impacts, if any, of the involvement of the association on the school?
9. What achievements, if any, can you point to for your association's involvement with the school?
10. What challenges, if any, have you experienced in your involvement with the school?
11. What strategies have you devised to increase and ensure continued support from alumni?

Interview Schedule for the Community Members

1. How would you describe the community's relationship with the school?
2. How would you describe the school's relationship with the community?
3. What is the community's impression of the school?
4. What, if any, are examples of activities or initiatives which show the community's engagement in support of the school?
5. What are some of the things you would like to see improved at the school?
6. Do you encourage other community members to support the school? If yes, how. If no, why not.
7. What motivates you to contribute to the school?

Interview Schedule for the Representative of the NEI, Jamaica

1. Background Information: Explain your educational background concerning your current role and oversight responsibilities.
2. In brief, what are the key roles of the NEI?
3. How did you arrive at the three strands for the indicator-relations with family and community?
4. Generally, have schools in Jamaica improved in their relationships with families and communities?
5. Generally, what are some of the ways in which schools have been involving the family and community?
6. Based on your interactions with schools, what are some of the benefits that schools have gained through their relationships with the family and community?
7. Successful schools, what in your opinion or based on the findings are the reasons for their success in building a strong relationship with the family and community.
8. What would you say are the main challenges that schools face in developing and maintaining strong relationships with the family and community?
9. What recommendations does the NEI have to give those schools that are failing in this respect?
10. Is there a policy from the Ministry of Education regarding school, family, and community involvement?
11. If yes, how adequate is the MOEYI policy guiding school-parents/community involvement? How might MOEYI improve?
12. What recommendations would you suggest to the MOEYI towards further supporting schools in their efforts to improve school-family and community programmes?

Interview Schedule for the Ministry of Education Representative

1. Could you please state your role and your job description?
2. What exactly is the function of the Community Relations Education Officer?
3. What support does the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Information provide for schools regarding family and community involvement?
4. How does the Ministry help to strengthen schools that are struggling with their family and involvement programme?
5. What are some of the major challenges that schools are having in developing or forging good relationships with the family and community and sustaining it?
6. What policy plans, if any does the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information have in place to support schools in developing and sustaining relationships with the family and community?
7. Schools are required to do a school improvement plan and one of the objectives is for schools to explain how they will engage the community, does the ministry assess the SIPs to see if the schools achieve their objectives?
8. What professional development programmes are in place to assist principals and teachers with the necessary skills to engage families and communities?
9. On a broad scale, how are schools doing regarding involving the family and community?
10. What plans does the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Information have to introduce a course at Teachers' Colleges on school-family and involvement for pre-service teachers?

Interview Schedule for the National Parenting Commission Representative, Jamaica

1. Could you please state your role and your job description?
2. What exactly is the function of the NPSC?
3. What were the prevailing issues that led to the formation of the NPSC?
4. How many schools are you working with now and how do you choose the schools?
5. So, what are some of the different programmes that are put in place to help parents?
6. What challenges if any the organization faces concerning carrying out its responsibilities/functions?
7. Do you find that parents are receptive to the programmes that you have designed?
8. You mentioned the word community, what does community mean to the NPSC?
9. Looking at the schools now what are some of the major challenges that the schools are facing with building this relationship with the parents?
10. How successful in the NPSC so far?
11. What are some of the plans that you have for the NPSC?
12. Do you conduct professional training in the schools?
13. What improvement would you like to see with the NPSC?

Appendix E

Observation Schedule

School: _____

Date: _____

Event/Occasion: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

	Description	Observer Comments
The Setting		
Participants		
Activities		
Interactions and Conversations		
Follow-up Action		

Appendix F

Different Types of Family and Community Involvement Activities by Each School

According to Epstein's Six Typologies of Involvement.

Typologies	Hutt Valley High School	Aberdeen High School	St. Fairview High School	Holy Cross High School
Parenting	<p>Parenting Seminars twice annually</p> <p>Frequent Home visits by Guidance Counsellors</p> <p>Parent score to keep parents involved and accountable.</p> <p>Training in data operations.</p> <p>Annual Health Fair</p> <p>Parents of children who are not doing well are invited to a meeting. Teachers discuss with parents different strategies to help the child</p>	<p>Parenting Seminars twice annually.</p> <p>Frequent Home visits by Guidance Counsellors</p>	<p>Parenting Seminars once annually</p> <p>Frequent Home visits by Guidance Counsellors</p>	<p>Parenting Seminars once annually</p> <p>Frequent Home visits by Guidance Counsellors</p>
Communicating	<p>A strong PTA meeting that meets once per month for general and grade PTA.</p> <p>Annual Parent Teachers conference held twice per year.</p> <p>Community PTA Monthly report cards</p> <p>Newsletter</p> <p>School handbook</p> <p>School text messaging system</p> <p>Circulars</p>	<p>A strong PTA that meets once per term for the general meeting and once per year for the annual general meeting</p> <p>Annual Parent Teachers conference held twice per year.</p> <p>Newsletter- from the principal's desk</p> <p>School handbook</p> <p>Telephone calls</p> <p>School text messaging system</p>	<p>Weak PTA. PTA is scheduled to meet once per month, but most times this does not happen. Turn out at PTA is generally poor.</p> <p>Annual Parent Teachers conference held twice per year.</p> <p>School handbook</p> <p>Circulars</p> <p>School text messaging system</p> <p>Telephone calls</p>	<p>Weak PTA. PTA is scheduled to meet once per month, but this does not always happen. Turn out at PTA is generally poor.</p> <p>Annual Parent Teachers conference held twice per year.</p> <p>School handbook</p> <p>School text messaging system</p> <p>Telephone calls</p> <p>Circulars</p>

Typologies	Hutt Valley High School	Aberdeen High School	St. Fairview High School	Holy Cross High School
Communicating	<p>WhatsApp Groups</p> <p>Edmodo educational platform</p> <p>Different grade meetings are held with parents to inform them of upcoming events such as graduation, choosing of subjects for grade 10, disciplinary problems, etc.</p> <p>Suggestion box at the entrance to the administrative area</p> <p>Email</p> <p>Telephone Calls</p> <p>Orientation session</p> <p>Class mother</p> <p>School's calendar of events.</p> <p>Principal's number shared with parents</p> <p>Parents are invited to SBA briefings where they are given information as to the timeline to pay the fees, the deadline for submission, etc.</p>	<p>WhatsApp Groups</p> <p>Circulars</p> <p>Email</p> <p>Orientation session</p> <p>Different grade meetings are held with parents to inform them of upcoming events such as graduation, choosing of subjects for grade 10, disciplinary problems.</p> <p>Class mother, father, and grade representative</p> <p>School's calendar of events.</p> <p>Principal's number shared with parents</p> <p>Active social media pages</p> <p>School Management system-RenWeb</p> <p>Print and broadcast media</p>	<p>School's calendar of events.</p> <p>Orientation sessions.</p> <p>Facebook page but inactive</p>	<p>Orientation session of events.</p> <p>School's calendar of events.</p> <p>Principal's number shared with parents</p> <p>Different grade meetings are held with parents to inform them of upcoming events such as graduation and disciplinary problems. These meetings are normally poorly attended.</p>
Volunteering	<p>Parents sit on committees such as safety and security, school development, etc.</p> <p>Parent assist in cooking and cleaning up at weekend examination camps.</p> <p>Parents lead devotional exercises</p>	<p>Parents sit on committees.</p> <p>Parents manage and assist in the school's breakfast programme.</p> <p>Parents provide monetary contributions as well as kind to the breakfast programme. One parent bought the stove.</p>	<p>Parents sit on committees</p> <p>Parents lead devotional exercises.</p> <p>The parent participates in certain fundraising events such as bake sales.</p>	<p>Parents sit on committees</p> <p>Parents lead devotional exercises</p>

Typologies	Hutt Valley High School	Aberdeen High School	St. Fairview High School	Holy Cross High School
Volunteering	<p>Parents volunteer as motivational speakers</p> <p>Parent assist in classrooms in areas of teaching and behaviour management.</p> <p>Parents assist in the teaching of different subjects such as Visual Arts.</p> <p>Parent assist in extracurricular activities such as Marching bands, sewing of cheerleading clothes for the different houses for sports day, etc.</p> <p>Parent volunteers as mentors for both students and other parents.</p> <p>Parents who are in the security forces offer security at sports day and competitive sports.</p> <p>Parent volunteers as parent police to aid in security and safety.</p> <p>Parent volunteer their time to do infrastructural work in the school such as the digging of long jump pit.</p> <p>Parents contribute food items and toiletries for care boxes</p>	<p>Parents sit on committees.</p> <p>Parents manage and assist in the school's breakfast programme.</p> <p>Parents provide monetary contributions as well as kind to the breakfast programme. One parent bought the stove.</p> <p>Parents lead devotional exercises</p> <p>Parents volunteer as motivational speakers</p> <p>Parents are used as Resource persons in the classroom or to address certain issues the school may be having.</p> <p>Parents assist in various extracurricular activities such as coaching the school's challenge quiz and basketball teams.</p> <p>Parent volunteers as mentors for both students and other parents.</p> <p>Parent volunteer to teach on Teachers' Day.</p> <p>Parents assist in infrastructural development such as the installation of fans in all classrooms, the painting of all classrooms.</p>		

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Learning at Home	<p>The teachers and school share tips with parents on how they can best help their child at home with homework. This includes references to educational youtube channels.</p> <p>Parents come in and sit and meet with teachers who explain the SBA so parents can work with the child at home.</p> <p>Parents are provided with the curriculum guide so that they can acquaint themselves with what is being done weekly. The assignments are also posted in WhatsApp groups so the parents can help the child.</p> <p>Parents of grade nine students are allowed to sit in Math and English classes so they can learn the concepts and help their children at home.</p> <p>Edmodo educational platform enables teachers to share content, distribute quizzes, assignments, and manage communication with students, colleagues, and parents.</p>	<p>The teachers and school share tips with parents on how they can best help their child at home with homework. This includes references to educational youtube channels.</p> <p>Parents are provided with the curriculum guide and timetable so that they can acquaint themselves with what is being done weekly.</p> <p>RenWeb educational platform enables teachers to share content such as the curriculum guide for all subjects, distribute quizzes, assignments, grades, and manage communication with students, colleagues, and parents.</p> <p>.</p>	<p>The teachers and school share tips with parents on how they can best help their child at home with homework. This includes references to educational youtube channels.</p>	<p>The teachers and school share tips with parents on how they can best help their child at home with homework. This includes references to educational youtube channels.</p>
Decision-Making	<p>A parent representative sits on the board and has one vote. The PTA representative makes a presentation at each board meeting.</p> <p>Parents sit on various committees in the school.</p>	<p>Two parents inclusive of the president of the PTA sit on the board. PTA president makes a presentation at each board meeting.</p>	<p>The president of the PTA is supposed to sit on the board but she was not informed of this, so she was not attending any board meetings.</p>	<p>The president of the PTA sits on the board and makes a presentation at each board meeting. Parents sit on committees in the school.</p>

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	Parents can provide suggestions and feedback at PTA meetings.			
Collaborating with Community	<p>The school facilitates a good relationship with the community and collaborates with several stakeholders.</p> <p>The school adopts the informal name of the residential community to identify with them.</p> <p>The school employs members of the community and they protect the school from theft and vandalism.</p> <p>The school has an annual vendor and taximen appreciation ceremony and roster them to participate in devotion.</p> <p>The school adopts a basic school in the community and provides them with food items for their breakfast and lunch programme as well as free printing and laminating of materials.</p> <p>The school partners with the community in projects such as the patching of the roadways and the distribution of care packages to the indigents.</p>	<p>The school doesn't have much contact with the residential community as it is virtually situated in a business community.</p> <p>The few people who live in the environment are retirees who don't get out much. The school however has a very good relationship with the parents, the alumni, and PTA who work together to assist the school.</p> <p>The PTA solely operates the school's breakfast programme which has been in operation for over 17 years. It provides a warm meal to over 120 students every weekday.</p> <p>The PTA provides monetary contributions to all staff at the end of the school year.</p> <p>The PTA assists in infrastructural development such as the installation of fans in all classrooms, refurbishing of bathrooms, rehabilitation of playfield, etc.</p>	<p>There is not much collaboration that takes place between the school and the family and community. The parents nor the community are involved in the school. The school has tried in the past to have a community PTA, but the first attempt was unsuccessful and the school discontinued.</p> <p>The school allows the residential community to use their playing field and netball court.</p> <p>The school has benefitted from the donation of a computer lab from the son of a former resident of the community.</p> <p>The school gets some assistance from businesses regarding their sports day and other activities.</p> <p>The school supports local poultry farmers for their canteen.</p> <p>The school gets resource persons to participate in their parenting seminars. School gets parents involved in fundraising activities such as bake sales.</p>	<p>There are few collaborations with stakeholders to assist with the sports programme.</p> <p>The school collaborates with resource persons and gets them to come in at different functions to speak to students and teachers.</p> <p>Parents and community members sit on the committee in the school</p> <p>The church provides spiritual support. Alumni participate in devotional exercises and give motivational speeches.</p> <p>Alumni donated towards the refurbishing of the reading room, donations of stoves, sponsorship of students.</p>

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	<p>The school partners with older men in the community and use them as mentors to mentor boys who are displaying deviant behaviours.</p> <p>The community football and netball teams use the school's facilities for training.</p> <p>Community members serve on committees.</p> <p>Students from feeder schools are accommodated on campus to market the school and promote visioning.</p> <p>The school does a community tour on the first Friday in September each school year. A different community is chosen each year from which their students reside, and the staff goes in the community. They meet and greet residents, provide information about the school, and ask them to look out for their students.</p> <p>The school has a good relationship with the wider school community as well. They facilitate work experience, give scholarships,</p>	<p>PTA contributes to school events such as Penn Relays, Teachers' Day activities, etc</p> <p>Students give back to the community. They collect donations and give to children's homes, old peoples' homes, disasters, etc.</p> <p>Parents are used as class mother and father and to oversee classes and serve as a link to administration.</p> <p>PTA hosts seminars for parents to educate and assist them to be better parents.</p> <p>Students are required to do 30 hours of community service in their community to graduate.</p> <p>Parent and community members sit on various committees in the schools.</p> <p>Parents are used as resource persons for both students and teachers.</p> <p>The church offers spiritual support and motivation for students.</p>		

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	<p>mentorship, and sponsor awards at the schools' prize-giving ceremony.</p> <p>The school host a yearly health fair each year and medical personnel give of their expertise free of cost. They also get sponsorship from corporate Jamaica.</p> <p>The school gets resource persons to come in and provide training, give motivational speeches to students, staff, and parents. Alumni participate in devotional exercises and give motivational speeches.</p> <p>Alumni and PTA raise funds in support of various school ventures such as the purchasing of the school bus.</p> <p>Parents are used as class mothers and fathers to oversee classes.</p> <p>The school trains parents and community members in data operation, crop production, and housekeeping and partners with HEART/NTSA Trust to provide certification.</p> <p>Students are required to do 30 hours of community service in their community to graduate.</p>	<p>The school also collaborates with other stakeholders such as corporate Jamaica who provide financial support.</p> <p>Corporate Jamaica and alumni contributed to the state-of-the-art science lab and the solarization of the school.</p> <p>Alumni participate in devotional exercises and give motivational speeches.</p> <p>The school allows the community to use its football field and netball court.</p> <p>The school collaborates with corporate Jamaica and universities and colleges to participate in their annual careers day.</p>		

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Collaborating with the Community	The school collaborates with corporate Jamaica and universities and colleges to participate in their annual careers day.			