D. T. SEALEY

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INTREPID IMPERATIVE PEDAGOGY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION INTO THE EXPERIENCES OF TEACHERS WHO TEACH AT HILL TOP GOVERNMENT PRIMARY, A LOW SOCIOECONOMIC, HIGH CRIME, URBAN SCHOOL IN NORTH TRINIDAD – THE SUCCESS STORIES!

DONNA THOMAS-SEALEY

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ABSTRACT

Intrepid Imperative Pedagogy: A Phenomenological Exploration Into the Experiences of
Teachers Who Teach at Hill Top Government Primary, a Low Socioeconomic, High
Crime, Urban School in North Trinidad – The Success Stories!

Donna Thomas-Sealey

There is currently very limited research within the Trinidad and Tobago context on
teaching in high crime, low socioeconomic urban schools, in which teachers have had
"successes" in educating children from this background. Moreover there are
misconceptions among many academic circles about the nature and accomplishment of
teaching/learning within such settings. This phenomenological study analytically
investigated "The teaching/learning experiences of five teachers who teach at Hill Top
Government Primary, a low socioeconomic, high crime, urban school in North Trinidad"
and the "student successes" they obtained at the school. The study attempted to give the
teachers of the school an opportunity to tell their stories and voice their concerns by
employing a qualitative phenomenological approach. The findings of the study unearthed
eight main themes from the data: teachers' perception of student success, facilitating
student success, contextual hurdles, teacher resilience, critical pedagogical practices,
beyond the call of duty, stakeholder collaboration and policies. The findings suggest that
the teachers at the school conceptualize student success as "holistic human development"
and not just academic attainment. Teachers have employed numerous innovative and
sometimes unconventional teaching/learning strategies in order to produce such success

in students. The need for parental support and assistance from external agencies, as well

as the allocation of adequate resources was emphasized as a means of improving student

success at the school.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

TERM	MEANING
Essence	The term essence is derived from the Greek "ousia", which means the inner essential nature of a thing, the true being of a thing (Creswell, 1998).
Lived Experience	This involves our immediate, pre-reflective consciousness of life: a reflexive or self-given awareness which is, as awareness unaware of itself (Dilthey, 1985 cited in van Manen, 1990).
Pedagogy	Pedagogy refers to the science or profession of teaching/educating children (van manen, 1990).
Perception	This refers to an awareness or insight. It involves mental interpretation that is influenced by our mental state, past experiences, knowledge, motivations and many other factors (van Manen, 1990).
Phenomenology	Phenomenology is a qualitative research tradition that describes the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or phenomenon. (Polkinghorne, 1989).
Resiliency	The term resiliency refers to the methods and strategies employed by persons who have faced or are facing adverse circumstances to overcome these challenges (Day et al., 2011).
Socioeconomic status (SES)	Woolfolk (2007) calls socioeconomic status (SES) "the relative standing in society based on income, power, background and prestige" (p. 165). Santrock (2004) adds that an important qualification is "the ability to control resources and participate in society's rewards" (p. 583).
Success	Success as used in this study will not only apply to academic attainment but will primarily focus on human development, more so to social and personal development of the child.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

I am a teacher researcher at the Hill Top Government Primary School, where I am presently one of the most senior teachers among a teaching staff of twelve. Like my counterparts at the school, I have encountered numerous educational challenges that preempted my efforts to successfully educate pupils from the area. These challenges include; the school's geographic location and socioeconomic context, as well as, internal and external issues which affect teaching/learning. These coupled with the absence of external support make the job of teaching/learning at the institution extremely difficult. However although the conditions, context and circumstances present obvious challenges to the teaching/learning processes and thus serve as barriers to quality education, some of the teachers have reported student successes.

This study was therefore designed help me understand from the lived experiences of five teachers at the school, both the nature and teachers' perception of the student success, as well as the dynamics involved in obtaining it in such a context. The study was therefore organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the background of the study, the phenomenon under investigation, the purpose of the study, the subsequent research questions, and the study's significance. Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive overview of the literature related to the contextualization of student success, the dynamics of teaching in exceptionally challenging contexts, teaching/learning strategies used by educators in high risk schools and necessary support systems to ensure student success. Chapter 3 delineated the methodology of the study, the rationale for the selected research paradigm, sample selection, and data collection and data analysis procedures as well as the

limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter 4 presented the findings of the study and provided a comprehensive analysis of the data which emerged. Finally, Chapter 5 covered both the discussion and subsequent recommendations relevant to the findings.

Contextual background

Education is viewed as imperative to the enrichment and development of any society. Accordingly the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2012) deems education as a fundamental human right and therefore essential for the exercise of all other human rights. These rights are necessary in order to promote individual freedom and empowerment as well as yield important developmental benefits which includes, contributing to social change and equity for all citizens. This paradigm has been the driving force behind such initiatives as "Education for All" (Dakar, 2000) which is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youths and adults- an ideology which has influenced many educational policies and programmes to this very day.

In fact, the very philosophy of the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago embodies the aforementioned sentiments when it states, "… that every child has an inherent right to education which will enhance the development of maximum capability regardless of gender, ethnic, social or religious background" (National Task Force on Education, 1994, p. xvii). The Education Ministry further posits that, "Education must ensure that disadvantaged segments of the student population are provided affirmative programming and support so that, like their more privileged cohorts, they would benefit from educational opportunities" (Revised Green Paper, 2005, p. 14).

Currently the educational practices and policies of many nations contradict the aforementioned goals of education. Equal educational opportunities have not been afforded to all students because of the various adverse contextual situations both exogenous and endogenous in which many schools operate. For instance, research has shown that children who live in high poverty contexts often attend the lowest performing schools. This is as a result of the hardships faced by very poor communities where children, families and the schools that serve them are bombarded with a host of challenges. Stiefel, et al. (2000) identified some of these challenges as children who begin school without early literacy skills, high rates of absenteeism and transience, lack of parental involvement, and the inability of these schools to attract and retain experienced and committed teachers.

Additionally, studies carried out in Canada by Janus et al. (2003) found that schools with the largest proportion of children with low school readiness were from communities of high social risk including poverty. This finding has been supported by American studies conducted by McLoyd (1998) which suggest that there is strong interaction between socioeconomic status and the exposure to risk factors, and that children born into these circumstances, are disproportionately at a higher risk for school failure. These challenges are not extraneous to the Trinidad and Tobago context where a conference report by De Lisle, Seecharan & Ayodike (2009) noted that there are large differences between schools situated in different geographical locations and socioeconomic contexts and that these differences suggest "differential opportunity."

For instance, Hill Top Government Primary School which is nestled in the hills of North Trinidad in a low socio-economic, high crime urban area, experiences these

challenges on a daily basis. The community in which the school is located has a total population of 4,945 within 1,538 households. According to the Citizen Security Programme Report (2013) approximately 87% of the population is Afro-Trinidadian while the other 13% consist of mixed races. Official statistical records furnished by the same authority, revealed that the community has a 24% unemployment rate, while 50% are of the working class who are employed within elementary craft industries.

The Hill Top area is also synonymous for a number of nefarious activities including, gang related violence which Heeralal (2011) reported as having doubled in the last five years since the murder of gangster community leader Mark Guerra, and homicides (Ramdass, 2013). This situation was confirmed by Ryan, Rampersad, Bernard, Mohammed, and Thorpe (2013) report which listed the Hill Top community among the crime hotspots identified by the Prime Minister during the 2011 State of Emergency (SOE). The same report also established that within the district where the school is located, "… poverty is generic, widespread and concentrated" (p. 29). It is from amidst this background that the school's student population emanated.

Hill Top Government Primary School, which is a co-ed institution, is the only primary school in the community. During its 43-year history, it has been responsible for educating most of the Hill Top residents of which 43% completed only a primary school level of education, while 40% have completed a secondary level education (Citizen Security Programme, 2013). The records also showed that 76% of the population never passed any exams. Presently the school is attended by 40% of the school-aged children from the area. Consistent with school records, the present enrollment is 152 pupils with more than 90% of the school population being Afro-Trinidadian. Additionally a large

number of the student population comes from single-parent households. For instance, the demographic listing for one Standard One class for the academic year 2010-2011 showed that more than 50% of the students have only one parent in the household while 10% do not live with any parent and are cared for by relatives.

The aforementioned contextual situation of the school, results in many challenges for the school's Principal and her twelve members of the teaching staff. These challenges include pupils' lack of early literacy skills, indifference to education and lack of basic social skills as evidenced by reports written in students' Cumulative Record Cards. Additionally, while many of the parents fulfill their obligation to send their children to school, both the teachers and principal have complained of minimal parental involvement and mediocre support of the school's Parent Teacher Association (PTA). An examination of the PTA attendance records revealed that less than 10% of the parents attend PTA meetings at the school.

In addition, an examination of the entries made in official documents such as the School's Log Book and Student Infraction Records have revealed that the teaching staff is regularly confronted with issues relating to the children's behaviour, emotional problems, physical problems and difficulties learning. The nutrition of pupils is also an area of concern for the school since, school records indicate, that more than 80% of the pupils have to be provided with both breakfast and lunch meal allocations on a daily basis. Efforts to seek assistance from external agencies to help teachers address these problems have proven to be futile. Moreover, the community and its negative influence represent a constant impediment to the teaching/learning experiences offered at the

school, as the unwholesome influences and negative practices observed in the Hill Top community are often readily adopted by the pupils of the school.

Furthermore, the Education Ministry has a perception of the school as underperforming because of the pupils' inability to score consistently high grades at the National Test and Secondary Entrance Examinations (SEA). Consequently, the school has been placed on academic watch and categorized as a Performance Enhancement Programme (PEP) school. Hence the Ministry of Education has placed increased demands on both the principal and teachers to improve the academic performance at the school. This situation has negatively impacted teachers at the school, who feel de-motivated, demoralized and disenchanted. The Ministry's insistence on academic excellence have left the teachers with the impression that they are considered ineffective and incompetent in their teaching when compared to their counterparts at other institutions who are not as contextually challenged.

Nevertheless, while there is a perception of the school as underperforming because it has not been able to obtain consistently high student passes at the National Test and SEA examinations, there is a different kind of success occurring at the school that has not been recognized. Amidst this background of turbulence and seeming hopelessness success stories have arisen of teachers, who against all odds and formidable obstacles to their practice are able to reach the hearts of their students and assist them to develop socially, emotionally and personally. These teachers have assisted pupils from this deleterious environment to adopt values that build character and promote autonomy which contributes to personal and social efficacy- quintessentially the characteristics of the ideal citizen.

Ultimately teachers at this school require more than just commitment, enthusiasm, and confidence in their ability to teach, and a sense of perseverance to be successful in such a difficult context. Therefore, the popular notion of student success as being solely based on academic attainment can be challenged. Therefore five teachers who have achieved this different type of success, which continues to be unrecognized by the Education Ministry, have been selected as participants in this study so that they can give voice to their unique experiences of student success at the institution.

Articulation of the research issue

At Hill Top Government Primary, the school that is the subject of this research study, problematic conditions, context and circumstances present obvious challenges to the teaching/learning processes at the school and thus serve as barriers to quality education. Such conditions have made it difficult for teachers at the school to achieve academic excellence at the Ministry's examinations, which has resulted in the school being classified as an underperforming institution by the Education Ministry. However, teachers at the school disagreed with the label which is now attached to their school and contend that it does not reflect the true nature of their work in comparison to schools in far less challenging contexts. Despite the many challenges, several teachers at the school have not only surmounted these obstacles, but have been able to achieve a different type of student success which not only educates but also holistically develops students at the school who were at a high risk of dropping out or failure. These outcomes, have necessitated that teachers at the school be given an opportunity to explain their notion of student success while simultaneously helping this researcher to determine the catalysts responsible for such successes.

Purpose of the investigation

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of five teachers who have successfully taught at risk children at the Hill Top Government Primary School with the aim of gaining invaluable insight into how they perceive student success and the various teaching/learning strategies they have employed to achieve this, in spite of the obstacles of educational and socioeconomic inequity and deleterious community influences that seek to erode their practice.

Research questions

Overarching research question.

What meaning do teachers ascribe to their experiences of teaching at Hill Top Government Primary School?

Sub-questions.

1. What are the teachers of Hill Top Government Primary School perception of students' success?

2. What are teachers' perceptions of the educational challenges they have personally encountered in their effort to help students achieve success at Hill Top Government Primary School?

3. What are the teachers' perceptions of the teaching/learning strategies they have successfully utilized to increase student efficacy and learning at Hill Top Government Primary School?

4. What are the policies and procedures teachers perceive as being necessary to improve the teaching/learning processes at the school?

Expected outcomes

Polkinghorne (1989) suggests that phenomenological research leads to the researcher developing an 'amplified' understanding of the experiences of the participants and that this will yield several results, namely becoming more sensitive and appreciative of those involved in the phenomenon; knowledge and insights gained can be used to enlarge on, deepen and in some cases correct misconceptions about a phenomenon or particular experience; and finally to promote social action and inform public policy with the aim of amending such policies so that they can be more responsive to the ways in which we experience various situations.

Therefore this study is of importance for several reasons namely that it will assist this researcher to gain greater insights into the educational dilemma faced by teachers at the Hill Top Government Primary School. Additionally the study is aimed at informing this researcher about the innovative teaching/learning strategies teachers at the institution have employed to attain student success and efficacy in spite of the adverse conditions under which they are forced to work. Furthermore the study will assist in building sensitivity and empathy for those involved in the experience. Finally it is the belief of this researcher that this study confronts a major issue facing the education system of Trinidad and Tobago and the wider world and if expanded, could raise issues about what must be the educational and policy responses to schools in high-risk communities given our concern with "education for all."

Summary of chapter

This chapter presents a preamble to the research study which includes the background to the issue, and research perspectives on the research site context. It also

identifies a novel approach to student success that has not been recognized by the

Education Ministry.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The proceeding literature review attempted to explore the association between dominant sociological perspectives of educational practices at schools situated in exceptionally challenging contexts and the challenges confronted by educators who are situated in the school that is the subject of this research. This review was driven by various theories including the *Marxist, Functionalist* and *Social Democratic* perspectives of education of the poor and the theories connected to *Resiliency*. The review sought to bifurcate from the traditional definitions of student success and instead situate the concept of 'student success,' within the ambits of the holistic human development of an individual. Additionally the review strategically addressed the four research questions by employing a systematic overview of the historical and theoretical underpinnings of education in poverty-stricken, urban schools and the arising concerns with student performance as well as teaching/learning strategies and policies that support student success.

Theoretical framework

Marxist education theory.

Marxist philosophies on education were influenced by Karl Marx (1818-1883). According to the Marxists, society is socially stratified as a means of maximum production. They purport that a capitalist state, is divided into two main classes or groups: the bourgeoisie or capitalist classes, who own their own means of production, and the proletariat or working class, whose members own only their labour which they hire to the bourgeoisie in return for wages. Marxist contended that the education system

is hierarchically structured and therefore designed to facilitate this stratification. Consequently teachers are perceived to be the medium through which students are taught social compliance. They further concluded that the stratification of the education system was manifested in the inequalities that existed in the treatment of the poor (proletariat) and that of the rich (Bourgeoisie) and that the system facilitates the failure of the poor and the success of the rich (Haralambos, 2000).

Functionalist education theory.

Functionalists make the assumption that society has certain basic needs or functional prerequisites, which must be met if it is to survive. They also believed that there must be social order, stability and cooperation and that these are based on 'value consensus.' They posited that society is meritocratic and that rewards are given to those who deserve them. This paradigm has influenced their philosophy on the education system, which they believed provides equal opportunity to all students, and that students' success or failure is based on merit or performance at school (Haralambos, 2000).

Social Democratic education theory.

Social Democrats disagreed with the Functionalists' notion that the education system provided genuine equality of opportunity. They argued that within democracies there are inequalities and that state intervention is necessary if these inequities are to be corrected. They further maintained, that the same educational opportunities are not offered to the poor that are offered to the rich- a situation that facilitated the underachievement of the poor students and prevented them from reaching their full potential. They did however, propose that if these deficiencies are addressed by policy

makers, then the deficiencies of the education system would be remedied (Haralambos, 2000).

Resiliency theory.

Resiliency theory has its root in social work and started as an investigation into how children overcome adversity. It has evolved over the past 80 years to include adult, family and community resilience. Resiliency theory defines how individuals survive and overcome adversities and contend with life's stressors. In terms of teaching, it determines how teachers who are confronted with deleterious working conditions and school contextual challenges are able to overcome these and stay on the job (Day, Edwards, Griffths and Gu, (2011).

Purpose of the theories

The preceding sociological theories were utilized by this researcher as sociological constructs, to help explain the condition of today's education system and how this has affected the quality of education given to poor students. They also provided the foundation for the argument for the inclusion of 'holistic human development' as an indicator of student success as opposed to only academic attainment. The theory of Resilience was used to explicate teachers' ability to professionally survive in extremely challenging school contexts.

Review of the literature

Education and the poor: Historical perspectives.

Education is regarded as the vehicle through which knowledge, skills, cultural heritage, and social personalities are formulated and the channel for individuals to realize their goals. As a result, both governments and policy makers have embarked upon many

initiatives aimed at addressing the problems of the education system with the aim of making it accessible to all. For instance, there was the U.S. Federal "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2004) aimed at bringing all schools up to National standards, by raising students' proficiency levels at state test by the 2013-2014 school year by making the school directly accountable for the success of its students; and "Education for All" (Dakar, 2000) - a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children youths and adults.

In spite of this, the evidence suggests that the education system has continued to fail the poor, because many of the poor continue to underachieve at school (Yulimaki, Johnson & Drysdale, 2007). Thus, from as far back as the early 1960's sociologists have expressed numerous concerns about the quality of education given to the poor and disenfranchised student population, compared to that extended to their more affluent counterparts. As a result, many sociological theories have been postulated over the years about the treatment of the poor by the educational system. Foremost among these have been the Marxist, Functionalist and Social Democratic perspectives on education of the lower class.

Marxists view society as being hierarchical in structure and that class distinctions are necessary for an effective labour force. Consequently, adherents to Marxist ideologies such as Bowles and Gintis (1976) proffered that the education system was being used as an instrument through which class distinctions can be maintained, and that the marginalization of the education system in favour of the privileged, was necessary for the development of the capitalist system. This notion was opposed by Functionalists who perceived the education system as meritocratic, that is, that academic attainment is based

on merit and that the education system provided genuine equality of opportunity that was not influenced by social class as the Marxists' contended.

Accordingly, Durkheim (as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2000) declared that, "Society can only survive if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands" (pp. 87-88). However, Bourdieu (as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2000) although not making the assumption that there exists intellectual superiority of the higher class over the working class, suggested through his 'cultural capital' theory which is heavily influenced by Marxism, that the failure of the working class is to be blamed on the education system and not the knowledge, skills or intellectual ability of the working class students. He contended that the education system was "biased towards the culture of the dominant social classes and that it devalued the knowledge and skills of the working class" (pp. 837).

Nevertheless Parsons had contrasting views to that of Bourdieu; he like his fellow functionalists, believed in the value of attainment and the value of equal opportunity, which he deemed as important constructs for society. Parson's position was that "education was crucial for the selection of individuals for their future roles in society" (as cited in Haralambos, 2000, pp. 780). On the other hand, Social Democrats, while not supporting the Marxist notion that stratification of the education system was necessary for social order, affirmed that the education system did in fact, marginalize the poor, and blamed the education system for failing to establish legitimate equality of opportunity for all students. Hence, Halsey et al. (as cited in Haralambos, 2000) held the

belief that the education system had not been fair in its treatment of the poor. He further indicated that children, whose parents are poor, tend to have the highest failure rate of the education system and therefore concluded that the education system, has not only failed to provide equal opportunities for all children, but has been unsuccessful in assisting students to develop to their fullest potential.

However holding to a more pragmatic position on education than those taken by both the Marxists and Functionalists, the Social Democrats acknowledged that although limitations and flaws currently existed in the education system these could be amended and improved if the deficiencies of the education system were first recognized and effective measures put in place to correct them (Hasely et al, as cited in Haralambos & Holbron 2000). Currently however, evidence suggests that an obvious dichotomy still exists within the education system between how the poor are educated and how their rich contemporaries fare. In fact one report from UNESCO stated that, "Extreme and persistent inequalities linked to poverty, gender, ethnicity and language are holding back progress in education, wasting human potential and undermining prosperity" (GMR Report, 2010).

This has undoubtedly contributed to the obvious widening of the achievement gap between the rich and poor students. A mixed methods study conducted by De Lisle (2011) added further conclusiveness to this fact, and revealed that within the Trinidad and Tobago context gross inequities existed in the education system, between schools that operated within challenging contextual situations and those that are not as challenged, with urban schools facing the most severe of these challenges. Using the McBeath et al. (as cited in De Lilse, 2011) definition of schools "facing exceptionally challenging

circumstances", De Lilse noted that such schools are institutions that are "… confronted by complexities resulting from higher poverty levels, disadvantage and turbulence among students, parent and staff, thereby threatening school performance" (Abstract). He further concluded that,

> "… mechanisms and processes associated with 'exceptional challenge' as operationalized in Trinidad and Tobago were complex and context dependant. Sustainable school improvement would require not just leadership training, but also integrated services and interlaced interventions, targeting the multiple levels and multiple deficits" (Abstract).

The current inequities of the education system and its failure to adequately address the needs of students from low socioeconomic, high crime communities, have made it increasingly difficult for educators in those context, to achieve a level of academic success commensurate with that of affluent schools. Hence the Ministry's comparison of schools based on academic performance alone, and subsequent labeling of these institutions as "underperforming" (Delisle, 2011), is an indication that sufficient consideration has not been given to the matter of context and its apparent effect on 'student academic attainment.'

Contextualization of educational success.

Therefore it is necessary for a closer examination of the concept of 'student success' at disadvantaged schools has to be undertaken. Prior to so doing however, it is necessary to take a closer look at the generic definition of educational success currently accepted within academic circles.

Academic success.

There exists an extensive amount of literature on academic success. Conventional definitions of educational success have always focused on academic achievement, that is,

how well students perform at exams. As a result, this notion of student success based on academic attainment, have been instrumental in identifying students who are high achievers or those who are perceived as underachievers. Therefore researchers such as Anastasi, Meade and Scneiders (1960) and Richards, Holland and Lutz (1967) have postulated that academic success should include such things as class rank, standardized test scores, inclusion in the honours programmes and academic achievement. This is ideology of success, accepted within the Trinidad and Tobago education system, is reminiscent of our British Colonial influence which according to De Lisle, Seecharam and Ayodike (2010) "was noticeably elitist and examination-oriented, designed to filter, segregate and retain students based on meritocracy, as defined solely by performance in public examinations" (p. 1).

This exam-oriented focus of the education system is also reflective of Functionalism which advocated an exam-driven meritocratic approach to student selection and placement. Furthermore, the Marxist notion of social stratification which stressed that resources are withheld from the poor to sustain their underachievement and under development has been confirmed by studies conducted by the World Bank (1995) which suggested that a problem with inequity existed in both Trinidad and Tobago and the English speaking Caribbean. In light of the obvious disproportion that currently exists in the education system, which gives affluent schools an advantage over poor schools in terms of academic attainment, it is incumbent that the existing concept of student success be revisited and contextualized it to include much more than academic excellence.

Intellectual development versus holistic development.

Although academic attainment is an integral part of schooling, it is certainly not the only function of the school. Accordingly the Ministry of Education (2005) noted that education was essential to the development of Trinidad and Tobago and that the education system should "… endeavour to develop a spiritually, morally, physically, intellectually and emotionally sound individual" (p. 17). They further believed that ethical and moral constructs are imperative to survival and continued human development. Thus the school is responsible for assisting students to internalize concepts such as decency, justice, respect, kindness, equality, love, honesty and sensitivity if society is to survive (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Primarily the role of transferring values and norms throughout the generations was considered the responsibility of the home. However, eroding societal values coupled with disintegrating family structures, have resulted in a moral and civic deficit which the school has been called upon to satiate. Thus functionalist like Durkheim (as cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2000) underscored the role of the school to mould and shape the lives of its students and prepare them for societal roles. Hence, the concept of a good school took on greater meaning which had less to do with the physical configuration of the school or the socioeconomic standard of the neighbourhood in which the school is situated, but more to do with how it successfully met its challenges to develop young minds and prepare them for life external to the school environment. Therefore Ungoed-Thomas (1997) proposed that a good school should possess "… readily recognizable moral and intellectual qualities, or, more specifically, traits" (p. 5). Which he identified as: respect for other persons; truth; justice and; responsibility.

Additionally, ul Haq (1995) postulated a postmodernist perspective on human development where empowerment of people was seen as the means and ends of societal development. Empowerment places citizens in a position to exercise their own free will, make democratic decisions, contribute to the decision-making process and make critical determinations as to the course their lives will take. An empowered people are a free people and that empowerment comes from knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge for the betterment of self and others (Rogers, 1961). In this regard, the notion of human development should undergird the vision and mission of all schools primarily those situated in challenging contexts and the concept of success be expanded to encompass "holistic human development".

Success redefined.

In today's society, the sole definition of student success has become increasingly constricted to mean academic attainment, which is in contravention of the paradigm of the holistic development of the child. However, the demands of a modern society necessitates that a child be developed in all respects including but not limited to the academic, emotional and social areas. The school would therefore be failing if it disregarded its loco parentis obligation to holistically develop the child. Therefore a truly successful student should be recognized as one who displays good social competences. This concept of social competencies cannot be limited to a few situational aspects, but must incorporate elements of cognitive, emotional, social and behavioral skills, as well as motivational and expectancy sets needed for successful interaction with other members of the society, without undue conflict or disharmony. Social competencies also reflect having an ability to take another's perspective concerning a situation, learn from past

experiences, and apply that learning to the changes in social interactions (Welsh & Bierman, 2001). However this goal is not as easily attainable because there are many challenges that school in depressed contexts encounter.

The challenges of educating pupils in low socioeconomic contexts.

Research has shown that children who live in high poverty contexts often attend the lowest performing schools. This is as a result of the hardships faced by very poor communities where children, families and the schools that serve them are bombarded with a host of challenges. Stiefel, et al. (2000) listed some of these challenges as children who begin school without early literacy skills, high rates of absenteeism and transience, lack of parental involvement, and the inability of these schools to attract and retain experienced and committed teachers.

Harris, James, Gunraj, Clarke & Harris (2006) were in accord with the above statements. They stated:

> …such schools have high levels of unemployment, physical and mental health issues, migration of the best qualified young people and, not least, low educational achievement… higher than average numbers of students with diverse ethnic backgrounds and low levels of literacy… take a high proportion of refugee children or pupils that have been excluded from other schools… this places demands on teachers and often leaves the school in a position of having difficulty with teacher recruitment and retention (pp. 6, 7).

Hence the foregoing contextual situations present obvious challenges for practitioners who try to successfully educate and holistically develop pupils, while at the same time sustaining their professional fortitude. Much more is needed for teacher-survival than mere commitment and enthusiasm; such practitioners require professional dexterity, determination and motivation which are the embodiment of resilience.

Teacher resilience.

Resilience is identified as an intrinsic factor which determines if a teacher will survive and perform in an exceptionally challenging urban school. Much literature has been generated over the years about how teachers can be recruited to teach in urban schools (Darling-Hammond, 2000). However discoveries made in recent research have identified that the problem does not lie in the recruitment of teachers, but rather how to retain them (Salvador & Wilson, 2002). It is an undisputable fact that urban schools, especially those in low socioeconomic catchments are plagued with many more challenging issues than their more affluent counterparts. Teachers in urban schools are called upon to do more than their regular classroom duties, because they are confronted with larger social issues which impact their students, which stem from the conditions present in the homes and the community. These situations according to Faber (1991) can result in teacher burn out.

Resilience is the capacity to recover from adverse events (Masten & Coatsworth as cited in Gay, Edwards, Griffith & Gu, 2011). Therefore a framework of Conditions for Teacher Resilience was advanced by Johnson et al. (2012) which highlighted five key areas that have to be addressed in order for teachers to be resilient namely; policies and practices, teacher's work, school culture, relationships, and individual identity. In this framework Johnson et al. posited that teachers' resilience are enhanced when policies and practices show a strong commitment to social justice, teacher agency and voice, community engagement and respect for local knowledge and practice. They also noted that resilience is encouraged when the focus is on understanding the complex, intense and unpredictable nature of teachers' work rather than on individual deficits and blame.

Further they suggested that resilience flourishes in schools that promote collaborative relationships, professional learning communities, educative forms of leadership and democratic decision-making. Additionally they proposed that schools that value relationships focused on the complex emotional needs of teachers and encourage social exchange that fosters respect, trust, care and integrity. Finally Johnson et al. proffered that when teachers engage in processes of self-reflection and self-understanding that sustain their personal identity, while at the same time developing a robust teacher identity this enhances resilience. In addition to resilience, teachers in exceptionally challenging contexts require teaching methodologies that motivate pupils to learn and force them to make application of knowledge; these strategies are critical to holistic human development.

Critical instructional strategies for challenging contexts.

There is a ubiquitous pool of literature on teaching/learning strategies for schools located in difficult contexts. The literature suggests that teachers use a variety of methods to help learners internalize concepts. Among the many examples of recommended strategies from the literature is, culturally sensitive teaching. Culturally sensitive teaching helps the learner to develop tolerance for persons of different ethnicities, races and cultures. As Crick (1999) explains, "…Tolerance is a two-dimensional concept: both disapproval but also restraint, forbearance and hopefully respect is signaled-hopefully mutual respect" (p. 344). Erickson (as cited in Biehler & Snowman, 1997) proposed another strategy where pupils are encouraged to acquaint themselves with eminent and successful people who share their ethnic background and adopt these as role models and pattern their lives after those individuals. Gay (2004) went a bit further and recommended

even inviting some of the outstanding individuals from the ethnic group to talk to the pupils about their experiences and what they did to became successful (Gay, 2004).

Other techniques include the use of peer tutoring, which involves the teaching of one student by another (Biehler & Snowman, 1997); constructivism where students construct their own knowledge (Bruner as cited in Biehler & Snowman, 1997); cooperative learning or student team learning which involves having pupils work in small groups where they help one another master a particular or concept (Slavin, 1995); mastery learning, where the content is specified and organized into small sequential units and students are monitored and corrected until they master the concept (Block, Efthim, & Burns, 1989); and differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2001) where the teacher individualizes instruction to meet the diverse need of all learners. Additionally, teachers can use the Creative Arts such as songs, poetry storytelling art and craft, drama as a means of catering for 'multiple intelligences' (Gardner, 1983) and different learning styles to teach various concepts in a manner best suited for individual learners. Also through the avenue of role play class teachers can involve pupils in patterning desired social behaviours (Bandura, 1997).

Finally, the issue of teacher expectations is critical when teaching in exceptionally challenging contexts where a culture of low pupil expectation can easily become the acceptable standard among practitioners. Research has shown that students' ethnic and social class backgrounds affect how they perceive success and approach various learning tasks. For example, Little (1967) and Levine and Havighurst (1992) proffered that students from low socioeconomic contexts generally show little interest in schooling and have low career aspirations. These characteristics can negatively influence the

expectations that teachers have of the ability of students to perform and therefore affect their perception and attitude towards the pupils. Hence, teachers these contexts need to find ways to maintain positive attitudes toward their students. One way of so doing is to learn to access students' cultural capital' as a means of reaching learners from socially disadvantaged settings.

According to Bordieu (as cited in Haralambos, 2000), the term 'cultural capital' incorporates a combination of the students' social knowledge and cultural knowledge. This knowledge is transmitted from parent to child within family socialization practices and includes previous experience and knowledge plus assumptions, values, belief and expectations. Therefore teachers should respect the diversity of their students as well as the 'cultural capital' they bring to the classroom. Rather than denigrating the cultural capital of the students in an attempt to have them adopt the more appropriate and prescribed social values, teachers should extract and help students identify positive skills and behaviours from their existing cultural capital that would motivate them to be successful both at school and in later life (Maslow, 1987).

Support for teaching/learning in low socioeconomic, high crime contexts.

Given that our education system is still being rigidly driven by functionalist meritocracy, it becomes exceedingly difficult for teachers at schools in exceptionally challenging contexts, to attain academic excellence and more importantly, holistic human development. There is therefore a need for assistance and policy amendments that help to equalize the existing imbalance among schools. This has been the position taken by Social Democrats who proposed that the deficits within the education system must be addressed if true equity of opportunity for all students is to be achieved. There is strong

consensus in the literature that policies and procedures within and external to the school affect student success at schools situated in adverse contexts.

Reezigt and Creemers (2005) proposed that school improvement can only be effective if "resources are made available by the educational context…" (p. 412). They further indicated that if resources are not made available, there will be difficulties with school improvement. They noted that resources in terms of support are critical elements for school improvements. These support resources are: "autonomy granted to schools; financial resources and favourable working conditions for teachers and schools and; local support" (p. 412). Local support encompasses assistance from the school community, parents of the school, district officials, school administrations and school boards. Additionally the National Education Policy in its general principles highlighted that schools must make it a policy to establish relationships with its parents and community that promote mutual trust" (National Education Policy, 2001). Epstein (2002) also believed that there is an urgent need for community involvement in the activities of the school because community involvement in the daily activities of the school increases school effectiveness and could enhance student performance.

Summary of the chapter

Chapter 2 identifies the deficiencies in the education system and its failure to meet the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged students in exceptionally challenging contexts, by establishing a historical and sociological perspective for such treatment. It highlighted that the examination-driven system of educational meritocracy and the iniquitous distribution of resources to poor schools results in teachers' inability to attain academic excellence. This chapter also places the concept of student success within the

ambits of holistic human development. It further outlines the challenges to

teaching/learning and the elements necessary to overcome these challenges.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative phenomenological approach was selected because it was considered most suitable for exploring the individual experiences and meanings teachers ascribed to their experience of teaching at Hill Top Government Primary, a high crime urban school situated in an underprivileged area in North Trinidad. Data gathering methods involved the use of semi-structured interviews that were formulated from the research questions and researcher's experiences. The data analysis procedures used in this study were principally rooted in the principles of the Grounded Theory Methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) which can be used by researchers in various research traditions. This process involved transcription of raw data, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

Research design

The Qualitative research design is inquiry aimed at describing and clarifying human experience as it appears in people's lives (Polkinghorne, 2005). Consequently, this researcher found it to be an effective medium through which she could explore and gain understanding of the meaning teachers at Hill Top Government Primary School ascribed to their teaching experience and success stories at the institution. Additionally, since little research has been done on the phenomenon a qualitative approach was deemed most practical (Morse, 1991). Finally, because this research was greatly influenced by the Social Constructivism worldview, this researcher selected the qualitative design, in an attempt to seek understanding of the world in which the teachers at Hill Top Primary work as well as gather the subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell, 2009).

Rationale for the research paradigm

The phenomenon that was the impetus of this study was the lived experiences of teachers at the Hill Top Government Primary School who have successfully taught at risk students at the institution over the years in spite of the many educational obstacles and safety issues they have encountered in so doing. In order to fully investigate this phenomenon, and extract rich thick data from the teachers about their experiences as teachers who teach in this context, this researcher selected the qualitative research tradition of phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) described phenomenological research as, "… a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by the participants."

Thus far, studies of this nature in the Trinidad and Tobago context have received very minimal research attention. Consequently the study did not attempt to make judgments about the teachers but merely *"borrow"* the experiences of the participants as it were, as well as, gather *"their reflections on their experiences"* (van Manen, 1990, p. 62). This research was descriptive in nature and contained a special scope of inquiry which was expected to result in the production of meaning in consciousness (Husserl, 1970). Polkinghorne (1989) proffered that phenomenological research does not ask the question 'why?' but rather address the question 'what?' consequently the study did not searches for reasons for the actions of the participants. This research therefore went beyond mere description and explored and interpreted the language, lived experience and social interactions of others and the meanings attributed to these experiences (Lopez & Willis, 2004; van Manen, 1990).

In an attempt to understand the inter-subjective views of the teachers who successfully taught at the school, the ontological view of the multiple constructed realities and shared meanings of the teachers was embraced therefore this researcher sought to ascertain the experiences of the participants and make sense of their meaning via qualitative interviews which were the primary source method of data collection. This method, according to Creswell (2009) assisted to reveal the essence of meaning of the phenomenon which was contained in the participants' narratives. This meant that multiple quotes and vignettes based on the actual words of different teachers were used to present differing perspectives on the phenomenon being studied (Moustakas, 1994).

Further the epistemological assumption of intentionality (Sandburg, 2005) was used as a foundation therefore the study was conducted at the participants' work place, in this case, Hill Top Government Primary School. The use of this venue placed the researcher in the best position to make a clear distinction between the knower and the knowledge gathered. Axiologically, the research was guided by the values and value judgment of both the teachers and the researcher, hence obvious biases both on the part of the researcher and the participants were expected and may be present in the study.

Justification for the research strategy

The research setting.

Hill Top Government Primary is a co-ed school which is Located in North Trinidad in a low socioeconomic, high crime urban community. The school was officially opened on the 13th April, 1970. Since then, this school has been managed by a total of seven principals. The school plant is comprised of a large two- story split level building with adjoining annexes; the perimeter of which is enclosed with a high security concrete

wall topped with razor wire. The compound is accessed via two gates, a main gate located at the south of the facility and a back gate located to the north. A security booth is positioned at this main gate. Since at present, only one security guard mans this very large compound the rear gate is kept locked at all times.

The staff of the school comprises twelve teachers all of whom are trained and the principal. There are also a School Clerical Officer (SCO) and three cleaners. Many of the teachers all hail from nearby communities within the Hill Top district. 152 students are presently enrolled at the school. From its inception, the school was constructed to facilitate the most ambitious of learning programmes. However this was not without its share of problems because the school is located in a high crime, low socioeconomic community synonymous for its gangs, murders and other illegal activities. Many students of the school complete only their primary school education, having dropped out of secondary school before completing their programme of studies.

Typical of the school, are pupils who are devoid of social and early literacy skills. There is also a high rate of student absenteeism and transience, student apathy, student involvement in delinquent behaviour, student drop outs, and parental non-involvement. The lack of parental involvement becomes so extreme at times, that teachers at the school are forced to rely on the area police to intervene with matters relating to pupils, parental neglect and non-support. These efforts have resulted in parental outrage and resentment. However there are some teachers at the school who in spite of these socioeconomic and educational obstacles, have been successful in educating 'at risk' pupils at the school. Consequently, this school was chosen as the research site because as a concerned teacher at the school, this researcher believed that it was within these walls and through the

experiences of the teachers, a more lucid understanding can emerge about the requirements for professional survival in such a deleterious environment and more so, what strategies are employed by dedicated teachers to achieve student success under these circumstances.

The selection of participants.

Participants were selected for this study based on their training, length of time at the research site, experience in teaching 'at risk' pupils, the number of student successes they obtained over the years, their ability to articulate their stories and the recommendations of the principal and fellow members of staff. The five participants, three males and two females were all trained teachers who have interacted with most of the pupils over the past ten years. Three out of the five teachers were assigned to specific classes while one teacher was in charge of ICT at the school and another was a recent retiree. The participants were each assigned pseudonyms of their choice and were interviewed in a setting that made them most comfortable. Three of the five participants were interviewed at their homes because they felt that being interviewed at school would take away from their teaching time. One participant was interview at the school during one of his scheduled free periods, while one participant had to be interviewed via e-mail because he no longer resided in this country.

The participants' profile.

Ashton.

Ashton is a male teacher in his late fifties who resides in a nearby community. He is married but is without any children. He is a trained teacher and has been in the teaching profession for the past forty years. Ashton received his training at the now defunct, Port-

of-Spain Teachers' Training College (POSTTC) where he received his Teachers' Diploma. He has since obtained a Diploma in ICT. Prior to coming to the school, Ashton taught at three other primary schools in Trinidad thereafter taking a seven-year leave of absence from the teaching service. At the time of the interview, Ashton had been teaching at Hill Top Government Primary for the past twenty-one years. He is presently teaching at the Standard Three level but has had the opportunity to teach within all levels of the school including SEA where he taught for a number of years.

Teddy.

Teddy is a male teacher in his late thirties who describes himself as an Agnostic (denies belief in the existence of God). Teddy once lived in a community in close proximity to the school then relocated to Central Trinidad. He has since migrated to the United States of America with his family. He is married and is the father of two children. Teddy was a member of the teaching service for seventeen years until his early retirement in 2011. He had both pre-service and in-service teaching and obtained his Teachers' diploma from Valsayn Teachers' College. Teddy is the proud holder of an Associate degree in Human Resource Management which he obtained while in the teaching service. Teddy taught at three different primary schools and various YTEPP centers along the East-West Corridor before his arrival at Hill Top Primary where he served for twelve years. Teddy also tutored at various On the Job (OJT) training centers throughout the country during his evenings and vacation periods. He has taught at both the Juniors' and Seniors level of the school and was assigned to the SEA class during his last three years in the profession.

Bob.

Bob is a male teacher in his early forties. He hails from a community in East Trinidad which is of similar socioeconomic status as that of the school. He is an unmarried bachelor and has one son. Bob has been in the teaching service for the past twenty-one years. He received his in-service training at the Valsayn Teachers' Training College. Bob is currently pursuing his Bachelors degree at The University of the West Indies in Sociology which he admitted to taking because of the community in which he works. Bob is A+ Certified in Computer Technology and is presently in charge of the ICT programme at the school. He has been at Hill Top Primary for the past eleven years, prior to which he taught at three secondary schools before coming to Hill Top.

He attributed this to the fact that at the time of his entering Training College, the subject he had taught at secondary school was not included in the College curriculum. He was therefore forced to pursue the primary school Teachers' Diploma which was the programme being offered at the College. On his graduation he was subsequently placed at Hill Top Primary. He was annoyed at the notion of being 'demoted' from secondary to primary so unceremoniously. He therefore described his initial reaction to the news that he was coming to Hill Top Primary as "Not positive!" Bob has since acclimatized to the school. Although he taught at only the Seniors' level and had a short stint at the Infants level, he has interacted with all of the students from all of the levels, because the entire school has ICT sessions at least once per week.

Giselle.

Giselle is in her mid-thirties and has been a teacher at the school for the past thirteen years. She is a single-parent and a mother of three and at the time of this

interview was pregnant with her fourth child. Giselle resides in a nearby community and takes approximately fifteen minutes from home to school each day. She received her first appointment as an Assistant Teacher II at Hill Top Primary. Subsequent to her graduation from Valsayn Teachers' College which she attended from 2003-2005, Giselle was sent back to the school and has been there since that time. Giselle's qualifications include ten O'Level passes, a Teachers' Diploma, a Certificate in Physical Education and a Bachelors Degree in Educational Services. Giselle has taught at all levels of the school and even served in the capacity of the Physical Education Teacher at the school for a number of years. She is presently the Standard Five teacher and has been teaching SEA for the past three years.

Kymn.

Kymn is married and in her early forties and resides within the Hill Top district. She has been teaching at Hill Top Primary for the past eighteen years. Prior to being posted at the school she taught at a Girls' primary school within the same district for three years and thereafter attended Valsayn Teachers' Training College from 1993-1995. In total she has been in the teaching service for twenty-three years. Kymn was born in the district and presently resides in there. Kymn has received qualifications both at the Undergraduate level and Post Graduate levels, having obtained both Bachelor and Master Degrees in Education. She also has a certificate in Information Literacy. She requested that the nature of her degrees, her religious affiliation and her present class not be placed in the research because of confidentiality concerns. Kymn has taught at all levels of the school including SEA.

Sampling method

Purposeful sampling.

Purposeful sampling that is criterion based was used for this study because according to Merriam (2002), "…, since you are not interested in 'how much' or 'how often,' random sampling makes little sense…it is important to select a sample from which most can be learned. This is called a purposive or purposeful sample. (p. 12). Therefore care was taken to select "information-rich cases for in depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposive sampling" (Patton, 1990 p. 169).

Criteria.

The participants who were chosen for this study were trained teachers who worked at the school under investigation for a period of at least ten years, and who have taught at most of the levels at the school including the SEA classes. These participants were selected because over the years they have had success in educating, nurturing and holistically developing 'at risk' students at the school. Their willingness and wealth of knowledge and experience made them prime candidates for the study.

Sampling procedure.

Prior to conducting the study, a letter of solicitation was sent to all eligible teachers at the school under investigation which announced the research study and invited participation in the study. This letter outlined the purpose of the study and requirements of the participants of the study (see Appendix II). Later a discussion was held with the school's principal who assisted in recommending the most suitable candidates. The accepted participants were thereafter informed via a letter that they have been selected to

take part in the study. This letter reiterated the title and purpose of the study (see

Appendix III). Arrangements were then put in place to conduct the subsequent interviews

and reminder letters sent to each participant (see Appendix IV).

Data collection procedures

        Data collection instrument.

        Within the phenomenological domain of research, the interview is considered the

primary instrument of data collection because it allows the researcher to investigate,

clarify and mildly interrogate the descriptions given by participants (Kvale, 1996). The

structure of the interview has however given rise to numerous deliberations by qualitative

researchers. For instance Baillie (1996) suggested that the interview should be open and

fluid as questions are generated on site and extemporaneous, while Koch (1996)

disagreed proposing that the interview should be semi-structured thus enabling the

researcher to examine multiple dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation.

Therefore for the purpose of this research, semi-structured interviews were used

consisting of open-ended questions and probes (see Appendix V) which assisted

participants to generate rich information from their experiences. The conversations

originating from the interviews were audio recorded thus allowing this researcher to

extract the actual words and insights shared by the participants.

        Face-to-face interviews.

        Face-to-face interviews lasting between 45 minutes to 1 hour were conducted

with individual participants at a venue they deemed most comfortable. Transcriptions of

these interviews can be seen in Appendix VI. These interviews allowed this researcher

the opportunity to establish rapport with each participant and illicit their trust and

cooperation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Though time consuming at times, interviews of this nature allowed this researcher to get insights from the emic perspectives (The participants) and the freedom to probe deeper into the participants' expressions and extract clearer meaning of their lived experiences.

Observations.

Participant observation was a data collection tool used in this study, which according to Jorgensen (as cited in Creswell, 1998) "offers possibilities for the researcher on a continuum from being a complete outsider to being a complete insider" (p. 123). Such observation allowed this researcher to discern potential deceptions in participants and identify the genuine meanings from the disingenuous (Hammersley & Atkinson as cited in Creswell, 1998). In order to record salient observations during the interview, personal notes were taken which captured those elements of the interview that the audio recording omitted namely; participants' behaviours, emotions, passions, facial gestures and mannerisms. These observations facilitated a clearer, richer understanding and description of how the participants really felt about their experience of the phenomenon and assisted to guide the data analysis process.

Documents.

Official school documents such as the Log Book, Cumulative Record Cards, Student Infraction Logs and Student Demographic Files were examined to substantiate and confirm data, as well as to minimize subjectivity.

Narration of researcher's experience

> **Conceptualization: September 2012.**

The researcher attended scheduled meetings with the research supervisor and brainstormed to arrive at clarity of purpose for the study. During this period several new ideas emerged which resulted in a change of wording of the research title to one that more fittingly represented the research issue. Consultations with the research supervisor continued throughout the study.

> **Data gathering for research background: October 2012-December 2012.**

During this period data was gathered for the literature review and background. There was however great difficulty obtaining literature to suit the needs and intent of the study because of the novelty of the research issue. In spite of that, appropriate information was sourced and the background developed. The Literature Review ran concurrently with data gathering and continued until May 2013.

> **Submission of background, seeking of official permission to conduct research and preparation of research proposal: January 2012.**

A draft of the background was submitted to the research supervisor for review and critique and official verbal permission to use the research site was sought from the school's principal. A subsequent permission letter from the Ministry of Education was later given to the principal (see Appendix I). The research participants were also selected during this period via solicitation letters.

Preparation and presentation of research proposal: February 2013.

A draft of the research proposal Power Point was submitted to the research supervisor who critiqued it and offered valuable feedback. The research proposal was later presented in the University's auditorium before an audience of lecturers and peers.

Conducting of interviews, data collection and transcription: March 2013-April 2013.

The interview protocol was developed and submitted for review by the research supervisor. Thereafter, a pilot study was conducted with a non-participant to insure that the research instrument was appropriate and that the questions yielded the responses intended. Resulting errors were quickly corrected and the interviews conducted in a timely fashion. All interviews were face-to-face and audio taped except one that was conducted via e-mail. Collection and transcription of data was done immediately after each interview. Each transcript was then sent to the interviewees for verification and validation.

Data analysis and submission of draft: May 2013-June 2013.

The data analysis process commenced when word of the transcript verification was received from the participants. Data analysis in most instances was done simultaneously with data collection. The first Draft of the research document was submitted to the research supervisor in the first week of June 2013 and feedback was received shortly thereafter. The latter process continued until final submission on June 28th 2013.

 Data analysis procedures

The method of data analysis used in this study was based on the principles of the

Grounded Theory Methodology advance by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and involved

different stages of analysis:

1. Initial or open coding (Creation of codes from raw data)

2. Axial coding (Formulation categories and interconnecting the categories)

3. Selective coding (Building a 'story' that connects the categories).

The audio recording of each interview was carefully transcribed to arrive at

written data (verbatim) for the purposes of detailed analysis of the participants' thoughts

and expressions. This process involved meticulously listening to audio recordings several

times and then writing word for word the conversation and expressions of each

participant (see Appendix VI). After each interview was transcribed the recording was

again played and the transcript read simultaneously to insure that transcription was done

correctly. Because all the transcribing was done by this researcher, immersion in the data

was possible thus facilitating familiarity with the interviews. Care was taken to omit any

names or references from the data that would comprise the confidentiality of the

participants. Afterwards a copy of each completed transcript was sent to individual

participants for verification of content.

Next was the open coding, which involved scrutinizing each transcript several

times to develop suitable codes for various aspects of the participants' experiences (see

Appendix VII). These codes represented central ideas or issues from the data, some of

which were 'in vivo' (The participant's actual words). The coding was done line by line

(see Appendix VIII). Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined coding as, "…the operation by

which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways...the

central process by which theories are built from data" (p. 16). The second stage was the

axial coding where codes were interconnected or arranged into categories or subthemes

based on the similarity of concept. Redundant codes were eliminated and all codes

checked multiple times for consistency of meaning (see Appendix IX). The emerging

subthemes were further grouped into main themes. These were sent to both the

participants and the peer reviewer for verification (see Appendix X). The third stage was

selective coding, where the themes and subthemes were used to build a descriptive story

which connected all the categories.

Rigour

In order to guarantee this research study was carried out with adequate rigour, a

pilot study was conducted on a teacher who was not a participant in the study. This was

done to confirm whether the interview questions would elicit suitable responses about the

phenomenon from the participants. Secondly, audio taping the interviews with the

participants' permission ensured that no vital information was lost and assisted in the

transcription process. Thirdly, completed copies of transcripts were sent to respective

participants for confirmation and credibility. Transcripts were affirmed by participants

and later codes and subsequent themes were submitted to a fellow researcher who

corroborated the results.

Limitations

There was a challenge to maintain objectivity, because this researcher is a teacher

at the school under study. Such immersion at times evoked preconceived notions and

personal biases about the phenomenon under investigation and the Education Ministry's

treatment of the school and its teachers. This researcher therefore had to struggle to "epoche," which in phenomenological research, means withholding assent or dissent, suspicion or judgment. This required that this researcher engage in constant self-reflection and accept the participants' expressions as the only valid data. Additionally, the school's involvement in sports, as well as the writing of assessment examinations such as Secondary Entrance Examination (S.E. A.) interfered with scheduling of time for interviews.

Delimitations

This study was restricted to one low socioeconomic, high crime primary school in North Trinidad and it was limited to the exploration of a single phenomenon and subsequently cannot be used to make generalizations at this level.

Ethical considerations

Administrative permission was obtained through the School's Principal before the commencement of the study to use the site and relevant school documents. Additionally each participant was provided with individual letters which explained the purpose of the study before participating. The anonymity of participants was insured by assigning each participant a pseudonym of his/her choice to maintain confidentiality. They were also informed that they were under no obligation to share information that in any way made them uncomfortable and that they could to withdraw their participation at any time.

Summary of chapter

The preceding chapter delineates the procedural manner in which the study was conducted. The research tradition of phenomenology is used to explore the phenomenon under investigation. The chapter highlights profiles on the five participants, the research

site, as well as, the sample criteria and procedure used to select participants. A detailed

description is also given of the data collection process and analysis procedure. The

Grounded theory methodology was utilized as an effective means of data analysis which

involved; open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Finally the chapter outlined the

limitations, delimitations and ethical consideration involved in the study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This study explored the lived experiences of teachers who teach at Hill Top Government Primary School, a high crime, low socioeconomic urban school in North Trinidad and the student successes they have obtained during their years of teaching at that institution. It attempted to give voice to these teachers thus having them tell their stories about how their teaching experiences at the school have been with the aim of obtaining valuable information about the methods they employed to get students from these communities to succeed in spite of the numerous educational challenges they frequently encounter.

The research was therefore guided by four sub-questions namely; (1).What are the teachers of Hill Top Government Primary School perception of students' success? (2).What are teachers' perceptions of the educational challenges they have personally encountered in their effort to help students achieve success at Hill Top Government Primary School? (3).What are the teachers' perceptions of the teaching/learning strategies they have successfully utilized to increase student efficacy and learning at Hill Top Government Primary School? and (4).What are the policies and procedures teachers perceive as being necessary to improve the teaching/learning processes at the school?

This chapter therefore presents a detailed analysis of the most significant discoveries that emerged from the research. The proceeding findings have been arranged according to main themes which resulted from the data (see Figure 1).

| Teachers' perception of student success |

| Facilitating student success |

| Contextual hurdles |

| Teacher resilience |

| Critical pedagogical practices |

| Beyond the call of duty |

| Stakeholder collaboration |

| Policies |
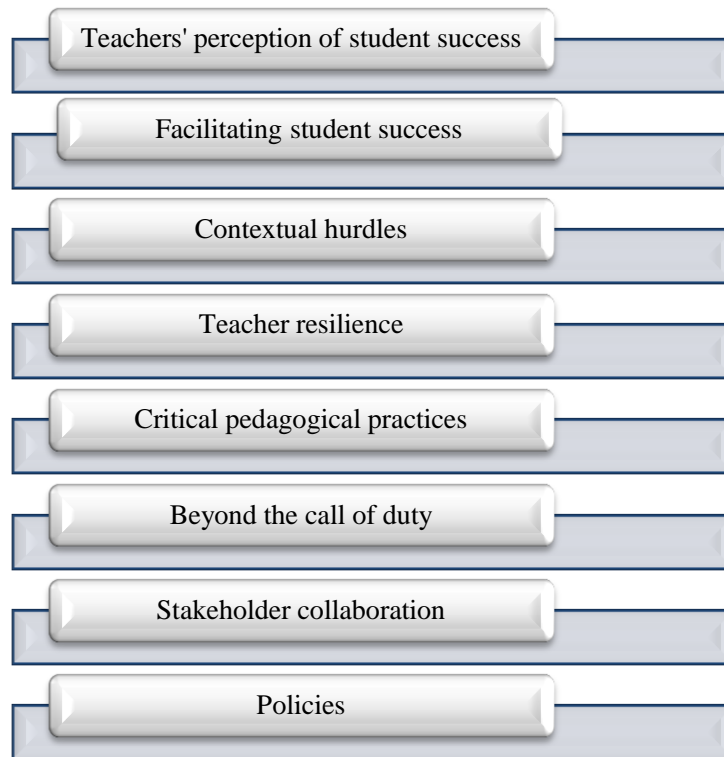
Figure 1: Eight Main Themes of Success Stories

Eight main themes emerged from the teachers' life experiences at Hill Top

Government Primary (see Figure 1). The eight themes were arranged in the following

order for discussion (1) Teachers' perception of student success (2) Facilitating student

success (3) Contextual hurdles (4) Teacher resilience (5) Critical pedagogical practices

(6) Beyond the call of duty (7) Stakeholder collaboration and (8) Policies. The

proceeding discusses each of these main themes with their accompanying subthemes (see

Table 1) in detail with supporting quotes and vignettes. The line numbers listed at the end

of each quote refer to the line in the individual transcript from where the participant's

quote was taken. To view complete transcripts see Appendix VI.

Table 1

Main themes and first level subthemes

Sub-question 1:
   What are the teachers of Hill Top Government Primary School perception of students' success?

Subthemes	Main themes
Identifying successful students	1. **Teacher's perception of student success**
Student attitude	
Creating amiable relationships	2. **Facilitating student success**
Positive conditions	

Sub-question 2:
   What are teachers' perceptions of the educational challenges they have personally encountered in their effort to help students achieve success at Hill Top Government Primary School?

Subthemes	Main themes
Mainstream culture	1. **Contextual hurdles**
Contextual deterrents	
Student attitudes	
Impediments to teaching	
Personal concerns	
Teacher attitudes	2. **Teacher resilience**
Teacher determination	

Sub-question 3:
   What are the teachers' perceptions of the teaching/learning strategies they have successfully utilized to increase student efficacy and learning at Hill Top Government Primary School?

Subthemes	Main themes
Teaching methods	1. **Critical pedagogical practices**
Forging relationships	2. **Beyond the call of duty**
Making sacrifices	

Sub-question 4:
   What are the policies and procedures teachers perceive as being necessary to improve the teaching/learning processes at the school?

Subthemes	Main themes
Home-school relationships	1. **Stakeholder collaboration**
Interagency communication	
School policies	2. **Policies**
Ministry policies	

Teachers' perception of student success

For the purpose of this discussion the generic term "student success" was extended to include both human and character development which involves the adoption of positive values. Each participant experienced success in diverse ways that were pervasive with other areas and this resulted in the emergence of the subtheme "identifying successful students." "Identifying successful students," entailed the viewing of success "outside the box" or perceiving it as encompassing much more than academic attainment. According to Kymn:

> I do not view true student success in the conventional way. I don't look at student success primarily in terms of academic achievement, like how a child performs in a paper and pencil test… (Line 130, 132 and 133)

Participants drew several examples of this alternative concept of student success they encountered while teaching at the school. Each success story involved attitudinal or behavioural changes on the part of the student. For instance Ashton stated,

> I recall that there was this child whose parent showed a lack of interest in her education and that was manifested in the child's attitude towards school… I had to go to her home in what is considered one of the most dangerous areas in Hill Top… to beg for the mother to come and sign up for the girl to take the exam… I gave her the money and she went for the certificate and the child was finally registered. What I observed over time was a change in that child's attitude towards her work… She was able to write the exam and pass for a secondary school and I believe she was continuing to make an effort there as well … (Lines 218-233).

Bob also expressed his success story which involved changes in student behaviour. He recalled,

> When I first got the class one of the things I heard from both the students and the teachers is that 'You have to watch this young man, because 'Bones' steals a lot!'… I have a very close relationship with the class. It didn't happen overnight, the stealing continued… my students began to say, 'Sir, but 'Bones' don't thief again!' …By the time he was ready to leave here he started to take a personal interest in himself and if you see

the gentleman now and I say 'gentleman' he has improved you wouldn't believe it was the same person…(Lines 161-183).

Teddy shared a similar experience about one of his students whose attitude and behaviour were his major shortcomings. He noted,

> …this boy who was rebellious to authority, disrespectful to teachers and other students, resistant to school work, had a spirit of apathy, lied profusely and had serious anger issues… he was a Standard Five repeater because he was sent back to repeat after doing poorly at the SEA exams. No teacher wanted him, but I took him in my class… I used some innovative ways to make him change his ways… By the time he sat the SEA again this boy was a changed person. He was focused on his school work, he made an effort, he was no longer disrespectful and his aggression abated to a large extent. He did pass his exams, but not for the best of school, however the character change he went through in my class was a real demonstration of success … (Lines 71-86).

Identifying successful students.

Participants were of the general consensus that many other elements were involved in determining if a student is successful. Kymn expressed that:

> I look at the personal growth and development of the child … This … encompass development of a positive attitude, adoption of proper values, um, positive behaviour changes and willingness to work to mention a few … (Lines 154-159).

Adoption of positive attitudes and values, behaviour modification and a willingness to learn were identified by participants as fundamental elements of student success. Bob concurred with Kymn stating that,

> …when you see a child coming in with bad attitudes, with um, problems with honesty and all of that and you can see after a while – a year, a term or so that that child has turned around and is no longer stealing, although they may not be getting an 'A' you see an attitude change and improvement in their work all of these things is what I consider success!... (Lines 125-130).

Likewise Ashton felt that student's success is reflected in the students' willingness to work and to learn and suggested that the teacher's effort and parental involvement are intrinsic,

> But off course for students to be successful, they must be willing and it helps a lot if the parents are behind them and off course if the teacher does his or her part. You see, so it is a combination of factors… (Lines 138-141).

Facilitating student success

Participants emphasized that student success is fostered by the pupil's attitude and the forming of relationships between teachers and pupils as well as the relationship between parents and teachers.

Students' attitude.

Both Ashton and Teddy viewed the attitude of the students in terms of their willingness to learn as intrinsic to success. Ashton stated that, "You look at the attitude of the children, their willingness to learn" (Line 149). Teddy's utterances were similar to that of Ashton when he stated that the child must exhibit a "Real hunger for knowledge" (line 46). He further added that confidence in their abilities was essential and commented that, "Students whose attitude to learning have improved and are more confident in their abilities, also students who believe that they can be or become high achievers" (Lines 49-52).

Creating amiable relationships.

Another area noted by participants as necessary for student success was that of relationships which included both parent-teacher relationships and pupil-teacher relationships. Giselle stated, "… I try to get parents involved. Personally I text my parents and let them know of issues concerning their children (Lines 184, 194 and 195).

Teddy also considered parent-teacher relationships as important when he reflected on an incident in his teaching career where he had to forge a relationship with a parent in an effort to assist her child he stated,

> What I had to do was make serious efforts to get the mother interested in her daughter and to understand that teachers were not against her but they only wanted the best for her child… (Lines 59-61).

Pupil-teacher relationships were also encouraged because most participants saw this as an avenue to communicate their concerns and commendations to their pupils. Bob for example, revealed that he had a close relationship with his class; he said "I have a very close relationship with the class" (Line 186). Ashton stated that, "I have always tried to let my children know that they are important" (Line 259) and Kymn recalled that, "I spoke to him every day and encouraged him to look beyond the now and see what the future had to offer" (Lines 214-215).

Positive conditions.

There were several conditions deemed by participants as being conducive for the attainment of student success. These were; the quality of teachers, parental involvement and the child's personal ambition. Teddy described himself as an, "… an unconventional disciplinarian … (Line 78). The importance of parental involvement was also emphasized. According to Ashton, "… with the support of the parents" (Lines 134) pupils can succeed. Teddy's comments endorsed Ashton's sentiment where he stated that student success required, "… parents placing a premium value on education as a means to success" (Line 45).

Contextual hurdles

Participants acknowledged that there were a host of obstacles that impeded their efforts to help students succeed including but not limited to the mainstream culture of the community, the contextual deterrents, the attitude of the students, the obstacles to teaching and their personal concerns.

Mainstream culture.

Several participants blamed the influence of the mainstream culture on the erosion of the values they tried to instill in their student. They considered it a challenge to try to teach children how to be different and virtuous when the community in which they lived contravened these teachings. For instance Bob stated:

> You know it comes like if you lean their heads and try to pour in something good in the morning and when they get home in the evening someone leans their heads in the opposite direction and it pours right back out! ... (Lines 206-209).

Ashton likewise indicated that environmental influences had a damaging effect on student success:

> …the attitude of the children which is largely a reflection of the attitude of the parents and the society, because one gets the impression that too many of the parents in the area feel that education is not all that important! ... (Lines 85-88).

Contextual deterrents.

Additionally several major contextual deterrents were highlighted by participant which increased the difficulty of attaining student success. Participants mentioned the school's student intake and emphasized that the majority of students that come into the school are below the readiness level. A fact Bob alluded to when he commented that, "… here given our clientele, given the kind of students we get I think we can't just look at

marks (Line 118 and 119). Ashton very emphatically pointed out the reality of the situation faced by teachers at the school. He stated, "In reality if you look at some of the children we have here, the type of homes they come from, it is very hard for them to excel" (Lines 188-190).

Giselle also highlighted the fact that students are too poor to obtain the required learning resources. She stated, "…children not coming to school with tools, stationery, books… (Lines 126 and 127). The issue of bad leadership was raised by three participants. Kymn called attention to the issue of ineffective leadership as another contextual deterrent and stated, "… there was a time when we got a new administrator who totally and in a very short space of time eroded everything we tried to do at the school because of his stubbornness and inexperience" (Lines 80-82). She described this as affecting the morale of the staff and the discipline of the school.

Students' attitude.

Participants also expressed that the attitude of the students acted as a deterrent to student success since the majority of students at the school exhibited a negative attitude towards their schooling and education in general which was manifested in their unwillingness to work. Ashton stated, "… you expect that some children will have natural ability, but for some reason they are not motivated to work … (Lines 135 and 136). Teddy described one of his students as being "… resistant to school work, had a spirit of apathy … (Lines 72 and 73) and Kymn mentioned that one of her students had a "lackluster attitude towards his school work" (Lines 212 and 213).

Impediments to teaching.

The participants had varying personal obstacles or situations that interfered with the effectiveness of their teaching. These were identified as the school's lack of adequate resources, the type of students, parental non-support, and parental support of students' negative behaviour, the devaluation of education by both the students and the parents. Participants believed that the school lacked adequate resources to cater for the needs of its student population. Ashton for instance stated "… we do not always have the resources that we need but basically we could work with what we have" (288-290). Kymn's statements substantiated those of Ashton and included the issue of parental non-involvement when she compared the affluent schools to Hill Top Primary. She stated:

> You see there are schools …They have parents who are involved in their children's education, access to numerous educational resources and resource personnel and untold material and social advantages that prime them for success. However in a school like this, these things are greatly lacking so it gives the teachers here a greater challenge to get these children to do well at the end of the day. (Lines 58-65).

Issues relating to the students' inability to learn effectively were highlighted by Giselle who described some of the children at the school as being "… special needs children. They were not diagnosed because we are not qualified to diagnose, but you know with teaching you can pick out one or two who really cannot function at a normal level" (Lines 110-112).

Personal concerns.

Matters of personal safety were a cause for concern for most of the participants because of the school's geographical location. Although there was no overwhelming feeling of trepidation, Bob acknowledged that "… in terms of location. The other schools

going to and from and actually getting to and from those schools didn't require as much caution" (Lines 65 and 66). While Kymn stated that "Another problem I had in the 'earlies' was safety and security because you know how this area is, but with the increased police presence things have normalized for the time being" (Lines 263-265).

Other participants expressed that they felt unappreciated for the labours they expend and felt discouraged by the lack of success experienced with many pupils. Kymn referred to this discouragement as "… spinning top in mud" (Line 258), while Ashton alluded to the lack of parental appreciation "It helps when parents appreciate what you try to do for their children. Of course not all parents appreciate…" (Lines 202-204).

Teacher resilience

Despite the numerous challenges, encountered by participants at the school they have been able to overcome them by showing strong resilience and determination in the face of adversity. There was consensus among participants that teaching at Hill Top was no easy task Ashton stated, "Well teaching at this school presents it's set of challenges … it can be a bit frustrating at times… (Lines 62 and 63) and several thought of leaving. Kymn expressed that she, "Actually I thought of leaving several times" (Line 69) and Bob confirmed he considered leaving the school, "A couple of times*"* (Line 87)

Teacher attitudes.

Participants described their attitudes as being positive and indicated that having a positive disposition at a school like this helped them to stay in this context and not seek transfers. Ashton stayed because he felt he could make a difference, he thus commented, "… yet you feel that you can make a difference. You can help somebody make a difference, because somebody has to teach children like ours" (Lines 63 and 64). Bob

affirmed Ashton's sentiments and stated, "Because this school is one school where you can see that you are making a difference!" (Lines 99 and 100). Kymn also expressed that she stayed, "… because of the children and my love for them "(Line 102). She further added, "You see Miss, you have to love teaching and the children you teach" (Line 270).

Teacher determination.

Participants further noted that determination was a critical criterion for teachers' resilience at the school. Although the participants were required to work much harder than in other schools to achieve student success, they noted their stay at the institution was as a result of their personal philosophies and determination to combat the stressors that seek to avert their teaching. Teddy's personal philosophy was guided by his "Commitment and endurance "(Lines 94 and 95). Giselle suggested that her "persistence and perseverance" (Line 132) were instrumental in helping her overcome the challenges of teaching at the school. Bob overcame his challenges because he decided, "Oh! Well I had to make up my mind that this is my class … I just 'kept going!" (Lines 224 and 225).

Critical pedagogical practices

Participants employed a wide variety of teaching methods to enhance and augment teaching/learning and achieve student success at the school. Thus the subtheme of teaching methods emerged from the discussions.

Teaching methods.

All participants enumerated the various teaching methods they used in their class. Some of these teaching methods shared common characteristics. For instance all but one participant stated that group work was used. Ashton referred to using group work when he stated, "One of the things I try to encourage pupils is to help one another in organized

group activities and otherwise" (Lines 270 and 271). Giselle too, engaged in the use of group work when teaching which she termed, "…small peer groups" (Line 142 and 143) and Kymn utilized group work to encourage weak pupils. She stated, "I also use lots of group work/cooperative learning so that weak pupils benefit from the encouragement of the strong" (Line 282 and 283).

Several participants used peer tutoring while several others used one-on-one teaching. Giselle commented "I find that one-on-one with teacher and student, that works" (Line 42). Kymn however engaged in constructivism which was her preferred way of teaching "I use constructivism a lot in my teaching, in that way students participate in their learning and remember concepts better" (Lines 281 and 282). Mentoring was also mentioned by most participants as an effective teaching strategy they used to achieve student success. Teddy for example, reported using a combination of external and personal mentoring to curb the behaviour of one of his students "I provided examples of persons who did well so that he could look to these as positive mentors. I acted like a father to him and showed him love, but I demanded respect in return" (Lines 80-82).

Additionally in order to enhance the teaching/learning experience for her charges Kymn used Authentic Assessment activities which she said allowed her to assess her pupils in a variety of ways and also facilitated her students' unique talents and skills "By authentic assessment I mean engaging the pupils in real life activities where they are forced to show their skills and talents to solve real life problems…" (Lines 176-178). Both Kymn and Giselle incorporated extra-curricular activities as aspects of teaching to reach slower learners. Kymn stated, "I may use a little music, maybe art, maybe dance-

whatever helps the children to learn better" (Lines 288 and 289). Giselle concurred and commented, "I believe in a lot of extra-curricular activities too, music is um, important" (Lines 76 and 77). Among the participants Kymn used the most varieties of methods in her practice.

Beyond the call of duty

Most participants agreed that they were required to go beyond the call of duty in an effort to help their students to be successful. This meant that they had to do much more than basic teaching. Subliminal influences and covert measures also had to be employed which involved the forging of relationships and the making of sacrifices.

Forging relationships.

Participants expressed that the forging of teacher-pupil relationships was an important component in the quest to get students to be successful. Bob created bonds between himself and his students by listening to them. He stated, "We need to listen when the children talk" (Lines 188 and 189). Ashton on the other hand forged relationships with his students by showing personal interest in them. He commented, "The interest you show in trying to help them with their problems I think will go a long way because pupils who feel that they are cared for tend to make an extra effort to do better" (Lines 134-136). While Kymn engaged in dialogue with her students which helped to build their confidence, "I spoke to him every day and encouraged him to look beyond the now and see what the future had to offer" (Lines 114 and 115).

Making sacrifices.

Participants indicated that they had to go beyond the call of duty to assist children to be successful. Ashton explained what that entailed, "What that means is that there are

other things that you might go out of the way to do for them that another teacher might not do" (Lines 211-213) The examples given by Teddy, Ashton and Giselle were most outstanding. Ashton recalled he, "… had to give money to parents to get students' birth certificate so that they can write the exams" (Lines 215-216). Teddy also recollected:

> The girl needed glasses; she developed a terrible hair fungus …. I had to take money out of my pocket to obtain the glasses, take urgent measures to get the child to a doctor, buy the medication and have it administered in school. (Lines 62-65).

Giselle likewise assisted a delinquent student. She recalled, "I didn't see a child coming and I visited the home ... I made him dress, I then took him to the police station. I told them what is happening" (Lines 225, 226, 229 and 230).

Stakeholder collaboration

Participants believed that there should be communication and collaboration if the teachers were to be more successful in their endeavour to attain student success. Collaboration between the school and external agencies was deemed vital and so too was home-school communication.

Home-school relationships.

In the area of home-school relationships the participants were of the opinion that if parents help teachers and vice versa, then pupils will be more successful. Giselle emphasized this when she stated, "I try to get parents involved. Personally I text my parents and let them know of issues concerning their children…" (Lines 194 and 195) and Kymn suggested that, "… parents need to become partners in purpose with their children's teacher so that they can assist the children together " (Lines 318-320).

Interagency communication.

Participants confirmed that the school received no assistance from external agencies at the moment. In fact Giselle stated, "We don't have any Guidance officers with us presently… Social worker no!" (Lines 203, 205). According to participants, the school had not received any assistance from social services although, they felt that this was of much importance for the improvement of teaching learning at the school. Bob confirmed this when he stated,

> … if we can get assigned to the school behavioural specialists, by that I mean a psychiatrist, a social worker, a counselor because we have a lot of students who would have either experienced things or seen things and have had violent exposure to different stuff who just go without counseling as if it is normal and I believe these specialist will be able to help. (Lines 241-246).

Policies

School policies.

Participants acknowledged that school policies were an essential part of attaining student success at the school, however only three were specific about what policy issues were of concern to them. Kymn for example, implied that policies with respect to the monitoring of the school's resources had to be established and therefore suggested that, "The principal and teachers should also monitor and use resources so that they last" (Lines 328 and 329). Alternatively Teddy focused on policy in terms of student discipline. He added that there should be, "Clear policies on discipline" (Line 107)

Ministry policies.

Kymn was the only participant to mention policies on the part of the Ministry about resource allocation and the placement of specialist teachers to assist pupils at the school. She stated:

On the part of the Ministry, I think the allocation of necessary resources and training on how to use them properly is necessary, because sometimes you get resources but you are not trained to use them well and they just get wasted. Schools like ours need specialist teachers, special educators… (Lines 329-332).

FINDINGS

Table 2		
Summary of research findings		
Sub question 1: What are the teachers of Hill Top Government Primary School perception of students' success?		
Main themes	**Subthemes**	**Findings**
Teacher's perception of student success	• Identifying successful students	Teachers at Hill Top perceive student success as Human development. They believe that holistically developing students is intrinsic to attaining real success.
Facilitating student success	• Student attitude • Relationships • Conditions	Student success is achieved through a combination of intrinsic element. Students must first have the right attitude towards education and be willing to learn. Secondly supportive relationships must be formed between parent and teacher and pupil and teacher. Finally pupils must have personal ambition coupled with a desire to achieve in order to be successful. They must also have good quality teachers and parents who show interest in their work.
Sub question 2: What are teachers' perceptions of the educational challenges they have personally encountered in their effort to help students achieve success at Hill Top Government Primary School?		
Main themes	**Subthemes**	**Findings**
Contextual hurdles	• Mainstream culture • Contextual deterrents • Student attitude • Impediments to teaching • Personal concerns	Through its devaluation of education as a means to success, the dominant mainstream culture of the community in which the school is situated exhibits a powerful and damaging influence on pupils at the school. Other challenges such as crime, poverty, parental non-involvement, the absence of social services, teacher de-motivation, pupil unpreparedness, pupil reluctance to learn and learning difficulties continue to be formidable barriers to teaching/learning at the school.
Teacher resilience	• Teacher attitudes • Teacher determination	Maintaining positive attitudes and having a caring disposition have assisted teachers in their effort to continue working at the school. Individual teachers used various coping strategies to deal with the challenges of teaching in the context; this was however not reflective of a whole school approach to teacher resilience. There was also no indication that resiliency training was part of existing school policy.

Sub question 3: What are the teachers' perceptions of the teaching/learning strategies they have successfully utilized to increase student efficacy and learning at Hill Top Government Primary School?		
Main themes	**Subthemes**	**Findings**
Critical pedagogical practices	• Teaching methods	Teachers at Hill Top utilized a variety of innovative teaching/learning approaches to deliver the curriculum. With a major emphasis on holistic human development, teachers focused on values training and aspects of character development to assist pupils to succeed. The approaches were however individualized and not a part of the school's pedagogical policies.
Beyond the call of duty	• Forging relationships • Making sacrifices	Attempts to establish critical home/school links with parents to engender support for pupils at times involved the taking of serious personal risks by teachers. Assistance of pupils to obtain necessary pre-requisites for learning also incurred monetary sacrifices on the part of the teachers.
Sub question 4: What are the policies and procedures teachers perceive as being necessary to improve the teaching/learning processes at the school?		
Main themes	**Subthemes**	**Findings**
Collaboration	• Home-school relationships • Interagency communication	Collaborative support from both parents and external agencies were lacking at the school. Teachers believed that the corporation of the school's stakeholders would contribute to effective teaching/learning experiences at the school and ultimately student success. However the school had no policy on stakeholder collaboration, nor was any measures in place to engender same.
Policies	• School policies • Ministry policies	The absence of clear and articulate school policies concerning parental involvement, curriculum delivery and discipline were cited as problems that impacted the teaching/learning processes at the school. Likewise the nonexistence of Ministry policy with respect to appropriate human and material resource allocation to the school was aired as a matter of concern by teachers.

Summary of chapter

Chapter 4 presents a careful qualitative analysis of the data. The data is analyzed using narratives consisting of quotes and vignettes from the participants' transcripts. Eight main themes emerged: 1) Teachers' perception of student success (2) Facilitating student success (3) Contextual hurdles (4) Teacher resilience (5) Critical pedagogical practices (6) Beyond the call of duty (7) Collaboration and (8) Policies. The themes were discussed in sequential order using relevant subthemes. The findings of the research are presented in relation to the four research sub-questions which guided the study.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Eight main themes emerged from the data; 1) Teachers' perception of student success (2) Facilitating student success (3) Contextual hurdles (4) Teacher resilience (5) Critical pedagogical practices (6) Beyond the call of duty (7) Collaboration and (8) Policies. These themes laid the basis for understanding that teachers at the school defined student success as holistic human development. Also while bombarded by numerous contextual challenges, they were able to withstand the pressure by being resilient which included having a positive attitude and developing mental fortitude. Additionally, they used a wide variety of teaching/learning strategies in their practice that even involved going beyond the call of duty, which they accomplished without assistance and support from parents, the community or external agencies. Hence this chapter was designed to compare, contrast and evaluate the literature surrounding the phenomenon investigated with the main research findings.

Perception of student success

It is evident from the findings that participants embraced a definition of student success that more closely aligned with that of ul haq's (1995) notion of human development. While it is true, that among popular educational circles student success is defined more in terms of academic attainment (Anastasi, Meade & Scneiders, 196), the teachers' perception that more is involved cannot be invalidated. For the participants, the context in which they are situated as well as the dominant subculture attitude of the residents and pupils create a major educational challenge which is usually faced by most marginalized schools. Therefore to attempt to measure or determine student success at the

school only in narrow academic terms would be injudicious in this context. Ryan, Rampersad, Bernard, Mohammed, and Thorpe (2013, p. 24) supported the position that education should use a "differentiated curricular designed to help individuals to acquire basic life skills and promote their holistic development."

Teachers at the school while teaching the academics placed heavy emphasis on training students to be good citizens and positive contributing members of society. This approach harmonizes with Ungoed-Thomas (1997) proposition that a good school should have, "… readily recognizable moral and intellectual qualities, or, more specifically, traits" namely: Respect for other persons; Truth; Justice and; Responsibility (p. 5). This they can achieve by helping children learn and emulate the principle of the "ideal Caribbean person." This is an individual who respects human life; is emotionally secure; possesses a high level of self confidence and self esteem; sees ethnic, religious, gender and other diversity as a source of potential strength and richness is aware of the importance of living in harmony with the environment; has a strong appreciation of family and kinship values; has a strong appreciation for community cohesion; is responsible to self and community; has an informed respect for our cultural heritage; … and has the capacity to promote physical, mental, social and spiritual well being (Caricom, 1987).

In order to facilitate this holistic human development, the education system and by extension the school, have to become humanistic in their approach to education. This entails that the focus be removed from meritocratic attainment and emphasis now be placed on individual schools and their diverse needs. Especially is this true, of schools in exceptionally challenging circumstances, where socioeconomic, cultural and contextual

issues limit the quality of teaching/learning at these institutions. In response to the situation with youth delinquency, a recommendation by Ryan, Rampersad, Bernard, Mohammed, and Thorpe (2013) proffered that "Schools should be learning communities of differentiated curricular, remediation programmes, accelerated learning, therapeutic settings, after school programmes, mentorship, empathetic teachers, student council and service learning" (p. 54). This therefore means that the education system has a significant role to ensure equity for all schools; equity, meaning not equal resources but providing what individual schools require in order to successfully meet the challenge of teaching and learning in spite of context (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Educational challenges and resilience

Educational challenges are to be expected in any school context because schools do not enroll perfect children nor are they situated in perfect communities. For a school situated in low socioeconomic high crime urban contexts however, challenges can become overwhelming. When these challenges are excessive they can result in teacher dissatisfaction, de-motivation and burnout (Faber, 1991). Stiefel, et al. (2000) was accurate when he listed some of these challenges as children who begin school without early literacy skills, high rates of absenteeism and transience, lack of parental involvement, and the inability of these schools to attract and retain experienced and committed teachers.

For instance participants outlined that they experienced profound problems with parental non-involvement, the devaluation of education by the community, and parents as well as students' apathy to education. This can presents major hurdles for educators because parental involvement is a critical element in the holistic development of the child

and this is clearly lacking at the school. Parents therefore need to view themselves as partners in the teaching/learning process, because students tend to put more effort into their work when parents become involved (Kinney, 2005).

At the same time, there was no indication by the participants that any measures were in place at the school to encourage parental involvement and participation. Whereas individual teachers may at times communicate with parents to discuss matters pertaining to their children, this was apparently not a regular practice and it clearly did not involve parents being part of the decision-making process at the school. The National Education Policy in its general principles postulated that:

> The school must establish relationships with its parents and community that promote mutual trust. These relationships should be based on open two-way communications. Parents and the community need to be involved in the developing and monitoring of the school's expected outcomes. The school should therefore display a willingness to respond to the parents and the community, and the community in turn should support and be involved in the school and its programme. (National Education Policy, 2001).

The need for parental involvement in assisting their children with homework was underscored by participants and this is very critical to children's learning because the involvement of parents in the educational interests of their children operates as a form of motivation for pupils (Dix, Gershoff, Meunier & Miller, 2004). However it must be also considered that many of the parents may not be unwilling, but unable to assist because of having poor literacy skills themselves. The school should therefore explore programmes aimed at assisting parents to develop literacy skills, in so doing parents will be in a better position to assist their children with school work. Additionally Belsky & Barends (2002) proffered that the personality characteristics associated with psychological maturity predicts the parent's ability to be a good parent. Therefore the age and maturity of the

parents also need to be considered in parental involvement. The school's P.T.A. therefore plays a vital role in helping parents learn the necessary skills to fulfill their role more effectively.

Being resilient was considered a priority because the participants expressed that the situation at times became so strenuous and they felt a lack of appreciation for the efforts they expended and that they contemplated leaving. Maslow (1987) discussed the issue of motivation in his needs hierarchy. He postulated that an individual's need to feel a sense of safety, belongingness and love are intrinsic to his/her personal motivation. Although the need to be resilient was evident from the discussions there was no indication that the true skills necessary for resilience were used nor were there any indication that the principal took a proactive approach in helping the teachers to be resilient. In fact what the teachers practiced resembled coping skills rather than resilience.

However seven essential skills are indentified in the literature as augmenting and encouraging resilience; (1) being positive in the face of adversity, (2) be flexible in how you achieve your goals, (3) be assertive (4) maintain high expectations for student success, (5) focus on the love and passion you have for your profession, (6) create a climate of personal and professional support, and (7) create shared responsibility and participation (Patterson, Patterson & Collins, 2002). Consequently, Johnson et al. (2012) suggested that it takes a collaborative effort on the part of the school, parents and the community to foster resilience in teachers.

Teaching/learning strategies

In the study many participants stated that they employ a number of teaching strategies in their teaching practice and that they take a learner-centered approach to the

curriculum delivery. This is advocated by researchers in order to cater for multiple intelligences and different learning styles (Gardner, 1998). Additionally methods such as group work which was used by all the teachers is an intrinsic part of the cooperative learning process which should be encouraged because it contributes to motivation, in raising achievement, and in producing positive social outcomes (Slavin, 1995). The literature also suggests that is essential for teachers to always communicate praise and high expectation to their charges (Maslow, 1987) because this serves as a means to positively motivate pupils. Pupils who are motivated tend to display greater interest in learning and basically perform better at school.

However the use of innovative approaches like constructivism or the use of technology was notably absent as approaches to curriculum delivery, in fact only one participant claimed to have used it in her classroom. Evidence indicates personal methodologies are used. Conversely teachers are encouraged to work collaboratively to plan curriculum delivery in order to improve teaching and learning. This should take place throughout all the levels of the school (Coombs & Rivers, 1998).

Furthermore maintaining trust within student and teacher relationships was deemed as being a very important factor in achieving student success. It is essential that teachers always communicate praise and high expectation to their charges (Maslow, 1987) because this serves as a means to positively motivate pupils. Pupils who are motivated tend to display greater interest in learning and basically perform better at school. The free expression between pupils and their teachers can serve as a catalyst for the enhancement of the learning process. Free expression is also a crucial factor in the

constructivist approach to teaching where dialogue between teacher and students and students and students is encouraged (Gabler & Schroeder, 2003).

Support for teaching/learning

Parent-Teacher Association meetings are neglected by most parents of the school, as well as parent-teacher conferences. In the health promoting school ideology, the formation of healthy community partnerships is a desired goal (Quest for Excellence, 2005 & World Health Organization, 2007)). In light of this, the school should endeavour to create viable partnerships with parents and the community by adopting an open-system approach to community involvement where the community participates in the activities and policies of the school (Levine & Fitzgerald, 1992). However there was no policy implemented to engender parental support and participation at the school. Owens (1995) suggests that it is the responsibility of the school's administrator to create policies that engender the collaborative effort of all stakeholders of the school.

As a result greater avenues should to be explored in order to improve correspondence to parents, "since it is crucial that parents be made aware of school's policies and work together with the school to ensure that these policies are respected by all" (Quest for Excellence, 2005, p 56).There is an urgent need for community involvement in the activities of the school because community involvement in the daily activities of the school increases school effectiveness and would enhance student performance (Epstein, 2002).

Student indiscipline was blamed on factors external to the school (Patterson, 1986). However, there are also many internal factors that contribute to this trend, for instance, indistinct and inconsistent policies on discipline. Canter (1989), posits that

teachers are to have clearly outlined policies on student behaviour and that these policies should be made clear to pupils. Inter-agency communication for school in high crime urban contexts was strongly advocated but absent from the school. There was no indication of the school receiving support from outside the school. Lloyd, Stead and Kendrick (2001) presented a strong case for collaboration with other agencies to promote student discipline and success at high risk schools. They propose that such collaborations can prevent or greatly decrease student being excluded from school on matters of indiscipline.

Finally, results revealed a noticeable absence of resources at the school as well as resource personnel like social workers and special educators. De Lisle (2011) had noted that if schools in exceptionally challenging situations are to improve, then "Sustainable school improvement would require not just leadership training, but also integrated services and interlaced interventions, targeting the multiple levels and multiple deficits" (Abstract, p. 1). Consequently the intervention of the Ministry of Education is necessary to assist the school overcome its present condition of educational disparity, by providing interventions and services which will bring the school on par with their privileged counterparts. This is not a novel idea, because enshrined in the Education Ministry's policy document is its position that, "Education must ensure that disadvantaged segments of the student population are provided affirmative programming and support so that, like their more privileged cohorts, they would benefit from educational opportunities" (Revised Green Paper, 2005, p. 14). Unfortunately, the current situation in the Education system proves that this assertion has not been actualized.

Recommendations

1. More emphasis should be placed on the teaching of values, character and citizenship education at the school. Thus helping students to develop a commitment to their country.

2. The school should undertake a programme of professional development for teachers in the teaching if values and character education.

3. There should also be consistent emotional and psychological support for teachers in such adverse contexts.

4. There should be occasions designated for the recognition of teacher's achievement. On these occasions teachers can be commended for the fine work they are doing thus enhancing teacher motivation and commitment to the task.

5. Programmes and policies should be put in place from both the Ministry of Education and the school to help teachers acquire resiliency skills. The programmes should be aimed at targeting teachers at all levels particularly new entrants and those who have been at the school for an extended period of time.

6. Teachers need to work collaboratively when designing programmes of work for students at the school, thereby sharing novel and innovative ideas with one another especially those who are inexperienced. Such collaboration will contribute to the success of the students.

7. Policies relating to parental communication and involvement need to be implemented at the school. Part of the policy should involve the training of parents in parenting and literacy skills.

8. Clear and articulate policies on student discipline should also be considered.

9. There should be an effective and equitable distribution of resources at the school.

10. Existing resources should be carefully monitored and maintained so that they will last.

11. In terms of resources allocation from the Ministry this should be based on the specific needs of the school. This will include the assignment of Guidance officers and social workers who will assist teachers care for the needs of pupils.

12. Annual school audits should be undertaken to help guide stakeholders as to the immediate needs of the school. This will help expose the short coming of the school and help to improve teaching/learning at the school.

13. Finally the quality of administrator sent to the school must be carefully considered, to avoid situations like what occurred in the past, where teachers became stressed and despondent over ineffective leadership. Such added stress can result in teacher dissatisfaction and eventual teacher transience.

Conclusion

Implication for practitioners

The existing argument presented in this study was that the notion of student success which was extended to encompass the holistic development of the child, especially in schools situated in exceptionally challenging environments, like the Hill Top community. The obvious marginalization of the education system has resulted in the present situation and deficiencies found within primary schools in disadvantaged communities. Consequently a heavier responsibility has been bestowed upon teachers who work in schools in such communities who are now required to do more than the regular teachers, if children from these communities are to be successful.

Teachers within these contexts must use a more integrated approach to student development than what currently exists. Given that pupils from these contexts enter school with gross educational and social deficiencies, teachers must find innovative ways of holistically developing students by providing them with the building blocks necessary for success. This involves forming and maintaining collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders who will participate in shared decision-making and support the school in its endeavours by providing assistance where necessary.

Implication for policy

Education policy has to be addressed if the needs of the disadvantaged student population are to be met. Equitable and sustainable physical and human resources must be provided to schools in challenging contexts so that they can work comparatively with their privileged counterparts. In order for this to be done, proper audits of the educational needs of each school should be taken on a regular basis as a means of identifying

deficiencies which place these schools at an educational disadvantage. Policy must also be in place to recruit and train teachers who are resilient and positive given their adverse working situation.

Resiliency training must be a fundamental function of all schools in challenging contexts and policy must be outlined within the Education Ministry, to ensure that trained and qualified professionals are contracted to provide such Training. Additionally policies must be adopted in whereby the contribution of teachers form these institutions are recognized and never devaluated. This will undoubtedly contribute to teachers' efficacy, commitment and endurance in problematic school contexts.

Recommendations for further research

The limitations of this study provide opportunities for further study in this area. As was previously stated there exists very little studies conducted on the phenomenon that was investigated, that of 'success stories,' especially in low socioeconomic, high crime urban contexts in Trinidad and Tobago. Although there have been numerous research into the obtaining of academic excellence in challenging school contexts, the trajectory taken sought to establish that policy makers need to adopt a broader perspective of student success which should encompass holistic human development. It would therefore be beneficial if the study could be expanded to include a multi-case study of schools in similar contexts.

Similar research of teachers' perception of student success and the obvious contextual challenges they encounter could be more closely examined and compared with the present findings. This will help to triangulate data that would paint a better picture of the circumstances under which many teachers are forced to work. For instance, the fact

that there were more male than female teachers who had experiences in this different form of 'student success' can be explored to ascertain whether teacher-gender played a role in attaining successful holistic development of students. Further research can examine what impact the allocation of necessary material and human resources specific to the needs of the school has on the quality of teaching/learning at the school.

Summary of chapter

This chapter discusses the research findings in relation to what the literature states about the phenomenon. It compares and contrasts the views of researchers with the realities of teaching/learning in challenging contexts. It further highlights the deficiencies of the literature and makes specific assumptions about the concept of student success and the Ministry's policies as it relates to contextually challenged schools. Additionally it provides strategic recommendations which will help address the educational deficiencies at the school under study. Finally it outlines policy implications for practitioners, policy makers and furtherance of this research.

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APPENDIX I

Official research permission letter

GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

APPLICATION FORM – PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS

- For one school only, the application is submitted through the Principal of the school who endorses it, and submits to the School Supervisor III of the District.
- For national or District scope, the application is submitted directly to the School Supervisor III who will engage in extensive consultation with other Units/ Divisions of the Ministry of Education for investigation, comments and recommendations. Criteria being met, reservation approval is granted.
- All applications will be evaluated according to the criteria laid down by the Ministry of Education.
- Applicants are advised to submit their application at least two months in advance of their intended programme implementation.
- Approved users should have their copy of their signed approval and agreement for presentation to school officials upon request.
- *The contact person given in this form must be the legal entity that will be offered the agreement with the MOE, should the application be successful.*

Please provide full answers to the following questions in complete sentences with no acronyms or other abbreviations.

1 Applicant Details

a) Name of Student conducting Research - PRINT

Donna Thomas - Sealey

b) University/ Educational Institute & Department

University of the West Indies, Faculty of Humanities and Education; School of Education, Post Graduate Department

c) Name of Research Study - PRINT

Intrepid Imperative Pedagogy: A Phenomenological Exploration into the experiences of teachers who teach at mill top government primary a low SES, high crime urban school in North Trinidad - the success stories

d) Contact Information

Address	
Phone Number	
Email:	

e) Department Head/ Research Supervisor/ Course Facilitator

PRINT _Dr. Samuel Lochan._

SIGN_____

2 Rationale
What are the underlying reasons for developing this study?

1. To get a better understanding of the challenges of an educational nature faced by teachers who teach at this disadvantaged, high crime school

2. To extract relevant teaching strategies and learning strategies that work in these contexts

3 Objectives
What are the intentions of the study?

3. To understand what keeps teachers teaching at institutions like that.

1. To explore perceptions and lived experiences of teachers at the school

2. To gain valuable insights into the various teaching learning strategies they employ to promote student learning

3. To assist in informing educational community given our national focus on "Education for all"

4 Target Group(s)
Study Targets?

Stakeholder group – *tick one*	Students	✓Teachers	Parents
Level (students only)			
Gender		MALE & FEMALE	
Group size		5	
Number of schools		1	

5 Duration (dates and times)

January 2013 – June 2013 (20th)

6 Expected Outcomes

Learning	1. To learn teaching strategies that work for contexts of high crime, low socioeconomic urban schools
Psychosocial	2. To discover what motivates teachers to continue teaching at these institutions despite the risk and enormous educational challenges they face
Behavioural	1. Attitudinal changes in terms of empathy for those in these challenging circumstances is expected as well as recognition of their sacrifice and great effort
Other _____	It is hoped that someone who can make a difference in terms of educational policy for schools in this context use the findings of this project to better the circumstances and experiences for teachers and students who are in these contexts and educational situations.

7 Methodology

Give a brief description of the implementation process.

1. *[handwritten] PART 1 SAMPLE AND PARTICIPANTS*

2. *[handwritten] The sampling procedure was done purposefully in order to obtain the participants who would give the best source of data relevant to the study. 5 participants were chosen all of whom work at the school and have been there for a period of over 10 years and who have taught at most of the levels including STEM.*

3. *[handwritten]*

4. *[handwritten] PART 2 : INSTRUMENTS*

5. *[handwritten] A semi-structured interview was used with open-ended questions and some probes. The interview was face to face.*

6. *[handwritten] PART 3 : DESIGN — The design used is a qualitative phenomenological study which is the use of indepth interviews of more than one participant.*

7. *[handwritten] PART 4 : PROCEDURE — First the data will be collected and transcribed from the video then codified and then themes would be formed and interconnected. Thereafter a rich thick narrative will be written in meaning as to the phenomenon by probing.*

8 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Please list the method(s) that will be used for monitoring and evaluation of your programme's success.

1. *[handwritten] The final project will be collected and evaluated by the assigned research supervisor. During the course of the research, the supervisor will be monitoring its progress and offering key advice for improvement*

2.

3.

4.

5.

9 Cost/ Resources

a) Funding sought from MOE

What is your budget breakdown for the proposed programme?

Budget item (give details)	Amount ($TTD)
1. TRANSPORTATION	$ 100.00
2. PHOTO COPIES (LETTERS, INTERVIEWS, ETC.)	$ 50.00
3. REFRESHMENTS FOR PARTICIPANTS	$ 100.00
Total - $ 250.00	

b) Contributions

Contributions (financial or other) from other sources?

Source e.g. private enterprise, community	Nature of contribution	Amount $
PRIVATE ENTERPRISE	DIGITAL RECORDER	$ 545.00
Total contribution - $ 545.00		

Total costs of initiative $ _795.00_ TTD

10 **Expected input from School/ Ministry**

What input does your study need from the School or Ministry? (e.g. Supervision, Security, Equipment)

- Permission to conduct the research at the school from the Ministry
- Permission from the school's Principal to use the school and relevant school records

11 **Other Relevant Information**

Please attach (with this application) all questionnaires and other relevant documents/materials to be used in the study.

12 **Declaration – Agency Representative (Contact Person)**

I declare that:
- The information given by me in this application is complete and correct
- I will notify MOE, in writing, of any changes to this information, within seven (7) days of that change occurring. *D. Thomas - Sealey*

I understand that:
- The information on this form allows MOE to assess the proposed initiative for access to schools *D. Thomas - Sealey*

I understand that:
- Giving false or misleading information is a serious offence.
- Any information obtained (about any individual participant/school) through this study is to be held in strict confidence.
- All findings of this study are to be made available to the Ministry of Education on completion of the research study. *D. Thomas - Sealey*

13 **Signature**

Name of Applicant (PLEASE PRINT)	DONNA THOMAS - SEALEY
Signature	D. Thomas - Sealey
Course Facilitator/ Research Supervisor (PLEASE PRINT)	SAMUEL S. COCHRAN
Signature	
Date	15/MAY/2013

APPENDIX II

Participants' solicitation letter

_____

_____

_____

_____

Dear Participant,

As part of the Master of Education (M.ed) programme which I am currently pursuing at the University of the West Indies, I am required to complete a Research Project focusing on a topic of interest in the field of education. I have chosen as my topic for study;

"Intrepid Imperative Pedagogy: A Phenomenological Exploration into the Experiences of Teachers Who Teach At Hill Top Government Primary, a Low Socioeconomic, High Crime Urban School in North Trinidad – The Success Stories" .

This project entails in-depth interviews with several teachers who presently teach at the school in order to elicit from them their direct experiences and views of their teaching/learning experiences at the school. This letter is therefore a request for volunteers for the study. As a participant in the study, you will be required to take part in one such interview which is scheduled at your convenience in the near future.

If you decide to volunteer, please do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before participating or during your participation. You are ensured complete anonymity if you choose to participate in the study. In fact pseudonyms will be used to ensure confidentially and anonymity of the research site as well as the participants.

The expected benefits associated with your participation are the opportunity for you to gain insight into how research at the tertiary level is undertaken, as well as to be a part of a qualitative research study that will seek to expand knowledge about of best practices in the area of teaching/learning at institutions like yours situated in very adverse contexts.

Thank you for your support and kind consideration of this request.

Yours respectfully,

………………………………

APPENDIX III

Participants' acceptance letter

_____

_____

_____

_____

Dear Participant,

I am pleased to inform you that you have been selected to be a participant in the research study;

"Intrepid Imperative Pedagogy: A Phenomenological Exploration into the Experiences of Teachers Who Teach At Hill Top Government Primary, a Low Socioeconomic, High Crime Urban School in North Trinidad – The Success Stories" .

As a participant in this study you will be required to take part in a face-to-face interview which will take place at a venue and time most suitable for you. I want to assure you that your anonymity will be protected and no information shared will be used to incriminate you in any way. You are free to withhold your comment in the event that there are any questions or topics that make you feel uncomfortable.

I look forward to meeting with you soon. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. You can feel free to contact me at _____-_____ if you have any questions or concerns.

Yours respectfully,

………………………………

APPENDIX IV

Participants' reminder letters

_____

_____

_____

_____

Dear Participant,

I will like to remind you of our interview meeting scheduled for _____ at _____ a.m/p.m.

As was previously stated the research topic is entitled:

"Intrepid Imperative Pedagogy: A Phenomenological Exploration into the Experiences of Teachers Who Teach At Hill Top Government Primary, a Low Socioeconomic, High Crime Urban School in North Trinidad – The Success Stories" .

The interview as you are aware will be audio taped for later transcription. Feel free to contact me at _____-_____ if there are any queries or concerns. I will greatly appreciate if you make every effort to keep our appointment. I thank you in advance for you kind cooperation.

I am looking forward to see you soon.

Yours respectfully,

……………………………

<center>**APPENDIX V**</center>

<center>The interview protocol</center>

<center><u>**RESEARCH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**</u></center>

SCHOOL: Hill Top Government Primary

INTERVIEWEE:

INTERVIEWER:

DATE:

VENUE:

DURATION OF INTERVIEW:

RESEARCH TOPIC: "Intrepid Imperative Pedagogy: A phenomenological exploration into the experiences of teachers who teach at Hill Top Government Primary, a low socioeconomic, high crime, urban school in North Trinidad – The Success Stories!"

<center>**INTRODUCTORY PROTOCOL:**</center>

To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to audio tape our conversations today. Please sign the release form. For your information, only the researcher on this project will be privy to the recordings which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, you must sign a form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that:

 (1) All information will be held confidential,

 (2) Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and

 (3) I do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.

I have planned this interview to last no longer than one hour. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.

<center>**INTRODUCTION:**</center>

Mr. /Miss _____, you have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about teaching/learning experiences in this school's context. My research project as a whole focuses on the perceptions and lived experiences of teachers who have successfully taught children at

the Hill Top Government Primary School with the aim of gaining invaluable insight into the various teaching/learning strategies they have employed to promote student learning and educational success in spite of the obstacles of educational and socioeconomic inequity and deleterious community influences that seek to erode their practice. My study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences. Rather, I am trying to learn more about teaching and learning, and hopefully learn how teachers such as yourself are motivated to overcome the educational challenges you face daily.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

A) INTERVIEWEE BIODATA:

1. **Pseudonym Assigned:** _____
2. **Sex:** M ( ) / F ( )
3. **Age Range:** 0 – 9 ( ) ; 10 – 20 ( ) ; 21 – 30 ( ) ; 31 – 40 ( ) ; 41 – 50 ( ) ; 51 – 60 ( )
4. **Religion:** _____
5. **Marital Status:** Single ( )   Married ( )   Common-law ( )   Divorced ( )   Widow/Widower ( )
6. **Area of Residence:** _____

B) INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND:

1. How long have you been in the teaching service?
2. Are you trained or untrained?
3. Did you receive pre-service or in-service training?
4. Where did you receive your training and in what year?
5. What are your academic qualifications? (Post Secondary Certificates, Diplomas or Degrees)
6. How long have you been at Hill Top Government Primary?
7. Was this your first teaching appointment?
8. At what other schools have you taught?
9. What was your initial reaction when you were assigned to this school?
10. How would you compare the other schools at which you have taught with this school?
11. What is your current position? (Administrative; Senior Teacher; Head-of-Department; Class Teacher; Special Teacher; Creative Arts Teacher; ICT Teacher; Other (specify)
12. At what levels within the school have you taught?
13. At what level are you presently teaching?
14. Do you enjoy teaching here?

Probe: What do you consider most enjoyable?
15. Have you ever thought of leaving?
    Probe: Why?
16. Why have you opted to stay at the school?
17. In your opinion how has the school changed over time?

C) OVERACHING RESEARCH QUESTION:

What meaning do teachers ascribe to their experiences of teaching at Hill Top Government Primary School?

D) SUB-QUESTIONS*:*

1. *What are the teachers of Hill Top Government Primary School perception of students' success?*

    a) What in your perception are the determinants of student success at this school?
    Probe: What would you use to identify a successful student and why?
    b) In what ways do you measure student success?
    Probe: Besides academic achievement in what other ways are students' success measured?
    c) What examples of students' success have stood out the most in your teaching practice at the school?
    Probe: What changes in student behaviour, attitude towards learning or enthusiasm have you observed in particular students?

2. *What are teachers' perceptions of the educational challenges they have personally encountered in their effort to help students achieve success at Hill Top Government Primary School?*

    a) What in your perception have been your greatest challenges in your effort to get students to succeed at this school?
    Probe: What effect has administration, school policy, community, family had on your efforts?
    b) What do you think was instrumental in your overcoming these challenges?
    Probe: Can you elaborate on these a bit further?

3. *What are the teachers' perceptions of the teaching/learning strategies they have successfully utilized to increase student efficacy and learning at Hill Top Government Primary School?*

    a) What are the teaching/learning strategies have you personally used to achieve students' success at the school?
    Probe: How have you used these strategies?
    b) What teaching/learning strategies do you consider **most** effective in attaining students' success at the school?
    Probe: Why is this most effective?

4. *What are the policies and procedures teachers perceive as being necessary to improve the teaching/learning processes at the school?*

    a) What in your opinion is necessary for the improvement of teaching/learning at school?
    Probe: What can be done at the school, family, community and ministry levels?

5. In conclusion are there any additional comments, questions or concerns you will like to share?

POST INTERVIEW COMMENTS:

We have arrived at the end of the interview and I wish to thank you for your participation in the study. Our discussion was truly enlightening and informative. I will forward a copy of the transcript to you as soon as it is ready for your approval and verification.

APPENDIX VI

Interview transcripts

RESEARCH INTERVIEW WITH TEDDY

Interviewer:	How long have you been in the teaching service?
Teddy:	*I have been a teacher for seventeen years.*
Interviewer:	Are you trained or untrained?
Teddy:	*I am trained*
Interviewer:	Did you receive pre-service or in-service training?
Teddy:	*Yes, I had pre service training*
Interviewer:	Where did you receive your training and in what year?
Teddy:	*I was trained at trained at Eastern Boys' Government School from January to December of 1994*
Interviewer:	What are your academic qualifications? (Post Secondary Certificates, Diplomas or Degrees)
Teddy:	*Associate in HRM and my Teachers' Diploma.*
Interviewer:	How long have you been at Hill Top Government Primary?
Teddy:	*12 years*
Interviewer:	Was this your first teaching appointment?
Teddy:	*No I was an Assistant Teacher 2 at Lower Morvant Government Primary*
Interviewer:	At what other schools have you taught?
Teddy:	*Lower Morvant Government, Tranquility Government Primary, Eastern Boy's Government, various YTEPP centres on the east vest corridor, OJT tutor at various centers around the country*
Interviewer:	What was your initial reaction when you were assigned to this school?
Teddy:	*I was excited, many of my friends attended that school and I saw it as an opportunity to do some good in that community*
Interviewer:	How would you compare the other schools at which you have taught with this
Teddy:	*Difficult as far as the community was concern, but the kids' enthusiasm and the plant were both good.*
Interviewer:	What is your current position? (Administrative; Senior Teacher; Head-of Department; Class Teacher; Special Teacher; Creative Arts Teacher; ICT Teacher; Other (specify)
Teddy:	*Retired Classroom Teacher.*
Interviewer:	At what levels within the school have you taught?
Teddy:	*The SEA Class (standard 4 and 5) and Juniors (Standards 2 and 3)*
Interviewer:	At what level are you presently teaching?
Teddy:	*I have just retired from the service*
Interviewer:	Do you enjoy teaching here?
Teddy:	*Immensely, It was a job I looked forward to doing each and every day.*
Interviewer:	Have you ever thought of leaving?
Teddy:	*Yes, but not willingly. It was something I had to do.*

Interviewer: In your opinion how has the school changed over time?

Teddy: *There are new facilities that have provided new opportunities for pupils to be exposed to a wider scope of experiences through the internet and multi-media*

Interviewer: What in your perception makes a student of this school truly successful

Teddy: *Parents placing a premium value on education as a means to success. Pupils who have a real hunger for knowledge. Teachers who are able to make their lessons exciting and relevant to the experiences of their charges*

Interviewer: In what ways do you measure student success?

Teddy: *Students whose attitude to learning have improved and are more confident in their abilities also students who believe that they can be or become high achievers despite difficult home situations, such as poverty, lack of amenities such as electricity at home, and physical disabilities. Students who do well at the SEA test in terms of marks obtained*

Interviewer: What examples of students' success have stood out the most in your teaching practice at the school?

Teddy: *There are two examples. The first was a girl from a single parent household. There were problems such as poverty and lack of parental interest. This student although having potential did not believe in herself and her mother added to that perception. What I had to do was make serious efforts to get the mother interested in her daughter and to understand that teachers were not against her but they only wanted the best for her child. She mellowed and things started improving, however there were several other problems that arose. The girl needed glasses; she developed a terrible hair fungus and had no resources for school. I had to take money out of my pocket to obtain the glasses, take urgent measures to get the child to a doctor, buy the medication and have it administered in school. I had to get a female teacher to wash her hair until the fungus disappeared. At the ending of the day, that child improved academically and passed for a renowned girls' college in Port-of-Spain. I even had to pay the one thousand dollar registration fee for the school and assist in obtaining her school books. If she had to depend on her mother, she would not have written SEA let alone pass for such a school. Another example was one of this boy who was rebellious to authority, disrespectful to teachers and others students, resistant to school work, had a spirit of apathy, lied profusely and had serious anger issues. His parents always made excuses for him and blamed the school for picking on their son, until one day he cursed and threatened his mother and she really saw what we had to deal with at the school. In fact he was a Standard Five repeater because he was sent back to repeat after doing poorly at the SEA exams. No teacher wanted him, but I took him in my class. I am a bit of an unconventional disciplinarian so I used some innovative ways to make him to change his ways. I was firm and resolute in my dealings with him. I provided examples of persons who did well so that he could look to these as positive mentors. I acted like a father to him and showed him love, but I*

demanded respect in return. By the time he sat the SEA again this boy was a changed person. He was focused on his school work, he made an effort, he was no longer disrespectful and his aggression abated to a large extent. He did pass his exams, but not for the best of school, however the character change he went through in my class was a real demonstration of success.

Interviewer: What in your perception have been your greatest challenges in your effort to get students to succeed at this school?

Teddy: To not be distracted by the culture of the hill.
(men "lime and hustle", while women work and make children)

Interviewer: What do you think was instrumental in your overcoming these challenges?

Teddy: Talking about how education can provide the thing they want, showing how it's cool and fun to be smart, and to learn. And for me love for the children and the desire to see the school improve. Commitment and endurance also played a very great part.

Interviewer: What teaching/learning strategies have you personally used to achieve students' success at the school?

Teddy: Acting out situations, Modeling, Music and stories, Many concept lessons are more physical, movement is use to demonstrate concepts in all subject areas, extra lessons on my personal time, and encouraging a community initiative within the class.

Interviewer: What teaching/learning strategies do you consider **most** effective in attaining students' success at the school?

Teddy: Peer tutoring and Group work to reinforce concepts

Interviewer: What in your opinion is necessary for the improvement of teaching /learning at school?

Teddy: Clear policies on discipline. Learning must become an escape from the issues pupils face when they are at home.

Interviewer: Well Teddy, thank you for answering the foregoing questions for me via the e-mail. I know because you live out of the country now it would have been difficult to have you participate in this study by any other means. Thank you again for your time and typing.

RESEARCH INTERVIEW WITH KYMN

Interviewer: How long have you been in the teaching service?

Kymn: I have been in the teaching service for the past twenty-three years.

Interviewer: Are you serious? You don't look as if you have twenty-three years of service!

Kymn: Well looks can be deceiving, but in all seriousness, I started teaching immediately after leaving secondary school.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Are you trained or untrained?

Kymn: I am trained.

Interviewer: Did you receive pre-service or in-service training?

Kymn:	*In-service. I taught for three years and was then sent to Teachers' College.*
Interviewer:	Where did you receive your training and in what year?
Kymn:	*I was trained at the Valsayn Teachers' College from 1993-1995.*
Interviewer:	What are your academic qualifications? (Post Secondary Certificates, Diplomas or Degrees)
Kymn:	*Well I have my Teachers' Diploma, a Bachelor's Degree and I am now pursuing my Masters Degree. I also have a certificate in Computer Literacy.*
Interviewer:	Wow, you are very qualified!
Kymn:	*Somewhat!*
Interviewer:	How long have you been at Hill Top Government Primary?
Kymn:	*I have been here for the past eighteen years.*
Interviewer:	Was this your first teaching appointment?
Kymn:	*No.*
Interviewer:	At what other schools have you taught?
Kymn:	*I taught at a girls' primary school in the district from 1990-1993*
Interviewer:	What was your initial reaction when you were assigned to this school?
Kymn:	*Well for one thing I had never heard of the school. My parents however, especially my father, who was more familiar with the area in which the school was located, did not like the idea of me going there too much. He was afraid for my safety because he said that there were a lot of bad boys and gangs in that area. I however was glad to be placed at a school where I did not have to pay too much in transportation or traveling too long to get there. But I must admit that after hearing how my parents felt I became a bit fearful. I was no doubt determined to make the best of the situation and 'go brave' with God's blessings.*
Interviewer:	How would you compare the other schools at which you have taught with this school?
Kymn:	*Well the other school was in a safer area of Hill Top. There were no gangs there at the time. It was an all-girls school and this is co-ed. Additionally the parents at my former school were a bit more involved and interested in their children's education and in the affairs of the school. The children at my other school also performed better academically.*
Interviewer:	What is your current position? (Administrative; Senior Teacher; Head-of-Department; Class Teacher; Special Teacher; Creative Arts Teacher; ICT Teacher; Other (specify)
Kymn:	*I am a class teacher.*
Interviewer:	At what levels within the school have you taught?
Kymn:	*Basically at all levels but mainly Juniors and Seniors*
Interviewer:	At what level are you presently teaching?
Kymn:	*My last level was Juniors' and I taught a Standard One class.*
Interviewer:	Do you enjoy teaching here?
Kymn:	*Well for the most part, yes!*
Interviewer:	What do you mean by that statement?

Kymn: Well as with everything you have your good days and your bad. But I mainly enjoy teaching at the school. I guess I enjoy more good days than bad ones.

Interviewer: What do you consider most enjoyable?

Kymn: Well I like the size of the facilities. This is pretty big for a primary school! I have my own classroom and the staff is really good to work with. I also enjoy making a difference in the children's lives and seeing they make positive changes. Not every child will be transformed into a swan, but for those who do, the feeling is beyond words. I also enjoy the challenge of educating children from this type of area. You see there are schools that may have fewer problems than this one, because it is as though the children there come hand-picked and pre-selected for success. They have parents who are involved in their children's education, access to numerous educational resources and resource personnel and untold material and social advantages that prime them for success. However in a school like this, these things are greatly lacking so it gives the teachers here a greater challenge to get these children to do well at the end of the day. The good thing though, is when you do get children to do well you genuinely feel a great sense of accomplishment and that in my opinion is good pay for hard work!

Interviewer: Have you ever thought of leaving?

Kymn: It is interesting that you asked that. Actually I thought of leaving several times.

Interviewer: Why?

Kymn: I guess frustration! At one point I was really thinking of applying for a transfer because an individual on the staff started a malicious bit of confusion that spread contention and division among the staff. I don't want to go too much into detail, but what ticked me off most was how big people, so called adults and educated persons could let someone whose 'elevator does not go to all floors' influence them to the extent that they started acting against individuals who have always fought their cause in the past - individuals who have never let them down and who they could always count on in times of distress. These people just abandoned us to the wind! That really, really, hurt. I just didn't want to be part of a staff that could be so petty. Then there was a time when we got a new administrator who totally and in a very short space of time eroded everything we tried to do at the school because of his stubbornness and inexperience. You see he came from a somewhat prestigious school where the culture and attitude towards education was very different from ours. So he tried to do things as they were done at his former school, but the context was far different and he landed himself in real 'hot water.' The parents saw him as a 'push over' and the children walked all over him and to make matters worse he tried to appease the parents but if I could use the term, 'Dissing' the teachers, in other words disrespecting the teachers in front of the parents. Now what's that about? Discipline dwindled, students became extremely disrespectful an did what they wanted and some even began cursing

teachers, lawless parents acted like they ran the school and tried to bring their standards into the school, the entire ethos changed and numerous teachers including myself became disenchanted and demotivated. I think those were the occasions I wanted to leave most!

Interviewer: Why have you opted to stay at the school?

Kymn: *I have asked myself that question on several occasions because the school and all its socioeconomic and contextual bacchanal is one thing, but a bad and obstinate administrator is another! I guess I stayed because things changed, the situations that were causing antagonism ceased to exist and the individuals who encouraged contention have left the school. The atmosphere is now conducive for working again. I also stayed because of the children and my love for them. I reasoned that if I allowed foolish people to run me from the school then what would happen to the children? After all the children were merely products of the environment and reacted to what happens at home and to what they saw happening at school at the time. I guess under those circumstances I decided to stay and fight instead of throwing in the towel.*

Interviewer: In your opinion how has the school changed over time?

Kymn: *Well as I said before, the things that were negatively influencing the human relations on the staff have ceased to exist. We now have a new administrator who came for this very school and she is doing a fine job and is earnestly doing all she can to improve the school. We also now have an audio-visual room, something I have lobbied for, for so many years. We also have our very own pan theatre were our students learn to play pan and read music. The school motto, uniform and building colour have been changed and we have received white boards in many of the classes. Teachers are a bit more focused and committed and have received more professional training than those in the past. On a least positive note the student numbers have declined because of the advent of the SEA and the all students-placement initiative as well as the upsurge in crime and violence on the Hill. Oh, I forgot to mention that at one time during my early years here, the school was unfenced and a security risk because gangsters and all kinds of people used the school yard as a thoroughfare, but by God's grace and a firm stance by both the PTA and the teachers, we got a high security fence, so that is a notable change as well.*

Interviewer: What in your perception are the determinants of student success at this school?

Kymn: *Let me get you straight, are you asking my view on what student success means to me?*

Interviewer: Yes, I am. In other words what would you use to identify a successful student and why?

Kymn: *Well that is an interesting question and I am afraid my answer may surprise you, because I do not view true student success in the conventional way.*

Interviewer: Well then let me hear how you view student success.

Kymn: *Well for one thing, I don't look at student success primarily in terms of academic achievement, like how a child performs in a paper and pencil test. Now don't get me wrong, academic achievement is one way to judge how a student is doing, but I do not feel it should be the only way and at most not the foremost way. I think many other things need to be taken into consideration that is unfortunately neglected by policy makers. Let me explain, now children come to a school at different readiness levels. The type of home environment coupled with psychological and sociological development determines how children will perform in school and their attitude towards school work. Another factor is motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic. By intrinsic I mean what motives a person from within or self-motivation and extrinsic meaning those external factors that help to motivate the individual. Now granted some children come from homes where everything necessary for success is present, like parental involvement, good nutrition, a print-rich environment, successful and educated parents, etc., while others come from exactly the opposite. At my school we get the latter, because our students come to us with a host of problems that we are sometimes not in a position to solve and yet we have to train and expose them to the same level of education as all the other schools, because face it, at the ending of the day they all have the same exam to write which determines what schools they go to. Now tell me if you think this is a fair measure? I personally do not believe that it is – I think the scales are tipped in favour of the more privileged in society. Now Miss, when I take these things into consideration how can I determine if a student is successful on academic attainment alone? Instead I look at the personal growth and development of the child – that is how far has this child come from the first day he/she came to school to now and how that child eventually leaves the school. This personal growth that I talk about will likewise encompass development of a positive attitude, adoption of proper values, um, positive behaviour changes and willingness to work to mention a few. So let's suppose a child came to the school unable to read or write, um that's normal right? It is expected that when that child leaves for secondary school he/she will have developed those skills, because that is the job of schooling, however what if that child came to school devoid of social graces – not knowing how to say thank you or please, or what if that child is aggressive and unable to work peacefully with others, or curses or steals? Wouldn't it be a greater example of success if when that child leaves the school he/she has learnt to abandon those negative qualities and adopt and practice positive ones, in other words be a better character than when he/she first came? These are the things I will look for to determine student success in addition to academic performance.*

Interviewer: In what ways do you measure student success?

Kymn: *I don't quite understand the question. Are you referring to how I design a test?*

Interviewer: No, I just want to develop or expand on the previous question. So what I want to know is, besides academic achievement in what other ways do you measure or determine students' success?

Kymn: *Oh, I get you. Well I use normal tests off course, but I also use authentic assessment. By authentic assessment I mean engaging the pupils in real life activities where they are forced to show their skills and talents to solve real life problems. A case in point was when I did a class project where pupils had to plan, fund and orchestrate a real concert. All I did was facilitate, advise and supervise. The children planned what the concert programme would be like, when the concert will take place, they planned advertisement and fund-raising they did budgets focusing on income and expenditure and they practiced and performed for the concert. That was truly remarkable to see! I was able to assess them in mathematics, grammar, spelling, group dynamics, public relations, etc. and at the end of it they discovered talents they didn't know they had like leadership and problem-solving skills. I also assess them in ways I previously mentioned like adoption of positive values, attitudinal and behavioural changes and willingness which is manifested by the effort they put forth to do their work as best they can.*

Interviewer: What examples of students' success have stood out the most in your teaching practice at the school?

Kymn: *Ah, maybe I don't understand the question fully.*

Interviewer: What changes in student behaviour, attitude towards learning or enthusiasm have you observed in particular students who you were able to personally influence or teach?

Kymn: *You mean students in my class?*

Interviewer: Yes and those who you consider a success.

Kymn: *You are causing my brain to work overtime with that one. Let me see, student example of success, student success, um. Oh, oh, I can think of two examples. Can I use their names?*

Interviewer: No, for the purpose of confidentiality use a false name.

Kymn: *Well there was this boy I taught in Standard Four and Five when I had Common Entrance class as it was called back then, he lived with both parents, however parental involvement was very poor. On the one hand the father was illiterate and a profuse weed smoker. He belonged to a Rastafarian Religion that believed that the smoking of weed was sacred and that it brought them closer to God. The mother also belonged to that religion and smoked heavily herself, she too was illiterate. The mother would only come to school if there was an urgent matter, like to sign for Common Entrance. Anyway the poor circumstances under which Rasta Jr. lived, the social environment and the lack of parental interest and involvement acted against him being successful. I forgot to mention that he missed quite a lot of school and had a very unkempt appearance. Basically he was weighed down by his situation in life and had a lackluster attitude towards his school work. However I saw potential in Rasta Jr. and refused to let him be lost to his circumstances. I spoke to him every day and*

encouraged him to look beyond the now and see what the future had to offer. I asked him if he desired to be like his parent or better than they were. I also asked him what he thought he would have to do to improve his lot in life and if he was willing to do that? He cried and said he wants to do better. Because he displayed a willingness to improve that gave me greater impetus to help him, so I began tutoring him one-on-one, during lunch time and a little after school, I let him do his homework at school because this was a sure way of getting homework done, I praised and rewarded him for all his efforts no matter how small and I directed his attention to positive role models from right in the community. The result was that Rasta Jr. started to excel in class, his grades improved and so did his appearance and attitude. He began coming to school regularly and at the end of it all, he passed for a very good boy's secondary school in Port-of Spain. That to me was a success story, because under normal circumstances he was really destined for failure. Another one that comes to mind is girl who lacked self-esteem and self-respect. She carried herself in a less than dignified way most of the time. Although parental involvement and interest was present she hailed from a single parent household where her mother did not live the most moral or fitting life. She had eight other siblings who were all fathered by different men and she was left on her own most of the time. She had a very volatile personality and many teachers who had taught her in the past did not have high hopes for her. She cursed and stole and was often in trouble at school. When she came to my class, I put her to sit down and had a very soul-stirring discussion with her. I tried to find out why she was so angry all the time and why she chose to fight for everything? I befriended her and let her know that she could come to me with any problem and we will talk it out. I told her that whenever the urge to fight comes to her, run as quickly as she can and tell me-I reasoned that the time she would take to run and tell me she would forget why she wanted to fight. I taught her how to value herself as a young lady and how to   build and maintain a fine reputation in her community. I encouraged her to reach for the highest position possible and I showed her love. Gradually I saw her making changes and settling down in her school work. She was involved in less fights and her aggression cooled down drastically. Her mother visited my class one day and asked me what I did to her daughter because she was a changed person even at home and she didn't have to come to the principal as often as she used to. I explained my strategy and her mother commended me for taking the time to care enough about her daughter. The end result in this case wasn't that the girl went to the best school, but that she went to the best attitude! This too I consider success!

Interviewer: What in your perception have been your greatest challenges in your effort to get students to succeed at this school?

Kymn: *Well I would say first and foremost a lack of parental involvement. Secondly, poor past administration. Thirdly bad staff relations and tensions and lastly the environment in which the school is situated,*

because it seems as though whatever we teach is eroded when the children leave the school so sometimes you feel like you are 'spinning top in mud.' I also have issue with our student intake, these student come to the school with so many issues and problems, we can only do so much. We need proper screening for physical, learning and behavioural disabilities and an on sight guidance officer. The students' lack of interest in education is also a major hurdle for me because it can be quite discouraging at times. Another problem I had in the earlies was safety and security because you know how this area is, but with the increased police presence things have normalized for the time being.

Interviewer: What do you think was instrumental in your overcoming these challenges?

Kymn: *Well I must say prayer! Earnest, earnest, earnest prayer to Almighty God to give me the strength and courage to overcome the obstacles. Then too there is determination to fight and not give up. Also there was commitment to the school, the children and the profession. You see Miss, you have to love teaching and the children you teach. I think too a positive outlook, because if you only focus on the negatives you will blind yourself to the positive, so I focused on the good things about the school and the future prospects I envisioned for the school. I believe continued self-evaluation likewise played a part because you always want to see how you could do things differently or be better. Finally when I see children who I have taught applying things I taught them and bettering themselves, then that to me is real joy and fulfillment because I feel a real sense of accomplishment. I believe that is what helped me most with the challenges of this school.*

Interviewer: What are the teaching/learning strategies have you personally used to achieve students' success at the school?

Kymn: *I use constructivism a lot in my teaching, in that way students participate in their learning and remember concepts better. I also use lots of group work/cooperative learning so that weak pupils benefit from the encouragement of the strong, however you have to be a little careful not to create a dependency syndrome for some children who are lazy, so you need to shuffle the group members about and make every individual in the group responsible for a specific task. Monitoring students' work is also essential. I also believe in Gardner's Multiple Intelligences so I try to cater for different learning styles when I plan my lessons. I may use a little music, maybe art, maybe dance- whatever helps the children to learn better. There are times when I do one-to-one teaching with specific pupils who need the extra help but I don't do it too often because it is quite time consuming. I find mentoring works well here, because you can help students choose positive role models from within their community. I sometimes use myself as an example because I let my children know that I was born and raised in this district, grew up in poor circumstances, had parents who were not really educated, but look where I am today and they can do the same. So I used my life history as a model for them   to*

pattern. I also encourage my students to set goals for themselves and work at attaining those goals. Once they attain their goals I praise and reward them. Even if they don't quite get there I still reward them for the effort they made and this encourages the students to work harder.

Interviewer: What teaching/learning strategies do you consider **most** effective in attaining students' success at the school?

Kymn: *Oh boy, this is hard because I think all that I mentioned is quite effective, but if I had to choose just one-I think Constructivism, yeah Constructivism, because students are forced to use their natural ability and talents as well as apply the skills they have learnt to solve problems and arrive at solutions. I always know that students learn better when they 'do' or participate than when they are told. And Miss how best did you learn to bake or cook, not by doing? Because you can read all the recipes there are look at all the cooking programmes, but if you don't do it yourself you will never really learn. So in this regard Constructivism stands out most.*

Interviewer: What in your opinion is necessary for the improvement of teaching/learning at school?

Kymn: *I really like this question! Well let's start in the home. I think parents must become more interested in their children and in their education because as the saying goes 'What monkey see, monkey do,' So if the pupils see their parents valuing education, then they will also value education. Additionally, parents need to become partners in purpose with their children's teacher so that they can assist the children together. At the level of the school I believe that teachers should work cooperatively and unitedly on school policies and rules, in other words all teachers must make their class of the same standards when it comes to rules and policy, so that pupils will not get mixed messages about how things are done at the school. If that is done it will go a long way towards enhancing student discipline at the school. So if the rule is that all books must be covered, then each class should adhere to that rule. I believe too that all teachers should genuinely love the school and that will be manifested in the efforts they put out for the school. The principal and teachers should also monitor and use resources so that they last. On the part of the Ministry, I think the allocation of necessary resources and training on how to use them properly is necessary, because sometimes you get resources but you are not trained to use them well and they just get wasted. Schools like ours need specialist teachers, special educators and proper screening and diagnosis of children so that we can know their needs and assist them were necessary. We also need access to a school counsellor or guidance officer on a regular basis to help children deal with the traumatic issues they have to face daily. You would agree with me that if the children have excess baggage in their brains then it is going to be hard to get anything in there! They must also learn how to deal with conflict and not to resolve situations at the end of a gun! We need the assistance of the police force to*

> visit delinquent parents and ensure that they send their children to school every day and give them the needed   resources instead of having their children staying home and 'liming on the block' where they can and will be led astray.

Interviewer: In conclusion are there any additional comments, questions or concerns you will like to share?

Kymn: *I think I have said a lot, but all I hope is that this information in some way is able influence the powers that be and let them not look at schools like this with the same spectacles they look at other schools that do not have these problems. I wish they can read this so that instead of condemnation, because we are not pushing out 'top' SEA students they will commend us for the tremendous effort we are forced to make to get these children to learn. On a more positive note however I want to wish you all the best with your project and hope you do well.*

Interviewer: Okay, I would hope for that as well. Kymn I wish to thank you for your participation in the study and I will forward a copy of the transcript to you as soon as it is ready for your approval and verification.

RESEARCH INTERVIEW WITH GISELLE

Interviewer: How long have you been in the teaching service?
Giselle: *13 years*
Interviewer: Are you trained or untrained?
Giselle: *Trained*
Interviewer: Did you receive pre-service or in-service training?
Giselle: *In-service*
Interviewer: Where did you receive your training and in what year?
Giselle: *At Valsayn Teachers' College in 2003-2005*
Interviewer: What are your academic qualifications? (Post Secondary Certificates, Diplomas or Degrees)
Giselle: *Well I have 10 O'Levels, my Teachers' Diploma, a certificate in Physical Education and I also have a Bachelors Degree in Educational Service*s.
Interviewer: Giselle, can you give a little information about the Educational Services degree, is it related to Physical Education?
Giselle: *Somewhat, it is how we did um, the major part of the degree first so we just continued that we didn't have to do the full four years of the Degree. That's about it.*
Interviewer: So the Educational Services Degree is somewhat Physical Education oriented area so that you can teach all kinds of sports?
Giselle: *Yeah, all kinds of sports, you can go to Secondary School with that.*
Interviewer: How long have you been at Hill Top Government Primary?
Giselle: *13 years, this was my first, only and present appointment.*
Interviewer: What was your initial reaction when you were assigned to this school?
Giselle: *Well I never heard of the school, so really I had no reactions towards it. I was really just happy that I got a job as a teacher, so where I was placed really didn't matter and it was close to home.*

Interviewer: So you were happy for the job and its proximity to home?
Giselle: *That's right and I didn't have a job earning that type of salary before, so it was like wow!*
Interviewer: So would it be correct to say you are in it for the money?
Giselle: *Hah, Hah, no! It is about fulfilling your goals, after school you want to get a good job and you would have a list of jobs you would like to obtain. I admit it wasn*'t *my first but it was one of the jobs I wanted to do and I got it so I was happy.*
Interviewer: What is your current position? (Administrative; Senior Teacher; Head-of-Department; Class Teacher; Special Teacher; Creative Arts Teacher; ICT Teacher; Other (specify)
Giselle: *A class teacher.*
Interviewer: At what levels within the school have you taught?
Giselle: *I have taught at all levels.*
Interviewer: At what level are you presently teaching?
Giselle: *I am the only Standard Five Teacher* in the school.
Interviewer: Do you enjoy teaching here?
Giselle: *Yes.*
Interviewer: Why?
Giselle: *I find it is very rewarding when the children come to you and they don't know and you help them learn something they didn't know existed, the expression on their faces – I find that to be very rewarding.*
Interviewer: So you enjoy changing the students' attitude?
Giselle: *More than that, the attitude, how do you say it? The mental spectrum that is their level of thinking. How you open and broaden their mind to different views and opinion. You see how they grow from blank to a point where they can carry on an open-minded conversation, I think that to be really rewar*ding.
Interviewer: Have you ever thought of leaving?
Giselle: *I have thought of leaving.*
Interviewer: Why?
Giselle: *At one time there was a particular principal I did not like for the way he was handling things, my job was becoming frustrating, the school was not being organized and run properly. There was poor leadership. Also the pupils with the lack of parental support too were not producing the expected quality of work that I was putting out.*
Interviewer: Why have you opted to stay at the school?
Giselle: *Uh, I heard a principal once say, "We know what we have, but we don't know what we are going to get!" and then I taught about my teaching practice at other schools and how those children behaved. I then compared it to how our children behave and our children here behave much better. They are more disciplined. When we go out on field trips with other schools our children behave so much better than the rest. I think it would be less stressful to remain instead of move on. Even though I thought of moving to other schools in the same catchment area, our children still have the upper hand where discipline is concerned. And then*

the academic ability too even though it would be more rewarding and encouraging for me as a teacher, putting out work and expecting children passing for better schools, because of the catchment area and liaising with other teachers, the results are the same. It always depends on the background of the student and the family and the parental support of the child that determine the results.

Interviewer: In your opinion how has the school changed over time?

Giselle: *Well we have a new administrator. She is very organized. She is easy to work with. She has policies and rules that we can follow and that we can see making sense and they work! Now we have a lot of things going on at the school that help the children where discipline is concerned you know. The only downfall and disadvantage is that parental involvement and the enthusiasm of the children towards school work.*

Interviewer: What in your perception are the determinants of student success at this school?

Giselle: *Ask that again maybe in another way.*

Interviewer: What would you use to identify a successful student and why?

Giselle: *Oh, depending on not only the ability of the child, but the amount of work I observe that the child is puts out or was attempting to put out. Then I would say that that child was a success. I would not say that because a child passed for a good school, that the child was successful. I would take into consideration the ability of the child, because we know that bookwork is not for everybody! I have some children, if you give them the booklet, they make a mess of it, but if you read and explain they are so wonderful and we wonder why we don't have other non-traditional exams to access these children. so I would access their success by the amount of effort put in to their work.*

Interviewer: In what ways do you measure student success? Besides academic achievement in what other ways are students' success measured? Because you mentioned before that you consider a child to be successful when you see the child display ability, effort and enthusiasm in his work.

Giselle: *Where paper work is concerned, that is easy those who pass. But then you take into consideration the background issues some of these children have to deal with, so you can relate and understand why it is they are not as forth-coming with their work. You have to understand that the playing field is not even for these children – it is unfair so you cannot judge all of them the same way because that would be unfair. I would go as far as saying that even getting some of them to leave primary school being able to read and write as independent readers is being successful. Because we know for a fact that we have some children who cannot cope in the so called 'normal environment' and they should not be in our schools.*

Interviewer: Giselle, please explain what you mean by 'cope in the normal environment'

Giselle: *I am taking about special needs children. They were not diagnosed because we are not qualified to diagnosed, but you know with teaching you can pick out one or two who really cannot function at a normal level.*

And you can see how when you have them in smaller groups how they perform differently and work better.

Interviewer: Based on your recollection, what examples of students' success have stood out the most in your teaching practice at the school?

Giselle: I don't know. Exactly what are you looking for?

Interviewer: What changes in student behaviour, attitude towards learning or enthusiasm have you observed in particular students?

Giselle: I can see the students that I have now being moulded in such a way that if they continue on that path, they would be very successful. There is one girl who was skipped from Standard Three to Five. Everybody thought she was average but she is now on top of the class. I encourage her to do law, because she loves to talk, she loves to ask questions and she is very aggressive and blunt in her speech.

Interviewer: What in your perception have been your greatest challenges in your effort to get students to be successful?

Giselle: Well I would say the lack of parental support, children not coming to school with tools, stationery, books, they are not doing homework. Many children have problems focusing and they have nutritional needs. Some are unable to retain information, others are disruptive. They have problems with problem solving and reasoning skills and these are some of the challenges.

Interviewer: What do you think was instrumental in your overcoming these challenges?

Giselle: I would say persistence and perseverance. Rewards for good work, real life experiences so I take them out on field trips to help them learn. Talking about and centering lessons on topics of interest, for example if they like football you talk about football and relate it to the lesson. I had a problem with a boy who couldn't figure out the age of a person if they were born in such a year. So I asked him his age and what year we are in? He was then asked to use the information to figure out the year in which he was born. Now he knew the year he was born and he was able to work backwards to solve the problem.

Interviewer: What are the teaching/learning strategies have you personally used to achieve students' success at the school?

Giselle: I find that one-on-one with teacher and student, that works. Also small peer groups anything more than three students in a group is a lot of chaos and 'ole talk' Assigning leadership roles to students like sometimes you have a prefect but you have to watch the friend-friend thing,, but it sometimes help. The children also like attention too because most of the time I have a seat by my table and I will call children and work with them one-on-one and even when I don't call them they will take it upon themselves to come and sit and you have to tell them return to their seat, because they like that attention.

Interviewer: So would you define that as giving individual attention or showing personal interest in the children?

Giselle: As showing personal interest.

Interviewer: What teaching/learning strategies do you consider **most** effective in attaining students' success at the school?

Giselle: *The one-on-one with the teacher and the student.*

Interviewer: So how do you do the one-on-one?

Giselle: *One-on-one, you break it up. Say you have a problem you read it for them, you may have to draw a diagram or bring in manipulatives so they can actually see it and look at the problem instead of just saying a formula like 'Length by Breath gives you Area' you actually have the material and show them what they are working with I think that works best where they can actually visualize the problem and solve it.*

Interviewer: Approximately how many students do you have in your class?

Giselle: *Twenty.*

Interviewer: Wouldn't an approach like that be time consuming and wouldn't there be obvious time constraints?

Giselle: *Definitely and that is why we have to resort to the peer teaching and group work so that the strong could help the weak understand what is taught in class because the one-on-one everyday is impractical.*

Interviewer: What in your opinion is necessary for the improvement of teaching/learning at school?

Giselle: *First thing I would suggest is having smaller class sizes. Classes should be ten for the most per teacher.*

Interviewer: So you are looking at a special needs classroom size. They are approximately five to ten in capacity.

Giselle: *Yeah. Secondly I believe in a lot of extra-curricular activities too, music is um, important. Sometimes when I teach too if you sing a song or a rap or something it tends to capture their attention and interest motivates them to learn and remember and stuff like that you know. Even sports you can use sports in that if you try hard to do your school work you can get to represent the school in sports, but discipline is important if you are to represent the school, but you must be trying in your school work and show some kind of effort because they go 'hand in hand' you can't be good in sports and lacking in your school work.*

Interviewer: But that is within the school, who else do you think needs to assist if the teaching/learning at the school is to improve?

Giselle: *You can always get parents involved because some parents just don't go into the book bag, they don't interact with the children' they don't even ask "How was your day at school?"" Did you do anything new"" Did Miss help you understand?" So if parents don't show that interest it shows that the children are neither interested in their work.*

Interviewer: And what can you suggest to get the parents involved? Because it is one thing to say they are not interested, but what are we doing to engender that interest and involvement?

Giselle: *I try to get parents involved. Personally I text my parents and let them know of issues concerning their children, if we have an upcoming meeting that they should attend, what would be the topic of the meeting, if we have a guest speaker and the topic would be very interesting and they should*

come and hear the speech you know. Activities in the school, like if we have a little Bingo in the school to encourage parents to come and play with their children, a little Bazaar or May Fair – all of these things work! Once the parents and other stakeholders get involved in the school I think it would help.

Interviewer: Do you have Guidance officers that work with the school?

Giselle: *We don't have any Guidance officers with us presently. We had a Guidance counselor before, and he used to pop in but that was for just one term and he was not consistent. Social worker no! I remember a Social Worker visited the school one time and that was when a parent came to ask me to speak to her son. She said that this Social Worker was at the Homework Centre at the community centre and she goes there to talk to the children and she brought the lady across. That lady came here one time promised to return but never did.*

Interviewer: So there are no social services assigned to the school. Is it your belief that the inclusion of these bodies would assist the school in any way?

Giselle: *When you come to think of it, there were a couple of ladies that used to come to the school at lunch time and they came to speak to students who had lost a loved one but violent means. I did not like the idea because I believe it would bring back negative memories and I strongly believe that school is a place that when you enter the gate you should leave all negative things behind. So if you come from a dysfunctional family, someone interfering with you, you hungry or so you should remember that you are getting your breakfast, your lunch, you have your friends, school is fun and you just came to have a good time. So the idea of having a Social Worker present in the school, those type of people in the school I am not really for it. Um, the Social Workers come they find out what is going on with the child but they don't follow up on it and not only that they don't follow up, but there is only so much they can do. Because we have teachers who play Social Worker and visit the children when they are not coming, call parents and other things. I even did that at one point. I didn't see a child coming and I visited the home. That was when we had exams coming up and I did not see him for the whole of January. About the middle of February I called his parent and said, "I am coming for him." I visited the home and he ran but I said, "Boy come here now!" He came and I made him dress, I then took him to the police station I told them what is happening and the officers told him that he had to go to school and report to the station every morning and evening.*

Interviewer: Was the parent there at the time?

Giselle: *No the parent was not present.*

Interviewer: You felt safe doing that in spite of the crime?

Giselle: *Yeah, I felt safe. They don't really trouble women. Remember women are not a threat. Men are territorial and when they see a strange man in their neighbourhood they feel threatened and that is their only excuse. As a woman they pay you no mind and they know me as a teacher at the school.*

	In fact the 'fellas' were telling me to take him because he does not go to school and telling me that there should be more teachers like me.
Interviewer:	Giselle, you mentioned extra-curricular activities and sports as being necessary from improving teaching/learning at the school, but don't these things already exist at the school?
Giselle:	*Yes we have them very organized in a club format.*
Interviewer:	So rather than speak of these things as being things that should be done because they are already being done and you have confirmed, I will like to know what additional things need to be done which are presently not taking place to improve teaching/learning at the school?
Giselle:	*As I said getting the parents more involved. I think early diagnosis of learning disabilities will also improve the teaching and learning at the school although I figure it will reduce our numbers greatly.*
Interviewer:	Hah, Hah, are you implying that after early diagnosis all the children would have to leave the school?
Giselle:	*Hah, Hah, but I think a lot will – a lot, a lot!*
Interviewer:	Giselle we have come to the end of the interview and I wish to thank you for your participation in the study. Our discussion was truly enlightening and informative. I will forward a copy of the transcript to you as soon as it is ready for your approval and verification.

RESEARCH INTERVIEW WITH BOB

Interviewer:	How long have you been in the teaching service?
Bob:	*Um, twenty one years.*
Interviewer:	Are you trained or untrained?
Bob:	*Trained.*
Interviewer:	Did you receive pre-service or in-service training?
Bob:	*In-service.*
Interviewer: afterwards*?*	So that means you were placed in the classroom and then trained
Bob:	*Yes.*
Interviewer:	Where did you receive your training and in what year?
Bob:	*Yes, Valsayn Teachers' College from 2000-2002.*
Interviewer:	What are your academic qualifications? (Post Secondary Certificates, Diplomas or Degrees)
Bob:	*Um, almost Bsc.*
Interviewer:	Almost Bsc! Can you elaborate on what you mean?
Bob:	*I am working on a Bachelor's in Sociology, with a minor in Psychology and I am in my final year.*
Interviewer:	Okay, presently pursuing your degree. Do you have a Teacher's Diploma?
Bob:	*Um, almost.*
Interviewer:	Hah, hah, alright. So would it be safe to say you are working on additional certification?

Bob:	*Yes.*
Interviewer:	Are there any additional courses you have taken?
Bob:	*Yes, A+ Certification.*
Interviewer:	Can you elaborate on that?
Bob:	*Yes. A+ Certification is a computer course that gives you basic understanding of not necessarily use, um, but the way a computer works, basic repairs and a little bit on networking.*
Interviewer:	So how long have you been at Hill Top Government Primary?
Bob:	*Since 2002.*
Interviewer:	So that is what roughly 11 years?
Bob:	*Yes about 11 years.*
Interviewer:	Was this your first teaching appointment?
Bob:	*No it wasn't.*
Interviewer:	At what other schools have you taught?
Bob:	*Um, at Point-Fortin West, um Malick.*
Interviewer:	Point-Fortin West what?
Bob:	*Point-Fortin Secondary. It used to be Point-Fortin Junior Sec.*
Interviewer:	Okay, so you taught at the secondary level before coming to primary?
Bob:	*Yes.*
Interviewer:	And what were the other schools you were naming?
Bob:	*Malick Secondary and Mt. Hope Secondary.*
Interviewer:	May I ask how you ended up in primary, because all these schools you taught at before were secondary?
Bob:	*What happened was that when I went to training college it was under the two-year diploma programme. I was teaching Spanish at the secondary level, however Spanish was not offered at training college when I was there, so I had to choose something else so I did Sociology. As such, when I came out, they weren't accepting teachers with Sociology electives because they had enough persons coming out with degrees, so I had to be placed in a primary school. But I have to do the Spanish because I did not do it in college.*
Interviewer:	So Bob, what was your initial reaction when you were assigned to this school?
Bob:	*Well it was not very positive. In terms of ....the school itself was not the issue, I wanted to go back to a secondary school, so any primary school would have been a problem at that point.*
Interviewer:	Okay so it did not have to do with area, it was all about the level?
Bob:	*Yes.*
Interviewer:	How would you compare the other schools at which you have taught with this school?
Bob:	*Um, quite similar actually you know because the other schools I taught at – their socioeconomic intake, um, in terms of the students and their socioeconomic background are very similar.*
Interviewer:	Are there any dissimilar characteristics among the schools?
Bob:	*Um in terms of location. The other schools going to and from and actually getting to and from those schools didn't require as much caution.*

Interviewer:	Are you implying that you have safety issues?
Bob:	*Yeah, because of where this school is located, you need to be a bit more vigilant in traveling to and from.*
Interviewer:	Okay. I hear you!
	So what is your current position? (Administrative; Senior Teacher; Head-of-Department; Class Teacher; Special Teacher; Creative Arts Teacher; ICT Teacher; Other (specify)
Bob:	*ICT teacher.*
Interviewer:	At what levels within the school have you taught?
Bob:	*4 and 5 and ICT and I taught Infants temporarily for three weeks.*
Interviewer:	At what level are you presently teaching?
Bob:	*I have the entire school as the ICT teacher.*
Interviewer:	Do you enjoy teaching here?
Bob:	*Yes I do!*
Interviewer:	What do you consider most enjoyable about teaching at the school?
Bob:	*What I like most um, is seeing the progress. Seeing students not knowing something and coming into knowledge of it. Seeing attitudes towards certain things change because they now know how to do something. I think that is a fulfilling feeling it gives you a sense of "I did something!"*
Interviewer:	Have you ever thought of leaving?
Bob:	*A couple of times.*
Interviewer:	Why?
Bob:	*Um, mostly because of safety issues.*
Interviewer:	Have you had any other issues with the school?
Bob:	*I don't know if I should say seeing that this is being recorded.*
Interviewer:	Well as I told you before, say only what you are comfortable saying, but be assured that your contribution will be kept confidential. This recording is just for the purpose for having an accurate rendition of what you say for transcription purposes. Also if you wish to elaborate you do not have to use names.
Bob:	*Well there was a time when I was having a little issue with one of the previous administrators.*
Interviewer:	Why have you opted to stay at the school in spite of these issues?
Bob:	*Because this school is one school where you can see that you are making a difference! You can see where, it is not always obvious and you don't always see it at once but it is a school where you can see the progress being made and you can see that your input is necessary. The staff is also good to work with because we have a very cooperative staff in comparison with some of the things you hear about other places. And at this moment we have ah… supportive administration!*
Interviewer:	In your opinion how has the school changed over time?
Bob:	*Okay, within the last couple of years, we have seen an improvement in terms of behaviour.*
Interviewer:	Okay.
Bob:	*There was a time when large fights were almost a daily occurrence and that has all but ceased. There has been an improvement in behaviour um,*

because we have managed to get students a little bit - not much, more focused um……

Interviewer: Focused in what sense?

Bob: *Academically and in the way they carry themselves. Now that does not mean that we don't have problems but it is not as bad as it used to be previously.*

Interviewer: So Bob, what in your perception are the determinants of student success at this school?

Bob: *Generally in the society, the way how the education system is structured, in general you look at student marks as a sign of success, however here given our clientele, given the kind of students we get I think we can't just look at marks. We have to look at the students who come from diverse situations um, where violence is the norm, come with negative attitudes, come with 'baggage' that is issues towards teachers, issues towards one another and towards themselves. There is a combination of interaction with many teachers because this is a school where any teacher can speak to any child not just the child in their class. Um, most teachers interact with most if not all of the students in fact and when you see a child coming in with bad attitudes, with um, problems with honesty and all of that and you can see after a while – a year, a term or so that that child has turned around and is no longer stealing, although they may not be getting an 'A' you see an attitude change and improvement in their work all of these things is what I consider success!*

Interviewer: So Bob, in what ways do you measure student success?

Bob: *I will still use partially the grading because I will like to see an effort or improvement, moving from point 'A' to 'B', but um, I also look at success where a student moves to a place where they make an effort to achieve something.*

Interviewer: What examples of students' success have stood out the most in your teaching practice at the school? What changes in student behaviour, attitude towards learning or enthusiasm, things that you mentioned before, have you observed in particular students?

Bob: *There are two students that readily come to mind. Should I call their names?*

Interviewer: No it will be best to give them a false name based on the aspect of their characteristics that stands out most.

Bob: *Alright. There is one that I will call 'Little Warrior.' 'Little Warrior' was in a remedial class I got and I looked at his behaviour. After a while I met the parent and I realized that a lot of the parent's attitude and behaviour was reflected in the child. After a while the child's, the parent would have noticed he would leave early to get to school. You know you would speak to other teachers about it and they would tell you that 'Little Warrior' would come in anytime he wants – he would come in late and anytime the mother would come in there was always some towards work was different, the attitude towards school was different to the point where people were saying "He different from the rest of them yuh know." The family was*

quite a large family, he is different from his mother and all and although the academic wasn't the best because we like to see students with 'A's, 'Little Warrior' is still trying. He was trying to get into the army. He passed the written test um, passed the interview and the only reason from what I am hearing that he did not get through was because when they sent out people to investigate his background and family and they found out who the parents were and some of the issues with the parents and other siblings, they turned him down.

Interviewer: That was unfortunate!

Bob: *But that has not deterred him from trying other things.*

Interviewer: Oh great! But you mentioned two examples, what about the other child?

Bob: *There was another one. When I first got the class one of the things I heard from both the students and the teachers is that "You have to watch this young man, because 'Bones' steals a lot!" I think one of the things I remember trying with my class was to get them to be very close to one another, not to be fighting and bickering with one another. I have a very close relationship with the class. It didn't happen overnight, the stealing continued and then one day a teacher sent   a student to my class to ask for 'Bones' because um, something was missing from somebody's bag or something like that. So I sent 'Bones' to the teacher and from the time he walked out the class, my students began to say, "Sir, but 'Bones' don't thief again!" and then it occurred to me in truth even within my class I could not recall the time when something went missing or even a teacher saying that he stole from them. Subsequently out of that episode they found out who really stole the stuff and he left here no longer with a reputation of stealing. In fact he would come back here ever so often to get a letter of recommendation. One the first occasion, I did it out of the corner of my eyes remembering from the 'earlies' how he used to steal and that boy has gone on from job to job to job. Now the fact that he was moving on from job to job wasn't because they were firing him or anything but he was working here got better terms and conditions elsewhere and came back for a resume to apply for that other job. Now while he was here apart from the stealing I guess it would have been easier for them to point a finger at him because he used to be untidy. By the time he was ready to leave here he started to take a personal interest in himself and if you see the gentleman now and I say 'gentleman' he has improved you wouldn't believe it was the same person, taking a personal interest in his grooming even his features are starting to change, he looks like a different person now!*

Interviewer: That is very good to hear, but how do you think you have personally influenced the behaviour changes in 'Little Warrior' and in 'Bones'?

Bob: *Miss, um I think it has to do a lot with talking and listening. We need to listen when the children talk. Sometimes the child may come to tell you something and you reason why this child come to tell me this and you still show them that you are listening and that what they have to say is important and you are not just interested in their marks, but that you are*

interested in them. Sometimes they tell you about what is happening at home, something that is happening with a brother or a sister. One day 'Little Warrior' asked, "Sir you watch de news?" apparently there was some issue on the news about a shooting incident and he was able to tell me that the way they said it happened is wrong. You need to listen to them and encourage, off course you are going to chastise and give little 'boofs' where it is warranting, but you listen and encourage them to look out for one another and be close to one another because if they start caring for the other people in their class it is not going to be too difficult to go out into the world and care about other people.

Interviewer: So in your perception what have been your greatest challenges in your effort to get students to succeed at this school?

Bob: *Miss, a lot of the students although they have parents in the home, a lot of the students are on their own. Very little or no parental support and the environment in which they live and come from. You know it comes like if you lean their heads and try to pour in something good in the morning and when they get home in the evening someone leans their heads in the opposite direction and it pours right back out! For example we would tell the children when you find something that does not belong to you, you should return it to the person or give it to a teacher and they have parents who when they tell them that they found twenty dollars and returned it to a teacher would tell them, "Yuh stupid ah wah? Yuh done know we ain't hah no money an yuh fine money and geh it back! Wah happen yuh is ah fool?" Or we would say to them that violence is not the way to deal with an issue and there are parents who would say to them, "Anybody who hit yuh buss dey head ah go pay fuh yuh in court!"So it's like you putting in good values in them every day and when they get back into the environment it is erased – it is like you are always starting from scratch!*

Interviewer: What do you think was instrumental in your overcoming these challenges?

Bob: *Well I think something would have to come from within them to help them overcome the challenges….*

Interviewer: Remember, Bob you enumerated a number of challenges you encountered, so I want to know what you personally did to overcome these challenges.

Bob: *Oh! Well I had to make up my mind that this is my class and that this is the section I was responsible for and I just kept going. Off course you would have your down days, but you have to just keep going and keep going.*

Interviewer: What are the teaching/learning strategies have you personally used to achieve students' success at the school?

Bob: *Um, peer teaching, group work, group projects, drills and repetition*

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the drills and repetition.

Bob: *Well I don't mean rote by drills and repetition. You do something one way you try it again in another way so that you make sure that you reach everybody. The group especially I like because you may be teaching and not reaching everybody, but within the group pupils can help explain the work to those who didn't understand on their own level and reach that child where the teacher couldn't.*

Interviewer: What teaching/learning strategies do you consider **most** effective in attaining students' success at the school?

Bob: *The group work.*

Interviewer: in your opinion what is necessary for the improvement of teaching/learning at school? What can be done at the school, family, community and ministry levels?

Bob: *Um, first of all parental support. In terms of the Ministry, if we can get assigned to the school behavioural specialists, by that I mean a psychiatrist, a social worker, a counselor because we have a lot of students who would have either experienced things or seen things and have had violent exposure to different stuff who just go without counseling as if it is normal and I believe these specialist will be able to help.*

Interviewer: So Bob, in conclusion are there any additional comments, questions or concerns you will like to share?

Bob: *I would like to make a recommendation. Um, from the nature of the questions and in the information you presented to me in the letter before, I would hope that these results, that is, the results of whatever your findings are, are exposed to somebody in authority who is in a position to um, to make a difference be it the Ministry, be it the school supervisor, be it the persons at Student Support Services, someone who could make a difference!*

Interviewer: Okay, I would hope for that as well. Bob I wish to thank you for your participation in the study and I will forward a copy of the transcript to you as soon as it is ready for your approval and verification.

Research interview with Ashton

Interviewer: How long have you been in the teaching service?

Ashton: *From 1973 to the present.*

Interviewer: Are you trained or untrained?

Ashton: *I am a trained teacher.*

Interviewer: Did you receive pre-service or in-service training?

Ashton: *In-service*

Interviewer: Where did you receive your training and in what year?

Ashton: *I went to Port-of-Spain Teachers' Training College in 1976-1978. In those days it was known as POSTTC (pronunciation - POSTACY), which no longer exists.*

Interviewer: What are your academic qualifications? (Post Secondary Certificates, Diplomas or Degrees)

Ashton: *Well I did one course which is a Diploma in ITC and I have my Teachers' Diploma*

Interviewer: How long have you been at Hill Top Government Primary?

Ashton:	*I have been at Hill Top Government Primary for the past twenty-one years!*
Interviewer:	Wow, Twenty-one years! That's quite a long time! Was this your first teaching appointment?
Ashton:	*No it was not.*
Interviewer:	At what other schools have you taught?
Ashton:	*Well no, I taught at All Saint's Anglican in Port-of-Spain, Brighton Anglican in La Brea and St. Mary's Anglican in Tacarigua.*
Interviewer:	You have taught at what seems the length and breadth of Trinidad what accounts for such a diversity of locations?
Ashton:	*Well after Training College, I was posted at La Brea. I then transferred to Tacarigua and I later ended up here.*
Interviewer:	Ashton I notice that all these schools prior to this one were Anglican schools. So were you an Anglican before?
Ashton:	*Yes I was and I later became a Seventh Day Adventist, so I had to leave the Anglican school.*
Interviewer:	What was your initial reaction when you were assigned to this school?
Ashton:	*I was out of teaching for about seven years, so I was looking forward to the challenge. You know the break gave me an opportunity to ah, ah, you can say I was rejuvenated, after being out of the classroom for over six years. So I looked forward to it. I really looked forward to going back.*
Interviewer:	How would you compare the other schools at which you have taught with this school?
Ashton:	*Um, the other school they um, All Saint's Anglican was a very good school. There were no problems in that school. That is a school you would enjoy teaching in. St. Mary's Anglican, though not as all um, well, All Saint's because the academic standards were a bit lower but still it was a good school and it wasn't too difficult to teach there. The problems more or less were dealt with at that school. Brighton Anglican however was different because it was in a very deprived area. There was a lot of poverty in La Brea at the time, there probably still is, I don't know. Yes there was a lot of poverty and it reflected in the attitude and the way the children conducted themselves. So Brighton Anglican is pretty similar to the school where I am at present.*
Interviewer:	What is your current position? (Administrative; Senior Teacher; Head-of-Department; Class Teacher; Special Teacher; Creative Arts Teacher; ICT Teacher; Other (specify)
Ashton:	*Well I am a teacher. One of the Senior Teachers*
Interviewer:	Is this an official position?
Ashton:	*No. I guess you can say I have just been there for a long time.*
Interviewer:	At what levels within the school have you taught?
Ashton:	*I have taught in Standard four and five and I have also taught Standard Two and I am presently in Standard Three.*
Interviewer:	So Juniors and Seniors Level?
Ashton:	*I also did Post Primary some years ago.*
Interviewer:	Do you enjoy teaching here?

Ashton: *Yes I do.*

Interviewer: What do you consider most enjoyable?

Ashton: *Well teaching at this school presents it's set of challenges and while it can be a bit frustrating at times, yet you feel that you can make a difference. You can help somebody make a difference, because somebody has to teach children like ours and I think that it is a challenge that I relish. Though it could be frustrating at times, I think it is a challenge that a teacher should like to take on.*

Interviewer: Have you ever thought of leaving?

Ashton: *Not seriously.*

Interviewer: I know you mentioned that it could be frustrating and that there are challenges, so what do you mean by not seriously?

Ashton: *Well especially over the last few years …. I taught Standard four and five for a number of years and you know they are the classes where you have to really push because they are the students for the exam and that is a motivation in itself for both teacher and students. However since I moved out of Standard five and I know that this is my winding down years so to speak so, I know that my time is short and my time has been short for the past three years. I just contented myself that I should just work out my years as best I can until it is time for retirement. So in such circumstances I would not have taught of leaving because I am close to retirement anyhow.*

Interviewer: So even though you were frustrated you did not think of 'jumping ship'?

Ashton: *Not at all. Because after all I could have sought a transfer years ago if the school was getting to me and I couldn't handle it, but I never asked for a transfer.*

Interviewer: Aston I just want to get something clear. You mentioned to me that you had certain frustrations. What would you say contributed to those frustrations?

Ashton: *Frustrations are largely due to the attitude of the children which is largely a reflection of the attitude of the parents and the society, because one gets the impression that too many of the parents in the area that education is not all that important! It isn't that they wouldn't want their children to do well, but the type of effort other parents would make with their children our parents generally don't. The parents who really follow up their children are very few. There are few who would come to track their children's progress, find out what they need to get are in the minority, so that there is a kind of attitude that school is important but not that important!*

Interviewer: So there is a problem with parental involvement?

Ashton: *Actually a lack thereof.*

Interviewer: But Ashton you have stayed. Can you just elaborate on why you have stayed?

Ashton: *Now even though I mentioned frustration, you do come across some students who want to learn and you do encounter parents who genuinely want to see their children do well and you gain encouragement from that.*

You also gain encouragement from children who have a nice decent attitude towards their work additionally you encouragement from parents who understand what teachers go through in trying to teach children. So I think that helps. It helps when parents appreciate what you try to do for their children. Of course not all parents appreciate that but from the positive examples among parents and students I think you can gain a certain amount of, should I say, inspiration and encouragement to continue.

Interviewer: In your opinion how has the school changed over time?

Ashton: *The school has changed a lot over time, not least of all the population of the school has been drastically reduced. When I first got here we had over seven hundred students at the school, today we are down to one hundred and fifty approximately. So that the school was crowded, the school was big and the environment was more charged and now the school is about one fifth of what it was when I first got there. The school was more charged and there was more fighting. The larger population presented certain problems in terms of managing, now the numbers are far more manageable and the classes are smaller, the teachers are not as stressed. By numbers we had classes that had thirty seven and sometimes forty and we are now down to twenty-one, twenty-two, sixteen, fifteen, that kind of thing, so it makes it easier for a teacher. However the attitude of the students could be about the same but it is smaller numbers to manage, more room in the classrooms and you could afford to do other things in the classroom. Then there are other changes for example students now do Computer Science which was not done back then. Now we have some of the courses that have been brought in by the Ministry, we have Dance, Drama and Agriculture. The Ministry calls them VAAPA and CAC.*

Interviewer: What do those acronyms stand for?

Ashton: *Well VAAPA stand for Visual and Performing Arts and I am not too sure of the meaning of CAC but it is the other areas that have been introduced that are not the Performing Arts, things like Composition, Character Education and things like that.*

Interviewer: What in your perception are the determinants of student success at this school?

Ashton: *In the first place everybody comes into this world with a certain amount of natural ability and um, that's not all, natural ability can either be used or wasted. Now in our school you expect the children to be of average or normal ability and then off course with the support of the parents, the efforts of the teachers and the willingness of the students too, because you expect that some children will have natural ability, but for some reason they are not motivated to work, either because of the home the environmental circumstances they are just not motivated to work so they underachieve they underperform. But off course for students to be successful, they must be willing and it helps a lot if the parents are behind them and off course if the teacher does his or her part. You see, so it is a combination of factors.*

Interviewer: How would something like academic achievement factor into that? Do you consider it one of the only criterions for determining the success of a student?

Ashton: *For me no, but in terms of a school it is by far the main determinant, it is one of the main things you look at, because you want to see your children do well in exams, that they measure up favourably with their peers in other areas. Now every teacher looks for that..... that their pupils do well in exams and pass for the school of their first choice, but there are also other factors to look at. You look at the attitude of the children, their willingness to learn – not only learning academically, but they learn to be mannerly, they learn to do their best in whatever field they may be in, for example, a child might be a good sportsman, a good athlete or a good footballer, they use their talents, they listen to the teacher, in other words they are disciplined. Now when I say disciplined, I mean disciplined in the sense of not sitting down and not saying anything – being quiet. Discipline, in the sense of being dedicated to the cause, whatever has to done they put the requisite effort into it, that is, what is needed. You see what is needed and you work at it. So that um, team work, the ability to be part of a team, to be part of a group, to learn how to work with others to get along with others…I think that also determines success! Remember when you go into the wider society the way you interact with other people can tell how far or where you could go in life. Because whatever abilities you have, you still have to learn how to deal with the stresses in life, the problems and also how to interact with your fellow men. I think school must teach children that, they must know how to get along with other people. For example if you are a policeman you need to know what will make you a successful policeman right, you need to know that you a part of a team or group and that your individual contribution is important and children need to learn that.*

Interviewer: How does that particular type of learning, getting along with others, being part of a team or having that community spirit and unitedness factor into the type of environment from which the children emanate?

Ashton: *You see I don't think that people from Hill Top here do so well as a community. Sometimes you might see the community come together to protest if they believe somebody has been unjustly dealt with by the police or the authorities, but basically we don't work as a team. We don't work as a community to help to uplift one another, for example the type of support the school should get from the parents and the community in fund raising and other endeavours is not good. It is hard to get parents - even some of them who actually went to the school to commit to the school in any meaningful way so I don't think as a society we have really learnt that. I don't think we have learnt how to come together for the common good. I think if we can teach them that in school and let them know that somehow they are part of a whole, part of a unit, this will not only be of benefit to the community, but the wider society in general.*

Interviewer: In what ways do you measure student success?

Ashton:	*Well off course in any school you measure success by the pupil's academic achievement, but I also measure students by their attitude towards their work, how they keep themselves, and the effort they put into their work. Miss, let's face it, every child was not born to be an Einstein right, every child wouldn't be an Eric Williams or a Capildeo right, but to the extent that they can use their ability to reach as far as they possibly can, that is a measure of success. In reality if you look at some of the children we have here, the type of homes they come from, it is very hard for them to excel. Instead they have to try and get as far as they possibly can so if they can use their ability, develop a measure of personal ambition; I think that is being successful or at least a measure of success.*
Interviewer:	Ashton I think these are very riveting terms, to 'drive themselves as far as they possibly can' and displaying a 'measure of ambition.'
Aston:	*Yes because I believe that. Because if you lack ambition, it means that you don't have a drive to achieve and once you don't have drive to achieve you can very easily 'fall through the cracks', follow the wrong set of people, and get into trouble as so many of our past students have done!*
Interviewer:	What examples of students' success have stood out the most in your teaching practice at the school?
Ashton:	*I really have to scratch my head for this one! Student success um!*
Interviewer:	In other words, which students from your previous classes, who were regarded and sure failures by most, have you been personally able to influence, using the criterion for success you previously mentioned?
Ashton:	*Well firstly let me state, that a teacher must have a love for his profession to start off with. He must also have a love for his students right, and when I say love I mean he has to care for his students and if you care for your students they would understand that – they would know if the teacher is really interested in their welfare or just doing a job. So to some extent the attitude of the teacher would somehow rub off on the children. A teacher who takes his or her work seriously is going to be able to influence the children to a certain extent. What that means is that there are other things that you might go out of the way to do for them that another teacher might not do, like the time you might take to help them with their academic and sometimes even personal problems. Miss, imagine I have on several occasions in the past had to give money to parents to get students' birth certificate so that they can write the exams, because it was either a case of them being unable or uninterested to obtain this document for their children. What comes to mind however, is as I recall that there was this child whose parent showed a lack of interest in her education and that was manifested in the child's attitude towards school and the fact that the parent involved herself in nothing pertaining to the child's school work. I recall that when I was registering children to do the Common Entrance Exam as it was called back then, this same child had a problem with registration because she had no birth certificate. I had to go to her home in what is considered one of the most dangerous areas in Hill Top at the time, because there were lots of dangerous characters in that part of Hill*

Top. I did not even know where she lived so I had to ask directions to find the home to beg for the mother to come and sign up for the girl to take the exam. When I met the mother she told me she did not have money to get the birth certificate, so I gave her the money and she went for the certificate and the child was finally registered. What I observed over time was a change in that child's attitude towards her work which I attribute to the fact that she realized that Sir was actually interested in her welfare. She was able to write the exam and pass for a secondary school and I believe she was continuing to make an effort there as well. The interest you show in trying to help them with their problems I think will go a long way because pupils who feel that they are cared for tend to make an extra effort to do better.

Interviewer: What in your perception have been your greatest challenges in your effort to get students to succeed at this school?

Ashton: *I think the greatest challenge or to me tragedy, has been the lack of parental support, because it is always a very sad thing when parents don't really care much about the type of progress their children are making at school. Whatever negative things come up in school teachers have to find a way to cope, but then again there is only so much you can do, because pupils have to be willing. There are so many children at the school who are unwilling and that could and is a great challenge to learning. When children also do not care much about their education, I think that that is one of the saddest things. When both parents and children have been overcome by that kind of negative attitude, it makes it hard to do anything!*

Interviewer: What do you think was instrumental in your overcoming these challenges?

Ashton: *First of all, your own personal values will drive you to keep doing what you are doing and my personal values tell me that every child is important. Although at times they may frustrate you and be rude to you, they are important. And from that point of view you teach and treat each child as you would your own child. I think if each teacher can develop the attitude to treat each child as if it was their own, then they stand a greater change of overcoming these challenges and succeeding in a school like this.*

Interviewer: What are the teaching/learning strategies have you personally used to achieve students' success at the school?

Ashton: *First of all I have always tried to let my children know that they are important. I believe it is an attitude we all need in life, now moving from that, it means that you will be willing….willing to put up with and make that effort. In other words a teacher can simply say "You all don't want to learn? Well that is your business!" and leave it there or he can say "You came to school to learn and improve yourself, so as long as you are in my class you will learn and leave school better than you came." Teachers should motivate and influence their children to better themselves and if you are not willing to do that then you are really in the wrong profession.*

Interviewer: What teaching/learning strategies do you consider **most** effective in attaining students' success at the school?

Ashton: *How should I answer that? One of the things I try to encourage pupils is to help one another in organized group activities and otherwise. Doing this is like helping themselves. I also discourage them from laughing at each other. I also offer my time at recess and lunch to those who are having difficulty in understanding their school work – not that they always take advantage of the offer, because they prefer to play and have fun than to come to me for help. I always try to encourage that type of individual attention. I also believe in giving my children rewards or recognize their achievements, but the rewards must be attainable so that even the weakest child, with effort can have a chance to attain it. As they reach the benchmark the bar cam be lifted higher so that they are continually motivated. Even if it is a book or a pen our children need rewards to motivate them. And you would agree that our children at the school need all the motivation they can get!*

Interviewer: What in your opinion is necessary for the improvement of teaching/learning at school?

Ashton: *Well from my standpoint, I believe that the present Government is trying to effect some changes which have been long overdue. Some of these changes were talked about when the previous administration was there and they were never able to implement it, so I think the Ministry is on the right track. However we do not always have the resources that we need but basically we could work with what we have. Now in my school there is always a lot of fund raising going on and although fund raising may be necessary it takes away a lot from teaching time and the time that should be devoted to the educating of our students. For example whenever we have something like a dress up day, a number of our students stay home so a number of these activities we do, while we understand the objective of it, they are counter-productive in that it negatively affects the regularity and participation of the students in classroom endeavours. I believe that we should have fewer fund raisers. Now if the parents would take a greater interest in the PTA and form this teacher/parent partnership, this would go a long way to improving the school. However there are certain things that are symptomatic of more serious problems, I will give you an example, a parent would send a child to school with a pair of slippers "Oh God!" or some other kind of apparel that is clearly in violation of the school rules, this tends to show that they don't really care much about the school and that also I s reflected in the behaviour and attitude of the children. When you don't respect the school, or you allow your children to disrespect the school, it brings down the tone of the school and anytime there is a high level of indiscipline in a school it does affects the academic performance because the indiscipline, also effect other children who may not be so inclined. It affects the entire tone of the school. If a teacher has to spend a lot of time disciplining children it takes away from teaching time. When the discipline of the school is good it raises the tone of the school because the principal will have good and uplifting things to tell the students at assembly. Let be clear about what I mean when I say*

discipline, I don't mean beat the children as we used to do long time, but I mean getting the children to do the right thing at the right time and being responsible. So if you have homework, go home and do your homework, wear the correct games uniform and not some tight, short piece of pants to show up your body. You know it is sad to think that parents allow their children to do the things they do, but that is the fact up here in school s like these.

Interviewer: In conclusion are there any additional comments, questions or concerns you will like to share*?*

Ashton: *Well I would want to think that for a school to be successful there must be a level of unity among the staff and very often in schools you have some teachers giving one hundred percent effort while some may give seventy five, some fifty and others forty percent. And I say effort, in teaching and in their approach to disciplining and overseeing the conduct of children. for example, so teachers would not tolerate students chewing gum in the classroom others might not be so careful, some may insist on children keeping their classroom clean while others may not and all these little things although small influence how children behave and perform. If the staff can give a united front in discipline it will do well to influence the students positive behaviour. Teacher performance and example are mandatory for school success. Another area is the way some teachers dress in some tight, tight, short inappropriate clothing this sends negative messages to the children, some of which are entering adolescents and have raging hormones. This does not help the effort towards discipline and success in any way. Now I am not saying that a teacher cannot wear a pant, but must it be tight, tight pants? No I don't think so! So I believe that teachers' dress and grooming need to be improved at the school.*

Interviewer: Okay, I would hope for that as well. Ashton I wish to thank you for your participation in the study and I will forward a copy of the transcript to you as soon as it is ready for your approval and verification.

APPENDIX VII

Transcript coding

See attached file

APPENDIX VIII

Line by line coding

Table 3	
Interview with Ashton	

Line Numbers	Codes
32, 33	Teacher optimism
53	Teacher experience
62	Work frustrations
53, 54	Making a difference
85	Pupil negativity
86	Negative external influences
87, 88	Devaluation of education
90, 91	No parental interest
98, 99	Parental interest
100	Willingness to work
101, 102	Empathy for teachers
102, 103	Appreciation of teachers
118, 119	Student Indiscipline
131, 132	"Student abilities"
134	Parental support
135	Willingness to learn
136	De-motivated pupils
137, 138	Negative family influences
140, 141	Success multifaceted
149	Eagerness to learn
150, 151	Positive values
157-159	Having interpersonal skills
161, 162	Dealing with stress
173, 174	Community non-involvement
175-178	Parental non-support
180, 181	Learning to cooperate
184	Pupil work attitude
185	Pupil personal appearance
187, 188	Using abilities
189, 190	Negative home influence
191, 192	"Personal ambition"
205	Love of profession
206	Love of pupils
207	Caring about pupils
209, 210	Teacher influence
212, 213	Beyond the call of duty
214-216	Teacher's personal sacrifice

219, 220	Unwillingness to learn
220, 221	Parental apathy
223-225	Fear for safety
227	Parental unwillingness
232, 233	Willingness to learn
234-236	Taking personal interest
239, 240	Parental non-support
241, 242	Coping with work stress
243-245	Unwillingness to learn
250, 251	Personal value
252	Indiscipline
253-256	Love pupils
259	Pupil validation
265	Teacher motivate pupils
265, 266	Teacher example
270, 271	Group work
272	Pupil/pupil encouragement
273-274	Teacher sacrifices
276, 277	Rewards
288, 289	Lack of resources
290-292	Wasting teaching time
296, 297	"Fewer fund raisers"
297-299	PTA involvement
304-308	Indiscipline
309	Wasting teaching time
320, 321	Staff unity
324-328	Intolerance of indiscipline
329, 330	Teacher influence
333-336	Teachers dressing inappropriately

APPENDIX IX

Emerging subthemes

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Table 4

Emerging subthemes</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Sub-question 1:
　　What are the teachers of Hill Top Government Primary School perception of students' success?</td></tr>
<tr><td align="center">Codes</td><td align="center">Sub-themes</td></tr>
<tr><td>Student progress
Behavioural change
Character development
Character modification
Growth and development
Having interpersonal skills
Dealing with stress
Using abilities
Personality transformation
Having basic skills
Attitudinal improvement</td><td>Identifying successful students</td></tr>
<tr><td>"Real hunger for knowledge"
Willingness to learn
Valuing self
Adoption of values
Becoming confident
Willingness to learn
Effort to learn
Pupil motivation</td><td>Student attitude</td></tr>
<tr><td>Teacher-pupil communication
Teacher-parent relationships</td><td>Creating amiable relationships</td></tr>
<tr><td>Innovative teachers
Parental support
Personal ambition</td><td>Positive conditions</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Sub-question 2:
　　What are teachers' perceptions of the educational challenges they have personally encountered in their effort to help students achieve success at Hill Top Government Primary School?</td></tr>
<tr><td align="center">Codes</td><td align="center">Sub-themes</td></tr>
<tr><td>Difficult community
Negative subcultures
Environmental influence
Socioeconomic issues
Community non-involvement</td><td>Mainstream culture</td></tr>
</table>

Poverty issues Student background No parental interest Parental apathy Erosion of values Poor leadership Uneven playing field No support services Not like other schools Educational challenges Indiscipline Marginalization	**Contextual deterrents**
Lacking confidence "Rebellious to authourity" Disrespect Educational resistance "Serious anger issues" Underachievement Pupils unpreparedness Nutritional issues Learning difficulties "Unkempt appearance" Educational apathy Negative self-perception Pupil negativity Low expectations Student truancy Exposure to violence	**Student attitudes**
Parental non-support Parental support of indiscipline Negative parental influence Devaluation of education Erosion of values Lack of resources Abnormal children Learning difficulties Wasting teaching time	**Teaching obstacles**
Fear for safety Job frustrations Bad staff relations "Spinning top in mud" Teacher discouragement	**Personal concerns**

Optimism "Do something good!" Job satisfaction Love for pupils "Commitment and endurance" Happy for job Teaching rewarding "Persistence and perseverance" New discovery "Making a difference" "Good pay for hard work!" Teacher determination Faith Teacher determination Job commitment "Positive outlook" "Self-evaluation" "Sense of accomplishment" Personal value "I did something!" "Keep going"	**Overcoming challenges** **1. Teacher's attitude**
Good staff relations Good leadership Improved infrastructure Better teachers Empathy for teachers Appreciation of teachers	**2. Teacher's determination**

Sub-question 3:	
What are the teachers' perceptions of the teaching/learning strategies they have successfully utilized to increase student efficacy and learning at Hill Top Government Primary School?	
Codes	**Sub-themes**
Innovative teaching Mentors Child-centered learning Individual tutoring Peer groups Leadership roles Authentic assessment Constructivism Multiple Intelligences Individual teaching Setting goals Pupil validation Rewards	**Teaching methods**

Extra-curricular activities Sports	
Teacher-pupil communication Teacher-parent relationships	**Forging relationships**
Teacher's sacrifices Beyond the call of duty Teacher's example	**Making sacrifices**

Sub-question 4:
   What are the policies and procedures teachers perceive as being necessary to improve the teaching/learning processes at the school?

Codes	Sub-themes
PTA involvement Parental support Parent-teacher relationships	**Home-school relationships**
Staff cooperation Smaller classes Screening Resource monitoring "Fewer fund raisers" Wasting teaching time Teachers dressing inappropriately	**School policies**
Necessary resources Resource personnel Ministry commendation "Behavioural specialists" Police assistance	**Interagency communication**

APPENDIX X

Main themes with subthemes

Table 5
Main themes and first level subthemes

TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF SUCCESS • Identifying successful students	CRITICAL PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES • Teaching methods
FACILITATING STUDENT SUCCESS • Student attitude • Creating amiable relationships • Positive conditions	BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY • Forging relationships • Making sacrifices
CONTEXTUAL HURDLES • Mainstream culture • Contextual deterrents • Student attitude • Impediments to teaching • Personal concerns	COLLABORATION • Home-school relationships • Interagency communication
TEACHER RESILIENCE • Teacher attitudes • Teacher determination	POLICIES • School policies • Ministry