

THE EDUCATION OF BOYS: EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL LEADERS
IN CENTRAL JAMAICA

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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May 2020

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ABSTRACT

Education is widely regarded as the engine of personal development and is fundamental in shaping the social trajectory of the society. Conversations about the response of boys to education over recent decades have highlighted worrying concerns. Persistent low achievement of boys in school appears to be concurrent with negative social behaviors of under-educated young men in the society. It is recognized that improvement in boys' development, performance and educational outcomes at the school level has the potential to contribute to healthy engagement by boys in their community and nation.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the experiences of school leaders in facilitating the education of boys and to analyze those experiences to address the problems of boys' achievement. The study also sought to understand the dimension of leadership efficacy relative to the education of boys in Jamaica. The researcher examined the Attribution Theory to understand how beliefs about boys' education and the efficacy of school leaders may affect the ways boys behave and become motivated to achieve.

Although the Attribution Theory provides some guidelines about the causality of the degree of achievement among boys, this theoretical frame alone is insufficient in providing a full understanding of the range of experiences encountered by school leaders in facilitating boys' education.

Four fundamental question guided this study: (a) to what factors do school leaders attribute boys' achievement? (b) How do school leaders respond to key artifacts attributable to the education of boys in secondary schools in Central Jamaica? (c) What do school leaders do in response to those factors believed to attribute to boys' achievement? (d) How effective do school leaders think their responses are to factors attributable to boys' achievement?

Responses to these questions were provided by three categories of school leaders (Principal, Guidance Counsellor and the Head of Department for Languages) totaling twelve respondents across four schools, who responded to a structured one-on-one interview. The interviews were audio-taped, then transcribed and manually coded for thematic analysis and discussion.

The findings of the study points to the importance of supportive environments to boys' achievement. This includes providing home and school environments that are welcoming and supportive; display of understanding and appreciation by school leaders of sociological factors impacting boys; and the provision of mentorship and motivation by school leaders. With regard to key artifacts of boys' education, school leaders have rated teaching plans highly, and also point to significant gaps relating to curriculum relevance for boys. Additionally, the findings illustrate that the factors school leaders consider as most impactful on boys' education are the ones they have greatest control over (e.g., quality of teaching, curriculum structure and relevance). Finally, the findings also point to the notion that efficacy of school leaders in responding to factors attributable to boys' achievement is heavily skewed in favor of curriculum and instruction, and professional development support given to teachers.

Analysis of the findings reveals key implications for practice. First, there is the need to plan deliberately for boys: organize a dedicated resource pool; enhance practical programs and organize welfare and motivation support. Second, approaches to teaching must be explored, to include appropriate strategies for engaging boys; incorporate differentiated instruction and provide adequate co-curricular support that are attractive. Third, collaboration with other interest such as external stakeholders: Parent Teachers

Association, Alumni and the corporate sector helps to build structures to enhance boys' experiences at school. Fourth, giving attention to curriculum structure and relevance is regarded by school leaders as vital for the productive engagement of boys. Such attentiveness allows for improvement to curriculum implementation and monitoring; and improve quality of learning environment, aesthetically and psycho-socially.

Additionally, implications for research includes: (a) the exploration of a variety of modalities to generate best practices for engaging boys; (b) the conduct of case studies to determine connections between school leadership and the levels of educational achievement.

Key recommendations associated with the research questions include: having shared policy on the issue of boys' education; conduct action research to determine best pedagogical practices; strengthen communication with parents and external stakeholders; and contextualize the curriculum to ensure relevance to boys. Achievement of these through deliberate actions, will augur well for boys' educational development.

Unto Him who is the source of my Inspiration

Be All Glory, Honor and Praise.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This time marks the achievement of a significant milestone in my life. Indeed a new chapter has also commenced. As I reflect, it is with sincerity that I express gratitude and appreciation to the very outstanding individuals who have shared inspiring, listened intently and gave support selflessly as each leg of the journey was navigated.

To my mother Dorothy Smith, from whose sacrifices I benefitted, and on whose shoulders I stood to see more clearly, more extensively and with greater purpose. Your encouragement, even when you were not sure about the nature of the work I was doing; and your earnest prayer, proved to be the ‘wind beneath my wings,’ my strength when I felt weak, my motivation when I waned. I am truly grateful for your investment in me.

Members of my cohort have been invaluable sources of strength and fortitude on this journey. Alexander, Claudeth, Janett and Monica, the path for the journey became far more navigable and meaningful with you as fellow travelers. With you on the journey the load became lighter and more bearable through nudging, reminders and expressions of empathy. I express thanks to each of you.

The members of my Dissertation Committee have been tremendous. Through the expert guidance of Dr. James E. Davis, Dr. Michael W. Smith and Dr. Diana Wildermuth my perspectives have been enlarged. Collectively and individually you have challenged and guided me to produce my most significant work yet. The Committee’s dynamics provided me with the diversity of thought, insight, and direction needed during the dissertation proposal phase and continued to my final dissertation defense. My gratitude as well to Dr. Samuel Myers for his spirited input in the formative stages of the proposal development. He certainly helped to get me steadied on the path. I thank you all for taking the time to pilot and support me through and with the challenges inherent to the

study and those you thought were necessary inputs in completing my doctoral dissertation.

The pleasure is mine to also express sincere gratitude to all study participants who took time out, amidst very busy schedules to meet with me. Principals, Guidance Counsellors and Heads of Department (for Language Arts) in four schools were the sources of data on which this study took shape and concluded. Immense thanks also to Mr. Jay Marshall for technical support. Gratitude is an imperative.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	i
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
LIST OF TABLES	xii
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
Introduction	1
Background	2
School Leadership and the Performance of Boys	2
Perspectives on Boys' Education	5
Achievement of Boys in the Caribbean: Jamaica	11
Statement of the Problem	16
Purpose of the Study.....	18
Research Questions	18
Significance of the Study.....	19
Theoretical Lenses: An Overview	20
Summary	21
CHAPTER 2	23
REVIEW OF LITERATURE	23
Introduction	23
Theorizing Educational Leadership	24
The Leader as Relationship Builder: Motivation and Empowerment.....	25
Power, Influence and Leadership	26
Sources of Leader Influence.....	27
The importance of School Leadership	29
Attribution Theory and Leadership: Understanding Boys' Learning and Achievement.	31
Attribution and Motivation.....	35
Attribution Theory and the School Context.....	38
Implications of Attribution Theory for School Leaders and Teachers	40
Critical Influences of Boys' Achievement.....	41
Gender-related Influences	42
Influences of Gender Socialization.....	45

Economic Influences	47
Cultural Influences	48
Influence of Male Role Models	51
Gender Identity/Hyper-Masculinity Issues	53
School Leadership and Responses to Boys' Achievement	57
School Leadership and the Performance of Boys	59
Qualities of Successful School Leaders	60
Instructional Practices that can Enhance Boys' Achievement.....	62
Provision of Differentiated Learning Experiences	66
Self-Efficacy: Efficacy and Instructional Practice	68
Summary	71
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	73
Research Design.....	73
Rationale for Qualitative Design.....	74
Role of the Researcher.....	75
Participating Schools.....	77
Description of Schools	78
Data Collection.....	82
Selection of Interview Respondents	82
Data Analysis.....	84
Methods of Verification (validation strategies).....	87
Ethical Issues.....	90
Relation to Theory and Literature.....	91
Summary	92
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS	95
Overview and Introduction.....	95
Participants Profiles	96
Principal April.....	97
Counsellor Bohn.....	98
HOD Burnt.....	98
HOD Cameron	99
Principal Cox.....	99
Principal Day	100

Principal/Mrs. Lewin	100
HOD Malox	101
Counsellor O'ban.....	101
Counsellor Stair	102
Counsellor Weller.....	102
HOD Wills	102
Representative View of the Principal's Roles in the School.....	103
Glimpses of the HOD's Responsibilities	103
Overview of Guidance Counsellors' Responsibilities.....	104
Analytical Themes	105
Factors Attributed to Boys' Achievement levels.....	106
Introduction	106
Family Relations and Structure	107
Boys' Discipline in Attending to Educational Goals	111
Mentorship Support.....	116
Co-curricular/extra-curricular activities.....	121
Introduction	126
The Curriculum.....	126
Teaching Plans	131
Teacher Evaluation.....	136
Introduction	143
Feminization of Schools	144
Leaders' Response to Feminization	148
Ineffective Teaching.....	151
Curriculum Structure and Relevance	159
Popular Culture	165
Hyper-Masculinity.....	168
Economic Issues	174
Research question 4: How effective do school leaders think their responses are,.....	179
to factors attributable to boys' achievement levels?	179
Making School Count in Social Development	180
Forging Stakeholder Collaboration	187
Making School Count in Social Development	190

School Experiences as Lessons for School Leaders	197
Conclusion.....	202
Summary Reflections on School Leaders’ Views: Similarities and Differences	204
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	207
Lenses on Findings	208
Supportive Environment and Boys’ Achievement	209
Key Artifacts of Boys’ Education	212
Are School Leaders Making a Difference in the Education of Boys?	214
School Leaders Reconcile Change Efforts with Boys’ Needs	216
The Efficacy of School Leaders in responding to Factors.....	219
Attributable to Boys’ Achievement Levels.....	219
Study Limitations	221
Implications and Recommendations for Practice	223
Plan Deliberately for Boys.....	223
Explore Approaches to Teaching	226
Professional Development for School Leaders	229
Collaboration with other Interests	231
Attentiveness to Curriculum Structure and Relevance.....	233
Implication for Research	236
REFERENCES	239
APPENDIX A:.....	246
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	247
APPENDIX B	249
RESPONDENTS’ CONSENT LETTER	249
APPENDIX C	251
RESPONDENTS' FOLLOW-UP LETTER	251
APPENDIX D:.....	253
TEACHER APPRAISAL.....	253
APPENDIX E:	260
SAMPLE Teacher (Lesson) Plan	260
APPENDIX F:	268
IRB APPROVAL.....	268

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 2.1: Example of criteria in making attributions	35
Table 4.1: Participants’ designations and alignments.....	97
Table 4.2: Respondents’ ranking of artifacts	126
Table 4.3 Respondents’ Ratings as Per Effectiveness of Influences on Boys’ Education	144

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

Educating boys in the developing social and cultural context of Jamaica has generated much discourse, as the society examines emerging challenges of an under-educated male population. The dichotomy of the educated versus the uneducated men which is produced, has encouraged the examination of possible sources of influence. Such influences borne out in research by Figueroa (2004), Barker (2006), Miller (2010) and others, have included the level of response to educational opportunities by young men; the quality of educational provisions by the state; the processes of educating boys and the perceived relevance of the education in the Jamaican context. According to Figueroa (2004), the idea of the marginalization of men in the society is also perceived to be closely linked to the educational under-achievement of boys, from as early as the primary to the secondary level of the education system. This under-achievement is determined on the basis of boys' response to the education standards for all children at specific stages of the education system. In other words, age and grade level criteria are the primary platforms for such determination. Cobbett and Younger (2012) suggest standards of literacy, numeracy, and other knowledge and skills prescribed in the school curricula are to be key bench marks against which performance is to be compared and assessed.

Background

The question of how boys are educated in Jamaica, must be carefully elucidated in light of their much bemoaned underachievement in this context. School outcomes, and the education and performance of boys in particular, do not occur in a vacuum. Jamaican secondary schools are typically managed by tiered leadership structure that is responsible for their day to day operations. These learning centers are characteristically different from one another in general school ethos and performance levels, but typically are governed by the same government policy directives and follow the same curricular. Principals, vice principals, guidance counsellors, deans of discipline and senior teachers (heads of academic departments) provides front line leadership in schools, aided by an appointed Board of Directors which gives policy support. Size of school and demographic challenges are influences determining whether the principal is supported by one or two vice principals, guidance counsellors and deans of discipline in the leadership hierarchy (Ezenne, 2008).

School Leadership and the Performance of Boys

The 2013 National Education Inspectorate Report of Jamaica (Ministry of Education), underscores the view that in all effective schools, the principal exemplifies, and consistently models the characteristics of instructional effectiveness. Research has shown that a key factor in school performance, and by extension, the achievement of boys, is closely related to the quality of management exercised and experienced. Campbell (2013) attributes the problem of boys' underachievement to the issue of failing schools. According to Campbell the label 'failing school', though vehemently resisted by

some, is befitting, since they are unable to produce pupils with high levels of literacy and numeracy, which is a must if we are to find creative means of overcoming the country's economic issues. The problem of failing schools, he suggested, is inextricably linked to poor leadership and management of those schools so affected. Sergiovianni (1980) notes that where school leadership is effective, school-based management displays a good mix of conceptual, human and technical skills. That is, leaders in schools ought to bring qualities of vision, intensity and creativity that complement their good management practices. Sergiovianni's position is underscored by findings of the 2015 National Education Inspectorate (NEI) report for Jamaica (Dwyer, 2015). The report notes that in all effective schools, it has been observed that the principal is the respected "leader of leaders." In such contexts, the principal exemplifies and consistently models the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the school's instructional programs.

Research conducted on boys' academic achievement in Jamaica (Evans, 1999; Miller, 2000; Perry, 2000; and Figueroa, 2004) has provided varying explanations for the observed lower levels of performance of boys. From these researches, it has been opined that boys' underachievement is attributable to factors arising from two spheres of influence: the level of school connectedness that boys feel towards their school, and the cultural/sex-role socialization paradigm that molds boys' social development (Bailey, 2009; Blum, 2005). The context of boys' formal education in Jamaica is dominated by co-educational school settings in which boys and girls take classes together at all grade levels. In a few instances, secondary school leaders have encouraged the separation of boys and girls at certain grade levels and for pre-specified subjects. Similar attempts at

this at the primary level has been met with vigorous resistance by parents, though isolated experiences have indicated incremental benefits to boys without any negative impact on girls. Of the one hundred and sixty four (164) public secondary schools in Jamaica (Livingston, 2016), twenty one (21) represent single sex population (boys or girls); four percent of the 164 being for boys only. Among single sex schools, thirty three percent are for boys and sixty seven percent attended by girls only. These represent some of the oldest schools in Jamaica, established at a time when the socio-cultural issues were very different from those now dominated by the repulsive homophobic elements which are largely opposed to the growth in numbers of single sex schools. These single sex schools, have, by their sustained record of high performance, continued to be among the top choices for school places by parents for children entering the secondary level of education.

In 2017, the top one hundred (100) schools were ranked on the basis of the grade 11 cohort of students attaining five (5) or more passes, including mathematics and or English language. Among the top twenty five (25) schools, were 13 of the 14 girls schools (all girls schools were in the top thirty positions), while only three (3) boys schools made the top 25 positions. Notably, among the top ten (10) performing schools were seven (7) girls schools accompanied by three coeducational ones in the second, ninth and tenth positions. Boys' schools were distributed from the fifteenth to forty fifth position.

Beyond the aforementioned contextual elements, perusal of the literature on boys' education has not revealed that significant work has been done in relating school leadership and the education of boys. To address this, the primary dimensions of this

study includes: the efficacy of school leadership in treating with boys education; the structure and system of support targeting the education of boys by school leaders; the success, challenges and opportunities school leaders experience as influenced by school demographics, policy and the socio-cultural dimensions of the communities in which the schools are located. Whilst it is the case that boys in Jamaica are under-achieving and are under-representing in the education system, it is important to point out that not all boys are under-achieving neither are all girls achieving. This must be borne in mind. Hence when the assertion is made that boys are not achieving, we are not referring to all boys. Boys who are from particular home backgrounds, especially those with both parents and with family members who are from the professional classes (nurses, etc.) are boys that are for the most part doing very well.

Perspectives on Boys' Education

Undoubtedly, there is a notable difference between the learning styles of boys to those of girls, and one cannot help but wonder if school leaders are doing everything in their power to identify the varying education needs of boys and addressing these needs in a wholesome and timely manner. In fact many schools lack basic resources and as such there appears to be mediocrity in the way boys are facilitated in the learning process. Teachers in planning their lessons should always consider the differences between males and females particularly in terms of learning preferences and approaches, and plan accordingly. In fact Reynolds (2010) opined that it is of great importance to be aware of the difference that is obvious in the learning styles of boys and girls as this can positively impact their achievement at school. This writer is of the view that even before birth there is a disparity in the functioning and arrangement of the male and female brain. Such

views have resonated with, and echoed by writers and opinion leaders including Smith and Wilhelm (2002), who suggests that schools will be more successful if they know students well enough to recognize ‘identity markers,’ passion and interest that distinguish them. Of note also, is the recognition that these views are characterized by the common concern of the need to acknowledge differences in boys, relative to learning, irrespective of where in the world one uses as a reference point.

Throughout the nations of the global north and other cultural and geographic contexts, including the Caribbean, contemporary educational policy, work with the assumption that the feminist project (that is the push for feminism) has been completed, and, that boys are the new disadvantaged in schooling (Yates, 2000). With this “turn” towards boys as the new disadvantaged, there is a tendency not to disaggregate the performance data. However, it is believed that there is overwhelming evidence that middle-class boys are still doing well in school and certainly still doing very well after graduation from university into the labor markets and career opportunities, and that it is boys from poor families who are the most disadvantaged in education. Johannesson, Lingard and Mills (2009) project the view that while it has always been the case that boys have suffered from elements of marginalization in society, and the situation has worsened by changes in labor markets; the complexifying of transitions to jobs, increased school retention and credentialism and the implementation of neo- liberal competitive and individualistic educational reforms. Consequently, it is essential to develop education systems which are responsive to the needs of boys and equip them with relevant skills and knowledge for their futures. This would ensure that meaningful education is being provided to help boys (students) to become responsible and productive citizens. The

Commonwealth Education Hub (2016) concludes from discussion that education policies should be holistic, to address the issues related to boys' education using a multi-sectoral policy approach; integrating broader socioeconomic policies and development strategies to this end. The formulation of education policy should not be the sole responsibility of the ministry/relevant authority responsible for education. A collaborative, multi-sectoral approach is needed which includes all relevant ministries/authorities to promote coherence across policies, including economic, labor, gender rights and finance policies. This makes a lot of sense when one considers the dimensions of human growth and development spanning the social, emotional, and economic and health factors, from conception to adolescence and beyond.

From the Australian experience of treating with boys' education, a number of initiatives are worthy of perusal. Johannesson, Lingard, and Mills (2009) report that in 2002, a House of Representatives Inquiry into boys' education produced a significant text that is currently having a major impact upon the boys' debate in Australian schooling. The text, *Boys: Getting it Right*, has been heavily influenced by the boys' lobby. It has been responsible for justifying a review of Gender Equity: A Framework to make it more inclusive of boys and of setting in train federally funded projects to improve the quality of education for boys in Australian schools. The initiative included, the boys' Education Lighthouse Schools (BELS) program and success for boys' projects. Alongside the review of *Gender Equity: A Framework* and the introduction of *Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Program* there have been concerted attempts to attract more men into teaching. Mills, Martino and Lingard (2007), document the BELS project as the Australian Government's response to *Boys: Getting it right* as expressed by the then

federal Minister for Education, Brendan Nelson: “I initiated the *Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools Program* in direct response to both the report and the concerns of parents.” Their documentation was used to produce *Meeting the Challenge: Guiding principles for success from the Boys’ Education Lighthouse Program* (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2003a).

The ‘Meeting the Challenge’(2003) report provides schools with a number of principles for implementing effective strategies for improving boys’ education as expressed by then federal Minister, Brendan Nelson: “Where masculinity was once seen as a virtue, it is now seen as an obstacle to be overcome,” according to publication by the Department of Education, Science and Training, (2003a, p.3). This approach typifies the kind of collaborative, multi-sectoral and holistic strategy to which the commonwealth education hub alludes and one worthy of being adopted by those who shape education policies in the Jamaican and wider Caribbean contexts. This statement does much to lament the loss of traditional masculinity’s status that has played out in boys becoming lost, uncertain about how to behave, and disengaged from schooling. A situation reflective of what the Jamaican school community is grappling with, more particularly as it relates to guiding boys.

In Jamaica, the Ministry of Education through the Jamaica Teaching Council (JTC) is spearheading an effort captioned, *advancing the learning outcomes of boys*. This initiative seeks to address a number of important components:

- Gender Sensitive Educational Environment

This program is designed to aid teachers to plan and conduct lessons that engage the boys in the learning process – a sensitivity which speaks to being responsive to the differences in learning styles of boys and girls, and employing a variety of approaches that will motivate learning for all. Most boys love to be actively involved in the lessons and teachers will need a repertoire of teaching approaches that will engage boys in the learning process. Accordingly, there is strong advocacy for the organization of the school's programs to focus particularly on technical and vocational aspects that should respond to the learning and development needs of boys.

- ICT Supported Instruction

The identification and selection of appropriate technology tools that link to instructional strategies in the teaching and learning process can be accomplished with ICT Supported Instruction. A teacher can use ICT to advance students' learning through the use of games, exciting videos and other technology generated strategies. Students can design and construct on computers and apply technology to develop higher-order skills and creativity in the learning environment.

- Remediation to Enable Learning

Before moving on to a new topic, the teacher assesses the status of the students' background knowledge, determine the critical knowledge gaps and fill them. The time taken to do this exercise is regained as less re-teaching is necessary. Sometimes the teacher may need to create groups and exercises to drill and build understanding in different areas as the gaps may vary from student to student. This is particularly

important in mathematics, language, science and geography. It is also critical in the technical and vocational trades.

- Behavior Management

Managing boys' behavior is essential for improving the educational outcomes of boys. Contrary to popular thinking, boys like order. Rules must be shared consensus and they must know and understand why they are necessary. They must also be agreed sanctions and appropriate enforcement. They also need a platform for discussion of issues and for appeal and fair treatment, (Jamaica Teaching Council, 2013). While there are laudable initiatives by the JTC, there has to be greater recognition of the wider cultural influences, which will have stymied efforts, if these are only localized in schools without the public's engagement and buy-in.

Doyley, a teacher at a Jamaican high school, and associated with the JTC's thrust to address boys' underachievement on the Island, share her story of facilitating boys. She notes that being a form teacher of a class dominated by mostly young men, has been a challenging but rather educational experience. She emphasized that not only did she assume the role of Form teacher, but as a mother, a friend, counsellor and confidant. With these roles understood and implemented, she was able to gather information, assess, evaluate and also come up with possible answers and or solutions that may aid in the thrust for resolving some of the issues that the young men faced on a daily basis. Based on observation and assessment, it became evident that some of these young men were not lost, but searching for something that would help them grow not just physically but emotionally as well. Their behavior is not always what it seems, but is a way to cry out for help. In order to help these young adults understand the essence of life itself, the

meaning of having a sound educational background, we have to first assess, diagnose and evaluate, then come up with solutions to these issues (Ministry of Education/JTC forum, 2015). It is this understanding that has fueled campaigns in diverse contexts to do more to understand school leadership experiences and in addressing the educational needs of boys in fulsome manner.

During the campaign to advance the learning outcomes of boys, (Doyley, Ministry of Education/JTC, 2013) suggested the following techniques/strategies to combat learning barriers as it relate to boys:

- Refer to masculine things such as machines, sports, vehicles during the lesson. Create a connection between these and the topic being taught;
- Allow boys to choose reading and writing topics frequently;
- Increase experiential and kinaesthetic learning opportunities;
- Allow them to choose topics that appeal to them;
- Work with male imagination by allowing them to direct learning;
- Engage in learning camps where they assume leadership roles.

While the afore-mentioned do not constitute an exhaustive list of engagement possibilities, school leaders who are purposeful in providing quality experiences for boys, should find them to be worthwhile measures for initiating success among them. Clearly, to address the foregoing suggestion for improved engagement of boys, would require reconstruction of the organizational dynamics played out in co-educational school settings in particular.

Achievement of Boys in the Caribbean: Jamaica

Qualitative research suggests that masculinity plays a significant role in the increasing academic gap between girls and boys (McGeown et al. 2012). Through comparison interviews with boys enrolled in high schools in St. Vincent, the Grenadines,

Barbados and Jamaica, Evans (1999) and Parry (2000) found that males valorize school attainment through a contradictory process of “effortless achievement”. To gain and maintain masculine status among peers, they must position their school attainment as a result of innate capabilities, not effort—especially since studying has become associated with femininity. Of course, this renders actual academic achievement difficult, since factors such as hard work, discipline, effort and commitment are all highly consequential for achievement. Males’ adoption of the “effortless achievement” orientation corresponds with gendered stereotypes that males are naturally intellectually talented whereas girls must work hard to grasp school concepts (Epstein, 1998). Such stereotypes may be especially prevalent in school subjects that have become gender-typed, such that one gender is thought to be naturally predisposed to excelling or being interested in that subject: boys are thought to be inclined toward math and science while girls are thought to be inclined toward English and writing (Evans, 1999; Rivers and Barnett, 2013). Success in cross-gender typed subjects could undermine boys’ masculine status whereas excelling in same gender typed subjects such as mathematics could protect or even strengthen masculine status. Moreover, if success in specific school subjects or more general behaviors associated with academic success have become associated with femininity, then boys face a double bind: they can maintain masculine status by distancing themselves from feminized academic practices to the detriment of their school achievement or they may practice what some deem to be feminine-typed academic behaviors and strive to improve their academic performance at the expense of masculine status. Other research finds that not all practices of masculinity, however, lead to negative outcomes. In a study of 58 adolescent boys who were enrolled in their school’s gifted

program, Shepard and colleagues found that boys' endorsements of traditional masculine norms were positively associated with boys' perceived academic success (2011). Hence, some scholars have begun to differentiate between positive and negative masculine traits (Heyder & Kessels, 2013). Positive masculine behaviors include exhibiting leadership, rationality, and competitiveness while negative masculine behaviors include violence, disconnectedness, and devaluing the feminine. Thus some masculine practices may be detrimental to boys' academic performance while others may be advantageous. For which boys and in what contexts such practices are detrimental to academic performance is an open question.

Boys' achievement levels in literacy is a harsh reality in the Caribbean. Peters (n.d.) opined that the Caribbean was one of the regions where females had a higher literacy rate than males, and almost one third of the men in the Caribbean were illiterate compared to 19% of women. Boys are definitely at risk, and Miller (1994) who did extensive work in the Jamaican context, asserts that black boys especially, were originally labelled as the second sex in schools and also were viewed as late starters who attended school irregularly, dropped out earlier and performed at significantly lower levels than black girls. Miller further states that these boys did not place a high value on school and education because they believed that they can function without them. Boys should therefore receive constant encouragement and motivation to work harder in school and take their work seriously so as to reduce or eliminate poor academic achievement in literacy. Literacy is therefore a key target to be achieved if the educational fortunes of boys are going to be adequately addressed.

Chanda (2010) observes that girls' grades were improving and boys' grades were lagging behind in developed and developing commonwealth countries (as cited in Figueroa, 2010). In one Secondary school in Trinidad for example, Narine (2010) states that the issue of underachievement needed to be dealt with, and points to several classes in the school where girls were willing to read out loud while boys hid from classes and gave trouble to elude the dreaded activity of reading out loud in class (as cited by Figueroa, 2010). These and other experiences in the Caribbean schools have heightened the call for drastic actions to be taken in order to minimize the problem of boys' academic achievement levels. It clearly is a steep climb for school leaders, who must intentionally traverse the psychosocial realities of their school and community environments and address the cognitive issues of boys.

Some Caribbean countries have taken the lead in putting measures in place to address some of the issues of boys' education. In recent times Trinidad and Tobago has transformed twenty secondary schools into single-sex education institutions as a means of responding to a research which stipulated that boys and girls performed better when kept separately (Figueroa, 2010). Additionally, 'Advancing the Education of Boys Program' was launched in May 2013 that should be undertaken in four Caribbean countries. The purpose of this initiative was to conduct a study to identify various strategies that could be used to raise the performance of boys. These are all notable initiatives that are being done to drive the process of educational reform which should see improvement in boys' performance.

Like the other countries in the Caribbean, Jamaica is also faced with the issue of boys' academic underachievement in literacy. Parry (2000) postulates that in Jamaica,

the men took the lead in certain aspects of social life such as political participation, public leadership, and traditional prestigious professions. In the school setting however, girls were achieving more while the boys very often chose to discontinue their education. Undeniably, secondary school boys have not been maximizing their potential and a great number of them are settling for mediocre performances, especially in literacy.

Boys' low achievement in literacy at all levels is most definitely a problem within the Jamaican education sector. Reid (2012) posited that figures from Jamaica Literacy Survey in 2008 showed that females were at 6.5 percent and the males were at 10.6 percent. He further points to data which shows that girls were achieving more than boys in public all age schools; they outperformed boys in the Caribbean Secondary Education Examination; the boys sat less subjects, and their failure rate was more exorbitant than that of the females. Consequently, there was a 70:30 participation ratio of females in tertiary education in comparison to males. This statistical information no doubt, concretizes the fact that the levels of boys' academic achievement is a serious problem in the Jamaican education system. In her study of boys in Barbados, St. Vincent, the Grenadines, and Jamaica, Parry (2000) found that not only were boys underachieving at the secondary level of schooling, but they also seem to have a very rigid macho sense of masculinity that expresses itself in contempt for teachers, who are largely females. The situation in Jamaica was described as particularly grave. Parry (2000) also found an anti-academic male sex/gender identity existing among boys, which was not compatible with either diligent study or good grades. It is particularly worrying when boys become so caught up in identity issues that their values are compromised or inadequately clarified to the extent that they regard the pursuit of academic matters as feminine.

Amid the reports of Jamaican boys' underperformance in schools, teaching methodology is identified as the main reason by some commentators. However, this is a very narrow and shallow way of addressing the matter. In fact, there are many social factors that are affecting the academic performance of Jamaican boys that have absolutely nothing to do with how they are taught. They are exposed to the same teaching and learning environment as the girls, yet they are trailing in basically every aspect of academic life. Williams (2006) opines the belief that the key to academic excellence is focus and application. This, he notes, is where the girls have the edge over the boys. They are more focused, and they apply themselves better, for a myriad of reasons.

It is clear therefore, that culture influences the ways in which Jamaican boys (as do many from other Caribbean context) perceive literacy. Often, there are few desirable gender role models for boys to emulate. For generations boys have been urged toward independence, toughness and competitiveness. Often these culturally coded behaviors interfere with boys' literacy success. They can also distort perceptions of boys' abilities and willingness to develop literacy skills. This becomes increasingly more complicated when the culture of rap music (as is emulated from North America) and the dance hall genre of Jamaica, coins and produces slangs in such prolific manner as to cause domination of the literary interest of boys. Unfortunately, this has become the new norm in many communities and schools in Jamaica and the wider Americas.

Statement of the Problem

The underperformance of boys in Jamaican schools has been a topic of much discussion for many years and this worrying trend has persisted without the kind of concerted policy intervention to stop it. In pointing to this trend, Miller (2013)

highlighted the fact that men are getting left behind without the ability to fully take part in society and in achieving their full potential. This means the likely continuation of the range of antisocial activities that have become characteristic of disengaged men in the society. To this end school leadership is challenged to confront the reality of the underachievement of boys leaving schools. This is necessary in light of the low percentage (30 percent) of graduates leaving university being men, and as Miller (2013) further observed, the fact that over 70% of the violent crimes in Jamaica are committed by the age category, 16-29 years. Admittedly, boys and young men in Jamaica are underachieving; they are under representing in the education system of the country. It must be hastily pointed out however, that not all boys are underachieving neither are all girls achieving. It is important to always remember this in such an important discourse. So reference made in this study about boys not achieving, is not a reference to boys unblock. Boys from particular home and family settings where there are parents and other persons from the professional ilk of society, are for the most part doing very well. The problem is with the worrying high number of under-achievers.

Reversing this trajectory of Jamaica's young men will rely much on what happens in schools, including the specific roles of the leaders who are entrusted with the responsibility of directing the schools' affairs. There is currently a void in the research documenting school leaders' experiences in schools as a whole and their roles and contribution to the development of boys in the society. To this end the experiences of school leaders is worth documenting to create a repository of information that can help in the long-term resolution to what has grown into a threatening social issue.

Purpose of the Study

It is recognized that boys are failing more than girls at educational attainment efforts in Jamaica. For this reason, it is important to understand what the realities are for schools, particularly as it relates to school leadership. Understanding the nature and factors of boys' education in particular school contexts will provide insights for addressing existing and emerging problems. This research seeks to understand the experiences of school leaders in facilitating the education of boys and to analyze those experiences for answers to the problems of boys' achievement levels. The study also seeks to understand the dimension of leadership efficacy relative to the education of boys. Additionally, it intends to establish greater appreciation of the influence of school contextual factors and socio-cultural issues on facilitating boys in schools.

Research Questions

The nature of the topic reflects the intent to explore the school leadership experience relative to the education of boys as a high stake need/process. It is a deliberate search for understanding the leadership experience in facilitating boys, and to enhance their learning and educational experience generally. The study will be guided by the following four major research.

1. To what factors do school leaders attribute boys' achievement?
2. How do school leaders respond to key artefacts attributable to the education of boys in secondary schools in central Jamaica?
3. What do school leaders do in response to those factors believed to attribute to boys' achievement?

4. How effective do school leaders think their responses are, to factors attributable to boys' achievement?

Significance of the Study

This study has the potential for producing outcomes to guide school management and influence other stakeholders to develop appropriate school intervention strategies designed to strengthen the school instructional focus and improving the performance of boys. It is important that such action be taken in a concerted way to reflect continuous improvements that will more closely align the performance of boys to established educational criteria and assessment standards. Lessons from this study also has the potential to address the deeper socio-economic and socio-cultural implications, such as the over-representation of boys and young men in episodes of violence and criminal activities; low employability skills and unemployment. Clearly, persistent underachievement of boys has negative implications for the stability and health of families, and as Miller (2000) asserts, the creation of an under-class comprised predominantly of boys and young men, whose members engage in counter-productive and anti-social practices.

This relevance is underscored by the Universal Management Group baseline study (2013), Commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat, aimed at advancing the education of boys in Jamaica. It points to achieving the strategic objective of transforming selected schools, such that they provide safe and wholesome environments for teaching and learning. Key strategies identified for achieving this objective includes: the fostering of differentiated learning in order to identify possible effects on boys' responsiveness to teaching and engagement in classroom activity; professional

development for school leaders in order to build capacity of schools for improved student performance, with emphasis on boys (and girls who under-perform).

Theoretical Lenses: An Overview

Theories are formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena, and in many cases, used to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions. A growing and increasingly important trend in the social and behavioral sciences is to think about and attempt to understand specific research problems from an inter-disciplinary perspective. One way to do this is to engage cross-disciplinary theories or theories in other disciplines to understand phenomena. This perspective is applicable to appreciating how the experiences of school leaders and school leadership in general impacts the education of boys. The experiences of school leaders in the context of facilitating boys' education, presents many critical points of focus for engaging the social, emotional and physical dimensions of school life and educational development of the boy. This can be an effective and enlightening approach to be fully engaged in the research: *The Education of Boys: Experiences of Secondary School Leaders in Central Jamaica*. To this end, reflections from leadership, motivation and attribution theories are useful for producing fundamental insights into the phenomenon being explored in this study.

Leadership and motivational theories are varied in their primary focus, from the behavior, trait and attribution, to the situational theories. The behavior theories, with its strong emphasis on the behaviors with which a leader is engaged (rather than who the leader innately is), is closely aligned with the topic of this study. This is so as the behaviorist theory builds upon the premise that leadership is seen as a set of observable

actions and, as such, focuses upon the interactions between leaders and subordinates in organizational contexts, (Guthrie & Schuermann, 2010). This is reflective of the type of engagement expected of school leaders as they conduct leadership practices aimed at enhancing the education of students, particularly boys, in central Jamaica.

It is not surprising that behaviorism and motivation are some major contributors to efficacy in professional practice. Reflecting on Bandura's efficacy theory (1977), teachers' and school leaders' efficacy beliefs are influenced by four sources of information, including mastery experiences, physiological and emotional status, vicarious experiences, and social persuasions, (Chu, 2008). The construct of efficacy assumes that the perceptions of one's competency influence one's thoughts, feelings, motivation, and action (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Obidah & Teel, 2001). In the case of school leaders' experiences in facilitating boys' education, effectiveness can be seen as a reflection of the leaders' awareness of personal beliefs and attitudes, knowledge and skills for effective practice. Significantly, effective practice in the context of the school is largely based on behavioral change as reflected by students' cognitive, psychomotor and affective responses to curriculum instruction and leadership.

Summary

This study is concerned with understanding the experiences of school leaders in facilitating the education of boys in central Jamaica, with emphasis in the parish of Manchester. This is against the background of the seeming prevailing underachievement of boys in educational pursuits nationally. The chapter which immediately follows, provides a review of the literature relevant to the topic. It includes a synthesis of the behaviorist, motivational, attributional and leadership theories and their applications as

framework for fully exploring the phenomenon. A critical reflection of issues associated with boys learning is also given strong consideration in light of the severity of the need to have boys and men fully engaged in the society.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In consideration of the main purpose of the study being the experiences of secondary school leaders in educating boys, the review of the literature on leadership, particularly school leadership is paramount. It is also necessary to examine motivation and behavior and attribution as theoretical bases that under-girds this phenomenon. Such other relevant constructs as self-efficacy and self-identity are explored to better understand some probable linkages of school and classroom environment, instruction, the response of boys to formal education; and experiential lenses of school leaders. The first section introduces leadership as a guiding framework for the context within which boys' education takes place and where leaders exercise their mandate and build experience. The second section examines motivation and behavior; motivation being a significant driving force of human response to environmental stimuli. Furthermore, in examining motivation and behavior, care is taken to interweave conceptions of the roles of the leader to highlight how they may influence motivation and behavioral change. Apart from examining behavioral change due to motivation, this section also discuss sources of leader influence, with reference also to research findings. Finally, the researcher attempts to show how individuals may understand their behaviors, and how leaders could unpack personality complexes, and thus bring about motivational influences and change. Accordingly, the literature reviewed for presentation in this section is organized in accordance with selected topics and on appropriate theoretical framework for the study. The sub-headings that follow relate to some of the variables germane to the focus of the study.

Theorizing Educational Leadership

The earliest theories of education leadership focused on the innate attributes of individuals, and early studies dismissed the host of contextual and relational variables at play in leader-follower interactions. Based on these theories hereditary traits such as height, gender, appearance, and intelligence, were the means by which one rose to the rank of leader, (Guthrie & Schuermann, 2010).

Though the trait approach to leadership is still in current practice, most contemporary research focuses on job-related skills rather than personality traits of leaders as exemplified by the work of Bennis and Katz, Lunenburg and Ornstein (1995). Katz (1974) has identified the technical, conceptual, and human skills needed for effective leadership. Bennis (1982) includes skills such as the ability to (i) create and communicate a vision of what the organization should be; (ii) communicate with, and gain the support of multiple constituents; (iii) persist to the desired direction even under bad conditions; and (iv) create the appropriate culture and to obtain the desired results.

Another way of understanding leadership is to examine leaders through comparative behaviors, viz, effective and ineffective leaders, to see how effective leaders behave. This represents a fundamental shift from the trait approach to the behaviors they present, thus directing the focus from determining what effective leaders are, to understanding what effective leaders do. Lunenburg and Ornstein (1995) propose three focus questions to help with this understanding: In what way do leaders lead? How hard do leaders push their subordinates? How much do they listen and use their subordinates' ideas? It is important to quickly add however, that the dichotomy between the trait and behavioral approaches is not as sharp as one may be lead to believe. The suggestion is

that a leader's personal traits and characteristics is likely to influence his/her leadership behavior or style. Think for instance about an individual who feels satisfied and adequate about him/herself, whilst also relate comfortably with people. This individual will ordinarily adopt a people focused behavioral style. Contrastingly, a person who feels inferior in some ways and feels threatened by people may be strongly oriented towards a production-focused behavior style.

The Leader as Relationship Builder: Motivation and Empowerment

At any point in time, people have basic needs such as those for food, achievement, or monetary support to ensure survival. These needs are the source of an internal drive that motivates behavior towards fulfilling such felt needs. These are the hidden portfolio of things that the individual desires and will work to achieve, (Daft, 2005). To the extent that school leaders and others understand the needs of those they serve, they can design reward/motivational systems to reinforce students and school employees towards directing their energies and priorities for fulfilling responsibilities and attainment of goals.

School leaders can meet the higher motivational needs of students and staff in their institution by sharing power with them. They can decrease the emphases on policies and incentives designed to control subordinate behavior and instead embrace power sharing to achieve shared goals. Hollander and Hofferma (1990) project the view that leaders are shifting from efforts to control behavior through carrot-stick-approaches to providing constituents with the power, information and authority that enables them to find greater intrinsic value and satisfaction in their particular sphere of engagement. This assertion would not only relate to teachers and other employees of the school but also to

students, particularly boys who often need the motivation to become engaged and remain so at least for the duration of secondary schooling.

Research indicates that individuals have a need for self-efficacy, which is the capacity to produce results or outcomes, to feel they are effective, (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). I share the view of both Kanungo and Conger that leaders in schools, greatly benefit from the expanded capacity of both students and staff. This allows them to devote more attention to visioning and the big picture of the school. It also takes the pressure off leaders when teachers and students are able to show improved response based on their specific focus of engagement in the school.

Power, Influence and Leadership

Historically, power is viewed as the potential ability of one person to influence other persons to carry out orders (Dahl, 1957) or do something they otherwise would not have done (Astley & Pachdeva, 1984). Influence has been widely defined as the effect a person's action have on the attitudes, values, beliefs, or actions of others. Whilst it is easy to think of power and influence as belonging to the leader, in reality they result from the interaction of leaders and followers as situation dictate. Essentially, whatever the perceived approach to leadership, the most important point is the nature of the leadership and the manner in which the leader influences the behavior and actions of other people, example boys in a secondary school environment.

Being a dynamic construct, the leadership experience is impacted by a number of variables. McGregor (1987) identifies four such variables as: the characteristics of the leader; the attitudes, needs and other personal characteristics of the followers; the nature

of the organization, such as its purpose, its structure, the tasks it performs; and the social, economic and political environment. McGregor (1987) concludes that leadership is not a property of the individual, but a complex relationship of the aforementioned variables. Kouzes and Posner (2000) asserts further that credibility is the foundation of leadership: This assertion came on the credible foundations of extensive research in over 30 countries and response to the question of: what people look for and admire in a leader, in a person whose direction they would willingly follow. Respondents consistently replied that they want leaders who exemplify four qualities: honesty, forward-looking, inspiring and competent. They also expect their leader(s) to have integrity and trustworthiness, having a sense of direction, with enthusiasm and passion. Such traits are critical for display in school settings as those about which this study is concerned. Our boys in particular need as much model of moral rectitude and examples of positive inter-dependence that will foster self-development and identity formation. This is why the exercise of power, especially in providing direct leadership to young people must be embraced with purposefulness and high value. This underscores the fact that “the exercise of power is a social process which helps to explain how different people can influence the behavior of others.” (Mullins, 2005, p. 306).

Sources of Leader Influence

The five types of leader power presented by Daft (2005) sheds light on the diversity that exist in the demand for leadership: legitimate power, reward power, coercive power, expert power and referent power. Among these are important strands of messages that bears relevance to the “experiences of school leaders in charting boys’ education.” Reward power for example, stems from the authority to bestow rewards on

other people. Hence it is leaders who control resources and their distribution, and who by virtue of this can use rewards to influence subordinates' behavior. On the flip side of this, is power of a different nature: coercive power. This power to punish, is useful as a measure to exact and enforce compliance. Mullins (2005), cites referent power as being based on the subordinate's identification with the leader. The leader exercises influence because of perceived attractiveness, personal characteristics, reputation or charisma. Lunenburg and Ornstein (1995) suggests that expert power is closely related to a climate of trust, which is according to Mullins (2005) based on the subordinate's perception of the leader as someone who is competent and who has some special knowledge or expertise in a given area. Of special relevance though, is Lunenburg and Ornstein association of the leader's use of expert power to engender attitudinal conformity and internalized motivation on the part of the subordinates. This will therefore require less monitoring of groups within the educational institution by the leader, than does reward or coercive power. Lunenburg and Ornstein further note that 'a true leader is able to influence others and modify behavior via legitimate and referent power' p.121.

Referent power, like other forms, can be exercised with far-reaching impact in the leadership of schools. This is illustrated by the case of Lorraine Monroe, a former secondary school principal and documented by Daft (2005, pp.481-2). Monroe believes a leader has a responsibility to turn a workplace into a community by making sure people are nurtured, respected, and given an opportunity to make genuine, lasting contributions.

Research on the sources of leader influence, with particular reference to school organizations, found that in secondary schools in the United States, varying correlations exist as per students, teachers and leaders' relationships. Teachers reported greatest

satisfaction with their principal and school system when they perceive that the principal's power to influence emanated from their perceiving him/her as an expert. Conversely, teachers' perceptions of the principal's use of coercive power were associated with dissatisfaction with the principal and school. Moreover this same principal-teacher relationship was related to a perception of higher student satisfaction with the principal's use of expert power and lower student satisfaction with his/her use of coercive power, (Hornstein, 1968)

In general, concepts of leadership, as opined by Daft (2005), has evolved over time with the inclusion of research approaches such as: Great Man theories, trait theories, influence theories, behavior theories, contingency theories and relational theories. Elements of these approaches are applicable to the study of leadership, and are complimented by emerging perspectives which focus primarily on how leaders create change by providing vision and direction as well as the culture and values that help attain it. Today, the concept of the leader as hero is giving way to that of humble and servant-centric leader, who develops others and shares credit for accomplishments. The challenge for school leaders and others then, is to evolve to a new mindset that relies on human skills, integrity and teamwork, (Daft, 2005).

The importance of School Leadership

The question of the importance of school leadership is a daring one. This however does not require deep pondering when one considers that "leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (Louis, Wahlstrom, Leithwood & Anderson, 2004, p. 65). Guthrie and Schuermann (2010) notes: "Quality leadership is an essential component of successful

schools” p.240. Ezenne (2008) reports that school leaders have tremendous influence in shaping a school’s vision and mission. The writer further state that “the principal as the leader in the school organization, sets clear and high achievement goals, maintains an orderly environment, encourages teachers to monitor students’ progress and is actively immersed in the school’s day –to- day activities” p.5. Invariably, school leaders must be able to get others to work toward a shared vision; and to work with teachers to accomplish the instructional goals of the school or to modify the goals and plans to maximize outcomes.

Accordingly, the principal and other school leaders influence student outcomes directly or indirectly by offering direct instruction, or by facilitating instructional leadership, organizational management, as well as ensuring a productive school ethos through quality internal and external relations. These aside, student outcomes are critical to school success. As such critical variables impacting student achievement: quality of instruction provided by the teachers and quality of leadership provided in the school must be given priority focus. According to Lunenburg and Ornstein (1991), “when principals are surveyed, they often consider curriculum and instruction aspects of the job as one of the top priority work areas and that they need to spend more time on the job related to these two technical areas of development” p.339. The foregoing therefore underscores the point opined by Grissom and Loeb (2011), that where school leaders effectively combine their energy into becoming strong instructional leaders while enhancing their management capability, as well as embrace the psycho-social aspects of their job, they would have created a balanced formula for school success.

Attribution Theory and Leadership: Understanding Boys' Learning and Achievement.

Attribution theory emerged partly from the need for a more cognitive approach to the theory of motivation, (Moyo, 1994). This theory starts from the premise that people try to bring order into their lives by developing personal, implicit theories about why things happen the way they do in both theirs' and the life of others. Heider (1958), one of the first to describe the causal attribution process that people use to explain events that occurs in their lives, asserts that we are all 'naive psychologists' with the innate desire to understand the causes of our behavior and their outcomes. Fiska and Taylor (1984) adds that the theory developed by Weiner (1979) served to help people look at the way their beliefs may affect the way they behave and so become motivated. Accordingly, when learners become successful at certain points in their lives and fail at others, they try to think back and see their experiences and then try to understand the causes of their success or failure. In reflecting and situating possible cause(s) of their success, it becomes easier for them to control the situations that might be impediments, and keep on working with the hope of becoming successful repeatedly. Similarly, the process of ascribing a reason for failure can guide a person in a manner to avoid failing again. It is clear therefore that one's belief system is an important factor in making attributions – the reasoning process characteristic of the theory (Heider, 1958; Kelley 1967, 1972). Stipek (2002), makes the point that attribution is people's behavior which is determined by their thinking and interpretations; an assumption of cognitive theory that is believed to explain individuals' active response to their environment. Attribution theory is, therefore, a strong exemplification of cognitive factors in the processes of leading (school leadership), learning and achievement. Kelly (1967) expressed the view that attribution theory

concerns the process by which an individual perceives events, as being caused by a particular part of a relatively stable environment. As a result, attribution is the perception that people form about the causality behind the degree of success of their actions in situations when the causes may not be directly observable. These attributions according to David (2007), help to shape our emotional and behavioral responses to situations. Generally, in cultures like Jamaica's, success and failure are attributed to four factors: natural ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck (Frieze, 1976). These four attributions exist on three continuums: locus, stability, and controllability (Weiner, 1979).

Weiner (1986) classifies the locus of causality as being internal to external. This locus takes into consideration, feelings of self-esteem, shame or guilt, which are based on one's perception of the location (internal, external) of the cause. If we attribute success or failure to internal locus, we are the originators of what happens rather than being at the mercies of external forces. The dimension of stability takes into consideration that expectation for the future are based on whether the cause is perceived as stable (example: ability, task difficulty) or subject to change (effort, luck). Controllability, the third aspect of causality, is related to an individual's feeling of potency to affect the outcome by controlling the cause, as with effort (controllable) and ability, luck and task difficulty (non-controllable). According to Hunter and Barker (1987), the only causal attribution under our control is effort. Research on high achievers across various subjects, reveals that successful people exert a lot of effort (Gardner 1983; Bloom 1985). Consequently, if students are to succeed, they must believe that when they expend effort, they will experience success. However, if students believe that success or failure is the result of ability, task difficulty or luck, then there is no point in putting forth a lot of effort. It is

these three causal dimensions (locus, stability and controllability) that influence individuals to choose to continue doing a task and which cause persons to judge themselves when encountering tasks. Hence, if we attribute behavior to an internal locus of causality we assume that outcomes resulted from something within the individual; if the outcome is attributed to an external locus of causality, it is viewed as caused by something outside the individual. Heider (1958) first hypothesized that the result of an action was dependent upon two conditions: (a) factors within the person (internal) and (b) factors within the environment (external). Based on this conceptualization by Heider (1958), Rotter (1966) coined the construct internal-external locus of control from which Weiner (1986) modelled locus of causality and interpretation of behavior as is noted above. Attributions are also classified in terms of stability, from stable to unstable. This dimension reflects the degree of constancy which is found in a given cause. It presumes that stable factors such as ability/intelligence are more predictive of future performance than unstable attributions such as effort (Weiner, 1986). If boys' attributes lack of intelligence to their failure or underachievement, they are more likely to believe that they cannot improve. Therefore, whether the students view their failure as either stable or unstable will likely affect future expectations.

The third dimension, causal controllability (Weiner, 1979) was included to add greater distinction to causes identified as internal or external and stable or unstable, and is defined as how much control an individual has over a cause. Strategy and effort would be seen as controllable because the individual can control how much effort is exerted for a given task, and can decide on the strategy to use. Ability is not controllable because it is believed to be genetically inherited (Weiner, 1986). Weiner went on to suggest that

attribution is more likely to occur when a learner comes upon a situation that is unexpected. As well, learners are more likely to find causes for an event that is important to them. The bothersome question, having examined the tenets of the attribution theory is: are there stable bases on which to make attributions?

According to Weiner's (1977) claim, learners' attributions come from various factors. These include: the learners' past experiences; the feedback they get from teachers; and when they observe the performance of their fellow learners. Weiner (1986) notes that learners' attribution could also arise from perceptions they give to themselves. Learners with high self-confidence attributes their success to effort or ability rather than luck (Ames & Ames, 1984). Regardless of the accuracy of these attributions, they will influence learners' motivation, achievement, and even emotions (Graham, 1994). This clip from Smith and Wilhelm (2002) supports the foregoing points well. Jigg (a male student) advised teachers, "If you want me to learn from you, then be friendly, relate to me as a person, help me," (p.100). "Echoing the theme of needing assistance, another boy, Marcel, said, it is the teacher's responsibility to help him. Though he resists school, he said he would learn from a thinking, committed, and action-oriented teacher." (p.100)

In making attributions and determining whether an internal or external attribution is chosen, Kelly (1973), cited by Mullins (2005), suggests three basic criteria for guidance: distinctiveness, consensus and consistency. With regard to distinctiveness, one would want to know how different a behavior or action was in this particular task or situation compared with behavior or action in other task or situation. In terms of consensus, it would be important to know if the behavior or action is different from, or in keeping with, that displayed by most other people in the same situation. Establishing

consistency is based on whether a behavior or action is associated with an enduring personality or motivational characteristic over time, or an unusual one-off situation caused by external factors. Kelly (1973) hypothesized that people attribute behavior to internal forces or personal factors when they perceive low distinctiveness, low consensus and high consistency. Conversely, behavior is attributed to external forces or environmental factors when people perceived high distinctiveness, high consensus, and low consistency.

Table 2.1: Example of criteria in making attributions
(Student who fails a mid-sessional examination in a particular subject)

	Distinctiveness	Consensus	Consistency
Internal attribution	Student fails all Mid-sessional Examinations	Student is the only one to fail	Student also fails final examination
External attribution	Student gains high <i>marks on other mid-</i> sessional examination	All students in the <i>class get low</i> marks	Student obtains <i>a good mark in</i> final examination

(Source: Adapted from Mitchell, Terence R., *People in organization*, Second edition, McGraw-Hill (1982) p. 104)

Attribution and Motivation

Motivation stands as one of the most influential factors of learner achievement and has become a vital area of research in educational psychology. Several studies have indicated the positive correlation between motivation and achievement (Haertal & Walberg, 1993, Murphy & Alexander, 2005). As with learner achievement, motivation is identified as positively correlated to success in leadership and has in fact been regarded as a vital individual attribute of a leader (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacob and Fleishman, 2000). Among the many ways that motivation affects leadership, Mumford, et al (2000) suggest

three significant aspects. First, leaders must be willing to tackle complex tasks, in that, for leadership to occur, a person must want to lead. Second, leaders must be willing to express dominance, that is, to exert their influence. In influencing others, the leader must take on the responsibility of dominance because the influence component of leadership is inextricably bound to dominance. Third, leaders must be committed to the social good of the organization, that is, the willingness of the leader to take on the responsibility of trying to advance the overall human good and value of the organization. Taken together, these three aspects of motivation (willingness, dominance, and social good) are important attributes for the school leader and school leadership, which are themselves critical for learner motivation and achievement.

Nevertheless, simply recognizing the importance of school leadership and learner motivation, and how motivation influence learners' actions and leadership response, does not prescribe a strategy for school achievement, and particularly, achievement by boys. A clearer and deeper understanding of motivation demands knowledge of the factors that facilitate motivation to lead, learn and achieve. Consequently, some educators have investigated why some learners are more interested than others to learn, and how learners gain this interest to perform and carry out an activity to a successful outcome. It is perhaps because of this, why in responding to the literacy interest expressed by four respondents in their work: "Reading Don't Fix No Chevys," Smith and Wilhelm (2002) wrote:

"The passion evidenced by these four young men regarding many aspects of their literate lives beyond school, and many of their out-of-school activities lay in stark contrast to the much less passionate way they engaged in school in general and school – sanctioned

literacy in particular. If that passion could be tapped, school would be revolutionized. But to tap the passion, we must understand its source.” Pg. 94

Understanding source is therefore critical to appreciating how learning is embedded, especially among boys and for situating and valuing experiences, as in the case of school leaders. What is already generally known from the perspectives of social cognitive theory (Bandura, Vygotsky & others), is that, how learners become interested and motivated to respond positively to assigned tasks, is dependent on several factors. These include, but not limited to: the value they place on the task; the nature of the task; how the task relates to learner’s goal and the learning experience to which the learner was exposed. It is appropriate then, to reflect on the ideals of the attribution theory to understand how this might help unpack the complex phenomenon of underachievement among boys and help shed light on leaders’ motivation in the course of navigating the issues of boys’ learning. Even though there are possible connections between school leadership and the level of boys’ educational achievement, studies examining the possible relationship between both have not yet been done, neither has there been found documentation of school leaders experience in facilitating boys’ education in Jamaica. Different, but related studies in other context by Zhang and Lu (2002) found that both attributional feedback and self-efficacy influence learners’ motivation. These results were in line with Bandura’s (1999) hypothesis that self-efficacy is mediated by attribution and that attribution plays a major role by influencing people’s self-efficacy; that is, person’s belief in how well he or she can accomplish a task.

Attribution Theory and the School Context

When desirable and undesirable outcomes (such as success and failure) are experienced, the cause can be attributed to something specific which in turn can lead to increased or decreased motivational response. Having experienced a particular outcome, persons typically turn to attributions to help them understand what caused the event so that if the outcome was desirable they can do their best to experience it repeatedly (that is, the event becomes positively reinforced). Alternately, if the event is unpleasant or undesirable they can try to avoid the behavior that caused it, (David, 2007). Piaget's behaviorism, including positive and negative enforcements are well established psychological constructs which are used in schools to steer students from undesirable pathways.

School leaders with an internal control orientation towards leadership are more likely to believe that they can influence their level of performance through their own traits (abilities, skills or efforts). Studies point to the idea that leaders with an internal control orientation are generally more satisfied with their job and are more satisfied with a participatory style of leadership and management, than those with an external control orientation, (Kelly, 1973). Amidst these perspectives learned helplessness can arise in schools and classrooms. School policies, the behavior of school leaders and individual teachers can all lead to students feeling that success is unobtainable, especially if effort is not appropriately recognized. Such behaviors create a feeling that nothing the student does will ever lead to success and motivation, hence engagement decreases, (David, 2007). Smith and Wilhelm (2002) found that "when teachers or other adults did express interest in students and their lives, the students responded with tremendous positive emotion. The boys in the rural public school, for example, loved their principal, as

Timmy said, “Because he knows your name and what you do; and he is happy for you if you do something good. He knows about it and he mentions it,” reports Smith and Wilhelm (2002, p. 100).

Many researchers studied the relationship between learners’ attribution and achievement motivation in the areas of sports, mathematics and language learning. Powers, Choroszy, Cool and Douglas (1986) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between attribution and achievement. The result of the research indicates that achievement was positively correlated with attribution of success to effort and negatively related with attributions of failure to lack of effort. Bempechat, Ginsburg, Nakkula and Wu (1996) also conducted research to see the relationship between mathematics achievement and attributions. The result of the study showed that a high achievement was correlated with attribution of success to ability. A study which was conducted by Pishghadam and Mordaressi (2008) to observe the relationship between attributions and athletics achievement, indicated that athletes made stable attributions for negative outcomes and those athletes who made unstable attributions for positive events have poorer achievement. Further to this, Pishghadam and Mordaressi (2008) designed a questionnaire of “Attribution Theory for Foreign Language Learners” comprising four subscales of emotions, self-image, intrinsic motivation, and language policy. The questionnaire which was then employed to obtain responses from learners at a Middle Eastern University, yielded findings that indicate learners attributed success and failure more-so to intrinsic motivation than language policy. Previously, Kun and Liming (2007) investigated the role of achievement attributions on self-regulated language learning behaviors. It was observed that learners who attributed success to internal factors such as

ability or effort, demonstrated more self-regulated language learning behaviors. These are only a few of the studies giving a glimpse of the relationship between attributions and achievement in a variety of areas. It would be worthwhile understanding what boys' achievement/underachievement is attributed to, and the experiences of school leaders in responding to the respective issues.

Implications of Attribution Theory for School Leaders and Teachers

The theory of attribution has meaning for the ways, school leaders and teachers (who are also leaders in the classroom and the school), respond to their students' performance. As it relates to locus of control for example, it is necessary that teachers diagnose where students are at in their learning and cognitive processing ability. This way, they can determine what level of scaffolding will be necessary and what would be impossible for the level of effort the students have displayed capability for, at a given stage in academic development of the individual. Hence, where teachers' diagnoses are accurate and followed by effective teaching, students' efforts should yield success and ignite in them, the idea that the locus of causality and therefore success, lies within themselves. It follows that school leaders' and teachers' approval or disapproval of students' efforts can influence their attribution of success, (Nicholls, 1978). Similarly, students need stability. That is coming to the stage of belief in their ability to be successful, and translating this knowledge to understanding that they control the effort necessary to achieve success.

Regarding the controllability continuum, Hunter and Barker (1987) projects the view that the way a teacher responds to a student's success or failure can signal the

teacher's belief regarding whether the student is in control of success or failure.

Teachers' responses, whether verbal or non-verbal, can convey unintended messages to students that they are not in control. The teacher's expression of annoyance for example, can say to a student that, though he has the ability to be successful, he has performed below expectation. Similarly, the expression of sympathy and understanding can communicate that no matter how much effort a student expended, he/she could not have successfully completed a given task. Of course this assertion would not consider special needs children with cognitive challenges. What is bothersome, is the tendency of some students at the secondary level to take a devaluing stance regarding effort. In an effort to portray 'smartness' to peers and others some students go the extra mile to convince others they are not putting any effort to accomplish task/goals. This is usually a hoax to preserve egos (especially among teenage boys and young men). Should it turn out they fail they use their faked dis-interest and lack of effort as the reason, but gloats smartness if successful without apparently exerting much effort. (Nicholls, 1976)

Critical Influences of Boys' Achievement

It is very important to direct one's attention to some of the reasons identified for boys' achievement levels in Jamaica. Some of these reasons include: feminization (Drudy, 2008; Skelton, 2011; Carrington & McPhee, 2008); gender-related issues (Martino, 1995; Kehler & Martino, 2005; Martino, 2007, 2008a); socialization factors (Miller, 1991; Chevannes, 1995, 1999, 2001; Evans & Davis, 1999) and the list goes on. There are also significant influences brought on by economic states, forms of cultural exposure and the models of behavior and achievement boys are exposed to in their ecosystems.

Gender-related Influences

The afore-mentioned factors and conceptions are closely aligned to two primary schools of thought, in respect to the gender issue. There is the *essentialist perspective* in which proponents such as Dobson and Guran speak about gender being in the brain, that is, how boys are born. They come into being wired a particular way that influence specific ways in which they learn relative to girls. Then there is the *social constructivists* view, such as that shared by Connel (2009) and Chevannes (, who subscribe to the belief that gender is constructed. That is, it is as we socialize our young, and as we are socialized that we become who we are, even if the brain has a part to play in creating a pre-disposition. It is recognized that the brain is subjected to environmental issues and conditions, and so it is as we feed it that it produces.

As it concerns feminization it is believed that boys in the primary schools have difficulty in literacy education due to the ‘feminized environment’ in which they are expected to operate. This according to the writer allows the girls to ‘flourish’ and the boys to ‘set off on a rockier subconscious road’ (Shaw, 1995, p. 76). Some writers however disagree with the view that the gender of teachers in the classroom is impacting boys’ learning. I am of the view nonetheless that teachers whether female or male need to spend some time reflecting on how boys learn and utilize strategies that will motivate them to learn. Interestingly, that deep reflection on the part of the teacher can contribute to boys’ literacy learning. Cox (2000) thinks that practices in literacy require self-disclosure, introspection, empathy, and creative expression of feelings, and these are in opposition to boys and their interpretation of their masculinity.

Gender-related issues have tremendous influence on one's attitudes towards literacy (Maynard, 2002). There are various theories pointing to 'gender' having some bearing on how people think, act, speak, and the value they place on themselves. Those who look at gender from a biological point of view, argues that because of how the brain is made up, girls are 'naturally' at an advantage, while boys are at a disadvantage based on language activities. Head (1999) states that evidence has shown that there are some amounts of differences in the function of the brain in relation to language, where women use both hemispheres and men are more-so dependent on one hemisphere. Head (1999) also refer to scientists who believe that women seem to be 'predisposed' to verbal abilities that are superior. They talk earlier and clearer, learn languages more easily, and their fine-motor control seems to be more pronounced. The men on the other hand are better able to out-perform women in special functions like that of negotiating a maze.

Another perspective presented to explain boys' seeming disinterest in educational excellence is the psychoanalytic view that boys reject literacy because they are seeking to isolate themselves from supposedly female oriented activities in a bid to prove their maleness. These are existential dilemmas that are worth giving thought to, in order that boys and young men may be properly guided towards clarification of values relative to their education and personal development. On the other hand, social learning proponents are of the view that boys learn through reinforcement and punishment, and that literacy is not suitable for them. Regardless of the view we take, it can be deduced that, in comparison to girls, boys are at a greater risk of underachieving. Some general reasons suggested for this include:

- (a) Girls exhibit a more positive attitude to reading than boys; both girls and boys enjoy reading different kinds of materials.
- (b) Boys also read books differently. Boys take a discovery approach when reading while girls connect their reading to their own experiences.
- (c) Social and cultural factors, such as Socio Economic Status (SES)
- (d) Watson, Kehler and Martino (2010) recommends that the various cultural, social, and ethnic backgrounds that boys take along with them to the literacy classrooms ought to be recognized and explored. Attention should also be paid to how they view their masculinity.
- (e) The predominance of female teachers in the public schools may adversely impact the performance of boys. Martino (2008) on the other hand believed that there is no empirical evidence to support the claim that just being a male teacher makes a marked difference in the educational achievement of boys.

For many female teachers, teaching boys foregrounds the inequitable dynamics of their positioning within broader discourses of gender and power that privilege “the masculine” and marginalize “the feminine” (Epstein & Johnson, 1994; Reid, 1999). As Robinson (2000) suggests, the material and discursive representation of gender in schools (through, for example, gendered work specializations, staff hierarchies, curricular and extra-curricular activities, pedagogy, and classroom management practices), in reflecting broader power relations that authorize “maleness,” often work in ways that de-legitimize female authority. Herein arise issues of masculinity, power, and possibly the sexual harassment of female teachers that de-stabilize the teaching – learning context. In

particular, accessing these discourses make it possible for boys to subvert the traditional adult-child/teacher-student power binary to undermine their female teachers (Epstein & Johnson, 1994; Kenway et al. 1998). Robinson (2000) has taken the discourse further, indicating that a powerful way that particular boys (even very young) continue to subvert the male-female binary and reinforce gendered authority is through sexual harassment.

Influences of Gender Socialization

Boys, from a very early age, are aware that accessing hegemonic masculinity, privileges them to certain resources and institutionalized power that neither girls nor women will equally share in particular contexts. In schools, boys have learnt that practicing sexual harassment does work to gain them power (Jones, 1993). Accordingly, boys can draw on the dominant western discourses that privilege the male body and masculinized knowledge and practices to dismiss, undermine, challenge, rebel against, and objectify their female teachers (Reid, 1999). As Robinson (2000, p.82) points out, these dominant Western discourses “operate in schools to provide an environment where sexual harassment is a powerful resource for boys and men.” Against this gendered backdrop, students tend to associate power and legitimate authority with the hegemonic masculine body and dominant masculine characteristics. Conversely, they relate powerlessness with the female body and with femininity. In this regard the professionalism of young female teachers, particularly in the areas of discipline and behavior management, is frequently undermined (Clark, 1993; Reid & Simpson, 1994) cited by Keddle (2010). In this respect, it is commonplace for female teachers to experience power battles, rebellion, and uncooperativeness with particular male students – as a teacher in Robinson’s work (2000, p. 80) explained: “There are things that students

do that they would not do to men in the same position, there is no doubt about that.”

Reinforcing the discourse of gendered authority, such conflicts continue to be deferred to and “resolved” by senior, often male, teachers, sending clear messages to students about how power is really dispersed at school (Robinson, 2000). In the final analysis, studies conducted to explore issues of masculinity and transformative pedagogy (Martino & Mellor, 1995; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003) revealed that, it is not the gender of the teacher, but the positive relationships they have with their students; as well as the pedagogical approaches that contribute to them participating at a high level. This aside, observation in the Jamaican context strongly supports the view that female teachers are significantly challenged by the magnitude of disciplinary problems displayed by boys, which compounds the effort needed to engage them productively in the classroom. This is not to be interpreted as a negative evaluation of female teachers’ ability to control boys due to the extent of the gangster dominance and influence which infiltrates the school system. Accordingly, it must also be argued that the framework for boys’ success extend beyond the influence of a classroom teacher of any gender, to include good personal intentional guidance.

Smith and Wilhelm (2002) explored the instrumental value of school and reading among boys and documents their expressed feelings and preferences. Different profiles developed and presented for boys’ responses were used to highlight perspectives that characterize the diversity in behavior among young men. Profiles befitting the ‘rapper’, ‘techie,’ ‘fix-it’ man, ‘reader’ etcetera were used. The strength of the boys’ belief in school was manifested in their responses to the profiles. Smith and Wilhelm (2002) reports that in responding to the reader profile, the boys tended to veer away from

commenting on the pleasures gain from reading, but tended to emphasize what the reading would bring in the future. This tendency was true from boys across schools and ability levels. According to Smith and Wilhelm (2002) the boys' emphasis on the instrumentality of reading could be a function of the fact that they did not find immediate interest in their reading in school. It seems from this discourse on the work of Smith and Wilhelm, that establishing relevance of the need to read, to present and future interests, is a great motivator for the will to succeed and to engender among boys, pride in being successful.

Economic Influences

Poverty has been cited as being one of the major psycho-social factors that negatively impact on boys' effective participation in education. According to UNESCO (2003), many children have either lost one parent or both, thereby having to live with grandparents or on their own, sometimes without means of earning a livelihood. Consequently, children suffer all kinds of deprivations including food to eat. In such case they are unable to afford school related costs. Poverty is wide spread in Haiti for example, with over 58 % of the population living below the poverty line of less than UD\$1 a day (UNESCO, 2008). In these and other contexts Guidance and Counselling services or departments in schools are keener on looking at the welfare of a girl-child than those of a boy-child. Some factors behind the disparity in the provision of education have been documented. These include the participation of the boy-child in secondary education influenced by socio-economic factors, in-school factors and individual sexuality based factors, and negative attitude of community members and policy in education. In making reference to poverty as a factor impacting boys' underachievement,

it must be pointed out that it is no excuse for failure. Poverty may hinder the acquisition of some things, but it is not a recipe for sub-par performances among boys in schools. Young people from poor or less advantaged households and communities have achieved.

What poverty does though is exacerbate existing problems with regard to access to education. Young men in poverty are more likely to seek employment rather than complete schooling, and where this is not the case, living in poverty can entail difficult neighborhood dynamics that impairs ability to attend school and participate in formal education.

Cultural Influences

In a country such as Jamaica, popular culture is a major pull for young people. The cultural landscape of Jamaica is dominated by ‘hard-core’ music genre such as ‘dance hall’. This music form is believed to help push young men into academic decadence. Williams (2006), believes that the message in the music is about the glorification of ‘womanizing’; abuse of women – verbally, sexually and physically. It is about being a gun-hawk (shotta); about killing those who do not share certain sexual orientation, and ‘blinging and rolling’ in the finest outfits. The majority of dancehall listeners and performers are males, and the lessons that are taught are well-learned. According to Williams (2006), the boys have stopped listening to the classroom teachers, and are now schooled in the ‘University of Dancehall Music’ p.14. Their professors are deejays, many of whom can hardly sign their names. They try to live as deejays do, and many of them even aspire to be deejays themselves, without realizing that in most cases, there is no longevity in a dancehall career.

In these respects, a sense of abandonment has also been cited as a major issue impacting boys and the acquisition of education. This issue is multifaceted: some youths do not know their fathers or share no father-son relationship. They have been described as ‘wild weeds’ along the way; their hardworking mothers cannot control them and they are too tired to know that their sons are not in bed. Williams describe another aspect of abandonment as the quality of care and concern that is shown towards young men. They are expected to survive on their own because they are boys, without knowing that many of them need the nurturing and support that is given to girls. Francis (2006) speak to the level of subjectification entailed by the expressions ‘boys will be boys’, ‘poor boys’ and more recently, ‘problem boys’. Jamaican boys are underperforming partly because they have lost their focus. Williams went on to suggest that they are now rooted and grounded in a hustling culture, so doing well in school is only a passing phase; it has no relevance to survival. Bleached faces and tight school pants are in, while studying is antithetical to the community spirit. These are among the negative elements that school leaders must counter. In doing so, they must avoid social snobbery, attention to class status, religious and political prejudices.

Generally, boys seem to have lost interest in education as a result of many factors, among them familial and communal pressure. According to Williams (2006), many boys live in communities where certain values and mores must be strictly followed, and if they dare to be different, they stand the risk of being ostracized by their peers, families and associates. Further, there is a prevailing culture in some communities where boys are not to be seen shut down pouring over books and other academic material.”

They must be part of the corner gatherings:

playing dominoes, 'scrimmage' football, and cricket; checking a girl; smoking and drinking, or just plain idling.

It is hip, it is cool, it's all good, and they get the so-called respect that they crave.

They do not want to be a misfit, so they simply walk the line. As such, their focus is not on academics; rather, it is to be a 'dads,' a 'gallis,' a 'shotta,' a 'Joe-grind,' a 'heavy hat' said Williams (2006, p.13).

These are typical slang characterization for the in the street gangster image that many of the school age boys adopts or aspire towards.

It is argued that if many of these boys chose to be different, they must be prepared to be an outcast. The typical young man from some communities must not be sitting over a book every day 'like a girl.' Being 'like a girl' is a euphemism. In a country where homophobia is rife, many male students have to be careful that they do not send certain vibes to their family, friends and the wider community, (Williams, 2006). This pressure determines how much they surround themselves with academic-related matters and to some extent, the types of subject that they do in school. They make sure not to sign up for certain subjects. So, you will not find some of them in a French, Spanish, literature, history, cookery, dance or drama class. Ironically, they are often not doing well in their preferred subjects either. Williams (2006) further declared that girls will always out-perform boys in English Language which is compulsory for all students. As it stands though, boys just sit in, responding to the compulsory nature of the curriculum, but refusing to speak or learn English for fear of being called sissies.

Speaking of boys' belligerent attitude, Williams (2006) Said:

"As for literature, they do not see any possible reasons why they should sit down for a few hours with a Shakespeare or a Maya Angelou. Few of them will care about the subliminal message of Macbeth's murder of King Duncan. They do not

want to know why the caged bird sings. Though some of them fester as a sore, *A Raisin in the Sun*, is just that. *Green Days by the River*, has been replaced by *Pan De River, Pan De Bank*” (an expression characteristic of dance hall music) p.14.

It is clear therefore that culture influences the ways in which Jamaican boys (as do many from other Caribbean context) perceive literacy. Often, there are few desirable gender role models for boys to emulate. For generations boys have been urged toward independence, toughness and competitiveness. Often these culturally coded behaviors interfere with boys’ literacy success. They can also distort perceptions of boys’ abilities and willingness to develop literacy skills. This becomes increasingly more complicated when the culture of rap music (as is emulated from North America) and the dance hall genre of Jamaica, coins and produces slangs in such prolific manner as to cause domination of the literary interest of boys. Unfortunately, this has become the new norm in many communities and schools in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean.

Influence of Male Role Models

The value of male teachers as role models should not be underestimated. Hashmi (2009) believes there are several policies that could be used to attract and retain male educators, in turn causing an increase in male student retention rates in secondary schools. One way suggested to increase the number of male teachers is to raise teacher salaries. Ideally, offering higher pay for teaching jobs would attract men who are committed to the field but cannot afford to pursue it, and the quality of male teachers would also rise. Therefore, investing in high-quality teacher training could be another way to battle the gender stereotypes that boys face in school. Teacher training, Hashmi (2009) suggest, could help both female and male teachers learn about the specific barriers boys face in school, and the best strategies they can use to address these barriers in the classroom and the school.

Other strategies, as reflected by the work of the Caucasus Resource Centres have proven to be effective for the positive engagement of boys.

Reports generated from research conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC, 2008) in the Armenian context, has tied male juvenile crimes to ‘feminized schools’, where boys’ access to potential male role models is severely limited as a result of a lack of male educators. A commonly implemented program in the United States assigns male students from higher educational institutions as mentors for students in both primary and secondary school. Mentoring programs can also include field trips where students are given tours of professions that require advance training. In addition to direct mentoring and field trips, CRRC also suggests the implementation of a program that invites influential male guest speakers, such as community leaders, politicians, athletes, and scientists, to speak in school. Methods like these could enhance boys’ perception of what career oriented men do for a living, and so prevent them from dropping out of the education system by convincing them to persist and continue on to higher education (CRRC, 2008). Yes, talks about the need for more male educators and the acknowledgement that part of the underachievement of boys can be attributed to the lack of male role models are well grounded. However, it is not to be accepted that because role models can make a difference, that just by virtue of one being a male makes him a good role model. So, when the choice of role model has to be made, it must be determined; what is the profile of the boy that we want and therefore what should be the profile of the person who is going to be a model for him?

Gender Identity/Hyper-Masculinity Issues

Gender identity is one's knowledge that one is male or female as has seemingly originated in the initial labeling of the child as a boy or a girl (Rathus, 1989). It is believed that most children acquire a firm gender identity by the age of 36 months (Marcus & Corsini, 1978; McConaghy, 1979; Money, 1977) cited by Rathus (1989). Gender identity can be described as the single most dominant factor influencing underachievement of boys in Jamaica. This is so because the way they perceive and act out the notion of being a man, is reflective of what it means to be antagonistic to a clear sense of personhood and the embrace of personal development goals. There is a brand of masculinity that appears normal and natural and so as a society it is encouraged through popular culture in songs produced and shared, whether in the dance hall or in prime time radio and television slots; the church, school, social media, home and other social institutions. Heterosexuality and homophobia are the bedrocks of this grand masculinity which often demonstrate itself as violent, pseudo-natural, contradictory, tuff and a crisis forerunner (Anderson, 1990). Being a man according to this brand is defined as opposition to what is meant to be feminine. As boys internalize this (now) from an early age and regard anything remotely different, as feminine, they consequently regard anything such, as attributes to be resisted. As part of the homophobic culture they have even sought to develop a new vocabulary, dropping certain word usage and coining replacements that appeal to them as being more masculine (e.g. galchester for Manchester; # twice for # two etc.).

To compound this, a somewhat, ultra-masculinity psychology fueled by the popular music genre and other dominant cultural practices has seemingly swept the minds of boys

(and young men). These boys and young men, unable to clarify their own values, are quickly hooked unto new fads and behavior that produces a distorted view of themselves and of the institution and programs designed for their development. In her study of boys in the Caribbean, Parry (2000) found that not only were boys underachieving at the secondary level of schooling, but they also seem to have a rigid, macho sense of masculinity that expresses itself in contempt for teachers, who are largely female. The situation in Jamaica was described as particularly grave. Here, there seems to be an anti-performance culture, especially when it comes on to doing well in public. There is an unwillingness to do well in public because that is too much of a girls' behavior. Parry also found an anti-academic male sex/gender identity existing among boys, which was not compatible with either diligent study or good grades. Some boys under-perform and deny their giftedness in order to take on the masculine facade. Many who have the ability to do well resist doing so, just to fit in and maintain the 'status quo'. The call is for more male mentors for boys, thus stressing the importance of male teachers in the education of boys, to provide boys with "ideal" role models. Nelson (2003) bemoans the fact that, "only one in four students studying to be a teacher is a man. When you walk into a school to find the only man on site is the gardener, how does that affect the development of both boys and girls?" (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2003a, p.3). This is where civic engagement involving whole communities must play a greater role in fostering the development of boys in the community, knowing that men too has the power of choice over his choice of profession. Thus, expression of dissatisfaction would have laid the foundation for intervention strategies to include three key areas:

- Giving boys the opportunity to benefit from positive male role models and mentors from both within and beyond the school (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2003a, p. iii)
- Provide effective literacy teaching and assessment; and
- The use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a means of improving boys' engagement with active learning (Inspiring Success for Boys, n.d.)

Utilizing a mytho-poetic discourse, Karlsson (1995) claimed that there was a danger ahead for boys because many do not see men in their homes, their early childhood schools, or even their primary schools. Karlsson draws on essentialist understandings of the differences between male and female teachers to argue that boys have been harmed by being primarily educated by women, and by having to adjust to the women's culture that exist in our schools. He therefore suggested that for boys' healthy development they needed to be exposed to men's demonstration of masculinity. Artola, Sastre, Gratacos and Barraca (n.d) have explored the influence of teacher gender in classroom interaction and educational outcomes and the possible benefits of same gender matching. Some of these studies attribute male underachievement and disaffection from school to the dearth of male role models in teaching, especially at the Primary level, (p. 116). Meanwhile, Heyder (2017) bemoans the fact that literacy instructions are not engaging and should include non-fiction materials. This is supportive of Cooper's (2012) earlier call for literacy outside of the classroom or 'real-world literacy.' Such that, pedagogical effects

should consider materials that might best prepare students for adapting in a changing world.

In research conducted by Ward, Featherstone, Robb and Ruxton (2015), it was found that young men's masculine identities are strongly defined by their locality, and that young men 'at risk' tend to be embedded in local cultures of 'hyper-masculinity' often with problematic consequences. It was also determined that many young men aspire to a 'safer' and more responsible masculinity, their aspirations are largely shaped by local expectations. These may be in the form of reference groups comprising of individuals who are close to them and whom they see every day, or they may be broader social groups with whom they share attitudes, ideals, and philosophies – religious, ethnic, nationalistic, generational, or interest groups (Craig, 1986).

Figueroa (2010) call on men and boys to face the challenge ahead, particularly as it relates to their own masculine identity. He notes that just as women were called upon to adapt to, and in large part were successful in dealing with the changed notion of what it means to be female, men must be able to do the same. "They will have to participate in a redefinition of masculinity, by, for example, getting involved in what have long been regarded as the 'feminine' service industry and caring professions" (p.68). Admittedly, this urging by Figueroa has been heeded somewhat by a growing population of boys and young men of the twenty first century who are trending into personal and professional endeavors that are traditionally 'feminine.' These boys and young men are largely more open to experimentation, fearless and more brazen in challenging the establishment. Even so, there is push back from the 'feminine community' in defense of what is purported to be theirs'.

Not with-standing Miller (2010) interjected a critical educational dimension to the gender identity concern, noting that acquiring an education involves discipline and diligence and alludes to the fact that in this present world, men and boys must be flexible and open to a range of career options, many of which are in the service sector and require ‘soft’ skills. “Communicating effectively in a competitive world is paramount.” As such, boys will increasingly be at risk if they allow their notion of masculinity to interfere with their success in areas that can help them take advantage of the full range of opportunities available to them” (Figueroa, 2010, p.68). As boys struggle with masculinity and identity issues of their own, it must be noted that a number of researchers have their own concerns and continue to view boys as a homogenous group. However, there are some researchers (e.g., Smith and Welham) who consider if “boys” is a useful analytic category since boys are different and thus heterogenous. Hence, while most researchers are “groupers” who see boys as the same, there are other researchers who make the distinction and highlight the diversity that exists among them. Accordingly, some researcher would want school leaders and teachers to understand that boys are not the same and so there should be responses to these differences.

School Leadership and Responses to Boys’ Achievement

The question of the importance of school leadership is a daring one. This however does not require deep pondering or pontification when one considers that “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (Louis, Wahlstrom, Leithwood & Anderson, 2004, p. 65). Guthrie and Schuermann (2010) notes: “Quality leadership is an essential component of successful schools” p.240. Ezenne (2008) reports that school leaders have tremendous

influence in shaping a school's vision and mission. The writer further state that "the principal as the leader in the school organization, sets clear and high achievement goals, maintains an orderly environment, encourages teachers to monitor students' progress and is actively immersed in the school's day –to- day activities" p.5. Invariably, school leaders must be able to get others to work toward a shared vision; and to work with teachers to accomplish the instructional goals of the school or to modify the goals and plans to maximize outcomes.

Accordingly, the principal and other school leaders influence student outcomes directly or indirectly by offering direct instruction, or by facilitating instructional leadership, organizational management, as well as ensuring a productive school ethos through quality internal and external relations. These aside, student outcomes are critical to school success. As such critical variables impacting student achievement: quality of instruction provided by the teachers and quality of leadership provided in the school must be given priority focus. According to Lunen burg and Orstein (1991), "when principals are surveyed, they often consider curriculum and instruction aspects of the job as one of the top priority work areas and that they need to spend more time on the job related to these two technical areas of development" p.339. The foregoing therefore underscores the point opined by Grissom and Loeb (2011), that where school leaders effectively combine their energy into becoming strong instructional leaders while enhancing their management capability and as well as embrace the psycho-social aspects of their job, they would have created a balance formula for school success. In addition to effective leadership, this balance should involve, among other things, provision of differentiated instruction; relevant learning experiences and efficacy in instructional practice.

School Leadership and the Performance of Boys

The 2013 National Education Inspectorate Report of Jamaica (Ministry of Education), underscores the view that in all effective schools, the principal exemplifies, and consistently models the characteristics of instructional effectiveness. Research has shown that a key factor in school performance, and by extension, the achievement of boys, is closely related to the quality of management exercised and experienced. Campbell (2013) attributes the problem of boys' underachievement to the issue of failing schools. According to Campbell the label 'failing school', though vehemently resisted by some, is befitting, since they are unable to produce pupils with high levels of literacy and numeracy, which is a must if we are to find creative means of overcoming the country's economic issues. The problem of failing schools, he suggests, is inextricably linked to poor leadership and management of those schools so affected. Sergiovianni (1980) notes that where school leadership is effective, school-based management displays a good mix of conceptual, human and technical skills. That is, leaders in schools ought to bring qualities of vision, intensity and creativity that complement their good management practices. Sergiovianni's position is underscored by findings of the 2015 National Education Inspectorate (NEI) report for Jamaica (Dwyer, 2015). The report notes that in all effective schools, it has been observed that the principal is the respected "leader of leaders." In such contexts, the principal exemplifies and consistently models the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the school's instructional programmes.

In schools where there is exceptionally high and good leadership and management, school-based leadership worked collaboratively in almost all circumstances

to ensure that the learning and social needs of the students are met. They also ensure that the school's vision and mission were aligned to those of the Ministry of Education and are understood by almost all their stakeholders. The Principals were instructional leaders who demonstrated an understanding of the schools' core functions. They recognize the pivotal role of the middle managers in the strengthening of the school's operations and empower them to carry out their roles and responsibilities. These middle managers therefore held teachers accountable for the highest possible standards of students' achievement. Further, members of the school communities are respectful to each other and the leaders led by example. (National Education Inspectorate, Jamaica, 2013).

Qualities of Successful School Leaders

Sutcliffe (2013), shares eight vital leadership qualities believed to be common among successful school leaders: vision, courage, passion, emotional intelligence, judgment, resilience, persuasion, and curiosity. Sutcliffe (2013), quotes school Principal Richard Harman as saying that successful leaders have "great vision – the ability to formulate and shape the future, rather than be shaped by events." Courage therefore becomes an important characteristic of the school leader. They show great determination, with the willpower and patience to see things through. Additionally, they are willing to take risks and are steadfast in challenging under-performance or poor behavior.

On the matter of passion, Jeremy Sutcliffe quotes head teacher, Llyn Codling who cautioned "we are there for the children and we mustn't ever forget that." Sutcliffe (2013) agrees, adding that successful school leaders are passionate about teaching and learning, and show great commitment to children. These leaders also understand the importance of relationships, empower their staff and pupils and show great empathy; and so embrace

emotional intelligence in professional practice. The successful leaders also exercise good judgement, make the right calls and are wise leaders.

Sutcliffe (2013), notes that successful school leaders are also optimistic and resilient, remain calm in crisis and are energetic and positive at all times. Sutcliffe went on to highlight the characteristic, persuasion, noting the response of head-teacher Tower Hamlet who said “getting people to do things and go that extra mile lies at the heart of good leadership.” Sutcliffe remarked that the best school leaders are confident communicators and storytellers. Curiosity, remarked Sutcliffe (2013) is characteristic of leaders who are always outward-looking and curious. “Headship is about having at least one foot outside of the school looking at what’s going on elsewhere and picking up good ideas.

These eight characteristics are worthy of inclusion and consideration in any decision having to do with school leadership and management and an examination of leadership styles. In reviewing cases of underachievement and under-participation by boys in various countries, Jha and Kelleher (2006) underscore several important factors that could help to develop policy and programme solutions. Surely school leadership has been shown to be important in fostering an environment where schools help teachers develop leadership and managerial skills. Such skills, correctly applied, can help teachers guide students in clarifying values, thereby handling misbehavior and underachievement by boys as do girls having such challenges. The school leader who seeks to foster productive leadership, must also place emphasis on building cooperation, confidence and conflict resolution as part of creating that space for positive interaction between students and teachers. The outcome of this can only be the promotion of environments of trust and

the encouraging of students (especially boys less inclined) to attain great levels of achievement.

Instructional Practices that can Enhance Boys' Achievement

The ways classrooms are structured and are built seem to impact the learning process. In fact, Sullivan (2003) points to even the dull colors that are used in the classrooms, the limited outside stimuli where windows are covered or in some cases there are no windows, the desks that are very frequently attached to the chairs, limiting mobility, should be reconsidered. Of great significance is the fact that the methods used to pass on information to boys should be creative and critically thought through. Ideally, having specific classroom approaches which encapsulate a highly structured instruction and lessons with activities that are changed very often will benefit boys. There should also be positive reinforcement of achieved outcomes, as well as provision made for extra lessons (Browne & Fletcher, 1995; Rowe, 2000a, 2001; Slavin & Madden, 2003; Trent & Slade, 2001). We should employ numerous 'hands-on' learning through many different modes. We should also utilize strategies that are practiced in a bid to deal with auditory processing problems such as; gaining students' attention, utilizing short sentences, pausing between sentences and doing repetitions when necessary (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002).

High – profile officials in the education system have criticized teaching strategies in many Jamaican high schools as counter-productive to optimal learning among boys.

It is the expectation that teachers understand that if boys want to pursue something, they are going to do it. Teachers can sit right beside them and teach numbers, and they can

talk about it and they can draw and they can write. But they are not going to look on the white/blackboard and remember, and write on paper what teachers say they would like them to do (Hill, 2011), reported Fay Carothers to have said at an editors' forum.

According to Stevens and Gurian (2006), "Teachers need to modify their classrooms to be more boy-friendly, as classrooms were more fit to the learning preferences of girls, where long periods of sitting and verbal-emotive activities were prominent and not accommodating the more impulsive kinesthetic spatially oriented learning preferences of boys" (p. 90). Such suggestion is in sync with the perspective of Nasser (2016), that letting male students choose topics which are of interest to them is a successful strategy for improving their reading and writing for example. Nasser (2016) also suggests the incorporation of single-gender grouping as a strategy within the co-educational classroom. This he believes would allow each gender to be stimulated by materials of interest to them, but who would look forward to being back together after their respective group work.

In contributing to the debate on teaching approaches for boys, noted principal of a prominent metropolitan boys' school and former teachers' union leader, Ruel Reid, encourage teachers to embrace the new paradigm of differentiating instruction based on diagnosis of the gender differences or learning styles in the classroom. Reid (reported by Hill, 2011) further encourage Jamaican teachers to focus on the interests of their individual male students in an effort to improve their academic performance. He points to the notion that boys display characteristics that teachers can use to improve their academic performance, adding that teachers should take advantage of those characteristics, by setting high expectations for boys in the classroom and allowing them

more room to take risks. Wayne Robinson, principal of a privately operated coeducation academy weighs in on the debate noting that boys are wired differently, and therefore they learn differently, (Hill, 2011). The point must be reiterated that a suggestion of difference in boys' learning response is not a negation of girls' preferences in the teaching-learning contexts, but possibly the projection that what obtains synchronizes less with boys' style than they do the girls'. Smith and Wilhelm, (2002) highlights the use of activities as assistance in the provision of instruction for boys. They explain that while most of the boys in their study relish relationship with teachers as a precondition for their learning, they also identified features of learning activities and environments that would help teachers engage them more and deepen their relationships. "The most enjoyable and powerful form of assistance and support for reading that the boys identified were activities that involved active, participatory, hands-on response to reading," (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Dramatic activity and tasks that involved problem-oriented work and self-expression, were among the popular choices that gave the boys a sense of competence, control and challenge, in pursuing the subject matter with which they were called upon to engage. I endorse the view of Smith and Wilhelm (2002), that the boys' endorsement of teaching through activity matches Vygotskian notions of instruction, especially Vygotsky's idea of the zone of proximal development (ZPD). A construct which describe a stage of learning in which the assistance needed for learning allows the learner to appropriate the necessary problem-solving skills, language and strategies of the more expert person giving the assistance.

These perspectives are well in keeping with attribution theory's internal / external locus of control and how these influence the perception of outcomes; and are also well

aligned with Gardner's Multiple Intelligence view. A view Brown and Myers (2008) advocates in their crusade for "bringing in the boys." For six years, Brown and Myers designed library programs based on Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. They noticed that by creating a variety of programs that reach out to children and their different learning styles, they were appealing to both boys and girls and creating a library environment that was especially attractive to boys. The creation of 'Booktrek,' a library program, yielded memorable moments, example: "One mother was shocked that her son ate tofu, a food that she could not get him to eat. After another Booktrek, an excited boy informed his mother that they needed to go to the grocery store right away to buy spicy plantain chips, having been so motivated by reading.

Brown and Myers (2008) explained that they have witnessed a high percentage of boys taking up their programs; that boys trust the structure and have confidence that opportunities are provided for them to interact with topics in ways that work with their learning style. These perspectives seem to run parallel to those of Smith (2014) who discredits the mantra, made popular in the press, that boys are in trouble, and has extended his reservation to researches which have been based on this notion. He argues that if it is accepted that boys are in trouble, it is not so in all aspects of their lives. Smith (2014) points to the fact that many boys display diligence, ingenuity and persistence in being successful in different outdoor activities in their neighborhood. The proposition is that if boys are successful outside of school, it raises the question of whether it is the context or the students that are to blame for their problems in school, (that is whether the attribution has an internal or external locus of control).

Provision of Differentiated Learning Experiences

Subban (2006) notes differentiated instruction as a philosophy of teaching that is based on the premise that students learn best when their teachers accommodate the differences in their readiness levels, interest and learning profiles. In differentiated classrooms, teachers begin where the students are, not at the front of the curriculum guide. It is important that they accept and build on the premise that learners differ in important ways. Thus the differentiation framework assumes that all students in a heterogeneous classroom will have the same goals but instruction is tailored to match students' learning styles. Wormeli (2005) makes the proposition that differentiated instruction is doing what is fair and developmentally appropriate for students. In so doing a collection of best practices will be strategically employed to maximize students' learning from stage to stage. This is supported by Guild, (2001); Stronge, (2004); Tomlinson, (2004) who are also of the view that learning within the inclusive classroom is further influenced by a student's gender, culture, experiences, aptitudes, interests and particular teaching approaches.

Against the foregoing views, it is not farfetched to embrace the multiple intelligences perspective in the engagement of diverse learning groups. This multiple intelligences approach by Gardner (1983) provides a flexible framework for planning for differentiation and so incorporate a variety of curriculum and instructional strategies to respond to student diversity and differences. Identifying learning styles enables a teacher to capitalize on a student's strengths and to become familiar with concepts they may find challenging (Green, 1999). Fine (2003) reported a significant gain in test scores of students on special education programs, after their preferred learning style was

incorporated into the instruction. Students' performances were significantly better when they were instructed through learning style approaches rather than traditional teaching methods. It was further reported by Fine (2003) that the attitudes of the students toward learning improved significantly, as they felt that their individual strengths were being accommodated.

Such success is best achieved in learning contexts that are psycho-socially supportive. It is therefore imperative that the principles from Vygotsky's grounded learning theory, which holds that reciprocal social interaction and the collaborative relationship between teacher and student accommodates learning in a developmental sense. There must be the recognition that the learning context is a social space which encourages the development of cognitive functions and communication skills. It is therefore not far-fetch that students would want to engage in some kind of social contract to assure their preferred psycho-social climate for learning. Bambino, one respondent in Smith and Wilhelm's (2002) work: "Reading Don't Fix No Chevys" indicated that if teachers simply talk with him (a student) from time to time about wrestling (his passion), even for a quick minute in the hallway, he would be happy to do their work. All it takes to engage some students fully, is simple recognition of who they are and what they take to the learning context. Another respondent, Rev, made a similar contractual argument: "the teachers don't know you, care about you, or recognize you. So why should you care about them or the work they want you to do?" p. 99. Accordingly, Brighton (2002) observe the need for social interaction between the learner and the knowledgeable adult, as this enhances the possibility of intellectual activity. Much the same thought that Vygotsky (1978) makes in arguing that when we dialogue we connect language with

thought and feeling. Hence, his lobby for real world settings to be a key component of the learning experiences of boys. Such context will no doubt motivate boys to learn, especially where the challenge is presented to encourage problem-solving in any of their fields of interests. Brighton (2002) further explains that this principle, drawn from research into the workings of the human brain, and revelations regarding the multiple intelligences and learning styles, acknowledges that the potential for learning is enlarged if learners are engaged, associate new meaning with existing information and are allowed to consolidate this information in a manner suited to an individual learning style. It seems therefore, that the kinds of learning that we provide for boys must reach further than the purely mechanical treatment of words, into the socio-cultural realms where great focus is given to the acquisition of procedural knowledge (the how of doing things), rather than on declarative knowledge (what) which is emphasized and presented as rigid facts.

Much of this foregoing literature appears to present instruction as the key pillar to boys' educational improvement. While some people advocate for it, note should be taken that enduring change in behavior (learning) may not take place by simply changing instruction. Though there is the body of research that points to instruction as pivotal, there is also the caution that methodology is not a guarantee for changing the fortune of boys in their educational achievements, especially in light of many competing interests. Clearly, other areas of impact must also be vigorously examined to validate cause and effect from any source.

Self-Efficacy: Efficacy and Instructional Practice

The concept of self-efficacy, which is the individual's belief in the ability to successfully face specific tasks or situations, was introduced and developed by Bandura

(1986), and has been identified in social-cognitive theory as the most powerful self-regulatory mechanism affecting behaviors (cited by Bobbio and Manganelli, 2009). On the basis of the results of several studies, Bandura (1977) described effective individuals as people who are motivated, resilient to adversity, goal oriented, and able to think clearly, even under pressure or in stressing conditions. Stajkovic and Luthans (1998) cited by Bobbio and Manganelli, (2009) adds that the more confident an individual is about being able to successfully perform a task, the more frequently he/she will engage in that task. Self-efficacy then, has proven to be a useful motivational process in various domains of human functioning, as noted by Locke (2003). When associated with leadership, Bobbio and Manganelli (2009) defines leadership self-efficacy as a specific form of efficacy beliefs related to leadership behaviors and so it deals with individual self-efficacy beliefs to successfully accomplish leadership role in groups. Research based on self-efficacy theory has also found that personal efficacy influences the goals people choose, their aspirations, how much effort they will exert on a given task, and how long they will persist in the face of difficulties, obstacles and disappointments, (Maurer, 2001). Findings have also linked self-efficacy with whether a person experiences self-hindering or self-aiding thought patterns, and how well a person responds to taxing and threatening circumstances.

Drawing from perspectives of previous researchers (e.g. Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1977; Woolfolk-Hoy & Davis, 2006) teacher efficacy is not only teachers' judgments (or perceptions about their own capabilities to successfully execute effective teaching / leadership practices, but also how this efficacy influences their own students' learning. In recent decades, the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of teacher /

leader efficacy have been influenced by Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy.

Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as one's beliefs in his/her capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action to achieve specific goals.

The construct of efficacy assumes that the perceptions of one's competency influence one's thoughts, feelings, motivation, and action (Obidah & Teel, 2001; Paneque, 2004). Lynch and Hanson's (2004) competences framework appears to be sufficient to analyze the interactions between teacher/school leader and student. The competencies consist of characteristics along the following three dimensions: (a) the school leader's awareness of personal beliefs and attitudes, knowledge and skills for effective practice; (b) the teacher or school leader's understanding of the beliefs/attitudes and knowledge he or she holds about the worldview of the student; and (c) the leader / teacher's ability to provide ethical and culturally relevant teaching / guidance through appropriate intervention strategies and techniques. Thus, self-efficacy beliefs have been proposed to influence learners' motivation. Bandura (1997) cites four sources of feelings of self-efficacy, as: performance experience; vicarious experience; verbal persuasion; and learner's physiological state. "Performance experience," refers to knowledge and skills gained through experience and perseverance. "Vicarious experience" refers to the experiences of others used as a model and as a level of comparison as to what skills are necessary to complete an activity (Bandura, 1997). "Verbal persuasion" serves to reinforce feelings of efficacy when facing failures. The verbal persuasion learners receive from various school leaders, teachers and others, can help them to faithfully trust their ability and capacity when experiencing doubt. "Physiological states" also serve as sources of information toward an individual's self-evaluation of efficacy. From the fore-

going competency framework and sources of efficacy, it is possible to conclude that success raises efficacy and failure lowers it.

According to Bandura (1993), when learners are given sufficient skills, positive outcome expectations, and personally valued outcomes, self-efficacy is considered to influence the choice and learners' behavior. Self-efficacy beliefs have been proven to influence academic motivation, level of effort, choice of activities and persistence in accomplishing tasks. Learners who have high self-efficacy beliefs participate actively in the class discussion, work diligently, take part in challenging activities, show constant effort in the face of hardship, and experience little anxiety when they face difficult situations compared to learners with low self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997). More particularly, the theoretical framework guiding conceptualized teacher/leader efficacy for serving diverse population is comprised of a school leader's or teacher's knowledge, skills, attitudes, self-efficacy beliefs, and expectations as demonstrated in behavior toward students. Such behavior is critical in influencing identity formation among boys and young men, and for raising their self-efficacy standards. A fact has been established that as learners' efficacy beliefs are strengthened, their performance also improves, as shown by researches by Lane and Lane (2001); Pajares and Miller (1994) and Schunk (1981).

Summary

The literature reflected on is reflective of the availability of ample information on the education of boys, some of which are not necessarily backed by field research. Similarly. There is an adequate presentation in the literature on leadership and

specifically on the leadership of schools, but scarcely any substantive literature which links, in a direct way, school leadership and the education of boys. Of note, is that generally the researchers cited have tended to think of boys as a homogenous group. However exceptions such as Smith and Wilhem are researchers who consider boys a useful analytic category, since boys are different and thus considered as heterogeneous. It appears logical to conclude therefore that most research suggests a tendency to group boys (groupers) as a homogenous unit, but some researchers make the distinction and highlight the diversity among boys; that boys are not the same and schools should respond to these differences.

Through examination of the views about boys' learning, various context of boys' education, gender sensitive constructs surrounding education, issues impacting boys' educational achievement; school management theories and practices, as well as philosophical ideas about instruction; I am assured of adequate literary resources to inform best practices for the educational engagement of boys in school and beyond. Hence the literature presented, provides multiple lenses through which to glean and develop a better understanding of boys' education, and offers a strong platform for supporting this research project.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study was conceptualized on a qualitative research design embedded in a phenomenological and constructivist paradigm. It incorporates qualitative procedures that support claims that have arisen through analysis of the data. A phenomenology study includes “a group of individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon of focus” (Creswell, 2013, p. 78). There are four notable characteristics of a phenomenology study, namely: “it is descriptive, uses reduction, searches for essences, and is focused on phenomenon intentionality” (Castro, 2003, p. 49). A paradigm may be defined as a set of assumptions (or worldview) that influence the actions of the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Guba and Lincoln (1989), have suggested that paradigms are shaped by ontological assumptions (beliefs about what can be known); epistemological assumptions (belief about the nature of relationship between researcher and the researched) and, methodological assumptions (beliefs about rules for and methods of finding knowledge). The constructivist paradigm is associated with qualitative research, which operates from a relativist ontology that embraces multiple realities, a monistic subjective epistemology, and a hermeneutic methodology within which research is conducted pragmatically, leading to better understanding of the phenomenon under study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). By employing the constructivist qualitative paradigm, the researcher signaled a commitment to illuminating the ‘insider’ perspective, by providing “rich descriptions of the social world” of the phenomenon being explored and show how the study participants make meaning of the various frontiers. The study engaged the perspectives of school leaders at varying levels of the school as a distinct system, through activities which

involves: pre-fieldwork preparations such as development of the data collection tools; data collection and follow-up; data analysis and interpretation; and final analysis and reporting of findings. The lived experiences of the school leaders, as captured in successive chapters, have the body of research available for assisting leadership efforts towards the enhancement of boys' education and the education of children in general. The entire data collection process was a highly interactive one, primarily involving structured interviews, creatively used in a face-to-face dialogic atmosphere.

Rationale for Qualitative Design.

Socio-centric constructs such as school leadership and students' academic attainment often resist quantitative applications. There are significant reasons grounded in theory and experiences outlined in the literature that supports the belief that school leadership and students' school attainment are impacted by many variables of a social nature. A socially constructed and complex phenomenon as the one herein undertaken demanded a qualitative focus. The specific enquiry method that was employed is the structured interview.

This approach is particularly applicable to the nature of the study, as the school, with its distinctive and dynamic characteristics, presents a 'natural' setting of its own. Coupled with this are the psychological/behavioral influences that attends to school leadership, particularly relative to guiding boys. The qualitative perspective allowed for the researcher to delve deeply into the activities of the school so as to understand the reality of the phenomenon of interest. Influenced by the aspiration to capture the essence of educating boys from the perspectives and experiences of school leaders, the qualitative

approach proved to be the best approach, as it allowed for the “grasping of the whole meaning of the experience” (Castro, 2003, p.47). Hence this study underscores the view of Guba and Lincoln (1989), mentioned earlier, that the qualitative research operates from a relativist ontology that embraces multiple realities and a monistic subjective epistemology wherein research is conducted in a pragmatic manner that leads to a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The engagement of the constructivist qualitative paradigm was therefore found to be important to this study as it allowed for the gleaning of the insider’s perspective through the provision of “rich description of the context in which the phenomenon of interest was studied and how participants in the study made meaning, (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This design was applied in an integrated manner to facilitate data collection within a predetermined block of time and geographical location, as well as to reflect the inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary nature of the research phenomenon, that is centered on school leadership and boys’ achievement. This approach provided a more holistic portrayal of the object of the study, taking into account the impact of the setting, context, nuances, and complexities of school leadership, relative to boys’ education in central Jamaica.

Role of the Researcher

I came to this research task having been a facilitator of learning at the tertiary level for seventeen years. As current chair of the professional studies department of a teacher training college, I inter-face with a range of old and emerging educational issues. On the basis of my professional training and acquisition of a master’s degree in education, I teach courses such as Classroom Management and Strategies of Teaching and Learning to trainee teachers as well as engage in other school pedagogical practice.

In addition, request from Secondary Schools provides opportunity to address in-service teachers' professional development needs by way of workshops and seminars on issues related to Classroom Management, Lesson Planning and Assessment. Supervision of students during field practicum exercises in schools, provide other opportunities to interface directly with school leaders, with students and observe school operations. The significant issue of boys' education, is one fraught with ideological biases; and bears a fair level of sensitivity in the context of Jamaican schools where many male students have to be careful that they do not send certain vibes to their family, friends and the wider community. However, the study must be pursued in the context of government regulation and understanding of the social and cultural diversity, to avoid inconsistencies, ethical aberrations within the classroom and wider school context. Having facilitated boys in coeducational secondary classrooms and school context, where I also serve as Vice Principal, I have developed a strong capacity to cope with the issue without biases, and to present a research report that is highly valid. My current position as an administrator in a teachers' college, influences me to be acutely aware that every step must be carefully taken as I sought entry into the sites, and ultimate interaction with participants. Accordingly, specific steps were taken to overcome threats to validity, such as biases.

Contexts, personalities, resources and time variation are all elements which impacted the quality of the study one way or another. For this reason, a protracted period over which participant interviews were conducted was carefully provisioned to allow for changing context, participants' input and other variations to produce data that is comprehensive enough for validation processes. It took approximately eight months to

collect the data necessary, including the conduct of all the necessary field investigation. Capturing the most detailed perspectives was the major objective.

Participating Schools

This study focused on schools in central Manchester, Jamaica, where boys' enrollment is comparable to girls, and where leadership is comprised of Principal, Vice Principal, Guidance Counsellor, Heads of Academic Departments and Dean of discipline, within this pre-defined geographic area. Specific interest was paid to school leaders' history of engagement in such position. Particular interest was focused on ensuring that similar grade levels were identified across institutions to enhance the elements of reliability and validity.

The school selection followed a purposive sampling approach. According to Colombia University (2015), purposive sampling is a method in which the elements for the study are chosen based on the purpose of the investigation. The criteria that guided the selection, includes: the school is state funded; schools follow a common curricula structure and administer a common external examination; is co-educational with a high enrolment of boys as part of the total student population. The system of organization of the school (whether whole-day or double-shift) also enable the detection of patterns of conduct in the underlying phenomenon and entrenchment across institutions. Hence on the basis of the afore-mentioned criteria for selection for inclusion in the study, the lone girls' school, a technical school and two double shifts schools were eliminated from consideration. Of the seven secondary schools which remain, two have newly transitioned from private ownership to Government Grant Aided and one was adjusting to leadership changes and so were not considered to satisfy all the criteria for inclusion.

The four schools which were left for consideration in the central geographic region, satisfied the predetermined selection criteria and are therefore purposively selected for the study. The Central Manchester geographic region is among those having the highest concentration of secondary schools in central Jamaica and outside of the major cities which are in the eastern and western ends of the country. These secondary schools in Jamaica are broadly classified as traditional and non-traditional high schools largely based on years of operation and the culture of operating. Whilst it is not an objective of this study to make comparison in any aspect of the study among the two categories, it is useful to indicate that both are equally represented.

Description of Schools

For the purpose of clarity and reference, the schools are labeled as non-traditional 'A' and non-traditional 'B' with the first initial of each school's name completing the label: NT-A-M and NT-B-P. Similarly the other two schools in the sample are labeled as traditional 'A' and 'B' along with the first initial of the school's name, to give: T-A-D and T-B-M. The order of naming here, follows the alphabetic sequence of the schools' official names. All four schools included in the study are co-educational with an almost equal distribution between boys and girls. Each of these schools operate on a single shift (whole day) system, typically from 8 a.m. – 3:00 pm.

Though not far removed from the hustle and bustle of commercial activities based on its location, NT-B-P is considered to be the most rural of the four schools and cannot claim to have the most well-suited amenities and facilities to fully fulfill its mission as an educational institution. The physical infrastructure housing classrooms are well organized but within a small space that fosters encroachment and disturbance from neighboring

classroom activities. This often makes teaching and learning difficult. The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN), 2016 – 2017 report, list the school as having a capacity of eight hundred pupils, but had an enrolment of nine hundred and forty three, with an attendance record of eighty five percent. Sixty percent (566) of the total enrolment are boys. The school do not boasts a culture of academic excellence, but it has enjoyed bouts of credible achievements in artistic expressions and sports, notably regional football competitions for school boys.

Considered an urban school by Jamaica's Ministry of Education, NT-B-M, is a small school nestled between scenic hills bordering the plateaus, of central Manchester and approximately fifteen minutes' drive from the bustling commercial center of Mandeville. The cluster of buildings forming the major infrastructure are reported by STATIN to have a capacity for eight hundred students, but 2019 enrolment figures supplied by the principal is one thousand one hundred and eight. Boys total five hundred and thirty four (534) and the girls five hundred and thirty seven (537). The excess is reflected in the overcrowding evident in classes of the lower grades (7-9). At NT-B-M the student – teacher ratio is calculated at 25:1, influenced largely by the lower numbers of specialization groups in the higher grades (10-11). The school experiences an eighty seven percent attendance rate and is identified as a strong performing school among non-traditional high schools, not only at the parish level but nationally. Its favorability ratings has been on a positive trajectory with improving academic performances, excellence in the performing arts and good showing in competitions and exhibitions (Mathematics, Science and Music) that have enjoyed wide scale media coverage. A wide range of skill-

based activities are included in structured curricular and extracurricular programs for the engagement of students and which are particularly attractive for the boys.

The school, T-A-D, has a long history of service to the Manchester and wider Jamaican society having celebrated its one hundredth year of operation. Founded by one of the established church denominations in Jamaica, the school's operations are acutely managed under the aegis of Christian principles and values, and guided by the education regulation of the Ministry of Education. Grounded in the salubrious environs of Mandeville, this urban school enjoys the trappings of an affluent middle-class community and sustain a productivity-oriented ethos for all internal stakeholders. T-A-D is reported to have a capacity of one thousand students but boasts current enrolment of one thousand one hundred and seventy pupils and an eighty nine percent attendance. There are five hundred and twenty eight boys (528) and six hundred and forty two (642) girls. With a teaching staff of sixty five, the overall teacher pupil ratio came out at 21:1. This ratio seems quite acceptable but is unfortunately not so, as teachers with lower grades (7-9) would expect to have as much as forty pupils to a class. T-A-D has a strong tradition of excellence in academics, co-curricular activities and competitive sports (especially badminton, table tennis and basketball). The school has bolstered its favorability ratings through outstanding performances in competitions highlighted by the media such as popular media-based challenge quiz, music/singing, and debating.

In the case of T-B-M there is great visibility on account of its location close to the center of commercial activity in central Manchester. This school has a good outlay of physical facilities to support activities in sports (football, athletics, netball, basketball and cricket), agricultural science, introductory engineering and others. Classified as a class IV

school based on a points system, this secondary institution enrolls one thousand seven hundred and thirty eight students; one hundred and thirty eight more than its one thousand six hundred capacity. The enrolment figure for boys stands at eight hundred and forty (840) while that of girls is nine hundred and ninety eight (998). Generally a student teacher ratio of 20: 1 is achieved but the size of groups vary from class to class, with higher numbers per class groups at the lower grades. This school seem to have an all-round good balance between academic work, sports and social activities. Having been in existence for more than one hundred years, the school has built a reputation for fostering students' success. Its visibility in the public sphere is enhanced also by outstanding performances in sports (cricket, football, netball, and athletics), choir competitions, and televised quizzes and so on. The ambience of the school is quite inviting and conducive for teaching and learning. With their ninety four percent attendance rate, good discipline and a strong supportive ethos, it can be concluded that the school is on a path for continued excellence.

Both T-A-D and T-B-M administer strong grade 12-13 programs (the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination) into which students matriculate from the grade 7-11 program (Caribbean Secondary Examination Council). NT-A-P and NT-B-M do not currently administer a CAPE program on the scale of T-A-D and T-B-M but provided extended training in what is referred to as the Career Advancement Program (CAP), instituted by the Government to enhance mainly the practical competence level of students leaving secondary schools.

Data Collection

The source of evidence for this study about the experiences of school leaders in facilitating boys' education was primarily individual interviews guided by the structured interview format. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with informants at the level of senior leadership (principal and vice-principal) and from among middle leaders (guidance counsellor, dean of discipline and heads of academic departments) of each school in the sample.

Selection of Interview Respondents

Interviews help to facilitate an understanding of a particular phenomenon by bringing into a larger context, the social, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of the environment in which the phenomenon occurs (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). The selection of respondents within a qualitative research framework is guided by the purpose of the study, the research questions, the methodological approach (Jones, Torres, Arminio, 2006), and "what the researcher desires to know, and from whose perspective [the] information is desired" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 91). According to Patton (2002), the appropriate sample size for a qualitative research study depends on what the researcher wants to know, what will be useful and credible, as well as what can be achieved within the available time, given resource constraints.

In this study, the researcher sought to gain the perspectives of three leaders in each of four schools selected as explained above, for a total of twelve practicing leaders: principals or vice principals, guidance counsellor and heads of academic departments. The academic department thought most useful to this study is that which facilitates the

teaching of languages and literatures. Not only is English Language a core subject that all students are required to take, it is the subject matter thought most impactful on learning generally, as it is the primary language of instruction. Drawing upon Patton's (2002) notion of information-rich cases/sources (i.e., cases that generate a great deal of learning about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research), the researcher interviewed the aforementioned top school officials who are best placed and perhaps possessed greatest capacities to interrogate institutional policies and relate them to decision making about boys' education.

A structured interview schedule was developed (see appendix A) for use by the researcher to focus the interviews and elude rich data. The structured approach to interviewing was followed. Such interview approach allowed for the exploration of more of the frontiers relating to the topic, through follow-up to questions. This process was further enhanced by the inclusion of stimulated review components that linked school leaders and the instructional process with key artefacts and the issues of young men. Hence teaching plans, curriculum guide and teacher evaluation instrument were considered key artefacts around which school leaders must coalesce in addressing the needs of all students, including the issues confronting boys in school. In consideration of the artefacts careful thought was given to what was expected to be common or similar among the school leaders to enable similarity of engagement around common materials. A significant feature of the stimulated review of the artefacts was a ranking activity that allowed everyone to talk about a suite of issues of interest to the researcher. Each respondent was required to independently rate the issues on a five point scale thereby indicating the perceived level of influence exerted by each one in respect of boys'

education. All interviews were digitally audio recorded and complete transcription done of each. A copy of the interview transcript will be submitted to respective participants for review and feedback. Care was taken to conduct interviews in an environment well suited to each participant and the activity. Where all aspects of data collection are concerned, both the sites and participants were reported on pseudonymously to maintain confidentiality. A signed statement of informed consent was required of each participant. A matrix disaggregating interest in the phenomenon through research questions and sub-questions was also included as appendix B for perusal.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a systematic, rigorous and thoughtful process that researchers use to uncover large patterns about the central phenomenon from the data collected, (Clarke & Creswell, 2010). It involves the range of processes and procedures that are used to move from the qualitative data that has been collected into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the school leaders' experiences and the context of their practice. Data were analysed thematically and the constant comparison method of Glaser and Strauss (1967) employed. In using the constant comparison method, emphases were directed at employing coding procedures while focusing on theoretical notions that emerged along with new properties from the data.

In the initial stages of analysis of the data, transcription of the interviews were organized in computer files as well as in hard copy folders. Responses given to the researcher by participants were carefully read and notes taken of any significant or interesting component that fitted together. At the same time there were searches for essences in which were found invariant and unchangeable characteristics of the research

phenomenon (Castro, 2003). Connections between response components in relation to research questions were collected to derive key themes that describe the essence of the study. Closely related patterns were combined into sub-themes. Themes that emerged from the participants' perception about boys' education as well as those which defines the experiences of school leaders in facilitating them, will be combined to form a comprehensive and realistic picture of their collective experience. In this context, the narrative approach to analysis was found to be quite useful given the nature of the study: 'experiences of school leaders in facilitating boys' education.'

Essentially, qualitative content analysis was used as a technique to 'pull' the significant elements of the data together. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) described three approaches to qualitative content analysis: conventional, directed, or summative. In conventional content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from the text data. With a directed approach, analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guide for initial codes. A summative content analysis involves counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context. Both the conventional and direct approaches were given strong focus in regard to the analysis of the research, while the summative influence not factor, since quasi-statistical elements were not be incorporated.

Creswell and Clarke (2010) four-step process served as guide for the preparation of the data through transcription of interview audiotapes, reading and re-reading interview transcript and field data, making comparison and drawing reference about what emerges. Units were identified through coding techniques which involves finding and marking underlying ideas in the data. These units or blocks of data were discriminated

based on self-contained meanings that were detected, and then systematically interrogated for what they reveal about the topic under study. As the researcher, “imaginative variation” (Castro, 2003, p. 53) was used along with themes that emerged as frames to follow the experiences of the interviewees and reflection about different possibilities of the meaning of their individual experiences. This process enabled the production of meaning where there were found, consistent non-subjective outcomes. Following this, the insights about the meanings gleaned from data units were synthesised and integrated to produce final description, consistent with the experiences of school leaders in facilitating boys’ education (Castro, 2003). As themes and patterns that emerge from the data were identified, various threats to validity were checked against what emerged from the data and appropriate presentation made. As grounded theory emerges from the study, there should be clear reflection in the reality of the phenomenon explored. The use of a triangulation matrix involving research questions in conjunction with the interview protocol supported the data mapping process and thus the identification of patterns of relationship.

As indicated in the study earlier, and underscored here, the study is qualitative by design and therefore generated primarily qualitative data. (a) Accordingly particular attention was paid to what patterns, common themes or lack there-of that emerged from specific items in the qualitative data. (b) Attention was also paid to the extent to which the patterns or themes that emerged shed light on the broader, major research questions which guided the study. (c) It was also deemed important to consider whether there were deviations from these patterns. If so what factors could explain these *a-typical* responses. (Outliers were considered as providing divergent views and provide richness to the data).

(d) Attention was also paid to what interesting stories emerged from the data, and consideration given to how these stories helped to shed light on broader research questions such as: *'How do school leaders perceive their effectiveness as instructional leaders relative to the achievement of boys?'* (e) Consideration was also given to whether the themes that emerged from the data support the findings of other corresponding qualitative research.

Methods of Verification (validation strategies)

Studies, such as this one, that involve the collection of data through a structured instrument may very likely produce varying perspectives given its nature. Various threats to validity were deliberately checked against what emerge from the data and the appropriate presentation made.

Carefully thought-out and executed methods and procedures are essential to overcoming or reducing validity threats and increasing the veracity of conclusions about the phenomenon. Validity is the basis upon which the extent of creditability of the findings of the study rests, and therefore was given due credence in the research process. The following eight strategies by Maxwell (2005) for overcoming or reducing validity threats were found applicable to this study.

The phenomenon of understanding boys' education in relation to school leadership is one which is pre-disposed to a wide range of variables and influences. Contexts, personalities, resources and time variation were all elements which had an impact on the quality of the study. For this reason, a protracted period over which data collection and documentation took place, allowed for changing context, participants'

input and other variations to produce data that is comprehensive enough for validation processes. In the study, school leaders are the main participants and their perspectives on key principles /strategies for leadership and facilitation of boys' education are the primary focus. Long-term involvement was found to be a necessary factor in the development of such perspectives by the respondents. Intensive long-term involvement, coupled with my background experience has helped to avoid 'snap shot' and spurious approach to data gathering, thus helping to reduce validity threats in relation to inferences drawn and conclusions made. Thus the path taken in studying the topic entailed being as involved as possible over an estimated six months period, capturing the most varied and detailed perspectives. Hence for internal and external validity, triangulation, peer-debriefing, member checks, thick description and preventing premature closure of data, was given due attention.

This qualitative study of school leaders' experiences in facilitating boys' education required the garnering of 'rich' data to substantiate and thus validate the claims that arose and suggested contingent on the phenomenon. To obtain such 'rich' data and reduce or overcome validity threats, it was necessary to devise and execute interview protocol(s) that are detailed, engaging and varied in scope. Such interviews were executed and were able to reveal the 'lived' experiences of the respondents. To ensure this, verbatim transcripts of the interviews, rather than reflective notes are presented. It was also necessary to explore other frontiers of the phenomenon to further extend the 'richness' of data, and reduce the likelihood of validity threats. Accordingly, long-term involvement would be underscored by observation of context, practice and practitioners (participants).

Recorded interviews was one of the most reliable measures embraced to assist with enhancing validity. Such procedures allow for reflection to authenticate data using evidence and solicit clarification about participants' perspectives. In addition, getting feedback from participants on transcription of interviews, etcetera, helped to rule out misinterpretation of data. The bottom line is that I ensured detail responses were obtained from respondents, conduct member checks and facilitate debriefing exercises with respondents.

Fielding and Fielding (1986) emphasized the need to triangulate in terms of validity threats rather than use of particular methods which may convey systematic biases. For this particular study, avoidance of data collection techniques that encourage self-reporting without the opportunity for verification, was followed. Hence in interviewing, care was exercised in probing and conducting follow-up for substantiating and clarifying views, so as to produce the full picture of what is going on as far as the main issue of the study is concerned. To reduce validity threats, purposeful sampling guided by pre-determined criteria were used to set the stage for a comprehensive interviewing process. The fundamental principle here was to question several respondents along structured lines to focus attention on consistency and congruence within the data. As was mentioned earlier, some observational information and field notes would also be included to enhance the diversity of data sources with particular focus given to ruling out validity threats.

Discrepancies in data generation and collection are highly probable when researching in settings as highly diverse as education. School settings (including its culture and climate; leadership, faculty and students) varies. It therefore may not be

surprising to produce data/cases that are incongruent from one context to another. There were anticipation of alternative explanations and so care was taken regarding making explanations and present these in tandem with explanation that works for all the analyses. Where negative cases and discrepancies were sharply in focus, the researcher was careful to avoid making claims one way or another. According to suggestion by Wolcott (1990), where there were difficult cases, the best that could be done was to report the discrepant evidence and allow readers to evaluate and draw their own conclusion. Finally, the researcher incorporated members checking as a means of cross-checking the veracity of data obtained from participants. This action is key to having 'clean' data for credible outcomes.

Ethical Issues

Since the research primarily involved the use of interview schedule, with self-reflection components, a concerted effort was made to keep confidentiality and my commitment to same in the forefront of all the processes of the research. To begin with, personal identifiers were omitted from the process, and steps taken to ensure the programs of the school organization were not altered, to ensure students were not robbed of valuable instructional time. While it was not envisioned that participants would have been traumatized or otherwise distressed by participating, proper provision was made to hosts them separately for interview in such ways and context as to ensure comfort and relaxation for all involved. It occurred that majority of respondents played host to the researcher and were quite composed in their respective context. Each participant was allowed the freedom of choice for withdrawal from participation, without any penalty, hence no one was made to feel he/she is put under any psychological duress. In order for

them to feel comfortable in disclosing their thoughts and reflections honestly, based on their experiences, it was found extremely necessary to establish a trustworthy rapport with each participant (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, in relation to the ethical aspects, all of the IRB procedures were followed to ensure the highest standards were adhered to in the conduct of the study. Accordingly, issues of confidentiality, privacy and protection from any form of harm will be given careful attention.

Relation to Theory and Literature

This study endeavoured to provide clearer understanding of the issues school leaders encounter in facilitating boys' education and encouraging high achievement. There is adequate literature addressing the issue of boys' education, but unfortunately the element of school leadership has not been significantly explored in relation to this. This literature has been found to be grounded in broad theoretical foundations dating back to the late nineteenth century. The growth in psychology during the twentieth century brought new emphasis and meaning to the issue. Subsequently, most methods for addressing boys' education and school leadership is focused on understanding students' problems and helping them better understand themselves and work cooperatively with adults to produce more productive outcomes. The principal theoretical foundation and preoccupation of the literature undergirding the study involves theory of development (cognitive, social and physical), primarily as these relate to boys' relative to girls' educational achievement. Differentiation instruction is embraced in the literature as a philosophy of teaching that is based on the premise that students learn best when their teachers accommodates their differences, and is found suited for inclusion in the study on boys' education. Self-efficacy as an off-shoot of Bandura's social learning theory also

form an important basis for interrogating school leaders' effectiveness, whilst transformational leadership as a theory of leadership provides applicable principles for leaders' empowerment in facilitating boys' education.

Given that motivation plays a key role in achieving success in teaching, learning and classroom management, examining the Attribution theory provides a promising foundation for helping students, while effectively managing classrooms and schools. Kuykendall (2004) notes that in order to enhance students' motivation to learn and hope for the future, "curricula must be revised to foster an appreciation of all the positive components of the students' racial or cultural group, as well as the most accurate portrayal of history from the perspective of that particular racial or cultural group" (p.67). Teel, Debruin-Parecki, and Covington (1998) summarized a study incorporating four strategies – "effort-based grading, multiple-performance opportunities, increased student responsibility and choice, and validation of cultural heritage" (p. 482), thus: given certain classroom conditions in which teaching strategies were used that addressed diverse student interest, talents and strengths, student at risk for school failure became just as engaged and motivated in a positive way as the more "high achieving" students. Negative motivation, observed somewhat at first, gradually decreased (p.492). Thus, School leadership and classroom management approaches that merges social and motivation theories, seem to have emerged as means by which to best understand the nature of education dynamics and address the needs of students.

Summary

Research into the education of boys has expanded dramatically during the past several decades. Teachers can increasingly draw on an expanding body of methods and

strategy that will enable them to create more positive, supportive classroom environments; better organize and instruct their students; and more effectively respond to the academic needs of students. The efficacy of new methods can be enhanced if teachers and school leaders have a clear philosophy of boys' learning and understand their own responsibilities and those of their students and school support personnel. The ethic of care (Sergiovianni, 1994) is widely viewed as the heart of the professional ideal in teaching. It encompasses doing everything possible to enhance the learning, developmental, and social needs of students as persons. Quality relationships with others (parents, teachers, and students), characterized by nurturance, altruistic love, and kingship-like connections are central to the act of caring in schools.

It is clear that the perspectives on school leadership and classroom management vary widely and involve many contending and inter-related features. Focused and context-specific research on the phenomenon, like this study on the experiences of school leaders in facilitating boys' education, serves useful purposes for all stake-holders. The study stands to highlight and under-gird key features and strategies found relevant in understanding the process of providing leadership in educating boys. Important work of several decades and those in the forefront of the phenomenon being investigated have provided a satisfactory frame of reference for the research. Good instructional leadership is now known by researchers to be the first line of defense in behavior management. That is, a good instructional program gives focus to boys and so reduce the tendency to embrace negative tendencies. Better understanding of these influences will guide school leaders, teachers and other stakeholders to adopt appropriate approaches to address the issue of boys' education for the well-being of the boys themselves, the schools and the

society as a whole. Clearly understanding the strong inter-relationship of internal and external factors holds much promise for effective leadership of schools and the generation of wholesome experiences in facilitating boys' education in particular. Something the study has sought to kindle.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Overview and Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the twelve (12) interviews conducted as part of the exploratory qualitative study: *Education of boys: Experiences of Secondary School leaders in educating boys in Central Jamaica*. The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of school leaders in facilitating the education of boys and to analyze those experiences so as to gain insights for answers to the problems of boys' achievement levels.

Answers were sought from the perspectives and shared experiences of three categories of school leaders: Principals, Guidance Counsellors and the HOD for English Language Departments in the four schools targeted. The researcher sought to understand the factors to which school leaders attribute boys' achievement, how school leaders respond to key artifacts attributable to the education of boys in secondary schools in Central Jamaica; what school leaders do in response to those factors believed to attribute to boys' achievement and how effective school leaders think their responses are to factors attributable to boys' achievement and school leaders' views regarding the effect of their responses to factors.

As the primary means of data sourcing for the study, the researcher conducted twelve interactive face-to-face interviews between April and June 2019, the interview participants included four principals (top level administrators) four counsellors (middle leaders) and four HODs (middle leaders). To preserve the confidentiality and privacy of participants, pseudonym was assigned to each (table 4.1). Due to the sensitivity surrounding school climate and culture and competitive nature of school placements,

codes were assigned to allow for anonymity of these institutions. A descriptive profile of participants according to categories is provided in the ensuing section.

Participants Profiles

There were twelve participants in this explorative qualitative study, seven males and five females. The twelve participants comprise four of each principals, guidance counsellors and the Head of Department for English Language. These three categories of school leaders represents four secondary schools operating in central Jamaica under the aegis of the Ministry of Education in the Government of Jamaica.

At the time of the conduct of the study, three of the four principals were men and there was one woman; of the four counsellors three were men and one woman; and all four HODs for Language Arts were women.

The number of years' experience at the level of principal-ship varied among participants and range from five years to thirteen years. The average number of years' experience as principal is 8 years. Each had working experience in the education fraternity prior to assuming leadership roles as principal and interestingly they either served as specialist Mathematics teachers (three) or had experience teaching the subject. Except for the female, the principals had worked at their affiliated institution in this capacity for five years or more and given between ten and twenty years' service overall to the same institution.

Table 4.1: Participants' designations and alignments.

Pseudonyms	Gender	Age Category	School-Aligned Codes	Leadership Position
Ms. Burnt	Female	45-54	NT-A-P	HOD-Languages
Mr. Day	Male	45-54	NT-A-P	Principal
Mr. Weller	Male	45-54	NT-A-P	Guidance Counsellor
Ms. Malox	Female	55-64	NT-B-M	HOD-Languages
Mrs. Bohn	Female	45-54	NT-B-M	Guidance Counsellor
Mr. Cox	Male	35-44	NT-B-M	Principal
Mr. Stair	Male	35-44	T-B-M	Guidance Counsellor
Mrs. Wills	Female	45-54	T-B-M	HOD-Languages
Mr. April	Male	45-54	T-B-M	Principal
Mrs. Lewin	Female	45-54	T-A-D	Principal
Mr. O'ban	Male	45-54	T-A-D	Guidance Counsellor
Ms. Cameron	Female	55-64	T-A-D	HOD-Languages

Principal April

Principal April is a veteran teacher of over thirty years. Prior to his appointment to the position of principal, he served with distinction as a mathematics teacher at the secondary level. He expressed his passion for the subject and has continued fueling that passion through advocacy and reaching out to those who need practical help with the subject matter. Having pursued principals' training at the National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL), Mr. April has distinguished himself as a successful school leader for over thirteen years. During this time he has also served the Ministry of

Education as a Panel Assessor for schools, the Inter-Secondary Sports Association (ISSA) and the Jamaica Teachers' Association (JTA). He is an avid cricketer who plays the game for his professional organization in parish competitions.

Counsellor Bohn

Counsellor/Mrs. Bohn is a trained teacher of the biological sciences, and also a trained guidance counsellor. At the time of interviewing her, she was pursuing master's degree studies in clinical psychology. She serves as an adjunct faculty to two local (Manchester based) tertiary institutions. Mrs. Bohn has been working as a school counsellor for the past twelve years, having had prior teaching experiences. She expressed much happiness at being at the school she described as a 'microcosm of the world', noting the total set of experiences to which students and staff are exposed, and which can prepare students for world living.

HOD Burnt

HOD/Ms. Burnt achieved trained teacher status in her early twenties and went on to attain the master's degree, specializing in Language and Literacy Education. Based on her training and special competencies, she was drafted on many workshop teams by the Ministry of Education to help Literacy and other Language Arts practitioners cope with curricula challenges and new policy foci. Ms. Burnt has also served as adjunct faculty in teacher training programs over several years. She has vast experience in facilitating boys for thirty one years as a teacher and nineteen years as head of language education at her school.

HOD Cameron

HOD/Ms. Cameron has adapted well in the Jamaican educational landscape from another Caribbean context. She has served in the area of Language Education with diligence and professionalism. She is an outstanding model of English language usage for her students and colleagues beyond her specific school context, having served as an adjunct lecturer at a leading teacher training college in Jamaica. As head of department for eight years, she has been responsible for supervising twelve teachers, spanning the Caribbean Secondary Examination Council (CSEC) and the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations (CAPE) syllabi.

Principal Cox

Principal Cox is a keen individual who is well grounded in the teaching of mathematics. His particular knowledge and expertise in the teaching of mathematics caught the attention of the Ministry of Education and so he was drafted by that entity to assist in teacher development, particularly as it relates to mathematics teachers. Subsequently, Mr. Cox moved up the ranks to the position of Vice Principal, and was soon promoted to serve as Principal at his school. This is a position that he has so far held for five years. Outside of his engagement with secondary school students, Mr. Cox has facilitated teachers in training and mentored many young teachers in his employ. He is recognized as a respectable community leader and advocate, serving in his local church and distinguishing himself in other community endeavors.

Principal Day

Mr. Day is an experienced educator with varied experiences in the engagement of students. Apart from being a specialist teacher, he served as Boarding Master for boys and therefore had opportunity to also facilitate the social development of young men. Mr. Day has served as Principal in two different schools, and has been engaged at his present school for eleven years. He prides himself as a transformational leader and this is evidenced by the many positive changes which are associated with his tenure at the school.

Principal/Mrs. Lewin

Principal Lewin believes all the “negative connotations” relating to education has been awarded her, including being described as a work-a-holic; she does enjoy education and relishes being in the classroom. Having obtained teacher training and certification in Kingston, Jamaica, Mrs. Lewin returned to her rural roots where she taught a mixture of subjects at the secondary level for several years. She did further studies and obtained a master’s degree in teaching and learning, before taking her professional practice to North America. Ms. Lewin described her five years sojourn in North American schools as beneficial to her professional growth and development. Following her return to her homeland Jamaica, she took the job of Principal at a newly created high school, during which tenure she pursued principalship training at the National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL). At the time of the interview for this study she was completing her second year as principal of a much larger and well established high school. She would have completed five years as principal altogether.

HOD Malox

Ms. Malox is a career Language Arts teacher, who gave her professional services at both private and public secondary schools. At the time of her interview for this study, she was in her second stint at the school, having served 2006 – 2011, and returned in 2014 to serve as head of the language arts department. Though nearing retirement according to employment statutes, Ms. Malox was a model of enthusiasm, assertiveness and professionalism as she responded to the interview, and observed responding to responsibilities at the school. As head of department, she supervises teachers of English, Spanish and French. This advocate for more men teachers in the school, believes they will be better able to contribute to boys' education in terms of interactions, and being more relatable to the needs of boys.

Counsellor O'ban

Counsellor O'ban is a trained Minister of Religion, who, up to the time of interview for this study in 2019, was serving as guidance counsellor at the school of employment for five years. Mr. O'ban do not have formal training in education but he has adapted to the teaching and learning environment of the school very well. His training in Guidance and Counselling and the on-going professional development workshop organized by the school would have helped him respond satisfactorily to the demands of the job. The father of two teenage boys believes the challenge the boys are facing in the society plays on them a lot and so educators have to try and get into their psyche to devise the right approach for reaching them.

Counsellor Stair

Mr. Stair has been a counsellor for twelve years, seven of which he served as head of department. Having completed the degree in counselling psychology, he was soon hired as school counsellor at one of the most outstanding high schools in Central Jamaica. Mr. Stair described himself as an incisive counsellor and mentor who believes he has his ‘fingers on the pulse’ where engaging students, particularly young men is concerned. Apart from leadership of his department, he defined his dedicated focus as overseeing the students’ exit plan (that is helping students with readiness for life after secondary school); supervising the school’s and government’s welfare programs.

Counsellor Weller

Mr. Weller experienced what it means to rise above negative stereotypes to achieving academic success. Having been denied the opportunity to enter high school on account of early academic challenges, he took alternative route to acquire adequate educational foundation and subsequently earned a diploma in biblical studies, a degree in guidance and counselling, and a master’s degree in teaching and learning. He has served as Guidance Counsellor for more than two years and has acted as interim principal for two years at his school of current employment. Mr. Weller is an active Minister in his local church and finds time to participate in community outreach as a member of the Kiwanis club of Mandeville.

HOD Wills

HOD Wills has been a language arts teacher at one of the top rated schools in central Jamaica, for twenty one years. Up to the time of the interview for this study in

2019, she has served as head of department for nine years. She is responsible for overseeing teaching and learning in the department, and among other things, designing and implementing intervention plans to help students with academic challenges, especially those related to language learning.

Representative View of the Principal's Roles in the School

The responsibility of the principal in the school is wide-ranging and includes broad categories such as: (a) administrative duties having to do with registration of students and teachers; (b) Recruitment and selection issues in collaboration with the board of management to ensure best fit teachers and relevant support administrative and ancillary staffs are employed; (c) Accountability issues having to serve as the chief accountable officer managing every aspect of the school to include oversight of finances. Supervising safety and security portfolio as well, which is a broad area that the Ministry of Education has strong interest in; (d) Facilities Management is also a significant area of responsibility requiring keen oversight of the physical plant to include addressing maintenance needs and providing protection against safety and security hazards in the school environment; (e) Instructional management was also sighted as a critical area that must be dealt with by leaders, specifically the principal, who is the chief instructional leader, and this must be addressed in conjunction with maintaining good discipline in the school.

Glimpses of the HOD's Responsibilities

Years of service from Language Arts Heads of Department (HODs) at their current schools range from 11 years to 31 years. Three HODs had tenure exceeding

twenty years and their leadership engagement span a low of five years and a high of nineteen years.

Responsibilities as expressed by Language Arts HOD Burnt (NT-A-P) include overseeing teaching and learning in the department. This involves supervision of teachers in the department, vetting of lesson plans to ensure they properly reflect the contents of the curriculum and cater to the different needs of students in the classes; review of examination scripts and students' performance. HODs are also responsible for deploying teachers for the different year group levels and appraising teachers at the required time.

The HOD is responsible to oversee teaching and assessment of students relative to subject offerings, convene meeting and address the needs of the department as they arise.

Overview of Guidance Counsellors' Responsibilities

Participating counsellors have been very stable at the respective schools with three serving between twelve and thirteen years and the fourth, six years. Of the group, three are men and the other a woman. Two of the men are ministers of religion, and three have received training and certification in education.

Dedicated service is given to the affective wellbeing of the students: the feelings, aspirations, dreams and hopes; those parts of the individual student that you cannot touch physically, but which you can use resources around you to develop. This is reportedly achieved by developing a comprehensive guidance program that seeks to cater to the needs of various stakeholders within the school; the primary interest being their mental, social, emotional, academic and spiritual development. (Bohn, NT-B-M).

Dedicated focus is given to assisting students with the transition process from school to the world of work or tertiary education. There is also a conduct probation or other forms of disciplinary system for which supervision is given. Guidance is taught at the grade 9 level and includes career education and curricular topics such as healthy relations and sexuality. Other areas of responsibility include guiding the principal's distinction club, the school's honoring system and overseeing the Career Advancement Program (CAP); the Ministry of Education project to keep students in school up to eighteen years.

Participants (Principal, Counsellor, HODs) were selected based on their position as leaders in their respective schools with the capacity to shape or impact school wide decisions making processes and influence practices that are significant to the education of boys.

Analytical Themes

The findings produced by this study have been organized and presented according to themes that emerged from the analysis of the participants' responses to the interview questions. Associated with these main themes are several sub-themes which assist in expanding understanding of the main issue of the study. Together, both themes and sub-themes are presented within the broad contextual frame of the major research questions and sub-questions. The major categorical themes that emerged from analyzing the data are concerned with factors attributed to boys' achievement, school leaders' response to factors attribute to boys' achievement, content analysis of key artefacts (curriculum guide, lesson plans, teacher evaluation) associated with perceptions of leader effectiveness on issues of boys' education. Several sub-themes that are linked to each of

the aforementioned analytical theme were identified and used to better contextualize the views, beliefs, insights and general perspectives shared by the interview respondents. For continuity of thought and perspectives according to themes, responses from each category of respondents will be interwoven to provide as a complete a picture as possible to the research questions. Category identifiers will be used throughout to delineate responses of respondents for comparative views as may be necessary.

These themes and sub-themes are products of the overarching research questions that have guided the study: (a) to what factors do school leaders attribute boys' achievement? (b) How do school leaders respond to key artefacts attributable to the education of boys in Secondary Schools in Central Jamaica? (c) What do school leaders do in response to these factors believed to attribute to boys' achievement? (d) How effective do school leaders think their responses are to factors attributable to boys' achievement?

Research Question – 1: To what factors do school leaders attribute boys' achievement?

Theme: Supportive environment, conducive to learning and student development.

Factors Attributed to Boys' Achievement levels

Introduction

Concerns about boys' academic achievement in the Jamaican education system has swirled around for many years with varied explanations for the observed lower levels of performance by boys. While this concern appears pervasive it must be acknowledged that the perceived record of underachievement is not generalizable to all boys as many boys do perform at their age and grade appropriate levels. It has emerged however that

boys' achievement level can be attributed to several factors not the least of which is the level of connectedness that boys feel towards their school. As the participants shared their views on factors attributed to boys' achievement, several sub-themes emerged. These sub-themes included family relations and structure, the discipline of boys in attending to educational goals, mentorship support, provision of co-curricular activities and approaches to teaching.

All the factors impacting boys' education are played out in the environment/ ecosystem where they live, grow and develop as human beings. The primary institution and structures that facilitate them are the home, school and the wider community. School leadership plays a key role in connecting the home, school and community in ways that supports boys' development; in a system of competing influences from factors seemingly antagonistic to wholesome co-existent and balanced advancement. Such factors as popular culture, economic status, gender (including feminization and hyper-masculinity), identity and socialization issues are part of the mix of influencers, believed to be impacting boys in their educational attainment efforts. Hence the themes being pursued in the sections of this chapter: Supportive environment, conducive to learning and student development; content analysis of key artifacts for the effective education of boys; school leadership: connecting the home, school and community of boys' reality in a social system; and school leadership and engagement.

Family Relations and Structure

School leaders bemoans the present state of families in Jamaica, noting the effects that are played out in schools daily. Counsellor Weller shared the view that boys who are not performing well, are typically from single parent homes, are under sibling supervision

or are otherwise left on their own while parents pursue economic opportunities. They expressed the view that more students lived with their mothers than with their fathers and that boys were also more likely to live with another adult than they were to live with their father.

Principal April noted that the family is the most glaring characteristic difference identified among performing and non-performing boys. He stressed that those from a nuclear family structure tended to get support and they conformed to the pursuit of their education more purposefully. He emphasized that even where there are issues, those can be readily addressed in relational context where there are responsive parents. Principal April further suggested that the issue of the broken home with absentee father is a major contributing factor of boys' low performance level.

Mrs. Wills, (H.O.D) underscored the view that the factor of home relationship is a serious matter in relation to boys' response to education. She stressed that some experiences are brought out in literature classes as boys relate experiences in the course content (story or poem) with their own. This has triggered a different kind of response from the teacher. For example, she said: "Sometimes the experience points to a poor relationship with father, non-existence of father around the home; single mother who is putting too much pressure, for whom rebelliousness becomes the outlet, HOD Wills noted."

Against the foregoing, the teacher becomes the immediate counsellor who would have sought to help the distressed boy come to a better understanding of why parents may seem to put pressure on them. This becomes a reference point for the teacher and

counsellor to collaborate, with the teacher either simply referring the student, or inviting the counsellor to address the topic to the class/group as a whole.

H.O.D Malox's suggestion of fostering a strong home school relationship is quite instructive as a means of filling some of the breach created at home. She highlighted the importance of school leaders having a strong understanding of the sociological factors impacting boys, especially in relationship to their home and community environments. She emphasized that:

The presence of parents, a father figure and/or an older brother who can give guidance and relate to school leadership can significantly influence boys' response to education. Parents' inability to finance their boys' education will also adversely impact responses such as attendance, the absence of which could lead to frustration, an antecedent to school disciplinary problems and drop out.

Principal Day made the poignant point on a similar sociologically related aspect of the boys' home school dynamics. He asserts that there are self-esteem issues that are sometimes exacerbated by some social and environmental reinforcement: boys are told they are no good; they will come to nothing; and many of them tend to live this out. Principal Day suggested that good examples (role models) helps, as when the father is in the home, the boys usually perform better. The boys who go on the streets and such do not like to stay at home because the father is not there and according to them the mother 'terrorize' them. Many of them find gangs to align themselves with. Some of whom become set in their ways from as early as eight years old, reported Principal Day, who interacts with them and their parent (mother) as situation warrants.

Burnt (HOD), made the related point that the community culture and the culture of the school itself, tend not to be very attractive to the more discerning clientele and so

many of the parents who become associated with the school, do not put a premium on education. Burnt observed that:

The school is not one that is identified as first, second or third choice, especially among top performing students and discerning parents. Accordingly, the students who are registered at the school are primarily ones who are not focused on mainstream education and the response of the parents to their education would reflect that. So sometimes parents will see the students who are placed there as those who will not achieve much academically and so there are not much interest shown in their academic growth and development.

Certainly the family and the context of the home is the cradle in which the early forming of the individual takes place. Counsellor Bohn recognized this when she echoed the sentiment of Principal Day on the impact of home and family on boys' attainment of education.

So the home for me personally. I think one of the most important factor is a male actually being present and being active in his role as a male. Being a good example and actually encouraging education because when there is no male or the male is not playing a full role, these young men have to turn around and find other idols. Sometimes their peers, sometimes artistes, movie stars, they look out. They have to search for it. That is partly why we see so many of them bleaching and following these trends because they are looking for somebody to follow.

The breakdown in family structure, observed Principal April is a sore issue. We have a structure which continue to churn out unwanted boys with no father figure to look to. So that even if we were to get rid of all criminals at a point in time, we have a system that continues to produce boys that are left on their own to turn to guns and other antisocial conduct.

HOD Wills observed also that boys who perform well at school generally have support at home, whether mother and/or father or other close relative. Wills emphasized that:

These tend to be organized in their own way, not quite as well as the girls, but have some semblance of order to their approach in meeting demands of school. They tend to be good leaders, who invest times serve on the students' council body or is just good at keeping the classroom organized, especially in the absence of teachers or prefects.

The example was given of boys who participate in sports as co-curricular activity but still perform well in their academic work. HOD Malox concludes that when boys know that parents are involved in their education and maintain a strong relationship with school authority, their likelihood of being positively responsive to education, is enhanced.

It appears context is a significant variant among schools, and can negatively impact boys' performance and the perceptions members of the wider community cultivate about respective schools. Accordingly, many boys seem to start their secondary education at a disadvantage and therefore it is a serious disservice to them, if they are not given quality facilitation in discipline and guidance to establish some measure of equity for their development.

Boys' Discipline in Attending to Educational Goals

It has emerged from respondents that discipline is a significant factor impacting boys' attainment efforts at school. Not only were concerns expressed about social behavior and dealing with the inevitability of it but there was much emphases on the importance of boys to be focused on improving academic achievement.

It can therefore be more readily understood why Principal Lewin would opt for the more conciliatory position in responding to boys. Noting that when there is a strong bond and partnerships within the school and between home and school, boys tend to be a

lot more focused on their achievement goals and produce better behavior. She emphasized the point noting that:

As leaders we have to encourage our teachers to adopt a more mentorship, rather than punitive and harsh response when students err or fail to honor their academic obligations. It is something that will have to be worked on – so teachers may have to be made to understand that when children are referred to administrators for breaches, they may not have to be suspended from school, and refusal to do so is not an indication of extreme leniency. Teachers may wonder why, but every case has to be examined on its own merit and even when students are punished, we spend time to speak with them to explain and work through the issues. This affords me the opportunity to get to know the student. I am able to call the student by name, where I was not able to do so before, when seen on campus and so on, and the student may even feel freer to come to the office. So out of a bad situation, properly treated, could come good, and strong bonds and long-lasting relationships can be born, based on how the situations are handled. Accordingly, colleagues have to be encouraged to adopt a more mentoring and nurturing role of boys as we find many are not getting that from homes. Many of our most difficult cases are where the homes are weak.

Similar views were shared by Principal Day with his assertion that “discipline is a major matter and the home has something to do with it”. It is his belief that many boys enter school at grade seven (form 1) with minds set in the ways of the street, so it is difficult to change them from many of the negative without influences previously adopted. Principal Day further asserted:

As a leader and a man, I find I have to be the influence; so you will find the way I speak to my boys is different from how the ladies speak to them. Hence, you will find when anything happens, they would rather come to me than going to a female member of staff. Sometimes I do not have the time, but I can’t drive them away. They know no matter what I tell them, I have their best interests at heart; that I can care for them and will speak to them in a respectable manner.

“Those things they know,” Principal Day emphatically declared. This principal further explained how he can make a boy feel ashamed of his behavior by the way he calls him and talks to him when he is doing wrong. Noting that the boy will quickly say

he is sorry and his whole attitude change from being aggressive etcetera. Day continued to explain his discipline style, and remarked that:

You will find no matter how old they are, they still gravitate towards me because I give them positive feedback and they know I desire the best for them; I let them know they are worth something and that I expect great things from them.

Principal Day implored more teachers and school leaders to be as he explained he operates, cautioning that it makes no sense to be unduly aggressive with them, intimating that they are already very familiar with aggression.

Some schools such as T-B-M, where Mr. Stair is a counsellor, have sought to develop and maintain a zero-tolerance disciplinary culture. Mr. Stair explained that as a school, there is a strong disciplinary system which is believed to provide the kind of structure that boys need to function well. He asserted that:

To some extent, they (boys) need some kind of controlled environment to function optimally. The disciplinary system with conduct probation processes facilitate this. Negative situations are nipped in the bud. When untenable situations arise and when students are suspended, what generally follows are a combination of parent conferences, individual counselling and group counselling, in which case, teams are invited to come in and motivate the boys.

Principal Day suggested that boys love when you sit and talk with them in a respectful manner – you can make a boy feel remorseful for his action by the respectable way you approach him when he is not doing right. Additionally, Mr. Day expressed the view that you can be firm and strict and even punish a boy and he still appreciates you. You can be strict and so forth, but the boys also need love and care amidst the firmness and the punishment given. We know that even though they are boys who themselves think they are rough and tough; they really are not.

Whilst disciplinary infraction aligned to social interaction and responses to leadership is a significant matter, of even greater concern is the boys' dedication to apply himself to learning which can guide him in his development.

Language H.O.D Burnt, lamented the observation that some boys feel that they are not going to achieve much academically, and most of them have lower than expected ability levels; and whilst some will gravitate to the technical vocational areas, most of them will display negative attitudes towards mainstream academic subjects. In addition, they will display unwillingness to participate in class activities, complete homework and other associated academic engagements.

On the other hand, and thankfully so, there are boys in the school context who display the desired attitude and aptitude for academic and personal development as reported by Ms. Burnt. Such boys tend to have clear career goals, so they have identified what they want to do in life, and they have identified steps they need to take to achieve their career goals. Additionally, Ms. Burnt reports that boys who perform, typically: "Attends all classes, actively participates in classes through questioning, respond to instructions, complete assignments, is interested in the outcome of assessment and generally express the desire to know if they are performing satisfactorily."

In terms of their general presentation, Ms. Burnt explained that the boy who displays and interest in educational achievement, presents with demeanor that is courteous, is well-mannered, well-behaved and generally reflects positive personality traits and behavioral characteristics. He will obey the school rules and becomes distraught if he breaks any, especially if disciplinary action has to be taken against him. H.O.D Burnt observed that the reverse is true for non-performing boy:

He is often late for school and for classes, is generally inappropriately attired and spends much time on the school's corridors disengaged from classes. Furthermore, he is disruptive in class when present, responds negatively to instructions, does not complete assigned tasks and displays very little interest in his academic progress

HOD Wills has observed too, that the boys who present with lower achievement levels are heavily distracted by a myriad of social economic and physical factors in the environment. She notes, there is usually something that triggers a fall by the wayside and by the time the fall in performance is recognized, it is far gone, and would take some amount of work to get them back. Mrs. Wills attributes such response to factors outside the school – usually the home. “Something in the home is causing them some amount of pressure; displayed by indiscipline, withdrawal and non-completion of tasks,” she suggested. Accordingly, she is of the view that the teacher has to be cognizant of the behaviors and be informed if it is determined that some things are happening in the boy's life/environment that is a deterrent to his educational focus.

Ms. Cameron (HOD) has observed that in addition to the positive qualities reported by Burnt and other respondents, performing boys tend to have an air of confidence that they exude as part of their persona. Those who have given sub-optimal performance embrace more of the street mentality and usually have to be told or reminded to attire themselves properly at school. Additionally, they tend to want to use street language in communicating with peers and teachers, so their values are called into question.

Counsellor Stair has extended the foregoing views to include the observation that in his context (T-B-M) the best performing boys over the years tend to come from nuclear families. Examples of top performing boys were given and confirmed to be from

stable backgrounds as in the case of the nuclear structure. Stair (T-B-M) emphasized that where there were single parent situations with weak mothers, there are likely no end to trouble.

This assertion bears close relations to Counsellor Weller's declaration that in his context a no-nonsense system of disciplining had to be employed. He explained that although it may sound draconian it is mandatory that they (boys) participate – they do not have a choice, so they respond favorably at times. They later recognize that the systems put in place are necessary and are for their best interest. Compellingly, Counsellor Weller explained that:

At the end of the day, when they do well, their parents and themselves appreciate that they were compelled to undergo the stringent measures in order to improve themselves and their education. The reality is that boys in the local culture are part of the cultural norm of irresponsibility and therefore have to be forced to learn responsible behavior. Critical to the sustainable success of any draconian-like measure would be mentorship support that will develop in individual's strong agency, giving rise to more characteristic and positive autonomous behaviors.

Mentorship Support

Boys can learn a tremendous amount about real world challenges and the possible rewards of schooling and education through mentoring experiences with peers and leaders within the school context. Principal, Mr. April explained that in his school one of the main sources of support to boys' education is a mentoring program. In this program there is twinning of successful and exemplary male students and teachers with

younger and especially less successful ones, whether academic or behavioral, to rescue some of the boys who were trending in a negative direction. As part of the mentorship and guidance, Principal April referred to the importance of spiritual development, which is fostered in the school and which he emphasized cannot be left out, noting: “We are very big on that.”

Mr. April further informed that the school was founded on Christian principles and so sometimes when boys’ sessions are held, time is taken to encourage boys in terms of their spiritual growth and development and the importance of having a relationship with a supreme being. At Principal April’s school, mentorship is structured from first to sixth form. Boys can get into the principal’s distinction program if they get grades of 80% and above for fourth to sixth form and 85% and above for first to third form. Hence from an academic standpoint these students are the first port of call to support those not doing so well in their academic program. This type of engagement is made possible through the coordination of the vice principal who coordinates academic programs. This individual works through the mentors’ schedule to ensure weekly one-to-one meetings with specific guidelines (curriculum related) that the mentors are expected to get through in relation to the area of weakness that would have been identified by the subject teacher. The vice principal keeps a tab on things to ensure satisfactory outcomes, as mentors get a chance to work through issues with mentees on an on-going basis.

Principal Lewin expressed strong sentiments in outlining the need to specially scaffold boys in the education system. She declares:

We reach out to our boys; they love when you connect with them. So, for simple things like calling them by name (not for hurling reprimand, etc.) but for

acknowledgement, makes them feel good. So this connecting, this nurturing is an attitude that should be embraced. This should not be interpreted as letting your guard down, being overly lenient or being permissive. You have to show a more caring attitude in this society – be inclusive, be understanding. It is more authoritative, not authoritarian. The authoritarian leadership style must be bid good-bye in treating with today's youth in the classroom. With the authoritative style, you are firm but with caring and understanding.

Another form of mentorship practiced at T-B-M is described as behavioral. This form is not organized in terms of meeting sessions, but is monitored and followed through by the sports department, office of the dean of discipline, guidance and counselling units and others, (April, T-B-M). April reported that:

Here is where the teachers and some of the school's most exemplary students, work together to help others who tend to incur behavioral infractions that may lead to suspension. Though not organized as the academic format, the mentors are able to give feedback after a number of mandated sessions are completed. A one-to-one ratio (male: male) is used in the behavior mentorship initiative.

Speaking of a similar engagement in his NT-A-D context, Counsellor Weller reiterated the point that boys need more mentoring and guidance – a guiding process that is very stringent early in their schooling. Later in their school life, a monitoring system is put in place in concert with parental consultation. Extra classes, camps, summer classes and night sessions are strategies used to assist boys in particular to pass external examinations and gain some empowerment on leaving school. Special intervention program activities are included, especially for boys deemed to be at risk, at these occasions agencies of the state and from the private sector along with parents are brought together to encourage boys through motivational speeches, economic initiatives and

scholarships. Most times 90-95% of boys in the school are caught in this web and since there is no special program from the Ministry of Education to address the need, it is the school leaders that took the initiative and responded.

In underscoring the need for school leaders to be actively involved as it pertains to motivating boys to perform, Principal Lewin explained how she had to call a boy, in the throes of trouble, into her office for guidance. The conversation that proceeded between both of them was reported by Lewin, thus:

I heard you are walking into examination sessions and coming out in ten minutes, not doing papers at all, handing in incomplete papers and all that. He justified all of them saying, Miss, on one occasion I was out in ten minutes because I was done – I said, how long was the paper? And he said, forty five minutes. To which I replied, not even I could do a forty five minutes paper in ten minutes. He responded, Miss, I am telling you, I was done. Next, he said, Miss I was in an exam, John Brown (name changed) came to me, called me to the door and started talking about my hair. It's an exam I was going to do and I was being reprimanded boisterously about my hair – I was demotivated, I did not want to do an exam again; what kind of performance would I have done after that, so I left? The other occasion he said he was trying to talk to a teacher about something but he was not able to get through to the teacher. So I said, she offered you support. He said, Miss at what time, when I was already leaving, that's when the support was coming. It was no good to me at that time.

Principal Lewin went on to explain to the young man that it was his education that was at stake and that he should not act like he was hinging his success on others, on other person's attitude to him and so forth. She used herself as an example to explain the attitude he should take and how he should function:

I do regardless of; I do in spite of and I do to show you also that I am going to perform in spite of all you are doing. Stubbornly, the young man responded: Miss, that may be you, I don't function that way. At such a response, Principal Lewin reportedly

took the position that psychological assessment and care may be the best course of action for the boy, to help him understand that he need to perform for his own self-interest. She went on to explain how circumstances of conflict between teachers and young men pulls the school leader in to take decisive actions. Noting that often times the essence of the conflict can best be understood when the student is called to the office and given voice. At such times education took a different trajectory from that which the boys are accustomed, as Principal Lewin explained:

I have to educate them on how to operate in the classroom; to be open; to be frank; to speak their truth. Given this background they are taught how to navigate the nuances of conversation and interaction with people, with teachers in the classroom. I have to educate the boys in particular, that sometimes, it is not ‘the what’ is ‘the how.’ She intimated that there are many times that students are right, but what is usually at play is a face saving thing or an authority versus the sub-servient taking the center stage.

The enthusiasm to help boys in other school contexts was felt no less based on expressions from Mrs. Bohn (NT-B-M):

When I see young men, especially stepping up to the plate, I have to encourage and guide them to remain on a positive trajectory. You don’t just reprimand the bad, but you commend the good shown by them. You reinforce good so they know that it’s good to remain like that. It is important to reinforce them when they make the transition from the portrayal of negative attitudes to positive behaviors, as was the case with a young man whose improvement has led to his nomination to the students’ council.

Mrs. Bohn further charged that as leaders in the school:

We must gain their trust, be their friend and talk with them, not only to them. When they pass their place, you keep them in check. Let them remember that hey, I am the school leader, the adult, you are the student, the child; and encourage them when they are doing well. When it comes to bad, you address it just the same, with forthrightness. Don’t condone it. I have some of them I would consider my little friends, they come and see me sometimes, reason with me and so forth but when I see them slipping up... If I see them improperly attired, I say “no man, fix up, you are at school.” So, you correct them in love, straighten them up and for you as a

person, you try to keep yourself in the way that you want them to be in regards to dress, your speech, how you relate to people and so forth. Being a good example gives great support to your guidance and mentorship efforts.

For Counsellor Bohn, accepting an invitation from a group of boys to join them on the games field for a game of cricket was special. She expressed her feelings this way:

I said yes! Anything to be involved with the young men. I have a passion to be in their presence because I always seek to emulate Christ's method. He did not stay from far off and try to tell people what to do. Mix with them, gain their trust and then when you say certain things, they will be more apt to listen. If you stand from outside and try to say something to them it is like you are just a critic, you don't know me so how you going to tell me you understand?

Principal Lewin was equally ecstatic in her assertion of the need to bond with the boys as a foundation for gaining their trust and for guiding them purposefully. Lewin declared:

People believe that boys don't want praise and this is wrong. When I went to the first DaCosta Cup football match with my team, I eventually found myself bug down to going to practically every match, because the boys were so elated at the fact of my presence. They expresses the view that it was the first time they have seen anybody from the leadership rank of principal turn out to support them at a match. Subsequently, even if I wasn't able to stay for a match, I have made it my duty to turn up, show my face, give my encouraging support and explain my need to go unto doing other things. They would express to me their gratitude that at least I attended.

This kind of extracurricular activity makes a great platform for engagement across groups in the school generally and a natural fit for guiding and mentoring boys in particular. As Principal Lewin has come to realize, there is greater need for massaging the boys' ego to get them to perform than there is for the girls.

Co-curricular/extra-curricular activities

The provision of co-curricular activities in schools is a central pillar for student engagement and development. Principal April (T-B-M) embraces this aspect of the

school's overall program as a major ingredient in the leaders' philosophy of fostering a holistic approach to education, and which he reports the boys have been found to appreciate a lot. At T-B-M, co-curricular activities entail more than 30 clubs and societies that are also aligned to the core curriculum. There are clubs such as Visual Arts, Theatre Arts, Debating Society, Drama, 4-H and so on. Then there are the eight sporting disciplines that are aligned and very organized and are either generally winning championships or making finals in respective championship series. Hence boys are tending to gravitate towards these activities and are not inclined to just sitting down for instructional purposes for long hours. In light of this, you find that if a boy who is very keen on participating and representing his school were to be told that he needs to get his grades up to 60% or 70% in order to play, you will find that youngster will find a way to get it done. Principal April concludes his perspective on the role of co-curricular activities in his school, stating that the arrangement that the school leaders have in terms of co-curricular activities and sports is one thing that supports boys' education.

Counsellor O'ban admits his school is not a headliner in sports but indicated that provisions are made for all students to be involved. He states with pride however that the students and by extension the school have done well in table tennis, badminton and volleyball. All the students are expected to participate in clubs and societies, and they are given the chance to create new clubs with the support of the club coordinator (a faculty member).

Principal Lewin also said:

Yes! Co-curricular activities are encouraged and supported in a big way. There is the theatre arts society that fosters boys' engagement in drama,

speech and dance. The boys are not made to feel effeminate because they are involved in particular activities. They are embraced for whatever it is that they want to do. We have in recent times (Sept. 2018- July '19) copped, through our choir, eight golds and one silver medal, as well as a number of similar awards in the Jamaica Cultural Development Commissions (JCDC) competitions.

With regards to the institution's band, Principal Lewin categorically notes that it consists of all boys and they have been supporting the school's activities excellently. She explained that when there are programs/functions at the school or entertainment for fundraising, the boys are the ones at the forefront, leading in almost all aspects including creating program booklets, advertising flyers and other necessary paraphernalia, not to mention providing the main entertainment. It is clear therefore that the provision of opportunities for active engagement and honing of skills and talents is a great way of steering boys away from negative distractions. Boys need to be involved, school leaders should involve them and co-curricular/extracurricular activities are powerful platforms and strong launching pads for future development.

The experiences and reflections shared by Principal Cox, strongly indicate the scope of impact a properly organized co-curricular program can have on boys in the school. In proposing more engaging physical education programs, Cox asserted that it is important for the boys to have outlets to relieve excess energies that they come to school with, especially the younger ages. Principal Cox emphasized the importance of having a balance of relevance that caters to the interest, citing the introduction of dance and drama as examples in his context. He explained that the introduction of dance was an interesting case as at the initial stage, many fathers visited the school to express concerns that they did not want their sons to be studying dance in school because of the negative stereotype

that is associated with it. It turned out that when the dance club came into being the boys were most excited because they get to change into their dance outfit without any restrictions placed on them.

I believe the fathers thought that they (the boys) would be doing ballet and that sort of thing but we are trying to teach them that dance is a language, it is a wholesome activity; it is a way to engage and communicate and to self-express, highlighted Principal Cox. Mr. Cox explained further that infusion of the popular dance culture with other formal dance structures helps the boys to understand that dance is powerful, and it is one of those program components that the boys are not usually late for. In addition as much as thirty active clubs are in the school to offer a wide range of extra-curricular experiences for students. Counsellor Stair shares the view that school leaders have to provide the environment so that boys can develop in a rounded way. He believes boys ought to get engaged in non-athlete co-curricular activities also: Red Cross, Quiz Competitions, debating and so on. This suggestion is well in keeping with the perspective subscribed to by Principal Cox and which is being implemented at his school. We have, for example, an excellent music program and we find that a lot of boys gravitate to it. We offer band training for free, so they go on and learn guitar, drum, piano and keyboard: all of that and it is surprising that a lot of youngsters are going, especially to drumming, Principal Cox explained. H.O.D Burnt also believes significant co-curricular support including football, cricket, table tennis, cadet and drama clubs and music (which attracts many) have been put in place to support the strong boys' population in her school.

In further validation of the place of co-curricular activities in fostering development an objectively charged response was shared by respondent Bohn on the ethos of her school context and in relation to the prevailing co-curricular landscape there:

This school is a microcosm of the world. It has a total set of experiences that can prepare you for world living. We have almost forty clubs and societies that add richness to the offerings of the school and provides alternatives for the discerning student to be engaged in, in order to balance the experiences. The school boasts a very balanced sports program and so the students are able to taste different aspects of life at the institution.

She further explained that the school's programs and activities are geared towards exposing students to real world living and involves inviting persons to speak with them and also taking them out to diverse contexts for new experiences. It is her belief that a child who would have been through the system at her school has received such wonderful exposure to help him/her adapt to life beyond school.

Surely, co-curricular activity has been shown to serve more than just a complementary role to schools' academic programs, but is in its own merits a distinguishable platform for engagement and learning; and for honing of skills and talents which are transferrable to other disciplines and interests of the global environment. As will be shown in successive sections of this report, co-curricular activities are inter-related to many other factors pertinent to boys' education. Included among them are the way teaching is done as well as a range of context specific structures and influences that are explored in themes that follow.

Research Question 2: How do school leaders respond to key artefacts attributable to the education of boys in Secondary Schools in Central Jamaica?

Theme: Content Analysis of key artifacts (curriculum, teaching plans and teacher assessment instrument) for the effective education of boys.

Introduction

There are many pillars upon which the processes of education and monitoring the delivery and quality of education rests. Not the least among them are the curriculum, teaching plans and teacher evaluation instruments, collectively described in this study as key artifacts of boys' education. These provide a framework for the composition and delivery of instruction and for application of quality assurance measures. Given the inter-related nature of the aforementioned artifacts, the views about their status in relation to their impact on boys' education specifically, is wide open and diverse. The perspectives of school leaders who are respondents in this study are reflective of this.

Table 4.2: Respondents' ranking of artifacts

Artifacts:	Ratings:		
	Most Effective	Moderately Effective	Least Effective
Curriculum guide	6	5	1
Teaching plans	7	5	0
Teacher evaluation	1	1	10

The Curriculum

There are mixed views about the relative importance and effectiveness of the curriculum in the process of educating boys, especially when ranked among other artefacts, (see table 4.2). Of the twelve (12) respondents who ranked the artefacts, six (6) were of the view that the curriculum guides were most important, five (5) moderately important and one (1) least important. Counsellor Weller formed the view that the effectiveness of the curriculum in reaching boys rests on the creativity of the teacher in using it, because it is not ready made or specifically tailored to satisfy the needs of boys

or indeed special groups of boys. He expressed strong views, however, about the vital importance of the curriculum for teachers and educators to plan properly and achieve uniformity as it relates to subjects, grade levels, to assess learning outcomes and for overall evaluation of schooling. Structurally, there are elements that allow for the engagement of boys and it assists the process in that the teachers are able to use the curriculum as intended, as a guide and be flexible about it in structuring lessons to cater to the needs of the student. He however, does not believe that the philosophy of school is served by the way the curriculum is organized, noting that “the crafters and creators of the curriculum did not structure it with boys as a special sub-group in mind.”

Similar sentiments have been expressed by Cox who although admitting the general importance of the curriculum guide, believes that in relation to other artifacts (teaching plans and teacher evaluation) is ranked lower in impact-fullness as it regards boys’ education. Principal Cox produced the argument that the guide is written and provided to the school(s) and therefore in the national context, it comes from an external source. If given to schools without coaching or development of the appreciation for it; even if you infuse strategies which are useful for teaching boys and girls, where the teacher does not understand nor buy into it, it becomes ineffective. Principal Cox also explained his observation that teachers’ tendency is to pay attention to the content criteria of the guide more than they do the exemplars which the guide denotes. For example, a teacher of Physics may reflect on what his students need to learn and whilst the guide is there, proceed using the same style and approach to deliver the same content repeatedly. Thus, the teacher may ignore knowledge of the fact that the same content can be delivered in many different ways, some of which cater better to boys than do others.

Accordingly, Cox projects the view that the teacher's planning and approach is most effective in ensuring that the guide itself is implemented. He made the point that, "if the teacher doesn't implement the guide well, it does not work." Reflecting on the fact that teachers in their practice concentrate on fulfilling the requirements of the curriculum and presenting it in the ways and forms set out by technocrats, Counsellor Weller was strident in expressing similar sentiments as Cox:

Notwithstanding the pressure to conform to curriculum dictates, the encouragement to teachers is that they allow their practice to emphasize the teaching of students and not the curriculum. The practice is to make sure the curriculum is used in its fullest form in order to dedicate their professional practice to reaching students and obtain a good outcome in so far as teaching and learning is concerned. We cannot divorce ourselves from the curriculum but to effectively reach our students' needs we cannot be slaves to it, Weller said.

The foregoing cry of Weller is justified in light of the expressed satisfaction of Counsellor Bohn to the structure of the curriculum provided by the Government. Bohn, seemingly in consort with April, believes practitioners are provided the latitude to organize the curriculum guide in ways necessary to meet their specific needs within the parameters of the school's philosophy. To this end, Bohn revealed that the curriculum guide has been tweaked in a manner to ensure adequate engagement of the boys in her school context. She was unequivocal in making the declaration that, "it is the objective of the guidance unit to ensure that boys are well served in the process: decision making skills, relationship issues and choice of post-secondary training." This declaration was quickly evidenced by Bohn's revelation of a boy's career portfolio which is itself and outstanding artefact of his engagement with the guidance and counselling aspect of his training. The career portfolio seen is a comprehensive document detailing a wide range of affective issues pertinent to providing insights into personal development by the typical

ninth grader. The portfolio includes, among other things, the boy's autobiography, information on a role model, goals for the future, his career options, a job application letter and other relevant content. The comment from Bohn who assessed the course work piece, reads: "Lindell (fictitious name) is a well-spoken, focused, goal-oriented young man who will soar to high heights, it was an honor to meet you."

Like Bohn, Day expressed satisfaction with the flexibility offered by the curriculum and by the integrated nature of the variety of subject specialization. He acknowledged that the curriculum is set by the Ministry of Education but notes that as best as possible, he and his staff have had to tailor it to the needs of boys in the school. Day elaborated, saying:

Boys tend to prefer hands-on activities and processes for learning. Though there is a challenge with the only science laboratory, teachers take equipment to the classroom and get the students to make models. They are able to make models of interesting things like the respiratory system and manipulate them as part of the teaching and learning process.

Day further explained that a project-based approach is generally used to teach the boys as they enjoy the logical thinking processes and activities. "So the curriculum guide is necessary to provide students with the content the government would have children learn, but at the same time, we tweak it to satisfy how boys learn," concluded Principal Day. Counsellor O'ban adds:

Boys like to do stuff, they don't want to just sit back and write stuff, they want to be active in what is happening, so the teacher should so study his/her class so that better results can be obtained from the boys. Even though the curriculum may not have all the structured features to suit the diverse classrooms, much depends on the individual teacher to make the curriculum work to the benefit of the students.

It is Counsellor O'ban's view that where the curriculum documents do not provide an adequate suite of possible activities and suggested methodologies, it is incumbent on the teacher to devise the appropriate strategies to reach students. He believes there is too much passiveness among teachers when it comes to reconciling the issues relating to the curriculum and the teaching and learning process, especially when trying to come to terms with productively engaging young men in the school. He highlighted the need for teachers to be creative as they think through their pedagogy relative to boys and their learning and development. Something he strongly suggested should be given vigilant oversight by school leaders who are the chief stewards of the process.

Of relational significance too, are the views and shared experiences of Principal April. He categorically established that the National Standard Curriculum (NSC) is embraced by the school to the extent that its structure is in keeping with what interests boys in their learning and education generally. He declared:

I have long maintained that the structure of curricula and the way they are presented, and the way we teach our boys is not helping them to attain their optimum. So to the extent that the curriculum embrace elements of critical thinking and hands-on experiences and so on, it is likely that the boys will find the curriculum more relevant, providing that the teachers can incorporate the various elements effectively based on their planning and so on.

Principal Lewin was equally optimistic about the New Standard Curriculum provided by the Ministry of Education and implemented in her school. She acknowledged the long list of practical, place-based projects and other activities that are amenable to boys' learning preferences. When asked: is the school able to support all of these activities which are especially good for boys? Lewin's response was a resounding, yes! She extended her response, saying:

Sometimes I am worried about the number of field trips that leaves the school, but when I reflect that they represent different year groups, I have to pull back and realize it may not be as bad as it seems. Sometimes you have five bus loads going today and another six buses tomorrow and I have to go back and double check to note the year group. The curriculum lends itself to a lot of engaging and interactive learning, and the inclusion of technology is expected and heavily integrated.

Asked about the boys' friendliness of the curriculum, Principal Lewin replied:

It is boys friendly if it is used effectively, because it may not be executed as expected, so we encourage and monitor internally, and there is also external monitoring from the Ministry of Education, through pop-up visits.

Using the analogy of constructing a building, Principal Day underscored the perspectives of his fellow leaders on the curriculum as an artefact of boys' education. He explained that if you are going to put up a structure and you do not have any idea of what your end product is going to be or should be, and what are the materials necessary, you may end up with anything. Day emphasized that the curriculum guide provides a structure for teaching, to include those things considered relevant and appropriate for the age cohort for whom the plan is made. It is a plan that captures what it is you are required to do, comprising objectives and intended outcomes. Accordingly, he summarized his views on the subject noting that, "without it you would have difficulty measuring achievements or being able to target the needs of specific groups of students, example boys with learning or general behavioral challenges."

Teaching Plans

School leaders were asked to reflect on three artefacts of boys' education: curriculum guide, teaching plans and teacher evaluation, and rank them according to their perceived level of impact. Most school leaders ranked teaching plans as most impactful (see table 4.2). It was the general view of the school leaders that the teacher's planning

and approach to lesson execution is what will ensure the effectiveness of the curriculum (guide).

Principal April was unwavering on the matter when he disclosed his acknowledgement of the importance of all three artifacts (curriculum guide, teaching plans and teacher evaluation) before declaring the rank of most effective to teaching plans. Said April:

I rank teaching plans first because I feel that regardless of the curriculum guide, teachers have a certain level of flexibility and autonomy to be exercised in the facilitation of students. Given the students assigned, they may have to conduct diagnostic tests and analysis to determine the way forward with them in the context of the curriculum guide.

April reiterates the importance of the curriculum in setting the framework within which leaders and teachers operate, but projected the view that it is the level of expertise, experience and skill of the teacher that dictates what goes into the teaching plan and influence how it is passed unto students. This is critical in determining the extent to which we can actually reach them at their level, he noted. Against these key attributes of success in the classroom, April re-emphasized his ranking of teaching plans:

If I want to pick up anything to look at for an indication of teacher effectiveness, I go to the plan. I want to see how the teacher arranges the teaching plan for the different levels and to see how effective that is, in terms of reaching the students.

Consequently while Principal April acknowledged the importance of teacher evaluation and curriculum guide they were ranked as moderately effective to reserve the rank of most effective to teaching plan. Principal Lewin too, described the teacher's plan as something that she placed particular interest in, and give close attention to. It is crucial for her as school leader, that teachers' plans are submitted on a timely manner as this is

helpful in gaging the level of facilitation of students and boys in particular, and avoiding certain challenges.

In the leadership experience of Principal Cox, teaching plans are so highly valued that where colleague teachers have issues with the process, help, sanctioned by the principal is usually forthcoming. Cox called teaching plans “a serious matter,” as planning helps the teacher to be prepared for class. It focuses the teacher’s attention before the class and therefore makes the teacher more effective in the classroom. Principal Day puts it this way: “planning has to be given priority because the better you plan, the easier teaching becomes.” He believes that regardless of the fact that you have mastered the content, it is imperative that you satisfactorily gather your thoughts and approaches ahead of time to make sure your delivery is effective. Cox explained further that where teachers struggle to effectively cater to diverse groups and to respond to the needs of boys and girls adequately, a number of structures have been put in place to assist:

(a) Heads of Departments (HODs) are required to keep periodic meetings and development sessions at least once per month to focus on these areas. (b) The administrators within the school are assigned particular departments from the ten that exist. The principal is assigned four(4) departments and each vice principal three departments and where such a need is identified, a sit down intervention session is held and coaching material and coaching sessions are provided to the teacher to help him/her overcome the particular challenge that have been identified.

(c) Teacher Mentor is a specially established position geared towards helping young teachers especially, who are fresh out of college and who, whilst they have learnt a

lot, may be lacking in experience in relation to what is expected of them. Thus the mentor is someone who is significantly senior, who is adept at these matters and whose primary responsibility is to monitor and guide all new teachers and to provide mentoring and coaching on an ongoing basis.

In their first term with us they have bi-weekly meeting where issues are identified and coaching is provided through external experts in lesson planning and classroom management, invited to come in and meet with, and to help build up our new teachers. We found this necessary over the last three years because of the high level of turnover at our school due primarily to overseas recruitment (approximately ninety percent). We are one of those schools that have been hit hard by such and so we have created the post of teacher mentor so that our new staff can be mentored each year in our cultured and philosophical approaches to the teaching and learning of our students, explained Principal Cox.

In referring to his own contextual experiences, Day explained how he and his team of school leaders have sought to get staff to know how to reach children generally, and boys in particular who are difficult learners and those with behavioral challenges. It has been found through staff development sessions that staff sometimes exclude from classrooms, boys who are deemed to have challenges based on simple pranks that they pull off in class, seemingly to get attention. For example, while a lesson is in progress, a boy may be up walking about the class and happen to give a friendly slap to another student and while it is rightly ruled as disruptive in some way, could be used as a teachable moment rather than sending the individual from the class. The point was also made that many times pranks are also carried out by the boys as a way of diverting attention from the challenges they have – whether it is the inability to read or just not being able to cope with the concept(s) being taught at the time. Some of the things the boys do is really to hide the inadequacies they face and so they turn to get attention and

fame by other means. Planning well and knowing how to reach them is therefore critical for the teacher who may show up the inadequacies of students through the lesson.

As part of his own planning and leadership response, Principal Day made the following deposition:

Going forward with the new cohort of grade seven students, it is envisioned that a pre-registration activity will involve getting new students into the school to get readiness training for secondary education. This will involve heavy focus on helping the prospective students 'learn how to learn,' while also emphasizing the value of aptitude and attitude in the context of teaching and learning. The sessions will be geared towards helping students understand what they are getting into and to help them clarify values with the hope that they will see education as important. Experience has taught that unless the students see education as important, they will not attend much to the process of acquiring it. To this end there will also be focus on character development and the promotion of the value of good character, suggested Mr. Day.

Counsellor Weller justified his ranking of teaching plans as most effective of the artifacts with the argument that it is students that are the subjects of teaching and not the curriculum. Accordingly, he believes contextual differences, cultural influences and background of the students may require that sometimes the curriculum be de-emphasized; and taking into consideration the need of the individual, so craft lessons that are focused on addressing the needs students present with.

So it is not about teaching the curriculum, it is about teaching the students, gearing the lesson plan and therefore the lesson to address the needs of students, both on a group and individual basis. The teaching plan is the most important because we are dealing with people, not inanimate objects, emphasized Counsellor Weller.

Mrs. Bohn's comment on the issue of planning is supportive of her colleagues' view to direct instructional attention to the learner-centric ways. She believes that the

inclusion of the five 'E's (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, Evaluate) in teaching plans as prescribed by the curriculum is quite commendable. In Bohn's opinion, it is essential because the 'five E' model of planning, teaching and evaluation picks up the weaker students and makes provision for them to be engaged in doing something. It does not focus only on those who are at the top. There is the recognition that everybody can learn at one stage of the process; not all the students are going to be high flyers and learn everything presented to them at the same time, but there must be something in your planning that can ensure that each goes away with something. Invariably, it has been highlighted by respondents' responses that the curriculum, teaching plans and evaluation of and or by teachers are inextricably linked within the process of teaching.

Teacher Evaluation

Respondents' view of evaluation of teachers and teaching in the general scheme of educating boys is highly positive. However, in the context of an analysis of relative effectiveness and importance, it has been found to be rated lower than curriculum and teaching plans in terms of charting the course of boys' education.

Counsellor Weller proffered the view that teacher evaluation is important in order for teachers to introspect and determine current positions in relation to his/her practice and to chart the way forward. He believes reflection on actions help the teacher to identify strength and weaknesses encountered in the facilitation of students and avoid pedagogical pitfalls that can impair learning and general outputs. Thus he has asserted the need for evaluation of teachers by students to be facilitated at the secondary level of the education system in Jamaica.

It is a given that administration also carry out appraisal of teachers primarily to verify their stewardship to the students specifically and to the school and education system as a whole. It also serves as a foundation for promotion, as information to the administration to indicate where respective teachers are and to provide guidance (Weller, Counsellor)

Other participants shared the opinion that teachers should be evaluated as a measure of accountability. Bohn was quite explicit in affirming this assertion noting:

The school has a notoriously rigorous appraisal system. Teachers have to give account of what they have done. There has to be a monitoring system to keep people accountable, that holds you to task, and as a way of knowing where the gaps are and to give recognition to the pockets of excellence which can be imitated. The evaluation procedure should consider the inclusiveness and diversity that attends to the classroom as a subsystem: how are boys and girls catered to in consideration of their differences; how are the learning styles facilitated; how are special groups such as athletes provided for?

Principal April underscored the value of teacher evaluation in helping him to see how the teacher arranges the teaching for different levels of students and to see how effective that is in terms of reaching the students where they are. Counsellor O'ban too, explained that as facilitators and leaders, it is incumbent upon them to find a way to reach students so that even incrementally, some measurable changes can result. He recalled the National Education Slogan: "every child can learn, every child must learn" in support of his claim. For Mr. O'ban, evaluation is the means by which you see what you have done, what students have done and how you could make adjustments for your pupils the next time around.

Principal Day echoed similar views to Counsellor O'ban's, adding that school is really about students, and all efforts must be made to provide the best facilitation for them. To emphasize his point, he recalled the story told through the television sitcom, "Yes Minister," in which a state of the arts hospital was built and the portfolio minister

invited to view the status. Upon his arrival, he checked and was amazed at the outstanding quality of the facility but noted after a while that something was missing. After a brief thought, he exclaimed, “Ahh, where are the patients!” The technocrat and guide responded, “Who needs patients, we have the best hospital.” Day followed up with his very affective perspective, noting critical linkages associated with the attainment levels of education.

Sometimes we complain about the students placed in the school, but the long and short of it is that they are our students and if we do not take care of them, who will take care of the affairs of the community and country later? I told the final year students that is not because of them why I want them to do well, it's because of me, because if they do not do well it is going to affect me. If you do well you are not going to come and beg me anything; you won't come to break into my house; I won't have to join long queues in the bank; I will get assistance in the hospital, and so on. If you do well the principal have to benefit and if you don't do well the converse is also going to be true.

The seeming expedience expressed by Principal Day relative to students' performance is well grounded in the Jamaican context. Such expediency suggests that school leaders and their teachers do their best with students, with the knowledge that they may actually be doing well for themselves. This invariably spotlights another dimension of teacher evaluation that is a focus on the teacher. Counsellor O'ban pointed out that teacher evaluation is important as a means of knowing where the teacher or school leader is falling short. This, O'ban notes is how you reflect on what you have done, what the students have done, and to consider ways for improving and strengthening professional practice. He affirmed his sentiments with the well-known injunction: “if the students haven't learnt, the teachers haven't taught.” O'ban also expressed the view that whilst some teachers vehemently reject the suggestion embedded in the foregoing statement, there is an added ring of truth to it for those who would be keen to listen and be reflexive

about practice. This is the essence of Mr. Cox's deposition that an evaluation has to be more than stating that the objectives were met. It has to speak to how effective the delivery approach and strategies were and if they are not, determine what the possible strategies for improvement will be.

Such is the importance of teacher evaluation that school leaders embrace it as part of their most significant mandates for the effective operation of schools. It is regarded by the leaders as the standard procedure to be applied to teacher professional practice to see if they are teaching the students or the curriculum. Day emphatically declared his desire to see the teaching of students given priority over completing curriculum content. Accordingly, the suggestion was made that teachers be spared the fury of school leaders if they do not finish curricula syllabi in the designated time. There is much credence in advocating this position as highlighted by Principal Day:

Once we can see the value added response of the student moving from point A to point B, there is optimism about growth on the part of the student and the endorsement of positive trajectory regarding the teachers and school leaders' stewardship. We are therefore to move towards that kind of thinking where the teacher is given room to facilitate students and without having to rush the curriculum syllabi for completion.

Counsellor O'ban also endorsed the foregoing view of Principal Day, noting in addition that teacher evaluation is important in keeping teacher practitioners focused in ensuring that they carry out their responsibilities at an acceptable standard. He expressed the belief that the feedback from the HODs and Vice Principal helps the teacher identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as proffer suggestions for future success: These feedback he explained comes by way of professional development sessions organized by fellow school leaders. He expressed high praises for his principal, noting:

The current principal must be commended for getting the professional development sessions going, by engaging professionals from outside, coming into the school to address matters of importance to teacher professional development. With the engagement of these professionals from outside the impact on teachers is so much greater than when information is shared from within.

Similar views were shared by Principal Day and his other colleague school leaders when questioned in relation to comments made on the teacher evaluation instrument of the Ministry of Education. Items on the instrument directed focus on teachers' commitment, knowledge of how to teach, ability to manage diversity and promoting character development. Principal Lewin for example explained the value of the comment made about a teacher's willingness to support cultural activities and the importance of coordinating such activities to the life of the school. It was explained that, on the basis of what is produced from the evaluation, specific actions are taken. For example, if a certain area of weakness is detected as needing attention by the staff generally, it will become the focus of a staff professional development session. However, Principal Day explained that where a weakness was found to be localized to a department or an individual, it would be treated accordingly. Discussions are held, and guidance provided for teachers needing specific help as reflected by the low scores on the evaluation instrument.

Most times subject-specific weaknesses are addressed at workshops in departments where the subject matter resides. School leaders have expressed the need for keenness in treating with these matters as ineffective performance by teachers are likely to negatively impact students' output and undermine overall school achievement.

Reflecting on the teacher evaluation dimension, *the teacher knows how to teach*, Principal Day made the assertion that if the teacher do not know how to teach there will be natural negative impact on the students and the school as a whole. Hence, from a leadership perspective the concerted effort reportedly being made, is to move from a teacher-centered, to a student-centered teaching learning process. Day explained:

It is not the era where the teacher should be like the ‘sage on the stage.’ Knowledge has expanded and there are much literature out there on the internet, and available through other sources. Therefore getting teachers to get students to be more involved in the process of their learning is of utmost importance.

Like Principal Day, other respondents to this study shared the view that this student-centeredness is likely to foster students’ critical thinking skills, as teachers organize materials in ways that students can explore on their own, so that answers can be drawn from them rather than having to be telling all the time. Day however, recognized a challenge, in that, not all the teachers have been able to coin questions in a manner that stimulate students’ thinking and encourage learning in the desired ways. Some teachers are particularly challenged, because they think that if students are of a particular level, they cannot manage the student centered approach. Principal Cox shared one of his experiences having been faced with similar challenges as a school leader:

We have a number of extant literature which we have amassed over time; guides, journals, etcetera; so if it is a problem that is of a generic nature, where a number of teachers are having similar experiences, we can provide some written materials to help the teachers to help themselves. This is especially true for our young teachers who come to us fresh out of college and who would not have the experience in relation to what is expected of them.

Teachers are encouraged to meet the students where they are and utilize groups as instructional units that serves as sources of encouragement to learn from each other and

being more attentive in structured learning context if given the chance to participate. As a school leader, Principal Day denounced the approach some teachers have taken, of going straight to white boards to write content and give explanation in a teacher-centered manner. This he said caused boys to readily lose interest and tuned out by such methodology. Similarly, giving notes and hand-outs without questions for guidance and discussion and worksheets to interrogate the material, was described by Day as ‘a grand waste of instructional time.’ Burnt also described such approaches to teaching boys in particular, noting that:

It is just a matter of passing the time rather than teaching. The teacher must endeavor to work through the content with students, giving them a key role in the process. Taking a text book and reading and giving notes is pretty archaic. The knowing how to teach, not just familiarity with subject content, is vital.

Principal Lewin shared the account given by a boy about a teaching episode performed by a teacher he had previously complained to her about. He recounted the fact that the particular teacher was going through some videos to show to the class, and the first four that were opened were pornographic. The boy recalled that by the time it got to the fifth one, none of his classmates (all boys) were laughing anymore. “We pitied her”, the boy recounted. “Miss. it doesn’t take any genius in technology to know you don’t reveal your screen until you have found what you want.” Animatedly, the boy reiterated his view of her as a teacher. Miss, I told you she doesn’t have any sense, she doesn’t know what she was doing. Mrs. Lewin commented:

Of course the boys tend to be abrasive with their knowledge. When they are abrasive in communicating their knowledge of your ignorance of the subject matter, there is offense. Boys who are frank and forthright, finds it difficult to accept when they know you are at the wrong side and want to put the wrong on them, hence this creates stand-off at times.

Principal Lewin also expressed the belief that teachers need to know when to step back and not follow up with something. She recalled her encounter with another young man in her school and the kind of measured response which was necessary to diffuse a negative situation:

I realized his attitude and expression was tantamount to being a threat to other persons, so I asked the Vice Principal to give him a letter for him to be seen the following day with his parents or guardian. I do not address matters with them when I am at the peak of being in an upset state, because one needs to remain rational and in a state of calm, and handle things professionally, especially when you are dealing with others around you.

This goes to the heart of what it means to self-evaluate and build emotional intelligence capacities as a leader in a key institution of society, the school. Significantly, the curriculum, teaching plans and teacher evaluation structures and procedures are strong inter-related elements that influence the overall development of boys in varying ways. Their uses must therefore be approached with the seriousness of purpose they justly deserve in order to produce the quality of impact desired, not only for boys but for the entire school community.

Research Question 3: What do school leaders do in response to those factors believed to attribute to boys' achievement levels?

Theme: School Leadership: Connecting home, school and community of boys' reality in a social system of culture, economics, education, gender and socialization issues.

Introduction

A number of competing influences seem to be characteristic of existential reality of boys and invariably become factors attributable to their education. Six such influences formed the basis of discourse in interviews conducted with participants of this study.

They are as outlined in table 4.3: Feminization of schools, hyper-masculinity, popular

culture, ineffective teaching, curriculum structure and relevance and economic issues.

School leaders have rated these on a scale of 1-6; one depicting the most effective or that which best represents their thinking, to six (6) being least effective or representative of their views relative to boys' education and achievement.

Table 4.3 Respondents' Ratings as Per Effectiveness of Influences on Boys' Education

Rating levels:	Number of Respondents Selecting Ratings					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sources of Influence:						
Feminization of Schools	-	5	-	3	2	2
Hyper-masculinity	-	1	6	4	1	
Popular Culture	-	4	4	2	2	
Ineffective Teaching	6	5	1	-	-	-
Curriculum Structure and Relevance	5	6	1	-	-	-
Economic Issues	-	2	-	3	2	5

Feminization of Schools

The construct, feminization of schools, pre-supposes the notion that teaching was originally a male dominated domain later abandoned or neglected by them and became populated by women. In table 4.3 above, feminization of schools was represented seven times on the least effective spectrum (4-6) of influences on boys' education. When asked why feminization of schools was placed least, Mrs. Lewin (Principal) explained:

When I think about feminization of schools, what comes to mind is the leadership because many schools have female principals at the helm. In

terms of the language, the resource persons in the classroom, there are far more women teachers than men. I also think of our delivery style, that we are probably delivering more from the women's perspective in many ways than we are combining the perspectives.

Principal Lewin further dispels the notions people have that more attention is paid to the girls and more avenues are there for the girl to excel at things, as not particularly true. The suggested significant difference can be made with more persons accessing training on how to educate boys and pay attention to the literature that is out there that says 'boys learn differently and for persons to come into grips with accepting that.'

Similar sentiments were expressed by Principal Day who incidentally was among those ranking feminization as highly influential in the education of boys. He expressed the strong belief that schools were made for girls in the sense that the traditional way in which teaching is done is more geared to the way girls learn. Day expounded his thoughts saying:

You have more females teaching and they teach how they learn and you find that sometimes the boys become resentful to that kind of teaching. In one of my colleague's school, separation of boys from girls was done for some classes and she found there are things boys will talk about whilst girls are not present.

Day declared, "What some of the studies show, is that in some of the schools where there are only boys, they tend to learn better than where there are co-educational groups." He further expressed the opinion that schools are kind of feminine and so boys tend to waste time because of that; hiding from classes and so on, because they do not feel comfortable in the same classroom context and during some types of lessons. He explained that the boys' ego is easily impacted in the early to mid-adolescent stage, but after they reach certain grade levels in the co-educational schools, there is the tendency to be a lot more confident, especially the ones who are seen as bright or more capable of academic work.

Like Day, Principal April has ranked highly, the feminization of schools because it is seen as having overwhelming influences as far as boys' education is concerned. Said Mr. April: "We all know about feminization of schools; the boys generally have to relate to a single parent, who is typically the mother and then in school, more than ninety percent of those he will encounter as teachers are women."

Principal O'ban who ranked the influence at number two suggested that feminization of schools is symptomatic of what is happening in the wider society. For O'ban, it goes back to the system wherein the men have not performed at a certain level, hence women are becoming the driving force in the society having gone to colleges and universities. Hence there would be a wider pool of qualified females for the available jobs in the schools. Accordingly, an imbalance is created, no fault of the women who have sought to do the right thing in asserting themselves and making use of opportunities. Mrs. Lewin has also shared the view that feminization does not play as big a role as other factors such as in-effective teaching and the curriculum structure and relevance.

However, she hastily admitted that:

We don't have enough men in the classroom to impact the boys who are coming to school from homes where there are no men. So that is a short fall in the social system. Notwithstanding, schools can do things to impact that part of it and also schools are provided both men and women guidance counsellors now. Whilst formerly you only had a woman as counsellor to cater to the different needs, you now have a man as well to address the needs of boys as they present. Hence there is less of a gap now in the provisions made to cater to boys' psycho-social needs.

Counsellor O'ban also bemoans the fact that some of the boys do not have men at home to guide them in any way and when they attend school all their encounters with adults are with women. O'ban added:

Some of the women do not affirm them, and some are too timid to even correct the boy who missteps. It affects them, and it is not always clear at first because boys don't readily speak about what is bothering them until something happens and all pent-up feelings produce alarming outburst which are obviously offensive in the teaching/learning context. Non-responsiveness may also lead to under-performance due to the boy's unwillingness to participate in exchanges that could bring clarity to subject matter concepts.

Such participation has to be encouraged, preferably through methodology rather than direct coercion. Bohn too acknowledged the way the very dominant female presence in her school but rated it low in terms of influence on boys' education partly on the basis of the strong leadership being provided by a man. Though admitting that there are boys who are able to learn the way girls do, especially those who are more adept at the languages, she supports the notion that boys learn differently. She expressed the view that:

Boys need to be tactile and kinesthetic in their pedagogical engagement, they need to be active (touch, talk, jump, run, etcetera). Our culture is, you are a good teacher if your class is quiet it is not true, it is not right and it is not practical. We have come to understand more and more that sitting down and being quiet is not the way activities in the world are structured. Students have 'inner brain' and their activity will distract them from the content of your lesson, hence it behooves us to move away from the passivity that has characterized pedagogical practice for a long time.

Counsellor Weller followed up with converging views to Bohn's:

In schools such as the one I am affiliated with, feminization do play a role in how boys learn because boys relate better (in my school) to teachers who are men than to those who are women. This position is arrived at because I find the women will complain more about behavioral problems and issues of the boys and how the boys react to them. When you check on the scale of response from staff the men do not have any problem with the students the women complain about.

Weller concluded his perspective on the matter noting that whilst feminization of schools is a reality based on sheer numbers of men versus women in the schools, it does not come across as a big issue where the learning is concerned. This is quite unlike the general view held by April, a principal who believes feminization of school is among the

overwhelming influences as far as boys' education is concerned. He bemoaned the fact that boys generally have to relate to a single parent who is typically the mother and then in school more than ninety percent of those he will encounter as teachers are women. This he said, does not augur well for their psyche and social development. Counsellor O 'ban echo the sentiment this way: Sometimes some of the boys feel off, like a fish out of water in the classes, because so much of what is done is from the female perspective. Sometimes the female teacher who have not had adequate interaction with boys, finds it bothersome to negotiate the classroom that has many boys.

Like other colleague school leaders, Cox (principal) declared that his school does not escape the wave of feminization in the sense that they have far more women than men who are members of staff. Cox hastened to suggest why any negative impact of feminization may be muted at his school. He explained indicating that:

In our context we have a male principal, a male vice principal, a male registrar and a male guidance counsellor, all of whom have a very strong presence in the school. I still have students who call me 'Miss' when they talk to me because they are so accustomed to saying Miss as against saying sir

Leaders' Response to Feminization

Some leaders have found novel and creative ways to ensure the adequate facilitation of boys in school. In the case of Mr. Cox, for example, a program was started at the school called the Male Fraternity Club. Here all the men on staff get together and meet with the boys, especially the troubled ones.

We have a mentoring program led by the male vice principal that identifies the most troubled boys and pair them with men in the school. We also have buy-in from some parents(men) who come in and help address in a deliberate way, some of the more pressing issues of the young men in the school. So, we have vertical mentoring, meaning we mentor with a child and an adult and also parent representative.

Cox lauds the fact that the school is fortunate to have strong men who are grounded, men who know themselves and are focused. He explained that horizontal mentoring is also done in the sense that a big 'brother' and a 'brother' program (same age paired, one to help the other) are fostered. As a result of these responses, Cox and his fellow school leaders have found feminization of schools, whilst being impactful in and of itself, is not a major factor in their school at this time.

Like Cox and other school leaders, Principal April viewed the male influence as critical and because many of the fathers are absent from the homes and are present on the streets, in bars and clubs and in the prisons, he has to be deliberate in his response to boys at school. Said Mr. April:

I deliberately try to recruit men for teaching roles, not just because they are men, but persons who can act as role models and operate at certain level. We have to be deliberate about making sure we have good male influences for our boys. If you look at the statistics, where the fathers are present, the boys do a lot better, both academically and in terms of their whole demeanor, and so feminization is a very significant factor to contend with and consider in the leadership of schools.

As Guidance Counsellor, Bohn is in charge of academics from a guidance perspective. Accordingly, she explained a key role of watching boys who are performing under 50% and working with the vice principal in charge to see how best to address the learning needs of boys, particularly those who are more active. Based on observation regarding boys' consumption pattern what's happening in their environment; and how they respond to home environment at school, Bohn has recommended that teachers reframe from countering but rather see how best they can use the way an average boy is

to inform their methodological approach for him. Mrs. Bohn expressed her understanding that the boy typically want to do things: cut, paint, color, make models, demonstrate and so on and should be provided that platform by which he can show his learning. Bohn questioned and asserted a position concerning the context of her response to the needs of boys in a female dominated space:

Why does a girl sit for a significant time and is not bothered as the boy for the same period? Because a woman was created that way, to focus on minute but critically important tasks. Child bearing and rearing for example, requires much focus and attention to details. Women are meant to focus longer on certain things while men are hunters and gatherers; meant to move and be alert to what is happening around them,

These foundations, Bohn suggested, are very relevant to return to for understanding the dynamics of human behaviors including learning.

For Principal April, following up and encouraging the teachers to determine what levels the students are at is an important aspect of his role as leader. He expressed his belief that boys should be specially targeted because of what is happening through to the tertiary level wherein the girls are outperforming the boys, not necessarily because the girls are intellectually more capable, but because of how information is presented and the kind of traditional ways we teach.

Describing his approach, Principal April said:

One of the things I try to do is pull out boys together, for example, after we do the diagnostic assessment and determine where they are, we place a number of boys in intervention programs, because invariably, many times they fall at the lower end of the performance scale. Having them in intervention programs means we have the opportunity to use a different approach even with the context of the National Standard Curriculum (NSC) because now you are able to tweak what is done, as it is no longer appropriate to follow the same philosophy and approach to instruction that resulted in them not getting where they are supposed to be.

School leaders have also lobbied for and received additional support in the areas of Guidance and counselling (especially for male counsellors, where there were only female ones), dean of discipline and practical skill programs to engage more of the boys and add meaning to their tenure in school.

Ineffective Teaching

Based on the responses collated and presented in table 4.3, ineffective teaching with the most respondents giving a rating of one (1) and all responses falling in the upper half of the rating order is regarded as the most impactful in relation to the education of boys, when compared to other selected influences considered by school leaders.

Principal April made the point that where boys are concentrated in a teaching-learning space such as those in boys' school, the teaching can be more targeted, and they are able to get the boys performing at a high level provided there is the quality teaching and supervision that is required. Ineffective teaching is the source of our problem asserted Counsellor Bohn, who further explained how the National Education Inspectorate (NEL) brought them into sharp focus with this reality:

Even in our NEI process it was found that there were too much traditional methods used in instruction particularly the lecture method. We were found to be a school of white board and marker and lecture. A wake up call came for us when it was found through analysis that some of our children who came in with 90% averages at grade seven (7) were having difficulty making the graduation list after eleventh grade or met graduating at all.

Like Mrs. Bohn, other school leaders shared the view that when students enter high school they need to be nurtured and taken through a scaffolding process that helps

them transition from primary to secondary education. Pointing specifically to observed behavior in her context, Mrs. Bohn decry the attitude of some professionals entrusted with the responsibility of guiding the students. Bohn noted that:

Some teachers are literally escaping adequate supervision and are not engaging the boys satisfactorily, leaving many bored, because they come in every day, write on the board, dictate notes or give big handouts that they are asked to read and regurgitate. The system is failing as a result and this impacts boys' response more so than it impacts girls'.

Counsellor O'ban echoed the position of majority of his colleague leaders when he expressed the view that boys generally want to do stuff to be engaged, and to be involved. He denounced the practice of teachers writing on boards and asking students to write in their books – an activity that the boys resented very much. Accordingly, he spoke resolutely and passionately about deliberately doing more to engage boys noting:

Every boy has a smart phone these days, so maybe there needs to be introduction of the technology on a wider scale to get these boys 'bubbling' about their learning. For even one day of the week we can ask them to take their phone to class, explain what is to be done, and with the availability of the internet, the teacher gets on-line with the class and explore the topic of interest together. It's amazing how they will perform when they are engaged in such a manner.

Principal April emphasized that when diagnoses of learning are done in his context, ideas are passed unto teachers in having the boys relate to real world situations as part of the instructional process. From the experiences garnered he shared this perspective on boys' learning:

Boys tend to be excited by sporting activities for example so a lot of Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry can be related to football and cricket. Some of the classes are held at the school's gazebo and so it is shown that by just changing a few things in terms of the learning environment you are

able to engage their attention and their interest. They are thus able to recall and apply information in a more effective way.

Counsellor O'ban recalled teaching a class Guidance. He divided the class into small working groups, gave them topics to explore and challenged them to go all out to cover these topics adequately. O'ban's experience revealed the class went all-out as instructed:

They brought their phones and they typed, took photographs and editing and all of that, and then dramatized their work. Out of that, one boy (now going into grade 11 and who was very shy) revealed such tremendous talent and skill through the opportunity he got to work with his group and participate in a presentation. Now, he is involved in all kinds of technological things in the school, not just at the class level.

Moved by the observation of such transformation, O'ban reiterated:

So ineffective teaching is a big issue; the boys want to be challenged, to be involved, and to do things. Hence they are not afraid to tell you that a teacher is boring or that a class is unexciting. When these factors cause them to be disengaged from the lesson and become involved in their own side show, sending them outside makes matters worse, because it strains teacher-pupil relationship and serve as desirable reward for the student whose objective is to escape the boredom.

It is therefore not surprising that the charge to teachers from leaders such as Mr. O'ban, Mrs. Lewin and others is that they should do more with the technology and make real world linkages in their teaching because that is the sphere in which they operate. O'ban recounted the story of a mother who took her son's phone from him to reduce distractions it was causing to his academic work. The son, a first former, was immediately thrown into a frenzy, smashing the things in the house and was uncontrollable. O'ban noted: "This is the extent of the intimacy the now generation has with gadgets such as the phone and so more of the technology should be incorporated to encourage learning."

For Mrs. Lewin, making connection is important to the notion of effective teaching and so being cognizant of who your students are, using right instructional support in terms of resources and relevant content are key in the delivery of instruction. Lewin elaborated and noted that if you are teaching and you are not connecting to your teaching to anything in the real world, you have a more difficult time impacting the audience. Principal Lewin explained further:

In my educational journey I learnt that making real world connections in your teaching will improve the impact of what you are teaching. I have also had to ensure that it wasn't just for seeing that connections were made, but it was action- you could hear it, you could see it. So in teaching Mathematics, I have recognized that many of the concepts must be taken to real world experiences to get them across to students. A teacher who is teaching percentage, who never make percentage real-world, would have lost the battle teaching it, especially percentage increase and decrease.

Lewin is of the view that teachers should take such concepts into the store with students, but when they do they should not buy flour, because that is not what children are buying. Children are more interested in buying sneakers and such items. She encouraged the use of context-relevant content:

If you are doing graphs, example bar graph to represent information and you take your students to the side of the road to count car (for some this many seem too mundane for secondary students), their learning becomes a lot more concretized. When you take grade seven students through such activity for 5-10 minutes, when they get to grade nine, you don't have to re-teach that concept. Not only would you have taught the tally structure, but students would use the data gathered to create the graph. Then they may be asked to create 3-5 questions related to the graph. Do you know how accomplished these students feel?

The point Mrs. Lewin sought to emphasize is that as far as possible, the teaching must be related to real life experiences. Where students do not have the schema for certain concepts the teacher should provide or stimulate same in the student. She explained further:

So, where students are given books to read, if they don't have the schema to interpret what they are given to read, they will be lost. In using books from another culture for example, the teacher must be aware and be willing to provide the schema for students. If I take up a book and think they don't have the schema for it, a video would come into play or I got find a more relevant passage for the students to use. It's all about them and I operate with that understanding.

Clearly, Lewin recognized the need to anchor the boys particularly, in real world context and constraints and to make special provisions where necessary to facilitate learning. This is precisely the kind of response Mrs. Bohn advocated for, when she made the ensuing observations:

Many of our students are believed to be on the autism spectrum based on teachers and counsellors' non-specialists observation and so would benefit from professional assessment for isolation and to be given focused discrimination facilitation. Unfortunately in our context, there are no provisions for special needs assistance to our teachers and students and this needs to change, particularly as it relates to understanding boys and applying appropriate methodologies to facilitate them.

Mr. Day made the point that when the teacher does not understand how to teach the boys it has significant impact on the outcome and the boys lose interest easily. He further explained that when they lose interest, the opportunity is often presented to get involved with activities that are anti-social. Like Day, Burnt and Wills expressed the notion that loss of interest is a catalyst for boys to begin skipping classes and consequently fall behind in the quality and quantity of work in affected subject areas. Mr. Day was most emphatic in his assertion:

When they lose interest it is difficult to get them back and a domino effect is set in motion as they now begin to give trouble in the class for the teacher to do what he/she knows best, that is to drive them from the class, because 'they are not learning anything, but are only serving as distracting elements.' This gradually undermines how many of these boys view the importance of education.

Day, now a principal, recalled that in his experience as a teacher, students ran to his class because he made his class important and taught in a way that involved boys and with high probability of impacting them. Day said:

I remember teaching a group once and in a most uncharacteristic manner and at an unexpected juncture a little boy said, “sir no worry ‘bout me enuh sah, even doah u si mi naw learn – u a gud teacha enuh sah?” [Sir, don’t worry about me, even though I am not learning, you are a good teacher].

Apparently this student could appreciate the interest displayed and the effort made by the teacher to engage with him and develop a capacity that in his own estimation was not moving at pace with the teacher’s input.

Cox has reportedly found that in his years of experience, students have come to his school context from various socio-economic backgrounds. Some of them rich, some very poor. He has also shared that for many students, if they are motivated and willing to learn having enrolled in his institution, their economic situations do not play much of a role. The teacher therefore becomes very impactful, he emphasized. He further shared elements of his experiences:

I recall in our 2019 school leaving ceremony, some particular cases of poor students were highlighted, they having risen to the top and achieved high marks, in top positions among their peers. I had the opportunity to speak with one after I saw her leave the stage and the company of graduands to go and hug a teacher, which is not appropriate in the context of the function but she had just won an award and wanted to show her appreciation. I wanted to find out what was the motivation for her response, so I spoke with her after the ceremony. She said the teacher had motivated her and the way she teaches made her inspired to do well. I found that teacher is a very powerful influence on a child’s life and a teacher who teaches with heart and inspires does create change. It matters not whether you are rich or poor or how you are treated otherwise, if that child has his/her potential and intrinsic motivation unlocked by the teacher they tend to excel regardless of the circumstances.

Effective teaching then is not just expertly sharing content, it is motivation and inspiration to where you never imagine you could, to impact those you engage in the process.

Cox expressed the view that the opposite of the foregoing is true, in that if the teacher is ineffective even if you get motivated children you can turn them off. Cox explained further:

A child may come to the school bubbling with enthusiasm to do well, gets a teacher who is ineffective, who doesn't care, who doesn't teach with heart of with the passion for success of the students. The child/children will become wayward, loses interest in the subject and even a student wanting to pursue a particular career coming to us at the school, and loses interest in that career because a core subject in that career isn't being taught well.

So it is acknowledged across the cadre of experienced school leaders of this study that the teacher can actually make or break interest and motivation in students.

Consequently, Mrs. Malox encouraged teachers to incorporate boys' interests such as love for sports in the learning process as a means of motivating them. She also noted that boys do not like to write, so more hands-on activities are included in language arts teaching-learning context:

Engagement opportunities are provided by the inclusion of role plays and production of videos in which they create and perform storylines reflective of subject matter objectives. Such productions are made complete with the requisite elements such as background music and sound effects which taps into and develops other skills among the boys.

Other participants cautioned the careful management of the boys in their respective teaching-learning context. Cameron formed the view that boys had to be specially targeted for participation so that they are not left at a disadvantage where understanding subject content is concerned. Meanwhile, Lewin emphasized that patience

should be exercised in facilitating the boys as it is absolutely crucial to get them off to a good start.

Like Burnt and others, Cox formed the view that boys' interest and motivation is powerful in influencing how they learn. Thus Cox asserted:

Teachers who inspire young men and boys and find creative strategies will cause them to do well. Teachers who use strategies that are not very effective but deliver content in ways that imply the process is treated merely as a job, not being mindful or deliberate about their strategies may end up widening the gap between boys and girls.

The respondents' responses implies significant depth of understanding from experiences, that there is much value in planning classes in ways that allow students to interact with subject matter content and with peers. Clearly such approaches foster students' optimism, engagement and consequently encourage meaningful learning. This quality of being fully engaged seems to be at the least of what effective teaching is about. Respondents (school leaders) have alluded to the need to make provisions (in the planning of lessons) for a variety of interactions in the context of the classroom: student and content, teacher and student, and student and student. As school leaders, one way they have sought to engage students is by giving them opportunities to explore through individual aptitudes, attitudes, values and skills the objective designed for their learning rather than just remaining passive as information is delivered. Smith and Wilhelm (2014) asserts that to move forward with boys it is important to know them as individuals. "Instead of identifying their achievements and needs through statistical averages in which their differences are lost, we need to recognize and work with individual difference, variety, and plurality and make that diversity a strength of our classroom" (p. 184). Effective teaching then is about engagement of the individual through active learning and

the development of skills and competences, especially enabling the utilization of critical thinking skills including analysis, synthesis and the ability to construct new knowledge or create new products.

Many research studies have been cited that validate the assertion that students learn more, and are more concerned about the content they are learning when they are actively engaged in their learning (Trent & Slade, 2001; Sullivan, 2003; Slavin and Madden, 2003; Brown & Myers, 2008; Smith & Wilhelm, 2014). However, even with the most organized methodologies, school leaders and classroom practitioners have recognized that there will be push back from students who may be reluctant to work with content provided in the classroom. Smith and Wilhelm (2014) captures such scenario in noting that “knowledge that is seen to be controlled from the outside is acquired with reluctance and it brings no joy” (p. 134). For some, a significant impediment to their learning is how the curriculum is structured. This may even negate the flexibility of school leaders to facilitate arrangements for special needs and therefore cause challenges for effective teaching in all areas.

Curriculum Structure and Relevance

Curriculum structure and relevance was rate at a very close second behind ineffective instruction by school leaders and an influence on boys’ education (Table 4.3). Of the twelve respondents, five rated it at one (first) and six rated at two. Like the ratings given for ineffective teaching, none fell below three, where one is the highest rating and six, the lowest.

The discourse around the structure and relevance of the curriculum with secondary school teachers in Central Jamaica have yielded noteworthy insights for this study. This is where the ‘rubber hits the road,’ noted O’ban, who also expressed the view that the curriculum should be so structured that each child will get the opportunity to optimize his potential. O’ban seemingly lament the inadequacy of the curriculum to address the needs of boys in classrooms in his context.

This apprehension plays out and often times with negative implications for boys who, a lot of times are simply misunderstood. The curriculum, Counsellor O’ban suggested, should be so user-friendly that subject specialists find it easy to navigate and create learning opportunities across the board but with some emphasis on looking out for the boys.

Similar sentiments were expressed by Mrs. Bohn who has formed the view that the curriculum tend to be structured as a kind of ‘one size fits all’ framework. The curriculum in Jamaica, she noted, is seemingly directed at everyone in the same way, within respective age/grade cohorts; exposing those not developmentally or cognitively in sync with the group to fall behind. In her continued offensive towards the treatment of boys’ education in respect of key influences, Bohn asserted: “The curriculum structure has not catered adequately to boys. It is a generalized and somewhat inclusive curriculum but sometimes inclusiveness has its drawbacks because there are times when you have to separate and focus.”

Looking at it from the perspective of the powers that be, the policy makers, Mr. Howell advised that it be geared in a way to speak more specifically to boys’ learning. This, he justified with reference to research that points to learning differences between

boys and girls. Furthering his advocacy for a more boy-friendly curriculum, Howell declared:

They are slow learners, but who are able to advance over time. Therefore things that they would be influenced by and gravitate to in the early stage of their learning would have to be considered in the development of the curriculum, so that their interest can be picked from the formative stages, so that they may be engaged early.

Admittedly, Weller and others such as Burnt, Day, Wills and Malox, shared the view that the curriculum as it is presented has several aspects that are relevant to the needs of boys especially in the later grades (10-12): Joinery(woodwork), Welding, Human Ecology, Mechanical Engineering (auto mechanics) and Art. However, Bohn cautioned against overloading, especially those at the 7-8 grade levels:

I do not believe many of our boys should be given fourteen subjects in first form (grade 7). Many of them gets lost, having been confined to focus on a much narrower pool of subjects from the fourth to sixth grade at primary schools. I have seen where boys cannot manage fourteen subjects in the first year of their secondary education. Particularly those already under-performing with thirty averages.

School leaders are generally constrained by the policy directives of government (Ministry of Education) and so the response to pleadings like that of Mrs. Bohn is that the students must be exposed to ‘everything’. Only later, at the end of third form, is there a reduction in the number of subjects students are allowed to do. However, because particular variances between schools exist and are acknowledged (see table 4.1). Some facility for accommodation of differences among cohorts of students are provided. Mr. Day reported that in his context, particular subject pathways have been experimented with to provide all students with equitable opportunities to achieve. For example, the very

weak students will have neither Spanish nor French but will do additional and are in Pathway sessions in English. Those who are weak in Mathematics will do History and not Geography but will do Social Studies. So, during Geography time they will do additional sessions of Mathematics. Those extremely weak in Mathematics will do neither History nor Geography, but will do Social Studies, So during History and Geography, they will do additional Mathematics sessions.

In Mr. Stair's context, students, upon leaving third form will have a reduction in the number of subjects they are required to do and sit in an external examination. To be registered for these subjects, students must satisfy a pre-determined standard in the subjects. Mr. Stair explained that for the students who are failing, the number of subjects they are allowed to sit dwindles further to five or six, and apart from Mathematics and English, which are compulsory, the other subjects making the quota for the more challenged students are assigned by the teachers and vice principal. Mr. Stair expressed his concern accordingly:

The challenged students (mostly boys) are not at liberty to do the subjects they may like or desirous of doing in charting the desired career path. So, for many boys who might have eyed a career in engineering, not getting the opportunity to do Physics and Chemistry could mean dashed hope and frustration which is a perfect recipe for deviant behavior in school.

In Principal Day's context, it was found through diagnostic processes by pathway coaches from the Ministry of Education that the number of boys in the weakest group is very high compared to the girls. Hence, generally, there are more of the boys who will have to do extra work in English. Optimistic about outcomes of efforts made to place students on particular achievement pathways and monitoring of their progress, Mr. Day opined:

The plan is that by the time they reach fourth (10th grade) in pathway three they will have two additional years in school, where they will focus on Mathematics, English and a vocational skill area, thereby learning a skill prior to leaving school. With regard to other pathways (1 & 2), students will do at least five subjects with emphasis on employability skills, plus Mathematics and English at City and Guilds if they are not qualified for the Caribbean Examination Certificate.

These experiences outlined by Mr. Day are clearly justifiable in light of the observed needs of boys in the classroom. The flexibility exercised by Mr. Day in his context is a strong reflection of Lewin's views about the structure and relevance of the curriculum when she uttered:

The problem I find with the curriculum is the way teachers and other stakeholders navigate it. Nothing wrong with the curriculum, it is the way it is used by some persons and therefore the kind of impact it has on them. Some teachers do not adapt to change readily and especially where you find older teachers in the classroom who are seasoned in doing things a particular way and have not grown or developed meaningfully. For instance, there are those who seemingly have a phobia for the new wave of technology sweeping the classroom and who are satisfied saying they only have a few more years in the system, 'I can't bother'.

Curriculum implementation is therefore a significant challenge as this has direct bearing on effectiveness and relevance to boys in particular as they tend to have preference for teaching methodologies that incorporate practical elements and the use of modern technology by which they are driven and motivated. It is little wonder that O'ban proudly declared:

We try our best to prepare our boys for the wider world, so we have Auto Mechanics up to the fifth form level. Though it is not offered at the CXC, the students are allowed to sit in the City and Guilds examination. Industrial Arts, Electrical Technology, Technical Drawing, Building Technology, Agricultural Science and interestingly, Food and Nutrition (sometimes it is the boys who excel in this area), along with other academic subjects. In concert with the academic curriculum, methods are varied to accommodate boys who are noted to have preferences in doing, they like action; so we try our best to vary and provide some form of differentiated instruction. All are required to acquire IT skills which are

needed to assist them in preparing their academic work, and perform in the already technological driven society.

In the case of Principal Cox's school, leaders used a two dimensional analysis matrix for the purpose of examining the institution's curriculum. On one direction/dimension, there is rigor: rigor that satisfy the learning outcome for the external stakeholders, parents, the job market and the students own ability to get into scholarship program and so forth. He also made the point that the curriculum has to be relevant, that is, it must be appropriate to the interest of the students. Principal Cox asserts:

If students come here and the program of study is not relevant to them, they will lose interest in school, their school spirit wanes and they have no interest in coming to school to learn, so we try to offer a wide range of curricular offerings that cater to the interest of the students.

Appreciably, the experiences of school leaders in Manchester, Central Jamaica have highlighted the prominent place of curriculum structure and have relevance in the process of educating boys. The cross section of views from the authentic place of experience by principals, guidance counsellors and heads of departments have pointed attention to the need to not only have curriculum that is well structured, but that keen consideration should also be accorded to relevance, as also to processes of execution of instruction. Boys' achievement is closely related to their level of motivation which itself may be attributed to relevance, that is, the meaningfulness and applicability boys attribute to the curriculum. Studies by Haertal and Walberg (1993) and Murphy and Alexander (2005) have indicated there is positive correlation between motivation and achievement. Principals surveyed by Lunenburg and Ornstein (1991) have considered "curriculum and instruction aspects of the job as one of the top priority work areas and that they need to spend more time on the job related to those two technical areas of development" p. 339.

Popular Culture

On the ‘heels’ of ineffective teaching and curriculum structure and relevance, popular culture has emerged as being highly rated by school leaders as an influence of significance on boys’ education. Whilst none of the respondents selected the top rating of one (1), eight accorded positions two and three, while four others thought lower statuses (four and five) were the appropriate levels of ratings attributable to this particular source of influence, (see table 4.3).

In according a rank of two from the ratings continuum shown in the table 4.3, Mr. Weller considered popular culture to have significant influence on the way boys view education and respond to the processes of acquiring some. He explained that where the boys are concerned, there is the tendency to gravitate to and idolize strong influences of the popular culture. So their behavior is influenced by the prevailing culture in the way they dress, speak and deport themselves generally.

Weller noted: We do have serious issues in schools, because as something new pops up in the wider society, the boys tend to latch on to it, many times contravening the code of conduct of the school and thus creating behavioral issues which distract them from their school-related purpose.

While Mr. Weller shared the opinion that it is a natural course that culture impacts people, much the same way culture is influenced by people, he formed the view that there is something unnatural and socially destructive in what was portrayed. For him:

Issues arise because those things which the boys are gravitating to and are adopting are not wholesome. For example, their dress (spangy pants, wearing of pants dropped below the waist and revealing underwear), unkempt hairstyles, use of slangs, portrayal of the “bad men” demeanor and the like.

These sentiments by Weller, were echoed by other school leaders, including Ms. Bohn. Bohn observed that:

Most times the boys who are failing are susceptible to popular culture and actually worship aspects of it. Those who are most impacted, who are always tuned into the music and other aspects, tend to dress differently and refuse to have a “proper” hair cut (something appropriate for school).

Cameron described it as boys embracing more of the street mentality and having to be reminded to attire themselves properly at school.

Mr. Day responded with a kind of “neo-classical” socio-psychological overtone. According to his expressed views, popular culture tends to inform current behaviour in terms of lifestyle: dress, speech (use of popular slangs), mannerisms (conduct patterns), grooming and general deportment: much of which comes across as deviation from that which is elevating, socially acceptable and developmentally sound. The patterns which have emerged seem to have their genesis in the pop, rap, dancehall music genres and the roots theatre to a lesser extent.

Mr. Cox expressed his observation on the influence of pop culture on boys in his school this way:

Our boys are being impacted by the role models that are not necessarily wholesome. The language that they bring, their reference to each other as ‘dawg’, the way they demean each other without even knowing it, is cause for much concern.

Mr. Day added:

Boys gravitate to what is in now, and a man must dress that way. They disregard context and so want to be in school the same way they would be at other places. They would stand up and defend it stoutly, while they lose significant learning time. They will also spend a lot of time cleaning their shoes and giving focus to things they regard as ‘macho’, but which pales in significance to the achievement of quality education. They spend much time

on cultural fads – which are often distracting them from that which should really matter.

Invariably, popular culture, represented in varied forms, seem to be regarded as a powerful conduit for a slew of issues influencing boys' educational achievements. Combined with social media the influences of popular culture are conveyed in real time and quickly 'take root' in the psyche of boys and young men aided by constant reinforcing repetitions.

Stair highlighted music, primarily the hard-core dancehall genre as a factor that impacts boys' education. He explained how while sharing with a 17-year-old, he discovered that the young man had entered high school with a 92% average on the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT), a high-stake placement examination. Though he did well enough to matriculate into college, the young man cited football and music as reasons he experienced decline during his secondary school journey. Counsellor Stair reported that:

Through these influencers (football and music), he started to experiment with marijuana, alcohol, sexual promiscuity and so on. He could clearly identify what was going on in his head when he started exploring. The message that was in the dancehall genre – the dress, the way they looked and so on resonated. However, the school's disciplinary system has been effective in keeping them in check, in relation to dress code, grooming and general attire.

Stair reportedly 'flips the switch' on the negative connotation ascribed to the dancehall genre of music, however to create particular effects in his classroom from strong message-based songs. He noted: "Vybz Kartel, for example, produced a set of lyrics for a song which encourage men and boys to blend oats, peanuts and other aphrodisiac to fortify themselves, get a "gyal" (girl) and produce children."

This kind of lyrical Counsellor Stair considered useful as a basis for helping boys clarify values, whilst connecting with them on prevailing socio-cultural re-enforcers of society. This is necessary as the music (and lyrics) provides a level of captivation that can be capitalized to reach the boys who may be moving to the beat and singing the words of a song but do not understand the meaning or social connotations of said song. Attributions, according to David (2007), help to shape our emotional and behavioral responses to situations. Such attributions exists on continuums including: locus, stability, and controllability (Weiner, 1979). As far as locus is concerned, it appears much of the control on our boys is external and this is a plausible assumption when one considers the shifting values and changing cultural presentations. As outlined in the literature, many Jamaican boys have stopped listening to the classroom teachers and are being schooled in the ‘University of Dancehall Music’ (Williams, 2006). They try to live as dancehall deejays do, and many aspire to be deejays without realizing, that in most cases, there is no stability or longevity with such a choice.

Hyper-Masculinity

On the basis of the rating distribution recorded from school teachers (table 4.3), it appears hyper-masculinity is considered to bear enough influence on boys’ education and achievement to be given attention. The middling distribution of ten (10) responses shared between ratings three and four, along with one each at ratings two and five, the overall ratings attributed to hyper-masculinity can be conservatively described as moderate.

Asked to respond to the question of influences on boys’ education by the hyper-masculine pattern of conduct and behavior, Mr. Cox replied:

This one we are finding to be more of a challenge because the social media and popular culture have continued to convey messages that are not considered wholesome, based on the deleterious effects that are revealed by the boys most impacted. The constant desire to wear the hoodies in school because the rap stars wear them; this wanting to be involved in the things alpha-males are involved in, and funny enough, that doesn't involve academic excellence, and so we have had to be combating that.

As explained by Mr. Cox and supported by the views of other school leaders, a lot of boys want to be cool, because they think it is cool to wear the latest fashion, to be listening to the latest music, to be the best dancers in school. So you find that those boys will gather in the afternoon after school and rather than do some academic work, they would be busy listening to music, dancing, bothering their parents for expensive fashion, but little emphasis is being placed on education and personal development. Mr. April emphatically echoed the sentiments of Mr. Cox:

Invariably, we recognize it is the impact of the popular culture, through social media that is having this controlling influence over the young men; they want to be such 'hype' males. In our school (it's a mercy that I give a thanks for) we have a peaceful culture, so we do not have instances of violence or things like that, but I am aware that in other settings the hyper-masculinity complex often leads to boys adopting gang-like approaches and behave in macho ways that make it seem like [being a] sissy to want to pay attention. Others in defense of 'their' world get into conflict with teachers and school leaders resulting in the invocation of school rules and the imposition of disciplinary action.

Ms. Day offered the following explanation in considering the hyper-masculinity construct in relation to boys in her school context:

Boys do things they would not normally do, often to impress others especially girls within their particular context or just to gain acceptance into a group, often one with some negative connotations. Sometimes boys do things to hide inadequacies; for example, if they have difficulty reading, they may want to downplay the importance of reading and seek to vilify those who make the effort to do so. Sometimes you will see the boy get involved in a lot of activities, for example playing football, keeping many female friends and make himself very busy about the place; and look "bright" too, but it sometimes turns out to be attempts to cover up

shortcomings. Everything he can't do, he vilifies or otherwise describe some as "girls' thing".

It is therefore not surprising that what has emerged from discourses with language arts practitioners who are participants in this study, is that teaching boys language arts has to be approached deliberately. H.O.D Cameron posited:

Some of them still have the view that English is a subject for girls and we have found it is not easy to change the mind-set. Many of them have crazy notions, so if they are to use the language well, it sometimes diminishes them as a man. These crazy notions sometimes lead to problems that are disciplinary in nature and so there has to be constant search for means of engagement: reshuffling seating arrangement, repositioning them in the classroom, it means targeting them.

Rated five by Mrs. Bohn on the six-level rating continuum, hyper-masculinity was not viewed by her as having a significant influence on boys' response to education. "We have not encountered that in any significant way in our school, but teachers from other schools have expressed the thought that some boys in their school refuse to study English, claiming that it is a subject for girls."

To counter such a dilemma, Mrs. Bohn advises that what is said to children when they enter the school for the first time is important. They must be told that they are in school to achieve, and part of that achievement is the learning of English, whether they like it or not. This must be reiterated periodically through motivational talks and monitoring at the grade and class levels. Mrs. Bohn spoke to the value of doing the subject:

It must be hammered home that he must do the subject and achieve a score of 60% and above, recognizing that textbooks are written in English, external examinations are not written in patois (but English) and many countries in the world use English as the official language of communication. Young men and boys need to be guided in terms of the reasons for doing the subject and performing well in it.

Like some other school leaders, Principal Lewin formed the view that the culture influences the hyper-masculinity syndrome that exists. She was, however quick to point out, that there isn't a great portrayal of the hyper-masculinity characteristics in the setting where she leads. She made the point that young men are influenced by what is going on in the society and they exercise their prowess as the opportunity is presented. She recalled times past when men had a problem wearing pink clothing, but acknowledged that it is not so now in the society – most boys do not have a problem wearing pink as that part of the culture has become less rigid. Lewin declared:

“Here the boys don't have a problem showing their emotions – if they are sad, they are sad and they will express this.”

She then shared the account of an encounter she had with one of her students, a senior boy:

I passed a young man one day and asked, “how are you?” He said to me, “I don't know miss.” I followed up asking, “How is it you don't know? Is anywhere hurting you?” He said “everywhere.” I then said “no, it can't be everywhere.” So I spent some time with him, during which I found he was sadder than in physical pain. I asked him, “What is making you sad?” He said, “Miss, I don't know what I want to do and my parents have a problem with the fact that I don't know what I want to do.” He seemed to have felt bad to the point of pain. So I (i.e. Principal Lewin) said to him (a 13th grader) “don't feel badly about the fact that you don't know what you want to do at this time. There are many others walking around who don't know either and here is what they have done: They have developed their response to give people when asked.”

Principal Lewin continued her motivation and encouragement by making reference to what happened to her eleven-year-old son who came home crying one evening. She told of how her son was laughed at and ridiculed by classmates and teacher when, unlike his classmates, he told the teacher he wasn't sure what he wanted to do. Lewin's strong

expression at the interview gave a clear idea of the lived experience that evening when her son revealed his trauma: “I had to coach my child, I had to counsel my child. I went to my ‘psychological box’ saying to him nothing is wrong with you at this level not knowing what you want to become.”

The story which continued for several hundred words longer, concluding with Principal Lewin telling of how she helped her student to link the subject he was pursuing with what he has interest in doing in a tertiary context. Mrs. Lewin reported seeing the young man sometime later:

He was bright and chirpy and came up to me and said, “Miss thank you.” Further on he came back to me and said, “Miss I have registered for UTECH” and since then I have seen this young man – his hair is low-cut, he is always looking neat and well put together, and never with any look of dejection. Now he has figured it out and I told him to just concentrate on his study, and doing well.

The verdict is out on hyper-masculinity as an influence on boys, particularly as it relates to their attention in acquiring education. From the foregoing disclosure of discourses with school leaders, it is clear that the views are quite scaled on the phenomenon. Whilst the data and experiences appear to show hyper-masculinity towards a negative trajectory in terms of its influence, causing deviation and mitigating against boys’ wholesome development, including acquisition of education, it is not all so. Lewin’s shared experiences is a testimony that hyper-masculinity may not be as pervasive among schools or is necessarily deleterious to boys’ education. It appears the perceptiveness of leaders in their context and the willingness to work with, and guide boys in clarifying the values they embrace, can deflate hyper-masculinity tendencies that may be of a negative nature. Recognizing that individuality counts and that a certain level of positive aggression and

assertiveness, properly directed, may well be ‘what the doctor ordered’ for boys’ learning and achievement.

I am supporting this analysis of the hyper-masculinity issue, against the understanding that in some contexts there is a multiplicity of expressions and interpretations, even with allowance to switch. Hence, masculinity as seen in the way a male express his male identity, his manhood, has no one expression because it is socially constructed. When it comes to pedagogic engagement school leaders have to be less judgmental of students and seek to understand them. That in averting the tendency to stereotype, teachers’ /school leaders’ first responsibility is to know students: what they know, how they speak, understand their experiences and feelings as starting points for providing them, empowering school engagements.

As a response to boys’ attitude toward the learning of language Arts, H.O.D Cameron posited:

Often, it is a matter of trying to change their mind sets. Meetings are held with them and efforts made to promote the subject taught to them, by explaining the benefits of the language to their career path and life in general. There is resistance from the boys to the study of English language and Literature so it has to be constantly sold to them.

For H.O.D Wills English Literature is made compulsory in the school to enhance the critical thinking skills of students. She reported that boys’ resist for the most part because they do not like to read and they are of the view that English Literature is a ‘girls’ subject. She highlighted the fact that a male language teacher in the school has been lauded as being a good role model for boys’ embracing English as a valuable subject for their portfolio.

Economic Issues

On the basis of the data presented table 4.3, reflecting the ratings school leaders share on the relative influence of economic issues on boys' education, there appears to be divergent views on the matter. With ten of the twelve respondents placing economic issues lower on the rating spectrum, it appears the majority of school leaders do not view it as a factor exerting majority influence on boys' education. It is interesting to explore the experiences of school leaders to better understand and appreciate the stories behind the statistics.

Principal Day suggested that economic issues can be understood from one spectrum to another. He explained that a boy who has the economic resources can encounter negative impact and the one who does not have ample economic resources can be impacted negatively or positively. For example, some boys have everything, so they just show off, spending on the mundane, often expressing the sentiment that they already have it, "Mommy and Daddy have it". You have the other boy who said he is poor, it doesn't make any sense trying because things won't get better, while another who is also poor would declare and own his status, but will affirm the will to work hard at his schooling and education to transform his status. Day concluded, noting:

You can have two persons in the same poor economic situation and one takes a positive view of it and the other the negative path. There was a boy (now a successful professional) who attended a prominent high school in Mandeville, but had to travel to and from Saint Elizabeth where he lived. Since he did not get much money and could barely afford travel, he was often late for school, having had to depend on hitch hiking to get to school on many occasions. So he carried and executed the plan to hide and overnight in the school's cadet room and attend school in the mornings. He barely spent from the little morning he was given at the beginning of the week, and so saved to have enough to travel home at the weekend. When the school leaders caught up with him and sent for his mother he was thrown

into distress, believing his mother or the school authorities would be punishing him severely. Little did he know that he would be in for a life-changing encounter, as the then vice principal of the school decided to take the boy home and care for him as though he was their own child. He recounted how, for the first time in a long time, he went home and saw daylight. He got up and had breakfast and all the other family and home trappings he was unaccustomed to. Later he developed such love for the administrator he did the bachelors' degree in mathematics, the subject previously taught by the teacher/ school leader. When she was retiring from the school, he spoke at ceremony, expounding how the deed meted out to him changed him life. Needless to say the story left many in the audience teary eyed and undoubtedly challenged.

At the 'heart' of this story is the effort this economically deprived young boy had made to attend school. Other boys' in similar circumstances might have given up and faltered along the way. The concluding question Principal Day asked, was: "How many more are out there at the brink and need helping hands to pull them back, and put them on a path of renewed hope?"

In reference to economic issues Principal Cox declared:

"This is important, and though I might have put it last, it is really based on my own philosophy that you should not allow your financial circumstances to overcome you, but you should rise above them."

He explained that it is from the perspective of society's own influence and presentation that the young men often do not do well academically, because they have an understanding born out of society's influence on them that they have particular roles to play in society. Their socio-economic background is of a certain type, so they eventually lose interest in school; it affects primarily attendance in that they do not attend as often as they should because they believe that they must help out at home with the family's economic situation.

Principal April shared the opinion that economic issues are not accepted as an excuse for any of the students to be absent or to underperform at school. He cites other

issues listed in the table 4.3 as the ones that present the challenges. He emphasized his point thus:

Our Rhodes Scholar (a 2013 graduate) for example, had to sell on the streets in his neighborhood/township, in the mornings to raise enough money to attend school some twenty kilometers away. He used his poverty as a source of motivation, and in fact, many of the school's high performers are persons who are registered as poor or of lesser means; those who have encountered severe economic challenges. Therefore, economics is not counted among the most significant influences on boys' education. Additionally, support programs are put in place to assist those with economic challenges

Other participants shared the view that the students who are regarded as being amongst the most economically challenged are often the most successful academically. Ms.

Bohn posted this follow-up:

Something must be happening in their circumstances that is impacting them to use the little resources they have to the best advantage. The statistics are there to support the claim that poverty of itself is not a strong impediment to educational attainment.

Mrs. Bohn further explained that her school's guidance department runs the school's welfare program which resources are primarily provided by past students, especially those in the diaspora: Atlanta, Miami, New York, and Canada chapters. They also give to the school little scholarships and bursaries to the schools poorest, who happen to be the high achievers' as well. Bohn disclosed that some 400 students are on the government Program for Advancement through Health and Education (PATH). She suggested also that there are another 400 who are eligible for this assistance, but are not getting the same, as in some cases, parents perhaps driven by personal pride did not get their child/children registered in the program. Accordingly, the Guidance Unit has to devise strategies that will allow for this extension of benefits from the source resources available.

Mrs. Bohn affirmed that which is done in her school context to aid economically challenged students: "The aim of the Guidance Department in our school is to keep the

student one more day/week/month/term in the school system, and I think we are doing a ‘darn’ good job of it.”

To further explore the interplay between economic issues and boys’ achievement in school, Principal Cox posited the following view:

If a root analysis is done, you will find it is not the economic situation alone, but rather what it triggers is attendance – if students are not in school regularly they are [likely] unable to be learning well, and therefore it has deleterious effect on individuals. Whilst it can be linked to economics, economics of itself triggers other thing, attendance is one. Also, it’s not that children have to stop to help out with the economic situation at home, they cannot afford to attend school to begin with, and so we have had children who receive low averages, not because they do not have the capacity to learn, but simply because they are not in school often enough to learn. Therefore, economic issues have a powerful impact on the learning engagement on the outcome of each child. Weller lauded the effort the government has made in easing the pressure associated with maintaining children in school, but the majority of the students who are very poor are still finding it hard to obtain their education due to the constraints caused by poverty.

This he explained is reflected in truancy among the students, irregular attendance at school – it has become the culture to attend school only some days because other days they have to be working and hustling; some do not attend because they are not properly geared, while some results are poor because they do not have the tools to be at school. Weller provided some details of what he described as dire economic reality for many of his school:

In my school, 70% of the students can be considered to be from very poor backgrounds, the government’s PATH program gives them lunch for specific days (not enough to cover all days of the week), and there is also the provision of transportation along a specific route (so not all who need can benefit); There is also the book rental system that allows students to receive some of the books needed for school. These don’t take away from the fact that some of these students have single parents, some are ‘barrel’ children, others live with relatives, with older siblings, or by themselves and are unable to manage. All these negative restraining factors affect their learning in a very huge way.

Counsellor O'ban echoed the experiences/ sentiments of fellow Counsellor Weller:

I have seen it all the time, if a boy is hungry, he is not going to be able to focus adequately for optimum learning. He is having challenges at home and there is no money to get by on a daily basis, it is not going to be pretty give full attention at school. On a daily basis there are students who have to be given money to go home because, for the most part they are only able to find their way to school and nothing else. There is one boy in particular, for whom attending school is a big challenge, so he has to be given enough money to travel both ways each day, and to make matters worse there are family related issues that he has to battle. It is not surprising that these issues seem to play on him to the extent that he acts it out and gets into trouble with the principal, and now has to double his effort, along with support from the Guidance Unit, to better manage his situation.

Mr. Cox provided some additional details on the impact of economic issues in influencing boy's education:

It has been our experience that in some families where there are several children attending high school and who are of mixed gender (boys and girls), if preference has to be made as to who goes to school, the girls tend to get the nod over the male. So if there are two children (boy and girl) in a home and both are to attend high school, but the family can only afford one, it is highly likely that the female is the one that will be sent. This is the sort of thinking that characterize majority of the populace from the school's feeder communities where farming is the main economic activity. On days when the boys are unable to attend school, for lack of economic capacity, they are expected to assist with the family's self-help production activity.

To help, school leaders across each of the sample schools have devised means and fostered poverty mitigation schemes to assist needy students. Mr. Weller described having a welfare program through which funds are solicited from many different stakeholders to sponsor students' scholarships and many other areas. All these initiatives are channeled through the guidance department of the school. Counsellor Weller confidently declared:

There is never a student who comes to the department expressing the need for food or fare to go home, who is not assisted.

There is no denying the existence of the poverty concern and its possible influence on the performance of students in school, as maybe inferred from the high rating attributed by two respondents and the acknowledgement by others. However, the existence of poverty, many argued, is not a sufficient deterrent to the acquisition of education as systems are put in place both by government and at the school level by school leaders to assist in mitigating possible impacts. The cogent point is made too, that lack of resources such as money for transportation could affect attendance triggering the problem of students falling behind due to frequent absence from instructional settings. While not exhaustive the range of influences examined above provides a clear and comprehensive impact into the complexities which attends the education of boys in Central Manchester, Jamaica. Exploration of identified influencers through the lenses of school leaders has provided valuable feedback that supports the tripartite, participatory notion of education involving the home, school and community. It has been shown there can be no disconnect among these pillars of the school system in which boys are educated and socialized to assume their roles as productive citizens, otherwise dysfunctionality sets in and the system becomes less supportive of development. In this regard the role of school leadership is quite pivotal.

Research question 4: How effective do school leaders think their responses are,
to factors attributable to boys' achievement levels?

Theme: School leadership and engagement.

Many factors and influencers intersect in the dynamic process of educating, and in context that are as valued as the social groups they serve. In this milieu school leaders are called upon to, as part of their remit foster the engagement of stakeholders and appropriate systems and process that will produce results that endue to the development of students

(boys) and the institutions in general. Hence in treating with the theme: ‘School leadership and engagement’ the following sub themes will be considered:

- a) School and social development
- b) Forging stakeholder collaborations
- c) School experiences as lessons for school leaders.

Making School Count in Social Development

The value of school as a socializing agent in the society is infinitely extensive. School leaders have the awesome responsibility to organize schools in ways that lead to the optimization of students’ potential at school and beyond. In acknowledging his role, Principal April said:

I have the responsibility to ensure that before a boy leaves the school he has something worthwhile to add to society, otherwise we would only be perpetuating more crime and violence. We cannot fool ourselves, unless we assist them with marketable skills that allow them to be gainfully employed, they will turn on us, or to things that are destructive to themselves and to society as a whole.

April bemoans the breakdown in the family structure, a structure which he said continues to churn out boys with no father figure to look to in homes. He declared his responsibility to produce worthwhile citizens, husbands for the young ladies, men of integrity and honor generally. Accordingly, much time is spent in general assembly and class sessions trying to get boys to understand. April added:

It is almost a counter-culture, but it is noticed that if there is enough persistence and they see good examples being produced, they will respond positively. This is a big responsibility that leaders in the school must take on board to properly prepare boys who would be gainfully engaged as men in the society.

Weller made the point that is reflective of April's view. He noted that when a boy does well, he will always be a better citizen in society and also will be a better father and a better person. This he described as paramount, adding that it is the responsibility of parents, the school and community to train the boys well, not just in academics and skills but training them in other areas to be responsible citizens, to have values and good attitudes. Achievement in these areas would have signaled that school leaders did well.

Mr. April expressed the view that if adequate investment is made in boys, they are likely to respond and make use of opportunities that exist in areas of interest to them. He cited the example of sports and explained how as a school family and the wider community they have continued to laud and applaud national representatives in sports, some of whom have gone on to become Olympians. April added:

Some of these were not necessarily academically strong students, but by supporting them in their quest to exhibit the talents they possess, they have gone on to represent well at the highest levels and have become outstanding role models for some of our students.

Mr. April further explained that aside from those who have excelled in sports and who have become Olympians, many have obtained academic scholarships to universities and colleges and many are doing well outside the academic professions. Thus he affirmed the leadership of the school. This encourages the thrust to continue embracing the holistic education philosophy and the remain cognizant that if we are going to impact the level of indiscipline going on in the society, I have to make sure the school leadership caters to the affective attitudinal aspects in terms of our boys' educational development.

In advocating for boys' education in schools, Mr. Cox shared the view that you have to be deliberate about it in the sense that you first have to appreciate the need to cater

to boys specifically. He made the suggestion that if school leaders and educational practitioners generally, begin from the perspective of deliberateness there will be the drive to focus on strategies. Cox provide some details on his perspective of engaging boys in their social and educational development:

If you are oblivious to it and so treat it as a generic issue, using a generic approach to everything in your school: your curriculum, teaching-learning approaches, etc., then you may be losing your boys without even recognizing it. So it begins with awareness of the phenomenon and being deliberate and addressing the same. This is what will drive the school leader, recognizing that there is no one strategy that will work, but that if you are mindful of it, you will constantly be aware and constantly implementing, and modifying to get strategies that work.

Mr. Cox acknowledged that every cohort that comes into the school is different and that even within a cohort, every class within a grade level have their differences and special cases to which you have to cater, but you set a context and a structure of reference. For example, each secondary school is required to have a students' council and the council should have a president. The students are allowed to vote for their leader and if you are not careful, for ten consecutive years you could end up having a female leader. This was averted when the forward-thinking male fraternity convened a meeting of its members, and out of the discussion that ensued, the idea to have the genders represented in the top leaderships of the council was formed. Principal Cox explained that within the context:

Having a male and a female leader and giving them distinct leadership roles in the school, having them address the students, (and) this has been found to have a powerful impact on motivating the boys in particular. They see their leader; they see a path to becoming that leader too.

For Counsellor Weller, being a father of three boys has made him very passionate about boys progressing and being successful. He declared that he has learned a lot, having acknowledged that boys can be very rude and rough. You will see them at school and you

become very hard on them: you will suspend them, expel them, but when you see them in the community, they hold no grudges because they know you were trying to help them.

Counsellor Weller emphasized:

I have learnt that even though boys are slow in learning and understanding, you will be surprised at the end of the day how they excel, so one just has to be patient with them and see them through. I have learnt also that the culture (national, community and home), have more influence on the boys than the girls, so as a leader you have to understand and know about the culture, know what's happening in current affairs and use that to gain their respect and confidence, and help them to be responsible.

A common response shared by school leaders for assisting boys' development is engaging the strategy of a boys' day in the schools. In executing this strategy, the boys are separated from the girls for a day and external resource persons are invited to interact with them. The idea is to identify some of the problems the boys have through discussions with them and assist them in forming their own solutions. Mr. Day shared the view that too often school leaders get caught up with everything else, and so do not get time to spend focusing on the need of boys. He, however acknowledged the effort of some school leaders who separate boys for girls at some grade levels and have them take classes separately. Mr. Day asserted:

There are other things that we can do to focus on the education of our boys, because when a boy does well, I think the country does well. If men are doing well, then the country will do better. It is noticed that the percentage of boys going to university and other tertiary training institutions, while low, has increased significantly because there are deliberate actions that are put in place to try and assist the boys.

Mrs. Lewin expressed the view that it is absolutely critical to support boys' achievement in schools (not at the expense of the girls). She took note of the vulnerability of boys when it comes to certain societal problems and issues, and shared the recommendation that more explaining and teaching be done of the social issues in society. This should include values and attitudes education, and critical thinking skills must be

infused into the teaching so that the reasoning skills of boys can be enhanced. Mrs. Lewin added:

The education must be proactive; the church is not as strong formally, the society is not as cohesive as in earlier times when the elders looked out for the younger ones in the community. Education is the last bastion and we have to try and do a little more. We have to infuse a little critical thinking into the education process, engage meditation and foster humility. Young men need to understand that they are no less a man if they say they are sorry for a misdeed; they are no more a man by carrying a gun or knife. Boys! When you work with them and see them turn around, it's a beauty, and school has a big role to play.

Not unlike other HOD respondents, Ms. Cameron made the daunting assertion that the education system tends to stifle boys. They do not get enough play time and they don't expect they are going to respond differently to the girls. Ms. Cameron emphasized:

As we look around we see more and more where men are marginalized, sadly, the marginalization starts at school because of the ways we instruct and the activities incorporated. Outside the classroom setting, does the school allow ample quality activities for the boys to become engaged in?

She explained that in her school, the boys complain about the deficiencies of the sports program. However, in relation to the curriculum, the school has responded well in providing adequate and appropriate engagement opportunities in auto mechanics, design art and other skill areas which have been put in place to extend other curricula needs – some of which are of particular interest to (those) boys in particular to those who are semi-literate through the Grade Nine Achievement Test (GNAT) program. It is understood that special interest is taken to diversify the curriculum to meet their academic needs, even as efforts continue to address shortcomings to their personal growth and development.

Mr. Cox's point about how classes are deliberately structured to cater for both boys and girls is quite instructive.

Structurally we ensure that each class is balanced in terms of males and females, and we do not stream the students. However, we have a high achievement class and even in that class we ensure that it is balanced with boys and girls, because one of the things we are mindful of is that because girls achieve higher academically than boys, on average in the school, you will have male-dominant underachieving classes and female-dominant overachieving classes, and so we are mindful not to do that. We are also careful not to stereotype subject offerings, so we have boys who are enrolled in home economics classes and girls who are in building construction classes, for example. We don't allow students to feel it is wrong for a boy to become a chef, for example, so we tweak the curriculum when it is being offered to ensure that it is as gender neutral as possible.

Ms. Burnt shared the view that as a country, we need to embrace more, the fact that boys have needs that are unique, and that a more direct effort is needed to cater to the different needs and learning styles of boys. Ms. Burnt declared:

It should really be a policy decision and should not be left to the teachers in the school, and the HOD to make these decisions because you might come upon situations where you have people who are not sensitive to that fact, and this could result in the boys' being neglected.

The forgoing perspective of school leaders on 'making school count in social development' underscores the established understanding of the school as an agency of socialization and development in, and for the society. The voices of school leaders have echoed, but also occurring are divergent views on how they have sought to make school work for the benefit of society. With the focus of the study being boys' education, it is believed that providing boys in school with well-rounded education and social orientation it will auger well for their personal development, and for the collective wellbeing of the society. As Mr. Day said "when the men are doing well, the country will do better." Similarly, Mr. April concluded, "this is a big responsibility that leaders in the school must take on board to properly prepare boys who will be gainfully engaged as men in the society". Some drawbacks to the school leader's effectiveness have also been identified, such as resources (human and material), policy constraints and cultural impediments to

pushbacks. Having a satisfactory good grasp of society's dynamics is a good starting point for the discerning school leader to respond adequately. Freire (1998) made the point that:

“Educators need to know what happens in the world of children with whom they work. They need to know the universe of their dreams, the language with which they skillfully defend themselves from the aggressiveness of their world, what they know independently of the school and how they know it”. (pp 72-73)

Wise words for the teacher and school leader who would dare to make a difference in a boys' life; having detected his unique differences and responding accordingly. Orientating boys to the instrumental value of school (Smith and Wilhelm, 2002) can be significant game changer in clarifying their values and taking the course of development. It is not beyond school leaders and the boys themselves to achieve. In spite of the litany of negative comments regarding the status of boys' education and their responses to engagement opportunities, several pockets of excellence have been observed and reported on. In the area of electrical engineering/skill training, Counsellor Stair spoke about the awesome results received by a teacher and his charges when the high-stake, external results were presented. In interview with this researcher, Stair reported that the class of 20 boys comprised some of the weakest students of the cohort. However, the electrical technology teacher devised his own strategies to get boys to comply with what he was about and so got the work done. They all passed electrical technology, one of only two subjects many of the group passed. This class proved that when boys are adequately motivated, and the appropriate strategies applied to facilitating them, they will apply themselves and do well. Similarly, Principal Lewin applauded her boys for their industrious response in managing the school's band and music program, and in leading certain entrepreneurial activities. There is no question that many of our boys are doing tremendously well in schools and are

destined to make significant contributions to the society. The concern worth reiterating is about the large number of young men who leaves school at the secondary level, semi-literate and ill-equipped to cope with the social, political and economic condition present in the society. As will be explored in the succeeding section, the course of development of boys require a collaborative approach as the issues relating to education is diverse.

Forging Stakeholder Collaboration

By its nature, education has a multi-sectorial appeal, and therefore is dependent upon and impacts other sectors of a country in a far reaching manner. Hence the effectiveness of schools, which are the crucibles of learning and education, are highly influenced by the quality of its stakeholders' engagement. Realistically, stakeholders are the real determinants of all the facets of an effective school. It behooves school leaders to have a strong engagement mind-set as they aim to serve the needs of the individual student, as well as to respond to the demands of employers, tertiary institutions, examination bodies and society.

A significant problem reportedly encountered by school leaders is lack of adequate facilities to accommodate their school population in a single location. Hence most are required to engage spaces within the wider community to host special events, such as award's ceremony and graduation. Mr. Day bemoaned the fact that he had to exclude underperforming students from the school's prize giving ceremony for lack of adequate accommodation, even at the rented facility. Mr. Day gave this assurance: "Monies will be found to rent a bigger facility that can accommodate the entire school population so that the motivational speeches, seeing others collecting prizes and so on, can serve as a sort of motivation for them."

Forging collaboration with regard to the use of facilities is a critical part of stakeholder's support. As in the case of Mr. Day's school, students who need the motivation the most are excluded from a major activity of the school. These students (mostly boys) use the opportunity to do as they like on that day when they are not engaged by the school.

Stakeholder engagement has been found to have important impact on students' welfare and on keeping them in school. Principal Cox indicated that there are over one hundred children in the benevolent scheme of his school, in addition to four hundred and fifty-seven PATH students. The two groups combined forms almost a half of the school's population. The leadership of the school wish it could take on more, but the limited resources prohibit it, as the funding for such benevolence comes from benefactors, not state funds. Mr. Cox noted: "Funds are contributed into the benevolent scheme by past students who must be lauded for their commitment in contributing dedicated amounts yearly."

Mr. Cox explained that the Guidance Department is responsible for needs analysis and for implementing the assistance program, and distribution is made from the bursary. Distribution is done in such a way that the child is shielded; it is done with some amount of discretion so that no one knows who is on the benevolent program except these in the Guidance Department. Principal Cox declared:

It works, God be praised, due to a set of dedicated past students who gives every year without the need for reminders. We also have sponsors, persons in the wider community who help students in the school, through the administration of the Guidance Department with well-established adherence to individual privacy.

Like Mr. Cox's school context, others such as Bohn's have also been the beneficiaries of past student's associations and benefactors from the wider community.

Bohn shared how it is done:

The guidance department runs the school's welfare program, which resources are mainly provided by past students in the diaspora. A fast food concessionaire has also been in the school and has given assistance to the lunch program of the school.

There is a welfare department at Mr. Weller's school, through which funds are solicited from many different stakeholders, to sponsor student's scholarships and give assistance in other area. The past student's association, including individual past students from home and abroad, give scholarships to students. All of these efforts are channeled through the guidance department. Other matters/areas of collaboration with stakeholders were not widely acknowledged or commented on by respondents. In relation to academic articulation, Ms. Lewin observed that there needs to be closer collaboration in working with primary education to allow for smoother transition from the primary to the secondary level, as there seems to be a gap regarding boys transitioning between the two levels. She expressed the hope that the Primary Exit Profile (PEP), the new grade six assessment scheme for exiting the primary level, will help to achieve the transition gap since it uses alternative forms of assessment including the portfolio and more ongoing performance activities, rather than just a one-shot examination. Mrs. Lewin asserted: "This format will engage boys more directly and they are thus likely to improve their participation."

The Parents Teachers' Association (PTA) is a key stakeholder group with which strong collaborations is a keen concern of school leaders. Whilst all the schools featured in the study have active PTAs, they all do not enjoy the same level of vibrancy and support. As noted by Ms. Burnt, and reiterated here, "the students who are registered at the school

are primarily ones who are not focused on mainstream education and the response of the parents to their education would reflect that.” Mrs. Lewin emphasized that the parent-teacher/home-school relationship has to be strong. She notes that there is a passion for the boys who are seen to be more at risk than the girls in the society. In light of the tendency of boys to veer off course in pursuit of the ‘macho’ image and its variants, Mrs. Lewin emphasized: “This partnership between home and school is of extreme importance, and we find that when the parents are compliant, when they are closer to us, we find the students’ behavior to be better.”

Ms. Burnt made a similar observation to Lewin’s and it is reiterated here for emphasis and support:

The boys who are doing well in school are the ones whose parents tend to turn out for PTA meetings. The parents of the non-performing child are highly likely to be absent from the PTA meeting and, even when called in for consultation, are unlikely to show up.

Making School Count in Social Development

The value of school as a socializing agent in the society is infinitely extensive. School leaders have the awesome responsibility to organize schools in ways that lead to the optimization of students’ potential at school and beyond. In acknowledging his role, Principal April said:

I have the responsibility to ensure that before a boy leaves the school he has something worthwhile to add to society, otherwise we would only be perpetuating more crime and violence. We cannot fool ourselves, unless we assist them with marketable skills that allow them to be gainfully employed, they will turn on us, or to things that are destructive to themselves and to society as a whole.

April bemoans the breakdown in the family structure, a structure which he said continues to churn out boys with no father figure to look to in homes. He declared his

responsibility to produce worthwhile citizens, husbands for the young ladies, men of integrity and honor generally. Accordingly, much time is spent in general assembly and class sessions trying to get boys to understand. Principal April added:

It is almost a counter-culture, but it is noticed that if there is enough persistence and they see good examples being produced, they will respond positively. This is a big responsibility that leaders in the school must take on board to properly prepare boys who would be gainfully engaged as men in the society.

Weller made the point that is reflective of April's view. He noted that when a boy does well, he will always be a better citizen in society and also will be a better father and a better person. This he described as paramount, adding that it is the responsibility of parents, the school and community to train the boys well, not just in academics and skills but training them in other areas to be responsible citizens, to have values and good attitudes. Achievement in these areas would have signaled that school leaders did well.

Principal April expressed the view that if adequate investment is made in boys, they are likely to respond and make use of opportunities that exist in areas of interest to them. He cited the example of sports and explained how as a school family and the wider community they have continued to laud and applaud national representatives in sports, some of whom have gone on to become Olympians. April added:

Some of these were not necessarily academically strong students, but by supporting them in their quest to exhibit the talents they possess, they have gone on to represent well at the highest levels and have become outstanding role models for some of our students.

Mr. April further explained that aside from those who have excelled in sports and who have become Olympians, many have obtained academic scholarships to universities and colleges and many are doing well outside the academic professions. Thus he affirmed the leadership of the school. This encourages the thrust to continue embracing the holistic

education philosophy and the remain cognizant that if we are going to impact the level of indiscipline going on in the society, I have to make sure the school leadership caters to the affective attitudinal aspects in terms of our boys' educational development.

In advocating for boys' education in schools, Mr. Cox shared the view that you have to be deliberate about it in the sense that you first have to appreciate the need to cater to boys specifically. He made the suggestion that if school leaders and educational practitioners generally, begin from the perspective of deliberateness there will be the drive to focus on strategies. Cox provide some details on his perspective of engaging boys in their social and educational development:

If you are oblivious to it and so treat it as a generic issue, using a generic approach to everything in your school: your curriculum, teaching–learning approaches, etc., then you may be losing your boys without even recognizing it. So it begins with awareness of the phenomenon and being deliberate and addressing the same. This is what will drive the school leader, recognizing that there is no one strategy that will work, but that if you are mindful of it, you will constantly be aware and constantly implementing, and modifying to get strategies that work.

Mr. Cox acknowledged that every cohort that comes into the school is different and that even within a cohort, every class within a grade level have their differences and special cases to which you have to cater, but you set a context and a structure of reference. For example, each secondary school is required to have a students' council and the council should have a president. The students are allowed to vote for their leader and if you are not careful, for ten consecutive years you could end up having a female leader. This was averted when the forward-thinking male fraternity convened a meeting of its members, and out of the discussion that ensued, the idea to have the genders represented in the top leaderships of the council was formed. Mr Cox explained that within the context:

Having a male and a female leader and giving them distinct leadership roles in the school, having them address the students, (and) this has been found to have a powerful impact on motivating the boys in particular. They see their leader; they see a path to becoming that leader too.

For Mr. Weller, being a father of three boys has made him very passionate about boys progressing and being successful. He declared that he has learned a lot, having acknowledged that boys can be very rude and rough. You will see them at school and you become very hard on them: you will suspend them, expel them, but when you see them in the community, they hold no grudges because they know you were trying to help them.

Mr. Weller emphasized:

I have learnt that even though boys are slow in learning and understanding, you will be surprised at the end of the day how they excel, so one just has to be patient with them and see them through. I have learnt also that the culture (national, community and home), have more influence on the boys than the girls, so as a leader you have to understand and know about the culture, know what's happening in current affairs and use that to gain their respect and confidence, and help them to be responsible.

A common response shared by school leaders for assisting boys' development is engaging the strategy of a boys' day in the schools. In executing this strategy, the boys are separated from the girls for a day and external resource persons are invited to interact with them. The idea is to identify some of the problems the boys have through discussions with them and assist them in forming their own solutions. Mr. Day shared the view that too often school leaders get caught up with everything else, and so do not get time to spend focusing on the need of boys. He, however acknowledged the effort of some school leaders who separate boys for girls at some grade levels and have them take classes separately. Mr. Day asserted:

There are other things that we can do to focus on the education of our boys, because when a boy does well, I think the country does well. If men are doing well, then the country will do better. It is noticed that the percentage of boys going to university and other tertiary training institutions, while

low, has increased significantly because there are deliberate actions that are put in place to try and assist the boys.

Principal Lewin expressed the view that it is absolutely critical to support boys' achievement in schools (not at the expense of the girls). She took note of the vulnerability of boys when it comes to certain societal problems and issues, and shared the recommendation that more explaining and teaching be done of the social issues in society. This should include values and attitudes education, and critical thinking skills must be infused into the teaching so that the reasoning skills of boys can be enhanced. Mrs. Lewin added:

The education must be proactive; the church is not as strong formally, the society is not as cohesive as in earlier times when the elders looked out for the younger ones in the community. Education is the last bastion and we have to try and do a little more. We have to infuse a little critical thinking into the education process, engage meditation and foster humility. Young men need to understand that they are no less a man if they say they are sorry for a misdeed; they are no more a man by carrying a gun or knife. Boys! When you work with them and see them turn around, it's a beauty, and school has a big role to play.

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Wise words for the teacher and school leader who would dare to make a difference in a boys’ life; having detected his unique differences and responding accordingly. Orientating boys to the instrumental value of school (Smith and Wilhelm, 2002) can be significant game changer in clarifying their values and taking the course of development. As will be explored in the succeeding section, the course of development of boys require a collaborative approach as the issues relating to education is diverse.

School Experiences as Lessons for School Leaders

The provision of school leadership provides many and varied experiences from which to learn the nuances of education, generally, and the issues related to boys' learning and social engagement specifically. In responding to her effectiveness as a school leader, Ms. Cameron said, "I am learning daily to respond to boys through analysis of the challenges that emerge – the classroom is dynamic and new things are emerging all the time."

Mr. Cox explained that at his school data that is gathered is fed back to the system, to the teachers to improve the offerings to successive cohorts of students, so the things that are found to be ineffective or do not work well are discontinued, or tweaked, and things that work are reinforced and continued with generically. Mr. Cox gave specific examples of how school experiences have been used as lessons directed at students' development:

- (a) We have found it very useful to have an almost equal number of males and females per class, so when students are to come into grade seven one of the things we have done is that we have been very deliberate in asking the Education Ministry place equal numbers of boys and girls at the school and thankfully they have been very good at complying with that request, and that helps.
- (b) We have managed to identify troubled or misaligned boys early and place them with a mentor early so that they can be helped along the way, especially in the grade seven classes.
- (c) There was a time in the school when a boy was not allowed to do Home Economics and a girl was not allowed to do Joinery (woodwork), we have prevented that sort of thing from happening, so if a student opts to do either, he/she would be allowed.
- (d) Where we have cases of external gender influences which have been brought to bear, we address it directly as a school and we encourage a better thinking, a clearer thinking among the students.
- (e) When we were having difficulties with the deportment of young men at one point, for example, one of the lessons that we learnt is that the men (on staff) in the school promote themselves as examples, hence even on a warm day when the principal doesn't necessarily want to, dress a particular way as a living example.

Mr. Cox affirmed the lessons learnt by himself and team leaders in the context of his school:

We have learnt that men are powerful role models, when we don't hear it we know it; so we are deliberate in comporting ourselves in a certain way, we speak a particular way, we are deliberate about using standard English when we teach, for example, and it is not a critique of Jamaica's standard language (Patois), but we want the boys to understand it is alright to speak well, and that you are not a sissy if you speak well. Therefore, the male teachers are deliberate about speaking well to their classes, they are deliberate about teaching their boys as they should be about their female students. In other words, we collate the issues qualitatively and quantitatively, we analyze them, look at what went right, what went wrong, tweak what went wrong and re-inforce what went right, and we try to do that over and over each year.

Similar insightful experiences have helped other school leaders such as Mr. Day plan for and contribute to the development of boys in schools. Principal Day shared the view:

To save one boy (and they do return to say "thanks") when you see them in society doing well, I just hug them. It gives personal satisfaction when they return and say "Sir, I want to come and talk to the students".

The account was highlighted of one boy who became a soldier and who enthusiastically returned to speak to the students about a little of the much he learnt. He was described as a former trouble maker, who teachers and school administrators 'fought' with and kept in school despite the challenges he presented. Interestingly, he spoke to the importance of listening and responding to what is being said to them by their leaders. The changes reflected by the young man drove Mr. Day to reflect on the leadership stance taken relative to him. Day noted:

Had we given up on him we would not have had such an output. This is one of the reasons I get into trouble with my teachers because I don't like to give up on them. I ask "when I push them out, where are they going?", "how is it going to benefit us in the school and the society at large?" There is a boy

who I had to part company with in recent times, but rather than expelling him, I called a school, spoke with his parents and had him transferred to that school, providing a change of environment.

Mr. Day offered the explanation that while the Ministry of Education's policy speaks to one thing or another regarding suspensions, principals have an understanding amongst themselves, and so one will be able to call up another to say "this boy will be better off at your school' and so they are removed at the principal's own discretion to avoid having to expel him.

HOD Malox spoke to the value of early intervention as a way of helping those boys who enter secondary schools with low entry performances from primary school. She noted that, as a direct response to experiences with other cohorts of students, teacher assistants were employed, especially for the seventh graders. Mrs. Malox emphasized:

It was found that early intervention was very important in getting boys who were underachievers to improve and not become frustrated in the teaching-learning context. It was also found that the acknowledgement of achievement publicly, even commendation for modest progress, gets boys on a high and motivated for more success.

Mrs. Malox also mentioned how certain boys 'walked on air' after they were invited on stage at a school gathering and acknowledged for the incremental improvements they were making in aspects of their school engagement. Malone also explained that:

Simply placing encouraging comments on report cards have been shown to motivate boys, who tend to perform better subsequently. It was also found that the sports which are loved by boys was useful as a strategy to engage boys and motivate them towards productive educational endeavor in class, and the wider school community.

Mrs. Bohn explained that at the time when the interview for this study was concluded, she had been working with forty-two students who had failed their fourth year in high school. Of the forty-two students, forty were boys. Mrs. Bohn asserted:

What I have observed is that they want to learn, but they approach it differently, so our teaching methods have to cater to them. They are not able to do everything at once and so I believe they should do less early. There is the general agreement that there should be broad-based exposure, but they should be planned for differently, because they are not managing fourteen subjects. These students think differently, learn differently and their results are different. They do not want to fail, but end up doing so and so it is time we stop playing hypocrites in our school system and plan more for these children, including giving more nurturing support at first form.

This view by Mrs. Bohn coincides well with the experiences reported by Wills and others regarding preparations made for accommodating first formers (seventh graders) in the respective schools. New cohorts of students entering at grade seven at the beginning of each academic year are required to attend summer classes. During this phase, assigned language arts teachers identify students (mostly boys) who are challenged by the subject, so that such information can be passed on to teachers who will facilitate these students.

Meanwhile, Cameron, also Language Arts HOD, made this rather similar deposition:

Yearly, there is a two-week emersion for Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) students entering the school and a one-week period for Grade Nine Achievement Test (GNAT) students. A reading test is given to diagnose reading competence, to influence planning and instruction. This has worked. It has been found that it is necessary to allow the boys to talk and then seek to correct them. Accordingly, the language experience approach to teaching English is found to be useful.

In extending the conversation about school experiences as lessons for school leaders, Burnt's reflection is instructive. She shared the belief that, in schools where the population is largely boys, the administration has to place greater emphasis on the implication of this fact when planning. Such focus should result in informed procurement of adequate resources for the engagement of the population of boys, in particular. Burnt emphasized that if, for example the population of boys is quite large and there are not enough practical skill-training subject options to choose from and absorb them for active engagement, they might get lost along the way. Thus what you may find is that these boys

become disruptive and are regularly referred to the dean of discipline, the big factor being the non-engagement in classes. Ms. Burnt provided more details:

What is found is that in many instances, where the school accommodates a large population of boys functioning at a low academic level, and the school has mainly mainstream academic subjects, the boys become disruptive and they do not benefit.

On the basis of the forgoing, Ms. Burnt suggested that more schools should desist from following the strict directives of the Ministry of Education because there are some systems, for example the City and Guilds certification program, that addresses more workplace readiness. Ms. Burnt bemoaned the fact that:

Some principals have great difficulty buying into these (aforementioned) programs/certification and these are really what will take care of these boys who are underperforming in other areas. Advocacy has therefore arisen for the school leaders to step out of the box somewhat for the benefit of their context.

Inherently, school leadership embodies a range of experiences for the engaged leader. Invariably it encompasses the school as an agent in social development, stakeholder collaboration and the generation of experience that becomes useful lessons for leaders in guiding students' development.

By the school leaders' responses, it has been shown that making schools count for social development is not only determined by principals and teachers, but also by other stakeholders: government policies and regulations, parents, past students and community members. From government comes policies and regulations with codes of behavior that communicates the acceptable value systems of the society. Accordingly, they provide a defined frame of reference for guiding and supporting school leaders in executing their roles.

Among key stakeholders of the work of schools are parents, but several respondents have alluded to the fact that many boys in schools have essentially lost their way because of the lack of parental guidance and low engagement with schools. Ezenne (2008) captured the spirit of collaboration beautifully, noting that “the active involvement of parents in the life of the school can help promote a learning community in which students can actively engage with teachers and their peers” (pp. 26). The noteworthy point was also made by Cook (2008) that:

The more information that schools provide to parents, the more they can support their children’s learning at home, and the information that parents share with teachers can assist them in adapting their teaching to suit the learning styles of students. (pp. 27)

Furthermore, didactic discourses with school leaders (respondents in this study) has revealed that effective schools and inspirational leadership goes hand-in-hand. It goes without saying, therefore, that the school’s engagement with the community is paramount. As was shown, this involvement has paved the way for economic and social benefits to students in the form of scholarships and grants, and for assistance in building capacities within the schools for a sustainable future.

Conclusion

The findings of the study reflect the vastness of concerns related to the education of boys in central Jamaica, and the experiences school leaders have garnered in navigating various influences. From the findings it may be determined that the primary factors attributable to boys’ achievement, include family relations and structure, the discipline of boys in attending to educational goals, mentorship support, provision of co-curricular activities and approaches to teaching.

The findings also suggest that the key artefacts aligned to boys' education are appreciated and supported by school leaders as having far reaching impact on the development of boys. Participants in the study indicated that the effectiveness of the curriculum in reaching boys depends much on the innovativeness of teachers and school leaders in crafting and applying appropriate engagement strategies. Other artefacts (teaching plans and teacher evaluation) given focused analysis in the study, have been endorsed as having strong merits in fostering boys' education. Of the artefacts examined, teaching plan was identified by majority of respondents as most impactful in the process of facilitating boys in school. For successful instructional outcomes, school leaders have therefore recognized the need to be mindful of teachers' planning, and so provide the appropriate supervision.

A number of far-reaching influences characterize the reality of boys in central Jamaica. School leaders who are respondents in this study have argued with varying perspectives, on the level of impact on boys education, attributable to feminization of schools, hyper-masculinity, popular culture, ineffective teaching, curriculum structure and relevance and economic issues, respectively. On the basis of school leaders' responses, it has emerged that ineffective teaching, curriculum structure and relevance, and popular culture, presents the strongest influences in so far as boys' education is concerned.

Clearly, responses to factors attributable to the achievement level of boys, has pointed the way forward, with the objective of giving greater agency to them. Herein, the place of schools in enhancing development is unequivocal as was underscored by school leaders. In this educational milieu, school leaders have also rightly endorsed stakeholder

collaboration as a means of empowerment for providing more outstanding service to all students, but particularly the boys who are believed to be the most vulnerable to shifting societal values. The experiential lessons learnt are tremendous and school leaders have voiced the resolve to use them in guiding successive cohorts of boys in their respective schools.

Summary Reflections on School Leaders' Views: Similarities and Differences

The foregoing data from the three categories of school leaders, reflects strong similarities in views and perspectives across the levels of leadership. Rather than being different in an exclusive sense of discord, the views of the respondents across the categories are in a significant way complementary to each other or otherwise represents shared similarities. They all, for example, promulgated the view that boys would be better off at school academically and socially if they had more stable and supportive home environments. Except for Principal Lewin, who concedes that more men should be in the school to assist boys, other school leaders suggest feminization was an issue, though not among the most impactful factors on boys' education.

Principals spoke strongest to the embedded issues relating to planning, integrity of the instructional process, teacher professionalism, student discipline and home-school relationship. As they should, principals tended to assert personal responsibility for the maintenance of order on all fronts of the school's leadership and were particularly strident on the need for more practical instructional programs to engage boys. Principals and other school leaders saw external factors such as popular culture as important to the extent that they are regarded as primary causes of distractions to boys from the process of acquiring education. Such factors offers offer boys more immediate gratitude.

True to their professional agency, Guidance Counsellors' responses tended to be empathetic, with an advocacy orientation towards helping boys. Along with the Principal, the Guidance Counsellor has a lead role in activities associated with the socio-economic needs of students. In many respects Counsellors serve as more than an employee in the school that students look to for professional guidance; they are father figures, friend and support to many of the boys. Accordingly, they are often able to reach beyond academic requirements and see the boy as an individual, a human being needing help in areas where the teacher and principal may not pause long enough to understand. So Guidance Counsellor helps the teacher who calls on him/her to better understand the unsettled boy and mend strained student-teacher relationships. The Counsellor also helps teachers pacify class disputes before they escalate into insurmountable problems for the teacher and by extension the principal. Importantly, Counsellors have made themselves available to give professional advice to teachers on problem-solving in their classes; and Principals also benefit from Counsellor's advice on disciplinary, instructional programs and other matters. By virtue of their positions, the Counsellor is a strong link between home and school, and so she/he is an important source of data on the student for both teacher and principal. In general, the Counsellor's attendance to guiding students' career decision-making goes a long way to keeping them focused thereby reducing stress on the class teacher and principal.

In general the Counsellor and HOD support the work of the Principal in the overall administration of the school. The HOD focuses on the proper execution of the curriculum with respect to assigned subject areas, supervising a number of teachers employed to such department. As the data revealed, the Language Arts respondents

(HODs) were passionate about their expectations of boys, knowing the boys deep seated apprehension to the subject. Through this source, much of the idiosyncrasies boys display to the learning of the English Language in school were realized by the researcher. Of course, the HODs responses to other questions in the schedule, less specific to language arts tended to reflect much of the ethic of care and nurturing that is desirable to engage boys.

A detailed discussion of the findings associated with the research questions is presented in the following chapter. Here the researcher also discusses the implications of the study to the continued education of boys, and the Jamaican boys in particular, and proposes recommendations for educational practitioners, policy makers, and others with a vested interest in the education of boys and for future research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter I discussed the implications for practice and research of my dissertation. The study has been concerned about issues pertinent to boys, particularly as it pertains the experiences of school leaders in facilitating their education. The researcher explored the perspectives of principals, guidance counsellors and language arts heads of department from four secondary schools in Central Jamaica, factors attributable to boys' achievement levels, key artifacts and influences attributed to the education of boys, and school leaders' effectiveness in response to boys' educational needs. The exploratory nature of the research underscores its purpose to better understand the experiences of school leaders in their effort to facilitate boys in schools.

Perusal of the literature has revealed that some work has been done in providing a measure of understanding of the nature of boys' achievement in school. However, it appears that the experiences of school leaders in facilitating boys' education is a topic about which very little has been written. Included as part of the theoretical discussion, is an examination of the attribution theory. This theory has as its primary tenet the creation of understanding about what people thinks, that is, the attributions people make about why things happen the way they do. Thus the study provides insight into what principals and other school leaders think attribute to boys' achievement levels. Hence, attribution is seen as the perception that people form about causality behind the degree of success of their action in situation when the causes may not be directly observable. Accordingly, this chapter presents a discussion of the implication of my research topic on what principals attribute the performance of boys to. However, before I go into the

implications I will provide a quick summary depicting some of the major findings arising from the data presented in the previous chapter.

The reason it is important to study attributions was explained by David (2007) as helping to shape one's emotional and behavioral responses to situations. Frieze (1976) notes that in cultures like Jamaica's, success and failure are attributed to factors of natural ability, effort, task difficulty and luck. These are not always the applicable factors though, as was noted in the findings, school leaders have rated a number of factors which, in their contexts are influencers of boys' success: ineffective teaching, economic issues, curriculum structure, hyper-masculinity, feminization of schools and popular culture. These Weiner (1979) suggests exist on the continuum: locus, stability and controllability. Perceptions of these will influence the individual's emotional response and effort. For example, if school leaders attribute lack of leadership skills (a stable factor) to their effectiveness in treating with the issues of schools, then inability to acquire such skills, would leave them more likely to believe that they cannot improve. However, if it is perceived that strategy and effort contributions can be applied for improvements then the final outcome is likely determined by the extent of the strategy and effort the leaders employ. Attributions theory is therefore seen as a strong exemplification of cognitive factors in the process of leading (school leadership, learning and achievement).

Lenses on Findings

This study was guided by four overarching research questions: (a) To what factors do school leaders attribute boys achievement?; (b) How do school leaders respond to key artifacts attributable to the education of boys in secondary schools in Central Jamaica?; (c) What do school leaders do in response to those influences believed to attribute to

boys' achievement levels?; (d) How effective do school leaders think their responses are to factors attributable to boys' achievement levels?

The findings of the study suggest that attention to boys' education is gaining traction among stakeholders, and that school leaders are becoming more understanding of and alert to the needs of boys. This may be due to certain developments in the education sector over the last decade. As the participants suggested, one of the most noteworthy of these developments was the establishment of the Jamaica Teaching Council (JTC), an agency of the Ministry of Education tasked with setting and monitoring teaching standards. There has been some proactivity by them in conducting sensitization workshops and motivational sessions with teachers and boys from schools considered the most affected by boys' low achievement levels. Reportedly, the JTC's establishment was in response to the changing needs of society, and especially in response to the need to raise students' achievement levels. This task is being achieved through improvements to teaching and learning experiences in Jamaican classrooms. More particularly, improvements in boys' development, performance and educational outcomes at the school level has the potential to contribute to healthy engagement by boys in their community and nation.

Supportive Environment and Boys' Achievement

Providing home and school environments that are welcoming and supportive, and which comprise the appropriate mix of instructional methods is highly likely to result in a conducive setting for boys' unique learning needs. My chief finding for research question one: *'To what factors do school leaders attribute boys' achievement,'* is the belief school leaders have, that family relations and structure along with boys own discipline and

dedication are among the most significant contributors to boys' level of achievement in school. All respondents have underscored the critical relevance of a conducive environment for supporting educational development. Central to the realization of this kind of environment are family relations and structure, mentorship support, provision for leisure and rejuvenation, and the boys own personal discipline and dedication to achieving. Unfortunately, many boys live in communities where certain values and mores must be strictly followed, and failure to conform could see them being ostracized by their peers, families and associates (Williams, 2006). Hence even within the family context, challenges have been experienced by boys in their efforts to acquire secondary education. Perhaps it is this knowledge that inspired Ms. Malox to highlight the importance of school leaders having a strong understanding of, and appreciation for the sociological factors impacting boys, especially in relation to their home and community environments.

Although the literature projects strong mentorship support as the perfect foil to enhance the boys' discipline towards academic achievement, it is not something school leaders appear to agree on, and some may even be described as cynical. None-the-less, on the basis of some shared experiences and views of significant numbers of other leaders, I have formed the strong belief that mentorship, especially by school leaders, makes far-reaching impact to the performance of boys. This is supported by the motivating views of Figueroa (2010), "acquiring an education involves discipline and diligence" (p.68). He alluded to the need for men and boys in contemporary society to be flexible and open to a range of career options, many of which are in the service sector and require 'soft' skills (Figueroa, 2010). School leaders in Central Manchester, Jamaica, have acknowledged the need for mentorship as a key element of keeping young men motivated to remain in

school. Principal April explained that in his school, one of the main source of support to boys' education is a mentoring program in which both exemplary boys and staff provides help both on the academic and behavioral fronts. Similarly, beyond physical and aesthetic soundness, Cox, reportedly worked hard to ensure boys in his school, benefits from a psycho-social environment that is conducive to learning and personal development. To create such a culture, Principal Cox explained:

the school leaders lead from top, where we set this culture, and insist on it from our teachers in the classroom, and we coach and monitor it into our teachers, so that they buy into it, and come to understand and appreciate the need to have safe learning spaces.

The psycho-social environment Cox advocates for is one which is characterized by a sense of safety, supportiveness and is welcoming to students. School leaders who ensure that this is the prevailing classroom space provided for students to learn are well on their way for creating conditions conducive for engaging boys. The quality of student-teacher interaction is a significant component of the desirable psycho-social space. One which should not be intimidating to students or teachers, but facilitate both in a mutually beneficial relationship in which teachers feel free to teach effectively and students get the opportunity to learn. The recognition of the learning context as a social space that encourages the development of cognitive and interaction skills is significant.

Appropriately, Brighton (22) observe the need for social interaction between the learner and the knowledgeable adult as this enhances the possibility of intellectual activity.

Beyond this intellectual relations though, and on the evidence of school leaders' shared experiences, quality family relations, boys' personal discipline, mentorship support and leisure engagements provides a balanced environment for boys to maximize their potential.

Key Artifacts of Boys' Education

It must be acknowledged that there is an inseparable relationship between curriculum and instruction and the assessment/evaluation of both. The observation that teaching plans are rated equal to or more impactful to the education of boys than the curriculum due to its capacity for activating and making the curriculum come alive is chief among the findings in relation to research question two: *How do school leaders respond to key artifacts attributable to the education of boys in secondary schools in Central Jamaica?* The curriculum, teaching plans and teacher assessment have been seen as inter-related constructs capable of capturing the primary needs associated with boys' education. When rated on a three-point descriptive rating scale of most effective to least effective, both curriculum guide and teaching plans were the overwhelming choice of most effective, compared to teacher evaluation, for which the choice of one respondent was recorded. This is not surprising given that teaching plans are expected to emerge from curriculum guides and may be regarded as a miniature versions of said guide. The critical difference here can be inferred from the choice of Principal Cox who justified his selection of teaching plans as most effective over curriculum guide this way:

At our school in particular, what we found is that the curriculum guide is good, is well written/well structured, but the person who actions it at the most important level in the classroom is the teacher. If he/she doesn't give the buy-in, doesn't embrace the philosophy of the guide, it almost doesn't account for anything.

Planning, Cox explained, focuses the teachers' attention before the class and helps him/her satisfactorily gather his/her thoughts and approaches ahead of time to make classroom delivery effective. Conversely, the guide is viewed by Cox as being very important, but of the three, he ranked it as least impactful, noting that it is written and

supplied from an external source often without coaching and the development of the appreciation for it, which do not augur well for its implementation.

What is also important to this discourse is the number of responses (ten) given as ‘moderately’ important in respect of the curriculum guide and teaching plans. I would have attributed most of the activities of the school to have a direct or indirect relationship to curriculum and teaching/instructing, hence would have expected less moderately effective responses and more ‘most effective’ responses. This suggests that school leaders may have a significant gap to be filled in so far as the relevance or appropriateness of the curriculum and teaching plans are concerned. David (2007) declared that attributions help to shape our emotional and behavioral responses to situations, and so it is hoped that the lessons learnt will be applied for the benefit of boys’ education in particular. Of note too, is the fact that of the twelve responders only one suggest that teacher evaluation is most effective, while nine others thinks it is least effective. School leaders are involved in conducting evaluations and would know, very well, the value of these to the process of teaching and learning. While there may be no stable bases on which to make attributions, the school leaders’ past experiences, feedback from class teachers and colleagues and their observance of fellow leaders helps. In rating teacher evaluation as highly important, Principal Day made the comment that if the teacher doesn’t know how to teach there will be natural negative impact on the student and the school on a whole. According to Day, the teachers must be evaluated to see if they are teaching the students or the curriculum. In general there were some glaring differences between the attributions that school leaders made relative to the artifacts and boys’ education.

Are School Leaders Making a Difference in the Education of Boys?

School leaders have the awesome task of connecting the home, the school and the community with the ultimate objective of positively impacting the lives of boys in their respective places of learning. My favorite discussion in the context of research question three is the exceptions that school leaders are making pertaining to feminization of schools, hyper-masculinity, popular culture, quality of teaching, curriculum structure and relevance and economic issues as factors which have come to the fore as major areas of concern to be navigated in treating with the reality of boys' education. My primary finding in this area is the fact that the factors school leaders considered as most impactful on boys' education are the ones they have greatest control over and not those external to their professional practice. The verdict on these factors is mixed, as while they thought in some ways that some of the factors were particularly impactful, in other ways they were not as clear. The phenomenon 'feminization of schools' seem to present concerns of a two-fold nature. Principal Day projected the view for example, that there are more females teaching, and that they teach the way they learn – a form which boys are resentful of. On the other hand, boys are being schooled and cultured in a context where homophobic sentiments are strongly expressed overtly and so as explained by HOD Malox, it follows that some boys tend not to listen to a male teacher or want to be close to them, because of the fear of being branded something else. Conversely, they relate powerlessness with the female body and with femininity. Other issues of a similar nature arose from associated factors that are beyond the control of school leaders. Hyper-masculinity and popular culture for example, are 'peas of the same pod' and the best that school leaders have reportedly been able to do is foster a culture that is antagonistic to

such external influences and keep them under control. For Principal Stair, it is a matter of reversing the psycho-social influence by using lyrics from popular music genre for example as a way of connecting boys to certain societal realities, while guiding them through values classification activities. Summarily, school leaders thought that through measures like that described by Stair, boys are helped to understand their reality and be the best versions of themselves possible.

The quality of teaching and curriculum structure and relevance are factors over which the school leader can exert the greatest impact. In a seeming ‘thirst’ mood on the subject of the curriculum, Ms. Burnt made a rallying call for school leaders at the level of Principal to desist from following the strict curricula directives of the Ministry of Education in order to better facilitate large populations of boys in respective schools, using more relevant program such as the City and Guilds certification. This advocacy, if heeded, should see the individual school making a giant leap in facilitating boys in more appropriate program commensurate with their aptitude, attitude and literacy/numeracy levels. Interestingly, the data (table 4.3) shows that the curriculum structure and relevance and ineffective teaching were factors school leaders viewed as having the strongest influence on boys’ education. These are the factors over which school leaders can exert most control, hence I would have formed the view based on contemporary trending attitudes of young people to education that most influence would have been attributed to feminization, hyper-masculinity and popular culture follow closely. The suggestion by school leaders’ ratings could be that positively or negatively the factors with the most impact and which are under their control are those generically possessing the strongest power to sway boys’ achievement level. Invariably curriculum structure and

quality of teaching constitute the structured frame through which cognitively directed and psycho-social changes are planned for and executed for the development of the young of society. School leaders are therefore compelled by a strong sense of professional ethic to do more to ensure the factors over which they have control are efficiently and effectively addressed to the benefit of their charges. Principal Day underscored this thought giving further insights into how boys are helped as a result of proactive steps by school leaders: “Through our staff development efforts, we have sought to get our teachers to know how to reach children generally, and boys in particular who are difficult learners, and those with behavioral challenges.”

It seems logical then, according to Heider’s (1958) attribution theory, that if school leaders attribute boys’ difficulty achieving educationally to ineffective teaching and curricular structure and relevance, factors over which they have controlling influence, it is within their realm to exert such influence. However as a school leader the extent of influence would be minimal on economics, popular culture, etcetera, since these are more external to the school and are farther outside the scope of influence of the school leader.

School Leaders Reconcile Change Efforts with Boys’ Needs

The school leader’s ability to make decision is absolutely necessary to his /her educational work. Faced with the challenge to effectively engage boys in school, the school leader is driven to seek to know the needs that exist and to be critical in thought and strategy about the choices that exist and how to best apply them. With the diversity that exist culturally, cognitively and behaviorally, performing the balancing act becomes an unending dynamic. Though school leaders thought factors (e.g. popular culture)

external to the school had a part to play in boys' response to education, they generally believed the factors over which the school had greatest control (e.g. quality of teaching) were most impactful on boys achievement level. Hence it is most prudent that deliberate changes are made in these areas in keeping with boys' needs.

Addressing the matter of the curriculum, Principal Cox note that while it is difficult to make adjustment to the Government's mandated National Standards Curriculum (NSC), he and his team of Vice Principals and HODs had to carry out re-alignments that synchronizes with the school's philosophical approach. Principal Cox states: "In essence we have added dimensions to the NSC to ensure that we are deliberate in catering to the needs of boys." Cox explained other steps taken to accommodate boys' needs, such as ensuring there is no stereotyping regarding subject offerings. He strengthened the point, saying, "We don't allow students to feel it is wrong for a male to become a chef for example, so we tweak the curriculum when it is being offered to ensure that it is gender neutral, that it be left with very little gender bias."

Principal Day echoed the sentiments of other school leaders that in most instances, boys learn differently from girls, thus necessitating the incorporation of differentiated instruction as a major part of pedagogical practice. Principal Day explained that in order to satisfy this need, training has been done for teachers in differentiated instruction modalities, so that they can better guide the boys based on their need(s). Day added:

Consequently a lot of hands-on is also done including project learning and Skills training in a variety of practical areas. Boys tend to gravitate more to the practical areas, hence much effort is made to include new offerings (e.g.

plumbing, renewable energy sources) in the curriculum, to ensure a good mix of skill options.

In relation to the instructional needs of boys, Counsellor Weller notes that teachers who spend time knowing their students, pay attention to emphasizing and evaluating them, as well as understanding their students' learning styles, and fashion lessons accordingly, are usually the most effective. Counsellor Weller cautioned:

“While upgraded technology is all around and poses pressure on the teacher to adopt and adapt to, it must not be lost on them that their creativity in using what they have at their disposal in an interesting, efficient and productive manner is of great value to students.

Principal Day emphasized that when the teacher do not understand how to teach the boys, it has a significant impact on the outcome and the boys lose interest easily. This is therefore a key area in which changes are organized by school leaders to meet the needs of boys. As Counsellor O’ban acknowledged, “Boys generally want to do stuff, they want to be engaged, and they want to be involved.” Accordingly changes are made by school leaders along this line by holding teachers more accountable and ensuring enhanced pedagogical practices to excite and retain boys’ attention, while facilitating learner-friendly lesson presentations. Principal April encouraged the use of intervention programs to help the boys who are falling behind make strides, however incremental those may be. Intervention April explained, affords the opportunity for using a different approach to teach, while Principal Cox notes that teachers who inspire boys find creative strategies, and get them to do well. He also acknowledge that teachers who are not mindful or deliberate about their strategies may end up widening the gaps between boys and girls. It is partly for this reason that Principal Cox has put in place a Teacher Mentor;

a sufficiently senior person who is adept at teaching methodologies to monitor and guide new teachers, and provide mentoring and coaching on an un-going basis. Fostering a culture of excellence to include all boys, is the goal.

The Efficacy of School Leaders in responding to Factors Attributable to Boys' Achievement Levels

The efficacy of school leaders bears direct relationship to the quality of provision they make for boys in areas of instructional leadership, safety and security and the home-school relationship fostered, etcetera. This general assertion is made in relation to the research question: *How effective do school leaders think their responses are to factors attributable to boys' achievement levels?* A slew of factors has so far been identified in this study as influencing or having the capacity to influence boys' educational achievements. School leaders respond to them in like or unlike manner, given the similarity of the challenges wrought and the diversity or complexity of the context of practice. Schools and the boys who attend them are part of an extensive ecological system in which school leaders claim messages are communicated to boys, from component sectors - some more alluring and impactful than others, but which are often antagonistic to those offered in the formal education space. In such a milieu school leaders have expressed their ambivalence in reaching boys where some factors are concerned, especially those external ones over which they have little or no influence and to which their response would be, at best, general or searching in nature. These would include family and relationships, popular culture, hyper-masculinity issues, economic issues and such. A reminder from Ms. Burnt will bear this out: "the demographic characteristics associated with the school puts it at a disadvantage particularly as it relates

to resource support; the school is handicapped by this, as it has not been able to provide some of the classroom materials that teachers require to make their classrooms more boy-friendly.” Conversely, there are those factors that are directly within the professional purview of school leaders, framed within the structure and operations of the school that school leaders will directly or indirectly influence, thereby impacting boys’ achievement. Curriculum relevance and structure, and quality of instruction are primary factors in this category, which may include to a lesser degree gendered issues such as feminization of schools. We are reminded of the point Lunenburg and Ornstein (1995) made, that “when principals are surveyed, they often consider curriculum and instruction aspects of the job as one of the top priority work areas and that they need to spend more time on the job relating to these two technical areas.”

Alluded to in the foregoing discourse is the difficulty in delineating the efficacy of school leaders to respective factors, particularly those over which their ability to exert influence is minimal. Consequently, I will encourage that for a clearer understanding of school leaders’ efficacy that there be closer examination of the leadership domains that have emerged from the data. These include internal synergy and culture, attentiveness to physical and psychological environment, quality assurance procedures, partnerships with stakeholders, teacher professional development support, pupil welfare and motivation, and attentiveness to communication. Areas over which they could exert an influence are special for us to understand because they provide better grounds for making recommendations about implication for practice.

Study Limitations

As much as the demographic context of the study is quite representative of the national whole, the fact of the restricted focus to Central Jamaica, represents a noteworthy limitation to the study. The selection of cases in this study were further limited to coeducational secondary institutions in the parish of Manchester, a central parish which has become a hub for high quality educational opportunities in Jamaica. The secondary schools in Manchester are sought after and accessed by students from other central parishes of Clarendon, St. Ann, Trelawny, St. Elizabeth, and from as far away as St. Catherine.

Naturally schools are dynamic entities that undergo change from one period to the next – influenced by both internal and external factors. Schools undertake a range of activities weekly, and so the field work components of this study were challenged by the fact that some aspects coincided with internal and external examination activities and other events. The pre-occupation of staff with these activities influenced their availability for sustained quality consultation. These challenges had to be mitigated to the extent they possible in order to obtain robustness of data collection and to produce veritable yield of data for analysis. Ultimately, I endeavor to explain, through qualitative approaches, what Miles and Huberman (1994 p. 147) call “unrelentingly local causality” – the actual characteristics, processes and mechanisms attributable to school context and leaders that give rise to observed outcomes. Therefore, besides restricted geographic focus, timing presented significant concerns, as school leaders’ schedules are highly variable and this raised issues of timely accessibility.

Prior to 2010 when the Ministry of Education embarked on a fairly well designed Inspectorate Program that yielded some data on the quality of school leadership being exercised in schools across the country, very little was done to use data to drive leadership change in schools. Yet this process concentrated on assessing school leaders' performance and does not provide an adequate central clearing house on school leadership experiences. This makes it difficult to obtain baseline literature on school leadership experience, particularly as they are experienced in Jamaica.

Another challenge that was encountered is that of conducting follow-up interviews and obtaining verification of transcription from participants as their busy and unpredictable schedules were not as facilitating as desired. The inability to obtain timely follow-up feedback from all participants upon review of transcribed audio recordings impacted the turnaround time of data yield from interviews, especially when it is considered that respondents were not able to assert all their experiences at the first interview.

The data collection, and subsequently the study, was locked in a relatively short time period and may not have yielded the breadth and depth of experiences that a more longitudinal process would have afforded, and so poses another likely limitation to the study. Additionally, when it is considered that school leaders do not set policies, the omission of the Ministry of Education from the data sourcing process might have denied the study added richness as another important frontier of boys' education was not engaged.

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

The issue of boys' educational achievement poses major challenges across the Island State, Jamaica, and raises particular concern in the central region, including Manchester. The findings of this study, which examines school leaders' experiences in facilitating boys in their pursuit of secondary education, have been presented and discussed. Now it is left to be pondered, what was all this about? What use is this to anyone, system and or process? It is to be noted: now that the study is concluded and the findings reflected on and their possible value internalized, it is worthwhile to share five salient points with you that are derived from the findings, and which is thought to be pertinent to professional practice in the field of education and related disciplines. It was with some degree of deliberateness, the point was made earlier that many of our boys are performing excellently and that under-achievement is not characteristic of boys. Understandably then, is the obdurate in my rejection of any notion that boys are less smart than girls as the data would want to suggest. It is just that we do not cater to them well enough; given that we do, the data would be more balanced, for all concerned, presumably so. It is hoped that at all levels of boys' development there will be significant contribution to the change. Let me hope each of us will contribute to the change, consequent to the implications shared.

Plan Deliberately for Boys

Boys present particular concerns in schools and so this warrants them being specially planned for; from a resource, social intervention and curricular consideration. The creation of a special resource pool for boys will assist school leaders to be engaged

in sustained focused efforts to help boys, particularly those challenged by dysfunctional families and other social insecurities, find productive niches in society. Boys with special needs, need well planned and executed intervention program that cannot be addressed by piece meal funding or token gestures. Thus it would be important for school leaders to solicit funding from government sources, other stakeholders and benefactors, and mobilize same for timely redress of the needs and issues pertinent to boys in schools.

One school leader in the study, HOD Burnt, appealed for more of the practical program to be funded and sustained in her school so that boys in schools such as hers, who are less adept in mainstream academic subjects can have adequate exposure to skills training. It is argued by the respondents that the curriculum tends to be structured as a kind of one size fits all' construct. It tends to not cater for the 'male mind', some participants argued, and so it is felt that such inclusiveness is fraught with its draw backs of not giving focus where it is most necessary.

An added dimension to this is for school leaders to underscore their efficacy by addressing boys' welfare and motivation needs, as in each of the school represented in the study, school leaders spoke of having a significant percentage of their constituents having such need. The data suggests that school leaders have tended to respond by putting in one system or another to offer well needed welfare and motivation support. A most poignant example was shared by Principal April:

“The mentorship and literacy/numeracy program have done much to improve the lot of many of the boys, some of whom have matriculated to advanced-level program in the school. This makes the administration very excited, considering the level of struggle they presented.”

Thus it is recommended that in planning deliberately for boys that there be a shared policy or philosophy on the education of this demographic group. It is appreciated that school leaders do not set the policies that guides their school operations, they are received from government, but they certainly can establish philosophical frame-works that will guide boys' education in their schools. The importance of this is reflected by a cross section of views from respondents of this study:

“The statistic shows that boys are under-performing in relation to girls and we have to see it as something we have to address as a country. I am not sure it should be a policy, but a useful initiative is required to cater to their specific learning needs and style.”
(Counsellor Stair)

“As a country, we need to embrace more, the fact that boys have needs that are unique and I think that a more direct effort is needed to cater to the different needs and learning Style of boys. It should really be a policy decision and should not be left to the teachers and Heads of Departments in the school to make those decisions.” (Burnt, HOD Language)

It is also recommended that each school should establish a committee of special responsibility to spearhead the creation and implementation of an intervention plan with the special focus of enhancing boys' education. In this respect the team will have responsibility for oversight, accountability and liaison work with collaborating individuals and groups with the vested interest of remediating gaps and challenging stereotypic expressions that have tended to stifle boys. For this endeavor I would challenge school leaders to include the creation of a work portfolio for the facilitation of improvements in boys' education in their respective schools. It would be my preference to have a senior

team leader assigned responsibility for this portfolio and be supported by other selected members with appropriate competences. Ownership of such intervention should be encouraged by school leaders and so foster a whole school effort that will motivate the main beneficiaries, boys.

Explore Approaches to Teaching

Throughout the data collected, concerns about how boys learn and ideas about how best to facilitate them have been raised. The data has therefore challenged me to think that among the most significant take-away of the study is the implication for practice related to the appropriateness of strategies to engage boys and interest them in learning new skills and reform attitudes. Among the concerns that I have noted from conducting interviews with school leaders is the level and timeliness of provisioning, especially for the practical skill training department. Relevant tools, materials and equipment are necessary to be in place to meet the instructional needs of boys in particular. In fact, ineffective teaching was sighted as one of the main factors attributable to boys' achievement. To know that this is one of the factors that resides within the controlling influence of school leaders causes me anxious moments, but with the resolve to go further in understanding the cause-effect relationship. To attribute the cause of boys' achievement levels to ineffective teaching, is a call to revamp methods and strategies that will yield more satisfactory outcome from boys. Research respondent Weller, remarked that teachers who spend time knowing their students, pay attention to empathizing and evaluating them, as well as understanding their students' learning styles and fashion lessons accordingly, are usually the most effective. If ineffective teaching is the source of our problem, then highlighting it here as part of the implication thrust, is

ample acknowledgement that more should be done in getting the message of education to boys. The question of how we teach to reach boys must therefore be at the forefront of our pedagogical practice as teachers and school leaders.

The practice of differentiated instruction for learning is therefore a plausible approach to take on board pedagogical best practice in light of the issues of disparity raised concerning boys' education, especially compared to that of their female counterparts. There is a strong school of thought that more experimentation should take place with a view of having differentiation by way of having single sex classes. This will of course engender strong debate among stake-holders; debate that is likely to sway appreciably away from the central purpose of focused engagement and learning, to rantings energized by emotional biases. Outside of such delicate posture, Wormeli (2005) shared the thought that differentiated instruction is doing what is fair and developmentally appropriate for students. A survey of the data collected from respondents (school leaders) showed that there is general appreciation of the need for differentiation and this is practiced in different ways. Mr. Day explained that differentiated instruction is encouraged, so that the student is paid attention, giving due regard and consideration to differences in learning styles. Meanwhile, Burnt remarked that there was need for modification of instruction and the provision of curriculum support to facilitate the needs and learning styles of boys. Provision of co-curricular support in the form of sport, music and clubs as learning communities, are also suggested as imperatives, especially for large male population. Differentiation is therefore a need to be pursued in teacher professional practice, with the objective of maximizing engagement of boys in their respective learning context.

To systematically engage boys it is recommended that action researches be conducted to explore various teaching methods in a data-driven format. Through the different departments of the school, leaders should be mandated to carry out researches on approved topics as part of the goal-focused intervention to improve boys' achievement, academically and socially. Achievement of this goal will require a multi-faceted approach, necessitating the engagement of stakeholders within, and those external to the school or departments. Certainly, it will include the boys, their parents/guardians, and school leaders; past students' association, with policy-based consultative inputs from the Ministry of Education. There is urgent need to find context relevant approaches and strategies that schools can use to strengthen their scope of influence to engage boys, and obtain greater receptiveness to instruction from them. Other anticipated outcomes are increased motivation to apply themselves to their studies and school life, and ultimately improvement in their performance. The cited sources in this research include some suggested ways of fostering engagement and the learning of boys. These can be used as starting points for exploration and testing among boys.

Classes can be a big issue when it comes unto engaging students generally, and more so when large groups of boys are involved. Hence a companion recommendation is that school leaders reduce class size and examine class composition to encourage the best performance. Respondents in this study have argued that younger boys at grades 7 and 8, struggle to keep up with their female counterparts academically, and often experience setback in their performance. Comparatively speaking, this may be due to the stage of cognitive development that they are at. Large class sizes may not allow subject teachers to provide them with the nurturing and differentiated learning engagement needed. Other

school leaders have pointed to the need for smaller class sizes, given the increasing need to provide more practical learning experiences and the limited facilities and resources existing in these schools will not adequately support large classes.

Professional Development for School Leaders

As the educational landscape changes, the demand on schools and school leaders become more onerous. External stakeholders including parents, have become more sophisticated in their expectation of service to their children and the society in general. Therefore, with the sustained growth in issues facing boys' education, the intention in the call for professional development is to underscore the need for continued capacity building of leaders and ultimately schools for delivering quality service to the society. This is with the understanding that school leaders are not to be fixed in focusing on subject matter to be taught and the proficiency of teachers to do so, but should also be afforded the opportunity for personal development in areas that are relevant to improve student's performance, with emphasis on boys. I believe that leadership should progress beyond routines and provide "inspiration and motivation, create ethos and provide educational vision...." (Mahoney, 1998, p.306).

At a number of points throughout this report, issues having the potential to create challenges for school leaders have been highlighted, and it is for these and others stated in this implication, that leadership must be bolstered. Principal Cox made the point that as a country our leadership have not been firm enough on what values we endorse and what values we reject. Our music has dominant influence; in many ways it is lewd and violence promoting, and we have to address these things which now floods our schools. Though the school leader has minimal influence on factors external to the school, s/he has the school

to harmonize as whole sub-system, it being a ‘melting pot’ of values, cultural forms, and social experiences. School leaders must therefore be equipped and empowered to deliver ‘the goods’ according to their mandate.

Principal Day highlighted the fact that, through staff development efforts, he along with his team of leaders have sought to get the staff to know how to reach children, generally, and boys, in particular, who are difficult learners. At Mr. Cox’s school there was the establishment of the post of special responsibility for the mentoring and coaching of new teachers to build them up for the maintenance of standards in the school, especially in the light of a high turnover rate due in large part to overseas recruitment.

Against the fore-going it is recommended that school leaders seek and provide opportunities for themselves and teachers to build their capacity in key areas that are relevant to improved performance of boys, including: effective teaching and innovative teaching methods; gender issues (especially hyper-masculinity, feminization of schools and identity issues; results-oriented leadership.

‘Life-long training’ is an adage embraced by educators especially in the context of the changing face/pace of a knowledge-based society. Subsequently, structures have already been put in place for on-going professional development of school leaders and teaching staff in areas considered relevant to school operations and teaching. Regrettably, such training opportunities have not as yet been extended to emerging areas of concern such as those listed above. In interview interaction with respondents for this study, it came to the fore that capacity building in coping with the above named issues will be welcomed. In my recollection, majority of the leaders were awed by the reality of boys’ education, simply through questioning. To devise or support program for assisting boys therefore, it

is recommended that school leaders (from faculty and management) be afforded the opportunity to build their capacity in key knowledge and skills required to support boys' achievement (through effective teaching, etcetera). This training would be intended to serve the useful function of enabling schools to address issues of suitability of teaching styles/methods for reaching and motivating boys. Generally, the provision of professional development for school leaders and teachers can contribute to the development of a supportive network for the exchange of learnings and student engagement.

Collaboration with other Interests

No man is an Island, no man stand alone
Each man's joy is joy to me, each man's grief
Is my own, we need one another
So we can defend, each man as my brother
Each man as my friend

The lyrics of this short song has meant much to me since my early teenage years. The idea of cooperating to achieve, is a most expedient matter, knowing that it cuts both ways and is developmental in nature and scope. Stakeholders are varied and so are the specific areas of collaboration: financing, mentoring and counselling, certification services, training and the sharing of resources. Within schools, teachers and school leaders collaborates to negotiate the curriculum in the most efficient and student-friendly ways to assist boys achieve learning goals.

In engaging external stakeholders who make an annual presentation on puberty to first form students at his school, Mr. Stair informed that after detecting a trend whereby the presentations are skewed to girls, with almost total exclusion of boys in his school, he begun insisting that those who come in, find something to engage the boys

also. Subsequently, boys are not only being included more in the presentation, but care packages are also provided for them as well.

The parent teachers' association (PTA)/home-school collaboration is among the most significant in tracking boys and steering their development, and school leaders need to regard this as a major part of their mandate. Ms. Malox noted the importance of school leaders having a strong understanding of the sociological factors impacting boys, especially in relation to their home and community environments. She highlighted the fact that the presence of a parent, a father-figure and an older brother who can give guidance and relate to school leadership, as valuable in significantly influencing boys' response to education. The call was also made for closer collaboration in working with primary education to allow for smoother curriculum articulation from the primary to the secondary level as there seem to be a gap regarding boys transitioning between the two levels.

Partnership with stakeholders has been highlighted by collaboration to meet some of the economic and social needs students have. School leaders score highly in efficacy for meeting the social and economic needs of many boys and for keeping scores of them in school. Mr. April remarked that, "Partnership of the school leaders with a responsible adult in the home is found necessary to salvage students who are falling between the cracks – it is possible to rescue such."

In this regard it is recommended that program and activities be devised and instituted to attract male parents/guardians and other Stakeholders to participate more in the academic life. School leaders' experiences have pointed to the fact that involvement of the male parent in parent teachers' association (PTA) and in the life of the school, is appreciably low. The call for a father figure with whom to dialogue concerning

the boy in need, was unrelenting, since they were to be heard throughout the interview process, from one respondent to another. With the cry for father presence, came also the request for mentorship support, much of which have been engaged by Guidance Counsellors from alumni and community organizations. So what specifically can or should school leaders do?

- Use parents' days or other specially scheduled occasions to foster collaboration; include special fathers' flora.
- Have scheduled PTA meetings: these should be timed with the working man in mind. Flexible scheduling should be accommodated.
- Organize and host special information sessions (specially targeting men) to allow parents/guardians to work more closely to identify areas of strengths and areas needing improvements.
- Strengthen communication with parents/guardians: keep them in the know about what is happening in the school, especially as it relates to their child/children. Modern ICT resources make it possible for parties to be in touch without the hassle.

The engagement of school alumni as well as community-based organizations in school activities, adds another layer of human resources and expertise from which schools can benefit. More school leaders should recognize the need for these and involve them.

Attentiveness to Curriculum Structure and Relevance

Attentiveness to curriculum structure and relevance is a matter of quality assurance in offering boys the best possible secondary education experience commensurate with their capacities. School leaders have argued with forthrightness, the appropriateness of reviewing and restructuring the curriculum and for standardizing certain core content areas

to better allow for inter-school transfers and articulation along the grade levels. All respondents have independently raised the issue of the Jamaican Government's attention to improving the curriculum, and have in fact endorsed the new National Standard Curriculum (NSC). Most however bemoans the lack of provision of necessary educational material to support the curriculum. A variety of things are done by school leaders in their respective school to enhance the curriculum implementation and monitoring process. Mr. April, for example, noted that an 'excellent' school management system exists that allows the administrator to easily access students grades and determine those who are performing below the minimum satisfactory level encouraged. This allows the most urgent cases to be identified and dealt with from an intervention point of view. For his part and his school, Mr. Cox established a curriculum monitoring committee including the Principal and Vice Principal to ensure alignment of the NSC to the school's philosophical approaches for the maintenance of excellent standards especially against high teacher turn-over rates, due in large part to overseas recruitment.

Attention to the physical and psycho-social environments was also found to pique the interest of school leaders. All the school leaders embrace this as an essential element to be continually addressed in responding to factors attributable to boys' achievement. A most cogent point was made by Principal Cox, who noted that the learning environment plays a significant role in and of itself, in that the learning environment must be safe, and conducive to effective learning. Both the physical, aesthetic, as well as the psycho-social (the atmosphere and climate), are enforced. To create such a climate, the administration leads from the top, setting the culture, whilst ensuring teachers are coached and mentored to adequately serve the boys' needs in their context of exposure.

An appropriate recommendation therefore, is for school leaders to contextualize the curriculum in such ways as to provide rich learning experiences for all the students. Whilst a common curriculum is provided to the school by the government, and require students to sit common examinations, interview data from respondents have pointed to the need for tweaking of the curriculum to more manageable levels for boys, especially those struggling with foundational literacy and numeracy competences. Interview data suggests that with existing differences in secondary schools, based on resources, nature of student population and subject offerings; some allowance should be provided for school leadership flexibility in subject offerings, number and type of subjects taken and the certifying body engaged for assessment and certification. Action research into selected curriculum concerns is also highly recommended as a strategy for obtaining answers to aid boys in the most purposeful manner possible.

These few concluding points of strong relevance brings the implication of the study to a fitting conclusion. By virtue of the contribution by the literature and the school leaders' experiences, women are strongly referred in the study with concerns over their ability to reign in boys in a significant way. Hence one of the things that need to be done is for information to be shared with the teacher training colleges and for them to institute measures that will aid the young women (teachers) who are sent into the field, especially to teach in the secondary schools, develop a firm sense of self and strong behavior management techniques to better cope in their facilitation of boys. Additionally, one of the things that all of the administrators have pointed to, is that their efforts to do a better job educating boys depends on the effort of everyone. Hence school leaders need to display internal synergy as a culture.

Implication for Research

There are avenues for further research on several frontiers of boys' education and the experiences of school leaders. However, if I were to do another study, it would have to be, 'exploring intervention strategies for improved engagement and performance of boys. Throughout this study it has emerged that there are gaps and challenges with which school leaders had to contend with little strategic structure for overcoming. An action research that is school-specific and which explores innovative methods of teaching and student engagement would be, I believe, the perfect foil.

In an era and context of expanding use of information and communication technology (ICT), and one in which the learner has become more sophisticated, such a study would seek to shift focus from teaching approaches that emphasize traditional teacher-centered/information-delivery modalities to realizing a student-centered experiential model of discovering and creating. Among suggested ways of supporting engagement and learning by boys are: field observation, project-based teaching, boys only classes, co-curricular activities, among others. Additionally, such research lenses should also be focused on differentiated instruction – a construct that has the capacity to incorporate a variety of learning modality.

Exploration of a variety of modalities have the potential to unleash best practices that are not only effective as methods or strategies for teaching concepts in comprehensible ways, but which are 'boys-friendly' as well. Being 'boy-friendly' it is expected that such methods would address issues of motivation which the data highlights as a deterrent to boys' effective engagement. Such motivation is also linked to the school and classroom environments (physical and psycho-social) and so must be given due

consideration in researching intervention strategies aimed at enhancing boys' educational attainment. Notably, one of the main factors highlighted by school leaders as being attributable to boys' education is ineffective teaching. Hence, it is the hope that exploration of various methods and strategies will yield results that contribute to more effective teaching practices and subsequently improvement in boys' performances.

The exploration of boys' education from the perspectives of school leaders' experiences has uncovered several layers of a complex process of human social development. The study has been a true journey of intellectual understanding and a coming to agency on the scope and depth of the issues confronting boys, and ultimately the school leaders whose job it is to put structures in place to adequately facilitate them academically, and support their development in other areas to be best fit for the society. The insights from the school leaders' perspectives has been rich, but it would be interesting to explore this phenomenon from the perspectives of secondary school boys and parents. Further research into the perceptions of these other stakeholders would serve to provide a more complete picture of boys' education in Jamaica. Another prime possibility for research is to track and document boys' response to counselling intervention strategies. The strong perspectives shared by Guidance Counsellors in this study highlights the fact that counselling has a major role to play in education programs for boys.

Having spent hours collecting data, transcribing and analyzing data, it can be concluded that the experiences of school leaders shared in this scholastic work will stimulate action, not only among other school leaders, but will also be found resourceful for policy formulation and practice to other key stakeholders. From the findings of the

data, it is reasonable to suggest that schools have the capacity to address the issues of boys, and so it is my fervent hope that my dissertation works in some ways for that to be done.

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APPENDIX A:
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The Education of Boys: Experiences of School Leaders in Facilitating Boys Education in Central Jamaica.

Interview Respondents: School Leaders (Principals, Department Head, Guidance Counsellors)

Demographic questions:

1. Could you tell me your exact position in this school? How long have you been in this position?
2. What position was previously held by you?
3. Please tick the pronoun that applies to you:
 - i. Masculine (male)
 - ii. Feminine (Female)
4. In which of the following age categories do you belong?
 - i. 25 – 34
 - ii. 35 – 44
 - iii. 45 – 54
 - IV. 55 – 64

Research Question # 1: To what factors do school leaders attribute boys' achievement?

Research Question # 2: How do school leaders respond to key artifacts attributable to the education of boys in secondary schools in central Jamaica?

5. In inviting you to share in this interview, the request was made for you to take along two artifacts (a curriculum guide and a completed teacher evaluation) that could assist the process of our discourse on boys' education. Please share with me what you brought.
Let's talk about each in turn
 - a. Can you explain to what extent and in what ways it demonstrates your school's approach to teaching boys? How do you feel about that approach?
 - b. How do you reconcile your position about the curriculum and teaching/learning evaluation with the learning of young men in the school?
 - c. Please rank the following artifacts from the one that has proven to be most effective to the least effective in the process of educating boys in your school.

Rank

Most effective	Moderately effective	Least effective
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Artifacts

Curriculum guide

Teaching plans

Teacher evaluation

- d. Are there other artifacts that you would like to speak about in relation to boys' education?

Research Question # 3: What do school leaders do in response to those factors believed to attribute to boys' achievement levels?

6. A number of competing accounts are identified as possible sources of influence to boys' achievement levels: feminization of schools, hypo-masculinity, popular culture, ineffective teaching, curricula structure and relevance.
- a. Please rank these from 1-6, from the one that has proven to be most effective or that best represents your thinking (1st) to the least effective/representative (6th).

<u>Competing sources</u>	<u>Rankings</u>					
Feminization of schools	1	2	3	4	5	6
Hypo-masculinity	1	2	3	4	5	6
Popular culture	1	2	3	4	5	6
Ineffective teaching	1	2	3	4	5	6
Curriculum structure						
and relevance	1	2	3	4	5	6
<u>Economic issues</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>

- b. I noticed you ranked 'n' first. Can you tell me why?
- c. Can you explain what you do as a leader to respond to that influence on boys' achievement? How effective has it been?
- d. In your opinion, are there identifiable characteristics which are associated with high achieving and low achieving boys? **(Reflect on ranking as per characteristics of high achieving versus low achieving boys.)**

Research question # 4: How effective do school leaders think their responses are to factors attributable to boys' achievement levels?

7. a. Based on your experiences, what are some of the key lessons you have learned about supporting boys' achievement in school?
- b. How have the lessons learnt informed your leadership in meeting the needs of new cohort of boys in your school?
8. Are there other views you hold about boys' education that you wish to share?

APPENDIX B

RESPONDENTS' CONSENT LETTER

CLEVELAND ROBINSON
Bloomfield, Mandeville P.O. Manchester, Jamaica
Cell: (876) 454-4652, (876) 962-2662. Email: Cleveland.robinson@ctc.edu.jm

April 26, 2016

Dear _____:

I am Cleveland Robinson, a doctoral student at Temple University, Philadelphia. As a requirement for the partial fulfillment of my program of study, I am in the process of completing my dissertation, which is entitled, *The Education of Boys: Experiences of Secondary School Leaders in Central Manchester, Jamaica*.

The goal of this phenomenological study is to develop a deep understanding of the lived experience of school leaders in their quest to guide the education of boys. I would appreciate your participation in this study by way of an interview.

I will contact you via telephone, within one week of your receipt of this mail, to elaborate on the study and to answer any questions or concerns that you may have. Please feel free to contact me via e-mail at cleveland.robinson@ctc.edu.jm; telephone 962 – 2662.

Yours respectfully

Cleveland Robinson

Cleveland Robinson

Student: Temple University

I,am willing to participate in the captioned study, by Cleveland Robinson.

Respondents' signature:.....

APPENDIX C
RESPONDENTS' FOLLOW-UP LETTER

CLEVELAND ROBINSON
Bloomfield, Mandeville P.O. Manchester, Jamaica
Cell: (876) 454-3126, (876) 962-2662; Email: Cleveland.robinson@ctc.edu.jm

April 2019

Dear _____

I take this opportunity to once again thank you for participating by way of interview, in the study I am currently conducting on boys' education. As continuation of your engagement, I hereby provide for you, transcription of our discourse. Kindly provide feedback on any aspect that may not adequately represent your views as documented.

May I also engage you for another 10-15 minutes at a date and time convenient to you? Then, I look forward to having dialogue with you on an artifact of your leadership (curriculum, teaching evaluation or policy related to the school). I would also like you to rank these competing constructs which are possible sources of boys' under-achievement: **feminization of schools, hyper-masculinity, popular culture, ineffective teaching, curriculum structure and relevance**. Please rank on a scale of 1-5: one (1) being the most impactful and five (5) the least impactful.

Looking forward to your usual kind courtesies.

Sincerely

Cleveland Robinson

Cleveland Robinson.

APPENDIX D:
TEACHER APPRAISAL

APPRAISAL OF TEACHER PERFORMANCE
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

A. TEACHER INFORMATION

Name

Qualification

Position

Region ...5.....

Department

School.....

Date of
Employment

Date Assigned
Present Position

Previous
Appraisal

Current Appraisal
Period

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			to	
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B. APPRAISER INFORMATION

Name

Position

Name

Position

Name.....

Position.....

Length of time Supervising This Employee..... Yrs. Mths.

C. PURPOSE OF APPRAISAL

☐

Annual Performance Review

☐

Appointment

☐

Job Change/Deployment

☐

Training

☐

Other (Specify)

D. PERFORMANCE RATING

Calculation of Rating

Part

Total
Score

Avg.
Score

1

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2

--

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3

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Overall Rating:

--

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Overall Rating

Unsatisfactory

1.0 – 1.4

Check Box
that applies

--

Area of Concern

1.5 – 2.4

--

Meets Expectation

2.5 – 3.4

--

Exceeds Expectation 3.5 – 4.0

--

Instruction – Tick the appropriate box to show the rating

4 Exceeds Expectation

3 Meets Expectation

2 Areas of Concern

1 Unsatisfactory

PART ONE: Observation of Teaching Skills					
Areas of Performance		Levels of Competence			
PSL	Planning for Student Learning	4	3	2	1
PSL – 1	Demonstrates a planned approach toward delivering the curriculum and achieving learning outcomes				
PSL - 2	Lessons have clear objective s developed from the curriculum				
PSL – 3	Lessons characterized by seamless progression of content over the allocated class/time period				
PSL – 4	Plans and integrates the use of available resources and technology				
PSL - 5	Subject content demonstrates regard for level of students				
PSL – 6	Plans/develops evaluation methods aligned to lesson goals				
PSL – 7	Maintains proper records to track student progress against plans				
PSL - 8	Uses evaluation results to guide future planning				
Rating for PSL: No Items		Total Score		Avg. Score	
TSL	Teaching for Student Learning	4	3	2	1
TSL – 1	Communicates lesson objectives to students at beginning of lesson				
TSL– 2	Knows the subject matter well enough to have an in-depth conversation about it				
TSL – 3	Recognizes differences in abilities of students				
TSL – 4	Recognizes differences in learning styles of students				
TSL – 5	Delivers content in a logical and sequential manner				
TSL – 6	Links content with previous lessons and/or students' own experience				
TSL – 7	Gives clear and specific instructions/explanations				
TSL – 8	Uses activities that are motivating and challenging				
TSL – 9	Makes learning the subject matter relevant and interesting				
TSL – 10	Provides the opportunity for students to participate responsibility in the learning process				
TSL – 11	Encourages high standards of effort				
TSL – 12	Uses a range of strategies to assess understanding throughout the lesson				
TSL - 13	Engages students for the duration of the lesson				
Rating for PSL: No Items		Total Score		Avg. Score	

ESL	Creating Classroom Environment for Student Learning	4	3	2	1
ESL - 1	Creates a climate conducive to/supportive of the learning process				
ESL - 2	Creates a climate of supportiveness				
ESL - 3	Creates a climate of courtesy and respect				
ESL - 4	Takes appropriate action(s) to address undesirable behaviours				
ESL - 5	Positively re-enforces effort, achievement and desirable behaviours (e.g. through praise and recognition)				
ESL - 6	Takes precaution to protect students, equipment, materials, textbooks and facilities				
Rating for PSL: No Items		Total Score		Avg. Score	
PART TWO: Teacher Professionalism					
Areas of Performance		Levels of Competence			
Personal Characteristics		4	3	2	1
PC - 1	Attends college regularly				
PC - 2	Attends classes punctually				
PC - 3	Personal decorum and dress are appropriate. (How the teacher carries him/herself)				
PC - 4	Plans and records are completed and submitted punctually				
PC - 5	Supports the extra-curricular activities of the college				
PC - 6	Level of work output (quantity of work)				
PC - 7	Participates in development of the College's Action Plan				
PC - 8	Observes strict code of confidentiality				
Rating for PSL: No Items		Total Score		Avg. Score	
PD	Professional Development	4	3	2	1
PD - 1	Uses reflection (self-study) to analyze own strength and weaknesses				
PD - 2	Sets goals and implements plans for own professional development				
PD - 3	Participates in in-service professional development activities				
PD - 4	Demonstrates an interest in exploring new teaching concepts and methodologies				
PD - 5	Demonstrates language flexibility in the interest of student learning.				
PD - 6	Ability to represent the college to external constituents (e.g. through speech making)				

		4	3	2	1
PD - 7	Organizes and presents written information in a clear and effective manner				
Rating for PSL: No Items		Total Score		Avg. Score	
IS	Interpersonal Skills	4	3	2	1
IS - 1	Builds and maintains rapport with principal and colleagues				
IS - 2	Builds and maintains rapport with students				
IS - 3	Works cooperatively in teams				
IS - 4	Exerts positive influence over peers				
IS - 5	Contributes to harmony among teaching staff				
Rating for PSL: No Items		Total Score		Avg. Score	
Below this line to be completed ONLY by person with Management or Supervisory responsibility					
PART THREE: Leadership and Management					
Areas of Performance		Levels of Competence			
LM	Leadership and Management	4	3	2	1
LM - 1	Demonstrates supervisory skills in carrying out coordinating role				
LM - 2	Maintains appropriate records related to delegated responsibilities				
LM - 3	Actively participates in the implementation of school policies				
LM - 4	Supports lecturers in development of goals and supporting actions				
LM - 5	Ensures that performance management goals and strategies are consistent with MOE strategic objectives				
LM - 6	Actively participates in monitoring and evaluation of lecturer performance including constructive feedback				
LM - 7	Makes appropriate decisions about deployment of staff taking into consideration individual lecturer strengths				
LM - 8	Makes appropriate decision concerning lecturer recruitment				
LM - 9	Helps promote a culture of accountability				
LM - 10	Manages change effectively				
Rating for PSL: No Items		Total Score		Avg. Score	

SUPPLEMENTAL COMMENTS

1. Describe the individual's strongest attributes.....

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2. Describe the areas needing the most improvement.....

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3. Through conversation with the appraisee, establish technical (teaching) and personal (professional) improvement goals against which performance will be measured at the next performance appraisal.

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Team Leader/Reviewer _____ Date _____

4. Teacher comments on the rating received; the appraisal process; future prospects for development and advancement etc.

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Supervisee/Appraisee _____ Date _____

Note: Supervisee signs not in agreement or disagreement with the results of the appraisal but to verify that appraisal was conducted.

Comments of Head of Dept. Comments of Principal.....

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Signature Date Signature Date

Review by Regional Office/Education Officer

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Signature Title Date

APPENDIX E:

SAMPLE Teacher (Lesson) Plan

LESSON PLANS

Subject: Biology

Grade: 9

Duration: 5 – 6 hours, (one week for creation of digital presentation)

Resources: Plastic bags, containers, knives, grapefruit, salt, eggs, vinegar, Irish potatoes, hot water (for curly fries)

Lesson Topic: Transport in Humans and Plants – Osmosis

Attainment Target

Understand the importance of the life processes in plants and animals, their interdependence, their interaction with the environment, and how lifestyles determine health and well-being.

Objectives

By the end of the lesson students should be able to:

1. Investigate the process of osmosis
2. Compare diffusion with osmosis
3. Make predictions using scientific knowledge and understanding
4. Plan and design an experiment to solve a specific problem

Key Skills

Activity 1: observe, analyse, draw conclusions, communicate, report

Activity 2: predict, observe, measure, analyse, compare, draw conclusions, problem-solve, report

Challenge (assessment): plan and design, problem-solve, create, apply, communicate

Key Vocabulary

Hypothesis, problem statement, fair test, controlling variables, isotonic, hypotonic, hypertonic, diffusion, osmosis

Content Outline: [Brief notes on main points/concepts]

For example, cite notes for: Simple description of osmosis with necessary diagrams and examples; definition of isotonic, hypotonic and hypertonic with illustrations. Include video description and link for videos to be used in lessons; reference texts and relevant page numbers.

Prior Learning

Check students' understanding of:

- the basic functions of the cell membrane, cytoplasm and vacuole and that they are able to recall that the cell membrane is selectively permeable
- explain diffusion

Strategy: Students complete worksheet that requires them to label and annotate the plant and animal cells and, answer short questions about diffusion

Learning Outcome:

- Demonstrate an understanding of diffusion and osmosis as fundamental events which enable living organisms to carry out life processes.

Assessment Criteria:

Activities 1 and 2: Use a rubric to score investigation reports for students' ability to record accurate observations and in appropriate formats; analyse observations and data and draw logical conclusions that make reference to predictions and questions asked; communicate orally; measure accurately and make comparisons.

Assessment activity (the challenge): Use a rubric to score the design plan for application of the engineering design process, application of the concept of osmosis and evidence of problem-solving strategies.

Teaching Procedure

ENGAGE

How can I get students interested in this? Use of an interesting picture, video, story etc. to hook students' attention.

- Present the following story to the class.

Mrs. Gordon loves to take care of her vegetable garden. She is especially proud of the cabbage and lettuce plants with their sparkling colour and perfectly formed luscious leaves.

One day, Mrs. Gordon was alarmed to find that her lovely garden plants were covered with small, soft-bodied, brown creatures... 'SLUGS!' ...devouring those succulent leaves!



Quickly! Stealthily ... like a soldier, ('*Mission Impossible*' sound track), Mrs. Gordon crept up to the unsuspecting molluscs and sprinkles them with dry table salt. In a few minutes, the unfortunate slugs fell to the ground. No survivors they were all dead.

What caused the death of the slugs?

EXPLORE

What tasks/questions can I offer to help students puzzle through this? Use of a simple investigation.

Problem: Why do slugs die when table salt is sprinkled on them?

Allow students to make predictions as to what the answer to this question might be.

Working in groups, students:

Activity 1

Investigating osmosis in plant material

- Place one peg of grapefruit (or other citrus fruit) into a clean, dry, transparent plastic bag containing one tablespoonful of salt and shake.
- Place another peg of grapefruit into a similar plastic bag without salt.
- Leave the bags undisturbed for approximately ten (10) minutes. Observe and record what happens.

Activity 2

Investigating osmosis in animal material

Students will:

- Label container with group name
- Place 3 eggs in container and pour in sufficient vinegar to completely cover eggs
- Cover container loosely and leave in for two days
- After two days, carefully rinse de-shelled eggs and dry
- Measure mass and circumference of eggs (use a string and ruler) and record data in a table
- Pour 300 ml of pure water, strong salt solution and dilute salt solution separately into three different containers and label
- Place one egg in each container
- Cover containers and allow to soak for 12 - 24 hours
- Make predictions about the expected changes in the physical appearance, mass and circumference of the eggs during and after soaking them in the various liquids
- After 12 - 24 hours, remove eggs, rinse in tap water and dry
- Measure the mass and circumference of each egg and record data and observations in a table
- Compare the eggs before and after placing in the liquids and construct a simple bar graph to represent the data
- Explain the changes observed in the eggs in terms of osmosis

EXPLAIN

How can I help students make sense of their observations? Class presentation and discussions.

Activity 1

Investigating osmosis in plant material

Students share their observations with the class and suggest reasons for the changes.

Facilitator: Guides students in inferring from their observations that water particles move from an area where they are in greater amounts to an area where they are in smaller amounts.

Guiding questions

- What do you think the liquid in the plastic bag contain?
- Where do you suppose the water came from?
- What caused the water to move out of the grapefruit and into the plastic bag?
- What role, if any, do you think the membrane on the peg of grapefruit played in the process?
- Students draw a picture of how the membrane on the peg of grapefruit would appear if you were able to view it at the microscopic level.

Facilitator: Show video of what happens to the peg of grapefruit at a molecular level and introduces, 'osmosis' as the term used to describe the phenomenon. Students are allowed to modify their drawing, if necessary, and annotate it.

- Students develop their own definition of osmosis and share with class.

Guiding questions

- In osmosis, what types of particles move from an area where they are plentiful to an area where they are in smaller amounts?
- What conditions must be present to facilitate osmosis?
- What major characteristic of the cell membrane makes it suited for osmosis?
- Do you think changes in temperature would affect the rate of osmosis?

Facilitator: Explains that 'an area where water particles are in greater amounts' is described as the area of 'high concentration' and that the 'area where water particles are in smaller amounts' is described as the area of 'low concentration'. The terms hypotonic, hypertonic and isotonic are introduced.

Activity 2

- Students share their observations with the class and suggest reasons for the changes.

Facilitator: Guides students in making the connection that osmosis takes place both in plant and animal matter and that the same conditions are necessary for the process to occur.

Students write a laboratory report and provide an answer to the question, “**Why do slugs die when table salt is sprinkled on them?**” Ensure that students make reference to the prediction they made earlier.

In addition, the report should include the answers to the following questions:

- How is the de-shelled egg similar to the body of the slug?
- Do you think osmosis occurred when salt was placed on the slugs? What evidence can you provide to support your answer?

[Students research the body structure of the slug]

- What would be a better method of getting rid of the slugs?
- How is osmosis different from diffusion? (Students compare the processes of diffusion and osmosis.)

Students identify the fair test.

ELABORATE

How can my students apply their new knowledge to other situations? Application of what was learned.

Facilitator: With the aid of a video, introduces the students to dialysis and explains the role of diffusion and osmosis in the process.

Whole class discussion:

Facilitator leads discussion of the role of osmosis in life processes such as digestion and excretion. [A description of the processes is not required.]

EVALUATE

How can I help my students self-evaluate and reflect on the teaching and learning, and how can I evaluate the students learning of concepts and skills?

Challenge: (class work) Students plan, design and conduct an investigation to make ‘Curly Irish Potato Fries’ using a given set of materials.

Note: Cooking of the fries is not allowed.

[Students may repeat the investigation at home under supervision of parents. Samples of fries may be displayed in class.]

Students’ Reflection

Students record their thoughts/feelings about osmosis as a life sustaining process in both plants and animals in their journals.

EXTEND LEARNING:

It has been observed that when fruits, example mangoes and apples, are available in large quantities, much of these are wasted because of spoilage.

Create a digital presentation to explain how fruits might be preserved for a long time.

Differentiation Opportunities:

- Create a four-page brochure to explain how the process of dehydration is used in preserving grapes. Highlight the role of osmosis.
- Create a poster showing pictures of processed or preserved foods found around the home and indicate the role of osmosis in their preservation.

Facilitator: Schedules time for viewing of presentations by class.

LINKS TO OTHER SUBJECTS

Food and Nutrition, Chemistry, Mathematics, ICT

POST-LESSON REFLECTION

APPENDIX F:

IRB APPROVAL



Research Integrity & Compliance
Student Faculty Center
3340 N. Broad Street, Suite 304
Philadelphia PA 19140

Institutional Review Board
Phone: (215) 707-3390
Fax: (215) 707-9100
e-mail: irb@temple.edu

Date: 12-Apr-2016

PI: DAVIS, JAMES

Committee: A2

Protocol Number: 23637

Project Title: The education of boys: Experiences of Secondary School Leaders in Central Jamaica.

The above new study was administratively closed because the IRB determined that the proposed activity is not human subjects research as defined by DHHS or FDA regulations. Consequently, Temple IRB approval is not applicable and the study was given the status of “closed/never opened.” You are welcome to pursue the activity, obtaining any applicable administrative or departmental (non-IRB) approvals.

Please contact the IRB at (215) 707-3390 if you have any questions.