

University of the West Indies  
Centre for Gender & Development Studies  
*Regional Co-ordinating Unit*

**Project Title:** Gender Differentials at the Secondary and Tertiary Levels of the  
Caribbean Education System

**RESEARCH STUDY - FINAL REPORT**

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**“DROPOUT FROM EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS  
IN A SELECT SAMPLE OF CARICOM COUNTRIES”**

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*Kingston, Jamaica*  
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*Monica M. Brown*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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As originally proposed, the specific objectives of this research were to:

1. determine the rate, by sex, of dropout from the education system through analysis of 1998-2002 data collected from a sample of primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions in Antigua, Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago;
2. ascertain the reasons why a representative sample of those identified at (1) failed to complete their courses of study;
3. evaluate the impact of gender socialisation on dropout rates.

The research approach was to have comprised collection and verification of enrolment and attrition data, structured interviews, and analysis of interview and other data findings, as follows:

1. Searches of records of the Ministries of Education in the 4 targeted countries to identify the secondary schools with the highest rates of dropout.
2. Searches of the records of the selected secondary schools for the 3-year period 1998-2001 to confirm Grades 8 to 11 enrolment/drop-out rates, and to identify those students who left the education system during that period before completion of Grade 11.
3. Verification that those who appear to have left the secondary education system prematurely did in fact fail to continue and complete their secondary education:
  - The Grade 8 enrolment records for 1998-99 provided the base data. Unless there is evidence that they had transferred to another school and continued their education to the end of Grade 11, students enrolled in Grade 8 at the start of 1998-99, but not found in the Grade 11 enrolment records for the end of the 2000-2001 school year, would be classified as 'dropouts'.
4. Searches of records of selected tertiary educational institutions to ascertain rates of dropout and identify a representative sample of dropouts whose present whereabouts can be traced for interview purposes.
5. Interviews with a purposively selected sample of 'dropouts' and their parents/care-givers, using carefully designed questionnaires to collect data pertinent to the research objectives. The investigative focus to be on the socio-economic, familial, attitudinal/behavioural and school-related variables that are generally believed to impact on school attendance.
6. Interviews with a control sample of students, who completed their secondary, and tertiary education, as well as with their parents/care-givers, using questionnaires focusing on the same variables as in (5) to determine whether similarities or divergence existed between the circumstances of the two populations with different educational outcomes.

After extensive preliminary investigation, it became clear that the research scope and approach would have to be modified. This was due to the evident incompleteness of national

data on dropouts per school and time/cost constraints, which by that time restricted widespread collection of additional data from individual educational institutions in all four countries.

As a result, research efforts were limited to conducting a pilot study in Jamaica and Barbados on the following basis:

- i) Interviews with 28 randomly selected students (SAMPLE A) who had dropped out of the formal secondary school system in Jamaica and were currently enrolled in remedial education programmes offered by two non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
- ii) Collection and analysis of specified information from 9 of the Jamaican high schools (SAMPLE B)
  - a) identified as being those from which most participants in the two NGO programmes had exited; and
  - b) able to provide information from their school records on students who had dropped out after finishing Grade 8 in 1998/1999 but before completion of the 2001/2002 Grade 11 school year.
- iii) Collection and analysis, as far as possible, of Barbados secondary school level information for the subject period from a sample of schools
- iv) A case study of the dropout situation at one tertiary level institution in Barbados.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The acquisition, collation and analysis of data from CARICOM states is now extremely difficult, because of inconsistent criteria for recording 'drop-out' information and inadequate record-keeping by educational institutions.
  - Conducting research to suit the education system context in each country also proved to be an extremely complex task, since each territory is unique in some respects, e.g., at one secondary school Grade 8 students could not move *en bloc* to Grade 9.
  - Some principals in Jamaica were reluctant to admit that students 'dropout' from their institutions, and it was sometimes found that students were kept on school registers long after they had ceased to attend school. It is difficult, therefore, to take for granted the accuracy of annual dropout data reported to, and compiled by, the Ministry of Education.
2. Approaching the research through investigation at non-governmental organisations (NGOs) providing remedial education to dropouts proved to be the most feasible mechanism for contacting dropouts from the public education system and obtaining authentic information on their former in-school experiences.

3. It was not possible to determine the actual reasons for school dropout by a significant number of cases included in Sample B of the Jamaican segment of the study, because of the high frequency of “Don’t Know” responses recorded by the schools involved. Therefore, no reasonable conclusions about underlying causes of the phenomenon can be drawn.
4. In the populations studied, pregnancy was a factor in girls dropping out, but it does not appear to be the only explanation for their apparent higher rate of exit from secondary school before completing Grade 11. Pregnancy was not cited by a large percentage of the dropouts from the tertiary level institution in Barbados
5. The enthusiasm and interest, which students enrolled in the two NGO remedial education programmes displayed in improving their level of educational attainment, give support to the views expressed by Miller<sup>1</sup> that features of this type of intervention should be developed as a model for retaining students, particularly boys, in the public education system.
6. Noteworthy aspects of the Barbados public education system are the provision of universal free education up to the tertiary level and the existence of a vigilant Truant Officer cadre that monitors and ensures school attendance. These provisions can be assumed to have a significant effect on that country’s low dropout rates as they reinforce awareness of the importance of education and scholastic attainment and support the entrenchment of those values in the national psyche and culture.
7. Many students who move from the secondary to tertiary level of education seem overly challenged by their changed learning environment. This may mean that:
  - i) better articulation is necessary between the secondary school curriculum and the tertiary level curriculum;
  - ii) the secondary level teaching methodology needs to inject more independent study to give students increased practice in taking responsibility for their own learning;
  - iii) curriculum planners at the tertiary level need to look carefully at the student qualifications required for entry and the academic level of the curriculum.
8. In spite of the Main Project’s focus on secondary and tertiary levels of the education system, the dropout rates published by the Ministry of Education & Culture — Jamaica suggest that there is some worrying attrition at Grades 4-5 (primary level).

## **Recommendations**

1. To facilitate well-founded, meaningful research into the dropout phenomenon within CARICOM countries, there should be mutual agreement on :

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, Errol (1999). Developing a model of intervention to retain boys in school.

- i) which data will be collected by each school/institution at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of the public education systems;
  - ii) the manner in which schools/institutions must record that data, and the frequency with which they must present information in a specified format to the respective Ministries of Education;
  - iii) the frequency, level of detail, and format of Ministry of Education reports in which national dropout data reports must be published.
2. At a later date when standardised, accurate and comprehensive data are available, further investigation of the drop-out phenomenon in CARICOM countries should be undertaken to establish, for example:
  - the frequency of attrition at Grades 4-5;
  - the stage(s) of the education process at which most students exit prematurely;
  - the percentage of ‘true’ dropouts that subsequently access alternative educational opportunities and complete their primary or secondary education, as the case may be;
  - whether there are gender-dominant patterns of dropout at the various levels of the education system and, if they exist, their root causes and consequences;
  - the number of institutions, whether operated by religious bodies or NGOs (with or without funding from international donor agencies), which cater to dropouts, and the nature of their programmes.
3. CARICOM countries, which do not presently have provisions for compulsory secondary education and effective systems to prevent truancy, should consider the implementation and effective maintenance of such policies.



**“DROPOUT FROM EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS  
IN FOUR CARICOM COUNTRIES”**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

As outlined in the original proposal, certain issues have been of concern to CARICOM States with respect to primary and secondary education in the English-speaking Caribbean. Among the issues on which the CARICOM post-Beijing Regional Plan focused were:

- (1) High drop-out rates, particularly among male students
- (2) Possible linkages between paid/unpaid child labour and lapsed school attendance
- (3) Gender stereotyping affecting curriculum choices and content of education.

In the beginning, the study, which is the focus of this final report, was conceptualised to focus on (1) and (2) above in a select sample of four Caribbean states, namely: Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad & Tobago.

The planned research strategy required verification, analysis and evaluation of data acquired through:

- (1) collection and verification of enrolment and attrition records of the Ministries of Education in the 4 targeted countries, to identify the secondary schools with the highest rates of dropout;
- (2) searches of the records of the selected secondary schools for the 3-year period 1998-2001 to confirm Grades 7 to 11 enrolment/drop-out rates and identify those students who left the education system during that period before completion of Grade 11;
- (3) verification that those who had evidently left the secondary education system prematurely had in fact failed to continue and complete their secondary education;
- (4) searches of records of selected tertiary educational institutions to ascertain rates of dropout and identify a representative sample of dropouts whose present whereabouts can be traced for interview purposes;
- (5) interviews with a purposively selected sample of ‘dropouts’ and their parents/care-givers, using carefully designed questionnaires to collect data pertinent to the research objectives;
- (6) interviews with a control sample of students, who completed their secondary, and tertiary education, as well as with their parents/care-givers, using questionnaires focusing on the same variables as in (5) to determine whether similarities or divergence existed between the circumstances of the two populations with different educational outcomes.

## Revision of Planned Activities

After funding approval was received, preliminary investigation revealed that it would be impossible to pursue this research project as originally proposed:

1. The planned approach to acquiring base data, on dropout rates as well as identifying secondary and tertiary level institutions where the incidence was high, had to be modified largely because it became clear soon after work on the study began that there would be major challenges caused by:
  - i) significant differences in how the term *dropout* was defined and, consequently, in the school data relating to those who had been recorded as having done so;
  - ii) the unavailability of disaggregated records at the Ministry of Education level, or from the secondary or tertiary education institutions themselves, which could point to the institutions where the drop-out problem might be greatest during the period to be studied
    - In Jamaica, for example, the Ministry of Education Youth & Culture had no disaggregated national statistics on dropout by year, school type and school, or on transfers by school type from one school to another. Individual schools were sometimes able to identify students who had left their programmes, but rarely knew whether they have rejoined the system in another parish, or had migrated to another country and were in fact continuing their education.
2. Differences between data collection regularity, methodology, and presentation format by the educational institutions and/or Ministries of Education prevented meaningful comparison of national data.
3. The time and funds spent to discover what data were readily available in the four targeted countries restricted the degree to which additional expenditure could be incurred to correct the problems that existed and, therefore, conduct research of the scope initially intended.

Consequently, it was decided to transform the exercise into a pilot study. Data-gathering efforts concentrated on secondary level education in Jamaica because ease of access to data and schools made it feasible from a time and cost perspective to do so. However, some data are also presented for Barbados.

An influential reference point for the research methodology ultimately adopted was the 1999 action research study, “Developing a model of intervention to retain boys in school”, carried out by Professor Errol Miller.

## **Definition: Who is a School Dropout?**

At first glance, the term ‘dropout’ seems easy enough to define as:

**A student who exits the education system before completing the programme for which he or she was registered.**

This definition could embrace students at all levels of the education system — whether primary, secondary or tertiary. However, a classification difficulty arises when students leave one institution and move to another; that is, initially dropping-out but likely to reappear in another institution in another location. Certainly, if a student soon continues his/her education elsewhere, he/she cannot be reasonably classified as a ‘drop-out’.

The working definition settled on was:

**If a student exits the formal education system at a particular level without completing the programme designed for that level, he/she can be classified as a ‘drop-out’.**

## **II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Many students drop out of the secondary level of the school system before completion of the final year, and this is a problem faced in many countries — developed, developing or under-developed. More research attention has been paid in metropolitan countries to determining the causes of secondary school dropout and appropriate preventative measures, although dropping-out from the primary level is likely to have a more deleterious effect.

The greater focus on secondary level dropouts is no doubt due to the accepted tenet of educational philosophy that it is important to extend education for as long as possible within the developmental period from age 14 to age 18. "The more time adolescents have to gain educational experience during the teenage years, the better prepared they will be to face life's challenges" (Battin-Pearson *et al*, 2000). Battin-Pearson *et al* maintain that identifying the predictors of high school drop-out is a crucial task for researchers, because understanding the causes and processes of dropping out can help guide the creation of effective approaches to preventing the problem. They also assert that "it is critical to study early dropout as a possible distinct and unique pathway affecting later adult outcomes." Moreover, Claus & Quimper (1991) and Schwartz (1995) found that for those students who entered high school, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade was the year of greatest risk for dropping out.

At least five different theories have been developed to explain the process of dropping out of school. Though each attempts to offer a unique set of affective influences or processes, the interrelationship of certain key variables becomes apparent overall.

### *Academic Mediation Theory*

Poor academic achievement, typically assessed with standardised achievement tests or grade point average (GPA), has consistently been one of the strongest predictors of dropping out of school when the poor performance is associated with other variables such as anti-social

affiliations, personal deviance, family socialisation and structural strains (Garnier *et al*, 1997; Janosz *et al*, 1997). Low academic achievement can also mediate the association between low school bonding and ultimately dropping out of school.

### *General Deviance Theory*

General deviance or specific aspects of deviant behaviour have direct effects on high school dropout. For instance, Garnier *et al* (1997) found that teen drug use directly predicted dropout. Pregnancy has also been a predictor, although differences in family background were also found to affect the likelihood of the mother eventually completing secondary school. In addition, early sexual activity has been shown to affect academic failure. Teenagers who are not doing well in school and have lower educational aspirations are more likely to have sex during adolescence than those faring better in school (National Research Council, 1987).

### *Deviant Affiliation Theory*

Research has concluded that dropouts tend to have more deviant friends who also show potential for dropping out (Cairns *et al*, 1989; Fagan & Pabon, 1990), but the mechanism of the influence of these deviant peers on the decision to leave school has not been widely investigated. It is theorised, however, that deviant affiliations have a direct effect on high school dropout over and above the mediating influence of low academic achievement.

### *Poor Family Socialisation Theory*

Families provide many of the chief foundations and experiences for later life, including academic achievement and success in school. Early influences include divorce, family stress (Garnier *et al*, 1997), parental behavioural control and acceptance (e.g., Steinberg *et al*, 1989) and, most, importantly, the parents' own education levels (Ellickson *et al*, 1998; Janosz & LeBlanc, 1996). Therefore, low parent expectations and low parent education would have direct effects on school dropout over and above the mediating influence of low academic achievement.

### *Structural Strain Theory*

Studies focusing on demographic factors, have indicated that dropouts are more likely to be boys than girls and are more likely to be from families of low socio-economic status (e.g., Rumberger, 1987; 1983). The overriding hypothesis is that the structural strain factors of gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status will have a direct effect on school dropout over and above the mediating influence of low academic achievement.

Tesseneer and Tesseneer (1958) have noted, however, that the study of the dropout phenomenon and its causes is difficult because “the same [environmental] factors may influence different pupils in different ways and even affect the same pupil in different ways at different times (p. 143). Janosz, Le Blanc, Boulerice and Tremblay (2000) also found that while an empirical typology could be useful as a predictive tool with regard to the impact of

social risk factors, differential dropout prevention strategies should be adopted for different personality profiles (e.g., the Quiet, Disengaged, Low-Achiever, Maladjusted).

As far as the Caribbean is concerned, Miller (1998) and others maintain that on average the pattern is that boys start their schooling later, attend school more irregularly, repeat more grades, drop out earlier, have lower completion rates and achieve less than girls while in school.

Despite the limitations mentioned earlier, this research, undertaken between 2003 and 2004 sought to determine whether any of the foregoing theories held true for the sample populations studied.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Because of the data collection challenges and the time/financial constraints already outlined, as well as other factors which are described hereunder, a decision was taken to conduct a pilot study on the basis of:

- v) Interviews with 28 randomly selected students (SAMPLE A) who had dropped out of the formal secondary school system in Jamaica and were currently enrolled in remedial education programmes offered by two non-governmental organisations (NGOs). An Interview Schedule (*Appendix I*) was developed, pre-tested and used, after modification beforehand, to conduct the interviews.
- vi) Collection and analysis of specified information from 9 of the Jamaican high schools (SAMPLE B)
  - c) identified as being those from which most participants in the two NGO programmes had exited, and
  - d) able to provide information from their school records on students who had dropped-out after finishing Grade 8 in 1998/1999 but before completion of the 2001/2002 Grade 11 school year.
- vii) Collection and analysis, as far as possible, of similar information from Barbados, which seemed to have a fair amount of comparable data for the subject period.

#### **Sample Selection Process**

##### ***Jamaica***

At the outset of the research project, a visit to Jamaica's Ministry of Education, Youth & Culture yielded the data presented in Tables 1a and 1b (page 6). These data gave no indication of school types or the schools experiencing a dropout problem, nor did they offer information on the actual number or percentage of enrolled students who dropped out of the public education system in each year. The question still remained, therefore, of how the sample population should be selected.

**TABLE 1 (a)**  
**JAMAICA: Dropout Rates in Public Primary Level Education by Grade & Sex**

Grades ⇒	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6
<b>1998/1999</b>					
DROP-OUT RATES	-4.4	-0.4	0.7	3.6	3.3
Male	-5	-0.5	1.2	4.1	5.5
Female	-3.8	-0.3	0.3	3.1	1.1
<b>1999/2000</b>					
DROP-OUT RATES	-1/2	1.5	-0.3	8.4	-1.2
Male	-0.6	0.9	-0.5	9.7	-2.9
Female	-2	2.2	-0.1	7	0.4
<b>2000/2001</b>					
DROP-OUT RATES	-1.7	1.4	2.3	6.1	3.3
Male	-1.1	1.9	2.9	7	4.8
Female	-2.4	0.9	1.7	5.1	1.8

Dropout rates from Grades 6-7 are not calculated since Grade 6 marks the end of primary level.

**TABLE 1 (b)**  
**JAMAICA: Dropout Rates in Public Secondary Level Education by Grade & Sex**

Grades ⇒	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-13
<b>1998/1999</b>						
DROP-OUT RATES	0.4	-3	–	10.4	–	21.4
Male	1.1	-0.8	–	5.7	–	18.3
Female	-0.1	-4.5	–	12.1	–	23.2
<b>1999/2000</b>						
DROP-OUT RATES	0.0	-3.5	–	9.1	–	21.4
Male	2.1	-2.2	–	5.7	–	18.3
Female	0.2	-4.8	–	12.1	–	23.2
<b>2000/2001</b>						
DROP-OUT RATES	2.7	-8.3	–	12.9	–	–
Male	3.1	-8.1	–	12.8	–	–
Female	2.2	-8.4	–	12.9	–	–

Dropout rates from Grades 9-10 and Grades 11-12 cannot be calculated as most students in AI-Age and Primary & Junior High schools complete the secondary level at Grade 9. For other secondary schools, students terminate at Grade 11.

**DROP-OUT RATE:**

**Definition:** Proportion of pupils from a given cohort enrolled in a given grade at a given school year that dropout of school before reaching the next grade

**Calculation Method**

$$\text{Drop-out rate from grade } g \text{ in year } t = \frac{\text{The number of pupils dropping out from grade } g \text{ in year } t}{\text{Total number of pupils in } g \text{ in year } t}$$

The promotion, repetition and dropout rates usually add up to 100 percent. If the number of students dropping out of school is unknown and the promoted and repeaters are known, then the dropout rate is calculated as below:

$$\text{Dropout Rate} = (100 - \text{Promotion Rate} - \text{Repetition Rate}).$$

**Source:** Statistics Unit, Ministry of Education, Youth & Culture, Jamaica.

primary schools. However, discussions with teachers at a teachers' seminar, where a fairly large cross-section of staff from different types of secondary schools were present, revealed that they perceived the dropout rate at their respective schools to be very small.

When the phenomenon occurred, they attributed it to pregnancy, migration — whether overseas or to other parishes, or to financial difficulties. Their conclusions were not based on statistical evidence. Nevertheless, a decision was taken to focus on these perceived causative factors and try to ascertain which secondary school types had experienced a high incidence of dropout as a result.

Contact was made with the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation (WCJF). This organisation plays a major role in sheltering pregnant school-age girls and assisting them to continue their schooling through their "Programme for Adolescent Mothers". The WCJF also operates a skills training programme for other at-risk youth of both sexes who had, for the most part, dropped out of school much earlier in their lives. These programmes are carried out in seven Main Centres and six Outreach Centres island-wide, and three centres (Kingston, Mandeville and Montego Bay) were selected for research focus. An initial meeting was held with the Kingston Centre Manager and some staff members to outline the purpose of the study and to gain their support. After written permission was obtained, subsequent visits were made by the main research assistant (Jamaica) in order to gather relevant data, and arrange and conduct interviews with the purposive sample of students.

Contact was also made with the Kingston Restoration Company (KRC) which conducts a skills training programme for at-risk male youth. The KRC's "Necessary Education and Training (NET) Programme" participants are mainly poor inner-city boys who were financially unable to continue in the formal education system or had displayed anti-social behaviour.

The youngsters' ages ranging from 10 – 18 are from an environment characterized by a culture of drugs, begging and loafing. The NET programme was initiated in September 1998 'to catch' these youth and re-integrate them into society. It is an intense programme of remedial training in literacy and numeric skills. The participants are also exposed to training in reproductive health, family life education, cultural, personal development and counselling. Informal interviews with the Centre Manager of the KRC NET programme revealed the 'at-risk' nature of these students' experiences.

1. One student who exhibited anger and a rebellious disposition made an angry outburst at a session with the police. The anger was due to the fact that his father had been killed by a policeman and he was a witness. He had not returned to the Centre since.
2. Another student damaged the manager's car. He was threatened by men in the community and had to flee the community.
3. One male student was the nephew of a popular 'don'. He was very aggressive and his acquired status gave him 'power' to bully the others.
4. One female student fought frequently, was raped in her community and was expelled from the school system twice. She became pregnant.

5. A brilliant boy who was made head boy at the Centre was placed in a Technical School. The Centre provided him with school fees and uniforms. He dropped out of school a second time as his parents were unable to give him bus fare and lunch money. The school was unable to assist any further. He began to learn a trade after he left the school.

Based on these preliminary discussions, it seemed worthwhile to schedule interviews with some of these boys in the NET programme.

It was evident that the schools could no longer be the starting point of the investigation. Instead, the sample schools would be identified and selected on the basis of those from which the majority of students enrolled in the WCJF & KRC programmes were coming. Sample B therefore consisted of girls from the WCJF Centres in Kingston, Mandeville and Montego Bay and students from the KRC Centre .

In both cases, the research objective was to identify those programme participants who had dropped out of the school system, their reasons for doing so, and the schools (and school types) they had last attended.

The enrolment data for the WCJF centres by school type over the period 1998-2001 are shown in Table 2 (page 8). A look at the total enrolment reveals that most of the enrolled students came from High/Comprehensive High schools. With the reclassification, Comprehensive High schools became High schools. In years previous to 2001, the majority of the participants came from Comprehensive High Schools. The sample of schools selected for study of the dropout phenomenon over the 4-year period will be drawn, therefore, from those combined 'high' schools and any school types highlighted by compilation of data acquired from KRC.



**TABLE 2**

**Women's Centre Foundation of Jamaica: Programme for Adolescent Mothers  
Enrolment 1998-2001 — Kingston, Mandeville & Montego Bay Centres**

PROGRAMME FOR ADOLESCENT MOTHERS		KINGSTON	MANDEVILLE	MONTEGO BAY
<b>January - December 1998</b>				
<b>Schools Previously Attended by Participants</b>	Primary	0.98%		0%
	All-Age	16.79%	*	27.27%
	High	27.42%		7.07%
	Secondary	1.14%		11.11%
	Technical	10.13%		5.05%
	Comprehensive	40.92%		45.45%
	Other	2.62%		4.04%
<b>Grade Reached by Participants</b>	6 <sup>th</sup>	0.98%		0%
	7 <sup>th</sup>	6.98%	*	4.04%
	8 <sup>th</sup>	15.09%		28.28%
	9 <sup>th</sup>	33.03%		37.37%
	10 <sup>th</sup>	28.07%		28.28%
	11 <sup>th</sup>	14.33%		2.02%
	no record	1.52%		—
<b>January - December 1999</b>				
<b>Schools Previously Attended by Participants</b>	Primary	2.52%		0%
	All-Age	7.98%	*	27.48%
	High	26.89%		9.92%
	Secondary	3.36%		—
	Technical	10.08%		4.58%
	Comprehensive	47.06%		52.67%
	Training Centre	1.27%		—
	Other	0.84%		5.34%
<b>Grade Reached by Participants</b>	6 <sup>th</sup>	0%	*	0%
	7 <sup>th</sup>	7.15%		12.97%
	8 <sup>th</sup>	10.08%		22.90%
	9 <sup>th</sup>	33.19%		41.22%
	10 <sup>th</sup>	24.79%		20.61%
	11 <sup>th</sup>	16.39%		2.29%
	no record	8.40%		—
<i>cont'd.</i>				

\*Similar statistics for the Mandeville Centre were not included in WCJF Annual Reports for 1998 and 1999.

TABLE 2, *cont'd.*

PROGRAMME FOR ADOLESCENT MOTHERS	KINGSTON	MANDEVILLE	MONTEGO BAY	
<b>January - December 2000</b>				
<b>Schools Previously Attended by Participants</b>	Primary	0%	3.8%	—
	All-Age	7.23%	20.2%	22.63%
	High	36.95%	17.3%	68.61%
	Secondary	—	—	—
	Technical	3.61%	7.7%	8.03%
	Comprehensive	48.19%	51.0%	—
	Other	4.02%	—	0.73%
<b>Grade Reached by Participants</b>	6 <sup>th</sup>	1.61%	1.0%	0%
	7 <sup>th</sup>	5.62%	2.9%	0.73%
	8 <sup>th</sup>	11.24%	16.3%	13.14%
	9 <sup>th</sup>	32.13%	46.2%	42.33%
	10 <sup>th</sup>	31.73%	30.8%	32.12%
	11 <sup>th</sup>	17.67%	2.9%	11.68%
<b>January - December 2001</b>				
<b>Schools Previously Attended by Participants</b>	Primary/Jnr. H.	6.05%	1.07%	—
	All-Age	5.65%	11.82%	19.61%
	High	42.74%	59.15%	73.20%
	Secondary	—	11.11%	—
	Technical	8.87%	13.98%	7.19%
	Comprehensive	33.06%	13.98%	—
	Other	3.23%	—	—
no record	0.40%	—	—	
<b>Grade Reached by Participants</b>	5 <sup>th</sup>	0.40%	—	—
	6 <sup>th</sup>	0.40%	1.07%	—
	7 <sup>th</sup>	4.44%	5.38%	0.65%
	8 <sup>th</sup>	10.89%	21.5%	14.38%
	9 <sup>th</sup>	29.43%	30.11%	39.22%
	10 <sup>th</sup>	38.31%	27.96%	35.29%
	11 <sup>th</sup>	14.52%	13.98%	10.46%
no record	1.61%	—	—	

**Source:** Annual Reports, 1998, 1999, 2000, WCJF, Jamaica.

On the basis of analysis of the preliminary data collected from WCJF and KRC, 15 schools (4 traditional High and 11 New Secondary/Comprehensive) were identified for possible inclusion in the sample. The principals of those schools were contacted and given an explanation of the research objectives and what they were being asked to do to facilitate the process. Thirteen schools agreed to participate but, in the end, useful data was obtained from only 9 of these schools —3 traditional High and 6 New Secondary/Comprehensive schools. Designated teachers in each school provided and returned the required information, using copies of a Tracking Sheet (*Appendix II*) specially designed for this aspect of the research.

## Barbados

### — Secondary Level

The initial contact regarding secondary level drop-out information was made with the Acting Chief Education Officer, who expressed positive interest in the study and assigned a Research Officer of the Ministry of Education to facilitate the compilation of relevant information from statistical and other information returned by schools to the Ministry.

The Ministry requires schools to submit returns on pupils who left school during the previous school year with an indication of the level (form/grade) the pupil had attained at the time of exit. Schools generally record the intended whereabouts of those students without necessarily verifying whether they actually proceeded to the next stage/institution indicated.

Tables showing 'drop-outs' for the years 1999-2002 were derived from re-working data in the Ministry's records and that information, as summarised in Table 3 below, indicated the number of students who left secondary schools before reaching the normal age limit for that school type. That basis for determining the number of 'drop-outs' was only applied for the purpose of this study, with the understanding that further sifting would be necessary to identify which, if any, were true 'drop-outs'.

**TABLE 3**  
**Dropouts from Public Secondary Level Education in Barbados 1999-2002, by Sex**

	TOTAL ENROLMENT			NO. OF 'DROP-OUTS		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1999-2000	10,178	10,257	20,435	126	148	274
2000-2001	10,232	9,949	20,181	66	66	132
2001-2002	10,303	9,895	20,198	61	56	117

As in the case of Jamaica, the available Ministry data made it evident that the schools themselves had to be the focus of any in-depth inquiry to identify drop-outs because of their likely closer contact with ex-students, and the more detailed information which the nexus of parent–teacher–guidance counsellor relationships was likely to provide.

A purposive sample of 5 secondary schools was ultimately selected, based on individual school dropout rates and visits were undertaken to these schools.

The period during which information-gathering commenced proved a somewhat difficult one. At the level of the Ministry, general elections, which took place in May, resulted, *inter alia*, in a different incumbent for the position of Minister of Education officeholder and a natural, attendant absorption with internal matters. At the level of the schools, the staff was

understandably preoccupied with marking examination papers, internal meetings to do with promotion and attending to the plethora of administrative details involved in submitting various returns to the Ministry by tight and looming deadlines.

At one school, their problems were aggravated by their being in the midst of a substantial rebuilding and resettling programme which saw them operating out a combination of buildings and containers on an active construction site. However, this did nothing to diminish the co-operation received from the staff.

### — Tertiary Level

Data were collected on the dropout experience at a tertiary level institution, because of the interest of a teacher who, as a Master's Degree student, found the field ripe for investigation as her thesis study. Although some of that data have been included in this report, similar data from tertiary institutions in Jamaica has not been included due to several constraints that prevented collection.

The objectives of her study were to determine the reasons for student dropout at the institution, the impact of institutional factors, academic achievement, parental influence, family, finance, trauma, deviance, deviant affiliations, employment and other miscellaneous factors on student attrition/dropout. Another objective was to determine whether there was a relationship between different stakeholders' perceptions regarding the reasons for student attrition/dropout.

The total sample 'pool' of 1039 was comprised of 3 cohorts of full-time students in two-year programmes (1999-2001; 2000-2002; 2001- 2003 from 20 different areas of specialisation. From these cohorts, 188 dropouts were identified from the college's records. (See Table 4, pg. 12). Dropout figures were relatively small in each course except for Auto Body Repair in 1999-2001 and 200-2002 ( 52.94 and 31.25%%) and Commercial Studies in 2001 -2002 and 2001 -2003 (35.00% and 37.90%).

Overall, the percentage of dropouts for each cohort did not exceed 20% (2000-02)

**TABLE 4**

**Dropout Data for a Tertiary Level Institution – Barbados**

Programmes	1999-2001			2000-2002				2001-2003		
	Intake	Drop-out	Percentage Dropout (%)	Intake	Dropout	Percentage Dropout (%)	Intake	Dropout	Percentage Dropout (%)	
Agriculture	17	0	0	16	8	50	16	2	12.50	
Auto Body Repairs	17	9	52.94	32	10	31.25	18	7	38.80	
Building Construction	-	-	-	12	4	33.33	-	-	-	
Cabinet and Furniture Making	16	5	31.25	15	3	20.00	15	3	20.00	
Carpentry and Joinery	16	3	18.75	15	4	26.66	15	4	26.60	
Civil and Structural Engineering	-	-	-	27	7	25.93	-	-	-	
Clothing Craft	-	-	-	19	4	21.00	16	4	25.00	
Commercial Studies	74	9	12.16	20	7	35.00	58	22	37.90	
Consumer Electronics	18	3	16.66	18	1	5.55	16	0	0.00	
Cosmetology	-	-	-	20	7	35.00	-	-	-	
Electrical Installation	16	1	6.25	18	2	11.10	19	0	0.00	
Home Economics	20	4	20.00	21	1	4.76	20	4	20.00	
Masonry and Tiling	12	2	16.66	-	-	-	14	6	42.00	
Mechanical Engineering	31	2	6.45	16	1	6.25	32	1	3.12	
Micro Computer Technology	16	4	25.00	18	0	0.00	19	1	5.29	
Motor Vehicle Engineering	37	3	8.10	32	3	9.37	20	3	15.00	
Network Technologies	14	3	21.42	-	-	-	16	0	0.00	
Printing	16	3	18.75	17	4	23.50	19	3	15.70	
Refrigeration and Air Conditioning	14	0	0.00	13	1	7.69	16	3	18.75	
Welding Engineering	14	0	0.00	16	2	12.50	17	5	29.4	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>14.65</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>20.00</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>19.65</b>	

**Source:** Jones-Drayton, Audrey (2004). *An investigation into the incidence of dropout at a tertiary technical Institution* (unpublished M.Ed. thesis, University of the West Indies, Mona. Jamaica).

A stratified random sample of approx. 50% of all academic units was then selected.

Students: N = 96 — 72 males (75%) and 24 females (25%)

Stakeholders:

Academic staff

& Guidance Counsellors N = 48 — 35 males (72.9%) and 13 females (27.1%)

Significant Others N = 96 — 1 per 'drop-out'.

**N.B.** Fifty percent of the staff was requested to answer questions pertaining to male dropouts, and 50% about the female dropouts.

Four different author-designed questionnaires were used: 1 questionnaire for male dropouts, 1 for female dropouts; 1 for the teachers and guidance counsellors, and 1 for 'significant others'. Common variables were explored throughout all of the questionnaires for all sample groups.

Questionnaire returns reduced the sample to 40 students, 36 staff members and 11 significant others (family members)

#### **IV. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

##### **Jamaica**

###### *SAMPLE A*

While the sample of 28 students, who had dropped out of the formal education system and were currently participating in remedial education programmes offered by two non-governmental organisations (NGOs) was small, the findings are still informative. The sample included more girls (20) than boys (6), largely because one of the two NGOs focuses most of its programme activity on girls and women. As Table 5 (See pg. 14) indicates, most of the students interviewed dropped out of the formal school system in Grade 8 or Grade 9. However, the seven KRC students had dropped out between grades 5 and 7.

##### ***Impact of Family/Home Environment***

In terms of their family situations, the following picture emerged:

- Most were from fairly large families (3 or more brothers and/or 3 or more sisters);
- There was no obvious correlation between birth order position and dropping out since. for example, there were an equal number of respondents (4) who were first, second, third and fourth in their birth order relative to their other siblings.
- All 28 respondents had lived at home when they dropped of school, with 13 (46.4%), 4 (14.3%) and 11 (39.3%) having lived in households headed by a female, male, or by both male & female, respectively. In 10 cases the head of the household had been a relative other than a parent. At the time of the survey, however, only two were living with non-relatives.

- In 15 cases (53.6%), responses were missing regarding “father’s occupation”, and it is presumed that this information was unknown to those respondents or their fathers were unemployed. Known occupations ranged from casual worker, artisan, farmer, and bus driver to computing, photography and accounting.

**TABLE 5**

**Dropouts from Public Education System Interviewed at NGO Centres (SAMPLE A)**  
**— Age, Sex, and Prior Formal Schooling**  
 (n = 28)

	FREQUENCY	
<b>LOCATION:</b>		
Attending Kingston & St. Andrew Centres	18	
Attending Centres in other Parishes	10	
<b>AGE &amp; SEX DISTRIBUTION:</b>		
	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>
10-12	2	-
13-15	6	13
16+	-	7
<b>EXIT GRADE FROM FORMAL SCHOOL SYSTEM:</b>		
Grade 5	2	
Grade 6	3	
Grade 7	4	
Grade 8	5	
Grade 9	7	
Grade 10	4	
Grade 11	3	
<b>EXIT SCHOOL TYPE:</b>		
Primary	5	
Secondary	23	

- In all cases, information was given concerning “mother’s occupation” —including a response of “unemployed” in one case. Typical occupations were housewife, nursemaid, factory worker, dressmaker, cook, and hotel worker.
- The highest educational qualification attained by parents/guardians heading respondents’ households at their school dropout date was as follows:

Don’t know	3	10.7%
Govt. Primary	5	17.9%
Secondary (traditional)	9	32.1%
Secondary (Tech/Voc.)	11	39.3%

Since most parents/guardians had a secondary level education, these findings could be interpreted as refuting the theory that the higher the parental education, the less likely it will be that a child will drop out of schools. On the other hand, since 96.4%

reported receiving parental encouragement to excel, parental education level may have influenced the encouragement given and been a motivating factor in the students' return to an educational setting. However, only 6 (21.4%) reporting receiving help with homework and only 4 (14.3%) reported having been provided with the books and other school material they had needed. Level of parental education, therefore, might not be enough of itself. The ability to give practical parental support is also necessary if the child is to succeed.

***Reasons for Dropping Out***

The majority of the respondents (85.7%) indicated that they had attended school regularly or very regularly. If these are honest responses, then regularity of attendance is no guarantee of completing a formal course of study at the secondary level. The four students that did not attend regularly, or only “fairly regularly”, cited the deterrents as being financial (2), sickness (1), home chores (1).

Some of the interview questions sought to determine whether these dropouts had been involved in extra-curricula activities or played any leadership roles while in school, since other research has indicated that such involvement encouraged students to stay in school. The findings for this group evidently support that thesis, because their involvement had been fairly low: 39% in Sports, 10.7% in leadership activities, and 17.9% in junior service clubs. In addition, only 7 (25%) of the respondents had ever been elected/selected for a position of responsibility in the classroom.

All respondents liked most or at least a few of their teachers, and most had one or more friends among their schoolmates. Only one student reported having no friends. As far as personal conduct was concerned (See Table 6), it did not appear to have been a factor in most cases. That conclusion is evidenced by the fact that only one student had been expelled and only two had been suspended before personally deciding not to return to school.

**TABLE 6**  
**SAMPLE A: Personal Conduct While Attending Public School**  
 (n = 28)

	Never	Once	Sometimes
Drank beer/rum/other liquor?	23	1	4
Used illegal drugs?	27	1	0
Picked a fight?	20	2	6
Threw stones, etc. at cars/people?	27	0	1
Carried weapons to school?	25	2	1
Took property of others w/o permission?	28	0	0
Purposely damaged belongings of others?	27	1	0



Table 7 (pg. 16) indicates that pregnancy was most often cited (50%) as the reason for dropping-out. It must be borne in mind, however, that one of the two organisations from which the sample was drawn caters primarily to female teenage adolescents who have dropped out of school due to pregnancy.

Two persons (7.1%) said that their premature departure from the formal school system was for financial reasons, and one of these two respondents “dropped out to support family/self”. The study done by Bailey & Brown (1999), entitled *Gender Perspectives on the School Experience*, revealed that financial reasons was most often cited as the main reason for poor attendance at school and eventually school dropout — not a significant reason in the present study. Both studies indicated, however, that the participants attended school regularly and were keenly interested in continuing their education. All aspired to becoming better prepared for the ‘world of work’.

**TABLE 7**  
**SAMPLE A: Reasons Given for Dropping out of the Public Education System**  
(N = 28)

REASON	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Learning Problems	1	3.6
Expelled	1	3.6
Suspended/Did not return	2	7.1
Peer Problems/Bullying	1	3.6
Financial	2	7.1
Pregnancy	14	50.0
Gang Warfare	2	7.1
No Response	5	17.9
<b>TOTAL:</b>	28	100.0

All respondents believed that getting a good education was important, although only five (17.9%) said that it was the key to success and only 13 (46.4%) believed a good education was important “in getting a career”.

It should also be noted that, when asked whom they most admired in their individual communities, 12 (42.9%) said “no one”.

**SAMPLE B**

Information with respect to the Sample B population was provided by nine high schools:

- 2 in the Corporate Area of Kingston & St. Andrew (Schools #5 and #9);
- 3 in major rural towns (Schools #4, #6, and #7); and
- 4 in medium-sized rural districts (Schools #1, #2, #3, #8) close to major towns.

**TABLE 8****SAMPLE B: Dropouts between Grade 9 (1999/2000) and Grade 11(2001/2003), by Sex, as Percentage of Number Who Entered Grade 9**

<b>SCHOOL</b>	# Grade 9 Entrants 1999/2000		# Exiting Before Completion of Gr. 11 (2001/2002)		% Dropouts vis-à-vis Gr. 9 Enrolment	
	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>
School #1	84	101	7	10	8.3	9.9
School #2	82	82	17	17	26.1	26.1
School #3	102	96	14	28	13.7	29.1
School #4	59	84	9	15	15.3	17.9
School #5	182	177	31	71	17.0	40.1
School #6 ( <i>Girls' School</i> )	–	32	–	5	–	15.6
School #7 ( <i>Girls' School</i> )	–	32	–	6	–	18.7
School #8	95	76	20	27	21.1	35.5
School #9	212	174	17	20	8.0	11.5
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>816</b>	<b>854</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>23.3</b>

Although mindful of the limitations of sample size and methodology that constrain the validity of deducing conclusions of general applicability, it is evident that, relative to the number of boys and girls entering Grade 9 in 1999/2000, a higher percentage of girls than boys left these 9 schools prematurely.

Information reported by each school concerning the number of ‘drop-out’ occurrences during each of the 3 years, as well as the reasons for those students’ failure to complete the secondary level stage, is set out Tables 9 and 10 (pgs. 18 & 19), respectively. In the case of Schools #6 and #7 only a sample of the grade 8 cohort was selected for tracking of dropouts, hence the low number. It is purely coincidental that the same number was recorded for each of those two schools.

**TABLE 9**

**SAMPLE B: Drop-Out Occurrences In Nine Jamaican High Schools, 1999/2000 - 2001/2002**

	<b>DROP-OUTS</b>														
	<b>ENROLMENT END GR. 8 1998/99 SCHOOL YR.</b>			<b>Gr. 9 1999/2000 School Yr.</b>			<b>Gr. 10 2000/2001 School Yr.</b>			<b>Gr. 10 2001/2002 School Yr.</b>			<b>Total Drop-outs by Sex as % of End 1998/99 Enrolment by Sex</b>		<b>Total Drop-outs as % of Gr. 8 Enrolment</b>
	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
School #1	84	101	<b>185</b>	3	2	<b>5</b>	2	3	<b>5</b>	2	5	<b>7</b>	8.33%	9.9%	<b>9.2</b>
School #2	82	82	<b>164</b>	2	1	<b>3</b>	14	14	<b>28</b>	1	2	<b>3</b>	26.2%	26.2%	<b>20.7</b>
School #3	102	96	<b>198</b>	9	15	<b>24</b>	3	11	<b>14</b>	2	2	<b>4</b>	13.7%	29.2%	<b>21.2</b>
School #4	59	84	<b>143</b>	4	4	<b>8</b>	3	9	<b>12</b>	2	2	<b>4</b>	15.2%	17.9%	<b>16.8</b>
School #5	182	177	<b>359</b>	10	13	<b>23</b>	16	52	<b>68</b>	5	6	<b>11</b>	17.0%	40.1%	<b>28.4</b>
School #6*	0	32	<b>32</b>	-	5	<b>5</b>	-	-	<b>0</b>	-	-	<b>0</b>	-	15.6%	<b>15.6</b>
School #7*	0	32	<b>32</b>	-	6	<b>6</b>	-	-	<b>0</b>	-	-	<b>0</b>	-	18.8%	<b>18.8</b>
School #8	95	76	<b>171</b>	18	20	<b>38</b>	2	3	<b>5</b>	0	4	<b>4</b>	21.1%	35.5%	<b>27.5</b>
School #9	212	174	<b>386</b>	4	7	<b>11</b>	1	2	<b>3</b>	12	11	<b>23</b>	8.0%	11.5%	<b>9.6</b>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	816	854	<b>1670</b>	50	73	<b>123</b>	41	94	<b>135</b>	24	32	<b>56</b>	Drop-outs Grades 9-11 = 314 % of Enrolment End Gr. 8 = 18.8%		

\* Girls-Only High Schools

**TABLE 10**

**Sample B: Reasons For Students Dropping-out of 9 Jamaican High Schools 1999/2000 - 2001/2002**  
*(Information obtained from Schools Attended)*

	SCH. #1		SCH. #2		SCH. #3		SCH. #4		SCH. #5		SCH. #6*		SCH. #7*		SCH. #8		SCH. #9		Grand Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
(A) Failing achievement scores	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>1</b>
(B) Disinterested in school work	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	<b>15</b>
(C) Financial problems	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>2</b>
(D) Poor parental influences	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>2</b>
(E) Pregnancy	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	19	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	5	<b>35</b>	
(F) Drug use	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	<b>6</b>	
(G) Illness	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	<b>2</b>	
(H) Expulsion (delinquency)	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>4</b>	
(J) Transfer to other Jamaican school	1	-	2	2	2	4	4	3	2	2	-	-	-	1	-	1	8	7	<b>39</b>	
(K) Migration overseas	1	-	1	-	-	-	5	5	1	1	-	4	-	3	-	-	1	4	<b>26</b>	
(L) Other	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	<b>6</b>	
(M) Don't Know	3	1	14	15	12	24	-	-	13	43	-	-	-	-	20	22	5	4	<b>176</b>	
<b>Total:</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>314</b>	

The data reported in Tables 9 and 10 supports the Sample A finding that girls may be dropping out from the secondary school level at a higher rate than boys did. The perception that more adolescent boys are out of school may be because the presence of out-of-school girls in public places during school hours might be less obvious.

The two schools with the highest percentage of dropouts relative to the number of their Grade 9 entrants were School #5 (28.4%) and School #8 (27.5%). They do not share a common socio-economic environment, since one is located close to several low-income Kingston neighbourhoods and the other is sited in a fairly prosperous rural farming community. When the reasons reported for student dropout in Table 10 are compared, however, there are no obvious similarities except that each school recorded a high level of “Don’t Know” responses. Of the stated reasons, “migration overseas”, “pregnancy” and “disinterested in school work” were significant within the sample.

Former students, who were recorded as having transferred to other Jamaican schools, do not appear to be actual ‘drop-outs’. It was impossible to ascertain, however, whether they had transferred directly into another school or were out of the education system for a period before transfer, or had transferred to a private educational institution of another type rather than to a public secondary/high school.

The high frequency of “Don’t Know” responses overall is indicative of the reality that many educational institutions, at all levels of the public education system, are unable (or unwilling) to maintain the type of contact with individual students that would facilitate retention or provide specific causative information when dropout occurs. It had also become clear early in the preliminary investigative stage that, in most cases, there was little possibility of acquiring “last home address” information from school records to facilitate possible contact with, and information gathering from, the drop-out students themselves.

## **Barbados**

### **– Secondary Level**

Information obtained on students who had dropped-out before graduation is presented in Table 11 (pg. 22). The dropout rate was very low, and most cases reported (e.g., “transferred to other schools”) did not in fact fit within a true definition of ‘dropout’.

Anecdotal evidence and the local researcher's own experience indicated that dropping-out was not normally expected or easily achieved in a social context where the value of education was recognised and sought after, and where government policy supported that social ethos through a number of positive measures, including:

- free access to education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels;
- compulsory education up to the age of sixteen;
- a school attendance service aimed at discouraging truancy;

- a consistently large share of the country's budget devoted to Education (for example, in the financial year 2001-2002 the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs & Culture received 17.1% of the country's Budget);
- social welfare assistance to needy cases.

**TABLE 11**  
**Drop-out Occurrences Students at 5 Secondary Schools in Barbados**

		INFORMATION PROVIDED
<b>School #S1</b> 1999-2000	5	3 migrated —USA 2 transferred to other schools
2000-2001	5	4 transferred to other schools 1 expelled
2001-2002	9	5 migrated overseas 3 transferred to other schools 1 expelled
<b>School #S2</b> 1999-2000	0	
2000-2001	1	Transferred to other school
2001-2002	1	Transferred to other schools
<b>School #S3</b> 1999-2000		Of the 5 'drop-outs' listed in the Ministry's record, none were true dropouts. All went on to other higher educational institutions (such as, the community college or to universities either at home or abroad, or emigrated because of family reasons—presumably continuing their education abroad.
2000-2001		Indeed, the Headmaster, who personally clarified this matter, gave an assurance that he could remember only two true 'drop-outs' during his tenure of office at the school and these had occurred during a period prior to 1999-2002.
2001-2002		
<b>School #S4</b> 1999-2000	0	
2000-2001	2	(1) transferred to other school; (1) was getting married (both Muslims) and (1) was unaccounted for
2001-2002	1	
<b>School #S5</b>	0	

Barbados, *cont'd.*

– Tertiary Level

**TABLE 12**  
**Reasons For Dropout as reported by Staff, Students & Family**

REASONS	Students (N=40) %	Staff (N=36) %	Family (N=11) %
1. Courses were difficult	70.0	33.3	54.5
2. Did not get encouragement from family	50.0	38.9	9.1
3. Lost interest in classes	62.5	75.0	45.5
4. Did not like going to classes	40.0	75.0	45.5
5. Did not do homework	47.5	91.7	45.5
6. Did not do extra studies	50.0	0.0	72.9
7. Did not get good grades	40.0	83.3	36.3
8. Courses were not what they expected	42.5	44.4	36.4
9. Did not get financial assistance from family	40.0	47.2	9.1
10. Did not get help with domestic chores	37.5	--	36.3
11. Teaching methods were not varied	32.5	27.8	63.7
12. Lessons were not interesting	25.0	41.7	54.5
13. Living with a partner	15.0	8.3	--
14. Classrooms were not comfortable	10.0	50.0	27.4
15. Participation in sports	10.0	8.3	--
16. Death in the family	10.0	13.9	0.0
17. Illness	10.0	80.6	9.1
18. Pregnancy	7.5	47.2	9.1
19. Participation in Sports	10.0	8.3	--
20. Expelled	0.0	13.9	0.0
21. Best friends were truants	0.0	30.6	0.0
22. Best friends had disciplinary problems	0.0	36.1	0.0

**Source:** Jones-Drayton, Audrey (2004). *An Investigation into the incidence of dropout at a tertiary technical institution* (unpublished M.Ed. thesis, University of the West Indies, Mona Jamaica).

There is some consistency in the reasons given for dropping out by all three groups — poor grades, failure to do homework or extra studies, and loss of interest in classes. A strong impression derived from these findings was that many students had difficulty coping with the academic programme and so lost interest and finally dropped out.

Only 7.5% of the 40 students cited pregnancy as the reason for dropping out, but 40% of the students and 47.2% of the staff cited lack of financial assistance as a reason. Nevertheless, only 7% of the family members saw this as a problem.

Another interesting observation was the indication by staff (30.6%) that the best friends of the dropouts were truants, and 36 % of the same group also said that the best friends had disciplinary problems. This corroborates the findings of Janosz *et al*, (1997) that peer influence can be a significant factor in the school dropout situation.

Also of note was the admission by a significant percentage of teachers (41.7%) that lessons were not interesting and the courses were not what were expected (presumably by the students). This could imply an acknowledgement that the courses and how they were delivered may have influenced the students' lack of interest in the college programme. Two questions arise: Are students underestimating the demands of the college programme? Is there sufficient articulation between the secondary school programme and the college programme? Such questions point the way for further research.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

1. The acquisition, collation and comparison of data between CARICOM states are almost impossible at the present time, because of inadequate and inconsistent national and school record-keeping of 'drop-out' particulars. Among other shortcomings, it is difficult to ascertain how many and which students transfer from one educational institution to another rather than prematurely exiting the public education system
2. Conducting research to suit the education system context of all sampled countries proved to be an extremely complex task, since each territory is unique in some respects. Schools also have their peculiarities in the way movement between grade levels takes place. For example, at one secondary school Grade 8 students could not move *en bloc* to Grade 9. The group of Grade 8 students are divided into sub-groups entering 'tracks' related to subject areas, and each sub-group then follows a slightly different programme until the end of secondary education.
3. Some principals in Jamaica were reluctant to admit that students 'drop out' from their institutions, and the maintenance of comprehensive, useful records on dropouts does not appear to be the norm. Moreover, it was sometimes found that students were kept on school registers long after they had ceased to attend school. It is difficult, therefore, to assess the accuracy of annual dropout data reported to, and compiled by the Ministry of Education.



4. Approaching the research through investigation at non-governmental organisations (NGOs) providing remedial education to dropouts is now the most feasible mechanism for contacting dropouts from the public education system and obtaining authentic information on their former in-school experiences.
5. It was not possible to determine the actual reasons for school dropout by a significant number of cases included in Sample B of the Jamaican segment of the study, because of the high frequency of “Don’t Know” responses recorded by the schools involved. Therefore, no reasonable conclusions about underlying causes of the phenomenon can be drawn.
6. In the populations studied, pregnancy was a factor in girls dropping out, but it does not appear to be the only explanation for their apparent higher rate of exit from secondary school before completing Grade 11. Pregnancy was not cited by a large percentage of the dropouts from the tertiary level institution in Barbados
7. The enthusiasm and interest that students enrolled in the two NGO remedial education programmes displayed in improving their level of educational attainment, give support to the views expressed by Miller in his study (*op. cit*) that this type of intervention should be developed as a model for retaining students, particularly boys, in the public education system.
8. Noteworthy features of the Barbados public education system are the provision of universal free education up to the tertiary level and the existence of a vigilant Truant Officer cadre that monitors and ensures school attendance. These provisions can be assumed to have a significant effect on that country’s low dropout rates as they reinforce awareness of the importance of education and scholastic attainment and support the entrenchment of those values in the national psyche and culture.
9. Many students who move from the secondary to tertiary level of education seem overly challenged by the changed learning environment. This may mean that:
  - better articulation is necessary between the secondary school curriculum and the tertiary level curriculum;
  - the secondary level teaching methodology needs to inject more independent study to give students increased practice in taking responsibility for their own learning;
  - curriculum planners at the tertiary level need to look carefully at the student qualifications required for entry and the academic level of the curriculum.
9. In spite of the Main Project’s focus on secondary and tertiary levels of the education system, the dropout rates published by the Ministry of Education & Culture — Jamaica suggest that there is some worrying attrition at Grades 4-5 (primary level).

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To facilitate well-founded, meaningful research into the dropout phenomenon within CARICOM countries, there should be mutual agreement on:
  - iv) what data will be collected by each school/institution at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of the public education systems;
  - v) the manner in which schools/institutions must record that data, and the consistent frequency with which they must present information in a specified format to the respective Ministries of Education;
  - vi) frequency, level of detail, and format of Ministry of Education reports in which national dropout data reports must be published.
  
2. At a later date when standardised, accurate data are available, further investigation of the dropout phenomenon in CARICOM countries should be undertaken to establish, for example:
  - the frequency of attrition at Grades 4-5;
  - the stage(s) of the education process at which most students exit prematurely;
  - the percentage of ‘true’ dropouts that subsequently access alternative educational opportunities and complete their primary or secondary education, as the case may be;
  - whether there are gender-dominant patterns of dropout at the various levels of the education system and, if they exist, their root causes and consequences;
  - the number of institutions, whether operated by religious bodies or NGOs (with or without funding from international donor agencies), which cater to dropouts, and the nature of their programmes
    - Since several of these help students re-enter the school system, it would be useful to ensure that their curricula are in line with those of the relevant Ministry of Education. For those who are being prepared for the ‘world of work’, links with the Human Education and Resource Training Trust/National Training Agency (H.E.A.R.T./NTA) vocational curricula and standards should be ensured.
  
3. CARICOM countries, which do not presently have provisions for compulsory secondary education and effective systems to prevent truancy, should consider the implementation and effective maintenance of such policies.

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27-Apr-04

## **APPENDIX I**

### **Interview Schedule – Former Students**



Interpret "Household" to mean persons living together as one 'family' unit.

Get occupation information

6. When you were going to  $\chi$  School, did you live at home?

YES  NO

*If answer is "No", ask respondent where and with whom he/she lived:*

7. How many people lived in **your** household? \_\_\_\_\_  
(N.B. More than one household may live at the same address.)

8. Who was in charge? Female: \_\_\_\_\_ Male: \_\_\_\_\_ Both: \_\_\_\_\_

9. What relation was (were) that person (those persons) to you?  
mother \_\_\_\_\_ father \_\_\_\_\_ stepfather \_\_\_\_\_ stepmother \_\_\_\_\_  
brother \_\_\_\_\_ sister \_\_\_\_\_ grandfather \_\_\_\_\_ grandmother \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (please state): \_\_\_\_\_

10. What kind of work did your parent(s)/guardian(s) do? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Where/with whom are you living now? \_\_\_\_\_

**Home/Parental Factors, *cont'd.***

12. What is the highest level of education that your parent(s)/guardian(s) achieved?

*(List the relation beside the appropriate answer)*

Primary (govt.) \_\_\_\_\_ Primary (private preparatory) \_\_\_\_\_

Secondary (traditional) \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary (Tech./Voc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Tertiary (Comm. College/Nursing) \_\_\_\_\_ Tertiary (University) \_\_\_\_\_

13. Did your parent(s)/guardian(s) encourage you to do well in school and stay in school?

YES  NO

14. How did they do that?

Ques 14. is applicable irrespective of whether respondent was encouraged or discouraged.

15. Was (Were) your parent/guardian (parents/guardians) able to help you with your homework?

YES  NO

Ask 15. & 16. if reply to 14. didn't address these issues.

**DO NOT  
WRITE IN  
THIS  
COLUMN**

16. Was (Were) your parent/guardian (parents/guardians) involved in your school's PTA?

YES  NO

**SCHOOL EXPERIENCE:**

17. How regularly did you attend school? \_\_\_\_\_

*If answer to Ques. 17 was "Not regularly", ask:*

18. What problems caused you not to attend regularly?

19. Why did you drop out of school?

<i>Poor marks</i> _____	<i>Too many rules</i> _____
<i>Bored</i> _____	<i>Expelled</i> _____
<i>Learning Problems</i> _____	<i>Suspended &amp; Didn't return</i> _____
<i>Not enough Teacher help</i> _____	<i>Peer problems</i> _____
<i>Illness</i> _____	<i>Drug Use</i> _____
<i>Arrest/Imprisonment</i> _____	<i>Financial Problems</i> _____
<i>Family Problems</i> _____	<i>Other problems</i> _____

▪ *If Answer to Ques.19 indicated "Family Problems" or "Other problems", summarise respondent's explanation of those indicators:*

Indicate respondent's answer by ticking, as necessary, one or more of the categories shown





**DO NOT  
WRITE IN  
THIS  
COLUMN**

**School Experience, *cont'd***

▪ ***If Answer to #19 was "Financial Problems", probe for specific responses to the following:***

20. You mentioned financial problems while you were in school. Were you unable to afford:

*Bus fares to school* \_\_\_\_\_ *Lunch money* \_\_\_\_\_ *Uniforms* \_\_\_\_\_  
*School Books* \_\_\_\_\_ *Exam Fees* \_\_\_\_\_?

Or was there something else you couldn't afford? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

21. Did you have to drop out of school to earn money to support your family or yourself?

YES  NO

(If "YES") Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

22. While you were attending  $\chi$  School, did you:

a) keep working on your homework assignments until they were finished (no matter how long that took)?	Often Sometimes Once	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) ever use your private time to do extra school work even though your teacher did not tell you to do so?	Often Sometimes Once	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) participate in any extra-curricula school activity (e.g., sports, drama, Cadets)?  <i>If "YES" state activity/activities:</i> _____ _____	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) get selected/elected to any position of responsibility by your teachers or classmates?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	NO	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) like your teachers?	Many A few One	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) have friends among your schoolmates?	Many A few One	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) drink beer, rum or other liquor?	Often Sometimes Once	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	None	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) use illegal drugs including marijuana?	Often	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Sometimes Once	<input type="checkbox"/>		
i) pick a fight with anyone?	Often Sometimes Once	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	
j) throw a stone, bottle or other object at cars or people?	Often Sometimes Once	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	
k) carry a weapon to school?	Often Sometimes Once	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	
l) take anything belonging to someone else without the owner's permission?	Often Sometimes Once	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	
m) purposely damage or destroy something belong to another person?	Often Sometimes Once	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never	

**ADDITIONAL INTERVIEWER NOTES:**

<p>Phrase question based on respondent's sex</p>	<p><b>VALUES:</b></p> <p>23. Do you think it is important for young people to get a good education?  YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>24. Why do you have that opinion? _____  _____  _____</p> <p>25. Do you say that because you are a (boy/young man) (girl/young woman) ?  YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>26. Who in your community do you admire the most? _____  _____</p> <p>27. Why do you admire him/her?</p>	<p><b>DO NOT WRITE IN THIS COLUMN</b></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">42</p> <p style="text-align: center;">END OF INTERVIEW — THANK RESPONDENT FOR HIS/HER CO-OPERATION!</p>	

**APPENDIX II**

**CDB/CGDS Dropout Study, 2003 – Tracking Sheet**

