

THE ODYSSEY OF A PRINCIPAL

By

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DEDICATION

To my entire family, particularly my two children, who have been a constant source of inspiration and support. Your belief in me and forbearance never gave way to any doubt and for this I thank you.

Finally to my mother, who is forever my academic heroine; her continued interest, love and support for me is boundless and cannot be repaid. Thank you mum.

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ABSTRACT

Jamaican schools are, for the most part, driven by the principal's persona. Many individuals within the public sphere view the school as being owned by the principal. This persona is sometimes magnified to the extent that it causes even some principals to assume this false position of ownership over the institutions they lead. It is, therefore, for this reason that I am offering an autoethnography focused on my experiences as a principal. This I hope will bring my audience closer to the subculture experience of school life, through my own experiences.

The following research questions were put:

1. What were the challenges I faced during my principalship?
2. How did I respond to the challenges?
3. What occupied my time during my journey?
4. What factors and considerations determined my priorities?
5. What barriers or obstacles did I encounter in attempting to initiate and execute the institution's first School Development Plan (SIP) and cultivating what I consider to be a positive environment, and an organizational culture that enhances teaching and learning?
6. In what ways did I develop and use a model of accountability in a positive and productive manner?

Research data were garnered from my reflexive journal, personal calendar, staff agendas and memos, the principal's log, and reflexive analysis. Reflective and retrospective insight was gained through the analysis of thematic similarities, key attributes, and the coding of the data. Secondary sources of information were substantially drawn from research findings and comparisons gained from literature reviews.

The study is justified in that it provides insight into how the experience of a school principal can: help to create a possible template of school development strategies, provide aspiring and current principals an opportunity to reflect on their own careers in administration, and give insight into how the experience of a school principal can help to provide for a new governance structure for schools.

I concluded with a specific appeal to principals and educational leaders to also write their own stories, and a general call for further autoethnographical research in this area from my colleagues in Jamaica and more generally in the developing world.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Cat: Where are you going?”

Alice: Which way should I go?

Cat: That depends on where you are going.

Alice: I don’t know.

Cat: Then it doesn’t matter which way you go.”

- *Lewis Carroll (1865)*

Setting the Stage

Jamaican schools are, for the most part, driven by the principal’s persona, and some outsiders, that is, persons without an understanding of the internal procedures and operations of the education system. Publicly though informally speak of a school as being owned by the principal. This persona, coupled with the view of outsiders, causes some principals to assume a false position of ownership over the institutions they lead. It is for this reason that I have chosen to present a highly personalized account of my journey as the first principal of a newly built government high school and to trace the evolution of the institution over its first ten years of existence. The study will, therefore, try to give my own account of the complexities, interpretations, reflections, concerns, disappointments and successes as I journey in time and space. While “Time” will represent the entire period spent during the ten year journey of my principalship, I will also chronicle the “Space” I occupied as I moved between countries, and from one school to another.

It is from a differing and consistently changing viewpoint, that I will document and trace reflexively the experiences of my own development and the evolution of the school’s leadership, administration and managerial processes, using an autoethnographic approach. By using this approach I hope to bring my audience closer to the subculture of the school,

through my own experiences as the author. While I recognize that every school has a distinct ethos and cultural environment, the outcome of a thorough evaluation and reflective analysis that can be gained through this autoethnography should facilitate an understanding of my development along the journey and the processes that are also involved in a school's evolution.

The main goal of this research is, therefore, to give a description and interpretation of my personal experience as a principal and to intricately explore the dilemmas faced along my journey. A journey where I have encountered many obstacles and struggles in finding the "right" solutions, particularly in areas of School Improvement Planning (SIP) and how it is perceived and affected by both internal and external factors. Obstacles were also encountered in developing the "right" culture and organizational structures; in the introduction and implementation of various policies, processes, structures and systems, that have impacted and influenced the school's development; in getting the "right" mix of people to serve on the Senior Management Team (SMT) through a balance of attitudes and competencies; and finally, finding that 'happy' medium between the internal operations of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and external policy-orientated Board of Management (BOM).

Furthermore, it is hoped that this research will motivate and empower my principal colleagues and others to reflect, as they journey and advance their careers in the field of educational administration. With this in mind, I think it is important to be self-analytic in the narrative of my journey, so that it can be a relevant and instructive to others who attempt similar journeys. This is supported by Denzin (1997) who states, "we must look inward on the self, while maintaining the outward gaze of ethnography" (p. 217). Hence in providing this self-analysis or Denzin's 'inward gaze' at the principalship, using myself as the subject and the researcher, it is important that the research be written (grammatically) from the perspective of the first person. It is also important that, being the researcher and also a participant in the research, writing reflectively and reflexively are central to the research, as posited by Sikes (2005): "Autoethnography is, essentially, reflexive 'ethnographic writing which locates the self as central (*and in so doing*) gives analytical purchase to the autobiographical'" (p. 7, citing Coffey, 1999, p. 126). Sikes continued to

say that “Autoethnographers put themselves into their text while also locating these texts in the literatures and traditions of the social sciences” (p. 7, citing Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Lather and Smithies, 1997; Richardson, 2000).

I have read through hundreds of peer reviewed research papers from many different educational journals and books, but I have been greatly influenced by four pieces of work. Firstly, there was Harry F. Wolcott’s 2003 edition of “The Man in the Principal’s Office”; secondly, there was David Winkley’s (2002) “Hansworth Revolution”; the third is Carl Henry Dethloff’s (2005) thesis “A principal in Transition”, and the fourth is Jon Clark’s (2004) thesis “Restarting the Worst School in the Country”. Wolcott (2003), is a seminal piece first published in 1973 about the issues, concerns and daily routine of a principal in a school in the United States of America (USA). It remains an important ethnographical reference for research students. Of similar importance is Winkley’s (2002) account in a British school. His book “Handsworth Revolution: The Odyssey of a School”, although is an autobiographical piece, has important significance to me and my own ethnographical odyssey. David Winkley’s “...Odyssey¹ of a School”, when examined critically, has implications for, and have impacted my own research and journey as a principal. My third and fourth most influential pieces are doctoral theses which are yet unpublished but are of great impact in describing personal journeys in the life of principals as they act out their mandate in leading schools.

These four studies have personally influenced me because it is my belief that, like Jon in Sikes (2005), “...the research could be helpful to me. First it could be an encouragement to; “reflect critically and systematically on my work and, thereby, could potentially lead me to insights and understandings capable of informing my professional activities” (P. 84). In addition, it might even serve as a cathartic outlet for the tensions and stresses that I have faced, the ones I am currently facing and those I am still likely to face. I make particular

¹ I actually borrowed the word Odyssey from title of Winkley’s 2003 book to form the title of my own research.

mention of Dethloff's (2005) doctoral research as having the greatest influence since his work chronicles the effects of his transition from one school to another. This account is similar to my very own experience, as I was seconded from my position at a school in Jamaica to another school in the Cayman Islands and then back to the same school in Jamaica after almost two years. I must, therefore, state that I quoted extensively from Dethloff's (2005) paper to support my own doctoral work.

Establishing the Context

I have so far set the stage by putting forward my reasons for undertaking this research. However, I think it is equally important for me to also define the context within which this research has taken place. In setting out this context, I seek to describe the educational system of the countries within which I have worked and executed my leadership skills as a principal of the schools. I also think it is important that I explain not only the historical perspective from which both Jamaica and the Cayman Island education systems are derived, but examine the structure of the systems within which the schools are operating. The Historical context shows that both systems are derived from similar colonial past and they function in like fashion (in both structures and processes) to the current British system. These structures and processes are also important to be examined because they tell a story in that, the curriculum structures are also parallel to each other and were inherited from Britain. The assessment and reporting structures are also similar but for minor differences in Jamaica, where that system has tried to develop its own indigenous model to reflect the needs of its population while Cayman remain by enlarge still akin to the British model. In the context of this thesis, the structures and processes are relevant in that they can help to provide a focus on the six research questions. For example, one of the contextual issues is the competitive assessment process which is evident at all levels of both systems. Successful completion through these assessments guarantee promotion to the next level of the system. In the Jamaican context, the assessment process not only guarantees entrance to the next level, but it also determines school type depending on the

quality of the pass mark. This has implications for school leadership, student achievement and overall school success which is the important subject matter and concern of this thesis.

The Context of Jamaica²

Jamaica is a Commonwealth country, with the British Monarch serving as the head of state. Queen Elizabeth II, therefore, appoints a representative in the Jamaica in the person of the Governor-General. Hence, Jamaica remains a parliamentary constitutional monarchy with legislative power vested in the bicameral Parliament of Jamaica, consisting of an appointed Senate and a directly elected House of Representatives. This is, therefore, why the education system and its administration were modeled after the British system; many of the developments in the history of Jamaican education can be seen as responses to events such as the abolition of slavery in 1834, the onset of public elections in 1944, and the achievement of independence in 1962. Much of the recent history of education in Jamaica has been driven by the perceived need to develop "homegrown" responses to economic, social, and political pressures on the island and in the wider Caribbean region.

The Ministry of Education is the government entity responsible for the management and administration of public education in Jamaica, which includes all levels (pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary) of the system. It carries out the Government of Jamaica's mandate, which seeks to secure quality education and training for all citizens of Jamaica in order to optimise individual and national development. The main objective of the Ministry of Education is to provide an avenue for enrichment and upward mobility of Jamaicans through the vehicle of education. It is however the cry of most Jamaicans that this objective is not being satisfactorily met. In fact, in an online article titled 'Jamaica: History and Background'³, the educational historians Palmer (1994) quotes Burchell Whiteman (Former Minister of Education and Culture of Jamaica) who characterizes the present educational system in

² The Jamaican context is cited from <http://www.studycountry.com/guide/JM-education.htm> - **History of education in Jamaica. And from;**

³ Also Jamaica - History Background

his efforts to change the secondary schools from "being comprised of students with the 'ability to pay' to students with the 'ability to benefit from' the education offered".

The Ministry of Education as an organisation is one of Jamaica's largest public entities and is comprised presently of eleven (11) agencies, six (6) regional offices, and a central office with approximately forty (40) units which fall under five (5) divisions. These unite to provide the framework for the efficient functioning of over 2,426 early childhood, 922 primary, 31 special, 277 secondary and 17 tertiary, which makes a grand total of 2,908 public educational institutions. These institutions serves a student enrollment of over 22,873 early childhood, 254,501 primary, 3,771 special, 228,371 secondary and 30,590 tertiary giving a grand total of 540,106 students. The staffing complement for this is 8,086 early childhood, 11,436 primary, 388 special needs, 13,373 secondary and 2,200 tertiary, which gives a grand total of 35,483 teachers. Within the tertiary listing, the Ministry of Education is also responsible for two (2) public universities and several community, multidisciplinary and teachers' colleges.

Early Childhood (Preschool) Education

Early childhood education, also known as preschool, is a non-compulsory level of education offered at both public and private institutions to children between the ages of 3–5. In terms of public schooling, early childhood education is provided in infant schools and in infant departments of some of the country's primary-level schools. Nursery and kindergarten departments of Independent Preparatory (private primary) schools also accept students at age 3. Towards the conclusion of their early childhood education, children must sit for a form of examination known as the "Grade One Individual Learning Profile (GOILP)," This ascertains their capabilities and their ability to master skills and concepts taught at the Early Childhood level. This helps instructors tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of all students. The GOILP measures the proficiency level of students in six subtests, namely general knowledge, number concepts, oral language, reading, writing and drawing, work habits, and classroom behavior.

The Early Childhood Commission, an agency affiliated with the Ministry of Education, is currently responsible for the regulation and supervision of basic schools and the training of early childhood practitioners.

Primary Education

In Jamaica, as in most countries, students are admitted to the primary level of education at age 6. Primary schools are therefore designated feeder schools for all secondary schools in the country.

At the conclusion of Grade 6, all primary school students must sit for the Grade Six Achievement Examination (GSAT), a requirement for advancing on to secondary education. The GSAT is the primary assessment instrument that is used by the Ministry of Education to place students into Grade 7 of High Schools. The test is administered annually during March. The GSAT is a part of the National Assessment Programme, which assesses performance of students at the primary school level. Other components of this National Assessment Program are the Grade One Individual Learning Profile, the Grade Three Diagnostic Test, and the Grade Four Literacy Examination.

Secondary Education

The secondary or high school system consists of two cycles, even though the demarcation between cycles is not obvious as in some countries even within the Caribbean. The first cycle commences in Grades 7-9 of All Age, primary and junior high schools, and high schools, including Technical high and Independent/Private high schools. The second cycle is provided in Grades 10 and 11 of these schools (with the exception of All Age and primary and junior high schools). At the end of Grade 11, students sit for the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC), with subjects administered by the Caribbean Examinations Councils (CXC). Some high schools have a continuing education program, provided under the Career Advancement Program and the Sixth Form/Pre-university program (Grades 12 and 13), where students are prepared for entry into tertiary or higher

education institutions. Students who are in Sixth Form sit for the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) at the end of Grades 12 and 13.

Towards the latter half of their secondary education, students can elect to pursue an educational track that is more vocational in nature, helping them to learn a skill or trade through which they can earn employment following graduation.

The Context of the Cayman Islands

In 1831, the Cayman Islands set up its first elected legislature, though only free men were eligible to vote. Later, in 1863, the UK parliament formally declared the Cayman Islands a dependency of Jamaica, which put the islands in a better legal and economic position, not least because Cayman ships were no longer required to pay tonnage dues when entering Jamaican ports. It was, however, in 1950, that the Island was to first realize tourism and built the first hotel, igniting an industry that became one of the twin pillars of the economy, which continues to expand today. In the late 1960s, the first cruise ships called in at the capital city, George Town, but these visits were rare. However, in the 1990s, cruise ship tourism exploded, and in 2007 more than 1,700,000 passengers entered Cayman waters.

When Jamaica chose independence in 1962, the Cayman Islands opted to retain its links with Britain, a decision that continues to lend it political stability and has aided the growth of the second pillar of the economy: the financial sector. Hence, from humble beginnings, the Cayman Islands now boasts telecommunications services, financial expertise and infrastructure to rival large industrial nations, and a notably high standard of living. Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman are well equipped to sail through the 21st Century.

Education in the Cayman Islands⁴

The Education Department in the Cayman Islands published its first National Education Data report in 2010/2011, with a view to help benchmark where the education system currently stands. The hope here was to continue a process which would help to improve data reporting and the use of data to track progress and identify priority areas for improvement. It was also the intention that data begin to play an increasingly important role, going forward, in a drive towards creating a world-class education system for the Cayman Islands, and the precursor to the development of the proposed Education Stabilisation Plan which was set to be launched in 2012.

The government provides free education for Caymanian children at primary and secondary schools. On Grand Cayman, government primary schools, located in all main communities, feed into a middle school, which on Cayman Brac is incorporated into the high school. The education system composes of twenty-two (22) pre-school establishments with a total enrolment of 1,433 students and a staffing complement of 251 teachers. The primary system has thirteen (13) schools with an enrolment of 2,553 students and a staffing complement of 168 teachers. The secondary system has three (3) schools with an enrolment of 2,309 students and a staffing complement of 230 teachers. This system is complemented by a number of private schools representing all levels of the educational system. Both government high schools take students to "CXC" (Caribbean Examinations Council), external school-leaving exams which are roughly equivalent to the British General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). In addition to the CXC, the high schools offer a range of other external examinations to meet all ability levels. These include IGCSE (the international version of GCSE); Pitman's; City and Guilds, etc. At the

⁴ Context for the Cayman education system was cited at;
<http://countrystudies.us/caribbean-islands/125.htm>

And

www.education.gov.ky/portal/pls/portal/docs/1/9936090.PDF - Cayman Islands Strategic Education Plan.

University College, the GCSE Advanced Level Examination is offered to those who have passed the CXC at the required levels.

For the adult, Government operates a four-year college, the University College of the Cayman Islands. Grand Cayman is also home to the International College of the Cayman Islands which offers Master's, Bachelor's and Associate degrees; St. Matthews University, which operates a medical school and a veterinary medicine school; and the United Church's Institute for Leadership and Development (ITLD) which offers Master's, Bachelor's, and Certificate degrees in counseling.

Even more educational opportunities are available. For example, the National Gallery offers art courses and the University of the West Indies offers distance learning both in conjunction with the University College. Several businesses also teach computer skills and some offer review courses for professional examinations.

Contextual Issues and Concerns

As I outlined above in defining the Jamaican education system (and to a broader extent, the post-colonial education system), it is, for the most part, a mirror of the education system as it exists in the United Kingdom. To reiterate, many elements of the Jamaican system are adaptations from the UK and other developed Commonwealth countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In recent times (within the last thirty years) however, Jamaica has become more and more influenced by systems emanating out of the United States of America (USA). This influence by the developed world has permeated all spheres of the education system and its impact on educational leadership, particularly school leadership, has not been spared.

Cranston (2013) states that;

There is no doubt that school leadership is now widely accepted as vital to school success and student learning, with a growing body of research deepening our

understandings of the complexities and contributions leadership makes in this regard. (p. 130) (see for example, Leithwood, et al, 2004; Robinson et al, 2009)

Pont et al., (2008) in an international research for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) noted that:

School leadership ... plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, as well as the school climate ... effective school leadership is essential to improve the efficiency and equity of schooling. (p. 9)

Similar sentiments have been expressed at national levels: for example, right here in Jamaica, the Minister of Education, Hon. Rev. Ronald Thwaite (2015) at the graduation ceremony for the first batch of aspiring principals which took place at the University of the West Indies, stated that:

...I am very reluctant to sign the appointment of any principal, who has not satisfied the National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL) requirements, not because of any bad mind, but simply because it is the new gold standard for qualification for Principalship. ... Currently, the role of the principal is changing. The accountability of principals is going to become a characteristic of the new order brokered by the Jamaica Teaching Council legislation (through) the reform of the education code... as such, leaders of schools should not be appointed on the basis of seniority and political affiliation, but purely on the basis on their competence as leaders.

The Minister was making the point that the current system where principals were appointed based on their years of service in positions of senior teachers and or vice principals, was no longer tenable. At the same function, the Permanent Secretary, Mrs.

Elaine Foster Allen, noted that having competent school leaders is critical to the success of the education system. She also stated that:

We have always thought that great leaders, teachers, principals are essential to the performance of our schools and the outcomes of our children. So, it is with joy to see this bright, cheerful group of younger people, who have put themselves forward to carry the baton.

In a similar tone, the Education Minister in Australia seven years earlier, declared that:

School principals and other school leaders play a critical role in supporting and fostering quality teaching through coaching and mentoring teachers to find the best ways to facilitate learning, and by promoting a culture of high expectations in schools. ... School leaders are responsible for creating and sustaining the learning environment and the conditions under which quality teaching and learning take place.” (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 11)

In New Zealand, the comprehensive Best Evidence Synthesis on school leadership and student out-comes confirmed that: “...school leaders can indeed make a difference to student achievement and well-being” (Robinson et al., 2009, p. 35).

In the UK, Considerable resources has been put into the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and it in turn has made significant contribution in the form of leadership seminars, workshops, and research, which has gone to reinforced the fact that school leadership can no longer be ignored as a key contributor to quality schooling.

In the USA, the Secretary of State Rod Paige in an interview published in the ‘Educational Leadership’ by Scherer, (2004) and in answer to the question, “*What makes these times so difficult for educators*”?, responded; “If the map were drawn and the course fixed, and all you had to do was keep the boat in the water and paddle, then powerful and great

leadership would not be needed”. (p. 20).

This response reinforces the multiplex nature of principalship in the 21st century, and is also supported by Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) who also argued—which is an argument supported here in this research, that we need new ways and new ideas, observing that “Education in the 21st century must move beyond the control of self-serving professionals under freewheeling progressivism and beyond the dark thicket of prescription and standardization that limit capacity and stifles initiative” (p. 19). Cranston (2013) in quoting Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) describe this state as “...the second way of markets and standardization. That is, it is a set of constructs from the past and for the past, with little demonstrable evidence that qualify education results...” (p. 131).

I will make reference to the issue of management and leadership in my literature review as this is an area of importance in the debate concerning school leadership and management. However, Dethloff, (2005) states that, “The principalship is a highly complex role that has increased in its complexity since implementation of standards-based reform... [and] the accountability for student achievement in our schools is growing” (p. 5). Hutton (2016a) emphasized this position by stating that, “One of the primary functions of a principal is to promote the well-being and academic achievement of students” (p. 13). These demands according to Dethloff, (2005) “...are placing extreme pressure on the administrator to be skilled and well-versed in multiple areas of organizational and instructional leadership” (p. 6).

It is therefore, my view, that aspiring leaders in education, particularly those aspiring for the role of principal, should be properly prepared, as there seems to be a greater demand surrounding the position of the 21st century principal. Dethloff (2005 quoting Smith and Andrews (1989) explained: “The effective principal is actively involved in all aspects of the instructional program, sets expectations for continuous improvement and collegiality, models the kind of behaviors desired, participates in service training with teachers, and consistently gives priority to instructional concerns” (p. 13).

While no two schools are similar in every way, if they are left to their own developmental processes, they will evolve and create their own cultures, ethos and identities, hence, responding in their own peculiar ways to the varying concerns and issues raised by their stakeholders. This autoethnography should, therefore, provides new innovative ways for dealing with such concerns and provide better ways for preparing new and aspiring school administrators.

Summary of the Context

It is clear that the educational context in which I worked in both countries (Jamaica and the Cayman Islands) were derived from a similar origin, that of the United Kingdom (with new adaptations from other developed countries such as the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), and therefore exhibited only minimal variations in structures and procedures (the Jamaican account attempted to become more indigenous in nature to suit its context). For example, the curriculum structure have not varied greatly and so both countries prepare students for examinations which are similar in nature at all levels of the system. To this extent, leadership (instructional) would be similar in how it is executed. It is, however, the wider social, economic and political structures where greater variations existed and which impacted differently on the educational processes in both countries (these are explained in chapter 6, where the context within the Caymanian school is examined). In this situation, it is unlikely that the leadership at the school level would be given the same leverage to be transformational or even of a distributed nature as in the case of school principals in Jamaica. This situation is also borne out as illustrated in conversation eleven of chapter 6.

Statement of Purpose

It is important to mention that the issues (contextual and otherwise) that I am confronted with, are complicated but relevant, because my journey is transitioned in two ways. Firstly,

there is the instance of making a transition from an education officer in the Ministry of Education, where my role was to give advice and guidance to principals and administrators, particularly, in the school development planning process. I am now, however, moved to the position of a principal and school administrator the same position I previously advised. Secondly, there is the experience of moving to another school in a foreign country as principal on secondment for two years, and then back to my original school. The confluence of these issues present a particular twist and blend to the leadership dilemma that I was subjected to and to which this research is focused.

It is hoped that the issues and concerns encountered on this journey will allow and empower my colleagues and educational peers to conduct their own reflections on their careers in administration. This research will be written grammatically from a first person perspective, as I reflect upon my journey as a principal, through the first five developmental years, and then through the next five years as I move between schools from one country to another.

The Core Purpose of the Principal⁵

Several issues and concerns are currently facing the education establishment in Jamaica. One concern which takes center stage is that of leadership within the school system, and central to that debate is the issue of accountability. This one issue is questioned at all levels—at the level of the principal, the teacher, the Ministry, the home and the community. The general belief, however, is that it all redound to the accountability at the principal's level. The bigger question therefore is what is, or should be, the function of the principal in a modern teaching and learning environment? Accountability being a general concern of the prevailing education environment, it has, therefore, become one of the focal points for resolution in answer to the research questions in this research.

⁵ Taken from the manual recently developed by the Jamaican Ministry of Education in the formation of their own National College of Educational leadership (NCEL), 2012.

Quoting from the training manual of the ‘National College for Educational Leadership’ (NCEL)⁶, (2012), the module titled “Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal” states that:

The core purpose of the principal is to provide professional leadership and management for a school. This will promote a secure foundation from which to achieve high standards in all areas of the school's work. To gain this success a principal must establish high quality education by effectively managing teaching and learning and using personalized learning to realize the potential of all pupils. He or she must establish a culture that promotes excellence, equality and high expectations of all students (p. 3).

In order to effectively fulfill their core purpose, the NCEL (2012) module further states that:

Principals need particular competencies. Competencies which will reflect the evolving role of leadership in the early 21st century and recognize the key role that principals play in engaging in the development and delivery of government policies. The competent principal will be driven by activities designed to raise and maintain levels of attainment in schools in order to meet the needs of every child. (p. 3)

The Changing Role of the Principal

Another issue receiving great attention is the changing role of principals for the 21st century educational environment. Dethloff (2005), documenting the evolution of principalship, started by clearly stating that:

⁶ The Jamaican National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL) is modelled off the UK's National College for School Leadership (NCSL).

The traditional role of the principal has undergone dramatic shifts in recent years. In this age of accountability, the principalship has struggled to evolve with the higher and more multifaceted demands of the position. This immutable role that we call the principalship has managed to sustain its function at a similar level for many decades. Only in the past decade has the principal's role shifted so dramatically. Is there a self-imposed glass ceiling that many of us bump against as we try to facilitate the growth and development of the position? Reshaping and examining the principal's chair is not an easy task. (p.1)

Like Dethloff (2005), I believe that we must take a look at the principal's position from the inside. The characterization of "Ed Bell" in "The Man in the Principal's Office" can greatly assist in this endeavor to learn from its intricacies. Ed Bell is a pseudonym and the main character from H. F. Wolcott's (2003) classic ethnography, *The Man in the Principal's Office: An Ethnography*, which was originally written in 1973. Ed Bell is a catalyst, a mechanism for examining the hidden mysteries, charms, tribulations, and representations of the modern principalship through an ethnographical lens. Placing the self within a social context, such as a school, ethnography connects the person to the cultural experience through research and writing (Reed-Danahay, 1997). A self-narrative presents the greatest opportunity to examine the changes in the roles and functions of the principalship and methods of optimizing school leadership.

School leadership can occur in assorted ways and the literature on this issue is varied depending on which model you prefer, author you read, or educator you advocate for. It is, however, worthwhile to note that whichever direction the leadership takes, success is usually characterised by a set of driving forces or 'drivers' which are similar for all effective and successful leaders. And whereas, the literature review will show that the composition of drivers will be different for different authors, a common thread with all of them is that the leader is a visionary. (Hutton, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2016a, 2016b; Miller, 2013, 2014b, 2016a, 2016b; Pashiardis & Johansson, 2016)

It is therefore not surprising that, with the growing pressures placed on students and

schools for academic success, the principals find themselves perpetually needing to revise and update their practice. These updates include among other things, making a determination of the balance that must be made between which leadership types are best suited for the context in which they are operating. There is also the factor of the varying leadership functions (formal and informal) within a school setting, and principal leaders must separate leadership functions and monitor their implementation as they are executed by various educators and stakeholders in the school and community. These functions or posts on the formal school establishment are usually set by the Ministry of Education, but more often than not, the person who gets promoted to the post are—as in the case of Jamaica Post of Special responsibility (POSR) or senior teacher position, recommended by the principal. It is for this reason that it seems necessary that education authorities develop a framework or guide for school leadership. In developing such a guide, one need only to look at the comprehensive framework for the principalship based on the 21 domains developed by the National Policy Board on Educational Administration in the USA. (Dethloff, 2005; citing Skrla, Erlandson, Reed, and Wilson, 2001) suggested that “the principalship represents the entire leadership function that must be performed in the school and, though overseen and coordinated by the principal, includes the performance of separate leadership activities by assistant principals, [senior teachers], teachers, counselors, and others” (p. 19).

They also add that it is useful to distinguish between the roles served by the person who occupies the position of principal. In the case of Jamaica, for example, according to the Education Act, The Regulations 1980, Schedule D, part 4, clearly states that a principal shall be responsible as (a) professional head of the institution, and (b) chief executive officer of the Board of management. The literature landscape on leadership shows, that it is becoming more and more difficult to describe a successful, effective and strong principal, because of the many and varied composite of factors that converges to pinpoint the attributes and characteristics that make for an effective and successful leader. This difficulty also stems from the multifaceted nature of the position.

Dethloff (2005), citing Skrla, Erlandson, Reed, and Wilson (2001) profess “the breadth and depth of the knowledge and skills associated with the job of principal can appear

overwhelming” (p. 3). The principal is now expected to carry out a number of tasks and management is only one of such tasks that is needed for overall effectiveness. Educators and educational systems must continue to evaluate themselves by being reflective at the work we do and examine our successes and failures in respect of the teaching and learning environment and more directly, how leadership is conducting in schools. Principals and educational leaders continue to be overwhelmed by challenges from all directions; Challenges from new advances in the technological environment is compounded with long standing socio-economic pressures and a new market environment which exerts greater demands for professional responsibility and accountability in schools. With these drastic changes and demands, the principalship must become more innovative in evaluating the new working terrain in a bid to develop the position of the principal in line with other developments that are taking place. Like my predecessor Harry Wolcott did when he first wrote his book nearly forty years ago, “I must take an anthropological look at the nature of the principalship in order to further its development” (Dethloff, 2005, p. 3).

Wolcott (2003), described his work in ethnography as “researchers who want to have a look around at what people in some other group are doing, or what people in their own group are doing, and sometimes even at what researchers themselves are doing and feeling” (p. vii). Like Wolcott, I will concentrate my efforts around what researchers themselves are doing and feeling as I investigate myself within the role of principal – an autoethnographical glance.

Autoethnography can sometimes be troublesome regardless of subject matter, area or content. The methodology presents many rewards and obstacles. Andrew Sparkes (2000), suggests that “autoethnographies are highly personalized accounts [that greatly depend on the author/researcher to facilitate an understanding of the subculture studied].” (p.21). It is a type of self-study which sets up an opportunity for the researcher to interrogate himself and the influences that help to shape him in a given situation. It is a personal narrative, a conflagration of events merging into a single episode or experience that is written about self, to the self as the major audience. It is an opportunity to draw on my own experiences to support others in their understanding of my particular culture or context.

The study is therefore justified in that it could:

First of all, provide insight into how my experiences as a school principal can help to create a possible template of school development strategies and continuing school improvement planning processes and procedures through the documentation and analysis of issues, positive and negative, which can then be later referenced as a standard or principle on which to base future improvement plans. This is particularly relevant in light of the Ministry of Education's current search for new strategies and approaches for school development planning.

Secondly, provide aspiring and current principals with a highly personalized account of the principalship in a government owned public educational institution. They can explore the unique perspective of that position, as the transformation and evolution of the institution are conducted over time. This will further enable colleagues and educational peers to reflect on their own careers in administration and form an assessment of the degree to which their own experiences relate to mine in leading a new school through its developmental evolution. This developmental evolution is succinctly put by Anderson and Kumari (2009), as the:

Evolutionary restructuring of support for improvement. [This is seen as] continuous school improvement [and] involves periodic questioning and reflection on the organizational infrastructure that supports and enables improvement to happen, and the willingness and the power of school system and school leaders to rethink and restructure the organization in light of evidence of the progress and results of improvement efforts for teachers and for student. (p. 291)

The challenges of being an effective school leader, manager and learner, as demands on schools and education continually shift, will be examined from an autobiographical perspective. By extension, the study could serve as a useful resource for aspiring principals

who will participate in the Jamaican government's new thrust to create and establish a National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL).

Thirdly, give an insight into how my experiences as a school principal can help to provide for a new governance structure for schools, particularly if the experience is seen by other principals and generally by the education system as being successful and the school is seen as effective and efficient. This, too, is of particular importance as the Jamaican Ministry of Education is currently examining proposals on how future members of school boards are to be selected.

Research Questions

My autoethnographic analysis of my principalship will therefore examine the following questions and issues:

1. What were the challenges I faced during my principalship?
2. How did I respond to the challenges?
3. What occupied my time during my journey?
4. What factors and considerations determined my priorities?
5. What barriers or obstacles did I encounter in attempting to initiate and execute the institution's first School Development Plan (SIP) and cultivate what I consider to be a positive environment, and an organizational culture that enhances teaching and learning?
6. In what ways did I develop and use a model of accountability in a positive and productive manner?

The data for this research will be garnered from my reflective journal, my personal calendar, staff agendas, staff memos, the principal's log, and reflective analysis. Thematic similarities, key attributes and the coding of the data will serve to provide a reflective and

retrospective insight. The research data will be used to capture the experience of my administrative journey and the school's evolution over the ten years since its inception. Secondary sources of information will substantially be drawn from research findings and comparisons gained from literary reviews.

Limitations

This study is limited in its scope to the viewpoints and experiences related to the researcher as one principal's educational career in administration. This research is autoethnographical in nature and is therefore limited to my own observations and interpretations as the principal of the school.

Design of the Study

This is a naturalistic study involving autoethnography. A subjective personal account of the principalship will allow data and the research design to emerge, from my participation and emersion as a member of a subculture;; the subculture being a secondary high school. The design will be fluid in its creation, and "self" will be the primary data source. Research tools include a reflexive journal documenting the period under study. The principal's log, staff agendas, staff memos, personal calendars, and reflective analysis will serve as primary means of data collection. These tools will be used to chronicle and trace the experiences of the principalship. Common strands and key attributes will be analyzed and meaning derived from this analysis.

Contents of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into seven major units or chapters. Chapter 1 contains an

introduction, the research questions, statement of the problem, a purpose statement, limitations, design of the study, and significance of the study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature relating to all the areas of focus in this research, such as the process of school improvement planning, school leadership, school culture and importantly, the methodology of autoethnography. The methodology and procedures are discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 looks at my life before assuming the post of principal and is more a retrospective examination on the preparation that was made for my future role as principal and leader. Chapters 5 and 6 break up the odyssey into two five-year periods and detail each as two distinct episodes in the life (my life) at the school. Each episode provides a description of the subculture studied through a personal narrative and examines my role and activities as the principal. A review of the answers and an analysis of the research questions that guided this study, the researcher's summary, implications for further research, and self-reflections are examined in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Structure of the Review

This literature review is based firstly, on my own thought processes that engaged me throughout the various developmental stages of this research; secondly, on my engagement and visioning process as I planned my journey for the principalship; and thirdly, deriving from my thoughts and visioning processes. I have set out the various themes that will run through this Thesis, and this literature review will attempt to deal with the issues and themes that have arisen throughout the research, and, by doing so, try to address the research questions. The overriding theme of this research being about leadership, I will begin by pivoting this review of literature around educational leadership, particularly from the perspective of the school principal. Arising from this major theme of leadership comes numerous subthemes such as: leadership types; styles; traits; motivation and drivers of leadership. There is also the continuous debate between leadership vis-a-vis management, particularly when in reference to the research on school leadership or principalship. The management of resources is another subtheme that is prominent in this research with specific reference to human resources and how this relates to collaboration, collegiality and conflicts arising within the school setting. Another subtheme is the concept of governance and the policy environment in which schools operate, and how these impact directly on school leadership. Still another subtheme is the school development planning processes and the subsequent issues around visioning, strategic planning, the school culture and environment, professionalism, and accountability. Finally I will provide a summary seeking to encapsulate all the themes in an attempt to establish a model for an effective school within the context of my experience in Jamaica and to a much smaller extent, by my brief experience in the Cayman Islands as set out in my introductory chapter.

School Leadership in Perspective

For well over three decades, the international education scene has been witnessing increased contributions in both writings and discussions on education leadership (Bush 2008, 2011; Harris, 2004, 2011, 2013; Leithwood, 2006a, 2006b; Hallinger, 2005, 2008; Hallinger & Heck, 2009, 2010; Torrance & Humes, 2015; Leithwood & Day, 2008; Mulford, 2007 etc.). Jamaica and the wider Caribbean have not been left out and have also been making a contribution to this debate (Hutton, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2016a; Miller, 2013, 2014, 2016a, 2016b; Beckford & Lekule, 2013, etc). And so, here in Jamaica, as it is in schools across the world, the development of leadership capacity is considered to be "...a most crucial factor in the process of school leadership..." (Hutton 2011, p. 59). In fact, Hutton, in identifying the high performing principals, mentioned some key drivers which have the support of other authors such as Leithwood et al (2006) in developing the concept of the effective school leader.

The above list of citation represents not only a journey through time but more importantly for this thesis it also represents the diversity of authorship across continents and geographical regions. This is important as I believe it is prudent and important that a scholarly piece on school leadership should not only be epistemologically grounded in relevant research but that the citations also enhance the research process and thereby give greater meaning, relevance, practicality and replicability to both the local and international academy and working environments.

It is also a fact that schools are competing with each other, both in the local context and internationally. This has shaped the current dialogue around leadership due to the fact that principals and other school leaders have been constrained by the increasing challenges of public sector reforms, a lot of which have targeted the education systems across the world. The result is that schools and their leadership are more and more subjected to greater levels of accountabilities. Miller (2016a) succinctly expressed this position by stating that;

Accountability in education and school accountability have featured prominently in recent and ongoing educational policy discourse. Governments are accountable to their citizens to provide quality education that is ‘fit for purpose’, [...] All this against the backdrop of a wave of school improvement rhetoric and increased competition in a global market for education, increased efficiency over the use of scarce resources and total quality management. (p. 93)

This situation seems untenable when we consider that schools are operating in a global state of flux and with local differences. Hence, for example, the contextual experiences of a Jamaican school will not necessarily be the same as another school within the context of say, ‘developed’ countries. Furthermore, the diagnosis and remedy cannot be uniform across schools even within the same local geographical context. It therefore begs the question as to whether standardization can be the appropriate response given that schools are operating in what Limerick and colleagues described as times of discontinuous, unpredictable and turbulent change (Cranston, 2013, quoting Limerick et al, 2002).

Cranston (2013, p. 131) also noted that:

[T]he expressions of self-management and devolution across some decades now has not resulted in schools and school leaders (that is, the professionals) determining and driving educational priorities. Rather, the curriculum, and the accountabilities associated with the curriculum, are essentially handed to school leaders by policy makers and others. What this has really done is in effect, reduced the effectiveness of school leaders to a political and economic environment that is controlled by those on the outside. To that extent, it also makes impotent school leaders to determine and interpret government policies and further undermine their own values and preferred practices. Cranston sums this up as “being submerged beneath a deluge of managerialist rhetoric, paperwork and legislated practice”. (Cited in Bottery, 2004, p. 198-199).

So what we have is the consistent raging debate on leadership, particularly school leadership which encompasses styles and types of leadership, governance in schools and the impact of the policy environment, managerialism and accountability vis-a-vis professionalism and the growing discourse on what constitute the successful and effective leader. However, within this discourse on leadership, there seems to be no consistency on a definition of leadership that marks the boundaries and confines the discourse to specific elements. This situation, however, may be a good thing, as leadership seems to be multifaceted. This review of the literature has identified a set of leadership types which are assigned to functions that are performed within the organisation or system. Furthermore the literature has also weighed in on the degree to which these functions and or tasks are measured and has ascribed factors determining values, traits and other such form of indicators. I (this research) will not attempt to adjudicate this debate or even to find a 'best fit' definition, but only to reflect on my leadership role over the years. A reflective process that I hope will not just consider the 'how' or 'what' of my leadership journey but most importantly introspectively on the reflexive 'why' I did what I did.

Defining School Leadership

Bush and Glover (2014) citing Gunter (2004) shows that the various descriptions assigned to the field of leadership have changed overtime from 'educational administration' to 'educational management' and, more recently, to 'educational leadership' (p. 554). Bush (2008) is also curious and questioned whether such changes are just for fashion or whether they truly contribute to significant addition to the field of leadership. I have found in my reviews that most if not all contributions on leadership identifies either in their definition or in an outline of characteristic traits a number of factors which points to an effective and or successful leader. However, there is a degree of consistency in all if we 'pick' on certain words such as visioning, influencing and achievement. Bush and Glover (2014) again citing Yukl (2002, p. 4) support this view and argue that 'the definition of leadership is arbitrary and very subjective', but the following 'working definition' includes its main features:

Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes. Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are geared towards the achievement of this shared vision. (Bush and Glover, 2003, p. 5)

While the literature consistently speaks to leadership being a contested subject matter and that a definition is arbitrary and very subjective (as Yukl, 2002 cited in Bush, 2003, p. 5), Onyefulu and Kelly (2013, p. 32), citing Bush (2003) added that there is no agreed definition of leadership. Lussier and Achua (2007) share the same view when they state that, “there is no universal definition of leadership because leadership is studied in different ways that require different definitions” (p. 5).

I find that there is, however, a definite commonality between all my reviews on leadership taken from both a global perspective (Leithwood, 2006; Bush, 2008, 2011; Bush and Glover 2014, etc) and those from a Caribbean perspective (Ezenne, 2003; Hutton, 2011, 2016a; Miller, 2013, 2016a, 2016b; Onyefulu and Kelly, 2013) on the issue of a uniformed definition for leadership. This is of particular importance as it demonstrate the research match between local findings and what is happening in the wider global arena. Hutton (2016b) believes that, “The need to establish a definition of leadership is central to the investigation into leadership and its effectiveness” (p. 4). He, however, did not arrive at one that was peculiar to the Jamaican context, but instead, agreed with Northouse (2013) who reminded us that, “those who seek to find a definitive definition for leadership, [will find] that after more than a century of effort, there is no agreement of what the definition should be” (Hutton 2016a, p. 4, citing Northouse 2013). Hutton also resigned himself to Yukl (2013) who defined leadership as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives” (p. 23). Ezenne (2003), writing from a Jamaican position, notes that leadership is a “process of influencing the

activities and behaviors of an individual or a group towards goal achievement” (p. 143). Hence, even though most if not all the studies done will say that there is no commonality or point of convergence in a definition of leadership, it is possible to single out words or themes which appear in most and therefore would indicate some measure of similarity. One such word is ‘influencing’, and this stretches across the spectrum of my research done on the subject. Another is ‘visioning’. If I should take only these words into account it’s easy for me to formulate a definition that say that leadership characterises ‘a visionary who has the ability to motivate (influence) others (followers) towards the achievement of this vision’. However, recall that from the outset of this research, I spoke to the fact that the Jamaican schools are, for the most part, driven by the principal’s persona, hence I want to suggest that this persona that creates vision for an organisation must be a manifestation of a value system formed out of personal and professional convictions. This seems to be the position taken by Bush and Glover (2014, p. 554):

Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes. Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are geared towards the achievement of this shared vision. (citing Bush and Glover, 2003: 5)

Therefore the principal, as an effective school leader, must be able to lead in the creation of a vision that is shared by all stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, Board members, and community) through the weight of his personal and professional influence to get ‘buy-in’ from all these stakeholders, leading to the ultimate goal of improved student performance and the building of a successful and effective school organisation.

Leadership That Works

Having then set out a perspective and then established my own working definition of leadership, I must now look at various types of leadership and how successful they are in realising leadership and organisational vision, along with achieving strategic goals and objectives, particularly within the context of this research. There are many factors that will determine success and effectiveness, but invariably all factors combine in different ways and in different context to determine the ‘best fit’ leadership for the achievement of effectiveness and success of a school. It is worthwhile noting, however, that the general view of literature reviews is that, “there is not a single documented case of a school successfully turning around its pupil achievement trajectory in the absence of talented leadership” (Leithwood et al, 2006a, p 5). Here, Leithwood is suggesting that successful school are dependent on effective leadership. Hence, even though literature reviews world over describes many types and forms of leadership, for the purposes of this review, the styles that I have chosen to mention are: Transformational leadership, Instructional or Pedagogical leadership, and Distributive leadership. This choice is not only based upon the fact that these styles are current and topical, but they impact in different ways and, at times, influence my own journey as a principal, and the story that I am currently relating. They also remind or cause me to constantly reflect on the ‘what and how’ of my leadership, and, in doing so introspectively interrogate the ‘why’ I did what I did and therefore reflexively reform my own positionality.

Transformational Leadership

The literature on transformational leadership acknowledges that the main focus of leadership is on developing commitments and capacities of organisational members. It advances the view that if the degree of personal commitment to the goals of the organisation is elevated, then the abilities for achieving those goals will result in extra

effort and greater productivity (Bush and Glover, 2014, p. 557 citing Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach 1999, p. 9). The model is said to be:

... comprehensive in that it provides a normative approach to school leadership, concentrating mainly on the process by which leaders seek to influence school outcomes rather than on the nature or direction of those outcomes. It is, however, criticised as being a vehicle for control over teachers, by forcing on teachers the leader's values, and more likely to be accepted by the leader than the led. (Bush and Glover, 2014: p. 557 citing Chirichello 1999)

Transformational leadership is championed by many and it is said that where it works well, there is the potential for it to engage all participants in the realisation of educational goals and objectives. However, the negative is that, because of its imposing attributes of a leaders' value system on followers which sometimes represents the dictates of government, the process cannot be said to be truly transformational but political in nature. Bush (2011, p. 86) alluded to this situation: "The strongest advocacy of a transformational approach to reform has come from those whose policies ensure that the opportunity for transformation is in fact denied to people working in schools" (Bush 201, p. 86 citing Hoyle and Wallace 2005, p. 128). Hence, even though Hutton (2011) in his research on high performing principals found that "leadership is transformational because they always depend on the collective energy of the staff and school community to achieve performance targets" (p. 7), The transformational model, because it stresses values, prioritizes the question of whose values? The teacher who has a day to day interaction with students exerts most influence on students and so does the principal on teachers. However if the values are imported from external sources such as foreign education systems, government policy mandates, or even the personal value of the principal, then the teachers influence will be subsumed and therefore real transformation would not have taken place.

Instructional Leadership

Leaders in the mold of the transformational model—by virtue of the fact that they are considered visionaries—are led by their abilities to motivate followers towards the achievement of organizational goals. It remains, however, that the core role and responsibilities of an educational institution particularly a school, is focused on teaching and learning. This focus has led to the growing emphasis on the ‘Instructional Leader, to produce what is sometimes called the ‘learning-centred’ leadership, expressed by Bush and Glover (2014, p. 556):

Instructional leadership ... typically assumes that the critical focus for attention by leaders is the behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students. (citing Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach 1999, p. 8)

Instructional leadership is said to be the longest established concept linking leadership and learning (Bush et al, 2014). It is sometimes referred to as pedagogic leadership, curriculum leadership, and leadership for learning. It is also noted that, even though instructional leadership has been viewed for its longevity, it faces criticism at two levels, first of all that it is primarily concerned with teaching rather than learning (Bush, 2013) and secondly that it is principal centred (Hallinger, 2003, p. 330). Being principal centred defines one who assumes power of authority over professional knowledge, visioning and strategic directions, and reduces the role of the middle managers, teachers and even the vice principal to subservient positions. Lambert (2002) claims that “[t]he days of the lone instructional leader are over. We no longer believe that one administrator can serve as the instructional leader for the entire school without the substantial participation of other educators” (p. 37) (cited in Bush & Glover, 2014).

Therefore the instructional leader is mainly concerned with ensuring that teaching and learning takes by directing attention on student’s performance via teacher’s inputs. This type of leadership is in a sense:

transactional in that the principal manage and reward staff members toward a predetermined set of goals. In contrast, transformational leaders create a common vision, create a consensus among staff members, and inspire followers to accomplish this vision through a more autonomous process' (Shatzer 2009, p. 31–32).

Distributed Leadership: A Personal Conviction

Finally, I want to examine the literature on the 'Distributed Leadership model' in a more detailed fashion, as I believe that this model best represents my style of leadership. This is, however, not to say that I have not modeled the other leadership styles, and it is also not to say that the followers who I lead may not have a different perspective. I will, therefore, review this model in terms of its school improvement attributes.

It is noteworthy that Hallinger and Heck, (2009) in an article *Distributed Leadership in Schools: What makes a Difference?* started with the quote from Louis, Mayrowetz, Smylie and Murphy (2009), stating that:

In a matter of a few short years, the idea of distributive leadership has evolved from a theoretical consideration of naturally occurring social influences in school organization ... to a mantra for reshaping leadership practice. More and more schools and school systems are attempting to develop distributive leadership. Increasingly, state education agencies and national education organisations are encouraging them to do it (p. 1)

Harris (2004), supports this position by stating that "Distributive leadership is currently in vogue" (p. 13), however, within a decade Harris (2013) wrote her second article on the subject matter and was able to say that, "Distributed leadership is now widely known and

variously enacted in schools and school systems...” (p. 545), which is quite an advance for the distributed leadership style.

Harris (2013) also set the stage by establishing the idea of distributed leadership as;

Leadership practice that has generated substantial interest among researchers, policy-makers and practitioners. She expanded on the fact that, few models of leadership, it seems, have provoked as much attention, debate, controversy or irritation within the school leadership field. While the concept of shared, collaborative or participative leadership is far from new, distributed leadership theory has provided an alternative and powerful empirical lens on a familiar theme. (p. 545)

Harris (2013) continues to ask the questions: What do we actually know about distributed leadership? What does it really mean? And so refers to Robinson (2008), who suggested that the nature of distributed leadership encompasses two main concepts;

...distributed leadership as task distribution and distributed leadership as distributed influence processes [...] “The first of these has its roots in the theorization of leadership as the performance of particular tasks; while the second conceptualisation emerges from the view that leadership is “an influence process that changes how others think or act with respect to the content of the influence” (Robinson, 2008; 246 as cited in Harris 2013, p. 546).

Harris and Deflaminis, (2016) in a more recent article, further asserts that;

There are, however, certain core elements or essentials that delineate [distributive] leadership concept from numerous others. One of these core elements is the emphasis on leadership as practice rather than leadership as role or responsibility

(Spillane and Diamond, 2007). In addition, distributive leadership places an emphasis on interaction rather than actions; it presupposes that leadership is simply restricted to those with formal leadership roles but that influence and agency are widely shared... (p. 141)

Harris (2013) speaks to the fact that, distributed leadership involves a fundamental change in the way formal leaders understand their practice and the way they view their leadership role. Therefore, distributed leadership means actively brokering, facilitating and supporting the leadership of others (p, 546). However, it does not mean that everyone leads or that everyone is a leader. This is to fall back on the notion of leadership as role and responsibility where leadership is somehow divided up and handed out to others. Such misconceptions litter the various critiques of distributed leadership, as does the selective inclusion of only some of the available empirical evidence. As frequently stated by those who research this topic, distributed leadership implies a different view of organisational development; one that departs from the bureaucratic or traditional model to an interconnected and dynamic approach to innovation and change (Harris, 2013: 547 citing Leithwood, 2009).

Distributive Leadership – Implications for Schools

Harris, (2013) quoting Leithwood et al (2009) identified that, "...under the right conditions, purposeful or planned leadership distribution can impact positively on school performance. This purposeful or planned distribution however, cannot take place without the involvement and direction of the head or principal" (p. 549). Harris. (2013) also noted that, similarly, other evidence points towards the importance of "...‘principal directed’ approaches to distributed leadership where the formal leader is the catalyst for distributed leadership practices within the school" (p. 549 quoting Hulpia & Van Geer, 2011). It remains the case that, without the active support of the formal leaders within schools, purposeful or planned distributed leadership is unlikely to self-combust or happen randomly.

Harris, (2004) has also asserted that:

In contrast to traditional notions of leadership premised upon an individual managing hierarchical systems and structures, distributed leadership is characterized as a form of collective leadership in which teachers develop expertise by working together. ... [and] this is not to suggest that ultimately there is no one responsible for the overall performance of the organization or to render those in formal leadership roles redundant. Rather, the job of those in formal leadership positions is primarily to hold the pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship. (p.14)

Again I make reference to school leadership in the Caribbean context where Beepat (2013), speaking to the leadership requirements necessary for quality changes to Guyana's education is quoted as saying: "school leadership decisions and practice needs to be shared between the Central Ministry of Education and local principals, and between local principals and [their] staff [...] this type of leadership is consistent with Spillane's (2008) idea of distributive leadership" (p.74). It is noteworthy that Beepat (2013) is speaking in a context where he is also describing a need for a visionary and therefore transformational approach to leadership, but which must be tempered by an understanding of Guyana's philosophical, empirical and anthropological history. This tempered approach is due to the fact that Guyana's checkered political history has managed always to dictate the transformational leadership agenda and hence Beepat's advice for shared [distributive] leadership approach. Beepat, therefore goes on to say that:

The reason for my position on this is that when examined, the strategies outlined by the Minister..., [they] are quite prescriptive... and reinforces the one-size-fits-all approach, [hence they] simultaneously stifling flexibility and the exercise of a form of leadership that works in contexts and circumstances which are unique to each individual school. (p.73)

Therefore, in considering Beeput's reference to contextualization of distributed school leadership, Beckford and Lekule (2013) is spot on in their identification of key characteristics of the model. They have said that distributed school leadership is characterised by interdependent relationships between school leaders, followers, and their situation or context. This is an important note as all of the above models of leadership describe influencing as an attribute. The distributed model also has this feature by its very nature as an important attribute also. I have also mentioned earlier that context is an important factor to consider by leaders. Hence the interplay between these factors as mentioned by Beckford and Lekule (2013) as a result of this interdependence, establishes a culture of collegiality, which is central to [school] improvement (citing Marzano et al., 2005). Furthermore, it is said that, "in a school context, collegiality is understood as the extent to which principals recognise the value of involving teachers, administrators, and parents" (Beckford et al, (2013, p. 166 citing Marzano et al., 2005). Furthermore, "collegiality contributes to the widening of the authority of professional expertise, which is important for school improvement. Moreover, through the collegial characteristics of distributed school leadership, various stakeholders are encouraged to utilise their personal talents by actively participating in the leadership of the school" (Beckford et al, 2013, p. 166 citing Marzano et al., 2005).

Beckford et al (2013) identified a second characteristic of distributed school leadership in the notion of lateral power relationship, which allows for a consensus model of decision-making (citing Harris and Spillane, 2009). In the context of the school, because collegiality is important, power is distributed not necessarily based on position but mainly on expertise and interest. Hence there may be times when a senior teacher, middle managers or even a vice principal is overlooked in the distribution of power, because some other individual within the organization have a greater level of expertise to deal with or develop the capacity that the school requires for a particular context.

It is to this end that researchers have long recognised that context influences what leaders do as well as how followers are impacted by leaders' actions (Beckford et al, 2013, citing Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Context here referring to the internal factors such as the professional, environmental, personal, social, cultural etc. that

arises from the variety of events and circumstances emanating from the school environment. Then there are also the external environment which includes international and local political and economic mandates. Harris (2007), Spillane (2006), and Harris and Spillane (2009) support this position, and in fact assert that, “leadership roles may be distributed based on the characteristics which include: leadership functions, subject matter, type and size of the school, and school leadership teams’ development stages” (cited in Beckford et al, 2013, p. 167).

Some Advantages of Distributed School Leadership

The fact that distributed school leadership concentrates on leadership practices rather than leaders or their roles, functions, routines and structures (Beckford et al, 2013, citing Spillane, 2005), empowers leaders and followers to remain active as equal participants in the development of the school. There is, therefore, a ‘feel-good’ factor that is engendered throughout the school environment when persons from all levels are so empowered, which helps to create solidarity because of shared experiences, particularly at the level of decision making. Beckford et al (2013) is of a similar view that “the ability to involve leaders at all levels is powerful because it helps to create appreciation of the influence of those who occupy no formal position in the chain of command” (p. 167 citing Leithwood, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009). Distributed leadership, because of its consensual nature, is able to deal effectively with confrontations and conflicts.

As mentioned earlier, distributed leadership exhibit an interdependency attribute and due to this feature both leaders and followers exists in a symbiotic relationship in which both groups are strengthened by each other. This is another strength of the distribution leadership model as “skills brought to the community [of learners] are shared” (Beckford et al, 2013, p. 168 citing Leithwood & Mascall, 2008). There is further advantages to this model as it also help with bringing about a smooth succession in leadership transition which also builds greater collegiality among staff members.

I believe another advantage of distributed leadership, which I have not seen in any of the literature, is that it could stretch outside the remit of the local school and help in the

improvement of the wider educational system. This is in accord with the Systems Leadership Model which is not discussed in this paper but which involves leaders extending their influence or remit beyond their own school. Bush and Glover (2014) referenced an example of this model in Hill and Matthews (2010), where they cited the example of this strategy in the role of National Leaders of Education (NLEs), using ‘outstanding school leaders who, together with the staff in their schools, use their knowledge and expertise to provide additional leadership capacity to schools in difficulty’. On a more personal level, I want to put forward an example is from the school that I currently lead, where since its official opening in 2004, three staff members (after extended distributed roles) have moved to on to lead other schools; another has been seconded to the Ministry of Education as a supervisor of schools and two others are currently being prepared for school leadership. This in my opinion is due to the distributed leadership model which, on reflection, I have implemented, and for which I am arguing for, as against the transformational and instructional models that are widely endorsed throughout the Caribbean. This position is clearly seen in Smith (2013), who, in speaking about leadership throughout the Caribbean, declared that, “It is transformational leadership from the various levels in society that will make the difference” (p. 175).

Some Disadvantages of Distributed School Leadership

Let me immediately say that the distributed model is not without its disadvantages and limitations. These limitations are important to consider particularly for two main reasons. First of all to determine strategies which will mitigate against them and move the organization or school forward. Secondly, they are important as points for personal reflection and introspection and in so doing help the leadership to reflexively rebalance against previous decisions. Beckford and Lekule (2013) in setting out the limitations and disadvantages states that:

Some of these result from its very nature and the manner in which it operates.

Interaction among school leaders, followers, and their situations turns out to be

complex and at times the nature of and motives for the collaboration are unclear.
(p. 168)

Thus, for example, Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) aptly adapt the term (notwithstanding that the term has been around since the first world war) balkanization to education, ‘which is the comfortable collaboration, and contrived collaboration as aspects that, if neglected, can lead to serious problems, such as division among members and pursuit of personal interests. Within a school setting, this situation can germinate to develop into a situation where members forge loyalties (and form cliques) for the purpose of supporting hostile climates or opposing a situation (including the leadership) in the school’ (Beckford et al, 2013, p. 168, citing Fullan et al, 1991).

The second disadvantage or limitation is Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) ‘comfortable collaboration’. This happens when members within a group or unit becomes comfortable and ‘smug’ to the point where they are consumed by the group interest instead of spreading their expertise for greater and wider organizational effect. Beckford et al, (2013) citing, Fullan et al, (1991) noted that; “Such groups will fail the school because members become passive, failing to ask each other the tough questions necessary for school improvement” (p. 168). A third disadvantage is Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) ‘Contrived collegiality’. A situation where the school leadership fails to understand the nature of the collegiality and therefore cannot determine its positive and or negative effects on the organization. These disadvantages, if left unmitigated, can erode communication, destroy trust among members, and weaken institutional integrity.

In concluding this section on ‘Leadership that Works’, and having defined leadership and examined some models of leadership, the still unanswered question remain, what really works? Specifically, what models of leadership works for schools? Miller (2016a), in his book ‘Exploring School Leadership in England and the Caribbean...’, concluded by recognizing that “...there is no ‘best way’ to lead, but that [a principal’s] approach to leadership was related to their abilities, context (school, cultural, national, [economical, political]), prevailing environmental factors and the abilities of followers” (p. 154).

Further, Hutton, (2016a, 172, citing Hutton 2013, p. 89), notes that ‘...high performing principals in Jamaica described their leadership styles as mixed, which means democratic at times and autocratic at other times’. Hutton (2011) further notes that when democratic leadership approach is practiced by these principals, they demonstrated situational and transformational leadership behavior, which is visionary, engaging, passionate, visible and demanding’ (p. 59).

Beckford and Lekule (2013) acknowledged that, “...there is no universal view on the most appropriate model of school leadership and the probability of agreement being reached on this is not high...” (p. 169). However, they proposed a distributed model for the Caribbean, even though they cautioned that it is not the answer to all the problems of leadership. This research takes a similar position, if only for the fact that distributed leadership reduces the paramount and imposing influence of one person, the principal, and recognizes the many other expertise within the school environment. These include, teachers with special interest and expertise, parents, board members and community persons who are a part of a school’s stakeholder cohort and who also can give support to achieving the goals and objectives a school leading it to improve student performance and overall school success.

The Principal’s Evolutionary Role and its Impact on School Development.

Whereas I have not done a global study of the history of educational leadership and particularly of the school principal, there is a perspective of the early twentieth century Anglo-American principals who were, “...expected to provide and enhance moral values for their students and constituents”, (Dethloff, 2005: 15, citing Beck & Murphy, 1992). During the 1920s, these principal teachers also assumed the role of scientific manager. Coupled with their new role of business manager, a principal teacher also included a religious component. In Jamaica, for example, a trainee teacher from the Mico Teachers College (now The Mico University College), the oldest teacher training college in the

Western Hemisphere, was expected to take a lead in church services and even deliver the sermon at least once per term for the duration of their three years training. This practice ended about the mid-1960s. It was thought then, that all male teachers would eventually become principals, and by extension, community leaders. Principals along with the local clergy were the foremost leaders in the communities, particularly rural communities.

Dethloff (2005), citing Beck and Murphy (1992), supported the view that “discussions of the principal’s managerial role contained numerous spiritual, religious, and value-oriented images” (p. 393). This role paralleled that of a priest in a parish. In the 1930s the religious reference to the role of the principal was disappearing (Patten, 2004). The image of the principal as a public executive appeared in the first half of the 20th century as the role was modeled after the emerging field of business management. Donaldson (2001), states that this leadership model was considered suitable for schools.

Dethloff (2005) further noted that, by the 1940s and 1950s, the school leader was thought of as a promoter of democratic ideals. The principal was responsible to make sure that all citizens received an appropriate education. The 1950s were also marked by an increased focus for the principal to oversee the daily operation and minute details of operating a large institution. As indicated by the above criteria, the role of the principal in the mid-20th century was basically one of a captain in tending to the many details of keeping his ship afloat. This system of managers remained in place throughout the middle of the century (p, 17).

Dethloff (2005, p. 18) continued by saying that, by the 1980s leaders in schools were faced with an increased emphasis on instruction. No longer could a person with strictly managerial skills and a desire to cure current social problems be considered a quality candidate for an administrative position in education. A principal must possess the background and capabilities of leading an organization through the mentoring, modeling, and deep knowledge base of curricular and instructional strategies. The school, therefore, needed an instructional leader, and the principal was deemed this person. As the mid-1980s approached, there was also concern in the literature regarding the feasibility of this metaphor, considering the overwhelming managerial duties still assigned to the position

(citing McCurdy, 1983).

By the start of the 21st century, the term ‘instructional leader’ was viewed as too encompassing, given the many other varied demands placed on the principal. A shift to instructional facilitator now captured the hearts and imagination of educational researchers and practitioners. According to Monahan and Hengst (1982) who pioneered the development of the role of facilitator as it applies to the principalship, put forward the notion that “the facilitative principal demonstrates respect for individuals, is skilled in goal clarification and conflict resolution, and places top priority on his or her instructional leadership responsibilities” (p. 314). In the decade that followed, educational theorists continued to stress the importance of the principal as being an instructional facilitator. The 19th. Century inspectors represented a level of accountability in schools, however, the 1990s saw the rise of accountability based on the belief that the economic security of our nation is dependent on our students achieving goals for academic success (Early, Hogan, Skrla & Hoyle, 1999).

The National College for Educational Leadership in Jamaica (2012) points out that:

... with values at the heart of their leadership, principals have a responsibility to all stakeholders. They are accountable for ensuring that students enjoy and benefit from a high quality education, for promoting collective responsibility within the whole school community and for contributing to the education service more widely. Principals are legally and contractually accountable to the school board for the school, its environment and all its work. (p.17)

Accountability, therefore, continues to develop on the regional and national levels in the 21st century, and was demonstrated in the USA with the “*No Child Left Behind*” legislation, in the UK with “*Every Child Matters*”, and here in Jamaica with “*Every Child Can learn, Every Child Must learn*”. These pieces of legislations and policies continue to hold principals accountable for student achievement across disciplines and increase measurement opportunities through rigorous student assessment. Principals in the 21st

century continue to search for methods and they continue to wrestle with strategies that can use accountability productively.

Leadership Impact on School Improvement Planning and Sustainability

As we consider the impact of leadership and its effect on school improvement, we cannot escape the reality that school improvement is a continuous process if a school is to take advantage of the changing environment in technological innovations, new directions in pedagogical research, resource mobilization, demands of stakeholders, particularly parents and teachers, local and national policy initiatives of government, and the ever developing differing culture of individual schools. Hence, the school improvement plan (SIP) must be an instrument that is synonymous with continuous change as it encompasses the vision, strategic direction, accountability and expectation for futuristic outcomes. Anderson and Kumari, (2009) states that “schools should become learning organizations in which school personnel are engaged in continuous cycles of action, analysis of progress and results, and change directed towards the attainment of a shared vision or goals” (p. 281). ...

Connolly and James (2006) cited Van Velzen et al. (1998, p. 48) and expressed similar sentiments: that the school improvement plan must be a “systematic sustained effort aimed at a change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions [in a school], with the ultimate aim of accomplishing goals more effectively” (p.70).

School Improvement Plans (SIP) are not new in the Caribbean, however, there was an intensification of demand for them, particularly towards the end of the 1990s and the beginning of 2000. I believe this was due to two main reasons. First of all there was a growing demand from the school’s stakeholders, requiring better performance of schools and their leadership. Closely tied in to this is the second reason, which is the demand for greater accountability from government who themselves were under pressure from funders, particularly international donors. This is illuminated when we examine the case of Jamaica.

The effectiveness of these SIPs were in fact questioned in a research on Jamaica by Lockheed, Harris and Jayasundera (2010) who found that:

These plans were expected to be built on a school-level analysis of needs, but we find that the “bundled” package of inputs chosen by schools as indicated by their participation in the programme did not have the anticipated positive effects on student learning. It may be the case that the schools in Jamaica were not actually in the best position to know what they needed to boost learning or that the poorest performing schools used school improvement plans to identify their largest input gaps, rather than the gaps in inputs that were most likely to boost the literacy and numeracy skills of their students. (p. 66)

What needs to be made clear, is that the plans that are alluded to above by Harris et al (2010) are the results of a project which was impacted by donor funding. I want to further clarify that, donors and local charitable organizations have always been involved in supporting Jamaica’s quality improvement activities, particularly in the area of education. However, the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) in partnership with the IDB, USAID, UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF, DFID and private sector interest have initiated projects to improve the delivery of better education in schools particularly at the primary and secondary levels. For example, between 1990 and 2005, support to primary education in Jamaica includes the following: Primary Education Assistance Project II, 1990–1997 (\$5.6 million from USAID); Primary Education Improvement Project II, 1993–1999 (\$35 million from IDB, OPEC, USAID, NDF); Basic Education and Early Childhood Development Program, 1997–2001 (\$2.9million from UNICEF); New Horizons for Primary Schools, 1997–2004 (\$13.6 million from USAID); Jamaica All-Age School Project, 1999–2003 (\$4.2 million from DFID); Primary Education Support Project, 2000–2005 (\$39.5 from IDB). It was therefore difficult to find a primary school in Jamaica that was not under the influence of some local or international donor. At the secondary level, there were many projects and one such was the textbook initiative which originally was paid for through a grant from the British Government in 1985, and is now operated by

the Jamaican Government at a current cost of approximately 800 million Jamaican dollars per year. It should also be mentioned that the New Horizon project that was funded by USAID, the Jamaica All-Age School Project that was funded by DIFID, and the Technical High School Development Project funded by IDB, were all done at the same time on different type schools and having in their menu of outputs, the development of SIPs which was similar across all three projects.

It is my view that the above menu of projects and donors creates major drawbacks to the effective implementation of coherent overall national education goals and objective, as each donor has an expectation that their goals and objectives are paramount to all others. In fact each donor carries in with them a set of prescribed ‘indicators of success’ which are attached to goals and objectives that are not necessarily aligned to those of other donors. In such a case, governments like Jamaica’s have limited choice in determining overall country goals for their educational sector, but instead acquiesce to project goals. Country goals are therefore sacrificed on the ‘alter of Project Funding’, where it is believed that the finance to drive country goals can be gained through donor agencies.

The country is left in an unenviable position of ‘beggars who are not choosers of their destiny’. To this end, in my opinion, it would have been ‘great expectations’ for anyone to believe that the country’s goals and objectives would have been appropriately met. One reasons for my pessimistic position is supported again by Lockheed et al (2010), who observed that, “...At the outset, it was observed that the school improvement plans were weak with respect to the specific activities required for implementing the plans, suggesting that the schools may also have suffered from a lack of necessary implementation capacity” (p. 66). My interpretation of this observation is that the lack of capacity is indicative of weak, poor or no leadership. In other words, the implementation of effective school development plans require effective leadership.

Impact on School Culture: Collaboration, Collegiality, Conflicts

All the literature reviewed for this research points to the fact that the most effective

environment for teaching and learning which produces added value to student performances takes place within a school culture where there is collaboration, collegiality and a lack of conflicts; Miller (2013) notes that, “Where development approaches favour individual recognition over collective engagement, these are less likely to promote a culture that supports and sustains collaboration and shared leadership” (p. 23). Hutton (2016b, p. 168), in defining effective leadership, cited similarities in the Wallace Foundation (2013) and the New Leaders for New School (2009) where they both recognize that one area of responsibility for principals is ‘...creating a climate hospitable to education...’ and ‘...developing an achievement and belief-based school wide culture...’ respectively.

It would seem, therefore, that an important ingredient to be a successful and effective principal is the ability to engender a ‘right’ school culture, which is all encompassing of a leader to include visioning, strategic planning, teaching and learning, professional development, stakeholder collaboration etc. It is also quite revealing that when the literature on leadership is scrutinized, all models speak to their effectiveness in leading school wide development. And so, even the transformational leadership model in the context of the Caribbean “...places it members’ commitments and capacities as central to its focus” (Watson 2013, p. 148). Yet it is also the position of Beckford and Lekule (2013), also out of the Caribbean who posited that:

Given the changing nature of schools, the increased complexity of issues to be addressed, and concerns about school effectiveness in educating children, we argue that there is a need to consider a more participatory type of leadership strategy based on a whole school approach. We [therefore] posit that the concept of distributed school leadership offers a productive way of thinking about how schools can be led more effectively by engaging resourceful people. (p. 169)

This Research has also taken this position in a visible and practical way and points to the fact that in the journey as a principal, the positive and productive engagement of resourceful people can happen only, if there is collaboration. However, this level of

collaboration cannot itself take place without a high degree of collegiality among staff members. This is made explicit by Tichnor-Wagner et al (2016, p. 605), that:

Schools with weak cultures tend to be characterized as having ‘silos of individuals or small isolated groups’ and a ‘single leader who directs the work of others from a position of authority’; in contrast, strong cultures have high commitment, motivation, and cooperation among members toward achieving shared goals. (citing Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011, p. 53)

This position is however tempered by Miller (2016a) who cautioned us by stating that; “...successful school cultures are collegial, (citing Hargreaves, 1994) rather than merely professionally collaborative” (citing McGregor) (p. 91). I should also add that it does not mean that there are no conflicts, but these are dealt with professionally and amicably without confrontation. This situation therefore sends a clear signal that an environment where everyone is treated equally and with the same degree of respect is the correct medium where the seeds of effective and successful leadership germinate. This, in turn, grows into flourishing trees, signifying a healthy school culture, and eventually bearing fruits which represents schools of excellence and high performing students.

Prescriptive Policy Environment and its Role in School Leadership

I now want to turn to the final section of this literature review and to examine briefly the issue of school operations in an environment where there are external pressures to comply with the directives of a prescriptive policy environment. Principals are faced with policy dictates from both internally and externally. In the Jamaican context, there are internal influences that directs policy development from parents, teachers, students, the community, the school board and most influential in some schools are the past student. Then there are the external influences which is mainly the government which sometimes joint in alliance with the school board against the administrative leadership of the school,

mainly the principal. Another external influence that must be mentioned, particularly in the context of developing countries such as Jamaica are international agencies. This have direct influence over the government who are signatory to international conventions and recipient of grants and loans. The school is directly impact by these international agreements if they are the indirect beneficiary of donor funding. This situation is impressed on everyone and is noted by Miller (2016a, p. 79) citing Bell and Stevenson (2006): “Education policy is high on the agenda of governments across the world. Global pressures focus increasing attention on the outcome of educational policy and their implications for economic prosperity and social citizenship...” (p. i)

Hence, whereas the internal policy environment is to an extent controlled by the school and is “important to its own effectiveness, productivity and accountability” (Miller, 2016a, p. 81), it is the external environment where schools have little or no autonomy and are expected to use national policies. Carnoy et al (2003) puts it succinctly by distinguishing between the internal and external accountabilities. “Internal accountability is derived from a sense of responsibility among individuals in the school, while external accountability is concern with constraints and demands placed on schools represented by performance measures which schools have to meet” (cited in Miller, 2016a, p. 94).

The school board, even though it is considered internal to the school, can sometimes be one of the greatest hindrance to school leadership, particularly in terms of policy directions. In fact, some board chairmen are known to overstep their boundaries into the area of school operations which is the purview of the principal. Heystek, (2006), emphasized the importance of maintaining a good relationship between principals and school boards, and summarized it down to a question of trust. In speaking about the South African system of education, he defined the areas of responsibility:

The professional *management* is the responsibility of the principal with the professional staff, while the School Governing Body (SGB) is responsible for the *governance* of a school. School Governing Bodies are not supposed to be involved in professional management activities such as decisions about learning materials,

which teaching method to be used or class assessment. (p. 473)

The Jamaican school is professionally managed by the principal along with teachers who are given Post of Special Responsibilities (POSR). These are senior management position and are akin to the senior management team (SMT) in other jurisdictions. The SMT usually consists of the principal, the vice principal and heads of departments, or senior teachers in the schools. The school board consists of the principal, Ministry nominated members, co-opted members for specialized functions and elected members from the stakeholders, mainly the categories of academic, administrative and ancillary staff, the Parents body, community representative, and the student population.

As indicated by Jan Heystek (2006), who referenced the situation in South Africa, a similar situation arises over the issue of trust here in Jamaica. There are frequent breakdowns in the relationship between principal and school boards, particularly the chairperson, who frequently takes on the position as Chief Executive Officer and thereby, sets up tension between principal and school board.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

An Overview of Autoethnographic Methods

I want to reiterate here that this research describes my journey as the principal who started the school from its new beginning and charts that developmental journey for the first ten years. It is therefore, a personalized account of the issues, concerns, obstacles, and, of course, the celebrations of positive stories. This is very similar to the story told by Carl Henry Dethloff (2005), in his own personal autoethnographical account of “A Principal in Transition.” Hence, even though the events described in Dethloff (2005) were concerned with his experience, they are similar in many areas to those events that I have encountered and, hence, the solutions adopted after my own reflections, are to some extent also similar.

I am also finding that, the narrative of my journey as a principal and the autoethnographical approach that fits best with the narrative, aligns with the autoethnographical approach of Holman Jones’ (2005) when she states that “Autoethnography is a balancing act... [which] works to hold self and culture together, albeit not in equilibrium or stasis” (p.763). It is therefore reasonable that I attempt to define autoethnography in a way that best connects me ‘the personal’ to my own social and cultural environment. Hence, in my attempts to find an ‘appropriate’ definition that is reflective of my own position, I have found myself in a similar place to Holman Jones (2005, p. 765), in sifting through books and various research papers, only to arrive at the same juncture where I am using the definitions that others, (Ellis, 2004; Spry, 2001; Neumann, 1996; Jones, 2005; Reed-Danahay, 1997) have posited. Hence, autoethnography is:

Research writing, and method that connects the autobiographical and personal to

the cultural and social. This form usually features concrete action, emotion, embodiment, self-consciousness and introspection... [and] claims the convention of literary writing. (Ellis, 2004, p. xix)

A self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social context. (Spry, 2001, p. 710)

Setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation... and then letting go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful attention to your words in the context of their own lives. (Jones, 2005, p. 765)

These definitions taken collectively have both painted and framed the picture of my own life as a principal. This has helped me in “create[ing] the conditions for rediscovering the meanings of past sequence of events” (Denzin, 2013, p. 126, quoting Ulmer, 1989, p. 211). It is, to this end, that Reed-Danahay’s (1997) notion of “autobiographical ethnography” also resonates with me and is helping to clarify the issues that weigh heavily on this research and hence, I am also strongly drawn to her definition of autoethnography as “A form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context... (p. 9).

Though written over a decade ago, these definitions still hold, as I consider the story of the approach to my own autoethnographical journey, which creates a connectedness between the text and the context of my story as a means of interpreting the past, translating and transforming context and therefore envisioning [and prescribing] the future (Jones, 2005, p. 768). This ‘connectedness’ is even more enjoined as autoethnographical approaches transcend time, and so, for example, if we then fast forward to present day, we note Ellis (2013) writing the preface in ‘The Handbook of Autoethnography’ as saying that;

For most of us, autoethnography is not simply a way of knowing about the world; it has become a way of being in the world, one that requires living consciously, emotionally, and reflexively. It asks that we not only examine our lives but also

consider how and why we think, act, and feel as we do... (Jones, Adam & Ellis, 2013, p. 10)

My own interpretation of this is that, even though “autoethnography is a new approach and one which is, often considered to be somewhat alternative and marginal...” (Sikes, 2013, p. 11), the approach has been advanced and enhanced by those contributors who have been carrying the torch for autoethnography (Bryant Alexander, Leon Anderson, Heewon Chang, Norman Denzin, Kim Etherington, Ron Pelias, Chris Poulos, Deborah Reed-Danahey, Laurel Richardson, Pat Sikes, Andrew Sparkes, Tami Spry, Lisa Tillmann, et,al) and therefore, new contributors who have seen the lighted path (of the torch) and are willing to carry on, to the point where autoethnographers “...do not simply describe the world, but offers great possibility for changing it” (Madison, 2012, p. 189, citing Jones, Adam & Ellis, 2013, p. 40).

A testimony to autoethnography as a game changer within the world is echoed by Sikes (2013), who states that:

Autoethnography can provide a means of challenging traditional, hegemonic and imposed power imbalances by creating a space for people (as individuals, as possessors of certain social characteristics, and as members of particular socio-cultural groups) to describe their perceptions and experiences and to express their views, beliefs and values rather than being re-presented and interpreted by others as tend to be the case... (p. 8)

This, I believe, is saying that, as individuals each and every one of us are intertwined with the day to day situations of life. We live in a context and cannot be separated from the things happening around us. We, therefore, have a part to play in determining and changing context as it impacts and affects us and the lives of others. Hence, Toyosaki and Pensoneau-Conway (2013), in speaking to social justice issues such as inequity in terms of access to further education, sexual identity and LGBT, bullying, parenting etc. emphasize that “Autoethnography serves as a critical mechanism for working with micro-social acts

and sites of social injustice and towards productively ambiguous social justice in the spirit of [and] with others..." (Toyosaki & Pensoneau-Conway (2013, p. 557).

Autoethnography serves as a critical mechanism for working with micro-social acts and I, therefore, go back to Ellis (2013), who notes that "...For most of us, autoethnography is not simply a way of knowing about the world; it has become a way of being in the world..." (Jones, Adam & Ellis, (2013, p. 10).

This is to say that "being in the world" requires that each individual with their multiple lens on the world creates their own picture of the world. That in itself is a collage, but collectively, we all see the world differently and hence frame a world which is a bigger collage of multiple collages. It is because of these multiple lenses why autoethnographical approaches have increased overtime, as autoethnographers depicts and presents their world from different vantage points depending on their methodological approach. This is due mainly because "...the coverage of research topics and agendas has been broadened to address personal, relational, professional, and social issues" Chang (2013, p. 120).

Heewon Chang (2013) makes the point that:

Autoethnographic approaches have also been diversified to include "accidental ethnography" (Poulos, 2008), "analytic autoethnography" (Anderson, 2006), "duoethnography" (Norris, Sawyer, & Lund, 2012), "co-constructed autoethnography" (Ellis, 2007), "critical autoethnography inquiry" (Afonso & Taylor, 2009), "evocative autoethnography" (Ellis, 1995, 2004, 2009), "new ethnography" (Goodall, 2000), "performative autoethnography" (Holman Jones, 2005; Spry, 2001), and "collaborative autoethnography". (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2012; Clandinin et al., 2010) (p. 120)

This supports the point that I made earlier, that multiple lenses, from multiple vantage points, give multiple pictures to form the collage which we call the world, which is

indicative of the multiple approaches that autoethnographers use to enhance autoethnographic methodology.

Mixing Methods as a Process Towards Enhancing Autoethnographical Methodology.

I have introduced myself as central to this research through its autoethnographical approach, however, I must remain cognizant of the fact that there are many approaches to autoethnography as previously cited by Chang (2013). Therefore, to best capture my positionality, I have arrived at the view that the research process must be a combination of more than just one qualitative research methodologies, in other words, a form of mixed method approach, but using different qualitative approaches. I want to pause here to explain that by mixed methods, my intention is to conduct a "...more pragmatic mixing of research techniques at the level of practice which consider issues around explaining and justification of methods at an epistemological level to a lesser extent than mixing methodologies would do" (Botha 2011, p. 12).

Therefore, even though this thesis is grounded on an ethnographical foundation, of particular interest to me and to a great extent, supportive of this research are, narrative theory, grounded theory, and indigenous theory approaches. I have commented briefly on the scarcity of research originating out of developing countries and how such countries depend on the developed countries such as the USA, UK, Canada, Australia etc., for research that forms their educational policy framework, with, I believe, great implications and consequences for 'indigenous theory making'. I hasten to clarify, however, my use of the term "scarcity of research originating from 'developing' countries," as this is made in comparison with the magnitude of research emanating out of the so called 'developed' nations. For example, in a recent publication, Miller (2013), and Brown and Lavia (2013), spoke to using five interrelated themes in a narrative approach to explore the dilemmas, barriers and opportunities by head teachers in Trinidad and Tobago. Hence, even though there is a growing body of narrative research coming out of developing countries, policy

makers from these countries still tend to constrain themselves to the hegemonic influence of materials from 'developing' countries.

Botha (2011), speaking to a mixed [qualitative] methods project for engaging with indigenous knowledges, notes that, "...indigenous scholars can show critical scholars how to ground their methodologies at the local level..." (p. 315). I must, therefore, refer to my earlier reference to the contextual position of the Jamaican education system, the school where I currently practice and my own personal position within these contexts. I want to reiterate here that these, though localized have historical colonial influences not only of a political and educational nature, but if taken to its logical conclusion have epistemological, axiological, and ontological hegemonic influences on any research agenda within this context. I will, therefore, make every attempts to extricate myself (and this thesis) from these influences by constructing subject which generates new understanding from the actions and procedures which have been established to reflexively question my positionality and related experiences as a researcher, and to possible widen the socio-political, economic and cultural context. Indigenous methodologies are then combined with my reflexive practices to accentuate relational aspects of knowledge making. These then further combined with the activity of writing narratives about my "collaborations, methodology, thought provoking incidents, puzzling phenomenon and so on, [which is] in itself a data collecting and analysing process (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005) through which I hope to discover and renew connections, emotions, insights, commitments and perspectives" (Botha, 2011, p. 7).

It is my belief that my local context creates the environment to explore these renewed connections, emotions, insights, commitments and perspectives "...through intuitive and experiential practice and verbal representation, [which are initially] framed by a decolonising agenda" (Botha, 2011, p. 318 quoting Bishop, 2005; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, 2005). Hence, I can also reflectively combine the narrative, autoethnographical and grounded theory as indigenous approaches to enhance a mixed method project.

I am, however, mindful of Lal, Suto, and Ungar's (2012) cautionary note that:

Critics caution that combined approaches can be problematic when limited attention is given to key considerations of the constituent methodologies. Caelli et al., (2003), observed that studies utilizing combined approaches are at times poorly anchored within an identifiable epistemological or theoretical perspective. They argued that under the pressure of time constraints, researchers turn toward the “less demanding option” (p. 3) of applying a combined approach because it is perceived as a way to avoid having to fully learn about any one established qualitative tradition. (p. 2)

Methodology: Storying Self

I begin here by reiterating that the literature has shown that autoethnographical research has moved away from the margins and is now positioned as acceptable scholarly work. “...this type of research has challenged accepted views about silent authorship and author ‘evaluated’ texts”, (Sparkes, 2000, p. 22). Dethloff (2005) goes further in quoting Charmaz and Mitchell (1996) who asserts that in:

Conventional research practice, authors are expected to remain on the sidelines and keep their voices out of their reports. [However], in writing themselves into their own work, authors of personal narratives provide the catalyst to answer the question, “What is happening here?” Researchers [now become] a part of the experience, and [is directly] involved in the process...(p. 58)

This means that for this autoethnographical thesis, I, the researcher, is not only influenced by the contextual environment, but is also now enjoined or fused into the research process thereby, giving me a more in-depth understanding of my cultural and social context. Writing myself into the research (or self-studying me) also helps in the “...construction of meaning for both me and any participants that may be involved” (Dethloff, 2005, citing Charmaz and Mitchell, 1996).

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), have also determined that “[a] quality self-study that engages the reader’s imagination has compelling research questions [that] transcends the purely personal and provides compelling answers to these questions, thereby creating a significant research piece”. They also state that “[f]or public theory to influence educational practice it must be translated through the personal. (p. 15) ” Cho and Trent (2006) supports the argument along similar ground by speaking to ‘members check’ and ‘triangulation’ for research validity and ‘truth’ (p. 328).

Dethloff (2005) asked the question: “What makes a good story [of self] scholarly?” (p. 62) in his own quest to find an answer to his research at that time. He indicated he found both the question and answer relevant to research today, and he asserted the need for both reader and researcher to become active participants to enhanced research credibility and trustworthiness. He further intimated that the power of the personal in research can be important in unraveling the many layers of social or cultural context (p. 63).

I originally stated that this autoethnographic research would be a mixed method involving indigenous, grounded and narrative approaches. The injection of self-study is not incidental but deliberate in an effort to enhance the proposed methodological approach. It is my belief that because there is a ‘blurred’ line between the research methodologies of autoethnographical (a look at self within particular context, particularly the social and cultural context), narrative (a look at a story of self), and self-study (a look at self at practice or in action), it is important to examine briefly the contribution that self-study offers to my research methodology. What is noteworthy is that they all give credit to research design, and it is therefore useful to combine their contributions in the understanding of educational practice, development of knowledge and meaning making in my research project.

Hamilton et al (2008), in explaining the differences between autoethnography, self-study and narrative states that autoethnography researcher takes a wide view of the “...social and cultural aspects of the personal using an ethnographic wide-angle lens...” (p. 9). They explained that this wide angled view, exposes several layers of consciousness which helps to understand self or some aspect of life lived in context. On the other hand self-study

research uses “a research methodology in which researchers and practitioners use whatever methods will provide the needed evidence and context for understanding their practice” (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 240). Narrative research, however, is distinctive in its identification of experience as story. It recognizes that people shape their lives by story and the story is a “portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful” (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007, p. 22, as cited from Hamilton, 2008, p. 9). Generally, the main difference seems to be centred around the approach to the research design, whether it be a story, the culture or on practiced experience, while in terms of similarities, all three methodologies seems to hold the “I” in a privileged position. This is explained by the fact that,

In narrative inquiry, the self in relation to others holds privilege in a storied, usually the written form. In auto-ethnography, it is the cultural “I” shaped by cultural contexts and complexities that takes the foreground. Where the narrative and autoethnography methodologies focus on relation or culture, self-study researchers focus on practice and improvement of practice, closely attending to self and others in and through their practice. (p. 10)

I also feel compelled to give an explanation to the concept of ‘meaning-making’ which I have previously alluded to, as a concept that in general is important to research and specifically to design, because of its’ contribution to knowledge creation. It also aids in the storying of lives to give meaning to personal experiences (Clandinin et al, 2007). Earlier in the literature review, I also spelled out the context in which my research is situated, and therefore from which knowledge creation and meaning-making is likely to be developed. The context, however, is not without a particular social and cultural order involving many actors performing various roles. The role of leaders, particularly the principal has already been reviewed, however, there are others playing individual roles as well as collaborative roles within their own social and professional grouping. For example, within the context of the school under study, teachers play a different role from parents, board members,

students or members of the wider community. Each group not only learn from the roles they play, but their continuous interactions and performances create new dynamics with an ever changing situation. It is from this continuous changing situation that each performer (and onlooker) is forced to reflect and evaluate not only self but the new change in scene and situation. Every new reflection iteratively prompts a reflexive turn that creates new understanding and sense-making of both self and situation, thereby give meaning to actions. This sense-making is derived through continuous social interaction, collaboration and results in new understanding and meaning-making.

Manning and Kuntel (2014) makes similar argument as above on the subject of meaning-making by emphasizing that:

The meanings people often hold about relationships are often paradoxical and contradictory (Baxter, 2011) as well as value laden (Manning & Kunkel, 2014). That is true in terms both of an individual in a social scene and for different combinations of individuals as they come together and interact as part of that social scene. Qualitative relationship research allows researchers an opportunity to see those seemingly contradictory elements at play, assess how different ideas or actions come to the forefront depending on situation and context, and consider how they might change or evolve across time. Moreover, many qualitative methods allow for natural observation of how people are working through such meaning making in their day-to-day lives. Research of this nature can allow rich insights into processes, practices, and/or cultural rituals. (p. 435)

Research Design and Methods

This study reflects my frame of reference as the principal of a high school, taking into account my personal challenges, journeys, relationships, celebrations, and multiple realities of staff and colleagues that help shape and form my own experience. To ensure a degree of trustworthiness, I am working towards making meaning from Lincoln and

Guba's (1985), description of qualitative research, the design of which is emergent in its design and negotiated outcomes. Any new understanding and interpretations that are formulated are determined through interactions and discussion with people that I have encountered as a part of the culture. As Cunningham (2000), noted, "as a principal myself, I am always interested in hearing the voices, interpretations, and experiences of my colleagues and constituents, and to recognize patterns in their perceptions" (p. 15). I will use these voices, perceptions, interpretations of the literature and of the experiences of my colleagues, corroborated with my own experiences and weave them into a tapestry that encapsulates the portrait of my principalship.

Data Collection

In emphasizing the importance of data collection, Dethloff (2005), pointed out that "the ultimate goal of self-study research is to produce literary representations and to add value to readers of our research. With this in mind, data collection tools vary greatly in self-narrative research and autobiographical studies" (p. 64). I will make reference to Feldman's (2003) four criteria of which he has prescribed as a basis for data collection:

- (1) Provide clear and detailed description of how we collect data and make explicit what counts as data in our work.
- (2) Provide clear and detailed descriptions of how we constructed the representation from our data. What specifics about the data led us to make this assumption?
- (3) Extend triangulation beyond multiple sources of data to include explorations of multiple ways to represent the same self-study.
- (4) Provide evidence that the research changed or evolved the educator and summarize its value to the profession. This can convince readers of the study's significance and validity. (pp. 27-28)

Feldman's (2003) criteria will facilitate and underpin my own documentation and data

collection in this study. The research reflective process is also represented in the way my data was gathered. It would seem that I began from the time I received the information that I was offered the position of principal of the school, however, to say that I immediately began collecting data, really meant that I began formatting school data that was not originally intended for a research but which became relevant to the research as it developed. As mentioned earlier, it was after I started this doctoral programme that I was introduced to the methodology of autoethnography as a possible approach for my dissertation. Some of the data used is gathered from sources which existed even before I started my doctorate, however, they became relevant, as they revealed information from sources which would normally have been available for public usage.

I began keeping a journal documenting the experiences I perceived in my journey as a principal after it was recommended by my doctoral supervisor. This reflexive journal was completed after each work day detailing my own summarization of the day's events. Day to day interactions, meetings, experiences, and phone calls were recollected in my personal diary. This meant that I had three different journals to attend to: the official school log book, my personal diary and a research journal. I must admit that the log book, which is the formal official journal, became the important one, as most things were repeated in all three, particularly in reference to school events (see appendix of excerpts from my log book).

In regards to the daily maintenance of my personal journey, I found that analysing and reflecting on the day's events worked best for me at the end of the work day or early in the morning before most of the faculty arrived. Sometimes, depending on how busy the days were, reflective writing became a weekly event. This was possible due to the modern technology of the computer, hybrid smart telephone, and tablet computers. These devices allowed me to record events almost instantaneously and then download and merge information automatically for future reference and for logging formally. On most occasions, this was usually before school began at 8am (between 2am and 8am). The time to accurately reflect on the previous day's experiences helped tremendously if I waited to make the journal entries; I was much more level-headed and removed from the turmoil and challenges of the preceding day. I would then attempt to represent the day by writing a few

paragraphs describing my own personal thoughts and responses to issues, concerns, celebrations, and impressions of the day's events. The days and weeks of the school year were depicted in chronological order, listing the description and explanation of the experience. I avoided entering a new week's information into the journal until I had completed the previous week. My personal calendar which evolved from a small book into a computerized memo pad on my mobile phone, was a valuable asset in providing reminders of the daily events I encountered. This was supported by a location log which was kept by my secretary. I would use these to prompt and 'fire-up' my memory to reflect on the affairs and happenings of the day. In my personal calendar I listed descriptive words that would remind me of important topics I needed to address with key members of my staff, and to write in more details in the principal's log. At times, I would record entries in my journal and or school log in chunks then do my reflecting, constructing and interpreting the meaning of two or three days at a time. Sometimes even a week or two may pass before I make the official entry, even though the event or a pointer may have been made on my computer. Usually, these multiple day/week summaries would be based on a central issue or challenge. It could take two or three days to arrive at a solution for a campus issue. Once resolved, I would then proceed to put my complete thoughts down on paper encapsulating the total dilemma from its inception to its completion.

Interestingly, data gathering significantly became more laborious as the school years progressed and as laboriousness becomes more and more intense, finding time to adequately reflect on the data entered in the log/journal became more and more difficult. Sometimes I also ignored my personal journal since the official school log had the same record. This began happening more and more frequently until the personal journal was completely ignored. This was also due to the fact that I also had a hybrid telephone which was frequently used to record incidents in personal note form or in conversation on "WhatsApp", "Facebook", "Messenger", etc. with friends. In considering ethics of using these messages and the matter of consent, I was careful to ensure that none of them could be ascribe to any one individual, but were generic in nature.

Hence, faculty agendas, staff memos, personal calendars, and reflexive analysis serve as the primary means of data collection. These research tools allow the design of the study to

be fluid in its creation, and provide the researcher with the opportunity to analyse and derive meaning from these artifacts. These sources were initially placed in a hard folder containing all written correspondence, after which, they were also backed up in electronic folders. The folders are organised according to subject areas, strands, or other commonalities. Many pieces of the written documentation could be placed in multiple categories. Common strands and key attributes of these documents were analysed through member checks and aided in the triangulation of data.

Data Analysis

Dethloff (2005), quoting Edwards and Skinner (2009), states clearly that “in an autoethnography, the analysis of data is an ongoing event, developing and crystallizing over time” (p.68). Hence, in an effort to fashion and create a proper expression of my self-study, I subjected myself to continuous iterative analysis of my reflexive journal by re-reading, re-examination of artifacts and conducting further self-analysis and introspection. This allows for greater clarity and enrichment of the research process as theories and themes evolve to create new knowledge and give meaning.

Ellis and Bochner (2000), assert that: ‘The analysis of data in a personal narrative involves a process where the researcher emotionally recalls the events of the past...through writings, thoughts, events, dialogue... [Hence creating the unique opportunity] for the researcher to let data emerge as the writing is progressing’

I was also unclear at the beginning of my research as to what would be the distinctive themes that would emerge. However, I was reminded of Janesick’s (2002, p. 389) comment that “the qualitative researcher uses inductive analysis, which means that categories, themes, and patterns come from the data. The categories that emerge from field notes, documents and interviews are not imposed prior to data collection” (Cited in Dethloff, 2005, p. 80). This is in keeping with my proposal to use a mixed qualitative method approach involving narrative, indigenous and grounded theory.

I will also use my research questions to guide my personal constructions of data, and I have placed a heavy emphasis on each of the issues determined by the research questions as my study unfolded.

Keeping the above mentioned research questions at the forefront of my thoughts in writing the narrative greatly supported the work. However, personal biases I have in dealing with certain situations also will impact the final selection of information I will use in the narrative. The success of the initiative and the success or failure I personally faced when attempting to facilitate or solve certain dilemmas also entered into the equation of what was included in the final product. Of course, I have attempted to remain as fair and honest as possible in my personal narrative, in my selection of both the successes and failures I experienced as the principal of new and developing secondary high school.

Dethloff (2005), also reminded us that ‘member checking’ (i.e., checking facts and interpretations with other persons in the setting) is also used as a form of reflective analysis. I have adopted this process in my study. I do this (member checking) quite frequently, in most cases with my executive assistant who also keeps a location log for the principal. This means that even if I am not at school, my secretary knows where I am. This check is for the Ministry of Education records, other members of staff, and for my own record, since I would not have used the official signing in register. The vice principal, who is in charge of administration is also an important member check. I also reference events that took place at school with my colleague principals from other schools, which serves as a form of member check that I frequently engage in.

Coding the Data

Categorizing the information collected provided a concrete structure that facilitated the writing and interpretation of data. At the beginning of my study, it was not always clear as to which themes would emerge. Coding and categorizing the data from my various records (principal’s log, location log, reflexive journal and personal calendar) were very helpful in keeping me up to date and also as a means of triangulating sequences of events. The ability

to make sense of the situation or event was increased as the coding of the data was completed and organized. In attempting to code my data, I realized that it could take many form as there were more than one way to categorize and code it, particularly, for the fact that it was always changing.

I first completed a thorough reading of my sketchy reflexive journal in its entirety. I assumed this would give me a more complete overview of the year and provide vivid details of the events I experienced. After an initial read, I then went back to my personal calendar and identified areas of the calendar that matched the journal entries. I must admit that both my personal diary and my reflexive journal were sketchy and not very informative. I found that my principal's log and my personal assistance location log were more useful and comprehensive. My computer calendar had also become more informative for me. These served as a support for the journal and provided a more detailed description of the day. It also enabled me to keep all the written information from the day in one easy, accessible place, which in the last five years of my journey, proved to be my computers.

Separating the artifacts I collected into important segments was the next phase of data collection. Coding the memos, staff bulletins, newsletters, PTO agendas, meeting agendas and minutes, and other official documents into similar categories posed multiple dilemmas. The challenge was in sorting these documents by time-frame, content, or personnel involved. I found that the event and the time or emotional commitment made to the event shaped the way I categorized data. For example, if I attempted to classify an event or meeting that involved a teacher with whom I was having difficulty, I would tend to code this event under a specific teacher name, not the content or time frame. If the artifact I was coding involved a particular tough topic or content area, I would categorize it under the subject. I believe this just gives credence to the methodology of autoethnography and to the realization that you cannot remove the emotion and other feelings experienced from a cultural setting. The emotions I felt during the coding of data were real and impacted the categorization of the data. As Dethloff (2005) argues, "When the researcher witnesses social action first hand in a culture and as part of the culture, it greatly enhances the information that is brought forth from the study" (p 72). Nevertheless, the analysis and evaluation of data collected from past events were affected by my personal feelings and

emotions. Thus, in categorizing the data, a sequential and basically historical presentation of the events was derived.

Ethical Considerations

The need to maintain high ethical standards in the conduct of social research, is always at the top of the agenda for researchers, particularly social scientists. The principle where researchers and research participants are always under consideration to be protected and respected is an established call on all researchers. It is for this reason that research ethics remain an important consideration by researchers and as an important principle, is constantly being enhanced through new reflections. Neale (2013) notes that, this situation is nowhere more evident than in qualitative research, where ethical principles, practice and regulation are the subject of ongoing debate (Neale 2013, p. 7, citing Wiles 2013; Hammersley & Traianou 2012; Miller et al., 2012). This ethical principle has been bolstered in recent times by autoethnography as an approach to qualitative inquiry whereby researchers tell their story of their own personal experience. This (autoethnography) has gained a widespread following, in part because as noted by Lapadat (2017, p. 589), it “...addresses a significant ethical challenge that faces many other ethnographic and more broadly qualitative approaches to inquiry, the issue of representing, speaking for, or appropriating the voice of others” (Lapadat citing Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013).

Let me reiterate that this autoethnography is the story of my journey. However, its very context, situated in both time and place implies that it also impacts and influences the lives of others who also operates within that context. I am, therefore cognizant, that I am relating my experience of the world through the telling of my personal story. In a sense, because it is my story, my writing should seek to avoid harming others. However, my family is involved in my experiences, my staff is involved because of the professional role that I play, all other stakeholders are involved because of the institution I lead—which impacts and holds influence over the entire community. Therefore, whilst I do not set out

to speak for them, my interactions with them reveal my identity and therefore inadvertently speaks about them. Carolyn Ellis asks what “our responsibilities to intimate others who are characters in the stories we tell about our lives” are, within autoethnographic research (2007, p. 4). In terms of my auto-ethnographic research, I, therefore, look to four ethical consideration. Ellis outlines three of them as procedural ethics, ethics in practice, and relational ethics (2007, p. 4). I want to introduce briefly a fourth one called ‘stakeholder’s ethics’. These ethical considerations are of particular importance to me and my research, because of the way my auto-ethnography ties into my professional community and the ways in which I am essentially “outing” professional colleagues and other stakeholders.

First there are the procedural ethics. ‘These are usually mandated by committee and review boards and deals with issues of informed consent, confidentiality, the right to privacy, deception, protecting human subjects from harm, and the ethics that guide research projects whose subject focus involves sub-cultural, cultural, national, ethnic, or religious groups...’ (Sanduliak, 2016, p. 370). Of note is that, at the time when I started the study, the university did not require autoethnographic research to undergo formal review (see *The University of Sheffield’s Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal data and Human Tissue: Version 1, 2011*). As I went forward however, I kept ethical considerations to the forefront being acutely cognizant of how my study and writing would implicate others.

A further ethical consideration is to ensure persons implicated in the research are not so generalized that they are misunderstood as speaking for the entire group as a whole. Sanduliak (2016) notes that:

Autoethnography is perhaps one of the best methods of qualitative research that can alleviate this ethical consideration. It is important within autoethnography that the social, cultural, and political contexts in which one’s story is understood are reflective of the self and not of the whole community. (p. 370)

Therefore, because the research was self-motivated and would focus generally on my own autoethnography, I have taken care in my research journals to ensure that matters of ethics are written in such a way to ensure that, writings, notes and comments would support only me and at the same time protect other individuals that are being (re) presented and implicated in the research.

The second of Ellis's (2007) ethical considerations, ethics in practice, is more relevant to auto-ethnography done in conjunction with ethnography or another research method. As Ellis states, it concerns:

Ethics in practice, or situational ethics, the kind that deal with the unpredictable, often subtle, yet ethically important moments that come up in the field . . . For example, what if someone discloses something harmful, asks for help, or voices discomfort with a question or her or his own response? (2007, p. 4)

This was certainly something that I was forced to take into account, and that is why I introduced the fourth idea of 'stakeholders' ethics, which is described in Bren Neale's (2013) research on *Adding Time into the Mix: Stakeholder Ethics in Qualitative Longitudinal*. Neale, (2013) defined stakeholders as "individuals or groups with a direct interest, involvement or investment in the research, and who are therefore implicated in and potentially affected by the research process and its outputs" (p. 7). This is closely aligned to my research that is contextualised within an educational setting and more specifically casted in a school. My thesis being of the sort that spans ten years, I think position it as a longitudinal study. Therefore the addition of time into the mix of my research "...heightens particular ethical issues and requires new thinking about principles and practice... [and] ...well established ethical principles take on new meaning and need reworking when seen with a temporal gaze for example, those relating to participant consent as an ongoing process, or sustaining confidentiality when the risk of disclosure magnifies over time" (Neale 2013, p. 7). The idea of journeying with people, working with them, sharing experiences cannot escape intimacy of participation and development of relationships between researcher and participants, even when those participants are

unintended as with autoethnographical researches. The ethical challenge becomes even more significant as the research journey through time.

As mentioned earlier, even though I am both the researcher and the researched in this autoethnographical study, there are others who are unintentional though inevitably involved. As principal of the school where the research is situated, all stakeholders which include teachers, students, parents, board members, other staff members, and the wider community are implicated through what Neale (2013) calls the ‘relational aspects of research practice’. (Neale et al., 2012; Neale & Bishop 2012a/b; Neale & Hanna, 2012). An analysis of these relationships and how they impact is an important component of ethical literacy in a longitudinal study, particularly for my autoethnographical research. It presents itself also as an ethical challenge that must be resolved in doing this type of research. I, therefore, believed that since these challenges were actually faced by me in conducting this research, they cannot escape my mentioning and how I sought to resolve them.

Lapadat, (2017) claimed that, ‘autoethnography is, at its core, an ethical approach’ (p. 593); [and] that “autoethnography has developed in response to ethical, epistemological, and methodological challenges facing modernist social science research” (p. 593 citing Holman Jones et al., 2013), and rests on an understanding of the centrality of narrative in human moral decision making and behaviour. Lapadat continued by asserting that, “It holds ethical issues as central to its practices, and autoethnographers have taken pains to describe and live by those ethics” (p. 593).

Despite this, however, ‘autoethnography as a research approach faces multiple ethical challenges’ (Lapadat, 2017 citing Tullis, 2013). She went to say that;

“These include issues that arise from the enactment of relational ethics; researcher vulnerability; the problems of existing within a bureaucratic framework designed to accommodate value-free ethics; degree of rigor; a risk of leaning toward self-indulgence, superficiality, and sensationalism; and restriction of scope” (p. 593).

No person is an island; we live relational lives (Lapadat, 2017, citing Eakin, 1999). In opposition to the assumption of autonomous individualism that arose from Enlightenment thinking. Eakin posited that “*all* identity is relational” (p. 42). We live in communities connected to family members, friends, colleagues, and others with whom we interact in our daily lives. Autoethnographic stories of our experiences, therefore, are not wholly our own; they implicate relational others in our lives (Ellis, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2009b; Tullis, 2013).

Lapadat, (2017) noted that unlike some forms of qualitative research, where participants’ identities are anonymized, in autoethnography, researchers typically use their own name in publishing the research. She makes the point that, this makes it difficult to protect the anonymity of others mentioned in the story, for example in my (this) research, my family, the staff and students at the school at which I am principal, the community, the ministry and the wider public are left unprotected. Even with pseudonyms for names and places, intimate others can be easy to identify, and they certainly can recognize themselves in a written account (Lapadat citing Ellis, 2007b, 2009b).

In dealing with this situation in this thesis, I constantly re-read the story I choose to write to ensure that data taken from my journals and diaries are rewritten in a form that do not compromise identifiable others, myself, the school or even the Ministry of Education. I, therefore, adhered to Ellis’ (2009b) proposal that “a way to approach ethical quandaries is to openly and repeatedly re-examine and make ethical decisions within each situational context, accepting that often there is no unambiguous solution” (cited by Lapadat, 2017, p. 593).

Having consider issues arising from situational ethics, relational ethics, stakeholders ethics and all, I have decided that, in an attempt also to protect myself and all the related ‘others’ in this research, I must also ensure that names of persons, places and significant events are anonymised as best as possible. Hence, for example, I refer to my workplace as ‘the school’ without naming the school. This, however, after much consideration may not even be sufficient, because the researcher’s identity is obvious even when denoted only by the first person “I”. Hence, I have further decided to anonymise time by using a different

timescale to indicate my journey in time. These may still not completely mask everyone and everything but should go a long way in offering protection and respecting the privacy of all.

In dealing with the issue of my own vulnerability, I choose to put to practice Denshire (2014) pointer that:

[A] strength of autoethnography is its ability to present an intimate but transgressive account, writing the absent bodies and voices of researchers and professionals into their practice, and thereby challenging institutional and professional power relationships. (cited in Lapadat 2017, p. 594).

I constantly spoke to the challenges that I was facing at formal staff meetings and informally to some colleagues at our regular Friday evening get-together when we meet to unwind after the hectic weeks activities. In speaking to challenges, I also sought solutions at formal meetings. Informally, it's mainly joking about difficult situations, but out of this joking often comes real solutions. This sometimes opens up real life, evocative issues and allow my colleagues to see me bare and receptive to their collegial overtures. Lapadat (2017) put it succinctly by stating that “over time, increased personal openness on the part of researchers will begin to unpack the authoritative voice that researchers have strived to cultivate, and ultimately foster greater interpersonal trust and a more inclusive institutional climate” (p.595).

There is also the ethical dilemma which criticises autoethnography for its lack of rigor, being and self-indulgent. To bolster my own thesis in this area I look to the arguments put forward by Lapadat (2017), where she states that autoethnography is,

[H]inged on whether there is a reality outside one’s own perceptions that is available for study, the extent to which a researcher can discover and represent the experiences of others, the ethical right of researchers to write about others’ experiences and cultures, and the authority of a story. (p. 596)

Ellis (2009a) further supports this position by concluding that “the meaning is in the experience . . . the meaning is in the story... [and] the meaning comes in writing the story about the experience” (p. 376). In essence, her argument is that all three of the critical perspectives are in part correct, and suggests that the strength of AE is that it combines elements of all of them. I have written this thesis with all this in mind and tried to cover as best as possible all three of Ellis’s (2009b) perspectives.

My memory takes me back to 2010, when I wrote my fifth assignment titled “A Code of Silence: Conducting Ethnographic Research with Reluctant Others in the Context of the Cayman Islands Education System...” This topic was chosen, because of the issues and concerns that I faced leading up to my final research and it is because of those very concerns, particularly around ‘informed consent, trustworthiness, relational ethics, reciprocity, reflexivity and the unwanted guest (insider-outsider relationships) that caused me to finally decide to do an autoethnography. This decision also alleviated the concerns mentioned above as the University of Sheffield Research Ethics Policy Note no. 1 (2011) titled; “Defining Human Research participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue”, stated that there was no need for ethical approval when doing this form of research. Hence, in reference to indirect participants the policy clearly stated that;

Indirect participation is particularly an issue in auto-ethnographic research, in which the researcher uses her/his own life experience as a primary source of data. However, no life is lived in a social vacuum and information about other people can never be excluded from auto-ethnography. These other people are, therefore, indirect participants, which raises questions about their anonymity and opportunity to exercise informed consent....

...The safety and well-being of human research participants in the very broad senses... should be taken into account when planning research. These aspects of

research do not, however, require formal ethics review within the University's procedures. They are, however, like all formally University-sponsored activities, subject to health and safety at work legislation and similar regulations, and governed by a duty of care and other common law considerations.

This gave me a sort of 'Get out of Jail' clause that I needed as I was not required to seek formal ethical review but was, however, obligated and subjected to commit to a 'Duty of Care'. This 'duty of care' has therefore, greatly influenced my every decision from the very beginning of this autoethnographical journey, as I considered the relational, situational, stakeholder and procedural ethical concerns in my professional working environment.

Summary

A hermeneutical phenomenological inquiry of a principal's self-reported experience allows the writer and reader to pursue the essence and significance of being an administrator (Raudenbush, 1994). Attention to detail, nuances, subtleties and contextual understanding are at the heart of all such inquiries and provide the researcher with rigorous and thought provoking reflection. In this study, names of persons and some places have been deleted or altered to secure some degree of anonymity. This is an important criterion of the research as I am still engaged as the principal of the school. I recognize that my personal descriptions and articulation of the events at the campus are subjective in nature and may not reflect what other peers or colleagues experienced. The data I gathered formed the basis of my research and it was not a comprehensive sample, but a sample that was important in my role as the administrator of the school. The objective here is to identify the experiences I faced, the meaning I derived from them (then and now), and to provide other aspiring or current principals an avenue to further develop their own thinking about the principalship, and to promote further growth in the position. There are no prescribed methods or exact formulas in a personal narrative. There are only pathways and structures

that serve as guideposts. First person accounts focus on life's turning points, on the openings, closings, and individual voices and milestones that collectively suggest formalized expression, (Denzin, 1989).

Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 contain a narrative that hopefully will offer readers a path to understanding my personal experience in the principalship, while perhaps bolstering a broader understanding of the administrative experience. From the position of an immersed researcher, I hope to provide readers, through a cultural anthropological avenue, a story and personal reflection that will impact their own careers. As Clandinin and Connelly (1994), acknowledge, a narrative offers a path to understanding as a dialectical process. Hopefully, an autoethnographic account will produce an approximation of the truth or a more detailed description of the principalship and draw readers into the story where the experience can be actually felt (Schwandt, 2001). This verisimilitude will enable the reader to draw upon their own experiences and to better understand those experiences as well as to assimilate and learn from the experiences of others.

CHAPTER FOUR

PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY - My Life Before Being a Principal

A Cultural and Demographic Beginning

“The Road Not Taken”

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
...
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
- Robert Frost (1920)*

My principalship may have begun in 2004, but my life did not begin there, neither in time nor space. I existed before and it is something in that or about that preexistence that has somehow brought me to this point. My arrival then, at this point represents the ending of a stanza of my life story and the beginning of another. However each stanza is a story in itself and can represent its own story. Denzin (2013) states this explicitly by saying that:

[A]ny individual can tell multiple stories about his or her life, it must be understood that a life will consist of multiple narratives. No self, or personal experience story will encompass all of the stories that can or could be told about a single life, nor will any personal history contain all of the self-stories that could be told about that life's story. Multiple narratives, drawn from the self-stories of many individuals located in different points in the process being interpreted can be secured (pp. 129–130)

I am also mindful of the need to avoid over-exaggerated in telling my story as, “the collection of stories that merely embellish or elaborate mainstream stories...merely fortify patterns of domination” (Goodson 2013, p. 5). Goodson went on to advise that to avoid embellishment and over-elaboration in the pursuit of narrativity and to understand it, one needs to move from life stories to life histories, from narratives of action to genealogies of context, [and if this is done], stories can be ‘located’, which means they can be seen as the social construction they are, located in time and space, social history and social geography (p.6).

Whatever chosen path has brought me to this point, has to a great extent, at every juncture, added some feature, character, attribute that have caused a reshaping of my personhood. Goodson (2013) notes that “[t]he emergence of life stories is closely related to the historical construction of notions of selfhood. Life stories, [then], are intimately connected to cultural periods, which provide different opportunities for the construction and expression of selfhood” (p.25).

I, therefore, find myself struggling with this notion of my own personhood and telling the story of how I arrived at this point in the development of my career and my journey to becoming a principal. There were many questions to answer as well as the tensions that I needed to resolve. Like in Clandinin (2013),

I [too have] the feelings as I chose to begin [this] doctoral inquiry with this story. It was, and is, not a story I am proud of living or that I am particularly comfortable

sharing with others. [It is] a story that left me and who I was as a [principal], vulnerable to be constructed by others in ways I did not want to be understood. I also know that I could begin my inquiry by telling many other stories, stories where, more than likely, I would be perceived as a more thoughtful [and successful principal]. But...as I travel backward, inward and outward..., I have come to rethink moments of tension and the educative promise these moments hold when we risk making ourselves vulnerable by inquiring into them (p. 76)

Goodson (2013, p. 3), in the introductory chapter of “Developing Narrative Theory”, shared his early fascination with how people constructed and presented accounts of their lives. He quoted from a Christopher Booker, who detailed how stories are ubiquitous:

At any given moment all over the world hundreds of millions of people will be engaged in what is one of the most familiar of all forms of human activity. In one way or another they will have their attention focused on mental images we call stories. We spend a phenomenal amount of our lives following stories: telling them; listening to them; reading them; watching them being acted out on the television screen or in films or on the stage. They are far and away the most important feature of our every day existence. (Booker 2004, p. 2)

Goodson (2013, p. 4), emphasized that she believed Booker is entirely correct and stated that it was for that reason certain questions arose: Why do so many of our educational endeavours, whether teaching or learning, pay so little attention to stories? Why are educators so parsimonious in employing the most important feature of our everyday existence? Is there a reason linked to the reproduction of the social order? Are stories too egalitarian, too inclusive, for an educational system that seeks to select and foster certain groups but not others?

It seems to me that in researching answers to these questions, Goodson is led further to conclude that;

To understand [certain] ... life story genre properly it has to be read against the backdrop of the historical context which privileges certain storylines. To do that is to move from life story collection to life history construction, whereby the historical context is interrogated and elaborated. (p. 5)

I further believe that it is from these deep and broad levels of interrogation that more pertinent questions bubble up to the surface around “the differentiation in the meaning and significance of life stories [particularly] for professional people [which] settles into a new set of questions about life stories” (Goodson 2013, p. 7). These questions contemplated, why do some people begin to settle into a new set of questions about life stories? Why do some people spend so much time in interior thought and self-conversation about their life story, whilst other seem far less concerned and seem willing to accept an externally generated script? Do these different kinds of [life story] narrativity crucially affect our identity and agency? Do people’s creativity and learning styles respond to these differences? Are there certain historical periods which favour certain kind of narrativity over other? Were, for example, the 1960s considered special partly because they provided such opportunity for more personalized narrativity, whilst the current period sometimes favours the externally driven prescription of scripts, whether as niche-defined consumers or heavily scrutinized citizens? In short, is narrativity a crucial variable between external structure and personal agency? In understanding narrativity, might we be getting at aspects of a kind of ‘DNA’ of personal response? To put in sociological terms, are we looking at a ‘crucial mediation membrane’, or a ‘point of refraction’ between external structure and personal agency? (Goodson 2013, p. 7).

Hence, Weaver (2012), in her literary analysis of Frost’s “The Road Not Taken”, emphasizes the symbolism of journeys. In consideration of Frost’s “The Road Not Taken”, Weaver states that “...It is symbolic of choosing the consequences of the journey towards the beginning of a trail...”. Weaver continues to emphasize that the poem’s overall theme focuses on the journey individuals face during their lifetime; through trials, overcoming

obstacles, and making difficult decisions, and compares them to the struggles of a physical journey. Frost speaks to the “nature of choice making”, as it depicts an individual figuratively facing the choice between two similar paths; one path less worn than another. While the poem focuses on a physical description of the surroundings: “a yellow wood”, “bent in the undergrowth” and “grassy and wanted wear”; “The Road Not Taken”, is about the “nature of choice making”, an aspect of life that every individual faces as they chose life’s paths. Going beyond making a choice between one road or another, Frost’s poem goes to the nature of the decision, and ultimately the narrator makes a choice that makes him happier in the end, a choice “that has made all the difference” (Weaver, 2012, quoting Clugston, 2010, Section 2.3).

Therefore my starting point at this school was not the beginning, there was ‘another beginning’, which created the condition to give choice for my current and future decisions. In the same way that physical travels include junctures and diverging paths, so does my life journey. Inevitably, each journey reaches forks in the road where we must choose how to react and what path to take. For some, choosing their own path risks “the consequences of walking alone” (Weaver, 2012, quoting Bernardin, 2001, p. 23), as is depicted by the road “less travelled by” in Frost’s poem. Weaver further emphasizes that this road symbolizes choices made different from the norm or customary paths of others; a path that has fewer-travelers but may turn out to be more rewarding in the end. This is an interesting perspective to take; that the path most people choose not to take ultimately may lead to a more rewarding outcome.

I arrive at this point fully understanding that the consequences we face in life are contingent upon the decisions we make—a chosen path. However, I am still questioning whether or not these decisions are not themselves influenced by previous lived experience(s). This question takes me back to my own research on values (module 1 for this EdD course), wherein I had charted my personal journey from childhood because I was challenged to discuss the issue of values in research and whether or not there can be ‘value free research’. Milestones along that journey were values concretised by my social, religious, political and academic experiences. I posit, then, that all of us, humankind, are in some ways affected by these and other factors as we journey through life. It therefore begs

the question as to whether any researcher can ‘honestly’ conduct and present findings from a research that is not influenced by their own life experiences and value positions. I also quoted Sikes (2004), speaking to researchers’ positionalities, which made the following claim:

Assumptions of this nature are coloured by values and beliefs that are based in, for instance, political allegiance, religious faith, and experience that are consequent upon social class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, historical and geographical location and so on. ...that the way in which researchers are biographically situated, the consequent perspective they hold and the assumptions which inform the sense they make of the world, inevitably have implications for their research related understandings, belief and values, for the research paradigms they feel most comfortable with, and, thereby, for their research practice. (p. 8)

I have therefore acknowledged that researchers’ ontological and axiological journeys influence their values, the construction of their research projects, and therefore the knowledge they eventually present to the world. It is for this reason that I have framed this discussion within the context of my own experiences as a researcher. By so doing, I can satisfy my own aims for this discussion by agreeing with Banks (1998), who argues that:

[C]ommunities in which individuals are socialized are also epistemological communities that have shared beliefs, perspectives, and knowledge (Banks, 1998 quoting Nelson, 1993), secondly that, Social science and historical research are influenced in complex ways by the life experiences, values, and personal biographies of researchers, thirdly, it is not their experiences per se that cause individuals to acquire specific values and knowledge during their socialization within their ethnic or cultural communities but rather, it is their interpretations of their experiences, and fourthly, how individuals interpret their ... experiences is mediated by the interaction of a complex set of status variables, such as gender, social class, age, political affiliation, religion, and geographical region... (p. 5)

My own reflections have also forced me to think that previous lived experiences, whether consciously or unconsciously, contribute and influence the decisions I have made in my life's journey. It is in a moment of deep reflection that I wrote a poem titled, "Mother and Child", which is a depiction and indication of my own thoughts as it relates to the formation of my own identity. This is not separate or dissimilar from the images that I have come to know and understand, which are rooted in the wider Jamaican society and originating from a colonial legacy which have bastardized all children born out of wedlock. This situation (of bastardy) was not legitimized until the socialist reforms of the 1970s, with the passing of the 'Status of Children's Act' (1976), a situation immortalized in a song done by reggae artiste Neville Martin (1976), titled "No Bastards nuh dey again, everyone lawful".

A thorough review of the social history of Jamaica and an analysis of seminal academic work, such as Clarke's (1999) "My Mother who Fathered Me", in what has been described as the first anthropological study of families social conditions in Jamaica, will show that the majority of children born in Jamaica are to single parent families. To this end, children like myself grew up in an atmosphere of illegitimacy and ostracized by a society that was predominantly African in demographic composition but whose institutions of governance were European and Christian. Clarke (1999):

“...either by reference to the historical facts of slavery or in terms of both the cultures which have contributed to Jamaica's history – the European and the African. Thus the “maternal” family was said to be characteristic of the Jamaican peasants, either because West African society was supposed to have been matriarchal, or because during the period of slavery negro children were solely dependent on their mothers; the existence of concubinage as a socially recognized relationship was accounted for sometimes, as a local version or adaptation of African polygamy and sometimes as a consequence of prohibition or discouragement of marriage between slaves. To many of those who were giving sincere anxious thought to the problem of family in Jamaica, it appear simply as a

European family 'gone wrong' owing to a series of historical events, the chief of which was slavery.

... To many, the different class patterns appear as a choice between two cultural traditions: the European defined in terms of Christian monogamy and stress on the father's role, and the 'African' defined in terms of the maternal family, concubinage, illegitimacy etc." (p. 2)

Hence:

Mother and Child.

For twelve years an only child to a single Mother

In a time when society held that as a bother

I recoiled and hide, but exalted myself in staged pretense

On playgrounds where little bastards showcased their excellence

In adulthood I realized that I was excused

A generation for society my mother had schooled

A path to greatness and leadership was an expectation

To erase society's botheration.

- ***Aldin Bellinfantie (2014)***

It really was not my intention, but I was obliged to write a poem about me. It came spontaneously as I reflected on the process and development of my doctoral thesis and as I struggled with my supervisor to find the best way of (re)presenting 'me' in it. I also had no intention of conducting an ethnographic research, much less one that was auto-ethnographic in nature. Before commencing on this doctoral journey, I proposed at my interview session in May of 2008 that my intentions were to conduct a quantitative research. In fact, I did not even mention the word quantitative, because in my mind there

was no other form of research outcome. Then, I spoke to a research design using a controlled and an experimental sample group. The next question posed to me was: Why this method? In my eagerness to show-off my academic knowledge, staunchly expounded on the rationale for eliminating biases in research. My ego was punctured when, after further questioning and explanation, I was lead to the point of understanding that my knowledge of research and research methodologies was only just beginning.

Within the Jamaican culture in which I was brought up, it is the common belief that a child should outperform his parents professionally, at the very least; achieve a profession that is higher than that of the parents. It is possible a universally accepted fact that most parents would want to see their children do better than they did, particularly in their career development. This position is even more so for someone like me whose parents are descendants of our slavery past. My mother retired as the principal of a primary school, means that my ‘prophetic’ professional path was to achieve a higher status in life. The question is, did I bend to this historical and cultural position or did I, as the traveler in the poem by Frost (1920); “...*I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference...*”. Some persons would say that I symbolically travelled the worn and beaten track as I also became no more than a principal, whilst others would, almost apologetically, say that I took the ‘less travelled track’ by becoming a secondary school principal. I find that this compulsion for higher achievement over the previous generation, has to a great extent dictated my career path, identity and personhood. This is further emphasized in the poem “Mother and Child”, as I was forced to excel as a means of erasing or even hiding my demographic status. I feel, therefore, that though not preordained, my preparation to becoming a school leader began early in my childhood life as a consequence of my family, culture, history and demography.

The Preparation Continues – Training and Development

After my Advanced Level examinations in 1976, my application to the University of the West Indies was late and therefore I was forced into the job market. My intentions were to work for a year, then apply again for entry to do geology, which was my intended course

of study. It so happened that I landed my first job as a pre-trained teacher at a renowned high school in central Jamaica. I taught for a year, liked it, and taught for a second year. By this time, it became clear to me that the teaching profession was my calling. I therefore applied to teachers' college in 1979, got accepted in a three year certificate programme, and graduated as a trained teacher in mathematics education. I taught for seven years as a classroom teacher before going off on my second stint to study in the United Kingdom for my Bachelors' degree in 1986. There (in the UK), I also taught in schools and colleges before returning to Jamaica in 1998. Back in Jamaica, I became immersed in the education system at various levels, working at the level of education officer, as consultant and advisor to the Ministry of Education on various projects and programmes.

All of this prior training and practice, I believe, was really preparing me for my return to the school-room as a principal and it supports Bush's (2011) view that; "Principals are almost invariably drawn from teachers, who gradually acquire leadership and management responsibilities, as their career progresses" (p. 514). He further noted that, "they gradually reduce the classroom work, for which they have been trained, and replace it with leadership and management activities, for which they are often unprepared" (p. 514).

The move back to the school room, took place after a four year stint as an advisor/consultant with the Ministry of Education, advising on school development planning. During this period, I was challenged by many of my colleague educators, but to a greater extent, personally challenged by some innate internal indicator, which caused me to reflect on my role of advising educators, including principals on school development and improvement planning, and yet, I have never personally engaged in or held positions in school administration and management. It therefore calls into question (1) the qualifications and level of preparedness that is necessary to assume the role of a school leader, and (2) whether qualifications and preparedness for leadership are conditioned personal agency, social structure, happenstance, or serendipity. I therefore find myself at the crossroad where I am trying to decide whether my elevation to the position of principalship was due to my own agency of academic training and teaching experience from high school through to the experiences gained in the various positions that I have held in educational establishments. On the other hand, is it due to some social structural

conditions emanating from my socio-demographic, cultural and historical backgrounds as previously mentioned in Clarke's (1999) analysis of the Jamaican family? An in-depth analysis of whether an individual is "born to lead" or "trained to lead" is not the remit of this paper, however, a brief comment is inescapable.

If the former position is considered, where preparedness is a requirement, then, leadership preparation seems to be the way that most countries are now going. Here in Jamaica, the government has been discussing various models for preparing principals for the educational system and has settled on a model since 2012. This is not inconsistent with the efforts of other countries such as England, New Zealand, France and the United States of America (USA), even though it is unique to the interest of the Jamaican school system.

Given this important role of the principal as a leader, Bush (2008), argues:

[T]he development of effective leaders should not be left to chance. It should be a deliberate process designed to produce the best possible leadership and management for schools...., 'leadership must grow by design not by default', an implicit recognition that school leadership is a different role from teaching and requires separate and specialized preparation. (p. 125)

I do not pretend nor have I ever been assigned the title of a 'born' leader; however, I have been described by others as a being 'destined' to become a leader. This description has been assigned to me from as early as fifteen years of age when I became president of the youth fellowship group in my local church, and captain of my school's cross country team. By the age of seventeen, I was all that plus captain of the athletics team, coordinator of the debating society, and president of the student council. On reflection, having attended one of Jamaica's elite grammar schools in the early 1970s, it is my belief that having sprung demographically from the lower socio-economic strata of the society along with the appendage of being a 'bastard', I had to work hard to prove myself and earn those positions. Hence, it is the accumulation of hard work (both academically and work experiences) that has fortified, and propelled me into leadership.

Stops, Commas and Hyphens – Personal Episodes

My story involved many pauses on my journey, but at no time were these pauses akin to a ‘full stop’. In my own mind the ‘full stop’ seems to be final, almost like death, with no future. I have, however, paused to make decisions and determinations as to which way to go. I have paused like commas to rest, refresh and gain strength for the next stage in the journey. There are also hyphens, where I have paused to give help to others, fallen [personally] with exhaustion and helped up by others, and struggled through difficult periods (waylaid and ambushed). All these constitute episodes in my life story and personal journey. These episodes are also indicative of Smith and Sparke’s (2008), comment that, “...as part of the ‘narrative turn’ in the social sciences, a growing number of scholars of various stripes have come to suggest that we live in a story-shaped world (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988; Sarbin, 1986; Somers, 1994; Taylor, 1989)” (p. 5). Smith and Sparke went on to say that “[a]n important insight coming out of this ontological position and wide-ranging literature is that our lives are storied and identity is narratively constructed” (p. 5).

As this research is about leadership, particularly school leadership, it calls into question the type of persona, personhood or identity that is required for leadership. I have so far focused on addressing issues of identity formation which impacts leadership, particularly my journey into leadership. I will not get into a review of the different forms and styles of leadership at this point, as that is not my focus, neither is it important to determine the criteria for leadership; however, it is of great importance to determine the nature of that leadership. I say nature, because ‘nature’ is defined by the Concise Oxford Dictionary (2008) as ‘the basic or inherent features, qualities or character of a person...Inborn or hereditary characteristics as an influence on determinant of personality’. If we then assume that ‘all persons are born equal’ (and not everyone makes this assumption), then we must presume that their final disposition in life is as a result of environmental conditions which is the accumulation of the social, the demographic, the economics, the cultural and everything else that contribute to their stature in life. This being the case, I will posit that

leadership characteristics are inherent and reside in all persons, but are demonstrated through the experiences gained over life's journey. It must stand to reason then, that leadership that is depicted by personality or is identified in the persona of individuals is original and authentic. Original because it is natural, (coming out from the 'nature' of the person) and authentic (reflecting one's true self). I hasten to say here that and at the risk of repeating myself, that; "we are looking at a crucial 'mediating membrane' or a 'point of refraction' between external structure and personal agency" (Goodson, 2013, p. 7). Because the life stories are told differently under different conditions and therefore the story of a great leader can be told from a different view point to depict the same person as a poor leader. In other words, not everyone will be depicted as a good leader.

Having gone through several punctuated pauses in my journey, each in its own right, I would consider an episode, a chapter or short story with its own ending and which when put together forms the component parts of my total life story. One episode was significant to be recounted here.

It started in 2003. I had just completed a three year contract as an advisor/consultant to the Jamaican Ministry of Education. I was employed by the University of Wolverhampton, which had won the tender/contract for a project sponsored by the United Kingdom's (UK) Department for International Development (DFID), to develop and implement intervention in low performing government All-Age schools. The job paid very well and I was a satisfied and comfortable provider for my family. The project ended in 2003 after three years and I gained new employment directly with the Government of Jamaica in a similar position, only this time working in Inner city schools, whilst the other project was with rural All-Age schools. I was still feeling quite satisfied even though this new project paid me in Jamaican Dollars whilst the first one operated by The University of Wolverhampton paid me in British Pounds Sterling. I was still comfortable because I had put away enough savings from the first project, or that was what I thought.

Six months into this work, several circumstances happened, which collectively used up all my savings. Chief amongst these was the fact that the new project was based in the Capital, Kingston, which meant that I had to live away from home and therefore committed to paying both a rent along with a mortgage. Secondly, my car developed engine problems which were so severe, I had to dispose of it and purchase a new one. Hence, in what seemed like a short period in my life, events conspired against me. In the context of my culture, Christian belief, my 'Jamaicaness', and personhood, manhood, and identity as the chief breadwinner for my family were left very exposed. This nakedness created extreme stress for the first time in my life, so much so that in May 2004, eight months into the job, I was diagnosed with type II diabetes. Before I was diagnosed, I did not realize what was happening to me. I was experiencing fatigue and frequent bouts of sleepiness and low libido. This was so extreme that my marriage also came under extreme pressure which in retrospect also contributed to my stress and invariable my diabetes. I therefore took action to deal with the situation by deciding to return home and find a job near home.

While all this was happening to me, my daughter passed the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) and gained entry to an excellent high school in Montego Bay. This also meant that her transition needed both parents to be home with her as she had a history of being unsettled in transitioning from one school to another. Being home and not having to travel every weekend to and from Kingston was helpful to my stress level. What didn't help was the emotional void in my marriage caused from the physiological damage due to my diabetes ailment.

Another event that added to the confluence of circumstances was the opening of seventeen new schools in Western Jamaica, the first four of which opened at a time when I was looking for work back at home; the school that I became principal of was one of those four. This, plus all the other things seemed to come together in a manner that was depicting some sort of manifest fulfilment.

I felt compelled to narrate this episode which covered a period of ten years from my life, not only because it represents a compass, helping to give directions to my journey, but it is also a sort of barometer, giving meaning and relevance to my own [present] existence.

It is also emotive and emotional for me, which caused a pause in my journey. For others, it could easily have been a 'full stop', yet for me it was merely a 'comma' for reorientation and to move on to my new beginnings. Moving on was not to ignore my nakedness and vulnerability in the circumstances, but was more an effort to ensure therapy for my next episode.

It is with all this in mind that I gained strength not only as a person but also for the leadership role I was eventually committed to, through this therapy of telling my life stories. It also reinforces the concept of the authentic leader which is defined by Shamir and Eilam (2005) as: "Having, among other things, self-knowledge and self-concept clarity ... they achieve such knowledge and clarity through the development of a life-story" (p. 402).

Leaders' life-stories are self-narratives. According to Gergen & Gergen, (1986), self-narratives "refer to the individual's account of the relationships among self-relevant events across time. In developing a self-narrative the individual attempts to establish coherent connections among life events. Rather than seeing one's life as simply 'one damned thing after another' the individual attempts to understand life events as systematically related. They are rendered highly intelligible by locating them in a sequence or 'unfolded process'. One's present identity is thus not a sudden and mysterious event, but a sensible result of a life-story. (p. 255) (p. 402)

I want to further posit that life's episodes and eventualities do not just happen in isolation. They are individual pieces of a jigsaw puzzle which, if and when it is put together, makes an intricate whole. It is the 'I' in all of us that needs to be conscious enough to fit the (life's) puzzle together and it is usually when we exhale that we see and come to terms

with our dilemma. We sometimes exhale only after near choking on our problems, mostly because we are fearful to expose our vulnerability and nakedness, or because we are inhibited by the methods that are available to us, through which we may gain insight and therapy. In this respect, performance through narrative text (which itself can take many forms) is one such method. This method that has so far been adopted by this research, as narrative, is also framed around identity formation which directly impacts on leadership development and which invariably cascades down to influence organizations and institutions. A closer and more insightful examination is therefore necessary to look at how narrative is used to frame a ‘narrative self’, impressing upon identity formation and further impressing upon leadership with its authenticity for institutional development, such as the school.

Sparrowe’s (2005) analysis of Ricoeur (1992, p. 142) asserts that:

Narrative identity thus is not simply the recounting of the temporal sequence of events in one’s life, one thing after another. Rather, it is to portray the ‘whys’ of one’s life if not by means of a ‘causal’ explanation, then through an accounting of how those events are related. That is, emplotment binds contingent events together into a comprehensible narrative (“discordant concordance”) that leads from beginning to ending. (p. 142)

Sparrowe (2005) later refers to Ezzy (1998, p. 245), who offers a somewhat more accessible account of how emplotment synthesises events in Ricoeur’s thought:

Events, which just happen, are transformed into episodes that take their place in a unified singular story. Episodes do not just happen, they carry the story along. Events can appear discordant until they are integrated and made sense of in the story. Hence Ricoeur refers to a concordant discordance. Plot is the organizing theme of a narrative. It weaves together a complex set of events into a single story. (p. 427)

My suggestion earlier in this research of a ‘confluence of events’ leading to a ‘manifest fulfilment’ is akin to Sparrowe’s (2005), Ezzay’s (1998) and Ricoeur’s (1984, 1985, 1988) analysis of ‘episodes’ and ‘emplotment’ weaved into a single life history/story. I, therefore, conclude that all the events in my life leading up to 2004, the point at which I began my principalship are a set of events, episodes and plots that have weaved themselves into the framework of my life’s picture. My identity, particularly my identity as a leader, which is put under the microscope and which is the summation of all that is ‘me’, expressed through my self-awareness, self-confidence and self-esteem, becomes and is presented to the real and narrated world as an ‘authentic self’.

In my original proposal for this research, I clearly stated that my intention was to, from an insider’s viewpoint, document my life’s journey as a principal, using the qualitative methodology of autoethnography. I explained that, while I recognize that every school has its distinct ethos, cultural and climate, the reflective analysis and evaluation provided by the method of autoethnography should greatly facilitate an understanding of the events that occurred along the journey and the processes involved in a school’s evolution.

I have also embraced the methodology of performance text and the use of poetry to engage my readers in an effort to get them to feel what I feel, for ‘my(self)’ to become a part of ‘them(selves)’, or the ‘I’ to become the ‘other’. Hence, this research is intended to, among other things, contribute, as Humphreys (200) states

...in his advocacy of autoethnographic vignettes as a means of enhancing the representational richness and reflexivity of qualitative research. A personal story of career...is used to illustrate how research accounts enriched by the addition of autoethnographic details can provide glimpses into what Van Maanen called “the ethnographer’s own taken-for-granted understandings of the social world under scrutiny,” ... (p. 840).

I have made every attempt to ensure that my story is a 'good one' and not embellished in anyway, thereby ensuring that I conform to Doloriert and Sambrook, (2009:35), who appeals to writers and researchers to do "good stories" because;

One's personal experience can overwhelm the study, even though it may not be a good fit . . . In effect, the personal experience derails the inquiry or, at least, seriously impedes it. [A study can be] broadsided by [a self] experience, unwittingly moving away from the immediate focus of the study (p. 35).

I have not only indicated my new found 'love' of performative poetic text in research writing, nut also advocate its use in autoethnography as an approach to (re)presentation, reflections, and reflexivity in qualitative research. In this chapter, I have also looked at narrative as a method for broadly portraying and examining the crisis of identity formation as an issue of leadership and leadership development (particularly as it relates to me). This further addresses autoethnography as "an autobiographical genre of writing and research" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739), reflexivity as "the turning back of an inquiry or a theory or a text onto its own formative possibilities" (Macbeath, 2001, p. 36), and the use of vignettes (stories) that "ask readers to relive the experience through the writer's or performer's eyes" (Denzin, 2000, p. 905).

Conclusions are not yet drawn, but as my story develops and becomes clearer, it is my hope that there will be career implications for leaders, particularly school principals and research academics, especially those facing firstly the "dual crisis of representation and legitimation" (Holt, 2003, p. 17, citing Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), that characterize the professional lives of qualitative researchers. Secondly, for school leaders who have to contend with the issue of School Improvement in a climate where there is also another dual crisis of internal staff frictions combined with an inertia of external mandate of accountability.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ODYSSEY BEGINS – My First Five Years

I make a journey in a paper

A contemplation ink in white field

I make a journey inside the book

Traveling my imagination in the word ocean

□ Maria Sudiby

The First Year – The Conversations

I remembered receiving a call informing me that I had been appointed principal of the new high school in Montego Bay, St James. At the time, I was working at the other end of the Island, in the capital, Kingston, as an education officer with the responsibility for a special government project targeting low performing schools located in the inner cities areas across Jamaica. It is worth noting here that I had just completed the Jamaica All Age School Project (JAASP), a project funded by the United Kingdom (UK) Department for International Development (DFID), which concentrated on rural All Age Schools, which were earlier identified in a World Bank report as the most underperforming schools in the Jamaican education system. Therefore, being called to work on poor performing inner city schools, was the second time in four years that I was being asked by the Ministry of Education to take on the responsibility of directing a project that was targeted at raising the standards of such schools. These, I believe were important training and preparations for the call to the post of principal of a new school.

In recounting my memory of that call and now having looked back with time to reflect on that moment and other conversational moments following that episode (which I intend to document in support of this research), I am forced to examine Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2013) reminder that autoethnographers not only "form part of the representational

processes," [but] are also informed by those processes as the cultural meanings they co-create are constituted in conversations, actions, and texts (p. 73). This, as I said, supports and enhances the position of this thesis as it (conversational analysis) adds to the methodological mix that I have already proposed. In the context of this research, I believe Miller (2016a), citing Ribbins and Marland (1994) also supports this position and when he suggested:

Conversational analysis helps to position the role of principals and research into school leadership firstly, as a situated perspective that gives full access to the views and actions of principals across a range of events and issues; and secondly as a contextualized perspective in action which examines what principals say in the context of what they do. (p. 5)

Therefore my use of the various conversations should not only aid data gathering but should themselves form part of the data that will be analyzed and I believe should provide “readers with a sense of individuality through portrait-base accounts of the individual's concern” (Miller, 2016a, p.5). I hasten to caution that most of these conversations are recounted on reflection and not formal, scheduled one-to-one interactions. They are, however, important informal chronological narrative of my first ten years as principal.

As I write, position will shift and alternate to accommodate my reflections as I try to make sense and salience to my ideas. This shifting position or what I term a ‘reflecting into reflections’ eventually becomes my reflexivity on my own positionality. This is reinforced by Dutta and Basu (2013) account that, “[o]ur conversation is...our positionality as humans/scholars who strive to thrive on hope, compassion, and the pragmatic possibilities of solidarity with the margins of civil society that have been and continue to be erased from so-called civil sites of discourse” (p. 143).

Conversation 1 – Conversation with a Ministry of Education (MOE) official:

This took place after I had submitted my application for the post of principal, but before my interview. I met the MOE official at a function about the middle of 2004.

MOE Official: Mr. Bellinfantie, good afternoon and how are you?

Me: Good afternoon Sir; I am fine and how are you?

MOE Official: I am fine also. I noticed you applied for the post of principal for the new school.

Me: Oh! So you have seen my application?

MOE Official: Yes, and I think you are better suited for the vice principal's position.

Conversation 2 – Speaking to the Regional Director by phone.

The call informing me that I was appointed principal came at about 9.30am on August 10, 2004. I cannot forget that date, because it has caused me to wonder even now,, why that call came so late. The official school year for Jamaica begins on the first Monday of September each year. This was also a new school, therefore, I had to recruit new staff, place new teachers, equip the school, procure instructional material, prepare a school timetable, amongst the many other things that all principals would need to do before the start of a new school year. This conversation took place at the Regional Office of the Ministry of Education. The phone call and subsequent meeting went something like:

Me (answering phone): Hello, good morning, who is this?

MOE (Secretary): Good morning, Is this Mr. Bellinfantie?

Me: Yes, I am.

Secretary: Mr. Bellinfantie, the Regional Director would like to speak to you.

Can you hold let me put you through?

Regional Director (RD): Mr. Bellinfantie, how are you?

Me: I am fine Sir.

RD: Mr. Bellinfantie, let me be the first to congratulate you on being appointed principal.

Me: Thank you Sir.

RD: Can you attend a meeting this afternoon so that I can introduce you to your Chairman and give you some urgent instructions on matters that must be dealt with now? Because as you know school opens in less than three weeks.

Me: OK sir, it is kind of sudden but as you said, the new school year begins in less than three weeks.

After the telephone conversation ended, I left what I was doing to begin preparations for the 2pm meeting. I could not help thinking that calling in a new principal, to start-up a new school, three weeks before the new staff members were appointed and before new students were enrolled, was bordering on carelessness on the part of the MOE or possible a means to test my character and mental tenacity for the task of principalship. My thinking here was based on the comment made by the MOE official in conversation one above, that I may be better suited for the vice principal position. I have always been throughout life, a very

focused and determined individual and not one that becomes easily daunted by difficult assignments, so I quickly dismissed the negative thoughts and instead directed my mind towards positive thinking.

I arrived at the Ministry for the 2pm meeting at approximately 2.10pm. I thought at the time that to be late for the start of a new job was not good, also it was not the right and positive approach to what I considered was a difficult task ahead. I again dismissed the negative thoughts, as being late for an appointment had never stopped me before from getting the job done in a timely manner. So, I went in to see the Regional Director.

Conversation 3 – Meeting with Regional Director

I entered the office of the Regional Director for my meeting. Another man was seated there and I assumed he was going to be taking part in the meeting.

Regional Director (RD): Hello Mr. Bellinfantie, have a seat, please.

Me: Good afternoon Sir, and I apologize for being late.

RD: Mr. Bellinfantie, please meet your Chairman.

Me: (I turned to greet and say hello to my chairman)... hello Sir, glad to meet you.

Chairman (He greeted me in return)... Glad to meet you Sir, and I hope we have a successful working relationship.

RD: Mr. Bellinfantie, as you well know, the new school year is upon us and there are preliminary things that must be done before it begins; especially for the fact that this is a brand new school.

Me: That's so true sir!

RD: The first thing I must give you is this package, (he handed me two large and bulky A3 size manila folders. They were so bulky that they were strapped with elastic bands to prevent the contents from falling out.).

In those folders were applicants or aspirants for the vacant staffing positions at the school.

Me: Sir, I am estimating that each of these folders contains at least fifty applications. At this late stage, what help can the Regional Office offer to speed up the process?

RD: I am glad you asked. I have assigned an education officer to help in the interview process. You, however, must complete the shortlisting process and contact them so the interviews can be done early next week or as soon as you are ready. I am also going to recommend that you employ two temporary staff here at the Regional office as part of your orientation team, in a temporary capacity to help you get started in the short time that you have before school begins. You can decide later if you wish to retain them permanently. I am recommending one to act as your bursar to deal with the immediate financial issues and the other to act as your senior secretary (senior secretary in the Jamaican education system is an executive secretary working directly out of the principal's office. More often referred to as the principal's secretary).

I left the Director's office with a mixture of emotions while deliberating on the task ahead. I started to plan in my mind the journey. What should I do first? Should I go home and start the shortlisting? Should I go and see where the school was and what it looked like? The list of things-to-do continued to lengthen in my mind as I drove out of the Regional Office car park.

I decided to phone my current supervisor at the Ministry of Education in Kingston, to give him the news, although, this would not be news to him as he was the direct supervisor for all the Regional Directors. Hence, he would have known about the appointment of all principals across the country. I, however, thought that it was good manners to formally inform him and ask his advice. His advice was more than necessary as I would need his permission to leave my current post short of the normal one month notice that was required when resigning. Luckily he was in a position where he had the authority to grant this request. He even gave permission for me to remain at the school and prepare for its opening instead of returning to my current post in Kingston. In fact this was a favorable position that I found myself, because there were other senior persons who believed I could not leave my current post short of the required one month's notice.

Again, the thought came to my mind that this situation could exist, where under the same Ministry, with the same leadership, a permission to move from one post to another was being obstructed. Again, it leaves me wondering if this was not a sophisticated planned to stop me from taking up the appointment. Whilst this could also be seen as negative thinking, the confluence of issues, some of which are mentioned in the conversations above, would have left anyone with those thought. These situations, even though, they seemed like obstacles, they kept me constantly aware not only of my position but also of my context. That means I was always in constant reflection, re-evaluating my every move, so that I would always ready to deal with all contested and conflicting situation. This helps me in understanding my positionality in the every shifting spaces that I occupy. I was therefore equipped to deal with situation through the lessons learnt and the awareness and encouragement from Berry, (2013) who concluded:

I dwell in the messiness of hope that shapes the ways we do and become in and across cultural spaces, and as we work to represent and critique those spaces, remembering the reflexive wisdom of the late John T. Warren (2011):

‘Looking back on my career so far, I think about how much time I wasted talking about how burdened I was. And although I have been busy and stressed, I have recently become committed to look for the joy, the wonder, and the true generosity my job enables me to experience. Part of my reflexive work lately is to reframe my labour. Rather than lament the amount of my work or the impact of budget cuts, I aim to celebrate the joy; rather than lead with the negative, I want to live in the positive. I work in a magical place, in a wondrous field of study where intellectuals come to engage each other, we do the work of scholarship, activism, and public engagement and we do it well... (p. 224)

I also found great support in my current supervisor, who was later to be a rock to me, in terms of his guidance and support.

After speaking to my new supervisor, I resolved in my mind that the first thing I would do is visit some schools in and around the area and introduce myself to the principals and request their help and advice as they were in the process of preparing schools for the new school year. One area in which I needed immediate advice and help was in the area of the school’s timetable. I visited three high schools, and also made arrangements to visit two others that were recommended to me by the Regional Director. I got some good advice on how to prepare the timetable from one of the high schools visited. Another principal advised me to keep in touch with colleague principals who were senior and who understood the workings of the Region. All advice was welcomed as it was later found to be of extreme benefit to me in my journey as a principal.

My New Staff Team

I returned home and set to the arduous task of going through the bundle of candidates given to me by the Regional Director. This would be my first task as a principal of my new

school. I started the shortlisting and found out that it was not too difficult as I had originally thought. Due to the fact that I had spent four years at the policy level in the Ministry of Education and knowing that the new direction of the ministry since 1996, was to have all teachers in the system qualified at the degree level instead of the current diploma level. It therefore was an easy task to first select degree trained teachers and only when no suitable candidate was found, that diploma trained teachers were considered. No certificate trained persons were considered and therefore the pile of applicants were significantly reduced on my first phase of shortlisting.

Let me inject a word of note at this point. Seventeen (17) new schools were built and opened in Western Jamaica between 2004 and 2008, of which seven (7) were high schools. Of the seven principals appointed to lead the high schools, three (3) were principals of primary schools, two (2) were vice principals of established high schools, one (1) was a lecturer in a college, and the other (me) was an education officer working at the Ministry of Education's central office in Kingston. I mentioned this, because in talking to my other colleagues, only in the two schools where the principals were previous administrators of high schools (vice principals) did they not have a high level of leadership concerns. The first thing they did not do was to take the bundle of aspiring applicants given to them by the Ministry. Their rejection of the bundle and conducted their own advertisement for their teachers. This action by those experienced school administrators was also an enlightening late discovery for me, however, it is important to mention a comment made by one of these seasoned administrators:

“I had been a vice principal for many years, supervising staff and being in charge of the timetable and the curriculum. I, therefore, knew what I was looking for and therefore what to advertise for. I also did not want any teacher who was seasoned in his or her ways, who was looking for a senior position in the new school. I employed only young teachers, mainly just out of college, who I would train as the seasoned and experienced persons in the school. Any new knowledge that I needed should be only policy directions out of the ministry and not administrative advice from within. The Ministry was upset with me for not using their recommendation

of aspiring applicants, but that didn't bother me" (comments of a colleague principal in conversation with me).

I did not have this insight and therefore, some of the issues, concerns and obstacles I faced, on reflection, were due to this lack of insight. More will be said about this, in subsequent chapters of this research.

I laboriously trolled through a second phase of shortlisting and arrived at my final list of persons to call for an interview. The interviews were set for the following week, starting Monday, August 16, 2004. It was my hope that along with the two recommendations from the Ministry who were selected as bursar and senior secretary, the appointed academic staff team would come on board to help with the placing of students, creating the timetable and preparing other matters for the smooth start of the academic year.

I conducted the interviews with the help of personnel from the Ministry. I only found out after, that this person was not an education officer, as was promised by the Regional Director. Seventeen eager academic staff members were appointed to start the ball rolling for September 1, 2004. The acting bursar, the acting senior secretary and I interviewed and appointed five (5) administrative and seven (7) ancillary workers. They were only too eager to begin work as soon as they got words of their appointment. One person even loaned us a computer to begin the registration process as the equipment for the school had not yet arrived. Only the furniture, desks and chairs for students and tables and chairs for teachers, were in place. Equipment to support the curriculum was not yet in place.

My First Set of Students

Having employed the complement of staff, we got down to placing the students in groups. The Ministry sent us a list with 246 grade seven students, who had just passed their Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT), at the primary school level. We also later received 210 grade nine students, who had also just passed their Grade Nine Achievement Test (GNAT), coming from the All Age and the Junior High Schools. The GNATs proved to be

very difficult as these were students who were not prepared for high school three years earlier at the GSAT level and were held back and given remedial “catch up” work. They joined the high school system at grade nine with the expectations that they had caught up. Therefore, the total number of students registered in 2004 at the school was four hundred and fifty six (456).

Everyone worked long hours to ensure all was prepared. Some worked on student placement while others worked on the timetable, and still, others worked on the aesthetics of the school and the grounds. The hard work was however worth it, as it not only got the job done but created and developed relationships among the new staff team.

The school year officially began on the first of September each year, and the first school day is usually the first Monday of September. Hence, Monday, the sixth of September, 2004, the school received its first set of students. The students proudly entered their new school; the girls dressed in their lavender tunics and white blouses, while the boys were outfitted in their lavender shirts and khaki trousers.

Meeting With the School Board

I met with the Board of Management for the first time on the twenty-fifth of October, 2004. Following, is an extract from that meeting. The Jamaican law dictates that matters discussed at Board meetings should remain confidential, therefore, I have removed all details to protect members of the Board except matters that were presented in my report as the principal and which are pertinent to the system and not directed at any particular individual. The extract is included as it gives a good reflection of the issues and concerns that existed at the time of the initial opening of the school and the policies and procedures that were the focus for the new management in the first year. I have also anonymized the school by removing its actual name from this research even though my identity and events will to an extent make identity of both school and other individuals somewhat possible. This situation cannot be allowed to hinder scholarly research and therefore, I remain

cognizant that, "...inquiry begins having already begun, with a confluence of past, present, and anticipated future influences informing any given moment" (Berry, 2013, p. 211).

Conversation 4 – (Extract from the minutes of First Board Meeting):

As Board meeting minutes are confidential material, the extracts are restricted to include only matters that I have presented or that have been raised in relations to my report to the Board.

The principal, reported that to date there are four hundred and fifty-seven (457) students on roll. There is however, grave concern with the achievement level of students that were placed at the school. The school was set up to model the traditional high school, however, the achievement levels of students did not reflect that of those that were placed in other traditional high schools. There is therefore a great challenge for both the teachers and students themselves. The chairman, therefore, suggested that the students be tested to determine their readiness for their grade level and the report be presented to the Ministry. This is to support any request for more assistance from the ministry.

The principal also reported that there is the intention to market the school to the primary schools so that the school will be seen as a "School of Choice". He reported that he had visited three primary schools to date and that there is the plan to produce brochures to send to schools.

He further reported that the school was in need of teachers for three subject areas: Music, Visual Arts, and Information Technology.

He went on to state that he was in receipt of a letter from the Ministry stating that only seventeen teachers were allowed on the establishment. A letter of response is to be sent indicating the need that now exists, as well as indicating the student/teacher ratio.

The problem of indiscipline among the students who were mainly coming from certain communities were also discussed by the principal.

On the matter of discipline among staff members, the principal reported that two teachers were spoken to concerning their dress code, punctuality and poor class management.

In his report, mention was made of nine clubs that were expected to start operating in the school. The question was asked about a tourism club, especially since the school is in the most popular tourist area of Jamaica. He reported that this club was slated to start next year.

Three students were presently serving ten days suspensions. Issues such as smoking of marijuana, possession of a knife and a fight were the reasons for the suspensions. There was a strong feeling expressed that the boys be given harsher punishments, and expulsion is to be seen as an option. However, the principal cautioned that there needed to be careful interpretation of the code as it relates to students, so that correct procedures are followed when carrying out disciplinary actions, especially with actions off the school compound and outside of school hours were concerned. Since the students had been suspended, there seemed to be a change in the behaviour of the students. It was suggested that the Child Development Agency (CDA) be approached about the indiscipline of the students.

The question was asked as to whether a training programme existed in the Ministry to help teachers to deal with problem students.

It was then suggested that a mentorship programme be started in the school. Each month a speaker could be invited to share with the students. In implementing this programme, it was suggested that small groups be targeted as this would be more effective in a small group setting.

Conversation 5 – Conversation with a Board Member

This conversation took place during lunch at a Chamber of Commerce function to which I was invited by the Board member. The invitation was given after the first Board meeting and was based on the fact that since the school was the newest school in the Montego Bay, St. James area, it would be useful for the principal to meet and be introduced to members of the business community. It was also based on my suggestion that the school should be marketed as a “School of Choice” in Western Jamaica.

Board member: Principal, what is happening at the Ministry?

Me: What do you mean?

Board Member: After your interview and your selection, I was approached on several occasions to change that decision by a MOE official.

Me: Oh!

Board Member: It was only after I threatened them with my resignation that the official stopped insisting that I change my decision.

Me: Oh, I see

Board Member: All I am expecting of you as the Chief Executive Officer and Lead Instructor, is that you carry out your duties with honesty and integrity. You are the educator, I am not, and therefore I will lean on you for educational recommendations on which to act. As a businessman, I have more knowledge of the financial and accounting matters. I will therefore keep an eagle’s eye on such matters and leave the curriculum matters to you.

At the end of the meeting I was left feeling confident that my chairman was someone who understood his role as policy manager and was not going to be involved in the day to day affairs of the school. This was in keeping with my expectations, as there were loud voices from within the education sector in Jamaica and from elsewhere across the world, some of which I have referenced in my review of literature on the policy prescriptive environment, that a positive relationship between principals and Boards is important for the effective operations of school. My level of comfort was, however, short lived as the chairman resigned after four months, citing personal commitment to his private company that needed more attention and to do so would not allow for the type of commitment required for the effective management of a new school.

Positioning for School Development

Previous to my appointment to the post of principal, I worked on helping underachieving schools improve their performances. My main task in this was to drive the school development and or improvement process. Therefore, I had come to this job as principal with a wealth of experience in school development planning. I prided myself at being an ‘expert’ at this and as being seen as an adviser and consultant to ministries of education and governments in the area. Hence, having advised education ministries and school principals at all levels on how to conduct developmental and improvement processes in schools, I was keen on proving that it was not just theoretical knowledge that I could offer but that I was also skilled at the task. Hence because it was intimated in the first conversation set out above, that certain ministry officials viewed that I needed to prove myself as a principal. It seemed, therefore, that I not only had to prove to myself but also to others looking on, I also had to show that I was, ‘the man for the job’ and that I was also an ‘excellent’ principal.

The Ministry of Education here in Jamaica set out in 2000 to develop a process of school development planning for all its schools. Several international projects were operating within the ministry, funded by different sources, all with the objective of school

improvement. The three main ones were the “New Horizons Project”, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Jamaica All-Age School’s Project (JAASP), funded by the United Kingdom (UK) Department for International Development, and another project funded by the Inter-American Development Bank focused on improvements in the Technical Schools in Jamaica. All three models, as with most development planning models had similar objectives even if their processes were ordered differently. To that extent, the ministry examined all the competing models to find the best fit for Jamaican schools. An attempt was made to combine them in order to arrive at that best fit. However, the JAASP model was in the end adopted in its entirety with some minor additions from other models. I am privileged to have been a part of the team that developed the plan for the JAASP model and so I came to the job of principal with unique skills, expertise and insights in school development planning.

Throughout this research I have used the words school improvement plan (SIP) interchangeably with school development plan (SDP) in relation to the strategic planning that is done in schools to have overall positive, sustainable and impactful changes on student educational standards. The school I was appointed to lead is a unique case, in that it is a new school, and so I have confined the use of the word ‘development’ to the first planning cycle which initially was for five years, but which ended after three years. After that initial three years, all other planning cycles have been referred to as ‘improvements’. I, therefore, adopted the JAASP model which I believed fits well within the context of this new school.

Rationale for the School’s SDP Process

I believe that past experiences is the mother of future endeavours. It is on our past and the path we previously walked that we are able to confidently step out and make the correct steps that will lead us in the ‘right’ direction and to make the ‘right’ decisions. Hence, with the experience from my previous work, combined with the advice that “Privacy of practice

produces isolation; isolation is the enemy of improvement” (Tenuto, 2014, p. 4, citing Elmore, 2000, p. 20), I was encouraged as a new principal to create the right atmosphere, which will support collaboration and professional collegiality in the workplace. I made sure, therefore, that the process of School Development Planning promoted was designed to foster a close relationship between the school and all its stakeholders through the consultation and participation process. Learning Goals and Action Strategies were set with and by the stakeholders of the school community rather than for them.

I had over several years, developed a particular position on the method and processes of School Development Planning, and this is similarly and effectively articulated in Flett et al (2004) which shows that:

“This approach to planning develops a wider sense of ownership that leads to a greater determination to achieve the goals through motivated implementation of the strategies. It also carries the potential to raise awareness of what it is possible to achieve when everyone works together towards a common vision, and thus mobilise school communities into action beyond the original scope of their plan” (p. 61)⁷.

To this end, a ‘School Action Team’ (SAT) was formed. This team included a representative from stakeholder groups, including the PTA and student body.

In my model of school development planning, I introduced the Fletts et al (2004) new concept of a “RIGHT” goal instead of the usual “SMART” goal. **RIGHT** goals according

⁷ The School Development Planning process was developed by the Jamaica All Age School Project. A project funded by the Department of International Development, United Kingdom (DFID-UK) and managed by the University of Wolverhampton. Three technical advisor were appointed to the project to deal with the project’s three main objectives which were, (1) School Improvement Planning, (2) Numeracy and Literacy and (3) Community Participation. Each advisor had geographical responsibility for two Education Regions and therefore took on responsibilities for all the project’s objectives within their regions. I was directly responsible for Community participation but had to be integrally involved in the development and execution of objective one and two. Similarly for the other advisors. Patt Flett was directly responsible for School Development Planning. It is this plan to which I also claim authorship that I adopted for the school.

to Flett et al, (2004, p. 61) were:

- R** - [R]efined as a result of drawing all the desired achievements into realistic statements.
- I** - [I]dentified from interrogating data (analysis of past exam results, attendance and other data.
- G** - [G]athered from all stakeholders
- H** - [H]ighlight student achievement and personal development
- T** - [T]imed to be completed and maintained within the period of the plan

This concept followed throughout as the pillow on which the plan was based. Therefore, other aspects of the plan such as, the vision statement and the mission statement were considered to be 'RIGHT'. However, the plan then defined Indicators as the conditions that signal success; the yardstick against which I would measure the extent to which the goals have been achieved. In general, therefore, Indicators of Success (IoS) were defined as **SMART**, which meant:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Timed

The Workshop Process

I decided that all staff and particularly the Heads of Departments (HODs) who would be trained with these materials as it was my belief that training all the school's stakeholders to become involved in the SIP would strengthened the planning process Even if they were not included in the training, I ensured that due emphasis was made of their role in the planning

and implementation process throughout the workshop sessions.

Materials were provided for 5 sessions over two days. It was envisaged that for greater effectiveness there should be a period of 14 to 21 days between each session, to enable all stakeholders to carry out specific School Improvement Planning activities. The materials were therefore written to accommodate this. However, due to the urgency and time constraints they were adapted to meet the requirements of a continuous 5 sessions over two days.

The areas covered in each session of the workshop were as follow:

session One	◆	Forming School Action Team (SAT)	
	◆	Carrying out a stakeholder analysis	
	◆	Gathering perceptions on the relationship between school and community	
	◆	Shared Vision	
session Two	◆	Review: forming SAT	
	◆	Stakeholder analysis	
	◆	Developing shared vision	
	◆	Gathering and analysing data	Enabling
	◆	Setting Learning Goals for the school and community	participation of all stakeholders
session Three	□	Review: school community participation in the process & Learning Goals	
	◆	Developing and refining Action Strategies	
session Four	□	Review: school community participation in the process & Action Strategies	
	◆	Developing an Implementation Plan	
session Five	◆	Review: problems and challenges faced so far	
	◆	Evaluating the process and content of SIP	

The Workshop Approach

The workshop was also planned to be participatory, with participants engaging in tasks to develop the skills and knowledge they will need for their School Development Planning process. The workshop approach was based on the belief that people learn best when:

- ◆ their schematic knowledge is used
- ◆ they are actively involved in creating new knowledge
- ◆ they are challenged in a supportive environment
- ◆ they see connections between what they already know and do, and the new
- ◆ they see a purpose for learning, that it is something they can ‘use’
- ◆ they enjoy it

Input for the sessions came from the participants themselves, and learning came from their active involvement in a range of tasks related to either conceptual understanding, or skills for the activities they needed to carry out. The average person immediately forgets 50% of what they have heard, and, for this reason, there was no place for ‘telling’ the participants what they should do or know.

A range of feedback strategies were employed to give participants the opportunity to share their ideas and where appropriate, evaluate what they had done in their tasks. The emphasis was on participants giving each other feedback, and with me as the facilitator for the workshop, it helped to draw ideas together.

Approval of School Improvement Plan

It is the role of the School Board to approve the School Development Plan (SDP), however, in the initial stages, since the school was new, I thought that they would need the support of the Education Officer (EO) in evaluating it. Therefore, the EO was also invited

to participate in the development process. The plan after its approval by the Board was presented to the MOE for a final approval, and registering the school as having a strategic direction and road map for development.

Vision, Ethos and School Culture

In the planning stages of the development of a school, one of the important consideration should always be the establishment of an inclusive and sustainable cultural environment. School culture is an “integral component of the school improvement process [because] it affects decisions throughout all phases of that process” (Zhu, Devos & Tondeur, 2013, p. 14).

In fact, it is argued that it infiltrates every facet of the school operation and so affects the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about or avoid talking about, whether or not they seek out colleagues for help, how teachers feel about their work and their students, and how students feel about the school (Zhu et al 2013, p. 1, citing Deal & Peterson, 1999). It is therefore of great importance in the development this inclusive and sustainable environment that all stakeholders should be involved. Furthermore, because the school’s main focus is on teaching and learning, with expectations of academic excellence, it is the view that the principal should promote a school vision, mission and culture that is pivoted around “learning for both students and staff, and that measures learning by improvement in instruction and in the quality of student learning.” (Miller, 2016a, p. 23)

Hence, the entire school development process involving all stakeholders took place in November of 2004, and a draft document was ready for presentation to the Board of Management, by the January 2005 Board meeting. Refinements were suggested before being sent to the MOE for final approval. With this road map now in place, there was the need for it to be operationalised. Arising out of this process was the task of articulating a vision and mission for the new school, which I hoped would also help in the process of developing a unique school culture.

The final document signaled the first version of the School Development Plan 2004–2009, and the fruit of considerable, and highly valued, consultation amongst many stakeholders and interested parties. I was most grateful for that input. The process took some nine (9) months and this was the result of much informal discussion and reflection amongst all sections of staff, pupils, parents and Governors. The formal phase of internal consultation began in November 2004 with the publication of a training manual and the presentation of ideas at the workshop. Consultation and planning sessions were then held with committees and departments between January and April 2005, in order to come up with a micro plan for each section of the School. The School Board then finally ratified the final version at its June meeting.

The plan was finally commended to all stakeholders when all matters of principle were firmly established, along with all the requirements of flexibility of approach, of flexibility of time-scale and of accountability in responding to the changing needs of the school. Against this background, the School Development Plan 2004 – 2009, was operationalized as a helpful and credible document laying out clearly a multitude of areas requiring our attention over the next five years.

The School of Choice

My vision to lead a ‘School of Choice’ developed or was conceived first out my experience in a previous life working whilst living in London during the Thatcher era of the 1990s when the concept or policy of ‘Funders and Providers’ was developed. Out of this policy came the idea of ‘Fund Holder Trust’ in which schools were allowed to opt out of Local Authority control and operate by direct funding from central government. This is not the subject of this thesis, but only to say that I was intrigued by the concept. My intrigue grew as I later worked in Jamaica on improving underperforming schools. This grew further in later years with my work in the Cayman Island, when I was introduced to the concept of ‘Schools of the Future’, which, in my opinion, is an advance on the concept of ‘Schools of Choice’.

The collective views on these types of school is that, involvement and participation in them revolves around a high degree of trust. Parents, in particular, choose these schools for their children because of the schools' history of excellence especially in teaching and learning and invariable in the high degree of student performance. They therefore develop a level of trust in these schools. Trust in schools is perceived as an essential resource that contributes to school effectiveness. High levels of trust improve school efficiency, enhance students' academic performance, and have a significant influence on cooperation among different actors in the school (Strier and Katz, 2016, p. 366, citing Mitchell et al., 2008). In their research about ethical climate and parental involvement in school, Rosenblatt and Peled (2003) claim that, "for parents to be engaged in school on the basis of cooperation, they must have some level of trust in school" (cited in Strier and Katz, 2016, p. 367). The school therefore began with much zeal and from the very outset was rooted in a vision to become the 'school of choice' for Western Jamaica and particularly for the parish of Saint James and the city of Montego Bay; providing a ladder to successful adult life for all our students, by offering secure and supported progression from age eleven to eighteen and equipping them to make informed career choices. To this end the school took on the motto;

“Certando Enim Vertis...Numquam prementibus” – (Latin Translation)

“Striving for Excellence...Never Yielding” – (English Translation)

And a Mantra which pronounces;

“Discipline...the Hallmark of Success”

A Vision statement which states:

“Transforming Ideals Into Reality”

A Mission statement which charts:

“The mission of the School, in partnership with parents and community, is to provide a challenging academic and supportive social-emotional environment that enable learners and workers to develop their fullest potential as they prepare to meet the demands and opportunities of a rapidly changing world”

All these were labels which we hoped would help the new school to become focused on fulfilling its dream of becoming a “School of Choice”. We were not disappointed, because a telephone call from an official at the Ministry’s head office in Kingston, in June 2007, after the GSAT results were published, to let me know that based an analysis of the students who chose to attend the school, we were designated a “School of Choice”.

Building Relationships

Building relationships is not a difficult task if the participants in that relationship are working towards similar goals and objectives. Hutton (2016b), citing Leithwood (2005) and speaking about the effective school leadership emphasized nine specific practices which are the drivers for accomplishing three general indicators of success, which are: setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization. In all three there is the indication that relationship building is a requirement. For example, setting directions requires creating a shared vision in order to establish a sense of purpose and building consensus regarding set goals and objectives. Developing people requires collaboration with colleagues, while redesigning the organization also requires a high degree collaboration, professional collegiality and a participatory approach involving all stakeholders (Hutton 2016b, p. 167).

Therefore, as I began my odyssey as principal at this new school, relationship building was immediately a main focused. The focus was on the students and parents, the community which surrounds the school, the members of staff, and the Ministry of Education itself.

In terms of the students, we were not given the best of the GSAT and worst, we were given a poor set of GNAT students. The GSAT students averaged forty six (46) percentage

points, while the GNAT came with even lower averages. In fact, when assessed, we found that over sixty six (66) students from the cohort of 246 GSAT and 210 GNAT were reading at least three levels below their grade level. I had to seek immediate intervention by requesting a specialist teacher to help the school in this area. Getting a specialist teacher to deal with the academic deficiencies was the easy part. What was most difficult to overcome were the negative behaviours of the students. Most of the students came from the inner city communities of the Greater Montego Bay area. At the time, a number of rival gangs had developed in many of these inner city communities. The level of violence perpetrated by these gangs spilled over into the school system and caused an escalation of violent behavior among the student population. Gang-related violence in schools generally became so prevalent and disturbing that it expanded beyond the education ministry and eventually caught the attention of the National Security Ministry. To this end, the ministry had to set up a special police team to deal with the high level of violence in St. James. Along with the direct intervention of the police, were community initiatives in the form of the St. James Peace Management Initiative (PMI) as a mediation body working with the various communities.

Schools in the parish of St. James came under extreme pressure as many of the students were domiciled in the communities. Principals, teachers and school counselors were caught up in much of the gang warfare as the students, particularly the boys, who sometimes brought the issues into the classrooms. Schools spent a lot of time mediating between rival communities in trying to help to protect their students instead of doing their main task of teaching. The school, even though situated on the outskirts of the city of Montego Bay in a sub-urban neighbourhood, was still affected, as over eighty percent (80%) of its students came from the twenty eight (28) inner city problem plagued communities. The surrounding community in which the school was built, had less than five percent (5%) of students attending the school.

The type of students the school received in its first cohort was also not academically inclined and was also a prime target as well as they were some students who became recruits for the gangs. I, therefore, spent much of my first three years working in communities, on the streets, at bus terminals and visiting homes to get students to come to

school and invariably building relationships with these entities. As the school representative on the PMI, I was able to get first hand understanding of communities' issues and therefore was better able to deal with them at the school level. The situation was so extreme that it is best related by the following conversation I had with two boys one afternoon after school:

Conversation 6: With Two Boys:

1st. Boy: Sir, can I speak to you?

Me: Yes, how can I help?

2nd. Boy: Sir, Miss wants us to stay back for detention but we can't do it Sir.

1st. Boy: And we know sir that if we don't she will report it to you, so we come to you sir.

Me: But why can't you do the detention?

1st. Boy: Because we are on duty sir.

Me: What duty?

2nd. Boy: (hesitantly) ... we are on community duty sir. The Big Men have gone to Kingston to collect them things and we are left to guard the community.

The implication here was that the gang leaders for their community had gone to get guns and ammunition, a situation which disturbed me greatly, because these two boys were only fifteen years old at the time. I immediately made up my mind to confront the gang and demand that they not involve the students. That evening, I met with one of the boys'

mother and told her about the conversation with her son and asked that she speak to the gang leader about using her son as a young recruit. If she was afraid of doing so, she was to set up a meeting with the leader and me. In the end, she reported to me that the gang leader had told her to let me know that he would desist from engaging the students at the school. Even though I was comforted by this response, I couldn't help but wonder about the many other students from schools around the country who were used in this way and who would eventually become recruits for gangs. The two boys with whom I had the conversation, were eventually expelled from the school, for unrelated reasons. One of them was killed by members of another gang about a year later.

To help build lasting relationships with the students, the school set up various clubs and societies, targeting behaviour, academic, citizenship and values and attitudes, in a bid to ensure that the students left school well prepared as valued members of society. As a result, other than the student council, which dealt with student governance, many other clubs were formed to help mold the students into "good citizens". These co-curricular activities also helped the students to relate to their teachers on a different level, other than the usual strict classroom environment.

The school's guidance and counseling department also developed contacts with families along with the school welfare committee, which was formed to help needy students (mainly those falling outside the government strict guidelines for welfare support) and other support apparatus helped to build lasting relations with the school.

The relation with and among a small staff team of seventeen academic, five administrative and seven ancillary members was quickly established. They gelled together very quickly and coalesced around the set goals and objectives of the school.

It was clear from the outset, based on the first conversation above, that the relationship between the ministry and the school was never going to be bright and flowery. This however, should never be a constraint against effective and successful leadership. As Miller (2016a) noted, schools operate in two broad policy environment, the internal and the external and both of which can be as volatile as they can be unpredictable (p. 80). However, I think it the acumen and skills demonstrated by school leaders in negotiating

internal issues and conflicts and external policy directives that will work to bring calm and certainty to volatile and unpredictable school environment. Therefore, even though this situation exists, where my relationship with the MOE was not ‘bright and flowery’ it would be to my advantage to demonstrate my leadership skill to the point where this situation would never show itself overtly to the extent where it became fractious and explosive. The situation, however, remained cold and distant. This was surprising to me, as the school being a new institution, should have been high on the ministry’s agenda for close support. This was never the case, although the school quickly established itself within western Jamaica as one of the better schools to send students. In fact, by the end of its first three years in 2007, the results from the GSAT examinations showed that of the twenty seven (27) high schools in western Jamaica, the school was rated seventh for choice; and of the eleven (11) high schools in the parish of St. James, it was rated fifth (5th).

It was fair to say, therefore, that the first leg of my odyssey as principal at the school had achieved its objectives, notwithstanding the obstacles that I had to face and surmount. This at least gave me some sense of satisfaction to move on, which also boosted my confidence to continue the work.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ODYSSEY CONTINUES: My Next Five Years

Life has been a mystifying journey

With every up and down

With tears and laughter

With hate and love

With stupidity and wisdom

With enemies and friends

But even in my journey of frustration

I have found a means of celebration

In my toilsome exploration to my fateful destination

– Excerpt from Sylvia Chidi’s “The Journey of Life” (2006)

Chidi’s (2006) poem is an epigraph to this chapter and is reflective of all the various human emotions I have undergone and choose to narrate on my journey in this thesis. I use it because I find it running congruent to my own life’s journey, and therefore, as I contemplate and document this part of my journey, I discovered that it is not only an emotive episode, but draws to the forefront issues of trust and vulnerability in writing particularly in an autoethnographical manner. It is also of note, that such issues are also relevant in the discourse on educational leadership.

For me, therefore, Chidi’s (2006) stanza on the ‘Mystifying Journey’, where she listed several emotive life journeying antonyms, I could have added ‘With anger and joy’ and ‘With doubt and trust’. To this end, my own painful memories are supported by Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2016) who states that “autoethnographic research presents the ethnographer with vulnerability on many fronts. In the early stages of inquiry, many

autoethnographers have found themselves facing the challenge of reliving or reinterpreting past experiences in painful ways.” (p. 75 in Handbook of Autoethnography)

The various conversations that I have related represent my field notes and recollections along my journey. I am also therefore conscious of the need (in relating these conversations) not only to protect others, but also myself, as my personal story and journey are not acted out alone, but in concert with others. Hence, I am mindful of Anderson and Glass-Coffin’s (2016) advice that, “[whilst] it is important to be vulnerable in your field notes and recollections, it may nonetheless be wise to be judicious and self-protective to some degree in published work” (p. 76).

Vulnerability is also case-specific to leadership, and, in my case, to educational leadership. Aspects of vulnerability comes in various forms, however, I refer to the influence of politics and the technocrats on leadership in the education sector. This is evident through the various policy directives issued by most governments over time to manage school operations. This creates regulatory environment in which school administrators must operate. Joel Abaya (2016, p. 767) expressed concerns about principals vulnerability in regards to board members who really have no interest in educational matters, but are there only to represent political interest.

I started my journey based on a trusting relationship between all stakeholders and I continued hoping that this would sustain and become the pillar of a successful school environment. Trust here is defined as ‘the extent to which one engages in a reciprocal relationship such that there is a willingness to be vulnerable to and assume risk’ (Freire and Fernandes, 2016, p. 897 quoting Walker et al., 2011, p. 72). The school improvement plans were always build around consensus and collegiality of stakeholders which included a high degree of trust.

The New School Improvement Plan

At the end of the 2007 school year, and after an evaluation, it was decided that even though the school was not yet fully resourced, the school had achieved most of its set goals and even surpassed expectations. This is evidenced by the fact that the overall goal in the 2004/2009 plan was to become a “*School of Choice*” in five years, yet was achieved in three years. The data will show that the average grades of students gaining passes to the school at its initial opening were in the forty five percent range, however within three years the average was above sixty six percent. More significant was the qualitative findings on the number of parents who showed preference for the school in their indication on the GSAT selection form. This information was relayed to the school by the ministry. This position had been achieved in just three years and therefore set us on the way to reevaluate and set new targets.

A second version of the School Development Plan (SDP) was now necessary and therefore a new 2008–2013 plan was required. Consequently, after exhaustive evaluation sessions, starting with a retreat for senior teachers and Board Members in August 2007, the school decided that the new target would be to become a “*School of Excellence*” within the next five years.

Hence, what we started out with in 2004 as a School Development Plan (SDP) now became our School Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2008–2013. We were careful not to lose sight of our original areas of focus and therefore the main focus areas of curriculum, staffing, management, and built environment were maintained. What had changed was the objective to attain the “School of Excellence” status. As a result, we were going to concentrate on, for example, statements such as, ‘eighty five percent (85%) of the grade seven (7) cohort should graduate at the end of their grade eleven (11) year with five (5) or more subjects including mathematics and English language’.

It was quite obvious that now that the school was labeled a “School of Choice”, which meant that it was getting the type of students with “Better Attitude” towards learning, then the way was clear for teachers to produce from those ‘choice’ inputs, the outputs that the

Jamaican society was asking for. That thrust was for students of excellence, who were fully prepared for matriculation into universities and colleges or for the job market, after leaving the secondary school system.

It was at this point when I was about to lead the operationalization of the new SIP and towards “The School of Excellence”, that I was chosen by the Ministry and seconded to take up a position in the Cayman Islands. This was in response to a request from the Ministry of Education in the Cayman Islands for a Jamaican educator to help in their education reforms. Personally, it made me proud to have been asked to take up this task, as it signaled to me that my work at the school was seen as a success story. I, therefore, took up the charge to work in the Cayman with much enthusiasm, even though there was a tinge of sadness leaving the school at this juncture.

The Move to a Foreign Country

The following two conversations (7a and 7b) are important inclusions in this research because they not only indicate the invitation that was made but emphasize the type of person who was required for the job in the Cayman Islands. They also indicate the level from which the invitation was made and the quality of person who was required for the job. Conversation 7a, is the actual email correspondence to an official with high level responsibility in the Jamaican Ministry of Education, and from a similarly highly placed official in the Cayman Islands Department of Education. The email was forwarded to me in a bid to encourage me to take up the offer.

Conversation 7b, was the email correspondence to me from the Cayman Islands after I had expressed an interest after reading the original correspondence indicated in 7a.

Conversations 8 and 9 are newspaper reports here in Jamaica and in the Cayman Islands on my appointment to the post of principal of the a high school in the Cayman Islands. These two conversations also give an indication of the high priority and importance that were attached to both the quality of work that I had done at the school, which had propelled me

to being seconded for service in the government of the Cayman Islands as well as the quality leader I was seen as.

Conversation – 7a: Correspondence between the Cayman Islands and Jamaica

Dear Mrs.,

Congratulations on your new role as Chief Inspector! I hope you are enjoying your new post. We continue with our efforts at education transformation in the Cayman Islands, though now under a new government, as I'm sure you know. The impact of your presentations to our teachers last year are still being felt, and your name came up in a conversation I had with colleagues only a few days ago, which actually triggered this email.

I'm hoping to impose on you for a favour, recognizing that you have extensive contacts throughout the Caribbean and may be able to help us. We are looking for a principal for our senior high school on Grand Cayman. A new school is under construction and will be opened in September 2010—with very different staffing arrangements—so we are looking for a one-year appointment of a principal with the ability to lead staff through both school improvement and the transition to new structures. The pay is quite good and an individual who was successful in that year would certainly be in a favourable position for further employment with us.

If you know of anyone who might be helpful to us in our attempt to move Cayman's education system forward, I would be most grateful if you could pass this information along and suggest that they contact us for more information or to submit an application. I've attached a copy of the ad for the post. The ad actually closes tomorrow (I've been on leave or I would have emailed you earlier), but if you know of a good candidate, we would certainly consider a late application. I hope I need not say that your endorsement of any candidate would be considered seriously in their favour!

Best wishes and many thanks,

*Chief Education Officer
Department of Education Services
Cayman Islands Government*

Conversation – 7b: Correspondence between the Cayman Islands and Jamaica

Dear Mr. Principal:

My deepest apologies for the length of time it has taken me to respond, but you will know the complications that arise at the beginning of the school year, and I am still wading through emails. First, I can confirm to you that we would still be willing to accept an application from you—the position officially closed on Friday, but you clearly contacted me regarding your application before that date. We will be happy to send additional information, but I am attaching a copy of the job description to this email.

Initially, we were looking for an interim principal for one year pending significant restructuring in our secondary system. At present, however, after consultation with the new Chief Officer in the Ministry of Education, we have decided on a standard recruitment process, so this post would carry an open appointment if offered to a Caymanian or a standard 2 year contract for a non-Caymanian.

I hope that my delay has not caused you to lose interest in the post as I regard very highly any candidate referred to us by your chief inspector of schools, Mrs.!

Best regards,

*Chief Education Officer
Department of Education Services
Cayman Islands Government*

Conversation 8 – Article from the “Jamaica Observer - Western News”. Thursday, December 10, 2009, titled; “[School principal] to transform education in Grand Cayman”

MONTEGO BAY, St James —High school's principal, Aldin Bellinfantie, has been seconded to [A] High school in Grand Cayman to lead that country's educational transformation process.

The request which was made by the Permanent Secretary in Grand Cayman's education ministry to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, was formally approved yesterday

Consequently, Bellinfantie who has been at [the school] since its inception in 2004, will take up duties as principal of [a Cayman] high school on January 4, 2010 pursuant to a contract which becomes effective on January 1, 2010.

A visionary who worked as advisor to the local Ministry of Education on the upgrading of inner-city schools, Bellinfantie spearheaded a raft of initiatives designed to build [the school] into a choice institution over a five-year period.

Conversation 9 – Article from the “Cayman Compass – News Paper”. Monday, December 13, 2009, titled; “New Principal at [a Cayman high school]”:

[A Cayman] High School will have a new principal, seconded from Jamaica, in the new year.

Aldin Bellinfantie, 52, takes up his post at the school on 4 January, Mary Rodrigues, the Chief Officer in the ministry said.

'Mr. Bellinfantie is an experienced and well-rounded educator, with 31 years of practical experience in education,' she said.

Mr. Bellinfantie is currently principal of [a high school] in Montego Bay in Jamaica. He has served as an adviser to the Jamaican Ministry of Education, as a teacher of mathematics at secondary level and as a lecturer in mathematics, statistics, finance and economics at the tertiary level.

He will be responsible for the professional leadership and management of [the] High School, to establish a culture of high expectations and ensure a high-quality education is provided for all students at this school.

'In so doing, his efforts will align with and complement the policies and work of the Department of Education Services and Ministry, to raise educational standards and improve the quality of teaching and learning within our education system,' she said.

The new principal is being seconded from the Ministry of Education in Jamaica for 18 months.

Mr. Bellinfantie, a father of two, has been principal of [the school] since it opened in 2004. Since then, [the school] has risen to become the sixth best performing school in western Jamaica, he said.

He admitted leaving [the school] at a time when it was striving to become a 'school of excellence' was difficult.

'It's like my baby. It's heart wrenching to leave it at this time,' said Mr. Bellinfantie in a telephone interview with the Caymanian Compass on Friday....(Cayman Compass, 2009).

My understanding from the conversations above, particularly 7a, is that the administrator of the Cayman education system were looking for to change or transform the system, as it would seem that the Cayman Islands' education system was in need of change, which was not possible from within the Island itself due to the limited number of persons with the

required competency and/or capacity. I make this claim based on the context in which I worked. For example, the school in which I was principal had a staffing cohort of 103 teaching staff, yet only approximately ten percent were Caymanian. Secondly, as outlined in my statement outline of the Caymanian context, I mentioned the fact that the economy was based on a contract worker culture where the majority of workers, especially professionals, were expatriates. Hence, the need to solicit help from the outside. For me, it was a means to demonstrate my own skills and competencies in school improvement planning, strategic intervention in poor performing schools, and general strategic management of education systems. As set out in the newspaper articles, I intended to put to the test, skills honed locally in Jamaica and on internationally sponsored projects. What met me when I entered the Cayman Islands was not only of great surprise to me, but was quite disturbing.

I took my entire family and went to the Cayman Islands for orientation in December of 2009, before taking up the contract in January 2010. During the period of orientation, I was introduced to the entire staff of the Cayman High School by the Department of Education officer. What was surprising and disturbing was that, at every instance, where there was an opportunity for a staff member to speak to me anonymously, they used the opportunity to ask the question, “are you certain you know what you are getting into, sir?”, or “you are being given a sieve to carry water, sir”. These comments came mainly from the Caribbean Nationals, particularly Jamaicans, who were working at the school. One or two Caymanians also made similar comments, advising me to walk carefully, as the Island was a difficult working environment. The following is a conversation with a friend who met me within weeks of arriving in the Cayman Islands in January of 2010.

Conversation 10: Between me and a friend (abridged version)

Friend: Aldin, welcome to the Cayman.

Me: Hi, how are you? I don't remember seeing you since you left Jamaica, and that is over twenty seven years (27) years ago.

Friend: That is true, and that is exactly why I wanted to see and speak to you. Aldin, I have been here for a long time and I have seen teachers and principals come and go for all the different reasons. I noticed in the newspapers it stated that you were here to transform the education system. Let me advise you to do nothing. You have recognized that I have been here for a long time and I will tell you that the persons at the top of this education system desire no change at all. What they do, is to create a fanfare as if something is happening, just as is described in the newspapers to impress their population, but as soon as the person begins the “shake-up” of the system and disturbs the comfort zones of certain individuals, their contract is terminated with the excuse that a new direction is required or that the person was not performing to task.

Me: But I cannot just come, take their money and do nothing. I was accepted because of my resume, which I must defend.

Friend: Please Aldin, this house that I built and all else that I have achieved was due to the fact that all I did was go to work, took no position of authority and stayed silent on issues. The moment you make your voice heard, your contract is not extended and you are gone without even, as much as a thank you and a good-bye.

Me: Thanks for the advice, but I think that I am in a chicken and egg situation. Most persons who come to the Cayman Islands for work, would have resigned their jobs at home to seek employment here. That is not the case with me. I was requested and seconded to do a particular task, within a certain time span.

Friend: OK sir, don't say I didn't warn you, but nothing you recommend or do will be accepted or implemented.

This conversation was reflective of many others that I had during my eighteen months on the Island, particularly with staff at the Cayman High School. Within six months I had developed somewhat of a good relationship with many of the staff, particularly those of Caribbean origin. In talking to one from Jamaica, I realized that this individual was a past vice principal of a famous and well established high school in Jamaica. This individual was a teacher in their special subject area and seemed to be enjoying it. I, however, thought that the individual with that wealth of administrative experience could be of help to me and proposed a recommendation for promotion to either Head of Department (HOD) or the post of Teaching and Learning Coordinator (TLC). To my surprise, the individual turned down the offer saying that they preferred to remain in their present position as seniority meant taking on responsibilities which included making decisions. This was said to put persons in the spotlight and make them into targets for non-renewal of their contracts.

The Context of the Cayman High School

Four years before arriving in the Cayman Islands, a document titled “National Consensus on the Future of Education in the Cayman Islands” (2005), stated that over the past two decades, several educational planning and review forums took place, starting with the National Strategic Plan for Education in 1992 through to the national education conference in 2005. The conference, under the banner, “Defining Challenges, Finding Solutions Together”, undertook the most comprehensive project to date, by asking the entire Cayman community to contribute its views on the current education system and to suggest ways to improve it.

To quote the Minister of Education, Hon. Alden McLaughlin, (2005) in his address to the Legislative Assembly:

It's not so much about us as you. It's about people. It's about providing opportunities for everyone to be the best they can be. It's about building brighter futures for the people of the Cayman Islands ... and it's all about the development of people. That is why we are regularly referred to as 'the People's Ministry'. Our objective is to provide the framework, which offers opportunities for everybody. We seek to equip young people, students and workers to compete on the international stage, and strongly believe that this is the key to the future prosperity of our nation as it plays an increasingly important role in an ever-changing world.

On Wednesday, February 3, 2010, the following blog appeared on the Cayman Island website:

If you want to see the future of education, you're in the right spot. In 2005 the Cayman Islands made an unprecedented pledge to bring about much needed transformation of their education system. ... Driven by a committed government and some of the most brilliant minds on the international scene are not only embracing but increasingly leading cutting edge developments in technology, facilities, human capital development and teaching and learning styles.

(<http://buildingcaymansfuture.blogspot.com>)

I was, therefore, fortunate to be invited to join this innovative educational initiative as a person with experience in school development planning. Over the last twelve years, I have been involved in the reforms of education systems in Jamaica, and also have some understanding of the United Kingdom system through the management of projects that were funded by that system. It is because of my successful experiences in school improvement and development strategies that seems to have initiated the call for me to help in the Cayman Islands education reforms. I was specifically called to help in the school improvement processes that were required for one of the high schools to become a school of excellence.

The Cayman high school was one of the few government high school on Grand Cayman, it was important for the country, for it to be seen as a school of excellence, producing high quality graduates ready and prepared for further education and the job market. I enthusiastically responded to this call, thinking that the task at hand was just to develop and lead the usual school improvement process. I, however, on analysis, quickly realized the enormity of the task, because this school development process was not normal in terms of a "...rational model of school planning..." (Mintrop et al., 2001, p. 198), which consisted of needs assessment, goal formation, action planning, implementation, monitoring of activities, and evaluation of outcomes. In other jurisdictions, the performance of the Cayman school would be cited as a failing school and recommended for external intervention and possible closure because less than thirty (30%) percent of students were passing five (5) or more subjects with grades A-C at the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), O'levels or Grades 1-3 at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC). Closure was not an option for the government of the Cayman Islands, because as stated previously, the Cayman school was the only secondary school which took students to the grade eleven (11) stage of secondary completion. Hence, intervention was the solution and my input as an external agent was more to the point.

The Cayman school, being the only high school in Grand Cayman, became the testing ground for every government policy. Staffing, particularly at the management level was sometimes determined by which political party was in power or to the extent that the Cayman school management was willing to execute the mandate of government policies and procedures. Although this system of accountability is no different from schools implementing SIPs in Jamaica and some other jurisdictions, the Cayman school becomes more the focus of attention as it is the only point of focus. In fact Miller (2014b), in speaking about prospective applicants for the post of principals points out that "[p]erceived political interference cuts deep and can lead to mistrust and disillusionment among prospective applicants" (p. 132).

This is the type of system that I had inherited at the Cayman school and there is the expectation on the part of all stakeholders, that the changes that must be made by me to improve the system must follow a similar template. The question that immediately came to

mind is whether or not using the same template will continue to give the same poor results at the Cayman school. If there was this need for an excellent education system, (the Cayman school being the hallmark), then the questions to be answered must be how do we achieve this excellence? What goals should we follow and what strategic template must we use? Mintrop et. al. (2001), citing Hanushek (1994), reminds us: “Much of what becomes documented in SIPs depends on the templates schools are given for writing the plans. The templates constrain the lens through which schools look at the improvement process” (p. 199).

This being the case, I believe that a different approach to school improvement should be attempted. This became one of my goals for the SIP at the Cayman school and also for this research.

My Personal Dilemma

The Cayman High school was the secondary school for students in grades 10, 11 and 12 on Grand Cayman. It had an enrolment of just over 1000 students and 103 members of staff. As far as my research could take me, I could not find any other educational jurisdiction that had such a favourable student to teacher ratio of one to ten. Yet, quoting from the Education Stabilization Plan of 2011, “The number of students achieving 5 or more high grade CXC/GCSE passes has averaged around 23% in the decade prior to 2009. Recent efforts have seen these percentages rise to 36% in 2009 and 37% in 2010 in Grand Cayman”. I want to note here that the Cayman education system uses all five categories of grades in both CSEC (grades 1 – 5) and GCSE (A- E) as pass marks, whereas the rest of the Caribbean (and universities all over the world) recognises only grades 1 to 3 as passing grades. This is a clear indication that the school had performed below schools of a similar nature in the Caribbean and the rest of the world in general. In fact the Cayman High School was better equipped and staffed than some schools in the United Kingdom and all similar schools in the Caribbean. Notwithstanding this fact, its results were below the schools in those jurisdictions.

One feature of the Cayman Islands is that all workers are employed on a contractual basis. For persons with Caymanian citizenship, the contract is open-ended until retirement, expatriate workers are given a two-year renewable contract. However, most workers in the Cayman Islands are expatriate workers. Data from the Cayman Islands Department of Immigration (DoI) (2015), and the Economics and Statistics Office (ESO) (2015), found that the population of the Cayman Islands is on the increase again, fuelled by almost record breaking levels of permit holders. These latest 2015 figures from immigration showed there were 23,097 people in Cayman on some form of work permit. The ESO revealed in its latest Labour Force Survey (Fall 2015) that Cayman's population stands at over 60,400 people (including permit holders), boosted by an increase in the number of men, who now make up 50.1% of the population.

With almost 50,000 people over the age of 15, the labour force is made up of more than 40,000 people; Caymanians make up almost 48%, while just over 10% are permanent residents and nearly 42% are permit holders.

It is in this climate of fear and timidity by all contract workers (including myself), that I was invited to be a steward of their educational transformation through directing and leading their only high school. It was my intention as an adviser to the transformation process, to investigate how national policy directives contribute to capacity building within the school in the area of school development planning.

I have since spent several months agonizing about how such transformation, investigation and leadership were possible in a climate where everyone seems to be afraid to talk about even the basic issues that are of concern to them. There are issues relating to the failures of an education system that are being debated in the legislative council, in the media and in many public forums such as the home school associations (HSA) all around the country. However, individuals within the system only commit themselves to publicly comment on condition of anonymity.

Recognizing the challenges, I also decided to examine these issues and concerns as part of a proposal for this my final doctoral research, in a bid to identify and determine a way around them. I realized very soon that the issues encountered in dealing with the

transformation agenda for which I was contracted, were no different from the challenges I would later encounter when seeking permission to conduct my research. In fact, when I broached the issue of formal consent for my research with the education officer he categorically told me that he could not and that his forty years of experience tells him that neither will his superiors. When questioned about this, he said that the education system has always been reluctant and skeptical of outsiders researching and publishing materials about it. These challenges, therefore, raise concern around issues of trustworthiness or the lack thereof, issues of relational ethics, issues of reflexivity, issues of reciprocity and agency. In fact, Harrison et al. (2001) spoke to the issue of building rapport between researcher and research participants in a bid to level power relationships in order not to "...compromise the epistemological 'trust' in the research process" (p. 324).

Getting information about these systemic changes planned by both past and present government officials presents its own set of challenges, adding to the aforementioned difficulty of soliciting the opinions of teachers operating within the system. Therefore, one of the focus of my transformation and any research agenda is whether or not persons are willing to freely speak to these organisational changes, which may result in some persons losing their jobs and others being transferred to other areas.

A final point that I need to make in establishing the context for change is the fact that the Cayman Islands remains one of the United Kingdom's (UK) overseas territories. The Islands have therefore adopted and maintained many of the structures originating out of the UK, including the education system. As I have indicated before in establishing the context for this research, the other Caribbean territories have since their independence attempted to divorce themselves and build structures more suited to the needs of their people. I want to inject here and say that, this attempt is happening with great difficulty as the influence of 'developed' countries like the UK remain strong and pervasive.

The Cayman Islands, due to its political and historical links to the UK and also its economical and geographical proximity to the USA, did very little to adopt to a Caribbean system, even though there seems to be current attempts to change that position. This change is set out in the Education Stabilisation Plan of 2011, which speaks to a kind of

intervention that is indigenized and ‘right’ for the indigenous Caymanian. In the words of Wood (2013), citing Mourshed, Chijioke, and Barber (2010), “...‘taking account of history, culture, politics,’ is a key ingredient of successful reform” (p. 21).

It is my opinion, that all the talk of change is only ‘political talk’ and not genuine efforts to make the changes and adjustments to the benefit of the Cayman Islands. The Islands have benefited from the recruitment of wealth of academic professionals out of the Caribbean, the UK and the USA carrying with them a mixture of curricula offerings. I believe that these benefits are seen by the authorities as more advantageous and outweighing the disadvantages, which according to Wood (2013), has “...contributed to inconsistency, conflicting expectations and approaches, as well as avoidance of establishing clearly what is right and best for the Cayman Islands” (p. 22). That, I believe is the preferred risk and position that the education authority is willing to take, which is inconsistent with my personal belief and position, and against what I believe to have been my main function in the transformation agenda of the Islands.

To cite an example of why I arrived at this belief and position came from the fact that, wholesale change to a system, can only meaningfully take place when there is consultation with all stakeholders and assurance that there is buy-in from those stakeholders. Hence, whereas, my contribution was from the perspective of an outsider and not necessarily a stakeholder, it would seem opportune (based on the reason as to why I was employed), that I would be an important contributor to the consultation process. This was, however, not so, as I found that what I considered to be important interventions for change were not accepted. The example comes from a recommendation that I made to reduce the number of different examinations that the students at the public secondary schools were exposed to. At the time, the department of education was paying subscriptions to more than seven different examination boards out of the UK, the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) and they were about introducing the International baccalaureate (IB) out of the USA. This, I think, is what Wood (2013) refers to as inconsistencies in curricula offerings. It should be noted that this recommendation originated from the teaching staff (who were majority Caribbean) and presented to the Department of Education by me in my capacity as school

principal and a member of the council of principals. This recommendation and others I considered also important were, however, not accepted by the authorities.

I concluded, therefore, that I would never be successful at implementing the process of transformation in the school that I was contracted to do and more so conduct any form of research based on what I call “Reluctant informants and a code of silence”. As a result, I quickly formed my own opinion that my attempts at transformation were not welcomed by the establishment. This is one of the many reasons that I arrived at the decision to return to Jamaica where my research would be conducted on a Jamaican high School instead of a Cayman high school. This decision is further borne out and supported in the conversation with one of my friends and the final conversation with an education officer who held an elevated position in the Cayman Islands, thus:

Conversation 11 – With Education Officer (abridged version)

CEO: Mr. Bellinfantie, thanks for the contribution you have made to our education system, but can you tell me of the concerns and challenges you have faced so far.

Me: Thanks very much for your kind words. In terms of concerns, there are many, but, if I were to ignore the issues of student indiscipline, I must straight away, mention that the principal needs to be given more autonomy to manage the day to day operations of the school. There are too many interferences from the department in areas that I consider the remit of the principal.

CEO: I hear you, but you need to understand that schools in the Cayman Islands do not operate as they do like schools in Jamaica, or even the UK, Canada and the USA. In Jamaica and those countries, the principal takes full control of school operation... to an extent they take ownership of the school, but here in the Cayman it is not so. All we want you to do is ‘to

greet the students off the buses in the morning and see them safely to their classes and even stand by the school gate with your coffee mug and wave to parents as they drop their children off in the mornings'. You are chief guardian of the students.

Me: Madam Officer, that makes me into a high bred security guard. That is not in the request you made of my Ministry in Jamaica and my resume reflects much more than that. I see now why I faced so much resistance even from your department.

CEO: I understand your frustration, however, we note your strength in policy development and request that you help us in the Department in that area.

The conversation ended and I knew then that even if I had any wish to extend my contract, it would only be wishful thinking on my part. A letter was presented to me two days later stating that:

...As we reflected on the needs of the Cayman High School and the challenges we face in providing immediate intervention for the school, we discussed our findings with Mr. Bellinfantie and sought his views and his support for the changes that are needed. Mr. Bellinfantie was very forthright in acknowledging the problems within the school and has worked with us to identify the challenges faced by the school. In looking at those problems from a new perspective, he feels that his previous experience with policy development has provided him with the background to work closely with the Department in drafting a stronger operational policy base from which schools will operate...

In March of 2011, I joined two other persons in the Department of Education who were previously principals at the Cayman high school and therefore learnt that the Department was the place to place principals who had fallen out of favour with the establishment, even

though these were promoted positions with similar or higher salaries. I spent the next four months writing several policy documents for schools before returning to Jamaica and the school from which I was seconded.

Moving Back Home to Jamaica

The Transition back to Jamaica gave me mixed feelings. There was that feeling of being a failure, even though on reflection, I think the timing of my interventions and contributions to the Cayman education system would have been better accepted if the conditions were different. Even then, I believe that I was not given the chance to prove myself because of prior plans and changes that were already in place. This was tinged with an anxious desire to return to my school in Jamaica and continue with what I considered to be my own creation, which on all levels was a success. As the different feelings churned over, my reflections became introspections. I dislodged the thought of failure and concluded that there was a lot that I had learnt from my time at the Cayman high school. In fact, in a sort of debriefing meeting with Ministry of Education in Jamaica in March of 2011, the conversation was of a similar tone:

Conversation 12 – Evaluation of my Time in the Cayman Islands: A Conversation with the Permanent Secretary (PS)

PS: Welcome Mr. Bellinfantie, you requested this meeting with me but can I ask the Chief Education Officer to sit in also?

Me: That is fine with me Madam PS.

PS: So how was Cayman, how did you get on there?

Me: Madam, I just want to say that I am glad to be returning home in September to continue the work I started at my school. The Cayman Islands do not

seem to want any meaningful changes to their system. My invitation to help them, I found out is part of a revolving door. They do this every so often, to keep the Caymanians and the world thinking that something is evolving and developing in their education system, but the only change is the frequent change of leadership at the Cayman school. There have been at least four principals in the last seven years; I am actually number five.

PS: I could have told you that. I smiled when you first requested leave to go there, I knew you would quickly find that out. You see, I am quite acquainted with their system as my mother was living there for some time.

PS: I note in your letter that you intend on returning to your job at the school

Me: Yes, Madam PS

PS: Well, I am glad you are back, because we are concerned that there may be an impending lawsuit against the Ministry which has a possible J\$15 million dollar price tag facing us.

Me: Madam that is exactly the reason I requested this meeting. I really did not know of that legal matter. However, on my previous holiday visits to Jamaica, I was always questioned by ministry officials and teachers at the school as to when I would have been returning to save the school. No one has ventured to explain in any details to me the reasons for the comments. Even a senior member of JTA called me in Cayman and said, "Bellinfantie, you are not Jesus Christ, you can't raise the dead, come back for your school", and this was on matters to do with human and industrial relationships.

PS: Mr. Bellinfantie, you officially return on the first of September 2011, do

nothing until then, but as soon as you take up office, please write to me on the matters that you have concerns about. But, before you go, you must have some positives that you have taken back from your time in the Cayman.

Me: Yes madam, their use of technology in schools. They have a system called the School Information Management System (SIMS) which I think is brilliant and could be adopted even though it is quite expensive. They also have a good grasp of how best to integrate technology in the teaching and learning process. Both of which, I would like to pilot on my return to the school.

That conversation with the senior ministry official was an eye opener and along with the many warnings that I was getting from other sources, I thought were good preparation for the challenges that would face me on my return to the school.

Different Challenges

I was most surprised to see the level of dislocation, discontent and the breakdown of interpersonal relationships and divisiveness that had permeated the staff team at the school. The environment that I returned to in September 2011 was almost unrecognizable as it was not the cohesive team environment that I had left in January 2010. The team, other than being split in two, with some on the side of the acting principal and others on the side of the acting vice principal. I immediately realized that I had a huge task at hand in trying to bridge gaps, fuse and restore cohesiveness to the team. My first area of challenge was the fact that the main actors in the drama did not anticipate my return or did not want my return, even though it was known that I was on secondment and so the position they held were only temporary ones. A situation arose on my return to office in the August preceding the start of the school year at the beginning of September; I was contacted by the Regional Director and the board chairman meet with and commenced preparations to

ensure a smooth start to the year. To the surprise of everyone, I was refused access to the principal's office and access to all information and documents relevant to this situation. My request for the school log and a report on the period whilst I was on leave were also not given. The main actor in this situation, in fact, insisted that I had no permission to return to the school and that the right to remain in the principal's office would be retained until the end of August. I will note here that it was by law, a correct position to hold since my period of secondment end at that time, however, it was at the inconvenience of me (the person holding the permanent position), an inconvenience to the school and also an act that did not enhance professional collegiality, collaboration and good working relationships. I was in effect hindered and sometimes blocked from taking up duties in time to prepare for the start of the new school year. This instantly told me that I was confronting a difficult situation and immediately determined my fate in any attempt at trying to restore normality to the staff team, as I was eventually cast as siding with the 'other side'. Having recognized the difficulties, I began planning my re-entry and return to duties. On reflection, however, I think my emotions may got the better of me, based on the situation. Hence, instead of planning to ways to attack the situation in an effort to build bridges and find appropriate amelioration remedies, my plans ended up attacking personalities whom I determined were the cause of the problem. Therefore in my moment of reflection, I realize that my twin positions of 'the returning principal' and 'principal on leave' had created personal agency by "...juxtaposing myself in two roles..." (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2003, p. 73), thereby causing conflict and "...[which] inverts the power relations of the (typically) more powerful 'Self' over the 'Other' by understanding and 'writing in' the 'Other's' perspective and demonstrating that they [too] have agency in explaining their development concerns, needs, and solutions" (Fomaselli, Myklehust & Grootheest, 2013, p. 590, citing Tomaselli, Dyll, & Francis, 2008, p. 356).

My first action was to request meetings with the Board of Management and the staff team. This request was made through the Board Chairman, to which I got no reply. This also sent signals to me, however, I choose not to indulge in any side show that could damage my attempts at dealing with the issues at hand. I therefore, on my own, held a dinner party for the staff team at which I could meet them informally and socially. This was again quite

revealing as several staff members wept openly in welcoming me back, stating their hope that my return would help to bring back team spirit and camaraderie to the staff. This made me feel very welcome, but gave me more cause for concern, because to speak of their concerns is one thing, but for adult professionals to show such emotions so openly and disconcertedly told me that there were deep wounds that would take time to heal.

The purposes of autoethnography methods are unique and compelling because they include (1) disrupting norms of research practice and representation; (2) working from insider knowledge; (3) maneuvering through pain, confusion, anger, and uncertainty and making life better, (4) breaking silence/(re) claiming voice and "writing to right" (Bolen, 2012); and (5) making work accessible, (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013, p. 32). This quote is a clear statement that underscores my understanding of my writings and my voice in this thesis. It explicitly emphasizes the "I" in how I chose to (re)presents myself and, therefore, I feel that self is not endangered because I am writing about my experiences that according to Jones, Adams, and Ellis (2013), "...I tend to write about experiences that knock me for a loop and challenge the construction of meaning I have put together for myself. I write when my world falls apart or the meaning I have constructed for myself is in danger of doing so" (citing Corolyn, 2004, p. 34).

To this end, I feel that I needed to express myself and to say that, I was not only disturbed over the situation but a degree of anger crept over me. I was angry because I believed deep down that having started the school and having brought it to the position I left it in, it was still mine to defend. I did not see it as a government public institution but my own and mine to defend. I was hurt because someone had kicked over my sandcastle, and, like the child on the beach who had taken time and pride to build that sandcastle and then have it kicked over by some bully, I assumed that same feeling of loss. My loss was, however, multidimensional as it reflected lost hope for an institution that I believed would be a beacon and monument, where future generations of children, teachers, principals and other educations could use as a symbol of success. It was also not only lost hope but also loss of control which reflected badly on me as the principal. Finally it was also a loss of identity, as I had set up myself as the epitome of an educational leader and more so "The principal".

I returned to earth with more than a bump from which I had to pick myself up, reevaluate, reflect and then possibly restart.

On reflection, I found that all this, was in an effort to ‘construct meaning’ and ‘make sense’ of what was happening, but more so (right or wrong), how I could extricate myself and preserve my identity as a ‘good and successful’ principal by telling my story. Knowing full well that telling story gives “[a]gency to my voice” (Jones et al., 2013, 19) and “makes myself [more] visible...” (Boylorn, 2013, p. 174). Sense making, however, according to Ganon-Shilon and Schechter (2016) is:

an ongoing process through which people work to understand issues or events that create ambiguities in routine (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014). It is an active process of constructing meaning from present stimuli, mediated by prior knowledge, experiences, beliefs and values that is embedded in the social context within which people work. (p. 3)

Ganon-Shilon and Schechter, (2016), went on to say that emotions [which] play an important part when inducing a change into schools, on the one hand, may motivate people to act, but on the other hand, it might inhibit their ability to interpret the situation. Hence, school leaders need to manage emotions in ways that can enable [them] to engage in sense-making. Therefore, given that emotions have a strong influence on sense-making processes, school leaders should incorporate emotion into their attempts to help educators make sense of challenging events (p.13).

It is in my attempts to make sense of my situation that I realised the importance of managing my emotions and in order to understand and deal with the circumstances that were confronting me as a school leader.

New Experiences, Ideas and Insights

The one thing I noticed that remained unchanged at the school on my return, was the process of school development. Nothing was done and no new initiatives were attempted. Only the deterioration in human relationships at the school had changed. The school development plan which focused on the new vision of developing a “school of excellence” remained untouched as if frozen in time. This, therefore, initiated and accelerated the process of reevaluation and reflections. I immediately put in place a Senior Management Team (SMT) from the cohort of teachers Special Post of Responsibilities (PSOR), with persons supportive of the action strategies as outlined in the SIP. This, however, did not work out as perfectly as I wanted, due to the fact that some official positions, for example that of the vice principal, were ministry assigned posts which had to be included, even though they may not have been very supportive. This, to some extent, defeated the purpose of the SMT, however, it did have some positive effects, as I had more persons to which tasks could be distributed, instead of the usual duet of just principal and vice principal. In this case, I ensured that the team was made up of more persons who I could rely on, than persons who were likely to undermine my efforts. This supports my views on distributive leadership and is advocated by Beckford and Lekule (2013) for Caribbean schools and who recommends the “...utilisation of distributed school leadership as a tool for improving school effectiveness” (p. 169). The setting up of the SMT, Therefore, not only enhanced the distributed principle of school leadership but provided me with a set of supportive personnel who were willing to carry out the vision, mission and strategic objectives of the school.

The idea of the school of excellence did not die, even though it was not implemented. Arising out of a general professional development seminar with all staff, was the concern that the excellence which is sought from the students, particularly academic excellence, was being hampered by the poor attitude of students, parents and some teachers. There needed to be attitudinal change among all stakeholders in order to achieve the excellence we desired. Hence, it was decided by teachers to collectively develop a new plan of action which would focus on attitudinal changes and which would soften the ground, and pave a

way to facilitate a better teaching and learning environment. This was an exciting proposition for two reasons: it represented a team approach to leadership within the school, and it supports the ministry as it had also developed a new template for school development planning and had dictated that all schools should complete one. This initiative from the ministry, therefore, coincided and merged beautifully with our own set of plans for the school.

Vertical Tutoring

To deal with the concern of attitudinal changes, as suggested by the general staff team, I proposed and introduced another innovation which was again garnered from my sojourn in the Cayman Islands, and that was the introduction of the concept of “Vertical Tutoring”, which is a British concept of managing students by age groups instead of by grade levels. This system would be merged with the House System as it was titled in a letter to parents: “An innovative and emotionally *intelligent* school, where success is expected, achieved and celebrated”. This concept was not just explained in the letter to parents, but a meeting with parents was also held to better explain it and where questions and concerns could be allayed. The details of the parent’s letter expressed that:

Extract from End of School Year 2011-2012 Correspondence to Parents

My first staff conference back in November 2011 after returning to my post in Jamaica ended with the resolution that something must be done to help change the attitude of students, notwithstanding that there was also need to put in place interventions to deal with staff attitudes also. This was planned for the next term as a two day retreat involving senior staff on the first day and joined by full complement of staff on day two of the retreat. The staff meeting concluded by ascribing the increased disciplinary concerns in schools to a breakdown in society

in general. To this end it was decided that merely administering sanctions were not enough. It was necessary to implement new systems that would target;

values and attitudes, care and welfare, self-esteem, pride, loyalty and inclusiveness. A pastoral emphasis in the school's strategic plan was therefore to become a central focus and this strategy would be carried by the system of Vertical Tutoring⁸ (or vertical supervision)...

... We believe that Vertical Tutoring with the House system will allow our students to achieve more successes as individuals and in groups, to mature into responsible adults and lifelong learners, and to feel proud of themselves, of each other and of their School.

... We know that our parents share these aims and values, and we hope that you will join us in supporting these innovative and emotionally intelligent approaches to the welfare of our students and your children at [The High School] (adopted - Thomas Alleyne School, UK, 2008).

The aims of the changes are:

- *To improve the behaviour, discipline and management of the students and thus increase their potential for achievement and their actual successes*
- *To develop rewards for and celebrations of achievement*
- *To align pastoral systems with the changes in the curriculum, and the move towards more individualised learning for all students*

⁸ The concept of Vertical Tutoring was researched by me and presented to both teachers, the Board of Governors, parents and students. It was adopted from the Thomas Alleyne School in the UK and as presented by Board chairman, Richards Stephens in 2008.

- *To create an emotionally intelligent natural community spirit amongst groups of students and thus amongst the student body as a whole*
- *To reflect the wider communities in which our students will live, mixing with different age groups as well as different backgrounds, genders, and races.*

This initiative was successful, and was applauded by all stakeholders. The teachers in particular believed that it was a fantastic piece of addition to the raft of ground breaking policies developed and implemented at the school. It, however, meant that all stakeholders, parents, teachers and students needed to be more vigilant and disciplined in their attention to roles and responsibilities. The few staff members who were negligent in these areas were the same individuals who had always given cause for concern, and these were reduced even further when the national Inspectorate Report was released to show that the school's provision for safety and security was "Good" and the school's provision for health and wellbeing was also "Good", so most came on board.

The School Information Management System (SIMS)

I also introduced a new system of school management to the Board of management at the school on my return from the Cayman Islands, having used it there I found it to be very helpful and efficient. It in fact represented a concept that I had proposed for the school even before my visit to the Cayman. Having seen it and worked with it helped me to realise and concretise that concept as a live and workable reality. I was so excited when I was introduced to it, because it was like watching the unfurling of a dream that had come alive. There was almost an indecent haste to return and introduce this innovation to school.

Soon after my return to office in September of 2011, I made a pitch for the introduction of SIMS. I first made that introduction to the Ministry of Education officials, then my own Board of Management, to my colleagues in the principal associations, to the officials in the Ministry of Technology and the private school sector. Including my own Board of

Management, all were invited to view and hear presentations on the benefits of SIMs. The school was used as a pilot school for demonstration.

I have, therefore, used SIMs to the full benefit at the school and have integrated the system with other technology systems within the school. Persons report that as they attend gathering of educators anywhere they go in Jamaica now, even at the Ministerial level, you hear the comments and are advised to “Go view my school for technology innovation”

Fighting to Survive

Putting in place all these mechanisms to improve the management of the school was applauded by both our stakeholders and friends of the school. However, like all new changes there were those who were resistant and so it was also with the new changes at the school. My first set of challenges came from the Board of management, and more specifically from the chairman. The reasons for challenges at this level are still unclear and unexplained, but they were consistently in opposition and resistant to whatever new initiatives I proposed for the development of the school. On most occasions, my proposals were only carried through because of a majority votes of the board members, much to the annoyance of the chairman. On several occasions, there were even attempts at undermining the collective decisions of the full board by a refusal to sign documents that had the consensus decision of the board that was fully quorate. Miller (2016a), in fact, noted that because school boards have the responsibility for keeping the principal accountable to stakeholders and ensuring government standards are met, “...it is perhaps not difficult to see why the relationship between some principals and their school board might be fraught” (p. 112).

I, as the principal, being the chief executive and lead professional in a school, have the responsibility to ensure that the school operates effectively by carrying out its statutory functions in the best interest of its stakeholders. These functions were guided by government policies which were supervised and monitored by the Board of Management. There was, therefore, clear delineation between the functions of the Board Vis a Vis the

functions of the principal. One dealt with policies while the other dealt with operations, yet I was frustrated on many occasions with the chairman's interferences on matters of operations. A gulf was therefore created between me and the chairman which filtered down to levels where it was also impacting on teacher behavior.

This behavior was, however, only confined to approximately ten percent of teachers. This was, however, noticeable and impactful due to the fact that two very senior teachers were also among this ten percent. Noteworthy is that the school had twenty senior teachers and so these two also represented ten percent of the senior teachers' cohort. Also of note was the fact that every one of these teachers had been complained against of unprofessional behavior ranging from attendance and punctuality violations to the more serious concerns, which under the law could lead to immediate dismissal. My responsibility in such matters was to conduct my due diligence and report the matter in the form of a complaint to the board. This was done but due to the gulf that had developed between me and the chair, which represented a breakdown of relationships, my complaints were never properly dealt with. This represented a corrosive situation, where others would also begin believing that they could get away with unprofessional behavior. These corrosive behaviors created a caustic environment, which was untenable for teaching and learning. The intense conflict that engulfed the school, fought between me and the chairman, combined with intransigence of some ten percent staff members created a high degree of inertia for the entire school development process. Other staff members remained silent for the most part, not wanting to take sides, but were uncomfortable with the state of things. They would individually come to my office to seek information and to offer their suggestions on how to solve the problem.

I reflected that in December 2009, I was identified as "top principal and education transformer" as was labelled by two national newspaper articles, locally by the Daily Observer, and in the foreign Cayman Islands Compass newspaper. The Ministry of Education who identified me as the person to be sent as their emissary to the Cayman also helped to create that label. I had, therefore, moved within the short space of twenty months, from that pinnacle of "top principal and education transformer" to the level of struggling principal who had lost sight of the vision for education reforms and leadership

development. This was hard to take, it impacted physically, emotionally and psychologically on my being, and everything that I had personally and professionally set out to achieve. Consequently, after thirty three years in education, I considered seriously the option of taking early retirement and leaving the education system.

Setting of a New Agenda

I reflected deeply and deliberated for long periods on the option of retirement, but finally decided that, this would not only be accepting defeat, but leaving behind and giving my detractors the ammunition to say that they won because they were ‘right’. It would also have erased all my initial efforts and the work that I had done in leading the school to become “The School of Choice”, to the degree where I (as the leader) and my identity would also be erased. This I could not allow to happen and therefore I had to summon up the effort and create a new agenda for a “New Start, New Future and a New School”.

I got a new school Board in January 2013. This was not only a victory for my persistent complaints of interference by the old Board, but a signal that the “New Start” had at least begun.

The first initiative of the Board was to arrange a two day staff conference with Board and staff members, with the objectives of working through the new five year development plan. The plan had started with the previous Board and therefore required only the finishing touches. An extract from that final document revealed and projected that, hence, what was a School Development Plan (SDP) 2004/2009 ... projecting “A School of Choice”, then a School Improvement Plan (SIP) 2008/2013 ... projecting “School of Excellence” is now morphed into a third version of the school SIP for 2012-2015. This was conditioned on the Ministry of Education’s mandate that all schools should develop standardized plans which were to be consistent with the Ministry’s own strategic objectives. It was, therefore, the hope that this 2012/2015 plan would move the school to be, not just a “*School of Excellence*”, but the structures that were being put forward would lead to improve our efficiency over time and therefore enhance the quality of teaching and

learning outcomes for our students and reposition the school in the context of the overall Jamaican Education system as “*A School of the Future (SOF)*”.

All this was put in place, yet the main protagonists in the continued intransigence among the staff team persisted. Many attempts at mediation by the new Board and Ministry were made with no success and therefore I formed in my mind that these persons had put their personal interest over and above the interest of the professional duties, the welfare of the students and the school in general. This would indicate that their continued employment could only lead to the undermining of the school’s administration and the school development planning process. I, therefore had no alternative but to formally present a complaint against them to the board for investigation. Findings from such complaints, if proven to be true after an investigation could lead to charges being laid and dismissal.

The intervention of the ministry at this stage, only created more confusion, as they sought not to focus on the deviant behavior of the staff members who were being investigated, but were more concerned to ensure that school would not become the focus of public scrutiny, which they believed would also bring the ministry under the microscope of public attention. They took what I considered to be a cowardly approach, and hid under the pretense of financial obligations in the event that the case against the staff was to be thrown out under an appeal by the teachers’ union. The ministry, therefore, did not intervene at anytime in the disciplinary process.

The antagonists who were the object of complaints were eventually freed of the charges as the teacher’s union posited that the complaints were improperly laid and therefore the process had breached the natural justice of their client. This was clearly explained by the union to all staff that, it did not mean guilt or innocence but that the process was breached. The fact that they escaped sanction, I was left accused and tainted as the reason for the school not performing, because I was unwilling to forgive and forget the deviant and unprofessional behaviours of the protagonists. Here was a Ministry whose objective for the last ten years was for transformation towards a twenty first century educational system, which was now willing to ignore the conducts of persons within that system who were obstructive to that successful endeavour and remained “cogs in the wheel”. *How can this*

be? I asked myself, how can those who bedevil the system so contort themselves into apparitions of heavenly virtues, to cloud the visions of those who are placed on a high to manage the transformation of our educational system.

If these individuals were allowed to remain in the school, they would continue to undermine the school's administration, resist all efforts of transformation, continue to divide the staff team, create a climate of poor working relationship and underperformance for everyone including students. As a result of this, I again resolved to continue, because least of all, the students needed me.

Battle Weary

The new Board of Management planned another retreat in May of 2013 to deal with the concerns, and to recast a mold for this "School of the Future". This was after they had reviewed the report of two consultants, who were contracted in April 2013, to look into the concerns of the school, and put forward recommendations for the future. A clinical assessment report was done by the consultants. The findings were damning, particularly as they relate to teacher performance, attitudes and behavior that the Board thought that a retreat with senior teachers was necessary to deal with the recommendations.

Another consultant was later contracted to review the recommendations and develop the mold that would take the school forward for the next five years. The consultant extracted from the 2012–2015 school development plan, the clinical report of the previous consultants and other minor reports previously done by the Board of management. The retreat concluded with one main objective, and that was to develop a transformation plan to cover the period 2013–2018 to include Key Performance Indicators (KPI) that were rated for all objectives in the SIP and apply these key performance targets to all members of staff.

This was a novel idea which all members of staff eventually signed off on as it would help to ensure and improve accountability among the staff team. A senior member of staff was

identified and the process began with much enthusiasm. However, much to my dismay, the same set of staff members who were over time the cause for concern, again started to be of concern again. They realized that they too would be monitored for performance and immediately reacted negatively by resisting. Again, they were complained against to the Board, and the Board, under new chairmanship, acted promptly to deal with the matter, but again, when decisive actions were to be taken to deal with them, the authorities intervened to protect them under the pretense that the correct disciplinary process was not followed. The school was again left to the mercies of their ‘whims and fancies’.

A Light at the End of the Tunnel

The crisis at the school had taken on national proportions, where the Minister himself had gotten involved as he was appealed to for intervention both by the Board of Management and by me, on several occasions. As mentioned earlier, none of the interventions seemed to work. What seemed to be a light shining at the end of a tunnel came in February of 2015, when the National Educational Inspectorate (NEI) conducted their inspection of the school. This inspection covered the period 2009 through to 2013. The inspectorate findings and conclusions were exactly as those from the clinical assessment done by the consultants in April of 2013. The inspection, however, did not take account of the efforts, plans and strategies that were put in place since 2013 and 2015 when their report was done, even though it was recognized. Hence the NEI reported that the overall effectiveness of the school is unsatisfactory. This was notwithstanding that, of their eight criteria, the school was rated ‘unsatisfactory’ in only three of them, ‘satisfactory’ in four of them and rated ‘good’ in another. In several sub categories under these main eight, the school was given the highest rating as ‘exceptional’. The report commented in its executive summary that: (1) Overall, leadership and management is satisfactory; (2) overall, teaching in support of learning is unsatisfactory; (3) Overall, students’ performance in English and mathematics is unsatisfactory; (4) Overall, students’ progress in English and mathematics is unsatisfactory; (5) Overall, students’ personal and social development is satisfactory; (6) Overall, the use of human and material resources is satisfactory; (7) Overall, provisions for

the curriculum and enhancement programmes are satisfactory; and (8) Overall, the provisions for student safety, security, health and wellbeing are good.

In assessing the report, the three crucial indicators of, (2) teaching in support of learning, (3) students' performance in English and mathematics and (4) students' progress in English and mathematics were all unsatisfactory. The discourse with the inspectors at the end of the inspection process confirmed the overall unsatisfactory position of the school due to the fact that these three main areas were unsatisfactory. It did not matter if all other five criteria were rated 'exceptional', the school would still be 'unsatisfactory' if those three main areas were rated 'unsatisfactory'.

I say it's a light at the end of a tunnel, because the report confirmed that the school's own internal assessment and the NEI's report had justified the actions that were implemented at the end of the May 2013 retreat. Hence, I would have thought, that since both reports confirmed and justified my actions that were supported by the Board, then the ministry and all others would likewise fall in line with their support. This to my dismay was not the case, and so, for the first time in now over thirty five years in education, and fifteen years as an educational administrator, I felt a sense of defeat, as I was neglected by those in authority I thought understood and supported my efforts, particularly my efforts at educational transformation. Having tried for years every form of intervention without success, and having appealed to those in authority also without success, I was now blinded by a mixture of emotions which include anger, frustration, helplessness and defeat. It was like a panic attack, where all my air passageways became sealed shut, and I was gasping, reaching out blindly in search of a solution, but none came. I talked openly to myself—sometimes I believe I even answered back—and I felt as if I was being pulled inside out, torn to pieces and ripped to shreds. My mind was in a tug of war of sanity versus insanity, and the accumulated content of everything that was terrible just hit me like a ton of bricks—I felt like collapsing, gasping for air, grasping for straws, clawing through the dirt, reaching for what little I could still see before the blackness had taken hold; the dark spots danced before my eyes, mingling with the ground before I am ripped to shreds begging for it all to just STOP.

Plans to Move on

It has always been a career goal of mine give of my best and leave a positive mark wherever I worked. I have also set a personal goal to limit my time in any one post to a period of seven years and up until this time and this post as principal, I had kept to those conditions. When I left the school in Jamaica to the Cayman Islands, I had not only accomplished the first of my personal goals but was only two years short of meeting the other. In the end, however, I returned and worked another six years totaling eleven years before the start of retirement years. In the context of Jamaica, the retirement age ranges from sixty to sixty five depending on recommendation after the age of sixty. I therefore contemplated requesting to stay on for another three years.

Retirement was never supposed to be a sad ending, but a celebrated occasion after a career of excellence. However, I arrived at this point in my life when decisions must be made to save me. I realized late that the school was not mine to own; it would outlive me and many who come after may even forget that I ever existed. What I did at and for the school was never about me. It was a duty, a professional responsibility to students, staff, parents, the ministry and all stakeholders. That responsibility will be taken over by another and another, as I recede into a possible forgotten land. Only the work I have done “Good or Bad”, will live on. If I should stay, I could damage my own “Good Work”. I must, therefore, see my work as complete at the school which has moved on. Now I too must also move on, and, in moving on, ensure that I do not travel the same path. I must leave the woods confident that I did walk “...the path less traveled [and it] made all the difference” (Frost, 1920). Now I can begin another journey, to new positionalities and another story, or alternative reflectively re-tell this same story with a reflexive gaze to also arrive at a new positionality. This I must do, if I wanted my “...personal narrative to participate in the scholarly conversation [and for my audience to] have confidence that I am telling the truth as I understand it” (Pelias, 2013, p. 388). Mindfully always that;

Context and point of view play an ever-important role in the knowledges shared in the autoethnographic story. As an autoethnographer, I work in context, focusing in on how place, products, and people create and cultivate knowledges in relational experiences. The personal here is in conversation with and is situated within social, political, and cultural contexts (Minge, 2013, citing Holman Jones, 2005 p. 431).

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the research was to take an inward glance at my journey as a principal and examine the unique challenges that come with being in this position. An autobiographical perspective lends itself to taking a look at the position of a public school leader from my own point of view as the researcher. My personal account of this journeying process will allow aspiring principals, my colleague principals, and other educational peers an opportunity to reflect on their own current or future career as principals and grow and develop their own understanding of the complexities, challenges and celebrations associated with the position.

The research as I have indicated, has shown that whereas there is a wealth of research from across the world (Bush, 2005, 2008; Hallinger & Peck, 1996; Hargreaves, 2001; Harris, 2010; Day, 2001; Leithwood, 2006; etc), it is only within the last decade and half that studies on educational leadership have started to grow significantly in relation to its function on the Caribbean environment (Miller, 2013; Hutton, 2013, Shotte, 2013, Beckford and Lekule, 2013; etc). One of the goals of this research is, therefore, to add to the body of knowledge, from the unique perspective of an autoethnography. Examining one's self within a social context, provides a rich perspective about the inner workings and hidden mechanisms behind the decision-making processes the principals undertake. We must take a look at this position from within to better examine the intricacies of the principalship. Through self narrative, autoethnography connects the personal to the cultural (Reed-Danahay, 1997). Providing an autoethnographical look at leadership, through the eyes of the participant, should help further the development of the leadership position.

Meaning was derived from the varied artifacts used as tools for this self-study. A reflexive

journal was kept, though not consistent, it had some documentation of the daily occurrences, feelings and thoughts of me during the process. Faculty agendas, the principal's log, staff memos, personal calendars, and reflective analysis all served as data collection tools. These tools helped me to set out my narrative chronologically by the data source and then compile it into a journal. The journal traces the day-to-day interactions, meetings, thoughts, and experiences of the person in the principal's position. This final chapter also examines my research questions that guided this study, as well as my summary, implications, and self-reflections to promote future phenomenological studies in the area of autoethnography. Readers of this research might find their own storyline through my own lived experience.

Originally, I anticipated my story to be that of the 21st century principal and the complexities of this position as I sought to initiate and establish positions in the process of school development planning. However, the deeper I probed into my own story and the issues encountered, the more I realized the experiences were not so much about the trials, tribulations and multifaceted demands required of a principal who is attempting education transformation and school improvement planning. It was more about my personal journey and my arrival at a new understanding of autoethnography as a process which is not "...static, but a process which continues to expand to include not only relational ethics, but moral ethics, ethical mindfulness, an ethic of trust, an ethic of care, and an ethic to look out for the well-being of ourselves as well as the other as we engage in emotionally laden journeys..." (Douglas & Carless, 2013, citing Adams, 2008; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Ellis, 2007; Etherington, 2007, p. 99).

This, autoethnographic journey and the discovery of self, I believe, was a greater discovery and a more enlightening story for me than was the process of school development, improvement, and educational transformation that occurred from September 2004 to August 2015. These were also critical years in the further development of my own character, professional experience and understanding of the principalship. The movement from one school to another, particularly as it involved a movement from one country to another, constituted not only knowledge transfer but the change process and understanding involved with the cultural shifts and the socialization process I encountered during these

school years, were integral parts of my journey.

What Were the Challenges I Faced During the Odyssey of my Principalship at the High School?

My first challenge was the time given to get the school started for the beginning of the school year. As mentioned earlier in the narrative of my journey, I was called to the position less than three weeks before the start of the school year. In this period, I had to decide on the needs of the school and design a timetable that would accommodate those needs. Based on the timetable, I also had to recruit all the different teachers needed to staff the timetable as well as source and procure teaching and other resources. Amongst these challenges, there was no time to design the type of advertisement which would indicate the staffing needs of the school. I, therefore, had to accept the two folders from the Ministry of Education containing a list of persons aspiring for teaching positions at the new school. This, while bearing in mind that “teachers can drive or retard students’ progress through enthusiasm (or lack of), their experience (or lack of), their commitment (or lack of) and their skills and qualifications (or lack or)” (Miller 2016a, p. 109).

Having recruited the teachers, the second challenge I had to confront in assuming the principalship at the school was the challenge of developing the “the school’s culture”. My first thought, therefore, went to the development of the school improvement plan with a significant emphasis on the “Right Vision”. This, I thought would create a pathway towards a “Right Culture”, a concept which evolves and cascade down from the initial stage of developing and ensuring that “RIGHT” goals were established (see chapter 5 in this research). The majority of principals inherit schools that have already been established, and therefore their difficulty lies in an inherent difficult position of changing the culture if that is deemed necessary. My challenge was not a change of culture but one of establishing a culture. I previously mentioned that on being appointed as principal, I was given two folders with names of teachers who were aspirants for teaching positions at the new school. It is the norm for principals to advertise for teachers, giving a clear

definition of the needs of the school and the existing culture to which they would be entering or, as in the case of a new school, the culture that is envisaged. I was faced with the situation where I had to select and accept teachers from different cultural backgrounds and with skills that were not necessarily matched to the vision and direction that was later created for the school. This differing cultural backgrounds, were in one sense a good thing, as it brought to the school a ‘melting pot’ of ideas. In another sense, however, it exposed the school to a variety of leadership and pedagogical approaches (some of which were so steeped in their own tradition of thinking) and inflexibility even to the collegial, collaborative leadership demands of a newly established institution. I was not seeking to impose my own perspective on the new school culture as the process was one of collaboration and consensus, however, it is not out of the ordinary or beyond expectation for the principal to lead in the creation of the school culture. Liu et al. (2017) noted that, principals in China give attention to “...creating a nurturing school culture”, and similarly in Australia, principals are expected to “create a positive culture of challenge and support...” (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014). In the Caribbean, issues of ‘collective engagement’ are emphasized over ‘individualism’ (Miller, 2013, p. 23) which is seen as more desirable in promoting greater collaboration and shared leadership and invariably promoting a culture of sustained improvement in schools. Therefore, as a new school, there was no script, job descriptions, person specifications or guidance notes indicating to applicants my intentions and my personal vision of the school I wanted to create. On reflection, I think they, like me, came with their own scripts and this was the challenge.

The third challenge that I encountered was the first set of students that were placed at the school. I came to the position under the advice of the Ministry of Education that the school would be a traditional high school akin to the old type grammar schools. This meant that the type of students who would have been assigned would have had GSAT averages upwards of seventy five percentage (75%) points. This, however, was not the case as the students came with averages of below forty six percentage (46%) points. This was, for me, a disappointment, as I had gone outside those ministry folders which contained those aspirant teachers and had enticed a few teachers away from some of the top traditional

grammar schools, with the promise of promoted status. Their encounter with these students could be explained at best as a harrowing experience. My only source of motivation was to remind them that our role as teachers should be one of servitude. Dethloff (2005), puts it succinctly by asserting that, “we must develop a community of acceptance with all of our stakeholders and provide all children the full opportunity to participate in an education that is not exclusionary”, (p.165), which is in keeping with the national education mantra which states that ‘Every child can learn, and every child must learn’.

A fourth challenge was the task of developing a strategic but innovative and futuristic school development plan. The challenge was that school development planning had only been introduced formally and made mandatory within the last five years in Jamaica. This was a slow process of infusion into the custom of schools, and still slower was the acceptance of teachers, particularly older teachers. My thought process, in recruiting the teachers to be part of the process of establishing the school, was to recruit mature teachers with years of experience. I, however, later discovered that, at least sixty percent of my recruits were teachers who had not progressed in their positions at their former schools and were looking for promotional opportunities at the new school. The reasons for their lack of progression were for the most case institutional, but I also discovered some were due to poor attitude, unprofessional conduct, and weak pedagogical skills. These weaknesses were not picked up from the glowing references received from their previous principals. It was only in light of off the record conversations with those principals, that I learnt that they were only too glad to be rid of those teachers. One principal commented, “I noticed you employed one of mine, I have some more like her that I want to get rid of”. References were therefore, unprofessional and dishonest on the part of my colleague principals, but I was temporarily stuck with my recruits and had to work with them, applying Phillip’s (2003) new and innovative school improvement planning process of “Future Basing” that I wanted to introduce.

I reflected on the above mentioned reasons for the weaknesses in the teachers and saw that it accords with the literature on leadership. The important observation was that of the transformational model of leadership, which has always stressed vision, setting a ‘right’ culture, and developing organisations and people, all in an effort to enhance the teaching

and learning environment; that, in combination with a distributed leadership model, which engages talented individuals, have moved the school towards the achieved goal as a “School of Choice”. On the other hand, the instructional model which directed its focus on setting educational goals to include curriculum and teacher evaluation came up short on its targets. This is shown to be so, because the students who entered the school with above average grades, began performing below average on both their internal and external examinations exams. (It must be noted here that these observations are made after three years and the only student who did external examinations were the GNAT students.). The school in the public’s eye was reflecting positively, but the academic performances of the students were below expectations. This supports the results of Robinson et al.’s (2009) meta-analysis of quantitative empirical studies which suggested that, “transformational leadership is less likely to result in strong effects on pupil outcomes (because it focused originally on staff relationships) than instructional leadership, which is focused on the core business of schools in enhancing effective teaching and learning” (cited in Day, Gu & Sammons, 2016, p. 222).

A fifth challenge was the move to the Cayman Islands. This was more of an emotional challenge that I had to work through rather than a physical challenge, and was self-imposed as well as derived from the experience and emotional attachment that I had developed at the school. After five years, we had established an environment that was growing and was responding instructionally and collectively to the needs of our school community. Teachers were pleased with the direction of our school. We worked together as a team and were energized and focused on improving the academic success of our students. Parents were very content with the leadership (my principalship style and in the main, the senior teacher cohort), and they deemed our school a safe and pleasant environment to nurture and develop their children. I had developed many close personal and professional relationships, and it was difficult to say farewell, even if it was just for a few years. Due to these established relationships, I felt the inner turmoil that I was letting the faculty down by leaving them. This disequilibrium I experienced proved to be an area that would take a few months to work through as analysis of my reflexive journal, personal calendar, past reflections, and future plans that I had for the school shows.

I, however, found inner comfort with the reminder that I was called upon from the highest level of my ministry to take on this task. This, I believe, was an affirmation by the ministry of the 'good' job that I had done with the new school. If therefore, that was the ministry's view, then it was also a mandate to me, to represent them with the highest of standards. It was also a commitment to return with good practices of lessons learnt, which would make a meaning contribution the Jamaican education system, and also enhances my leadership potentials.

How I Responded to the Challenges

My second question was: How did I respond to these challenges I faced on my journey as a principal? Dethloff (2005), quoting Bullough and Baughman (1997), points out that when discussing the acceptance of change in a new social setting, "we also engage in accommodation and create new beliefs, new ways of being in the world in response to new experience. Sometimes these changes are more or less forced upon us; at other times they are openly sought" (p. 75). I found that my newly recruited staff seemed to have the longing and need for change, yet could not articulate what they wanted to be the end result. So, although change can be positive or negative in an organization, the change that this staff seemed to desire was not only organizational but also attitudinal, on an individual and personal level.

My response to the challenge of the timing of my appointment vis-a-vis the start date of the school year and all the concomitant issues that followed, were placed at the feet of the Ministry of Education. They had responsibility for the appointment of principals and ultimately the efficient start to the school year of all its schools. However, I know based on the posturing of the Ministry officials, that blame could easily be transferred to my office. Hence, it was up to me to ensure that such blame could not be passed on to me but also to ensure that my own resume was not tarnished in this new exposure. It was also to the advantage of both the ministry and myself to work collaboratively to ensure that everything was effectively and efficiently completed and ready for the start of the new

school year and that no negative publicity arose from the event.

I was able to accomplish this feat even with the attempts of some individuals to stall the process by requesting and getting the help of a senior officer in the Ministry who supported my cause to be assigned to the school. This meant that any attempts to undermine the processes could be mitigated through internal interventions while I was acting externally and focused on the school operations.

My response to the challenge of establishing a “right culture and climate” in the school was to begin by modeling the type of behaviour I wanted, so as to give support through every interaction I engaged in on the school compound. I, therefore, had to lead by example in every aspect of my leadership in order to develop the right culture. Staff meetings, dialoguing with teachers, parent conferences, and general discussions on and off the compound could not stray from the course that I wanted to chart. Every interaction was to be in line with the goals and vision of the school, and what it eventually stand for. This was a difficult task, due to the different backgrounds that the teachers and students were coming from. Hence, arising from the SIP process, there was a general buy-in and acceptance of the final plan, however, while most had no difficulty in coalescing around the plan that for the most part new to them, there were individual difficulties in making the cultural shift from their comfort zones, and what they were used to at their past place of employment. The difficulty then, was not so much of a resistance to change, but more to the issue of “new wine in old bottles”, based on the new and innovative school improvement planning process and the futuristic direction in which we wanted to focus the school. This meant that as leader, I had to spend time not only on teaching the new innovative focus but on motivating and encouraging the few reluctant staff members into accepting the new processes. It was during these developmental stages that I had to stay the course and remain positive and optimistic. In doing so, I had to establish new relationships and concretize previous ones, not only on a professional level, but also to include those that were personal and intimate, as mechanisms for voicing my frustrations and apprehensions in the day-to-day challenges I faced in my journey as a school principal.

In my motivating and encouraging endeavours, I also responded to challenges in

establishing the school's culture, vision and strategic plans by making sure we validated teachers who were mature and veterans in the profession. As I mentioned earlier and in my list of challenges, some of my teacher recruits were persons with years of experience, some having over twenty years teaching experience. They came with their own expectations, from their own comfort zones that could only be deemed comfortable because of their day to day, mundane, recurring experiences and not because of any professional comfort and stability such as promotional opportunities. Whatever were their expectations, I thought it my responsibility to ensure that as a new administrative team I value their previous work and then extend their new learning opportunities if I was going to be a successful principal.

My third challenge of dealing with the students placed at the school was dealt with by engaging the ministry. I immediately conducted my own diagnostic evaluation, which correlated with the GSAT and GNAT scores of the students. The high number of students reading below secondary school level was presented to the Ministry as evidence to support my call for extra support. The ministry at its highest level responded and sent in a team to give support to all the staff in the form of a professional development seminar with the emphasis on 'Dealing with challenging students'. They then went further by approving an additional permanent position on staff to help with such students.

The fourth challenge was the development of the strategic development plan for the school. My response to this challenge is related to my second challenge of establishing the school's culture. I earlier mentioned a concept called 'Future Basing' in this conclusion as the process of school development planning that I intended to introduce at the school. The concept of 'Future-Basing' was first postulated by Bill Phillips in July 1991, with further development on the concept by Phillips in November, 2003. Phillips asserts that:

“It is a powerful process for creating vision, deciding how to achieve it and generating a motivation to act.... Future-basing works by basing yourself in the future at the hour or date of your ideal outcome. This successful outcome, described in detail comprises the vision of the future. Looking back from the

Future-base allows similar milestones and turning points to be identified as in reviewing a truly remembered success”. (p. 2)

The Jamaica All Age School Project (JAASP) team on which I served as one of the three overseas consultants to the Jamaica government in 2000, introduced this concept of the school development planning process. I have since being committed to the process, and I got my own opportunity to put it to the test in 2004 when I took up my principal post at the school. I must immediately say that the process served as an integral and decisive ingredient in helping to deal with this particular challenge that I faced on my journey as principal.

My fifth challenge was dealing with the transition to the Cayman Islands. Leaving the school was quite emotional for me, as I had taken on the school as a project as if it was my own personal project, and not a public service venture. I cuddled, personalized, and owned it as though it was my private business. Breaking away from the school was, therefore, quite hard, and, for a moment, my only comforting thought was the fact that I had to return after a two year sojourn. However, an afterthought took me to another place, where, merely returning cannot or should not be seen as advancement but could also be seen as a retrograde move. Hence, having meaningfully process the move, I realized that I would be gaining more than just valuable experience with which i could use to enhance “my project”, the school, but would be of benefit to entire Jamaican education system. This is played out in the conversation twelve with permanent secretary, when I was asked to give the positive gains from my experience in the Cayman Islands. I should also say that the experience helped in my development as a person, by making me stronger, more understanding of people, and better able to deal with relationship issues within the workplace.

What Occupied My Time During My Journey?

The third research question posed was: What occupied my time in my Odyssey as a

Principal? In answering this question, I must say that my time was divided in two periods, and in these two periods two separate events occupied my time, even though they collectively can be cast into the same category of relationship building.

The first period was that period between 2004 and 2009 which constituted the first five years of my odysseys and in my opinion is similar to the transition experienced by Dethloff (2005) in his transitional episode from one campus to another. Dethloff (2005, p. 168), clearly asserted that, the building of relationships is the catalyst for success in most professional endeavors. In the age of communication, there are not many businesses or professions where human interaction does not take place via technology or face to face. This relationship building is a critical component to promote true, systemic organizational change. Although education seems to be more reluctant in the overall change process than the private sector, the standards, legalities, and accountability measures dictated by the governments are always being updated and implementation is a necessity at the school level to meet these criteria. To better adapt to ever changing societal norms, it is essential that the school is a model of continuing professional growth. Establishing collegial relationships where people feel confident to share their strengths and areas of improvement is a means to achieve professional growth. This collegiality will allow educators a better opportunity to meet national criteria, improve instruction, and adapt to their cultural surroundings much like businesses and corporations have done. Building these relationships is time consuming. Trust has to be established on a mutual level among all members of the culture. Teachers, parents, students, and administrators must build these positive interactions with each other to open the doors for transformation. It is for this reason that I took great care to arrange meetings and dialogue sessions that provided the opportunity for our staff members to get to know each other on a personal level. This takes an extraordinary amount of time, but the dividends are tremendous. When a principal makes a continuous effort to hear all the voices that he or she represents, then communities can be created that acknowledge and promote differences, work in more collegial ways, and create learning opportunities through instructional dialogue.

My time was also occupied during the period 2010–2015 by relationship building of a different type. This constituted the second time period of my odyssey and was subdivided

into two parts. The period from January 2010 to August 2011, I was in the Cayman Islands, and for the most part, September 2011 to the present time I had returned to Jamaica. Both sub-periods were marked by relationship building which could be considered more of a “Bridge Building” type. This was significant in the Cayman environment, where the contract culture and a diversified and socio-racial divide created major differences and suspicion amongst members of the population. This position is supported in an article by Amit, (2001) in an article titled “A clash of vulnerabilities: citizenship, labor, and expatriacy in the Cayman Islands” where she puts forward the position that the government of the Cayman has defined citizenship in order to protect their commercial interest over the workers of the country. To this extent, she made the observation in the conclusion to the article that; “It is a zero-sum game that obscures the very real mutual dependence and therefore partnership, however grudging or resentful, that actually exists between workers in Cayman, arbitrarily defined as native or outsider” (p. 591).

The most significant concerns that I faced on my return to Jamaica were the split in the staff team, a partisan approach by the Board in dealing with the split, and the indifference of the Ministry in being proactive in their intervention to resolving the issues and concerns of the school. This caused me great concern and so occupied my time because of my attempts at resolving the issues, to the extent that the main objectives of my development plan and the major aim of a teaching and learning environment were stymied.

What Factors and Considerations Determined my Priorities?

My priorities were always determined by what was best for the students. Principalship or other positions of leadership present opportunities to impact the teaching and learning environment, determine the most appropriate vision, develop “right” strategies, and set a “right” culture on a school compound. The principal can affect the organization in a negative or positive light in a single moment (or matter of minutes), and therefore the principal must make critical decisions in determining which matters are of the highest

priority. Dethloff (2005), quoting Fullan (2001), describes changing the way we do things in a social setting as “reculturing”. The principal is in a constant state of reculturing. Using this criterion as a basis for decision-making, the principal must sift through the varied needs of individuals and the organization to determine what requires immediate focus and attention. At the school the decision-making filter that was utilized was the answer to the question: “Will this decision enhance the teaching and learning process to the benefit of the students?” This question would be the foundational basis for decision-making and in determining which concerns, challenges, or needs had top priority. Hence, successive school development and improvement plans would have this as their priority focus.

I have heard on many occasions when teachers made covert suggestions that “the students we are getting are not of high school standard” or “the students can’t learn because the home support is lacking”. These comments were redirected by me whenever I heard them, to focus on the strategies of the teacher, not the learner. The question would then become how we change our instructional strategies to reach this child. What can we do to make this situation better? As such, I focused a lot of attention on frequent professional development training seminars, workshops, and conferences during my ten year journey.

The comment on parental support would also take into account the type of communities the students live in. The pool of students that the school receives comes mainly from the twenty eight (28) inner city communities around the city of Montego Bay. Some of these students develop inappropriate attitudes toward school and learning, and therefore a priority approach was also developed which helped to engage them and enhance their aptitude for learning. This approach was earlier mentioned as “Vertical Tutoring”. All priority decision were, therefore, based on the best interest of the student and establishing a positive collegial atmosphere that valued all learners.

What Barriers or Obstacles did I Encounter in Attempting to Initiate and Execute the Strategy for Development and Cultivate What I Consider to be a Positive Environment, and an Organizational Culture

that Enhances Teaching and Learning?

This was the fifth research question posed to help guide this autoethnographical journey, and it engages directly the issues of previous questions. Again, I must say that the barriers and obstacles came in two different waves, particularly those that were internally generated. Thinking it through it would appear that the school had a five year cycle, because the waves came in that fashion.

I think my main barrier and obstacle was the Ministry of Education. This institution should have been my main support, however, other than persons loyal to my cause who quietly gave me their support, there were many others who covertly and openly undermined almost all my efforts to move the school in the directions that would enhance the educational cause. This was a huge barrier to cross, as without the Ministry's support, much of what I had proposed to do could not be done. It is my opinion that my overarching proposal and strategy to make the school into a "School of Choice" in five years, a "School of Excellence" within the next five years, and then eventually morphed into a "School of the Future" was too much for some persons to grasp. Here I was, attempting an initiative that was not achieved by the other schools that were fifty years older (some even celebrated centenary and double centenary) and yet had not achieved such lofty aims. Persons in officer positions in the ministry (some were even past leaders of these schools), could not vision or conceive of the idea that my vision for the school could be achieved. This to me was a major barrier, since I was dealing with persons who were within themselves comfortable with maintaining the status quo, thereby refusing to extend themselves and think big, "outside the box". I was to them, creating unnecessary work for them, since it was an easier task for them to carry out their mundane duties of monitoring existing, established institutionalized policies and operational architectures within the schools. They saw my initiatives as additional work instead of new work all because it required new thinking.

The ministry was not the only external barrier to the school. Their resistance to accept the new thinking and vision of the school translated itself to the Board of Management. I

found myself with a chairman who I experienced as a stumbling block to every initiative and proposal that I put forward. I, however, refused to relent, as I was not only committed but strongly of the belief that it was the correct path for the new school to take in its development. Hence, to that extent, the school at the management level descended into open warfare between the chairman and me. My remit was to direct the operations of the school, while the Board's remit was to monitor policies arising out of the ministry and those developed internally by the school. I felt that the Board through the chairman, had stepped across the line into operational matters and therefore was obstructing me. This situation with the Board was only resolved after I made a complaint directly to the Ministry and a new Board was then appointed.

There were also staff personalities who were barriers to promoting a positive school culture. It appeared to me that certain staff members were constantly seeking to undermine the direction the school was headed. These individuals would publicly question protocol, speak covertly in staff rooms about the management, send out emails to the entire school that address individual concerns, and do so in a manner that was not conducive to building mutually respectful relationships. This hostility by one or two individuals needed urgent attention. To provide an immediate response, I would adhere to the following protocol: During an all staff faculty meeting, I would address the question publicly but then encourage the concerned teacher to meet with the individuals with whom they themselves had concerns and to include me in the meetings (as principal) if they so desired. I would many times schedule this meeting publicly to demonstrate that our leadership team could handle difficult situations and would not shy away from controversy. This public scheduling of an additional meeting with the participants involved would let the staff know that we were dedicated to all members of our staff, and would support and work through those concerns or glitches. The same was true when a staff member would send out an all school email. We would reply to that email in the all campus format on a one-time basis to schedule an appointment to discuss the point of contention. Even though I thought that open discussion in staff meetings was a good way to air matters of concern, I was later advised by staff who were supportive of my efforts, not to address individual issues openly as the staff members who strive on conflict gained strength from that approach and used

the occasion to prolong the discussion and disrupt the general staff meetings. I took this advice and found that it did disarm the mischief makers.

I end here by stating that the barrier and obstacles were similar in both Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. The difference was the source of the barrier. In Jamaica, the main obstruction came from the Ministry level, cascading down to the Board of Management and eventually the staff. In the Cayman, it took the same path from the Ministry of Education, down to the Department of Education (the Cayman schools have no Boards of management) and then to the staff level. The issues were certainly different, but in both cases they created barriers for management and particularly for me, the principal.

Did I Develop and use a Model of Accountability in a Positive and Productive Manner?

Through my own experiences, I have come to support the view of Codd, 1999; Court, 2004 and others, that there is a misconception at the different levels of the Ministry of Education about what constitutes accountability in education, particularly at the school level. The differences in understandings are particularly significant when considering the notions of responsibility vis-a-vis accountability. Court (2004), in distinguishing between accountability and responsibility mentioned that, “There are distinctions between what is meant by the accountability of line management and by professional responsibility” (p. 190). She quoted Codd (1999, p. 51) as having described the former as:

[A]n external, low-trust form of accountability, which relies on hierarchically maintained impersonal processes of control through formal recording and reporting of information. Unthinking obedience and contractual compliance are all that are required in this form of accountability. In contrast, professional responsibility relies on individual and institutional internal commitments to high trust relationships that are characterized by loyalty and a sense of duty (Codd, 1999, p. 51).

[T]he practitioner has the moral obligation to render an account to several different constituencies, which may have different or even conflicting interests. This will involve judgement and sometimes the resolution of an ethical dilemma through a process of reflection or deliberation. This may be a collective process, shared with one's peers ... but in this form of accountability, the educational practitioner cannot avoid the exercise of professional discretion, where this may even require refusal to conform to managerial expectations or directives." (Court, 2004, p. 190, quoting Codd, 1999, p. 51–52)

More recently, Cranston (2013) suggested that the arguments on school leadership should critically examine the question: school leadership, for what and about what, is student learning? "That school leaders should be the ones driving that process, and that the constraints of accountability on school leaders need to be replaced by a new liberating professionalism for school leaders framed around notions of professional responsibility" (p.130).

I took it as my responsibility as principal and as mandated by the Ministry of Education to ensure that there was accountability demonstrated at all levels of administration. This was played out in my own personal conviction of collaboration in team work and my emphasis on a distributed model of leadership. I believe this also helped with building a better relationship with my board of management, enhanced relationship with parents and community and led to improved teaching and learning outcomes for everyone. This is a view which is supported in the literature by Court (2004, p. 190-191).c

Guided by the Board of Management in deciding on the policy requirements for the school, as lead learner and instructor, I developed policies which were rigorously interrogated by the Board before approval, and then put into operation by the senior management team of teachers. Many policies and procedural initiatives were developed to ensure everyone was clear on their responsibilities and to buttress the accountability framework of the school. I also ensured that early in the development stages of the school,

I sought and took advantage of a unique opportunity to begin laying the groundwork necessary for student success, without the immediate pressure of any external accountability ratings. For the school, this foundation needed to be developed on the belief system that was substantiated by existing models within the overall educational system in Jamaica. Hence, because I had previously worked in the Ministry, I was privy to the entire range of school types and their success and failure rates. I was therefore, in a position to position the school by modeling those schools that were rated highly and deemed excellent educational institutions. Many on my staff team, based on the schools from which they were recruited and based on the academic levels of some students that were placed at the school, held onto a belief that all children do not enter our doors equipped with the background, social upbringing, and educational experiences to be successful students academically, and that it is not in their job description to provide these skills or attributes. They spoke from the context that the low support from parents and the communities from which the students come, combined with lack of sufficient resources from government did not give them the motivation to buy into the Ministry's mantra that "Every Child can Learn and Every Child Must Learn" Whereas this belief or position is not universal to all teachers, I believe is an attitude symptomatic of weak pedagogic skills that is ingrained in some teachers who had developed an attitude of teaching that says that students must conform to their classroom and their way of teaching. I am not here saying that these teachers cannot be changed or cannot be trained, however, they continually demonstrate a reluctance to participate in training and development activities organized by the school Board and the senior management team. This type of attitude could not benefit the children of certain communities and especially those from low-income households that would be naturally at a disadvantage in our school system that is steeped in traditional values. Our traditional educational system is not designed to provide all learners with the tools they need to experience academic success and we were also experiencing this mentality at the school.

In my opinion, some teachers looked for 'designer' students, who are perfect students and who come with all the foundational skills needed to behave in socially acceptable ways (those of a middle class family) and also the educational background necessary to make

them great students. On many occasion, I had to ask them to step back from this chimera and reinforce the fact that the job of the teacher was to educate all children, and that students come to us from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of needs. The accountability system used therefore, was measuring with a yardstick that did not differentiate between social backgrounds, but ensured differentiated learning delivery methods that were appropriate for individual learners.

I also ensured that the school focused on developing the characteristics of a school with all-around strong accountability standards, and as Dethloff (2005), quoting Skrla (2002), pointed out, there are negative pressures for accountability which are placed on the job security of principals. This mentality was the focus of our strategy for development at the school. Our understanding of accountability also shifted as the process developed as well as to meet changing government priorities. We were, however, clear that accountability should not be synonymous with national assessment reports but that accountability should go much deeper than test scores and public recognition. Accountability should remain the effort teachers, principals, and the ministry make in implementing and utilizing strategies in and out of the classroom that provide all students with academic success and affords them an equitable education. It is providing our children an education that is democratic, that disadvantaged families, students with special needs, the affluent, and every child of every parent, the opportunity for a meaningful educational experience. These were the school's steps and efforts in using accountability productively.

Self-Reflections

As I stated in the introduction to the literature review in this research, there are certain issues that engaged me along my journey as a principal. Coming out of from these issues, were certain themes to which I have articulated as dominant episodes that have influenced the contextual space within which the journey evolved. These issues also highlighted the relationships formed with people with whom I encountered, and the places and organisations that were a conduit in helping me to understand, “the nexus of structure and

agency, of personal and political, of the phenomenal and the social-structural...” (Allen-Collinson, 2013, p. 296).

My reflections, therefore, begin with educational leadership, particularly from the perspective of the school principal and how my understanding of it has developed and created new meaning for me and leadership in the educational system. Inclusive to this new understanding is the subtheme which covers the issues of human relationships and how my personal entrance and exit from that space, leaves me with new insights on rapport building, ethical relationships, personal agency, collaboration and conflict resolution in a working environment where shared experience and teamwork participation were important. My reflections will also capture the sub-themes of governance, strategic planning, professional accountability, and the policy environment in which schools operate and how these impact directly on school leadership. These reflections, I hope will help to create new meaning and understanding that will help principals, particular new and aspiring school leaders, give new insights into the management of education system and add to the growth in knowledge on school leadership.

Reflections on Leadership:

Although I have done a considerable amount of readings on leadership in general, I will confine my reflections to leadership within schools and specifically on the principal, as this is the context in which my research journey has taken place. I immediately go back to my first conversation (conversation 1, in this research) when it was intimated to me by an education officer that I may be better suited for the vice principal’s position. At the time, I thought that this officer was condescending in his approach to me and unprofessional by imposing himself on the recruitment process. Now on reflection, I believe he was more right than wrong. I have come to this position based on the fact that even though I had great experience in guiding school through their school development planning processes (SDP/SIP), I had no experience in the management and administration of schools. Hence,

my immersion into the position of a principal was more theoretical than from a practical position.

I found, for example, that the theoretical knowledge of managing human resources was no compensation for the lived experience. Hence, the practical involvement in defusing conflicts, establishing rapport, and engendering relationships for participation and teamwork contributions were of vital importance in managing schools. The impact of which cannot be gained solely from 'book' knowledge. This is borne out by Ripley (1997), where in an article concerning *The Current Tensions in Principalship: Finding an Appropriate Balance*, mentioned that, principals are confronted with tension on a daily basis, which must be resolved by the principal as chief accountable officer. This he emphasized by stating that:

Principals must deal with tensions every day, [they] are pulled in different directions and are at breaking point under the stress... ..They find the needs of some students conflicting with the needs of others; they must deal with parents who want one thing while the staff wants another; they must meet accountability ratings of the ministry and Boards, yet satisfy the demands of parents.... There are tensions of leadership...; collaborative versus authoritarian..., feminine versus masculine styles..., instructional versus managerial..., the principal as leader versus the principal as servant..., distributive versus transformational..., and the list goes on. There are tensions of needs; the needs of one versus the needs of the many, dealing with the needs of the teacher as a teacher versus the teacher as a professional, dealing with teachers' growth versus students' growth. Then there are social and cultural tensions which include, the principal's vision versus a communal vision and the planning of institutional stability versus sustained change for improvement. (p. 55-62)

As I reflect on my journey and how I have dealt with these tensions, I have to admit that I did not plan for any of this and was somewhat unprepared for it. I have come to a similar

conclusion as Ripley (1997) that these tensions will continue to exist and exert pressure on principals for a long time to come. Rather than viewing these tensions as negative, I believe good principals can use them to help to make schools better” (p. 63). I have used them to:

“first develop a deeper understanding of all the issues that can confront a principal and how to manage them for the good of the school. In doing so I am also able to strike and maintain an appropriate balance between them and then find the middle path. (p. 63)

My learning moment from all this, is that in the management of people, theoretical ‘book’ knowledge cannot be the only source from which principals derive their awareness, skills, and abilities for managing staff. It is now my strong belief, borne out from this research experience, that qualifications for principalship must be a combination of prior experience and mentoring with a solid theoretical academic foundation. This belief is now so important to me, that in a recent response to a question from the permanent secretary, I have made it my recommendation that aspiring principals should serve time being mentored, (as vice principals, acting principals or otherwise) before being appointed as principals. Hence an education officer (without school management and leadership experience) should not automatically qualify just on the basis that they were school supervisors. This position is also supported in the literature by Murakami and Kearney (2016), who emphasize the move by many principal preparation programmes in North America to “embrace the responsibility of ensuring that their candidates receive a good balance of knowledge, skills and dispositions, and enhanced exposure to context-based challenges” (p. 57). Miller (2013), also suggested that in the context of the Caribbean, it is not surprising that current trends in school leadership reinforce “...academic liberalism and experiential vocationalism” (p. 18).

Miller (2013, p. 17, citing Holman, 2000, p.21), in his conclusion on the current trends on leadership in the Caribbean, proposes four leadership development models. These include

the academic liberalism, experiential liberalism, experiential vocationalism and the experiential/critical. The academic liberalism speaks to leadership concerns with objective knowledge and the capability of analyzing applicable theoretical principles. The Experiential liberalism speaks to a more practical approach rather than theory even though it accords much with the academic approach. The experiential vocationalism speaks more to the use of skills and knowledge in leadership development. The experiential/critical according to Miller (2013, p. 18) "...demands a higher level of reflection which enables individuals to become reflexive about their own knowledge and action and to formulate practical and emancipatory forms of action..." This approach is also said to share much with the experiential liberalism which in turn shares with the academic liberalism. In my opinion, this captures most of the elements that is involved in the leadership development approaches.

I also find this approach useful in theorizing and answering the questions that concerns my own journey in leadership and the concerns of this research. As stated earlier, my reflections have lead me to an understanding that leadership cannot be only from an academic and theory orientated position, but should also be grounded in practical live experiences. This was borne out from my own lived experience as a principal and my dealings with staff relationships. It is for this reason that I take the position that reflective analysis of situations should cause leaders to move to new spaces and new positionalities, so that their actions can reflexively accommodate context which is constantly in transition.

Reflections on Governance and the Policy Environment

My reflections on governance and the policy environment in which the school operated is juxtaposed between two operating spaces in which I found myself. For the time in which I worked in the ministry of education, I operated at a fairly senior level where from time to time, other than my work with underperforming school, I was asked to help in the crafting of policies and procedures for implementation at the micro and macro levels. Micro policy initiatives were mainly for the school level of implementation. At the macro level, these were usually as a member of a committee for presentation to the Minister. On a personal

level, I was also a close colleague of some of the influential persons not only on a professional level, but a friend. I, therefore, had a clear understanding of the ministry's policy position and the directions in which they wanted to take the education system and schools in particular. My work in education later moved to another space when I became principal of a school. The policy initiatives at this level were, as stated earlier, at the micro level and affected the operations at the school level. It was my belief, however, that because of established associations and work at the top level of the ministry, the policies that I developed and implemented at the school level would be innovative to the extent that they would be of such influence and impact that they would be adopted by the ministry for a wider "systems model leadership type" (Bush and Glover, 2014, p. 562), where principals (mainly high performing principals) extend their sphere of influence to other schools, particularly low or underperforming schools.

On reflections, it would seem that my transition from the office in the ministry to the office of principal in effect only took place on a physical level but not mental or psychologically. I say this because, whilst I worked directly in the Ministry of Education, I was employed in two different positions over a period of four years. The first was as a consultant/advisor on an international funded project for three years and in the second period as an education officer in charge of a government project for a year. In both positions, my responsibilities included amongst other things, development policies and procedures to be implemented both at the macro-level across the ministry and at the micro level in schools. I therefore, developed an understanding of working on international project with an agenda to affect national policies and programmes. I also experienced working on national projects with the agenda to impact policies and programmes at the micro level. Finally, my experience extend to my current work at the school or micro level, managing and developing policies and programmes at the individual school level. This accords with Miller's, (2016a, p. 80) notion of three environments within which schools operate; the internal environment (that which relates directly to the school) and the external which is divided into the national (which include government localized policy and procedures) and the supra-national environments (which include policies and procedures which are mandated and funded or influenced by international agencies).

In my reflective moment, I believe that I carried on within the mindset of my previous roles and assumed responsibilities beyond and above the statutory responsibilities of the post of principal. This was confusing to some of the persons I lead (the teachers) and also to some of the persons that I was answerable to (education officers in the ministry and board members). I want to add, however, that most found the new mindset to be innovative and visionary within the context of a school environment. It is also worth mentioning that the persons who found the mindset and all that flows from it (including the visioning, policies and procedures) confusing, were the same persons who also were the cause for concern, that has been mentioned earlier in this thesis and who created conflicts in the school. Those who accepted the mindset were the ones who saw the vision, policies and procedures that were developed as innovative and were will to work towards making the school a 'School of Choice' and later 'A School of Excellence' and 'A School of the Future'.

It is my view that my transition into this context played an important role creating new meaning, and in the knowledges shared in my autoethnographic story and supports (Minge, 2013, p. 431). The lesson from this experience is that, "... [In autoethnography, work is done] in context, focusing in on how place, products, and people create and cultivate knowledges in relational experiences" (Minge, 2013, p. 431). I moved with the context of the Jamaican education system but within time and place to execute structures. However, these structures had significant bearings on personal relationships in those different places. Due to my own personal vision, a need to prove self, and an imposition of structures (policies and procedures) which were misunderstood and possibly ill-timed, this became the liminal space where "...the tangle of [my own] collective desires, dreams, difficult dialogues, and complex relationships across differences live[d] and transform[ed] within academic research as well as popular cultural performance practices" (Shoemaker, 2013, p. 522). This concentration on the "I" without sufficient consideration for "others" created a situation where my epiphanies are acted out in "...ritually structured liminal experiences connected to moments of breach, crisis, redress, reintegration and schism, [as I cross] from one space to another (Denzin, 2013, p. 132). In the context, new meaning and knowledge is therefore created and gained through understanding that structures, though

transient through time, cannot be readily imposed on place without consideration of context, because the context of place, space and time comes entangled and intertwined with people and a web of interpersonal relationships. The leadership and management (or poor management) of these inter-relationships, particularly in the context of a school cannot be disruptive in a space that requires collaboration among stakeholders to ensure improved performances.

Finally, I realized that the experience of gathering, analyzing, and organizing the data, greatly enhanced my own understanding of the culture in which I worked. Separating myself from the data, sometimes for extended period of time, allowed me to take a more objective look at a very personal and intimate subject matter. This study allows me to draw on my own personal experiences, and will perhaps assist others in their understanding of my particular context here at the school in dealing, when and if they have to deal, with contexts of a similar nature in the future.

Recommendations and Implications for Practice and Policy: *In School Leadership, School Development and Future Research.*

A ten years journey may seem like a very long time in the life of one human being, however, the multiple episodes and events that occurs over an individual's lifetime, diminishes that journey to a single picture frame amongst the life-long collage of multiple frames. This research represents the autoethnographical journey of one such frame in my life. My reflections have shown how much it has impacted and influenced me, to the extent that I can now make recommendations not only for me, but for other practicing and aspiring educational leaders who journey similar path.

Recommendations and Implications for School Leadership

I am finding that, even though I spoke to the use of my personal conviction to a distributed leadership style, in my experience, it has engaged talented staff members in a collaborative working relationship in the management of the school. This was only possible due to the efforts that I had made in influencing the development of teacher leadership. I want to make the distinction here, between the distributed leader and the teacher leader, and in making this distinction, I am not in any way defining the terms as that has already been done, and many literature reviews have also already attempted and done so (Beckford & Lekule, 2013; Hallinger & Heck, 2010a, 2010b; Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, & Hopkins, 2007; Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Leithwood et. al, 2009; Robinson, 2009; Harris, 2004, 2013 etc). I want instead, to examine how the concepts have impacted and influenced specifically my practice and this research in general, and in so doing have caused me to arrive at a point where I feel encouraged to make recommendations.

I begin with the bold statement that, there is no evidence that messianic leadership can drive up school improvement, and even in the case of those who demonstrate mere charismatic personalities, they also have need for some amount of support (Berg et al.,2014; citing Crawford, 2002; Knapp, Honig, Copland, Plecki, & Portin, 2010; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). My practice even before coming to the position of principals (as an advisor to the ministry) was to advise on and support a form of leadership which required participation of all the school's stakeholders and would invariably lead to an interaction of people with artifacts in social context (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). This is why I posited earlier in this research that I favoured the distributed model of leadership because it does just that. However, the distributed model can only work effectively if there is a talent pool of persons to whom leadership can be distributed, or who have the willingness to be trained for the task. This, therefore, requires that those person would have been adequately equipped and prepared to lead. Miller (2016a), in fact noted that “the construction of school ethos, although led by the principal, is dependent on a number of actors...” (p. 91) and Bissessar (2014, p. 2), quoting Kocolowski (2010) from an earlier article concurred and stated, “it is becoming more difficult for any single individual to possess all of the skills and abilities required to

competently lead” (p. 22). In the context of the school that I led, I found out quite early that I needed the support of other experienced teachers to get the school started and operating successfully. I also found that because the school was new, the ministry had advertised within schools at the regional level for experienced teachers to work in the new schools that were being built. They even went a step further to encourage teachers who were already formally assigned leadership roles (senior teachers) to move to the new school, promising them that their leadership position would be preserved (in the context of Jamaican schools, senior teachers do not carry their seniority with them when and if they move to another school). The ‘good’ intention of the ministry here, was to ensure that the new school would be sufficiently staffed with experienced leadership to support the principal. In the experience of my school, no one took up that offer as it was a risk to leave their senior positions, since it was on the determination of the school board and not the ministry in making appointments. I was therefore left with the only option to recommend for appointment of teacher leaders from among those who were appointed ‘ordinary’ subject teachers. This means that a further requirement of the top leadership (myself and the board of management) of the school was to train a cadre of middle managers. The difficulty that I faced was that there was no time to properly identify leadership potential and then train. I earlier mentioned my late appointment to the post and the concerns that late appointment came with. One such concern was—because the school had started and I needed the support of others in the day to day operations; these leadership recommendations were done based only on the teachers’ long service and not leadership experiences from their former schools.

It is based on that experience why I feel able to make recommendations which should ensure that in the future such problems do not repeat themselves in the event that a similar context arises. Hence, whereas the government urgency for building new schools is mainly to fill the need for school spaces in a particular geographical area, there should be important considerations to ensure that competent persons are recruited, trained and deployed at all levels of leadership and not just at the principal level. The recommendation is that this should be done before the general staff is recruited and certainly before any new students are enrolled. This would then give time for training the new leadership cohort, at

least those who would be involved in the administration and preparing the school for starting-up operations. My experience is that because this was not done, I was forced to use persons who were already employed in the system as subject teachers who were not necessarily equipped for the leadership requirements of the school. This recommendation is, therefore, both to ensure good practice is developed and sustained in the school environment, and also a policy recommendation for education departments.

My second recommendation on the subject of leadership is focused on middle leadership in the school system. Within this thesis, I strongly advocate for distributed leadership within the school system and which is supported by many other writers and educators (Beckford & Lekule, 2013; Leithwood, 2003, 2007, 2009; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006a, 2006b; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004; Harris, 2013; Harris & Spillane, 2009; etc). I have already singled out Beckford and Lekule (2013) who, writing from a Caribbean perspective, spoke to the need for distributed leadership to be implemented in the Caribbean “not as a panacea but rather a theoretical framework of reference for leadership that is geared towards effective participatory school governance and enhanced student achievement” (p. 156). Bissessar (2014), also writing from a Caribbean perspective, noted that administrators (principals of schools), need to utilise the skill and abilities of teachers within their organisation in an effort to improve school effectiveness. All this supports my experience in managing and developing programmes and policies for a new school. It is therefore, reasonable that from a practical point of view to make recommendations for the development of leadership programmes for middle management at schools to support top management.

Currently in my Jamaican context, middle managers are recommended for appointment by the principal to the board and then sent off to the ministry for confirmation. These middle managers are, in most cases, formal statutory positions such as heads of departments and grade coordinators. However, each school has a different context in which they work. For example in my context, I was assigned students with behavioural needs and disciplinary concerns and therefore had to appoint a disciplinary supervisor. A senior position, therefore, had to be created for this assignment. I therefore recommended for the position a dean of discipline, and presented it to the ministry. This position has since been

institutionalised in 2009 in the education system in Jamaica. I should also note here, that the responsible person with the ministry who framed the new ‘Dean of Discipline’ policy and procedure for schools islandwide, requested from my school our policy document. This was because I had already a system in place, which was working successfully and therefore became a ‘good practice’ for replication.

Secondly, after three years, the vision and objective of the school was to advance from a ‘school of choice’ to eventually be an innovative ‘school of the future’. In moving the school to meet the objective of a ‘school of the future’ meant that innovative improvement had to be undertaken. Hence, for example, the school in 2007 had the first business model computer laboratories installed and which was officially opened by the Minister of Education. In 2007, also it had the first solar system installed in a school in Jamaica. In 2012, it redesigned its library with thirty computer bays, a corporate learning section with fifteen laptops and electronic digital interactive whiteboard, and a production area to develop digital computerised teaching aids to support the teaching and learning environment. The school in 2012 advanced the technology by giving laptop computers to all teachers and in 2013 began installing power point projectors in all classrooms. This was superseded in 2014 when the school initiated tablets for classroom teaching. The tablet initiatives was embraced, supported and expanded by the ministry’s own ‘tablets in schools’ project which was launched later that same year. The school was therefore added to the ministry’s list of schools under their ‘Tablets in Schools’ initiative. Many other such innovative technology projects were implemented at the school and therefore the ministry saw it appropriate to embrace it as a site to be viewed as a model of ‘good practice’ by other schools.

All this meant that leadership in this area of technology was important and so I requested of the ministry for two additional specialist senior posts with responsibilities. These were the ‘technology integration specialist’ who would be responsible for teaching, modelling and mentoring colleague teachers on the use of technology in the teaching and learning process. A ‘computer systems manager’ whose responsibilities would include implementing, maintaining and upgrading new software programmes to support the teaching and learning environment. These were separate posts from the computer

technician which was already part of the government establishment in schools and whose job was mainly to maintain the hardware components of the system. Albeit to say, without a formal response from the ministry, I had to identify in a single person, someone who would perform the task of a “Technology Integration and Systems Management Specialist”, and ensure that the appropriate training and exposure was given to this person to do the required task.

These examples reemphasize the recognition of experts or talented individuals as a feature of the distributed leadership focus to support the traditional formally established leadership roles. It is Beckford and Lekule (2013), that posited that there is a reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers. This reciprocity “presupposes that each member of an organisation be viewed as an asset endowed with skills to be used for the good of the school” (p. 164). I identified early in my practice as a principal this reciprocal relationship, and it is because of this reason that I selected certain persons in leaderships position to perform certain task which as leader I recognized as being important to the success of the school.

I, therefore, because of this practice and the success that it has achieved in my school, feel confident in stating and recommending that principals can draw expertise from the ranks of the ordinary school teacher. Hence, if the right environment is facilitated by principals and other educational leaders, then it is possible to identify talented teachers and illuminate the leadership attributes within these teachers. For this to be possible, principals must have the autonomy to seek expertise outside the formalised roles and empower those individuals (Hargreaves, 1999). This is necessary, particularly in my context in a Jamaican school, where the quantity of formalised positions is restricted by a one in three ratio of senior positions to total number of teachers. Permission must therefore be sought to accommodate other leadership roles outside this restriction, hence a need to empower more teachers, particularly teacher leaders whose role would be to drive the student improvement. Alternatively, instead of leaving it to subjective response from a request for permission to employ, the principal should identify or encourage teachers to improve their status in a formalised manner, such as that of a ‘master teacher’ status or the dean of discipline which have been formally introduced in the education system. My recommendations on this

matter, are also suggesting that an appropriate remuneration package be attached. This will ensure that 'good' teacher leaders having been developed are not moved to acquire administrative positions in other schools as is current the case, and therefore leaving the school devoid of its leadership.

I want to reiterate and reemphasize my reason for elaborating on these examples, because, based on the context of a school, the fixed, statutory and formally recognized senior teachers positions (even though important for the efficiency of day to day operation) may not be sufficient to satisfy the strategic developmental needs and the vision of the school. It is therefore my recommendation that schools be given more latitude to make leadership appointments outside the formal structure, given their contextual position, on condition that such appointment also supports the wider ministry's policy and procedural position. I believe that, even in situations where there are effective and successful principals who understand and are able to manage staff relationships, it is also important that official recognition be given to these new leadership roles so as to reduce conflicts with the traditional formal positions.

Another recommendation arising from this situation is that the ministry should give greater importance to teacher development with the view towards developing leadership capacity at the middle management level. MaCallum (2013), another Caribbean writer and educator argues for building and expanding the middle leadership base to include others that the traditional heads of department, grade coordinators, and others who are charged with senior teachers' responsibilities. I found that even though I could find persons who were sufficiently versed on the management of a heads of department, they were not sufficiently collaborative and influential in getting their colleagues to drive up improvement in students' achievements and quality teaching. Most assumed the role to be simply that of procurement of material and teaching aids, managing teaching resources, teacher allocation to classes, monitoring class attendance and duty rosters etc. They fail to understand that the main role should be that of ensuring excellence in teaching and improved student performances. This, therefore, requires a change in mindset from the

normal roles that a senior teacher traditionally played. For if the distributed leadership model is to bear fruits of school development and improvement:

“...teachers must start to conceive of their roles differently and must assume responsibilities beyond their classrooms for purposes of overall school improvement. [And] as teachers’ jobs are redefined in this model, so too must be administrators’ jobs if they are to maintain their function as supporting teachers and setting the conditions for their success. (Huggins et al., 2016, p. 204, citing Mayrowetz et al., 2007, p. 70)

I want to make a further recommendation on the subject of leadership by commenting on the need to widen the influence of successful top school leaders over the wider education system. There have been many successful ‘good practices’ with the education system which have been confined to individual schools and not shared between schools. There is a tendency due mainly to the competitive nature of individual schools and their leaders to ‘cling onto’ good practices that they have initiated and which have elevated their schools into the limelight, making them ‘schools of choice’. It is my belief that such initiatives cannot be the preserve of those only but should be replicated across the entire system and impacting overall development of the nation.

As mentioned earlier, in the discussion within this thesis, I came to the position of principal with ideas from my previous positions where I gained an insiders’ understanding of the wider government and the ministry’s vision, goals and objectives. To that extent, I was able to initiate some innovative practices which have been adopted by the ministry for general implementation. This, however sometimes caused conflicts at the local level, both at the school level and at the regional level, leading to my alienation by some leaders and some ministry officials who were accustomed to a ‘top down’ prescription of policy directives instead of a ‘bottom-up’ directives of policy originating from practice with an individual school. Hutton, (2011) in elaborating on his approach to data collection and analysis, identified nine categories which reflected the factors related to the performance of the high performing principals in Jamaica. In response to the category which spoke to

high performing principals who demonstrated a strong individual fortitude, qualities and abilities a principal stated that; "...the most important thing is the fear of failure. I am a very competitive man and I don't want any other school to be better than my school . . . you must be a pioneer, you must be the first, you must be at the cutting edge" (p. 6).

It is therefore, because of the issues that I have experienced why I have come to the belief that the benefits of any good practice cannot and should not reside in any one individual school but should be spread across the system. To this end, I also recommend a conjoint approach between the distributed and the systems models of leadership. The systems' leadership model within a school being, one where the leadership extends their sphere of influence beyond the boundaries of their school. Hill and Matthews (2010) define this as "outstanding school leaders who, together with the staff in their schools, use their knowledge and experience to provide additional leadership capacity to schools in difficulty" (cited from Bush and Glover, 2014, p. 563). If this could become formalised as a practice within the general educational system in Jamaican context, then it would also reduce suspicion and conflicts among the various levels of leadership, increase collaboration and collegiality, and help in enhancing mentorship of young and aspiring inexperienced principals and leaders within the education system.

In concluding this section, I must make one last appeal in recommendation for changes to the formal education system, and how the policy environment is designed and developed. Arising out of my experience, it is my belief that the policy environment is too prescriptive, defensive and inflexible. I say so because, too often good practices go unnoticed, not only because principals 'cling' to their innovative initiatives in order to preserve their individuality and competitive edge, but in some cases, they are prevented from exposing new and innovative initiatives through fear of offending their supervisors in the ministry or some other formal leadership within their school. This is because the status quo that exists places an emphasis on schools' dependency on policy directives from the state as the "state sets the parameters and conditions for how schools can operate in the education sector in society" (Miller 2016a, p. 98). I am not arguing for the state to abdicate its responsibilities for schools, but in an environment where there are hundreds or over a thousand schools in a diverse geographical and demographic environment, schools should

be allowed to respond to the context of their environment. This reinforced by Hutton (2016a), who cited that, "...schools in Jamaica are in the process of systemic development, legal and otherwise, which means that until these changes and related policies are in place, there will be need for schools to rely greatly on the capability and capacity of the leaders to achieve effectiveness" (p. 11). It is because I have also identified this situation why I believe and posit that schools can best design operational policies and procedures to address changing and evolving situations. The ministry should then take their signal from successful practices when design overall policy directions for the system, giving a certain degree of latitude for context.

Recommendations and Implications for School Development.

I have explained how I have put in practice Flett, Surridge, Bellinfantie, Borthwick, Foster-Allen, and Walsh's (2004) model for school development and improvement planning. I have also mentioned that I am minded to use this model, as I was an integral member of a team who developed and introduced it into the Jamaican education system. Having introduced it in 2000, I maintained my attachment to it and used it in my subsequent work in the education system in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. Therefore, without ignoring the concerns and obstacles faced in my practice in establishing the new school, I believe the successes outweigh the failures. Hence, I believe that using this model of school development planning contributed to the successes that were achieved.

I, therefore recommend it because it engages the innovative concept of "future basing" (Phillips, 2003) which allows for a 'reverse order or bottoms-up' technique in arriving at the overall developmental strategy and vision of a school. This technique (more than most others that are in practice in Jamaica) employs the use of participatory learning and action (PLA), which is a research tool that ensures that all persons are involved and not left out of the stakeholders mix (including those who were illiterate and intimidated by the education system). It also ensures that periodic monitoring of the SIP is done, otherwise funding for the next period is withheld by the board of management. This conditions ensures the principal is not the sole implementer and monitor agent of the plan, which is the case in

most other SIPs in Jamaican schools.

Recommendations and Implications for Future Research.

Given the experiences arising from my journey and considering my reflections and earlier recommendations, most of which was centred on leadership or aspects of leadership, I would like to emphasize the need for further research on this particular subject matter. Hutton (2014), who himself has done significant amount of work on leadership, particularly in Jamaica, has pointed out that, “there is need from a Caribbean or Regional standpoint to engage in research which examines the effectiveness and its impact on student outcome” (p. 14). I would like to recommend further research work on the effectiveness of leadership on school effectiveness, particularly students’ performance in Jamaica. The international research has pointed to the fact that leadership impacts school successes and effectiveness and invariable students’ outcome (Miller, 2013, 2014, 2016a, 2016b; Hutton, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2016b; Beckford & Lekule; Leithwood et al.; 2007, 2009, Spillane & Diamond; Hallinger & Heck, 2009; etc). It is, therefore, appropriate that we in the Caribbean intensifies our research in this area also, with the focus on the impact on our own context.

I am also particularly interested in research on the distinction between one style, trait and/or model of leadership on student performance and school effectiveness. Based on my practice, I found that distributed leadership was best suited in my context. However, the verdict is out as to whether this model of leadership gives the greatest of result on teacher effectiveness, student performance and overall school success. In fact, leadership training bodies such as NCEL in Jamaica, seems to place a greater emphasis on the transformational and instructional leadership models. I will suggest that, even though Beckford and Lekule (2013) have done some research on the distributed model, more research (which can include case studies on various practices) is therefore, also recommended in this area.

Another aspect of leadership that I believe needs attention is that of training and mentorship, particularly in relationship to aspiring principals, teacher leadership, and the general development of middle management in schools. Clayton, et al. (2013), citing Daresh (2004), noted that “collaboration between veteran and new or aspiring leaders can promote an environment that is conducive to high levels of student achievement” (p. 78). It is my belief that a properly planned and defined mentoring programme can go a far way in improving the leadership and filling any voids which may exist within a school and across an education system. As I have already identified in my examples of teacher leadership and the differences between formal and informal leadership, there needs to be clear identity of the leadership requirements which will not only concentrate on administrative duties but drive up quality teaching and student performances. To that extent, I am recommending in support of the position that Carver (2016) takes, when he advocates for future research which can:

[T]est the efficacy of embedding intentional learning about leadership identity into the context of teacher leadership preparation as a strategy for equipping teachers with the skill and will to challenge personal beliefs and assumptions, as well as organizational norms that often discourage and thwart leadership by teachers. In doing so, we might understand more clearly the often-weak relationship between leadership preparation and leadership practice. (p. 176)

This, I believe, will bring clarity and address most of the confusion that exists in determining the different levels of leadership within the school, and hence lead to a diffusion of conflicts, and increase collaboration and collegiality within the school leadership environment. It is also important because without clarity, teachers will also be confused as to who is a leader, what is the purpose and meaning of leadership, and what the practice of leadership represents at different levels and in different roles. Also, if clarity is not ensured, it may prove challenging to develop coherent pathways for professional development to support the policy rhetoric of leadership at all levels of the school organisation” (Torrance, 2015, p. 804, quoting Spillane and Coldren, 2011, p. 26).

Finally, I have encountered on my journey, numerous relationship issues which I have written about in the body of this thesis. They present as concerns and sometimes obstacles which had to be dealt with. It is my belief that a greater and more in-depth analysis of these relationship issues and concerns are needed, but was it not the main focus of this research, and secondly, space did not allow for it. For example, on the issue of relationship building, I would have liked to have been able to more critically interrogate Quinn's (1988) "Competing Values Framework" (cited in Davies and Coates, 2005, p. 112) as a way forward in dealing with relationship issues in school management. Again, space did not allow for it in this research. I have mentioned it in my review of literature and therefore, propose it as another area that is worth researching for the future.

The Personal Implication of my Odyssey.

Lattuca (2012) expressed how enlightening it felt having completed his autoethnographical journey. It is a similar sense of feeling I am now experiencing at this point, and so like Lattuca I must say that, "The process of completing this autoethnographical examination of my principal role was both a complex and an enlightening journey" (p. 148). I have learned a great deal about my role as the principal at the high school, and the method I employed to complete this dissertation. Even though I worked within the public education system at various levels and positions prior to becoming a principal, being a principal has exposed me to a whole new set of unique experiences with regards to general human interaction and behavior, which was different and surprising to me. From the parentless students that are being cared for in foster homes, to the single parent families who struggle to support their children, through to the supportive parents who find no difficulties in being active participants in their child's learning. From guardians who complain with every opportunity they get whenever their child is disciplined, to the teachers who support my every decision, or who interrupted me during a crisis, concerned about their computer was not functioning, or that the security guard was slow in opening the gate and caused them to clock in a minute late, "I now have a more complete understanding of the social

complexities...” (Lattuca, 2012, p. 148) that surround the role of the school principal. As Lattuca (2012) observed, “[e]ven in the situations that are predictable, the principal wears many hats. From the disciplinarian, parent, nurse, to the psychologist; the symbolic meaning attached to these hats is prevalent in both the internal and external settings” (p. 151).

To be domicile in the same community has definitely impacted my experiences in this area. Externally, I have had many experiences where [my identity as “I”] is lost and I am no longer the friend, the father, the jogger on the road, the supporter in the stands at a football match or the coach. To most community members, particularly, parents and students; [I am instead] seen as the principal of the school and I am known only as “Sir”. Everyone from the students, staff members, old and young, parents, my vice principal, even Ministry officials and Board members called me “Sir”. Whether or not the situation was informal and social, I would not get away from the “Sir”. This was at times embarrassing, particularly when you intend to let your hair down at an informal event, someone would shout out “Sir!” and I had to crawl back into my formality.

I stated quite early in this research that, this autoethnographical journey started with me being anxious about doing such a research. However, as the journey progressed, I got more comfortable and was able to go through the process of completing my dissertation to the point where I can now offer suggestions to guide future autoethnographers, particularly in the field of school leadership. I must also admit that, I have always thought that the ending to a doctoral research should culminate in some form of Einsteinian theoretical discovery that would change the world or cause a significant turning in epistemology, which would impact the academe. So, in addition to Chang’s (2008) methodological guidance, I want to make some suggestions to future autoethnographers who want to chance a similar odyssey.

Lattuca (2012) observed that: “[d]ue to the fluidity of the method, autoethnographers have more flexibility and freedom to conduct and present their research...” (p. 156). This gives autoethnographers (as against other researchers) a chance to impose themselves on and into their research, including an assimilation of their “...thoughts, feelings, and emotions into the experience, which should be clearly documented in data and expressed in the final

document” (p. 156).

I, therefore, suggest here that, whereas the experience that I have gained from this autoethnographical journey charts and gives one direction for others who want to follow, every other autoethnographical journey has or creates another possible direction. I posit, therefore, that it is at the crossing of several journeys that we will see, meet with and derive new meaning, a different understanding, and therefore new knowledge and positionalities from autoethnographical journeys. I suggest, therefore, because we look for uniformity in our work, and our stakeholders and those who hold us accountable look for a standard approach, that all principals are required to record this journey. Secondly, we must rigorously interrogate ‘self’; I used the introductory chapter to this research to examine the “I” before the start of my journey and I am suggesting here, that autoethnographers examine their inner self to determine the purpose of their work, and to lay the foundation of the autoethnography. In such a case, Lattuca, (2012), also asserts that:

“This self-examination” should be included in the research design and final document as a “background section” that informs readers of the writer’s purpose and the perspective from which the researcher is coming from...”. (p. 156-157)

In my frequent travels to the capital city, Kingston, to attend various meetings with colleague principals, the opportunity to carpool arises and it is during these travels and at these sessions that we share viewpoints on our work as principals. My carpooling moments along with my Friday evenings, after work, de-stressing moments can be considered a great support for me as I (we) became reinvigorated by each other’s encouragements, laughter and free abandonment of spirits outside the formal school settings. I also found them useful for the purpose of conducting member check on my research. My third suggestion is, therefore to use member checks as a means of verifying, justifying and validating your autoethnographical research. As Lattuca (2012) observed, “Member checkers should determine the fitness between their understanding/perspective of a given setting and what the autoethnographer described” (p. (157). My frequent (though

informal) conversations with other colleague principals have helped me to solidify most of the points made, and many of my descriptions fit well with their perceptions and experiences. “Even if the reverse was true, if members determined there was little or no degree of fitness, it would be worth exploring why. Therefore, I would suggest whenever possible, that future autoethnographers use objective members of their group to determine the fitness between perspectives” (Lattuca 2012, p. 157).

I could not conclude without commenting and making reference to the ethical dilemma that I faced in leading the school as its principal and more so in writing about my journey as the principal. It is Norberg, K. and Johansson (2007) who states that:

Being a skilful school leader presumes the competence to judge the ethical consequences of actions. This implies a need for all school agents to discover and analyze what values are at stake and, in turn, reconcile didactic rationality with ethical rationality” (p. 227). They went on to say that ethics concerns; “the issue of desirable actions, which, however, varies between individuals, time and context. In short, ethical aspects deal with our relations to and responsibility for other people... (p. 279).

... [Therefore] our relations to and responsibility for other people implies caring relations, which is emphasized in *ethics of care*. The concern here is care, concern and connection when moral dilemmas are discussed (from Poliner, Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005). This category of ethics is found in health care professions but relate also to education since, according to Buzzelli and Johnston (2002, p. 8): ‘teaching is fundamentally relational, and that relations in turn are fundamentally moral in nature... (p. 281).

It is this ethics of care for others and my relational position to other persons on this, my research journey, that has causes me to be critical and careful in the way I write my story

and to ensure that I do no harm to others or even to myself. Hence, it is the expectation that,

In individual autoethnographies, autoethnographers negotiate with themselves and consider "relational ethics" involving others when selecting material for writing. Relational ethics refers to recognizing and valuing "mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work," ethical standards that researchers follow when acting and taking "ethical responsibilities toward intimate others who are implicated in the stories we write about ourselves. (Chang, 2013, p. 111, citing Ellis, 2007, p. 4-5).

This study adds to an already vast and mounting literature on leadership in the public education system. First of all, it is unique in its autoethnographical approach, particularly from the viewpoint of a Jamaican principal. In my review of the literature, there is not an abundance of material on the subject of leadership from a Jamaican perspective, using this approach. This is even more glaring, when the subject matter is examined and narrated through the practicing lens of a principal. It is Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2013) who asserts that; "...autoethnographic inquiry calls for personal engagement as a medium through which deeper understanding is achieved and communicated" (p. 237). It is therefore, in the combination of both the geographical context and the methodological approach, that I believe this presents as unique and therefore a contribution to educational practice and knowledges. Hence, it can be used to better inform and prepare future principals by providing them with a glimpse into my world as a principal and how I have experienced that role. This exposure to and understanding of that world are immersed and coupled with a solid theoretical foundation of public school principalship, which I believe can result in better prepared individuals as they enter the world of school administration. Thus, I call for further autoethnographical research in this area from my colleagues in

Jamaica and more generally in the developing world.

Secondly, I want to present the subject matter of leadership as a trending issue within the Caribbean and Jamaica in particular, with the understanding that it is a ‘relatively new phenomenon, punctuated by small scale national studies’ (Miller, 2016a). Miller went further, quoting Hughes (1976) and Ball (1987) to say that “research (in Jamaica) has tended to only partially reflect the realities and experiences of principals” (Miller, 2016a, p. 3) and that ‘there is general failure to come to grips with the “street realities” of headship’ (p. 3). I, therefore, put this account of my principalship as an authentic “street reality” of a Jamaican principal. I genuinely believe that the account of my journey is a practiced experience that can pave the way for others faced with similar situation, to avoid the Jamaican “pot holes” of educational journeys in leadership, particularly principalship.

I want to also present the data collection instruments as an important aspect of this research, of which I have found no evidence in the literature of its previous use in this form and therefore, I believe elevates it to a contribution to both practice and knowledge. I speak especially here of the use of the principal’s log book and the secretary’s location log book as part of my data collection tools for this research. Let me clarify here, that both these documents are regulatory requirements that are found in Jamaican schools. Hence, they are not new features, and I am not therefore putting them forward as any new initiatives that I have developed. I am, however, suggesting that they have been utilized in my research journey as two of the instruments used for collecting data and informing my research. The principal’s log book is really a record of all events within the day to day life of a school, including school-related activities of the principal. It is because the principal is so integral to the life of the school (being involved and accountable for all activities and decisions), why I believe that, in any research which documents a principal’s journey over a period of time, that journey should also be reflected in the principal’s log book. The location, which is kept by the principal’s secretary, is really a reminder of where the principal is located throughout the day. It should be noted that there is a statutory requirement for all teachers to sign the attendance register, however, a principal attends many places and functions on behalf of the school and therefore signs or is accounted for at any venue visited in the interest of the school. The principal’s duty is always to inform

the secretary so that site visit can be recorded in the location log. It is important to note also that this log works also as a reminder or reference to be later noted in the principal's log. It is, therefore, also an important data source for research purposes. I see these two log books, therefore, as a rich data source of information, particularly for research that is not sufficiently or regularly used by principal in research. To this end, I believe my use of them to document my own autoethnographical journey is novel and therefore stands out as new practice that other principals can replicate in researching their our journeys.

Finally, my personal conviction to the distributed model of leadership and my attempts to put this model into practice has been documented throughout this thesis. Beckford and Lekule (2013), in advocating for distributed leadership model for Caribbean schools, have noted quite rightly that the model is not the "...only effective roadmap for school improvement in the Caribbean. [However they], advocate the utilisation of distributed school leadership as a tool for improving school effectiveness" (p. 169). I want to go even further to say that the distributed model encourages leadership development and therefore increases leadership density in schools and across schools to include the entire education system. Therefore, this research, which represents my journey as a principal, is practical autoethnographical case study in distributed leadership practice, and hence represents a "street reality" that within the Jamaican context, that is an important contribution to the improvement of leadership practice for the context. I, therefore, also make the appeal for practitioners and policy makers to use this practice to ensure a wider and more general execution of this practice, which will engender greater leadership density within and across schools.

Personal and Professional Implications

"We remember details of an event as moments; when we write, we thread those remembered moments together to make sense of the meaning of the experience" (Giorgio, 2013, p. 411). I started out this autoethnographic journey with every intentions of telling a story, of my successes and failures over a period of time at the helm as principal of a

school. Looking back, my intentions in telling the story were mainly to expose, “blame and shame” those who I thought were the obstacles to the implementation of my vision for a successful school. Now, as I look forward, I see things differently, I see the successes and as principal, the accountable person, I am given and claimed the praises for them. I also see the failures and reflectively as the accountable person must also take responsibility and seek to blame no one else.

I have arrived at this juncture and in this moment of reflection found a path that for the first time has given access to a form of freedom, an evocative release of pent up emotions that is stress free and gratifying. This is so because, for the length of my journey, I took on the posture of the all-encompassing, visionary leader who was delivering all that was right for the school. I was blinded to those things that were wrong for the school. In this situation, it also blinded me from those that were individually hurting. It means also that, even though many things were going right, I needed to be mindful of the concerns if the overall success was to be achieved. Hence, even though my convictions for a distributed leadership were well known, conflicts developed because I refuse to listen to those who had alternative views. I cannot say that some of my supporters did not identify these concerns but it was only when it came from external sources did I chose to pay attention and reflectively realized my errors.

It is however, good to reflect and allow reflections to manifest themselves in reflexive actions. This reflexivity is the narrative of my journey. A journey where the actions have generated new ideas, new understandings and new meanings, leading me to make meaning recommendations to changes in policies and practices. Hence Giorgio (2013), citing Boucher (2000) noted that:

The purpose of self-narrative is to extract meaning from experience rather than to depict experience exactly as it was lived. These narratives are not so much academic as they are existential, reflecting a desire to grasp or seize the possibilities of meaning, which is what gives life its imaginative and poetic qualities. The call of narrative is the inspiration to find language that is adequate to

the obscurity and darkness of experience. We narrate to make sense of experience over the course of time. (p. 270, in Handbook of Autoethnography, p. 412).

Through my insider's vantage point, I have chronicled and traced the experiences of my own administrative journey. The bumps, roadblocks, and emotional bruises encountered along the way have enabled me to grow as a leader and learner. Although the tangles I have encountered are many, they were moments for celebrations, of successes, and learning I have experienced along the way. My hope is that this story, my story, has provided the reader a peek into the soul of a school, principal, and system that were developing and negotiating changes. Through the structure of the story, I want to provide current and future principals an opportunity to relive my experience and perhaps enhance their own practice. This research has not only provided a deeper understanding of my own experience for others and myself, but I hope that it enhances the acceptance of this form of qualitative inquiry for other professionals involved in educational research. As Harry Wolcott (2003) described "The Man in the principal's Chair" (nearly forty years ago) in his description of ethnography, "researchers want to have a look around at what people in some other groups are doing, or what people in their own group are doing, and sometimes even at what the researchers themselves are doing and feeling" (p. vii). It is in this vein that I hope my contribution supports the efforts of other researchers to look around at what they themselves are doing and feeling in a particular culture, and relive these experiences to support their own growth as well as to benefit others.

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APPENDIX

LOG ENTRY 1 Student Discipline

YEAR 2004/05 LOG BOOK ~~High~~ EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Date	M or A	Attendance			Entries required by Edu. Regs. 1966 Sec. 21 (5)
		B	G	Total	
04/11/04		228	223	451	Principal off to Kingston to attend workshop on the environment.
05/11/04		221	225	446	
08/11/04		231	211	442	<p>Normal school day. Began with the usual general assembly. Still a great concern about the number of students that are consistently late.</p> <p>On Saturday 08/11/04 - collected some breakfast material at the Primary school. This was a gift from Food for the Poor which was organised by the Hon. Ed ?</p> <p>The Parent Church Service at the New ? Morian Church was a great success. Our Students' Choir performed very well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → De B - suspended for 3 days for fighting. → S G suspended for 3 day for fighting. → B R suspended for 3 days for fighting.
09/11/04		211	228	439	<p>Discipline is still a major concern. The entire school was kept back for one hour after school. A search was conducted. Knives and mobile phones were confiscated.</p>

LOG BOOK EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Date	M or A	Attendance			Entries required by Edu. Regs. 1966 Sec. 21 (5)
		B	G	Total	
04/04/05		205	206	411	BEGINNING OF THE SUMMER TERM About two third of the student population were present for devotions
05/04/05		208	203	410	Another quiet day. Devotions 10:00 am Father came in to discuss his future.
06/04/05		209	206	415	Case conference with Mr. Gray his father, the children's officer, the school's guidance councillor and myself.
07/04/05		213	203	416	A very quiet day. Principal is forced to assess and possibly change his strategy in dealing with students, particularly those coming from an unfriendly background. The stove and gas mains are finally connected.
08/04/05		198	195	393	From all reports, it was a quiet day at school. Principal off on sick leave with the flu.
10/04/05		191	210	401	Normal school day
12/04/05		200	223	423	Normal school day.

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LOG ENTRY 3 - Conflict With BOARD CHAIRMAN

YEAR _____

LOG BOOK

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION _____

Date.	M or A	Attendance			Entries required by Edu. Regs. 1966 Sec. 21 (5)
		B	G	Total	
					<p>The chairman was antagonistic to my plans and in fact voiced his concerns by instructing me on what I considered to be operational matters which were out side his bounds of authority.</p>
30.01.06		1458	1469	927	<p>The laptop (Vtech game) that was missing last year (2005) re appeared. The matter was brought to the Actg V.P. who tried to do some investigation. Overall it was a quiet day.</p> <p>N.B. Devotion started late because it took awhile to access the Public Admitt System. Three new students were admitted.</p>
31.01.06		1457	1467	924	<p>The Principal, Bursar and Staff rep. attended a workshop at Holiday Inn - Re Training of Board members.</p> <p>The Police were called in to take a parent off the compound after she threatened the Actg V.P. They also took the V.Tech handbook to the station ^{because} the matter was already in the hands of the Police. The parents are to visit the Police station on 01/02/06 at 8:00 to try and find the right owner.</p> <p>There was not enough manpower in the canteen so teachers were asked to assist to have a smooth lunch time. The teachers</p>

This page.

2008 Entry #4 - Commissioning of Solar System

LOG BOOK EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Date	M or A	Attendance			Entries required by Edu. Regs. 1966 Sec. 21 (5)
		B	G	Total	
02/05/08		392	500	892	This was a big day in the life of the school. The commissioning of our SOLAR SYSTEM was done by The Minister of Education the Hon. A. [redacted] (Hon. [redacted]) officially commissioned the system. In attendance also was the Minister of Tourism the Hon. [redacted] [redacted]. The Director of Education, Mr D. [redacted] [redacted] and his Senior Officer in the region Mr C. [redacted] [redacted] and Mrs [redacted] were also in attendance. The ceremony went very well and all were pleased with the progress of the school.
05/05/08		434	557	991	CSEC examinations begins today. The rest of the student body was addressed at this morning's assembly on the need to respect exam conditions set for their fellow grade 11 students.
06/05/08		452	531	983	A normal, quiet day.
07/05/08		417	532	949	Teachers Day today. School ended early (at 11:30) to accommodate the day's event.

2006 ENTRY 5 - GENERAL Discipline

YEAR

LOG BOOK

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Date.	M or A	Attendance			Entries required by Edu. Regs. 1966 Sec. 21 (5)
		B	G	Total	
12/14/08		527	657	1184	<p>After two attacks and series of fights over the past several days, I decided to take a hold of things</p> <p>(1) I gathered the Prefect body for a meeting informing them of their lack of impact around the school and how they needed have their presence felt. I then ordered them to stay with their classes for the entire day.</p> <p>(2) I then called general assembly of the school body and spoke briefly to them to remain in classes for the rest of the day while I conducted this meeting.</p> <p>(3) Meeting with SIMCOM was next to deal with the approach to discipline in the school.</p> <p>(4) Meeting with all senior ^{teach-} was next and I explained to them that the presence was ^{was} not felt around the school and the the prefects was almost non-existent.</p> <p>(5) Meeting with the general teach body. Informed them of decisions taken in SIMCOM and Senior Teach meeting and also to let them also know that a part of the reason for the breakdown of discipline is their own inactivity ⁱⁿ of ^{of} witness observation etc</p>

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LOG ENTRY 6 - OBSTRUCTIVE VICE PRINCIPAL

YEAR 2011 ⁵¹⁵ ⁶¹⁰ LOG BOOK ~~High~~ HIGH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Date PER	M or A	Attendance			Total	Entries required by Edu. Regs. 1966 Sec. 21 (5)	
		B	S				
05/07/2011		575	620		1185	The school year started out well. All the necessary preparation were put in place for a smooth start. Orientation and staff development which took place during the previous week went off well.	
						Make a list of several things to be accomplished throughout the day. Not much was done, due to the impromptu meetings with parents, students and staff. All in all a fairly good day which ended incident free.	
06/09/11						Education officer, Mrs. [redacted] also visited today. Another normal school day to ensure a smooth start to the year.	
06/09/11				543	643	1196	An incident free school day.
07/09/11				551	699	1238	After three days off requesting the last years school log from the Acting V.P. I have still not got it. Also requested a report for the last school year which I have still not got. I have also written to the V.P to hand over ^{the} spare keys to Her office to the Pursar.

LOG ENTRY 7 - PRINCIPAL'S CHARGE AGAINST CHAIRMAN.

YEAR
20 11

LOG BOOK ~~11~~ ¹¹ EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Date.	M or A	Attendance			Entries required by Edu. Regs. 1966 Sec. 21 (5)
		B	G	Total	
					Call from the school to advise on closing school early as there is no water.
28/09/2011		551	163	1204	A fairly good day until about mid-day when we were again informed that there was no water. Students were allowed to have lunch then were dismissed at 2pm. Emergency general staff meeting was called to discuss school matters.
29/09/2011		555	669	1224	Called out 5.55 by Mr. [redacted] the Principal to inform me that water had still not returned to the school. The matter was discussed with the chairman and a decision to close school for the day was made. Teachers were however told to report and sign so as not to lose the day.
					The emergency Board meeting was held to hear the Principal's complaints and allegations against the chairman. - A decision to set up an investigative committee to determine the depth of the allegations and submit a report a report to the Board in one month.

7.15 page
2-50

LOG ENTRY 8 Problems With Students And BOARD

LOG BOOK ~~High~~ HIGH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

This Page

M or A	Attendance			Entries required by Edu. Regs. 1966 Sec. 21 (5)
	B	G	Total	
				quiet as the students did their end of term examinations
06/12/12	586	601	1187	<p>Attended prize giving exercise at College College at 9am. Stayed until 12pm. then came to work to attend the personnel committee meeting of the Board for the expulsion of two boys and a girl.</p> <p>Later attended a casual Board meeting which terminated ^{ended} with ^{there} all the agenda items could be attended to as it was 6pm and getting late. This was the final Board meeting of a three years term of office of the Board.</p>
07/12/12.	559	568	1127	<p>A quiet day throughout. The boy who was expelled got his letter of expulsion.</p>
10/12/12	540	673	1213	<p>Final two days of examinations. Students of the choir preparing for tree lighting ceremony in the Square Square. Generally a quiet day as most students had completed exams and were absent.</p>

LOG ENTRY 9 - SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

YEAR
20 13

LOG BOOK ~~High~~ EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Date.	M or A	Attendance			Entries required by Edu. Regs. 1966 Sec. 21 (5)
		B	G	Total	
10/05/13.					Today was used as a continuation of the Strategic Development Planning, however the Senior Team and Board was joined by the rest of the staff at the Hutton Hotel. The second half of the day was used as a teacher's day relaxation
13/05/13					GAG report conference with Ms P and Mr S Principal Mr S concerning her behaviour and apparent poor home environment, which is disturbing for her. The GAG is working with her and will call on the parents Brief afternoon meeting with Ms ... on financial issues.
14/05/13.					The morning ^{went} well and was accident free. In the afternoon a schedule meeting of the timetable committee was held and training to manage "Nova T" by Mr. ... was done. TOOK EXE papers to the office

Duration	Date	Location & Entry	Detail	Supervisor
	18.07.14	Kingsport - 16		
	31.07.14	Kingsport - 2	2 CAP Meeting	
ACADEMIC YEAR 2014 2015				
	16.09.14		Grass Exec Meeting	
	18.09.14		ICS Emergency Meet	
one Day	30.09.14		visited NCB Alan MacIV for Meeting	
	08.10.14		Work from Home	
	09.10.14		Leave Compound: 2:30 (1st time)	
	10.10.14		Grass called - home	
	14.10.14		Travel to LGN - Inwin Market	
	16.10.14		ICS Meeting	
	25.10.14		STA Salary Negotiations	
	11.11.14		Turn Hand Meet - M.O.E	
	11.11.14		Managers Workshop w/ D. [redacted]	
	12.11.14		Travel to Zion MacIV - Delivery of Docs.	
	12.11.14		Arrived to School @ 11:24 A.M.	
	13.11.14		Meeting: M.O.E IV - PCS - Energy	
	"		Met with Mrs. [redacted]	
	"		(see: A. [redacted] 15.11.14)	
signature	14.11.14		Grass Awards	
	24.11.14		Casual Leave	
	26.11.14		Stony Conference Centre: Economic Forum	
	02.12.14		Meetings: M.O.E IV - with [redacted]	
signature			Mrs. Adams - return at 5:45	
	05.12.14		Bell [redacted] - Absent. Casual: 10 th Jan Home	
	Dec 10 - 12, 2014		ICS & STA - Meetings & Meet with Mr. D. [redacted] - T.E.F.	
	Dec 16, 2014		M.O.E - Head Office -	
	17.12.2014		End of Term	
	Jan 12, 2015		Bell [redacted] off compound & returned. Arr 9:51 AM. Returned 11:23 A.M.	