

# **CHAPTER IX – ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS – STUDENTS’ STATEMENTS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The intention of this research is to investigate to what extent there is a relationship between the Form Three junior secondary school students’ statements and perceptions about the causes for their success and failure and their teachers’ expectations about their academic achievement, generally and especially in English Language.

From the onset, it was critical to establish whether the teachers’ expectations were in any way the determinant of the students’ statements, vignettes, anecdotes, thoughts, generalised beliefs, causal perceptions and ultimately their present and anticipated academic outcomes. Now that the students have expressed their statements and feelings about their teachers’ rejection, alienation and lack of concern for them and they have identified through their responses to the causal attribution questionnaire that the negative impact of the teacher along with their low perception of their performance/their inability, their lack of effort expended and the difficulty of the task, English, were the significant causal factors for their success and failure, then the next step is to analyse to what extent the teachers and their expectations can be held totally or partially accountable for the students’ academic outcomes.

The generally accepted understanding is that the teachers’ expectation is that catalyst which motivates and influences students to display anticipated high

standards of performance. Sadly though, when mirrored through the teachers' engagements and interactions with the students, the JSS teachers have fallen short of the minimum required quality and standards. The findings also indicated that the students had inherent learning disabilities. The question to be investigated is to what extent did those who could perform well and those who were branded as non-performers and class-breakers in the JSS system were affected by their teachers' expectations?

As a result, through the Literature the findings and significant outcomes will be analysed in the following manner:-

1. What the students said through their observations, role-play, exit questionnaire, unstructured interviews with the groups and structured interviews with the six special student representatives about their performance and the impact of their teachers' expectations.
2. What the students perceived based on their responses to the causal attribution questionnaire and their causal attribution patterns that have emanated. These outcomes will be analysed and compared to the teachers' expectations.
3. What were the teachers' expressed expectations and engagements when the former were juxtaposed to the students' statements and perceptions? To what extent did they impact on the students' academic achievement?

This chapter seeks only to analyse what the students have said.

### **WHAT THE STUDENTS SAID - THEIR STATEMENTS.**

Based on the findings obtained through observations, vignettes, role-play, interviews, the students have said that their teachers had very little engagement

and interactions with them. They often misunderstood their in-class reactions and behaviour especially when they were experiencing trauma. They stated that more teacher interaction was needed for better understanding and co-operation between them. The groups of students indicated that they preferred being at the junior secondary school. However, they felt that even though their present teachers were more aloof and strict, they exposed them to harder/ more difficult work which was more meaningful. From the start their new teachers seriously and sternly informed them that the onus of learning was each individual's sole responsibility. Several of them felt that they were doing and coping quite well in their new environment and these were determined to do their best. Additionally, there was no leeway for disruptive behaviour as the Deans, all the teachers and even the security officers were more vigilant, showed more concern even though they enforced harsher penalties once a rule was violated.

The six student representatives indicated that the JSS teachers were not concerned about the students. They also stated that the teachers were uncaring, had little interactions and engagements with the students, and they never tried to understand the students' problems. Some said that the teachers were racially-biased, others noted that some classes were boring, uninteresting, without any enjoyment and without challenging work, but that apart, JSS was great fun.

As a result these statements will be analysed accordingly-

- ❖ teachers' lack of interaction and engagement, and their demonstrated indifference and rejection which impacted on the students' attendance at class.
- ❖ teachers' failure to give help and to show concern for students in their academic, personal and/or domestic struggles. These can be translated into the teachers' inactions and non-involvement, which helped to further compound the students' inability and/or lack of interest in the subject, English.
- ❖ teachers' acts of alienation and segregation, at times overt and/or covert acts of racism and favouritism, have resulted in their not seeking to help the whole class but only a few selected students. As a consequence, many students felt a greater need to be affiliated with their friends than to have the teachers' approval.
- ❖ some teachers' classes were boring, their in-class language unsuitable. They were often late or absent from class with only two exceptions.
- ❖ teachers need to be more cognizant of the content and difficulty of the task, English and the extent to which the subject is necessary for the students' academic and future careers.

## **TEACHERS' LACK OF INTERACTION, THEIR INDIFFERENCE TO AND REJECTION OF THE STUDENTS**

The findings indicated that the students cited several occasions and incidents in which the teachers' lack of interaction and engagements led to their experiencing the effect of their teachers' indifference and rejection and by extension their lack of expectation especially for those who performed at average to good academically. Coupled with that, the students in their role play indicated that they felt unwanted in some teachers' classes.

That the vocal, outspoken, potentially good performers were the most adversely affected by the teachers' indifference and rejection is contrary to what the literature had anticipated (Garner and Bing, 1973 and Silberman, 1969). These researchers observed that teachers often rejected or treated with indifference students who were usually described as silent, passive and very low achievers. However, in the school under review, the students who were rejected and sent out of class were not the quiet ones but they were the outspoken, the leaders of the gangs of students, the vociferous who made their voices heard and their presence felt.

This tendency of the JSS teachers to reject those students who were outspoken or who posed challenges is in keeping with the historical, cultural and traditional norms introduced into the education system in the 1600s. The established colonial rationale for schooling was to make the masses of native students submissive, devout and educable along middle-class lines. So traditionally but perhaps unconsciously the historical ills of dominance and elitism in schools are maintained as teachers have desired to interact only with the submissive and more educable students and rejected those who did not conform. In so doing, the teachers have acted in accordance with the expected rather than attempt to break free from those colonial practices. As a result the JSS teachers missed the golden opportunity to reverse the negative course of educational history. By their not accommodating those vociferous students in the classroom and by their not taking up the challenge to motivate them to use their energies to work and to put more directed meaningful effort into their studies they have demonstrated their inability or unwillingness to become

actively involved in raising the academic standards of those students. Perhaps some of the teachers were either afraid to or unaware of how to become creative or imaginative. Or perhaps it was because of the teachers' lack of expectations about those students' academic attainment levels that those teachers failed to see the students' potentials and thus rejected them.

At another level, the students indicated that their teachers' rejection and lack of interaction was also evident when 'students were frequently put out of classes'. In the school system, putting a child out of class was a major form of punishment and a crucial sign of rejection. Worse than that, the students said that once the teachers put them out of class for any misdemeanour, they were never invited to return.

In the JSS system, and specifically in the school under review, the classrooms were the permanent and constant domain of the teachers. They were resident there and honed all the power within its walls. The students had no 'home room' or place to call their own. Thus, for their entire life at the school under review, the students were expected to congregate at the Assembly Hall and at the sound of the bell they would then go to their particular designated teacher's class. The association between the classroom and the teacher was so powerfully significant that if one should ask any student, "What subject do you have now?" That student would call the name of the teacher to whom he /she was assigned at that time rather than the name of the subject. Therefore, whenever a student was put out of a teachers' class, especially on punishment, he/she dared not to re-enter that class without the teacher's invitation and permission.

Since the rejected student was never invited to return to class, the punishment was continually reinforced and the particular mal-adaptive behaviour (Armstrong et al, 1996) was never addressed nor corrected. That student was never exposed to any form of creative corrective method nor was that student ever given an opportunity by that particular teacher to demonstrate a change in his/her behaviour, so ultimately the student became out of control. The student's deteriorated state of behaviour provided the teacher with an excuse and explanation for further rejecting the student. It also absolved him/her from participating in the reconstruction and conversion process of that student's behavioural change, when more than likely the initial reason for the rejection was in the main the teacher's lack of interaction translated to his/her low expectation about the student's academic future. Therefore that student was never taught nor exposed to the necessary instructions even though he/she was at school every day.

Worse than that, whenever a student was put outside of a teacher's class, presumably on the grounds of indiscipline, that student was lost forever not only from that teacher's class but also from the classes of those other similar-minded teachers who show teacher affiliation. Very quickly, the word goes around the staff that student Z had a problem or was on suspension and he/she might soon be put out of the other teachers' classes. Indubitably, that student would become a nomad provided with opportunities to break classes, to wander around the school, to be idle and to encourage others like him/herself to become disruptive for the rest of his/her school life.

Whenever, the Dean or even the Principal sent or took the rejected student back to the particular teacher's class, the student acquiesced. However, his/her presence would irritate the teacher who would invariably soon send him/her out of the class again. The cycle of frustration and ill-feelings continued as the teachers maintained their *sustained bias* whilst the student was permanently labelled deviant and/or in-disciplined. The theorists, McClelland, Atkinson, Clarke and Lovell (1953) pointed out that in such situations the teachers did not cater to the students' affective domain and they were not organised to re-direct and motivate the student to study to attain mastery. As a result, no attempt was made by the teacher for the restoration of the student. There was no Guidance Counsellor attached permanently to the school so there was no other in-school support given to the student. Finally the student grew determined to avoid situations of learning, became totally demotivated and totally consumed by his newly-acquired deviance, as evidenced by Kenwin and Kanand.

In addition, as the Principal, it was sometimes difficult to understand the teachers' official sending or even bringing students out of class for correction or for the resolution of an in-class situation. One such incident that stood out was in the middle of a supposedly designated practical session which was in fact a non-practical Home Economics lesson; a very senior teacher abandoned her class, walked down six long flights of stairs to the principal's office to bring a student to be disciplined for giggling in class and for wearing the wrong socks. Sadly though, such action taken by this Home Economics teacher was repeated frequently by teachers from all departments including English.



This type of behaviour was symptomatic of what Mac Intyre et al (1996) termed the teachers' functioning in their middle-class 'schema of operating' in schools where checking schoolbags and uniforms were more important than meaningful in-class engagement and where productive interactive sessions were lost. Issues like these should obviously have been dealt with in the classroom, but at the school under review, the checking of the uniform is an institutional ritual which occupies several periods per day, per week, as students were embarrassed and often sent home and/or off the school compound for being out of the school uniform. Some teachers devoted their entire day to singling out students who were out of uniform, to the extent that if there were white ticks on the student's required all black school shoes, that student was reprimanded.

Other theorists, Becker (1952) and Goodacre (1968) made the connection between those teachers who practised an over-emphasized insistence on students' correctness of their external paraphernalia to the teachers' perceptual frames and their pre-occupation on issues of social class and social background. Such teachers' perception, treatment and expectation about students are dependent on their (the students') social class, their maintenance of discipline, their family background, their areas of residence, their clothes and general well-groomed appearance, their maintenance of the school image, their respect for authority and even the type of school that they attended.

Needless to state, the experiences and social backgrounds of these Form Three JSS students in their present situation and environment provided the best

modern day classic example and confirmation of the theorists' claims. These students were viewed not only by the teachers but by society as the marginalised, the off-spring of the poor, lower-classed parents who were attending a school which was also stigmatised by the wider public. Historically, the JSS system was not accepted as a feasible academic alternative and the students who attended those schools were made to feel inferior. The students' causal attribution ego-defensive patterns also indicated that they displayed impaired emotional and psychological tendencies.

Nevertheless, that type of behaviour and demonstration of lack of interaction by the teachers occurred so regularly that, that they unwittingly confirmed their lack of expectations about their students' academic progress. On the other hand the students interpreted the teachers' action accurately and learned to capitalise on the situation by adopting non-academic alternatives whenever the teachers exercised their most favoured option of bringing, putting or sending the students out of class.

Additionally, in the JSS system the practice of sending a child out of class was done not only as a form of punishment or as a means of rejection but on errands or on legitimate business. That was permissible through the issuance of a permission slip, which would indicate the student's name, time granted and purpose. However, often students requested to be allowed outside and the teachers would send them out for trivia without the permission slip. The students would then seize the opportunity to stay out of class for a long period or may never return for that session, and the teacher would not even lodge an

official complaint. Such sending of students out of the class was a violation of stated school rules.

Thus, even if sending the student out of the class was legitimate and some errands were legitimate, the teacher should not just allow the students out whenever they requested without the permission slip. The teacher should investigate and be selective in his/her decisions about when and who should be allowed outside rather than issue a 'carte blanc' response to the students' requests. As the Principal, it baffled and was difficult to understand the teachers' rationale for just sending students out of class. However, based on continued observation it seemed that when the teachers sent students outside for no apparent reason, sometimes even before the bell signalled the end of the period, both the teachers and the students were aware that they were in violation of the school rules. Whenever, the Dean or the Principal appeared to investigate the students' illegal presence on the corridors, they would quickly scamper back into the classroom and the teachers accepted them without lodging a complaint, thus proving that the teachers had condoned their early exit. When the teachers were approached for an explanation for their actions of short-changing the students' period for engagement and interaction with them they would be hard-pressed to provide an excuse and invariably blamed the students' restlessness rather than their lack of high expectations about the students' academic success.

On the other hand in many instances, once the students requested permission to leave the classroom even for trivial matters some teachers complied

immediately. The students expressed a sense of release and some often abused the privilege. Nevertheless, in spite of their love for the freedom outside the classroom, the students said that they were quite sensitive to the teachers' overt and/or covert forms of rejection and recognised the teachers' non-engagement with them. Some made alternative arrangements for spending the period outside. Others expressed their desire for meaningful, relevant challenging work which catered to their needs.

Ironically, by the students requesting to be sent outside the teachers were provided with a legitimate reason for non-engagement. However, by deliberately sending the students out of class the teachers not only gave the students the licence to skip class but have also provided them with the legitimate opportunity to break the school rules. The teachers perhaps because of their low expectations about the students' academic performance found a strategy to distance themselves deliberately and uncaringly from the responsibility of helping the students to become and remain focused on what little if anything was being taught in class and sustain a high interest in school (Phillip, 1984) and attain self-regulation and self-determination. Instead the teachers contributed to the students' deviance and flouting of the school rules. One cannot totally deny the system and the students' share of blame and their responsibility, but the teachers as the significant elders were more culpable. After providing the students with the opportunity to flout the school rules they often found it more difficult to command the students' respect and attention.

Unfortunately, in the JSS system and in the school under review, students'

being out of class is an institutionalised custom. Whenever a teacher is absent the students cannot gain access to that teacher's classroom because it is locked. On these occasions the students are required to sit or stand for that entire 45 minutes single or 90 minutes double periods in a quadrangle/open space, unsupervised. Dependent on the number of existing vacancies, teachers' absence or other engagements would determine the number of students outside at any particular time. On a really bad day over 200 students could be seen outside during a single period. Therefore, for any teacher to send a student out of class he/she added to the general number of students that can be legally out of class dependent on the number of teachers who were absent. The student who was sent outside would intermingle with those who were already there and any range of non-class activities was likely to happen. The teachers and the students were privy to and were well-apprised of the system and therefore a teacher should not send a student outside to become part of the crowd outside. Thus, on each occasion that the teacher provided the students with the option of being outside, most students capitalised on the teacher's compliance, their lack of assertiveness and their assumed ineptitude and made alternate arrangements to spend quality time with their friends from other classes. The teachers' actions made the students' plans successful.

Out there the students were provided with an unsupervised opportunity to demonstrate their deviance and free-spirited behaviour. However, unwittingly when outside the class, the students' behaviour fulfilled the teachers' spoken and unspoken expectations about the students' discipline and their academic capacity (Rist, 1970). In their taking such a passive non-involved, hands-off

stance in not preventing their assigned students from becoming entangled in the mayhem outside, perhaps unintentionally have resulted in the teachers' open display of rejection and low expectations for their students and in the students' demonstration of that questionable psycho-analytical theory of fulfilling the prophecies of the teacher (Rosenthal and Jacobsen, 1968).

The students in response demonstrated their disapproval of the adults, their teachers and/or significant others honed in the classroom, by disrupting the teachers' class from outside. Some even roamed about the school compound or remained in the toilet area hiding from administration. Ironically, it can be argued that the rejected students displayed acts of deviance but psychologically when confronted the students revealed that their actions were attempts to mask their feelings of alienation, rejection and helplessness. They needed help and engagement. They have said that they desired meaningful, relevant, fun-filled yet challenging work and more teacher interaction to meet their needs.

Thus, it can be argued that some teachers facilitated the students' deviance, condoned their class breaking tendencies, indiscretions and assisted them in flouting school rules. They also used the system to legitimise their non-~~interaction~~ interaction and their low levels of expectations about the students' academic future. Invariably, the student, Kanand remarked and the researcher's observations tended to concur that the chaos created by the students satisfied the wishes and expectations of the teachers who highlighted in the daily or weekly media, print, radio or television, any breakdown in the relationships

between teachers and students or teachers and Administration, perhaps to further discredit the name of the school.

## **TEACHERS' LACK OF CONCERN, INTEREST AND HELP GIVEN**

According to the findings only 37.5 % of the students said that they sought help from their English teachers. Even though the students significantly acknowledged that English was a double-awarded difficult task yet it was extremely necessary for their academic and professional future. Although the students unanimously agreed in their interviews and exit questionnaire that they enjoyed their experiences at the school under review, many admitted that to some extent they were emotionally scarred, operated under frustrations and psychological pressures because of the teachers' lack of concern, interest shown and help given in their academic, domestic and inter-personal relationships.

Some of these students in their role-play and interviews claimed that to counteract these feelings they adopted avoidance strategies and some deviant behaviour to protect their self-worth and their self-image. This was evident in the ego-defensive causal attribution pattern that emerged. Those students who operated persistently in the lower triangle of the performance continuum internalised their causal perceptions for their failure when they made ascriptions to the factors of lack of effort expended and their inability. But by so doing, they also positively and significantly admitted that English was a difficult task. These students externalised their attributions in order to mask the

extent of their psychological pressures as they tried to salvage their self-esteem in that debilitating situation.

The literature is clear. Showing concern for the student provides the teacher with the greatest opportunity to demonstrate teacher expectation through teacher interaction. Those students who are shown much concern by the teachers invariably become the most successful. Garner and Bing (1973) and Silberman (1969) measured teachers' interactions with and invariably teachers' expectations dependent on the teachers' attachment to the students either as - pets, concerned, indifferent and rejected, or those with whom the teacher hardly spoke and/or interacted. The researchers noted that the students who belonged to the grouping of the 'concerned' emerged the most successful. They may be less accurate with their school work, more inclined to guess, given less praise and more criticism yet they were sought out by the teacher more.

The students at the junior secondary school needed to be shown that level of care and concern, where their teachers would take the time and patience to show serious interest in their well-being despite their weaknesses and in spite of the teachers' challenges with the Administration. Instead, one very deviant student, Kanand criticised the teachers for 'spending too much time quarrelling rather than teaching'. It must be remembered that during these Form Three students' stay at the school, there were constant battles and turmoil between the staff and the former Administrator/Principal. These external distractions served to augment the teachers' attitude of non-caring, lack of concern and interest in



the students and perhaps were the direct result of the teachers' demonstrated lack of teacher expectations.

The students, especially through their six representatives, expressed openly and/or covertly their need for love and attention. The one student who was perhaps the most scarred and the most misunderstood was Kenwin, who eventually became a drop-out. He represented the largest group of male students whose academic performance was never allowed to develop and who operated on the fringes, outside the classroom without teacher concern, interest or love. The other male student representatives, Kanand and Kurtis also declared that the teachers were uncaring. Of the females, Kelly and Kimfa confirmed that uncaring quality in their teachers. In response to this lack of care and concern, and as her aunt confirmed, Kimfa adopted strong affiliative expressions and showed great desires for the acceptance of her peers. She was not singular in this expression of hunger for attention and display of psychological needs.

Thus, Kimfa, and Kanand spoke volumes for those students, especially those with academic potential, who attempted to mask the pain and helplessness by demonstrating this tendency to seek the approval of the crowd instead of becoming focused on things academic and important. This inordinate desire to see school as the avenue to make and greet friends is recognised in the literature by Wentzel (1991) as the main reason students give for coming to school. He also indicated that students use such affiliations to enhance their self-confidence and gain acceptability. Their feelings of inferiority and

insecurity caused them to over-compensate, not on their studies as is hoped but on non-academic and social activities. The teachers at the JSS under review missed these signals and desires and failed to give help and re-direct the students on another course to success, perhaps because of their perceptions of the students as being invaluable, and as a consequence they held low expectations about the students' academic future.

Dreikeurs (1968) argued that it was possible to motivate students to excellence in spite of their limitations and without knowing very many things about their personal difficulties. The Form Three students being investigated had been experiencing many domestic and personal issues which clouded their thought processing patterns and affected the functioning of their own emotions. Yet the transformation of Kurtis and the subsequent amicable relationship with his father may not have taken place if their domestic situation was not confronted and dealt with to release Kurtis to explore his better academic self. The teachers have said that some attempts at positive interactions were attained in the Home Economic Department where some teachers there entertained the free flow of confidential information with an aim to provide constructive solutions. Additionally, the students revealed that there were some changes in their domestic relationships with their parents once they started to attend their new secondary school as Kelly also pointed. There the students' sense of self-worth and esteem changed drastically as in the case of Kanand and as mentioned in the students' responses to the exit questionnaire.

## **SOME TEACHERS DEMONSTRATED ACTS OF ALIENATION, FAVOURITISM AND RACISM**

Additionally, the students reported that some teachers left some students out of the loop of active involvement in class activities. Those teachers often called not only the 'pets' but also on special students usually of similar ethnic origins to sit around their table and taught only those students. That practice of class separation and division gave rise to the students' complaints about the teachers' acts of racism and favouritism and general discrimination against the students.

This type of discrimination was most keenly felt amongst the boys who invariably tended to sit at the back of the class. Some of these boys at ages 14 and 15 were physically bigger than their petite female teachers whose responses to any form of challenge was to reclude themselves by leaving the class unattended perhaps to complain or to exclude the perpetrators from what was going on in class. Other teachers signalled very clearly and openly that they were not prepared to develop any levels of motivation and mastery of skills in those students whom they considered disruptive. Those were usually boys and a few talkative young ladies for whom there was absolutely no interaction with the teacher. All the three males in the in-depth sample complained or alluded to severe teacher rejection and alienation to which they responded by rejecting the teacher and the subject she taught, English.

However, this type of alienation of the males adds fuel to the argument about the phenomenon of male-underachievement. These three young male representatives are from different ethnicities, religious upbringings and

different social class, even though none belonged to the upper class, yet in the classroom situation they were dubbed under-achievers. Enciso (1998) and Kapchan (1995) in assessing the performance theory of students' achievement noted that one must consider all the factors. One must look at what actually happens in the classroom, consider the outcome in relation to the expectations of the others, especially the teachers, know the social codes and the discourses available within the given context and not merely be guided by the stereotypes and identity given to individuals and groups because of their repeated performance, their ways of talking, listening, behaving or even using the body. In spite of the position adopted, the evidence still exists that the males are not performing as well as the females and this disparity must be addressed at the school under the microscope and throughout the education system.

Another clear demonstration of teacher alienation, identified by Kurtis and Kelly became obvious whenever students were absent from school for legitimate reasons because they represented the school in some event, Drama Festival, Secondary Schools Under 14 Football or Athletic Meeting. The teachers made no attempt to help them catch up with the rest of the class by repeating work missed. Instead, they continued teaching only those students who were there from the beginning of that particular unit of work. As a consequence, those students felt that they were being wrongfully punished and alienated even though they were involved in legitimate school activities. That scenario was repeated several times over for mostly the males - footballers, cricketers, basket ball players and others involved in other team sports or activities. The teachers' reaction was even worse for the supporters who

attended these events. They were openly maligned for going to support their fellow students, and this even at football matches held on the school's compound in September, 1999 and 2000, or to support the drama team in their competitive production at the neighbouring school in November, 2000.

The students, especially the boys, who possess great talents and other non-academic abilities were never recognised, encouraged, helped nor even praised by these teachers. Even after the students demonstrated their abilities in other areas and brought laurels to the school, the teachers did not recognise the wisdom of applauding their peculiar metier nor did they take the time off to use their other forms of 'multiple intelligences' for assisting them to gain mastery in academic achievement areas. Recognition and praise are positive external motivators which can foster intrinsic motivation. Instead these teachers continued to harp on the students' past indiscretions and never provided them with an opportunity to change. The teachers did not seek these students out to help or praise them and the students reciprocated by staying away from them.

The value of praise cannot be over-emphasized (Dweck, 1991). It is recommended as the best motivator and a major instrument in developing the individual's self-esteem. Praise is an even stronger intrinsic motivator in one's accomplishments of positive non-academic activities. Thus, the students who may have exhibited such prowess and drive to attain excellence in the non-academic areas to maintain their levels of self-worth they needed the praise and

recognition of their significant others, their teachers, for them to make the links and attempt to transfer their skills and drive to things academic. Instead, those teachers remained unforgiving and maintained their *sustained biases* and continued to evaluate the students negatively, based on their low levels of expectations for them (Kolb, 1994).

In their role-play, the students said that the classroom settings and teachers' behaviours were undesirable and caused especially those students who were active in other school events to feel alienated, punished and removed from the main stream of the in-class academic activities. In their response to such feelings and situations of alienation the students initially complained and the teacher denied the allegations. Afterwards the relationships between the students and the teacher became so strained that the students turned to other interests and even deviance as they were very conscious of the non-involvement, alienation and relegation.

This practice of displaying overt acts of discrimination and racism was most keenly felt by the students of African descent from the teachers of East Indian descent, who represented over 90% of the teachers of English. Based on observation and students' reports these acts of racism were observed when the teachers of East-Indian descent tended to separate their classes along racial line and by so doing deliberately practised institutionalised ethnic discrimination in the dissemination of information. Kelly and the other students, including some of the boys, who were actively involved in sports and some of the other non-

academic but legitimate school activities, were all of African descent and they confirmed the prevalent existence of this practice.

Troyna (1993), Hargreaves (1995) and Rizvi (1995) lamented the existence of institutionalised racism which depended on a structural relationship which was based on the subordination of one group by another, dependent primarily, but not only, on the beliefs, characteristics and stereotyping of any person or all the persons who belong to the homogeneous group. Such stereotyping and the customary, institutionalised use of different scenarios tended to create an elitist or superior race of persons while marginalising another through education.

When this occurred the students of African descent tended to complain and react very vociferously as they often felt the most rejected in academic settings as the evidence confirmed. The reality is that there was only one teacher of African descent out of the eight teachers of English. Often Administration had to intervene to ensure that there was equity. Unfortunately, the practice is becoming widespread and needs to be addressed nationally as this can one day form the basis for much violence and anti-teacher sentiment in schools.

De Lepervanche (1984) indicated that education *per se* would not lead to the removal of prejudice and discrimination or to the emergence of equal opportunity. As long as racism is a product of the broader institutional factors then it cannot just go away merely by encouraging cultural and ethnic tolerance in the classroom. Nevertheless, the teachers who practised acts of racism possessed very low levels of expectation for those against whom they

discriminated. Any such deliberate act of racism on the part of the teachers was an indication of their generalised beliefs of those students against whom they have discriminated.

The students also perceived the teachers' attachment to their inner ethnic group as favouritism and an attempt to create *bloomers* or to make some students better performers than others (Silberman, 1993 and Beez, 1968). The teachers may have been either overtly or covertly intending to make bloomers of those of their ethnic inner circle and, in so doing they were identifying and exhibiting high levels of expectations about the academic success only for those students in that circle. Such an act is immoral and highly discriminatory and must be condemned. What may have been anticipated was that through this process ultimately the students who belonged to the inner circle would respond positively to the teachers' additional attention and mirror their teachers' anticipated expectations back to them through increased academic success, thus confirming a possible existence of the positive side of the *Pygmalion effect*.

However, in the case of the JSS teachers' practice, and contrary to those teachers' *perceptual bias* (Kolb, 1994), the students in the inner circle did not necessarily become better performers than those excluded, perhaps because of other hidden factors. As a result, the teachers often felt embarrassed when challenged by administration for their in-class separation. They were left with no logical professional explanation for their actions. Therefore, in spite of those teachers' open show of favouritism, as evidenced by greater use of motivational



techniques and strategies to enhance the learning and the performance of this inner often ethnic homogeneous group, only a few responded and reacted favourably to the teachers' efforts by living up to their expectations and making rapid and significant strides in their performance outcomes.

That type of transactional interactive relationship in the JSS under review did not automatically lead the teacher or the students to reinforce and correct attitudes and behaviours which should have resulted in students' increased motivation to learn and their greater development of self-concept. Instead, more division and ill-feelings were directed towards the teachers and the students in the inner ethnic circle by those who felt alienated and rejected. The latter group sometimes deliberately disrupted the activity of the inner group and little or no teaching could take place. The total effect of the Pygmalion effect was not realised because of those strong racial undertones which were introduced into the equation.

However, the effect of low teachers' expectation was evidenced when the teachers of the unfavourable found their task too difficult. They had to spend more time in explaining and giving examples as opposed to those who taught the favoured and found their work interesting and rewarding, though equally difficult. Yet those who were considered unfavourable complained that they were treated unfairly when they were either pressured to put more effort and apply themselves more and/or were forced to spend most of their school days

out of class because the teacher said, 'get out of my class and do not come back', and they took them literally. As a result these students either skipped or stayed away from all the classes taught by that teacher, and the vicious circle of low performance and lack of expectations was perpetuated.

Kimfa, Kanand and others like them remained out of their English teachers' class for most of the term and the teacher never brought that information or made any report about their irregularity in attendance to the Administration or to the Dean. In some cases these students were awarded course marks even though they were absent from class but not from school. Clearly, if the teachers' expectations about their classes were focused on the students' academic achievement and mastery for the whole class then these students should never have been excluded without the teacher becoming pro-active and finding ways to help and reconcile. Instead, no effort was made to contact the student to return to class and study. This should not have been the norm but unfortunately it was. The onus was now on the student to study but without the proper support systems being put in place that was almost impossible. As expressed earlier, the teachers were unwilling to help students even if they were absent on legitimate business, and even less, if they voluntarily stayed away from class on the teachers' prompting.

As a result, as Principal, on visits to teachers' classes, it was often possible to meet only half of the class present.

"Where are the others?" I might ask and the teachers' response might be.

"They just had Physical Education and are probably in the shower".

That teacher would never insist that the boys and girls arrive on time for the lessons or would she go to the showers to hasten their return to class. Instead she preferred to sit out the period and have no class interaction and engagement for that session.

When that teachers' attitude was signalled the students took advantage of the laissez-faire approach and spent more time in the shower with their friends rather than hurry to 'Miss class'. As a matter of fact, the bonding between the peers, the extra planning and affiliative support became stronger amongst the groups in the shower and in the toilet areas. That area became the hub of students' activities whenever they stayed away from the classrooms.

### **SOME TEACHERS ABSENTEEISM, TARDINESS, BORING CLASSES AND UNBECOMING LANGUAGE**

The students pointed out that some teachers were often absent and on too many occasions late for class. As a result, they were forced to lose several necessary, important contact periods, to the extent that for weeks some students did not have any interaction with their assigned teachers. Based on observations and from school records, the evidence substantiated that there were teachers on the staff who took at least a day off from school every week. There are 39 weeks in the academic calendar and the teacher is allotted 28 days maximum per year for sick and occasional leave. In extreme circumstances, there can be additions to the sick leave for extended periods. Added to these days are the numerous official non-contact sessions for religious, national and other holidays and time-

off for school and national events. Thus, it was possible for a teacher to not teach a particular class for months which was very frustrating for the students.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, in the JSS system, whenever teachers were absent or even late the students were further discommoded. The students were left on most occasions, unsupervised, outside of the classrooms waiting around on limited seating accommodation, or standing in the quadrangle or toilet area until the next period. It often happened that classes of students spent the entire day of six periods without having interactions with a teacher. On checking their time-tables the students, especially those of the evening shift become aware very early that their teachers for the day would be absent and immediately they make alternative arrangements to occupy their 'free time'. Little wonder then that especially those students of the afternoon shift were often restless and had short attention spans. Unfortunately, in the main they were the more academically inclined students who might have been left unattended by their parents since they awoke in the morning, for example Kenwin, and who would have been out of doors since mid-morning travelling to school, only to arrive at school and find that there was no meaningful engagement. Those students could only be restless and demotivated. There were no substitute teachers provided and the teachers who were absent were not concerned enough or did they develop the habit of leaving work for their students to do during their absence. It is therefore, incomprehensible to imagine that such teachers have any level of expectations for or about these students' academic achievement. Unfortunately, their actions were ably supported by the education system.

Some teachers were also insensitive to the power of their language when addressing the students. In many instances, teachers were not aware that their switching of verbal codes, using abusive and denigrating choices of vocabulary, intonations, body language and gestures spoke volumes to the students and impacted them negatively (Joseph 1980, 1996). She noted that students felt that their teachers were condescending and laughing at them when they switched language codes. This became evident whenever the teacher spoke to them in dialect or in the vernacular for them to understand the questions or explanations. Apart from the switching of codes the teachers' manner of speaking when using the dialect tended to convert the classroom from being a serious positive learning environment into one that was jovial, discouraging and negative. Thus, the switches in teachers' tones and codes were often interpreted as a reflection of the teachers' attitude towards the students and the students sometimes responded differently and sometimes inappropriately towards the switched codes.

But switching of codes in the classroom setting also tended to relate to the cultural and ethnic patterns of socialising (Beganrose - Green, 1963 and Green, 1964/1975). La Guerre (1974), a political and social East Indian activist, noted that historically, the two main ethnic groupings of Africans and Indians treated each other differently and with different biases. He claimed that, as a consequence, each viewed the other with suspicion when codes were used against them. To him, the Afro-Trinidadian had been using codes which were often interpreted as a threat to the Indo-Trinidadian's political and economic stability. On the other hand, still according to La Guerre, the Indo-Trinidadians

had been adopting strategies to deal with the afro/creole culture, which was at variance with their own. As a result, La Guerre (1974) claimed that teachers of the different races do not use the Standard English or the creole in the same manner, so that students of the same or different ethnic groupings might respond in a different manner to the same switched code.

Sometimes in the classroom setting, many forms of authoritative stances were adopted to establish where the power was. This need for the determination of power has remained one of the key variables which still plague the education system (Foucault, 1977). Some teachers gained certain levels of satisfaction and pleasure when they were the ultimate wielder of power, using the rod, in the classroom. They made no allowance for continued renegotiation of the limits of power. In such settings, invariably conflict ensued between those of the dominant group who had the resources of their position, their collective consent of other members of staff, the Administration and the teachers' union to support and impose their interest, even by force.

This type of legitimisation of power domination gained total control over the students, especially when they, the students, recognised and felt the need for redress in situations where teachers' 'switches' and switched codes turned into abusive and even obscene language and in those circumstances where the students felt helpless to address those situations. This type of situation ultimately leads to the polarisation of groups of peoples into the powerful versus the powerless or to the emergence of ideologies and/or situations of repeated endless power over the marginalised students, who invariably become the loser, asserted (Foucault, 1980 and Friere, 1970, 1972).

Thus whenever there was a conflict situation between the teachers and the students

or the teachers and Administration the staff tended to wield their power by refusing to teach. This Kanand termed, “quarrelling and having conflicts”.

During the first two years and four months of these Form Three students sojourn at the school, the staff was very unsettled. Every issue was a crisis and the teachers’ tempers and language were not always as they ought to be. Many of their indiscretions in language use especially against the students had to be brought to the attention of the school supervisors for disciplinary action.

The students in their role-play and Kelly in her advice to her past teachers reiterated that the English lessons/classes were boring and lacked activity and drama. The majority of the teachers of English were young, inexperienced and not trained to teach. They therefore, did not employ the skills and teaching techniques needed to enhance students’ learning and interest in school.

In the English department there were only two teachers who were specially trained and continued their professional development. The students felt that these teachers’ class sessions were practical and interactive, even though one of these teachers was often absent and both were on the afternoon shift. However, the majority of the other teachers used only the text, chalk and talk as their media of interaction, even though many of the students could not read. Therefore, in those classes there was constant academic inactivity, high levels of teacher absenteeism and teachers’ constant complaints about the students’

non-performance and lack of interest in their studies. The interaction was only prohibitory. To prove their point, often these teachers brought whole classes of 40 students to the Principal's office to complain that their homework was not done or that the students were not paying attention.

Coincidentally, the performance of the students who believed that their teachers lacked interest in their classes was directly related to those students' perception of their lack of academic ability. Historically, the public sentiment of the JSS system is that it is the repository of those students who cannot excel academically. The parents of the more academically inclined students, and especially the father of the most brilliant female student, Keisha, suffered internally from living with the burden and pain that their children were wrongly placed and unfairly treated by the system which they constantly strove to exit, leaving its stigma behind. Perhaps those psychological pressures and feelings of anxiety, hurt and shame provided one of the reasons for Keisha's reserved nature and lack of involvement. Shame and anxiety are two of the main motivational and psychological ill-effects to an individual's feelings of self-worth (Atkinson et al, 1953 and Crandall, 1963).

Additionally the literature has revealed and concurred that teachers displayed varying levels of expectations and attitudes towards students dependent on their ability levels, their social class and their school type (Burstall, 1970). Teachers tended to show more favour/pet more students whom they considered brilliant. Working class children, like those who attended the school under review, were viewed with less expectancy than those of middle and upper class (Pidgeon,



1970). Beez (1968) also felt that the teachers felt that the boys were less able to read than the girls. Hence, at the school under review the teachers continued marginalisation of the males has led to the widening chasm between the performances of the girls and that of the boys and have provided another major cause for the gross male under-achievement.

### **STUDENTS FOUND ENGLISH LANGUAGE - A DIFFICULT TASK.**

The subject, English Language presents its challenges for most of us and more so for the students who function with low levels of literacy and other academic deficiencies. The literature has established that Standard English is difficult especially in the components of Comprehension and Spelling (Stipek, 1984 and Galloway *et al*, 1996). It is therefore, incumbent on the teachers to make the subject interesting and meaningful.

The demands of the secondary school leaving 14+ Examination were great and the curriculum mandated that the teachers and students cover a quantum of work over the three years. The level of preparation needed was not totally accomplished by all the teachers, even though most of them could provide evidence 'on paper' that they had covered the entire syllabus. Still the students were quite aware when they were short-changed.

The students constantly indicated that what they really needed was that their teachers should give them work that was meaningful and yet sufficiently

challenging and then make them responsible and accountable for their own progress. In other words, in order to enhance their capacity to learn the students desired work which was sustainable because it forced them to develop intrinsic motivation levels to want to learn. The ultimate goal was to attain mastery without rewards, punishment or any other external motivator but to access learning is an innate, attainable, self-determined right (Stipek, 1984; Ames and Archer, 1998).

Exposure to meaningful work through an English syllabus which is functional ought to be attained in a congenial approachable manner and through the use of creative teaching and learning strategies in the presentation of the task (Benware and Deci, 1984). The task itself should be relevant and meaningful to the students' present existence and future well-being. In addition the system of evaluation should not be limited to grades alone but should include some oral work or performance-oriented statements or productions. Increasing students' choice and responsibility for their own learning are paramount to fostering the students' thrust towards independence and responsibility for their performance.

## **CONCLUSION**

Simply stated the students have indicated that their acquired attitudes and failure syndrome in their performance at their school work were affected by the teachers. They admitted that at times the task was difficult. They indicated that they needed to expend more effort on their studies. They also noted that the teachers' attitude, lack of concern and interest in them and in their personal struggles and issues further compounded their inability and/or lack of interest

in their subject areas. They also claimed that some of the teachers demonstrated deliberate acts of alienation and segregation. At times overt and/or covert acts of racialism and favouritism were displayed by some teachers who did not seek to help the whole class but only a selected few.

The teachers were frequently absent and classes were left unattended sometimes for the entire day. This amount of unsupervised freedom often caused the students to become deviant and get into trouble. The students also stated clearly that their English classes were boring and lacked activity and drama. There seemed to be little doubt, based on what the students said that the teachers' expectations for them were not high. However they enjoyed their affiliative experiences with each other and the extra-curricular activities in which they became engaged and that made the junior secondary school life enjoyable.

In their new environment, the students have said that they were able to cope with an even more difficult and complex curriculum. It therefore, begs the question what brought about the change? It is reasonable to assume that at the junior secondary school under review, the lack of teacher expectation and teacher interaction and engagement with their classes caused the teachers to miss out on the beautiful experience of assisting the students to learn and overcome their academic weaknesses.

# CHAPTER X

## STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS - CAUSAL ATTRIBUTION PATTERNS

### INTRODUCTION

What the students perceived as reported in the findings of the Causal Attribution questionnaire was very informative and the outcomes revealed very significant relationships. The Causal Attribution theory was not being investigated *per se*, but because of the theory's versatility and flexibility it provided an appropriate psychological and scientific tool to investigate the students' perceptions about their success and failure. Additionally, the theory's dispositional approach to conduct its enquiry has allowed for the exploration of high frequencies and the variations of opinions that the students voiced. Thus, the findings were revealing and to some extent anticipated, yet they still need to be analysed.

The Causal Attribution questionnaire has been espoused as an excellent medium to identify and define the means by which individuals understand and explain their behaviour, whether by some innate ability, by some personality traits or dispositions, or by some external characteristic of the particular situation, in which the person is momentarily located (Heider, 1958). Thus the Causal Attribution Theory deals with the way in which an individual arrives at an explanation of his observed or reported behaviour or the outcome after the performance of an act. Closely aligned to the attributions are the inferences that

can be made about the dispositional properties of the individual/ individuals, the environment, and the conclusions that can be drawn from the behaviour/outcome, and the assessment of the effects of such interactions.

This chapter will discuss and analyse the students' perceptions according to-

- ❖ the satisfactory application of the Causal Attribution theoretical framework to identify the JSS students' causes for their success and failure.
- ❖ the implications of their identified perceptions
- ❖ the JSS students' Causal Attribution Patterns

## **SATISFACTORY APPLICATION OF THE CAUSAL ATTRIBUTION THEORY**

Weiner (1974) contended that all achievement outcomes must be viewed as either a success or a failure which can be plausibly explained. Thus, he conceptualized the Causal Attribution Theory, as operating within a theory testing framework which had the potential to use the students' perception of the causes of their success/failure as the causes or causal perception of the underlying factors which caused their academic outcome. These determined the causal attributions they made. This notion of causality and the selection of causes *per se* became some of the areas of concern expressed about the theory. Weiner also noted that ascriptions to these factors tended to fall into specific patterns. When analysed, these patterns would reveal direct links with one's

ability, one's self-concept and one's willingness to improve with positive re-training. These concerns were also relevant when the Causal Attribution theory was applied to determine the JSS students' causal perceptions of their success and failure.

This Causal Attribution theoretical framework minimises the plethora of possible causes and explanations to the 'why' question by using the individuals' immediate perceptions of the factors that caused their failures and successes when they make ascriptions or attributions to the causal factors. The ascriptions that emerge are then used to arrive at their causal attribution patterns which when analysed in the dimensional framework revealed deep insight into the students' emotional and psychological well-being as well as provided a meaningful rationale for their success and/or failure.

As a result, in the case of the JSS students under the microscope, they were asked to respond to the causal attribution questionnaire immediately on the first receipt of their 14+ Examination results. Their responses when compiled revealed that the students' perception of the causality for their success and failure fitted into Weiner's existing and additional schema of his four basic factors of effort, ability, task difficulty and luck and the subsequently added factors of home effect and teacher effects. Weiner's dimensions when applied have provided the scientific and acceptable framework to address the students' concerns and perceptions. In spite of the concerns of the critics, the notion of causality and the selection of causes were succinctly covered by the students'

responses. The causal attribution patterns which have evolved reveal direct links with the students' emotional and psychological well-being.

It is this claim of the theory's dispositional and remedial properties that had often been challenged. The critics denounced the theory's ability to make such precise distinctions without considering causal inferences, cause and effect relationships and what constitutes 'a cause'. In addition, the critics argued that the immediate perceptions/ascriptions given by individuals may be common-sense responses to their particular situation and not be suitable for scientific inquiry. Or causal inferences which could not be considered as valid could be used to make generalizations. Early critics of the theory, such as Ajzen and Fishbein (1975), Anderson (1974) and Kruglanski (1979) noted that there may be the existence of unknown causes when the researched is asked to make causal explanations and inferences. They also felt that, when the question 'why' is asked, the result may lead to a variety of responses all of which might be considered as genuine explanations without necessarily being causal attribution. Notwithstanding, the responses of the students and analysis thereof should help to refute such concerns, especially to what constitutes 'a cause' and what is causality and its validity.

In implementing his attribution theory, Heider (1958a) had quite early addressed the concern that it was impossible to separate the cause-and-effect relationships between an act, actor or an event. They work as a mental and psychological unit or Gestalt in response to any situation. In other words,

Heider visualised that, the long-term result of any cause and effect relationship is represented by a combination of psychological and cognitive factors, which when fused directly involved the actor, the act and the outcome. In an academic achievement setting this infusion would involve the direct, cognitive, social and psychological responses of the student to the specific task/event when compared to his specific outcome.

Determining what was 'a cause' became critical. Shultz (1977), Michotte (1996) and Kelley and Michela (1980) confirmed Heider's view that a cause was any action which preceded an event. Such reactions demanded full involvement of the cognitive and psychological faculties as gestalts. However, in his perception of causality and the permanence of the cause and effect relationships, Michotte (1996) whilst using the Gestalt principle, also contended that an effect should be commensurate with its cause. Michotte also affirmed that the cause and effect relationship was merely an information processing rule for attributing causes. Kelley et al (1980) in agreement viewed 'a cause' as that condition which was present when the effect is present. Some social scientists still maintain that a 'cause' is inscrutably linked to its effect. Ryan (1970) questioned, whether mental /cognitive events can be considered as the cause of physical events. He felt that the two were mutually exclusive Thus for these JSS students who lived in a situation of failure the impact of the causes for that existence could best be revealed when they automatically identify the causes as an immediate response to the situation.

In spite of the preceding counter arguments, in articulating this notion, Ryan



(1970) also contended that the processing that was necessary to arrive at an identifiable cause needed some scientific inquiry and also involved the functioning of the complex human brain and the psychological interpretation of human behaviour, as these operate in their own natural environment. This concern about the mental, psychological and physiological led to the notion of scientific considerations about 'genetic'. But the attribution theorist counter-argued that even, in the sphere of science, there has to be a variety of types of explanations to arrive at scientific value.

Some of the early attribution theorists, like Hume and Mill also felt that it was untenable to apply scientific inquiry to individuals' common-sense responses to an event. They also pointed out the difficulty that may exist to identify the cause of a particular event on a particular occasion, or to make generalizations, or to determine whether the cause that is identified is the 'mere antecedent condition' or part of the circumstance.

The JSS students in their turn had to consider what constituted 'a cause' when making their ascriptions to those causes previously identified by Weiner and others. The demand for the immediacy of their responses would have genuinely prompted them to confirm automatically and unconsciously the statements that they had previously made.

Nevertheless, what constitutes 'a cause' remains central to the concept of causal attribution. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1977) defines a 'cause' as referring to anything, such as an event, circumstance or condition

which brings about or helps to bring about an effect. Hart and Honore (1959), two other attribution theorists, arguing from a legal perspective also pointed out the futility of striving to make distinctions between cause and effect and to forming generalizations. Instead, Hart and Honore (1959) suggested common-sense explanations for a 'cause' as an abnormal condition which made the difference because it intervened in the normal course of events.

Modern attribution theorists, such as Craig-Janes (1999) placed limited restrictions on what could constitute a 'cause'. They were however, always cognizant of the fact that distinctions existed between causes and the genetic, or natural explanations of arriving at a cause, which were often cited as opposing factors. Yet, these modern theorists were also sensitive to the pitfalls that occur when attempting to arrive at a cause. One such pitfall is the attempt to make predictions on the basis of causal inferences, after using just the causal factors. Another is that difficulties would arise to determine perceived causes where there may be the hidden presence of intrinsic or external factors that may hamper the identification of the more relevant and critical causes. The concern was also expressed about the former limitation made to the number of causal factors and responses that could be used to arrive at attribution causes. Notwithstanding that, in the literature, modern causal attribution theorists strongly endorsed the use of students' perceptions to identify causes and they rejected the idea of adopting learned and conditioned influences as causes.

Falbo and Beck (1979) suggested that students' perceptions provided sufficient scientific justification to be identified as a 'cause'. Based on their own

investigation on students' listing and identification of causes/reasons for success and failure at the completion of several unrelated tasks, they concluded that the causes invariably turned out to be those which were enunciated by Weiner (1974). In addition, these researchers further suggested that causal attribution conformed to a philosophical theoretical framework, which provided a variety of explanations of achievement outcomes. Only those factors that cannot be immediately identified are not accommodated in the theory.

Bar-tal *et al* (1982) also discovered that the main generalized causes for success and failure were those established by Weiner (1974). In their study done in Tel Aviv, Israel, they asked students, parents and teachers to respond directly to the students' specific success or failure outcomes. A list of the actual responses was drawn up and a variety of causes were itemized. Those enunciated by Weiner (1974) were most frequently identified. Similar situations have been replicated several times worldwide. A variety of academic outcomes and other issues were addressed by – Karniol (1990), Jerusalem; Chapman and Lawes (1987), New Zealand; Overwalle and De Metsenaere (1989), Brussels; Vispoel and Austin (1995), Iowa and Colorado, United States of America.

Rachel Karniol (1990) sought to determine the attributional causes for students' failure in tests which they liked or disliked. She adopted several self or ego-involvement causes which expressed themselves in such factors as likes and dislikes for a particular subject especially in situations of failure. She also assessed the students' perceptions of other students' attributions where these

students perceived that those attributions differed or are known to differ from theirs. There were implications for their affective reactions in failure situations.

Additionally, Chapman and Lawes (1987) utilized the students' free response attributions to assess their outcomes in a major external subject-based assessment School Certificate English Examination in secondary schools in New Zealand. Also of special significance was the research on students' perceptions of achievement in Music by Vispoel and Austin (1995) who identified and accepted the teacher and some critical students' interests as additional attributional causes for students' success and failure.

Causal attribution researchers are, therefore, positive in their assertion that students' perceptions are sufficiently scientific and psychologically valid to identify the causes of their academic outcomes. They also feel strongly that cause and effect relationships cannot be a deterrent to the effectiveness of the theory. It is therefore with that assurance and confirmation of the theory's world-wide appeal and its ability to assess student's perceptions that it was used to investigate the JSS students' perceptions of the causes for their success and failure and to determine the extent of the teachers' expectations on their academic achievement levels.

Nevertheless, such compelling arguments on what constituted a 'cause' merely stifled dissent and were insufficient to prevent the critics from exploring the notion of causality. Although this seemed to be a more elusive and highly controversial concept it was critical to the Causal Attribution Theory. In the

earlier period of the theory's existence questions about what was causation and what was causality and how they were identified had special relevance to several fields of interest including psychology, philosophy of science and law. The underlying premise was to establish whether there were distinctions between having a 'motive' and behaving from a 'cause'. Such interests impinged on the notion of 'responsibility' for one's action and the outcome thereof. That also impacted on moral, social and cultural issues and the strategies to be adopted to cope with them.

Hart and Honore (1959) identified 'voluntary human action' as the benchmark for causality. They highlighted the difference between arriving at causality and giving generalised explanation. They scoffed at the use of 'third person accounts' to establish causation. The counter position adopted by the realists, whether the traditional or the scientific realist narrator, was that causation and causality were extremely significant and might result in either 'generative' or 'productive' relationships. Bunge (1959) had suggested that the cause actually brought about the effect which could lead to the generation of other factors. That latter view when applied to the JSS students might be instructive to deduce what provided the antecedent, the cause or the effect that lead to the creation of low teacher expectation or the high student failure rate.

Another area of concern with causality arose from the linguists who argued whether the use of language was part of the methodology or part of the theory in eliciting and explaining the perceptions of human action. However, these linguists became divided into two schools of thought, that of the linguistic

category model of AU (1986), Brown and Fish (1985) and Semin and Fielder (1989) and the conversational model of Turnball and Slugoski (1988) and Hilton (1990). Those who espoused the former model felt that attribution processing was built on the linguistic mode and could be impacted on by choices of verbs or vagueness of presentation in the language, as words hold much significance. The latter group, the conversational model emphasised the pragmatic features of language which underlay the cognitive and the linguistic in everyday conversations and discourses. Several weaknesses were advanced in the arguments of both views and these included that there were weak relationships between the linguistics and the psychological analysis especially because of the action orientation nature of the events under review and the nature of the discourse itself. Brown (1984) noted succinctly that people did not ordinarily figure out definitions for the causality of events and then put them into words or read them in an automatic, calculated manner. In the end, the proponents of discourse psychology developed a discourse action model, DAM (Edward and Potter, 1993). They also concurred that reports and descriptions on causality and attributions were to be given as constructed communication whereas language offered great discipline and flexibility and should remain merely part of the social process of the reality of the situation.

Modern attribution theorists take the concept of causality quite seriously. They espouse that causality is established when the underlying agent which initiated the spontaneous reaction to an outcome is itemized. Thus these theorists maintain that, causality is established when the students who are assessed on any common issue have identified any factor or factors as basic causal

explanations for their outcomes. The causes identified are not given because of some other motive or influence but rather they spring purely from the individuals' initial reaction to the issue. This position is justifiably explained through the immediacy of identifying perceptions for the causes of one's successes and failures.

The concept of causality was appropriately handled in this research in the administration of the questionnaire and in the application of the Causal Attribution Theory's framework. The importance of capturing the students' immediate causal perception for their academic success and failure was appropriately applied as the students' responses were made only on their immediate receipt of their 14+ English Examination results. That restrictive factor of immediacy forces the individuals to focus directly on the specific issue and respond accordingly to that alone.

The theory also accommodates the investigation of other non-academic and social variables in large groups. Another local researcher, Osuji (1982) attempted to assess the effect of these non-academic variables. She noted that social class and school were more contributable to academic achievement than race/ethnicity. However, she used an elaborate schema, but, she later found out that these variables could be assessed directly with the use of the Causal Attribution Theory.

A most important benefit of the Causal Attribution Theory is its ability to identify those students who are willing to seek help in their situation of failure.

This could also be an indicator of the students' preparedness for remedial work. Thus theoretically the researcher could then be able to make some predictive statement about the future academic potentials of the students through the process of attribution re-training.

As the researcher, I felt that the students at the junior secondary school under review have many lived stories to tell that is why some of their non-academic realities have already been captured through participant observations, role-play and interviews. I was therefore confident that if the immediate causal perceptions of these Form Three students were elicited, then their attribution patterns which emanated could be used to determine the students' causality for their successes and failures. Additionally, the causal attribution patterns would give insight into the many other motivational and psychological areas of concern that affected their performance not only in English Language but generally.

### **THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS.**

When Weiner's four basic factors - effort, ability, task difficulty and luck, in addition to home and teacher effects were applied to determine the students' causal relationships to the said factors and to the other non-academic and social variables of their age, gender, race/ethnicity/religion, geographic locations and their likes and dislikes for school and for the subject, English, several significant relationships emerged.



Based on the frequency of the responses and analyses of the correlations, the students, especially the low achievers, made significant ascriptions to the factor of ability especially with regard to their perception of their performance/grade attained. They also made double awarded significant ascriptions to their effort expended and to the task of English as being difficult. Above all the students, particularly those whose ability levels were average to good stated that the effects and lack of expectations of the teacher about their academic attainment significantly impacted on them. Apart from these significant responses the students have also said based on the frequency of occurrence that their home and even luck affected them but not significantly. On their causal attribution to the other variables of age, gender, geographic locations, race/ethnicity, socio-economic levels, and their cultural backgrounds the students were not significantly affected. However, the information revealed was instructive and helpful in the further understanding of their perception of the relationships between them and their teachers.

Additionally, the significant outcomes have to be applied to Weiner's three-dimensional framework with dimensions of LOCUS, CONTROLLABILITY and STABILITY in order to analyse the inter-play between the significant factors and the dimensions to arrive at the students' causal attribution patterns. These patterns are generally either ego-defensive or ego-enhancing and when determined give insight into the students' emotional and psychological dispositions. However, when Weiner's Dimensions were applied to the significant causal perceptions of inability, lack of effort, task difficulty and lack

of teacher expectation as indicated by the JSS students under review, their causal attribution patterns which emerged revealed that the students' reactions did not seem to totally fit the universal patterns of responding to the dimensions of **LOCUS**, **CONTROLLABILITY** and **STABILITY**. The students were unique.

Subsequently, the notion of **INTENTIONALITY** was added. This dimension looked at the relationship between low/little effort expended by students as a direct corresponding result of teachers' poor teaching strategies and little/low expectations (Craig-Janes, 1999). Perhaps this notion best epitomises the situation of the problem of the JSS students under review.

Weiner (1974, 1979) had also intended that each of his causal dimensions should be uniquely associated not only with specific academic outcomes, but also with psychological consequences. The two dimensions of **LOCUS** and **CONTROL** are so instrumental in making the incisive liaison between the academic and the psychological, that some researchers address them as a unit, '**LOCUS OF CONTROL**', initially designated by Rotter (1966, 1975). Thus, Weiner's dimension of **LOCUS** was most directly aligned to the individual's level of self-concept. **CONTROLLABILITY** was closely associated to the individual's academic achievement outcome. His dimension of **STABILITY** gave the researcher insight into the individual's anticipated expectations about the future of his/her success /failure in similar academic settings.

It is therefore expected that in situations of success, the high achiever's causal attribution patterns would tend to indicate an internalization of responsibility and use of control factors over which he has much influence. Thus, the high achiever would attribute his success to his ability (locus) and to the great degree of effort, which he exerted (control). This pattern of attribution identifies an individual who is demonstrating ego-enhancing tendencies. The individual's level of self-concept should increase.

The converse ought to be true and should occur in situations of failure. The low achiever would tend to externalize the responsibility for his failure. Lack of control and ascription to stable factors would be most operative. The individual would tend to claim that failure resulted because the task was too difficult or the teachers' explanations were not adequate (locus) or that he did not apply himself sufficiently (control). This resultant causal attribution pattern would be ego-defensive. The self-concept levels of these individuals would necessarily be significantly lowered and might be so reduced that the individual might become totally frustrated or completely withdrawn.

The anticipated normal flow of high and low achievers' causal attribution patterns are as follows as **Table 15** overleaf shows Weiner's expected pattern.

**TABLE 15: WEINER’S CAUSAL ATTRIBUTION PATTERNS**

<b>ACHIEVERS</b>	<b>DESCRIPTIONS/DEFINITIONS</b>	<b>PATTERNS</b>
<b>HIGH ACHIEVER’S SUCCESS</b>	LOCUS – Internal – ability CONTROL – much influence exerted – effort STABILITY - ability	EGO- ENHANCING PATTERNS
<b>LOW ACHIEVER’S FAILURE</b>	LOCUS – External – luck, teacher, task CONTROL – no influence exerted over effort STABLE - task difficulty, teacher	EGO- DEFENSIVE PATTERNS

Weiner’s theory has become entrenched as one of the social and psychological instruments most suited to the placement and assessment of an individual’s achievement-related behaviour. The original theoretical framework has been tested and tried, criticized and applauded, accepted and refined, as researchers worldwide vigorously explored all its dimensions. Weiner *et al* (1984) reviewed and reassessed his theory in the light of conflicts and criticisms. Their findings have reconfirmed the theoretical framework of causal attributions as an appropriate and valid instrument to assess achievement-related behaviour. His framework is also useful in assessing the individual’s psychological well-being. The notion of INTENTIONALITY was also considered.

### **THE JSS STUDENTS’ CAUSAL ATTRIBUTION PATTERNS.**

The students have attributed their failure to the factors of ability, task difficulty, teacher effects and to their lack of effort expended. Their causal attributions to

lack of effort expended were in sync with their teachers' expressed major reason for their failure.

## **DIMENSIONS OF LOCUS**

However, when Weiner's dimension of LOCUS was applied, the students' ascriptions were heavily weighted towards the INTERNAL. As a result, the students have said that they internalised the responsibility for their academic achievement outcomes and therefore their causal attribution patterns should be ego-enhancing. But these students operated in situations of failure and by so doing they have acted contrary to the expectation of the theory, because one can only produce an ego-enhancing pattern in situations of success.

Simultaneously, the findings also revealed that the said students made significant relationships to the difficulty of the task and to the effects of the teacher, two factors which were EXTERNAL. In so doing, the students have also externalised the location of their failure which is the expected behaviour in their situation, and which would produce an ego-defensive causal attribution pattern. Thus, the students have revealed conflicting patterns and that is abnormal. The same group does not both internalise and externalise the locus of their causal attribution about their academic performance, except the group of students was attempting to mask their true feelings in order to protect their self-image and their self-concept.

As a consequence, a contrary position was adopted, where attributions were made to both internal and external factors simultaneously. The implications for

that were that the students were willing to accept, to some extent the responsibility for their academic performance, but they were unwilling to internalise and accept that full responsibility when they felt that the double-weighted difficulty of the task, English and the effects of the teacher were two important external factors which affected their performance. Accepting full responsibility for their inability amounted to an admission that they were incapable of performing well or that they operated from a position of low cognitive levels which would highlight their hopelessness, learned helplessness and utter frustration. In fact, they have appropriately made attributions to the difficulty of the task, by so doing they failed to mask their inherent weakness which was reticent in their lack of academic proficiency, especially in English.

However, by making ascriptions to the effects of the teachers the students were not only externalising their responsibility but when these perceptions were triangulated with what they and some teachers have said, they were indicating the utter frustration of operating without support and without high expectations from their significant other, their teachers. Thus, the students were confirming that they were greatly affected by their teachers' lack of expectation.

Additionally, a pattern of internal location for responsibility and accountability should be for good performance and should indicate that the students were ego-enhancing, but in reality that was not so. On the contrary, their position was reversed when the said students externalised their responsibility. In so doing, in their situation of persistent failure their behaviour should lead to lowered self-esteem and a causal attribution pattern that was ego-defensive.

That the students have made ascriptions to external factors indicate that they may have been masking their true feelings about their inability to perform to protect their SELF image. Ascriptions to task difficulty would indicate that the task of being successful at English was unattainable and was directly related to their ability to perform, and if ability is located as internalised and stable then their perceptions of themselves would be shattered. However, the evidence has been triangulated to reveal that many of these students have a serious literacy problem. If we accept that their ascriptions to task difficulty were truthfully their opinion, then they were saying that they could not cope and in a circuitous manner they made confirmatory ascriptions to their lack of ability which is INTERNAL.

The students have been attempting to save their own self-image. They have stated repeatedly and significantly that the task was difficult and that should not be taken lightly. Ascriptions and admission to failure at a difficult task reduces the SHAME that is attached to one's inability to perform, especially at a stable factor (Atkinson, 1964). Thus, the students' decision to make ascriptions to task difficulty to avoid shame might be based on their perception of the stigma attached to their failure. Therefore, operational in the students' sub-conscious mind might have been a quick processing of many pertinent motivational factors which were linked and inter-related with reinforcement and expectancy theories and the students' in-built mechanisms to avoid or approach tasks dependent on their expectations for success or failure (Rotter, 1966, 1975). Masking their inability and shame at failure, and attempting to preserve their egos were more prevalent amongst boys. The majority of the males operated at

the lowest academic level but they would prefer to be recognised as having failed a task that was difficult than one that was considered easy. Even if the task were not that difficult, such individuals would go to the extreme to convince the observers that either the task was too difficult or that they were insufficiently prepared to perform the task. In that situation, failure at such a task was therefore not directly linked to their inability but to some external factor (Andrews and Debus, 1978). The end-result was that their self-esteem was not affected and their inability was masked.

It must be noted that an individual gains satisfaction and recognition of SELF, when his/her cherished beliefs and his/her self-image are enhanced. The intrinsic reward is not only social recognition or any monetary advantage gained but it is really the establishment of one's self-identity and the confirmation of one's notion of the type of person that one sees oneself to be (Deci, 1975 and Deci and Ryan, 1985). This expression of one's value of oneself not only lends clarity to one's self-concept but it marries and brings closer the individual's self-image and aspirations. It satisfies the individual's need not only to know who he/she is, but also to realise that he/she is the type of person he/she wants to be and not merely a copy of someone else (Rokeach, 1973). To attain this level of fulfilment of SELF and aspiration to be unique is difficult when one operates in situations of persistent failure and with lowered self-esteem, low teacher expectation and no societal support. Hence the students expressed need for their association with and the reliance on the affiliative expressions with their peers whose levels of aspirations and levels of behaviour



were not dissimilar from theirs. The other alternative is deviance and disruptive behaviour.

## **TEACHER EFFECTS/EXPECTATIONS**

By making significant attributions to the teachers and all their effects of, lack of expectation demonstrated through their lack of interaction and engagement, the students felt, said and made a very important declaration. The effects and expectations of the teacher were external, stable factors over which the students have no control. Understandably, the students could not be held responsible or accountable for their teachers' actions.

However, when compared to the other findings based on the students' observations, role-play, vignettes and interviews, the evidence suggested that the students wanted, through this medium to strongly voice their displeasure at their teachers' levels of engagements, interactions and expectations. These have been so minimal and in some instances non-existent that morally, truthfully and justly they could make no other ascriptions but to externalise their relationship with them. Therefore, in spite of the historical and generally accepted notions about their academic inability, by their own attributions, the students were prepared to state boldly that their teachers were significant contributors to their present and perhaps future lack of academic achievement outcomes.

Interestingly though, the students who were most affected by the teachers low expectations were those whose performance levels were average to good, and

those who had the capacity and potential to excel to mastery. Instead of being ostracised, rejected and alienated from their classes, if these students were provided with the strategies and support needed to attain academic success, they might have excelled. Then their attributions about their teachers' effect would have been different. The higher the teachers' expectations about the students' capacity to succeed the greater would be the students' demonstration of success and vice versa. Herein lies the notion of INTENTIONALITY. Low or little effort expended by students is a direct corresponding result of teachers' poor teaching strategies and little or low expectations (Craig-Janes, 1999). Nonetheless, despite the students' external location of the causality for their academic outcomes, the adverse impact on the self-esteem levels of those who have failed was not scientifically assessed.

The evidence suggested that especially the boys found negative, alternative ways to utilise their energies and mask their true feelings. The three young men in the stratified sample were revered as leaders within their separate gangs. Many students sought good and bad avenues external to the academic to legitimise their existence and protect their SELF and their self-worth. Research shows a correlation between delinquent behaviour of youth and low self-esteem (Johnson, 1977; Kaplan, 1975; Kelley, 1978). Operating in a situation of low self-esteem provides the impetus to become a tremendous source of anger and hostility which frequently results in violence (Kaplan, 1975). Many young people commit violence to compensate for their feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem (Toch, 1969). Thus, many students join gangs because of the need to belong. To reduce gang membership, one must focus on enhancing the self-

esteem of the youth so that they do not seek out and need the gang to meet their basic human needs (Sahagan, 1991).

Surprisingly though, it was the most intelligent student who throughout her JSS experience remained withdrawn and uninvolved and who on the surface seemed to exhibit more lowered self-esteem levels as she was unable to display that “*capacity to experience pride in accomplishment*” (Atkinson, 1964, p. 214). The effect of the pressures from her home and the demands of her parents to have her transferred from the school must have made a more negative dominant and lasting impression on her.

However, *Keisha* and others like her who have displayed continued determination to succeed even in their new school environment have epitomized some aspects of the theory of Atkinson (1964) who proposed that especially in the realm of academic achievement, the individuals’ stable factor (ability) tended to affect their approach to a task. By focusing their attention on the achievement of the task, success at English, they have demonstrated the unconscious factor which he termed a ‘*motive for success (Ms)*’ or a ‘*need to achieve (Nach)*’. Thus for Atkinson his (Ms) represented the individuals’ relatively stable, enduring and unwavering disposition to strive for success, in spite of all adverse situations.

However, according to (Winterbottom, 1958), that capacity to be confident and display pride in situations of success is often impaired by the individuals’ orientation, their process of socialization and the reinforcement patterns

instilled from very young. The individuals who expect to succeed on a task must first believe and accept that their probability of success was very high. When finally successful the amount of pride anticipated would be proportional to individuals' expectations for success. Greater pride and higher incentive values result in higher levels of self-esteem and self-confidence which were experienced following success at a difficult task at which individuals had a lower probability of success than conversely. Therefore, the JSS students under review, like Kanand, who attained some measure of success but previously held no expectation about succeeding, might have been totally shocked and surprised at their capacity to succeed. Hence their expressed attempt to continue being successful at their new secondary school environment as their goal orientations have changed from only having fun (Wentzel, 1989, 1991) to self-regulation and self-determination and then unto mastery.

However, Atkinson (1964) also noted that individual differences and responsiveness to show pride in success or even shame in failure were based on the stable motives that could be traced to their parents' child-rearing behaviours and/or on the effects and expectations of the significant other adults, teachers, whose encouragement helped to form the critical and permanent part of their generalised beliefs about themselves (Rotter, 1975). That is, if children are provided with opportunities to display achievement efforts and to demonstrate their ability and competence in academic or even non-academic areas they tend to perform relatively higher in their *motive to achieve success*, and would therefore be more ego-enhancing in their causal attributional patterns. In

contrast, children whose parents, teachers and other significant adults punished or ignored their achievement efforts they tend to develop a strong motive to avoid failure and sometimes invariably never attained success. As a consequence, although Atkinson (1964) assumed that the motives to strive for success and avoid failure were unconscious, he also added that in achievement situations, individuals were also impacted by their conscious belief about the particular situation and responded accordingly. This responsiveness endorses the correlation between high levels of self-esteem and academic achievement as the former is a predictor of the latter even though causality may not be established (Campbell, 1967).

## **DIMENSIONS OF CONTROL**

In their response to Weiner's dimension of CONTROL, the students' causal attribution patterns clearly indicated that they have significantly responded to factors over which they have control. One such critical factor was effort and their need to exert much more of it to attain success. By so doing, the students have signalled their readiness to seek help in order to correct their academic short-coming. However, the students have also made attributions to other causal factors over which they have no control, namely their own-inability, the difficulty of the task and the effects of the teachers.

Have not the students indicated that even if they were willing to admit that they needed to exert more expenditure on their effort, yet they also recognised and lamented on the futility of their situation, when they make ascriptions to their lack of ability and the difficulty of the task? The students seemed to find

themselves in the proverbial Catch 22 situation. They were sufficiently intelligent to recognise that expending more effort would result in anticipated success. However, they were also sufficiently sensitive to identify that expending more effort alone would lead them to greater depths of frustration, without the necessary support and help from their teachers and significant adult others to correct their weak areas, address their academic deficiencies and to motivate them to raise their own levels of expectations to attain mastery. The more effort expended must be commensurate with and contingent on the help given by the teachers. Unfortunately the students knew and said that that help was not forthcoming so perhaps their decision to demonstrate learned helplessness (Dweck, 1965, 1975).

In reality, for some of the JSS students in the school under review, the magnitude of the effort needed to be expended would demand a life-time make-over and much dedication, willingness and commitment to learn from equally committed and qualified teachers. The students were teenagers who in order to address their literacy concerns needed to go back to learning phonics and phonemic awareness and other rudimentary requirements needed to read and write proficiently. Above all, they needed the assistance of qualified, caring and concerned teachers who will operate in an environment conducive to learning.

In the literature, Freize and Synder (1980), Nicholls (1978) and others identified that as early as the age of 9, individual students begin to make the distinctions between effort and ability and from then on ability attributions become increasingly important in assessing one's academic outcomes.

Therefore, the students' significant attributions to lack of ability and their low perceptions of their grade levels that they attain become more entrenched overtime, more subject specific and more difficult to explain on each successive occasion of failure (Marsh, 1984). After a while the students automatically associate their failure with their lack of ability and they give up hope of attaining a successful masterly performance outcome. This may have been the position adopted by the JSS students who operated in situations of persistent failure.

Based on their perceptions the students have therefore ascribed an attributional pattern that is INTERNAL and ego-defensive. Such a pattern should indicate that the students were willing to take responsibility for their performance outcomes, and that their self-esteem levels were impaired and might be seriously affected and they should display evidence of learned helplessness (Valas, 2001). Just as powerful was the fact that, the students also stated that they were not willing to accept the total responsibility for their lack of success and/or failure. They demonstrated this position when they significantly ascribed causality to the difficulty of the task, English for their failure. Such divided responses had serious implications for the researcher and for the students. It seemed to suggest that these students were unwilling and undecided as to whether they should accept totally the responsibility for their predicament, in spite of their own admission, that they needed to place more effort into their studies, and in spite of their difficulties with the subject, English.

## **DIMENSION OF STABILITY**

The students' admission that the stable factors of the teacher and the difficult task have significantly impacted on their performance indicate an EXTERNAL attribution pattern which is influenced by the dimension of STABILITY. Thus the students have confirmed ego-defensive postures in their situation of failure.

Standard English is the official language, but, the students are creole English speakers, whose use of the dialect has been engrained since their infancy and in their assimilation of the language. They therefore, experienced difficulty with the language especially in the critical areas of Spelling and Comprehension (Galloway, 1996). With their added difficulty with literacy, they were ill-prepared to cope with the demands of the present task, the 14+ English Examination. They needed additional assistance to help them to alleviate that difficulty.

However, by their making ascriptions to the need to expend more effort, the students have also made attributions to the INTERNAL factors. Attributions to effort expended are also used as indicators to determine other psychological and motivational factors such as the students' hampered self-esteem levels. More importantly, their response to the factor effort has further signalled the students' response to the dimension of STABILITY.

## **DIMENSION OF INTENTIONALITY**

The notion of INTENTIONALITY introduced by (Craig-Janes, 1999) and accepted as a causal dimension recognised all of the afore-mentioned



attributional factors, but especially focused on effort expended to determine its attribution patterns.

The researcher was interested in establishing the corresponding link between the students' effort expended and their resultant poor performance and the teachers' expectations about the students' capacity for success. She noted that the teachers' expectations were directly related to their levels of interactions and the teaching strategies and techniques used to assist the students to attain mastery. Perhaps it can be conclusively argued that, the students' double weighting of their lack of effort expended may have been contingent on and/or was an indication that the teachers' intentionally low expectations about their academic attainment may have resulted in their low achievement and performance levels.

Craig-Janes (1999) concluded that it was critical to make the connection between the quality of standards demanded of the education system and the teachers' levels of expectations which invariably impacted on the students' effort expended to attain mastery. Thus her notion of INTENTIONALITY when fully explored can be used as a feasible dimension to explain the situation of the JSS students.

## **CONCLUSION**

The students by making their significant attributions to the factors of their inability, which was indicated by their perceptions of their grades received, and

to their need to expend more effort have made attributions to the INTERNAL factors which negatively impacted the dimensions of LOCUS, CONTROLLABILITY, STABILITY as well as INTENTIONALITY. In particular, attributions to effort expended were also used as indicators to determine other psychological and motivational factors such as the students' hampered self-esteem levels. However, the students appeared to have attempted to mask their lowered self-worth through their displays of deviance and class breaking in response to their teachers' lack of expectation.

However by expressing their need to expend more effort, time and energy on their studies, the students have conformed to Weiner's concepts that the LOCUS of CONTROL and even the STABILITY are their responsibility. In addition, by their response they have also implied that with help they can gain CONTROL over their academic achievement outcomes. Thus, the fact that their attribution to effort was so significant and corroborated with their teachers' opinions is an indication that the students were willing to work harder and with remedial help they could succeed. But who would help them? They have already indicated that their teachers were unwilling to help and some of their parents were incapable of helping. To whom should they turn? To their peers? They had already expressed to them strong feelings of affiliation but there was no commensurate academic improvement. At their new secondary school they recognised the folly of such dependence on their peers and were seeking further involvement with their studies.

However, for those who significantly attributed to the STABILITY factor of

task difficulty when combined with inability which invariably reinforced the former, under these circumstances, the prospects for change in the future looked bleak. In reality this is the formidable task that faced the exceptionally weak students whose performance levels were extremely low and whose expectations of getting help from their teachers for their future academic success were almost non-existent.

Thus, using Weiner's Dimensional framework and incorporating the notion of INTENTIONALITY, based on their causal attribution patterns which emanated, the students appeared to be unique. They have said that they needed help and were willing to expend more effort to attain success. They said that their teachers' effects and expectations impacted negatively on their performance. Yet the students admitted their inability and significantly declared that the task of 14+ English was too difficult. By so doing they defended their egos and their lowered self-worth and attempted also to enhance their positions and their affected self-esteem levels.

Even though 162 students ascribed to luck, it was not considered a significant variable for their successes and failure.

Table 16 overleaf, represents the students' causal attribution patterns based on Weiner's Dimensional Framework of Locus, Controllability and Stability plus Craig-Janes' notion of Intentionality.

**TABLE 16: THE JSS STUDENTS' ACTUAL CAUSAL ATTRIBUTION PATTERNS**

<b>DIMENSIONS</b>	<b>DESCRIPTIONS</b>	<b>FACTORS AFFECTED</b>	<b>REACTIONS</b>
<b>LOCUS</b>	INTERNAL	<i>ABILITY, EFFORT</i>	LOWERED SELF-ESTEEM
	EXTERNAL	<i>TASK DIFFICULTY, TEACHER EFFECT</i>	ACCEPT NO RESPONSIBILITY
<b>CONTROLLABILITY</b>	EXERT MUCH INFLUENCE	<i>EFFORT</i>	ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT POSSIBLE
	EXERT NO INFLUENCE	<i>ABILITY, LUCK TASK DIFFICULTY TEACHER EFFECT</i>	HELPLESSNESS FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS
<b>STABILITY</b>	STABLE FACTOR	<i>ABILITY, TASK DIFFICULTY TEACHER EXPECTATION</i>	NO FUTURE EXPECTATION FOR SUCCESS
	UNSTABLE FACTORS	<i>EFFORT,</i>	WILL SUCCEED WITH REMEDIAL HELP
<b>INTENTIONALITY</b>	UNSTABLE FACTOR	<i>EFFORT</i>	WILL SUCCEED WITH INCREASED TEACHER EXPECTATION

That the students have indicated that they have conformed to some extent to the traditional manner of responding to the Causal Attribution theory must be noted. Every combination of factors provided insight into the psychological forces that were at work. These interactions also helped to elucidate and interpret the rationale behind the students' choices, responses and reactions. But the students also proved that they were quite unique. On one hand they were prepared to express significantly that they were willing to accept the responsibility for their poor academic performance. They also stated that they

were desirous of exercising control over their cognitive deficiencies and they were not prepared to operate permanently in a negative stable situation of persistent failure.

However, the dimensions of locus, stability and control were operative in a contrary manner when the students said that their ability, their perceptions of their grades received, and their effort expended, the teacher effects and/or expectations and the task difficulty were all responsible for their existing failure situation. Their attributions to ability indicated their acceptance of responsibility but they could not control and change their academic situation because of the difficulty of the task and their levels of literacy. However, the students expressed hope for possibilities of their future success when they made attributions to the unstable factors of effort, which they awarded double levels of significance. That type of double-take ascriptions is unique, significant and not in sync with many recorded outcomes.

As stated before, according to Bar-Tal *et al* (1981), the expected, acceptable, consistent norm of ascriptions in situations of success was that the high achievers' causal attribution patterns would tend to be ego-enhancing. They would indicate an internalisation of responsibility, a direct utilization of control factors over which they have much influence, and credit would be given to their ability. Conversely, in situations of failure the low achiever would tend to externalise the responsibility. Lack of control and stability would be most operative. The students have claimed that they failed because the task was too

difficult or the teacher did not explain properly or had low expectations about their academic future (stability) or they did not apply themselves sufficiently (control) or their inability (locus). By so doing, they have set the platform to arrive at the resultant causal attribution patterns of being ego-defensive. Their self-esteem levels ought to be significantly lowered and might be so reduced that it might lead such individuals to become totally frustrated, deviant and completely withdrawn from attempting to attain success, as some students have demonstrated.

Covington and Omelich (1985) identified that dependent on the students' more dominant orientations towards the interpretation of their failure as being either ability-linked or effort-linked, the low achievers' causal attribution patterns tended to be heavily skewed towards whichever component had the greatest influence. However, for most low achievers it was crucial to avoid identifying with any degree of certainty, that lack of ability was a very important criterion. But, these junior secondary school students have both externalised and internalised their responsibilities, in the locus, control and stability dimensions. Therefore in their patterns of attribution they tended to display both ego-enhancing and ego-defensive tendencies. They therefore both avoided and approached their failure situation head on. This type of reaction should result in lowered self-esteem or overt learned helplessness. However, for too many of them, they may continue to operate oblivious of the serious dilemma in which they exist and still remain optimistic.

# CHAPTER XI

## ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

*John was always breaking class  
He ran around the school very fast  
John was only in FORM ONE  
So all he wanted to do was to have fun*

.....

*While playing football he got a serious injury  
And he could not get a job to support his family.  
The job he was so sure he would get  
Years pass and he still hasn't gotten it yet  
He ended up living a life of crime*

ALL BECAUSE HE THOUGHT HE HAD TIME  
(Teacher PM Shift)

That poem was written by a young male teacher who is presently teaching at the junior secondary school under review and published in the school's Special Edition magazine, in celebration of the school's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary [Appendix iv].

The poem expresses very aptly the teachers' expectations and their sentiments of rejection and hopelessness about the students' academic achievement and future success in life. The poem serves to confirm that the teachers have attempted to ostracise and vindicate themselves from the direct causation and responsibility for the students' lack of academic achievement. The teachers have attempted to attribute all the responsibility, accountability and blame on the folly of the students' actions rather than on their lack of interaction and engagement, on their teaching styles, and on their failure to give help, motivation and advice to the students even from their initial entry into the school.

However, based on my observation, interviews, records of the teachers' interactions and their responses to the Teacher Expectation Questionnaire

[Appendix ii] and on the students' perceptions, the evidence has indicated differently and this chapter seeks to determine and analyse this.

This chapter therefore proposes to study critically the teachers' expectations about the students' academic achievement. This analysis will attempt to unravel and give explanations for some of the direct causation and the negative impact that the teachers' lack of expectations, engagement and interaction had on the lives and academic achievement of the Form Three JSS students under review, under the captions of -

- students were difficult to teach;
- teachers' concern and willingness to help the students;
- teachers' expectations versus students' causal attributions;
- teachers' expectations for the students and
- students' future involvement in criminal activity.

## STUDENTS WERE DIFFICULT TO TEACH

The teachers were unanimous in their assessment that the students were difficult to teach even though the frequency and intensity of difficulty differed. The teachers' stated perceptions and reasons for the difficulty were divided into categories which included the students' demands on the teachers to motivate them to learn and be more dedicated to the task of teaching them. But who is charged with the responsibility to motivate the students? Others identified the students' lack of ability, their indiscipline and their low self-esteem. Still others blamed the parents and the society.



The findings also revealed that many of the teachers were young and untrained. Some 30% of the teachers were under 30 years old and some had less than five years teaching experience. More importantly, all the eight teachers of the English Department were females and 50% of them fell into the category of young and unqualified, with less than five years experience. But all the older teachers also indicated that the students were difficult to teach and they agreed that the teachers were unable to handle the students because of lack of preparation and because of their inability to motivate them to learn. The older teachers never gave much support and advice to the younger teachers. Instead, based on my observations, what the older teachers accomplished was to indoctrinate the young teachers into the existing prevailing school culture which was antagonism towards Administration, an unwillingness to teach practicals and a determination to remain cloistered in their home rooms.

The main whole school teacher interaction with the students occurred when the teachers operating under their upper social class teacher schema used long sessions at the Assembly and early Monday morning periods to insist on the external superficial checks on the students' wearing of proper uniforms (Becker, 1952 and Mac Intyre et al, 1996). But the involvement of the whole staff taking the responsibility of nurturing and fostering the students' academic achievement was never put in place even on a partial or superficial level for these Form Three students. Yet, the whole school external acts of teacher engagements could be so potent that it was important to identify how they were formed and organised, and the criteria and framework that the teachers used to determine their expectations and perceptions.

Surprisingly but very sadly, the teachers have operated in sync with the literature (Mac Intyre et al, 1996), where most of their perceptual frames of reference came from their own social background and their own individual view of the world. Thus, at the school under review, the teachers' own peculiarities and idiosyncrasies when compared and coupled with the existing or non-existing social fabric, administrative and school cultural framework have moulded them to put certain issues on the front burner of their repertoire of items and these painted a truly sad and depressing picture for the junior secondary school students. Thus checking on and insisting that students were always perfectly dressed in the prescribed uniform without the slightest variation became the main educational focus. At the end of the exercise some of the students were publicly embarrassed, reprimanded, threatened with suspension from school and even sent home because their expensive sneakers may have stripes or a *nike tick/symbol*.

No consideration was given to the fact that the sneakers may have been gifts from parents or relatives who lived abroad and who might have experienced difficulty in obtaining an all black or all white pair of shoes for school. No thought was spared for the feelings of students. Such feelings of shame and anxiety which the students experienced as they hanged around hiding in corners or 'liming' outside the school gates totally embarrassed for wearing the only shoes they might have owned or which might have been a well-appreciated gift from relatives abroad. Once they were put out the gates, no interest was shown in whether the students went directly to their homes, or got themselves into trouble or even got hurt (which actually happened) or did the teachers care that engagement time in positive academic work was being lost.

Thus, the teachers perceived, too often taken-for-granted, accepted schemas were used to determine the students' levels of discipline or indiscipline which were all contingent on the culture and type of the school coupled with the teachers' own idiosyncrasies and sense of relevance. These schemas and activities provided the teachers with a powerfully large framework of operation and focus, which pleased the parents and school supervisors and made them, the teachers, appear interested in the students because they focused on the students' discipline, when, in fact it was a charade in which much valuable time for positive in class and academic engagement was lost.

This charade positively affirmed the teachers' expectations which were not focused on the students' academic achievement but merely on maintaining their status-quo as they unwittingly perpetuated the colonial elitist traditions of education, keeping students submissive, quiet and polite. The teachers, especially that older 41% of the staff were the product of an elitist type traditional education and over the years those with long attachment to the school have cemented the impression and established their fame and frame of reference as strict disciplinarians to be feared. But the evidence has shown that those were some of the very teachers who taught warmed over lessons, did no practical and were always in conflict with the students because they were unable to motivate and keep their attention and interest in class. Their modus operandi remained in tact keeping with the original colonial intent of education, which was to make the masses barely literate and academically functional and to propagate continued dependence on the educators who will continue 'the relation of domination and exploitation', called schooling (Apple, 1996).

Historically such teachers' behaviours have been analysed as the ill-effects of their middle-class orientation to schooling. Hence, those teachers' experienced an inability to understand and cope with the twenty first century students who operated at such low academic levels. They were unable to find creative means to move them forward. They therefore, taught the students in the same manner in which they were taught. They were unable to recognise and accept that with their assistance and the appropriate creative strategies those students could perform academically and be motivated to move forward and master the subject, English, as they demonstrated that they had started to do at their new school.

Furthermore, when assessed by the criteria enunciated by Becker (1952) these teachers also operated in schemas that functioned in directly opposing pairs, such as desirable and undesirable, or happy and unhappy and as such, for many of the teachers the criteria that they used in arriving at their perceptions of the students were oftentimes based on the students' flexibility, dependability, discipline, maintenance of school image, and fear and/or respect for them as the symbols of authority. However, Becker (1952) and Goodacre (1968) showed when these schemas were in operation the teachers' expectations differed and were not focussed on students' mastery. Instead, these teachers developed different taken-for-granted attitudes and perceptions of students which were determined according to the students' and their parents' social class. These included whether the students lived in upper-class areas and houses, and other insignificant variables, such as, the students' conversations and their class 'news' or 'stories' that they related, or their clothing and other belongings and especially the teachers' knowledge of their siblings and parents.

But all the JSS students in the school under review were not only perceived as belonging to but they came from the lower, poorer class stratum and the forgotten country and coastline areas of Erina, Rancho Quemado and Palo Sico. Others came from the two small nearby country towns as the geographic locations of the students revealed. Thus the students were from the onset in a disadvantageous position with the teachers (Goodacre, 1968). In contrast, in the main the teachers and especially all the teachers of English came from outside all these areas and with middle and upper class orientations. As a consequence, the teachers were the repository of the cultural capital and were instinctively more than likely to continue their reliance on an upper class teacher mentality which tended to cast aspersions on practical subjects, and be distant and uncaring to those who functioned outside of their realm.

These attitudes not only provided the platform for continued disparities but were not in sync with the framers' conceptualization of what the JSS system had intended to eradicate. The students must be exposed to an equal share of academics and practicals to equip them to move on to function successfully at level two of their subject academic achievement and/or on to the Pre-technician and Craft areas. Instead the teachers claimed that the students were too difficult to teach and on most occasions they were unwilling to find positive strategies and solutions to help themselves and the students to change. Thus, in their scenario, the teachers' main solution was to put the difficult students which in some cases might be an entire class outside of the classroom and by so doing continue to marginalise them.

A plausible reason for the teachers' perpetuation of their dominance and marginalisation of the students is because the teachers were the owners of the classrooms. As a result, I have likened the teachers' behaviour and attitudes to that similar to the colonial plantation owners who wielded power and domination over the masses and controlled them with the whip. It was only in the year 2000, the final year of these students sojourn at the school that corporal punishment was outlawed. The teachers protested vehemently because they had lost their most powerful and potent piece of apparatus and symbol of authority over the students.

That apart, it was only when the teachers were present, in some cases very infrequently, or when they desired that the students should be allowed to enter and sit in their classroom because their uniforms were in order, that some students received any teacher engagement. However, at the slightest infraction, especially for incomplete home work or any sign of disrespect, mainly 'talking-back' to the teacher, putting the hands akimbo or making a sucking sound through the mouth and between the teeth, *a steups*, the students were put out of the class again, sometimes permanently. These demonstrations of teacher expectation which were based on class, caste and economic standings were very critical and have produced low teachers' expectations which impacted extremely negatively on the academic performance of the students at the JSS level.

In addition, according to Hallworth (1962) teachers' perceptions also differed based on the individual teachers and their concept of the students' maturity,

especially in the areas of extraversion, reliability and conscientiousness which can become not only a '*traumatic proposition*' but also a very confusing one (Feather, 1963, 1966). The students had to select in which teachers' classes they felt accommodated, according to the level of respect and conscientiousness that was meted out to them. This, in turn dictated the students' behaviour and levels of performance which tended to appreciate in those classes. Herein, is more than evidence of the direct causation of the teachers' expectations on the students' performance, as demonstrated by Kenwin and others who selected, attended and performed well in those teachers' classes which provided them with those positive vibrations. Therefore, that explains why on some occasions the impact of the teachers' differences in approach and the individual teacher expectations tended to be more diverse and unpredictable.

More than that, those JSS teachers not only operated within schemas which prohibited them from having a different view of the students, but their visions of the students were further clouded by the stigmas attached to the type of school. According to Hallworth (1962), some areas that caused teachers to hone low levels of expectation for their students' academic achievement were the types of students and the types of schools that these students attended, whether traditional grammar or junior secondary (Pidgeon, 1970). Burstall (1970) aptly concluded that the students with the lowest scores and who invariably had teachers with unfavourable attitudes whose teaching styles were pedestrian and apathetic tended to come from the junior secondary type schools. The JSS teachers highlighted and confirmed Burstall's findings with their demonstrated agreement of those negative variables in their own perceptions. Ironically, Burstall also

pointed out that the said students when placed in a different, traditional school environment excelled and performed better than their peers whom they left behind.

Coincidentally, the performance of the students who believed that their teachers lacked interest in their classes was directly related to those students' perception of their lack of academic ability. Historically, the public sentiment of the JSS system is that it is the repository of those students who cannot excel academically. The parents of the more academically inclined students, and especially the father of the most brilliant female student, Keisha, suffered internally from living with the burden and pain that their children were wrongly placed and unfairly treated by the system which they constantly strove to exit, leaving its stigma behind. Perhaps that psychological pressure and feelings of anxiety, hurt and shame provided one of the reasons for Keisha's reserved nature and lack of involvement. Shame and anxiety are two of the main motivational and psychological ill-effects to an individual's feelings of self-worth (Atkinson et al, 1953 and Crandall, 1963).

Historically, the parents, teachers, the church and other stakeholders objected to the original intention of the JSS system, denigrated the process and placed such negative baggage on the plan that soon it became the general perception that the system was not workable. Afterwards the teachers in the system tended to blame the students in the system for the perpetuation of the poor image of the school because of the students' behaviour and lack of discipline. However, I maintain that the teachers and the JSS education system are equally as culpable for the



students' tendency to in-school indiscipline which to a large extent is structural and directly hinged to the migratory, nomadic existence of the students' life at the school. Can anyone imagine what it feels like to be in school on time, in proper uniform, willing to work yet forced to remain outside of class all day just walking around with one's bag of books on one's back? The original lockers provided were no longer functional and they did not even exist anymore.

As a young and new Vice Principal in the system, I agreed with the then Principal, whom incidentally the older teachers did not like, to change the system and to give the students home rooms and have the teachers walk from class to class as is the practice in the traditional grammar typed schools. The teachers objected and claimed that the school's furniture would be destroyed and the students would put graffiti on the walls. However, if the teachers were honest and well-intentioned towards the students they would have later noticed that the students were more settled, their self-esteem levels were higher as they owned and decorated their classrooms. Additionally and more significantly their performance improved. In their free periods it was easier for Administration to exercise greater supervision and control over the students.

The only problem that really occurred was that instead of the same classroom being owned and shared by only the two different teachers from each shift, the classrooms were now fully occupied by the two different schools/shifts of students in addition to the different teachers who teach the various subjects. As a result, the time allotted for cleaning the classroom between the shifts when one set of students exited and the other entered became stressful when cleaners were

absent. Besides that, the Form teachers and students of both shifts of classes needed to collaborate and agree on areas for the placement of charts and posters and such like to avoid bickering.

In the main the conversion was productive but those who preferred the old system were still complaining and eventually had their way when I later demitted the system for a couple years. It is therefore my view that the structural nature of the shift system itself needed to be handled by teachers and administrators who are prepared to adopt a more aggressive and pro-active approach to study the fault lines and put in place remedies that will enhance the students' chances for academic achievement. That was not accomplished. The teachers had their way again. Complacency set in and the thrust for students' academic achievement was aborted. Without manageable supervision, the school was back to chaos, with many students outside of class and their Pavlov-type conditioned responses to the bell highly operative. The JSS students under review were not expected to succeed. What was also interesting was that the few footballers and other students who succeeded in demitting the system to go to the traditional schools for any reason tended to succeed and excel whilst those whom they left behind had to wait until graduation at Form Three to get their release, as demonstrated by Kanand and Kurtis.

## **TEACHERS' CONCERN AND WILLINGNESS TO HELP STUDENTS**

The notion that people react to each other through symbols and words as suggested by Nash (1973) and other symbolic interactionists becomes very

significant when analysing the entire issue of teacher expectation at the junior secondary school under review. Teacher expectations and teacher perceptions were very critical to the interactions, engagements and the relationships which exist in the classroom where there was a great deal of inter-relation between the opinions, attitudes, feelings and actions between teachers and pupils. These perceptions impacted on classroom organisation, classroom behaviours and on classroom patterns of interaction. Therefore, for classroom teaching to be successful as evidenced by students' academic achievement, it was necessary that these relationships were congenial and workable. The accomplishment of workable interactions depended to a large extent on the relationships which were developed between the teacher and the students; the students and the students, the teacher and administration, the teacher and the parent and the school/teacher and the community.

These relationships and perceptions are really an 'active process' of taking notice of the taken-for-granted. That is, how each became sensitised to each other's reactions to any subjectively meaningful phenomena, which although already existing was only noticed whenever one attempted to give meaning to any action (Nash, 1973). However, in the final analysis the relationships and interactions are concerned about the SELF which is engrained from infancy and determines the person's unconscious generalised belief and self-image. Whatever a person believes about himself is important and will form part of his/her motivational structure. This notion about the SELF impacted very heavily on how the teachers firstly saw themselves and then how they viewed the students. These two perceptions determined the inter-relationships and decided on which outcome severely affected the other. Thus,

Kenwin, in some teachers' classes behaved as one person and as another in classes where he was loved and treated with respect. Thus the teacher who assessed that student as difficult should question his/her own attitude towards the student and the degree of concern, help and meaningful involvement in the work that that teacher provided

The teachers' perception of themselves in their dominant roles caused them to construe positions of autocracy and uncaring and so alienated students from them. As a result of the alienation the students built up active negative perceptions about themselves which in turn impacted in a negative fashion as lowered self-esteem levels. Researches on self-esteem confirmed in their studies that when measured the self-esteem levels of JSS students were low. They concluded that the students entered the system with high levels of self-esteem and expectation but by the time they were ready to exit the system they tended to leave school with lowered self-esteem. Even though, the self-esteem levels of these Form Three students were not scientifically measured, especially in the cases of Kimfa and Kanand their later expressed self-confidence might have been indicative of the significant differences in their deviant behaviour at their new schools, when compared to those displayed at the JSS, where their actions had been wrongly interpreted as indiscipline and laziness. In fact, these students may have been operating at the JSS with lowered self-esteem. The question is what made the difference? Perhaps, the teachers. The evidence seemed to confirm that the students were attracted to greater desires for affiliation and popularity rather than being prepared to work as independents, as demonstrated by Kimfa and her

friends, or even Kenwin who in areas of the academics were so reticent as compared to his performance on the athletic track.

If social interaction exists when a person acts towards another with the expectation that the other will listen and respond, then that interaction is deemed successful, whenever each person correctly perceives the other's expectations and motivational context for taking an action. Even though, the students stated that they were rejected and alienated by the teachers as evidenced by minimal or in some cases no interaction with them. It is regrettable, that the teachers' interpretation and response to the students' reactions to their perceived behaviours was withholding of engagement, considering the students as being rude and difficult to teach and blaming the students and the system for all their disappointments and inabilities to cope with the task.

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The teachers and the students admitted that the task of becoming proficient in Standard English Language was difficult and had a double-edged reality (Hodge, 1997). However, in spite of over 10 years of exposure to school, to teachers and Standard English, the students' foundational developmental language usage was deficient as evidenced by many of the students' inability to read or write. Yet, the big unanswered question was, whom do you blame? The teachers always blame the parents, whom they identified as single, young parents who were irresponsible and unschooled in the art of parenting. If the teachers' descriptions of the parents were true, then to some extent the parents could be exonerated because they might have inherited these attitudes and behaviours from generations of adults who have perpetuated their modus of operating. Therefore,

to whom should the students turn? These students had no choice but to seek help from the only remaining institutions that were positioned to help them, the school and perhaps the church. But if the educators in the system rejected, alienated and found the students too difficult and did not reach out and seek to help them, then it was not the system but the educators who failed the students by their lack of expectations and concern for them. The educators were the ones who were empowered to assess the students' needs and to apply suitable, relevant strategies to help those students succeed.

### **TEACHER EXPECTATION vs STUDENT CAUSAL ATTRIBUTION**

The students indicated in their causal attributions that the effect of the teacher was significant and in their statements said that interactions with the teacher were either non-existent or negligible. This endorsement should signal the importance and criticality of the relationship between them. The patterns of relationships once formed tended to be also long-lasting and could produce both negative and positive reactions and responses contingent on the students' generalised beliefs about themselves especially in the academic and psychological. Thus, in situations of persistent failure and in perceived alienation and rejection the negative effects were often manifested as lowered self-esteem, learned helplessness, self-fulfilling prophecies, failure to attain mastery and other motivational factors, and would tend to be instrumental and operational in this teacher - student relationship.

But contingent on the students' causal attribution patterns to stable, uncontrollable factors of lack of ability, teacher effect and task difficult was it

that the students undeniably tended to indicate that their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth must be impaired? Coupled with their societal and domestic pressures which could not be resolved at home and were often brought to the school to be resolved, as in the case of Kurtis and his father, the students might have indicated unnoticed the existence of their lowered self-esteem and need for help. The fallout, learned helplessness and lack of belief in themselves mirrored what the significant others said and thought about them. In other words, they had fallen prey to self-fulfilling prophecies or had succumbed totally to the denigrating 'power of the tongue'. Much has been said about the ethical virtues of such a concept (Craig-Janes 1999), but the evidence strongly suggested that once the teachers' expectations, either positive or negative were perceived, the students tended to reciprocate their responses in tandem with the expectations sent. They invariably lived up or attempted to live up to the expectations expressed and the standards anticipated. Therefore, the teachers' expectations might serve as reinforcement of a learned attitude that one could or could not complete the task.

Kolb and Jussim (1994) in refining the notion explained that self-fulfilling prophecies occurred when teachers induced students to perform at levels which were consistent with their erroneous expectations of them. Anderson *et al* (1991) had previously pointed out that the erroneous expectation did not always have to be negative. For instance, if teachers led children to believe that they were brilliant and they created an atmosphere for them to succeed, then, those teachers' expectations would be fulfilled. The operative suggestion was not just

the expectation *per se* but how the future interactions and engagements were set up to ensure that what was expected came through. In other words, what were operative were how the expectations were communicated and the differential treatment given to endorse the expectation so that the students were influenced to react and behave in a certain manner to cause the expectation to become a reality (Weinstein, 1995).

The literature revealed that teachers tended to display varying levels of expectations and positive attitudes towards students dependent on their ability levels, and these were exposed to greater levels of expectation than those who demonstrated lower levels of academic performance. Thus teachers tended to support and pet more those students whom they considered as bloomers, like **Keisha**. The teachers showed more interest in their performance and used greater motivational techniques and strategies to enhance their learning. In response, these students reacted favourably to the teachers by living up to their expectations. They made rapid and significant progress and strides in their performance. This type of transactional interactive relationship leads to teacher-student reinforcement of the correct attitude and behaviour which results in students' increased motivation to learn and to develop greater levels of self-concept. But this effect functions differently for different persons. Those who performed excellently were outnumbered and were in some cases, like Keisha, also inhibited and too shy to display their own ability levels. So the real bloomers did not shine. These students in their causal attributions responses indicated that those students who had the potential to perform well were more significantly affected by the teachers' lack of expectation.



Taking the issue to another level Kolb (1994) noted the existence of a perceptual bias which suggested that the expectations of the teacher affected the evaluation that the teachers make of the students' performance outcomes. This perceptual bias is akin to some attribution theorists' views of the language discourses used by teachers that affect the daily exchanges in the classroom. In addition, closely aligned to the perceptual bias is the sustaining bias. Here teachers' expectations of the student outcome were so fixed that the teacher expected the student to maintain continuously previously displayed methods of behaving or of performing. According to Saracho (1991) and Anderson *et al* (1991) the teachers expected the students' behaviour to be static or remain unchanged always..

Kurtz and Schneider (1990) noted that complementary with the expectancy theory teachers can influence students' cognitive development through the transmission of perceived expectations that operate in conjunction with the students' transmitted attributions for their achievement. As a result, students who attributed failure to their lack of ability and were convinced that they were functioning in an uncontrollable, stable situation and on whom the teacher did not call to perform, but, instead put them out of the class; in such a scenario the teachers' actions communicated to the students that the teachers' expectations about their success was low because of their inability and as a consequence they were meted out such poor attention. To some extent this was the experience of the JSS students.

Craig-Janes (1999) insists that the new causal attribution patterns of

INTENTIONALITY become operative when poor student performance is equated to poor teaching strategies which result because of lack of teacher expectation. Tollefson (1988) concluded that the cycle of frustration and reactions would continue. Even in a situation where the students' attributions indicated their need to expend more effort, yet the teachers were unwilling to help because their sustained expectancy bias of the students was such that they were not interested or concerned about their work, then those students may become angry, hostile, then withdrawn and totally frustrated. In such classroom settings, the teachers would not assist the whole class of students to think positively and critically and will also not assist the students in their desire to learn and study. Such behaviour on the part of teachers was contingent on their expectations based on their perception of the students' performance.

### **TEACHERS' FUTURE EXPECTATIONS FOR THE STUDENTS**

In the junior secondary school under review, teacher expectations, classrooms interactions and self-perceptions were highly important and relevant to the students' well-being and future successful academic performance. It was therefore mandatory that a commonality of agreed norms of behaviour be put in place, as misconstrued responses could result in long lasting, indelible reactions to things past, present and future. According to Shultz (1977), whenever there is a reaction, the other person attempts to determine motive, either 'in order to' or 'because of' and these become the significant contributor to understanding the reason for the action, even in the most common matters.

Sad but true, based on teacher expectations, interaction and perceptions, 64.5% of the teachers have indicated low expectations for students' academic

performance in the future. In fact, that 64.5% have indicated that the students' future would end in the hands of the law due to some criminal activity. The teachers have therefore identified and indicated the hopelessness of the existence of many of the students' academic and social existence, yet they continued to ignore the signals, reject the students and constantly blame others.

Fennema (1990) construed that this type and level of expectancy can be based on a wide range of teachers' preconceived notions and discrepancies of beliefs which are tied to two concepts, stereotyping and labelling. These two are based on students' inherent traits of race/ethnicity, gender, age, appearance, physical disabilities, perceived levels of effort, and socio-economic status (Hall, (1993); Anderson *et al*, (1991) and Gottfredson, (1995).

Both students and teachers have acknowledged the impact of the factors that indicate labelling and stereotyping. The students noted with much concern on the issues of racism and ethnic preferential treatment but the teachers were silent. However, the students perceived and identified racism in the teachers' interaction and sharing of information with a selected few of their same ethnicity to the exclusion of the whole class and especially to the boys of African descent. Troyna (1993), Hargreaves (1996) and Rizvi(1995) noted the existence of overt and covert acts of racism as being institutionalised and also noted that teacher expectations varied along mixed racial groupings, but in the JSS under review there is a racial divide between the children/descendants of the two large racial groupings of Africans and Indians. That the students did not point out any

significant relationships between their attributions and racism was significant because of the erstwhile manner in which racial acts were performed.

## STUDENTS FUTURE INVOLVEMENT IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

That the teachers perceived that the students would become involved in criminal activities could be closely linked to their expectations and perceptions of the students based on their classroom behaviour and social symbolic interactions. Accordingly, Jackson and Lahadernell (1969) noted that teachers' interactions with their students tended to be threefold, *instructional /curriculum /school/work-related task; managerial/directions and rules and prohibitory /disciplinary.*

In the average classroom, instructional interactions, primarily 'talk and chalk' were the most frequently used forms of interaction. However, there was a striking relationship between low teacher expectations and classes in which prohibitory class interaction was high as exists in the junior secondary schools. Unfortunately, this occurrence is invariably higher in classrooms of boys rather than girls. But at the school under review, the teachers have demonstrated that they were not prepared to work with those boys who really needed the intervention in spite of their need for disciplinary controls. Therefore, in keeping with the teachers' tendency to distance themselves from the students, rather than having meaningful and interesting sessions of curriculum delivery and teacher engagement, at the slightest provocation the teachers would bring whole classes of students to the Dean or Principal for them to be disciplined. With this habitual

custom of the teachers taking the students to the 'authority 'to be dealt with; it is not difficult to envisage that they would imagine that when the students got older they would continue to be taken to the relevant authorities for punishment. There was no responsibility or feelings of concern and interest on their part to ensure that an alternative approach to the students' problems could be worked out between the teacher and the student. This was never considered. The student was simply passed on into the hands of the AUTHORITY.

Additionally, the manner in which teachers differentiate their classrooms with separate seating-arrangements for high and low performing students often clearly and invariably demonstrated teacher expectations and favouritism. To this the students tended to respond accordingly with much hostility as was enacted by the group of students who performed the role-play. Good and Brophy (1970) in their study in determining teacher differentiation according to streaming and achievement concluded that the teachers invariably tended to favour the better performing students. These students usually pleased the teachers because to them 'they were less difficult to teach'. According to Gardner (1993) these students tend to learn whether or not teachers used the traditional methods of teaching which focus on the 'verbal linguistic and logical mathematical' intelligences. These students may also adopt more active 'metacognitive strategies' such as reviewing materials not understood, asking questions as they work and making connections between current and past problems, suggested Meece, Blumenfeld and Hoyle (1989).

Such students in terms of the cognitive levels tended to function more in sync

with the teachers' expectations of the students' performance. They seemed to fit into the traditional naturally talented class of high achieving students who at the school under review constituted less than 1% of the Form Three population. The literature has indicated that in situations of persistent failure, even those students whom the teacher may have identified as highly successful achievers may in fact also have motivational problems. These students can often be recognised as those for whom the teachers always note 'can do better' or 'performing below potential'. These students under-estimate their actual levels of performance, set low standards, give up easily and spend less persistent time on any difficult task (Phillip,1984).

The students of this group were not being serviced. The boys appeared to be receiving more interaction than the girls but that type of interaction was always more negative and prohibitory/disciplinary. Hence, Kimfa and her friends appeared to be less noticed in their deviance and class breaking in contrast to Kenwin. Only in classrooms where there was no streaming or overt separation of the high achievers was there less discrimination in teacher expectation between the achievers and those who were not. But, these classes were rare. Perhaps, the practical subject areas would have provided the best opportunity to realise this level of interaction. But what happens in reality is that the JSS teachers did little or no practicals and the students, especially those considered as deviant, disruptive and low achievers experience little or no teacher interaction with the task. That tends to be the normal culture and general level of expectation displayed by all the teachers.

In response the students in the school under review have indicated that the differentiation in the present classroom setting is not based on achievement but on favouritism, ethnicity and race. *Kelly*, speaking on behalf of the students, *noted that the teachers had favourites with whom they shared all information whilst the others remained alienated and rejected by the teachers.* As a consequence, the students had in their response tended to re-define and re-write their main purpose for being in school and their own hidden curriculum which highlighted the affective and the affiliative. Their main missions in school tended to be 'to have fun' and 'make and keep friends' outside of the classroom (Wentzel, 1989, 1991). Hence the majority of the students interviewed concluded that their JSS experience was great fun. Their most effective and pre-dominant sphere of operation was the affective rather than the cognitive domain. But the teachers never capitalised on this *joie de vie* by attempting to teach the students at their level of operation and enjoyment. Hence the students' claims that the classes were boring and not challenging.

The teachers never insisted or expected whole school standards of excellence and mastery which would have encouraged, fostered and enhanced cognitive development. Nevertheless, it was in the students' unsupervised settings where they set their own rules that some of the deviance, divisions and factions in the groups emerged. These groupings could and had on occasions created serious problems in and out of school. It was the teachers who fostered the development and emergence of in school gangs and cliques and started the students on their

road to criminal activities because of their failure to engage the students totally in meaningful, challenging academic and other tasks.

In addition to the teachers' overt expressions of lack of expectations, their comments and attitudes tended to create further feelings of discontent in the students. Silberman (1969) stressed that the effect of teachers' comments, whether given directly or indirectly, held serious implications for the students and their reactions. In spite of the duality of the students' language use of English, the students imputed negative intentions, such as condescending and belittling when teachers spoke to them using the vernacular (Craig, 1971).

Reisman (1970), whilst noting that the 'creole' had positive values and gave genuine spontaneous feelings, argued that the switching of codes had a permanent negative effect on students' desire to learn. Joseph (1996) in her study of teachers' questioning in the secondary schools in Trinidad also pointed out that the teachers' intonations and comments were regarded negatively by the students. In assessing the teachers' comments and their use of language codes, dialect and their interaction with students at another junior secondary school in Trinidad and Tobago, Joseph (1980) noted that the students felt that the teachers were condescending and laughing at them when they switched language codes which in the classroom setting also tended to relate to the cultural and ethnic patterns of socialising (Beganrose and Green, 1963). But not only the switching of the codes is significant but the manner in which teachers speak that may



convert a classroom in Trinidad and Tobago from being a desirable learning environment to being chaotic.

Besides the switches in codes, La Guerre (1974) noted that historically, the two main ethnic groupings of Africans and Indians treated each other differently and with different biases. They have always viewed each other with suspicion when codes are used against each other. As a consequence, teachers of the different races do not use the Standard English or the 'creole' in the same manner, so the students of the same and different ethnic groupings may respond differently to the same switched code. But the implications for this in the classroom are awesome. The teacher who was of the same ethnic grouping with the students could easily alienate or create hostility in students of another ethnicity if each does not understand the other or communicate along the same lines. The horror that can evolve is mind boggling.

## **CONCLUSION**

In spite of all the existing concepts to enhance student performance by internal motivation and self-determination for achievement, the bottom-line is that each individual must eventually forge a different pattern of internalising motivation. But the external environment and the perceptions of the significant other may seriously affect the patterns of internalisation. Therefore, the students' patterns of internalisation of core values, affiliative expressions, self-identification and self-determination bear significant relevance to the individual's internalisation of both his personal and school goals and the interactions and inter-relationships that reinforce them. However, in the classroom setting as existed in the JSS

where the teachers were in control and therefore in a position to help students to forge their identities, they shied away from accepting that responsibility. They preferred to often blame the students' poor performance, their indiscipline, their inability or their low levels of motivation and lack of effort expended. According to Metcalf (1995) the responsibility still always tended to point to the teachers because any action to rectify the negative problems depends heavily on them.

## **PART FOUR**

### **REVISITING THE CURRICULUM**

## CHAPTER XII

### CURRICULUM CONCERNS

#### INTRODUCTION

The present Minister of Education, the Honourable, Senator Hazel Manning has said that the Curriculum and by extension the Curriculum Development Division is the engine room of the education process. This concept of the role of the curriculum in education was espoused by some of the early education theorists as Jean Jacques Rousseau (1762), Froebel (1782-1852) and more recently John Dewey (1859-1952). They were conscious that education was a process of gaining knowledge in the context of a systematic body of principles and ideas which addressed the needs of the society and which assessed the needs of the child. Dewey (1932) also pointed out that education was more than just a function of the Curriculum but it was an orientation to learning through the curriculum.

Although the notion of the curriculum moved from its earlier holistic position to being subject and content specific and therefore more subject specialist in approach, the students at the junior secondary school under review have said on several occasions that in order to develop their love for any subject, especially English, they needed a more meaningful, inter-active curriculum which was full of drama, fun and other activities. Some of the students in the study, Kimfa, Kanand and Kurtis have indicated that at their new school environment the difficult task of English appeared to be more suited to their needs and more relevant to their life and their lived reality. These and other observations should

force us as educators to reassess what has happened with curriculum delivery and curriculum planning especially of English Language in the JSS system.

It is not difficult to realise that based on the conditions under which the JSS under review functioned, that there has to be an urgent and immediate intervention into the delivery of the existing curriculum and collaborative sessions of planning and designing a curriculum which caters to the students' needs. Currently, as a Curriculum Officer in the subject areas of English Language and Visual and Performing Arts with special emphasis on Drama and Dance, it is imperative that I should not only hear the students' voices but respond accordingly. It would be foolhardy not to do so. The question then is, to what extent and how critical should be the response? Also, what are the implications for the future of these and other students as they continue on their pathway of free secondary school education, and remain structurally entrenched in worsening situations of failure rather than moving towards academic excellence.

This chapter hopes to accomplish three major activities, namely-

- To address the issues and challenges of arriving at a new curriculum for the JSS students through the Curriculum Development Division in its present structure and in so doing examine its capacity to effect the necessary changes and/or be changed into a more operative and feasible structure.
- To enhance the teachers' levels of expectations about the JSS students' capacity for mastery and future academic success.

- To present teachers with some appropriate creative strategies and teaching styles that can be adopted.

The foregoing will be discussed under the following captions-

- re-focusing to create a relevant JSS curriculum and a critical-thinking, dynamic Curriculum Development Division -CDD
- resolving the problem of low teacher expectations in the JSS system
- reviewing appropriate teaching styles that can be adopted
- Rationalising a differentiated curriculum in Chapter XIII

### **REFOCUSING TO CREATE A RELEVANT CURRICULUM AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT DIVISION – CDD**

Historically, it was not until the mid-twentieth century that the notion of the Curriculum as distinct subject domains became separated from the broad concept of education which focussed on acquiring and processing knowledge. In order to crystallize the separation, the curriculum became not only top-down but also unrealistic to the students' needs. Ironically, the students were exposed to curriculum subject areas, as Mathematics, English and by 1957 Social Studies but at the teachers' colleges the teachers were trained to use subjects as psychology, philosophy and sociology of education in order to understand the student's human nature. This disparity set the stage for the disconnect between the subjects taught conceptualization of the teachers.

By the 1940's curriculum theorists Tyler (1949/1950) and later Taba (1962) viewed the curriculum as a means to an end. Teachers taught the National

Curriculum which apart from being top-down and specific, also demanded that teachers conformed without question and without changing the stipulated texts because the results of the students were assessed thereby. Such a curriculum was implemented in the JSS system and especially, in the school under review. Goodman (1993 /1994) and Goodson (1994) argued against the imposition of a curriculum that was top down or merely a collection of subjects in silos (Bernstein, 1975, 1990). Instead Quicke (1999) suggested that a meaningful curriculum should be able to equip students for life. As a corollary the school should envision itself as a democratic learning society.

Oliver (1992) posited that the school Curriculum should include and provide all the experiences that the students need for life and they should be exposed to them under the guidance of the school. In other words, the school should therefore be a pro-active, positive, microcosm of the society. He contended that the Curriculum must include courses and subjects that should be so systematically arranged that they should all flow in tandem to suit the students' needs and give them experiences which were both academic and non-academic.

Long before Oliver, John Dewey (1932/1962) noted that it was the office of the school to balance the varied elements in the social environment and to see to it that each individual got an opportunity to escape from the societal group in which he/she was born and be exposed to and come into contact with a broader Curriculum. He proposed a broad-based curriculum which ought to include the practical and technology areas in order to be more diversified and ultimately able to equip the students to become productive citizens. To accomplish this

requires the input from all stakeholders - the Curriculum Officers, teachers, parents and persons who are willing to implement and deliver the curriculum to benefit the students. One of the recent interventions in Trinidad and Tobago to assist the school and its Administration is the newly-established Local School Board, which working in conjunction with the CDD and the school's Administration is expected to run each school effectively with meaningful curricula.

In response to political aspirations and the demand to address the need for monitoring the curriculum, presently, the CDD especially in the English Department is much more peopled than it was thirty years ago when the JSS system started. The Division has been fortified with new and experienced staff in all subject areas. The number of Curriculum Officers for English Language has been increased from one to five. As a consequence, their scope and ability to cope with the problems that exist in the junior secondary schools should be less complex but in reality they are not. There is still no Curriculum Officer specifically assigned to the JSS system and therefore the concerns of the JSS system are neither targeted nor even scheduled to be addressed. Additionally, there has been a massive and totally baffling increase in low literacy levels in most secondary schools. To address that phenomenon requires not only the expertise of the Curriculum Officers but the inputs from parents, teachers at all levels, but especially at the infant/primary levels, members of the communities and other external organisations to ensure according to Deardeen (1981) that the Curriculum is balanced.



Unfortunately there is no Curriculum Officer with the expertise of a Reading Specialist. Therefore, to address the issue of poor reading one of the Curriculum Officers was assigned to implement and monitor the delivery of reading strategies in schools. Through her efforts and that of others, like me, who are interested in curbing the Literacy problem, the CDD has facilitated and conducted several workshops in the techniques of developing reading skills. But these sessions have specifically targeted Remedial Reading teachers and contract workers who have been brought into the education system to address the Literacy problem in the schools. The other four English Curriculum Officers are attached to the secondary schools, primary schools, examinations, the Arts, tertiary levels which include the teacher training colleges and the like. In addition to our core business we cover the breadth and depth of all other educational activities. As a result, the Officers are stretched to full capacity and the task of re-organising the Curriculum for the junior secondary schools *per se* is a mammoth undertaking that has been left unaddressed.

The twenty junior secondary schools located throughout the country were introduced as a unique attempt at the transformation of the secondary school system and a political and governmental desire to stem the ills of exclusion and inaccessibility to secondary school for the masses. Now thirty years later the junior secondary schools and the entire JSS system are outside and excluded from the direct sphere and control of the CDD.

On account of their special nature and structural characteristics the junior secondary schools are the only schools where students sit the 14+ Examination

and which have students on a two-shift system. As a result, the numbers of students that are accommodated at these schools far surpass all those who attend the traditional grammar type schools, and yet these schools are left unsupervised and uncared for even at the highest level of the Ministry of Education. Is this phenomenon intentional or is it structurally inherent that all that concerns the masses must be treated with scant courtesy to ensure the continuation of the system of oppression and marginalization?

### **THE LITERACY CONCERNS IN THE JSS SYSTEM**

In spite of the Ministry's attempt at addressing the critical literacy problem through hosting workshops, without a Specialist, the challenge for the JSS system and especially for the school under review still remains. There are some secondary school students who do not know or cannot even recognise the letters of the alphabet even though they have been in school, at least, since the age of five.

In 2000, the then UNC Government implemented Universal Secondary Education - USE, however, since then thousands of the students who enter secondary school at Form One at the recommended entry age of 11 years are not ready for secondary school. Prior to 2000, students were not allowed to enter the secondary school system until they were academically ready, even as late as 16 years of age. During that period of becoming prepared for secondary school education, the students were schooled at Post Primary centres and studied to earn the recognised 'Primary School Leaving Certificate' through examination on completion of that period of study. This certificate was

accepted by employers for several categories of work. With the influx of all the masses of students into secondary schools without the filter of readiness, the literacy problem became exacerbated, as many of the older student entrants have not attained a reading age of beyond six years. In addition the impetus to become literate and be certified for employment no longer exists with the commensurate public free removal of the Primary school Leaving Certificate.

Historically, even before the implementation of SEA - the Secondary Entrance Assessment Examination, in 1999, the students of the educational district in which the school under review falls, tended to perform badly at the former dreaded secondary school entrance examination, Common Entrance. In spite of their high failure rate, the majority of the students were generally placed. Through some of the students' inherent abilities and the implementation of streaming and other measures some of those students were able to succeed. But within recent times with the introduction of USE the entrance of weak students have quadrupled. One wonders when the problem will end. In some instances, students have been at the junior secondary school for the past three years and are still considered as 'third year Form One students'. They have been operating at varying levels of literacy and are unable to cope with the stereotyped, inflexible methods of teachings. These and other such students tend to operate under a level of hopelessness. They are often "very restless and are engaged in many of the after-school fights and other forms of violence." These are the students who are generally totally excluded from the teachers' engagement even though they are in school everyday.

This problem becomes more acute when it is evaluated by the enunciations of the theory, in which Vygotsky (1978) examines the role of language acquisition in learning. He contends in his social cognitive view that cognition and acquisition of language develop because of social interaction. He noted that cognitive development tends to lag behind language acquisition and the initial learning of language is a dynamic social process in which enriched dialogue between adult and the child fosters the development of higher-order cognitive processes. Thus for Vygotsky, the child's language use represents the child's actual level of cognitive development and the impact of his/her socialization process.

If the social cognitive concept is accurate then it becomes only relevant when one attempts to explain and understand if there is a link between the students' cognitive development and their social problems. Several of the students live in single parents homes in which the father is absent. Only a few students operate and live in an environment in which there is the strong support of both parents living with them harmoniously in the same house. In addition, the students come from poor social class backgrounds. All these factors combined with the teachers' expressed lack of expectations for the students' academic achievement, it is clearly obvious that within the JSS school environment the process of socialization and internalization of the goals of education impacted negatively on the students' academic achievement levels.

This situation of low literacy level becomes more critical for students who are

in their late teens and are still unable to read or write. Within the psyche of these young persons there will be the temptation to mask and/or develop apathy and ease at operating in a situation of persistent failure. Some of these students explained their responses to their unfortunate situations as, “Miss ah coping”. That unexplainable level of dissonance and degrees of restlessness which overpower them, to the extent that, they are unable to understand, express and/or accept the social and psychological dynamics under which they must function can be overwhelming. Dweck & Repucci (1973) noted that children who operate in such situations of persistent failure tend to accept their state and attribute to themselves what is termed the ‘learned helplessness’ syndrome (Valas, 2001).

At the school under review, there were over ten (10) persons who were specially assigned, contracted by the Ministry of Education to perform the duties of remedial teachers. Most of these are ex-teachers, over sixty (60) years old, only one male, retired and then re-hired on contract. There was little evidence that they had been specially trained in remedial teaching strategies or that they had sufficient exposure and skills in understanding and operating with students at that level of illiteracy. Regardless of their previous and/or additional qualifications in remedial teaching techniques, they had been teaching for long periods, two were previously in Administration. They were now faced with students who needed special care, energetic and creative attention together with the appropriate, effective, teaching strategies and a curriculum which ought to

be progressively designed to help the student move forward according to their individual needs.

The literature noted that the long - term effects on teachers who had served several generations of weak students were gross frustration, low morale, teacher burnout syndrome and finally apathy. It was therefore reasonable to understand and empathise with the existing older members of staff and that elderly crop of hopeful remedial teachers at the levels of frustration and feelings of inadequacy that they must have been experiencing. Nevertheless, all of the fore-going including the existence of illiteracy and its negative impact on the students' self-esteem have serious implications for the present and future curriculum planners to devise an appropriate, innovative, creative English and literacy programme with adequate resources and competently skilled staff to ensure its success.

## **THE SIGNIFANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

Ironically the students have recognised the relevance and significance of the subject English. They have noted and rightly assessed the subject as being most important and necessary to their future development. They understand the urgency of being qualified and certified in English and therefore in spite of their limitations they did not plan to take it lightly even though they were intimidated by the subject because of their academic inability. However, over the years many struggled and learned to surmount the difficulties of the task.

At the interviews conducted at their new school, five of the six students in the stratified sample indicated that they were in fact not just 'coping' but actually enjoying the difficult task. They said that the subject, English, remained difficult but what was being taught was more relevant and meaningful and they believed in their ability to succeed. Their sentiments were echoed by the 4 groups of 12 students each who were also interviewed. They said that they were willing to expend more effort. However, they needed help but were afraid to seek help from their past teachers who were previously unwilling to give them automatically the help that they needed.

### **DOUBLE-EDGED REALITY OF THE SUBJECT**

As stated before, the 14+ English Language JSS Leaving Examination is a National Examination with a criterion reference norm established for all JSS Form Three students. The nature and the double-edged reality of the subject that is English becomes more acute when it is coupled with infant acquisition of the non standard, creole dialect which is a derivative of the Standard, English language. This inter-relationship results in serious problems for literacy and becoming proficient in English Language. Both the similarity and the striking differences between the Standard and the indigenous vernacular in structure, spelling and interpretation of meaning present grave difficulties to the 'creole speakers' who can communicate and be understood at any level but whose reading and writing skills remain deficient and cannot be accepted even as the barest minimum standard. It is evident therefore, that success at English Language will pose a major obstacle that low achieving students may be unable to surmount and therein is confirmed the double-edged reality.

English Language is the official language spoken in Trinidad and Tobago, but it is in reality a second language. Thus, whereas Trinidad and Tobago is perceived of as an English Speaking nation, in fact, the use of the vernacular and non- English forms are the dominant modes of communication. Standard English forms are not used in the daily exchanges at all levels. However, the dialects and commonly used expressions differ from region to region, family to family, among the ages and ethnic groupings. What is even more poignant is that the same word may have different meanings and interpretations for the different groupings. In addition, the same expressions may mean absolutely different things to the various groupings and to members of the same group even though there is a basic core of English sounding commonality of expressions enabling each group to understand the other. The local dialect is mutative and for the young it is distinctly influenced by the 'slangs', and expressions of the Americans and the Jamaicans. Thus, the Standard English is a foreign language in Trinidad and Tobago.

The demands of the English Language 14+ Examination paper are many and varied. As stated previously the students have to write an essay/short story or either a rap, dub or poem, rather than only prose. He/she has to respond to questions based on a Comprehension passage and also on a Poem. The students' knowledge of the Grammar of the Language is tested. For the English Literature the students are expected to have read several texts and novels and then respond to questions on the themes, characters or the events. Both sets of marks awarded are totalled to form the composite grade for English.



As an examiner in English and a former Head of several Departments of English, I can testify to the existence of this double-edged relationship with the Standard English, and its adverse effect on many of the students who are either weak readers or non-readers. As a consequence, these students find it difficult to make the adjustments necessary to attain high levels of performance in the skills demanded in the 14+ English Language Examination. But the English Language results are used as a measure of the students' academic ability. Failure therefore, at this subject has serious implications and interpretations. The explanations of teachers and other educators about the students' dilemma and inevitable failure range from lack of motivation, low self-esteem, poor academic foundation, learned helplessness and lack of parental guidance to abject laziness. However, if the students who are lacking in the basic skills of reading, writing and comprehending were not well-prepared for this examination they would experience extreme difficulty in attaining success at this examination. The end result must either be the development of the learned helplessness syndrome, coupled with maladaptive motivational tendencies (Armstrong *et al*, 1995), or the overt expression of gross frustration and/or an open show of lack of interest in the subject.

## **THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CURRICULUM**

The implications and problems for the curriculum exist not because Comprehension is difficult or demanding or that the various components of the task are difficult. Instead there needs to be a systematic approach to curriculum development which is innovative to overcome the inherent threats of language

diversity and still provide avenues to develop the students' weaknesses to become proficient. This would require an over-arching system which provides the necessary scope for creativity, available modern up-to-date books and resources to be put in place to help students come to terms and master every aspect and each required skill of the curriculum.

Accordingly, Dweck (1986) stated several different implications to be noted about how students behave in achievement setting and how their performance outcomes should be assessed and evaluated. Primarily, these were based on the students' responses and the interpretation of their rationale for adopting learning or performance goals (Dweck and Elliot, 1983; Dweck and Leggette, 1988; Lepper, 1988; Nicholls, Cobb, Yackel, Wood, and Wheatley 1990). In Dweck's theoretical analysis, he noted that regardless of the students' high or low ability levels, once the students have determined goals for learning they would always seek challenging tasks that provided opportunities to develop new competencies. They willingly worked along with and accepted their teacher as a resource and guide to their learning rather than see their teachers as merely evaluators.

Active Curriculum planners and developers must facilitate teachers in the preparation of a variety of multi-skilled and different intelligence targeted activities to assist students' interaction with the language at various levels. The teachers must also be trained in the selection of a variety of assessment criteria and modes of evaluation which will be suited to the needs of the various

students. There has been much discussion on the oral mode of assessment of English but to-date it has not yet become a reality.

How noble and laudable! But in the culture of the junior secondary school, with the constant student mobility, teacher absenteeism and tardiness, students' constant flow of distractions and little teacher engagement and interaction how can those individuals be encouraged to succeed? They are not encouraged nor are provisions made for their acceleration. Keisha and her friends had the capacity to do extremely well but in the circumstance they had to settle for *good* rather than excellent.

That apart, the process of planning a new English Curriculum to suit the needs of the students at each junior secondary school is not as simple as it sounds. It requires a profound change in the philosophy and thinking about the purpose of education for these masses of students in their different localities. Each school was deliberately located in poor, uncared for, remote communities and as a result each school has different catchment areas with specific needs. After thirty years of embattlement, failed promises and hope of being merged into the regular academic school system through de-shifting, to plan a new curriculum for the JSS would be challenging. One must take into account the school's climate, culture, ethos and population which is made up of a number of dispirited and diverse individuals who have other intentions and goals as they co-exist within the school environment. According to Doyle (1977), foremost on the list of concerns in such planning should be the knowledge of the

classroom history, the teachers, the students, the administration and environmental context. In other words the intervention of a new curriculum or the direction from a re-constituted Curriculum Division to implement the change cannot be top-down but be situational and school and learner centred.

Modern management theory and practice demand that a SWOT analysis be first made of the environment before attempting to introduce change. Such planning has to be creative, focussed and centred on the vision and mission of each, entire, individual school population. The Administration and staff must not just adopt the standard accepted norms of curriculum planning designs which in the past tended to use and follow the older models devised by Tyler (1950) and /or Taba (1962). Their format for lesson planning followed specific behavioural objectives and the selection of rigid strategies to satisfy set inflexible objectives. Instead, based on an agreed vision and mission of the school by the present school family and together with the planners, the new curriculum should emerge out of the set goals, aspirations and objectives, which those in the system have developed.

The constructivist approach to curriculum development and design purported by von Glaserfeld (1995) is recommended for the emergence of curriculum that can be adapted to suit the needs of both the students and the teachers. It is intended to facilitate learning and assist the learners to change their previous ways of thinking to remedy their specific deficiency. Jonassen (1991) also noted that the constructivist approach to learning is so designed to help the learner to become engaged in meaningful and active problem-solving

experiences which are essential and existent in the real world environment. The teacher does not always need to aid the learning experience but the teacher can create situations in a non-threatening environment which generate experiences to foster knowledge. In addition clear essential learning outcomes will be enshrined and these will be measurable and can be easily implemented.

Therefore; the curriculum that is designed out of the needs and input of the teachers and students ought to be so adapted, because it ought to be learner-friendly, community-oriented and needs-specific. According to Reynolds and Skilbeck (1976) the curriculum should be school-based. Ironically, in theory this is the new proposed approach of the Ministry of Education to school management but it is not yet the practised approach of the CDD to curriculum development. To adapt the school-based strategy in its truest form requires adjustments and changes in the teachers' roles and functions in order to create that change in the students' behaviour which will lead to their increased desire to want to learn and strive for mastery. Therefore, the teachers' approaches, their teaching strategies and philosophies about the students and their need for education must change to affect the students' learning styles. Once this process is set in train and the ultimate goals, teachers' expectations and standards are understood and transmitted then the implementation and the delivery of a meaningful curriculum to effect changes in the teachers' and students' attitudes to learning would be adjusted.

This type of approach cannot be top-down but will certainly be bottom-up as the implementation of the new curriculum is not from the national level alone

but also from the school level. To further enhance the constructivist approach one can use the naturally formed groupings that exist in the school and in the classroom as a medium for teaching and learning. Slavin (1990) is an advocate for group or co-operative learning which he feels that any curriculum should instinctively adopt. It is more effective and socially more beneficial than competition and /or the individualistic approach. To some extent in the initial period this approach can help in curbing the low literacy rates through using the students' positive affiliative bonding tendencies. He therefore developed and proposed the use of small group learning instruction techniques that are collaborative, learner-controlled with rewards, which are based on group achievement.

The validity and best fit of this new curriculum can be evaluated by the use of the *CIPP Model*. *CIPP* refers to the *context, input, process and product evaluation*. This model of evaluation of the curriculum was developed by Daniel Stufflebeam *et al* (1971). Context defines the arena or the environment of the curriculum. The input assesses that the appropriate and available resources will be used to attain the objectives. Process evaluation will be ongoing to detect flaws in the implementation and finally the product has to stand up to the scrutiny of accomplishing changed student and teacher behaviour and satisfying the other essential learning outcomes. These essential learning outcomes in the local setting must include the aesthetic, citizenship and morals. The success of this new curriculum can also be measured through the extent to which the mission statement has been attained.

All these plans sound very utopian. If they were to become a reality those who now function in the system must be prepared to make the paradigm shift and change for the benefit of the students. There is the need for an over-arching system or a participatory and consultative structure which oversees and addresses students' needs and teachers' best practices to encourage the weakest to move on to mastery. Can and will the present CDD assist in the setting up of that structural framework? The task seems insurmountable. When and who is going to start the process and monitor its implementation and the delivery? From where I sit there seems to be a stalemate.

### **THE NEW CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT DIVISION - CDD**

In the light of the prevailing situation, the re-structuring of the dynamic bottom-up student-centred curriculum cannot be left totally to the teachers who are not specialists, nor qualified in the field of remediation. The CDD has to become involved. The present CDD has no specialist in remediation in English or Mathematics. So the first priority is to source such a person or persons as well as to expose the existing officers to programmes and courses on remediation and remedial studies.

It is also necessary and a matter of urgency for the CDD to provide some specific training for all its officers who must be directly involved in making interventions to change the Curriculum and must be assisting in the development of creative assessment strategies. Those so involved should be trained not only in the subject specificity content but also in the psychology and nature of the teachers, the school, and the students. They must also be exposed

to the skills in researching and analysing school climates and cultures to determine appropriate corrective strategies. In other words the staff of the new CDD should be professionals who are versed in the knowledge and skills needed to diagnose effectively and prescribe measures that meet the needs of its clients - the students, the teachers and the administration, both those of the school and the Ministry.

To accomplish that, the staff of the new CDD has to re-enter the school system to participate in its development of an emergent curriculum rather than to remain in its offices and write curricula. The CDD must act as an insider consultant who is needed to work alongside the teachers and administration to provide the professional guidance and structure. Each individual school staff has to develop a vision and a mission for their school with an aim to understand and use their culture and climate for their benefit. The statements of intentions should be arrived at after much whole school involvement and planning to provide the philosophy which will underpin the curriculum that intends to cater for the students' needs.

This approach is so mandatory because what is needed in the education system is not a change in external curricula but really a change in culture, mind-set and in the taken-for-granted ways of teaching and learning. Thus, the new CDD has to become involved and has to re-emphasise a re-construction of society where education and schooling can assume a dynamic role at two levels, in re-shaping the social structure of society and in enhancing the interaction between the teachers and the students to benefit the students' progression to mastery. The



net effect is that Curriculum change must not only be school-based, but must be widened to include the family, the parents, the business-men and the society (Jencks *et al*, 1975).

The process for change must begin in the classroom as Hargreaves (1967) recommended. In order to reverse the ill-effect of teachers' lack of expectation and low engagement and to provide opportunities for student mastery classroom interactions must first be assessed. Thus the Curriculum Officers of the new CDD would not spend thousands of dollars in writing curriculum external to the classroom environments but they must be engaged in critical assessment and research on how schools, especially the JSS schools function. The Curriculum officers must also be actively engaged in reflexive practice. It is mandatory that a dynamic CDD of the twenty-first century develops different schemas and frames for assessing teachers, re-assessing the teachers' syllabuses and schemes of work, monitoring the progress of the students, assessing teacher-student interactions and assisting principals in the decision-making on the school's emergent curricula.

The process that the CDD must adopt to address the difficulties of the curriculum specifically for English has to be more pro-active and relevant. The paradigm shift has to be made from merely inviting teachers to attend workshops which concentrate on subject content relevant to the varied examinations. This practice has resulted in providing legitimate opportunities for teachers to maintain the existing status-quo of regurgitating information which targets and ensures that the exceptional and educable gain certification.

What is perhaps needed is a more humanistic approach which targets the emotional, dispositional and psychological well-being. Programmes and strategies are to be developed where intrinsic motivation to learn and excel is engendered and where learning which is specific and friendly is tailored to the students' needs.

In attempting to accomplish these goals the new CDD has to remain sensitive to the socio-political and cultural dynamics which have driven education throughout the years. The existence of the cultural capital and its tenacity to maintain power and control through lack of dissemination of information are important variables which the CDD must address. In addition, the manner in which all the aspects of the curriculum impact on the students' and teachers' performance are also critical. At present there is a strong emphasis on technological foundations and technological development that are subject shifts in position from the technical and vocational education which included a necessary craft oriented sector for the weakest students. There is therefore the need to instil in the consciousness of all educators that a shift to technology or to the practicals is not intended to deny and totally separate those who operate at those levels from being involved in the academics. Some of the world's best skilled-persons are very intellectual and that should be expected and encouraged. In addition, the new CDD should assist each teacher and each school to build true communities as all work towards improvement of the curriculum delivery and the school (Brighouse and Woods, 2002 and Sergiovanni, 1994). There should also be equity in the procurement of resources for all the subject areas and especially for students with special needs.

To be given high priority is the ARTS - the drama, dance, music, visual art, craft and all that pertain to stagecraft, technical theatre and electronic technology with which the Arts are vested. At present, the significance of the Arts is sidelined by the Director, but throughout the system the principals and teachers are recognising its importance and are attempting to incorporate the Arts in all aspects of teaching and learning. The Arts provides the best platform for learning and for making the most significant impact on the students' language development and their ability to become reflexive about their own challenges and on societal issues. It provides not only an alternative for the students to run to in times of stress or insecurity but it also assists them in arriving at praxis in traumatic or life-threatening situations.

The CDD needs to present an integrated approach to change the existing JSS and other education systems to become an inclusive learning and teaching system. Apple (1996) suggested a critical social science instructive approach to addressing the moral and social issues and in targeting the range of modern ills, including HIV/AIDS, child prostitution, discrimination and other social issues. This must envisage rethinking of the mindset of the future citizens (Roche, 1992).

The desired outcome is not teacher conformity to the derived curriculum but teacher ownership of the proposed plans to effect changes in teacher delivery and student learning. This ought to lead the teachers into a clearer understanding of their role as educators, not as individuals who put students out of class but as persons who encourage engagement because of their positive

change in expectations. The CDD has to be determined to make true professionals of its officers and the teachers who are involved and concerned about meeting the needs of all their charges especially their weaker students in the poorer depressed communities. The CDD therefore, must be in the field focussing on assisting teachers to craft new techniques, to become reflexive in their thinking, to make sound moral and practical decisions, to break with traditional approaches and stereotypes and to replace them with strategic, creative, researched and well-planned programmes to support students to overcome their weaknesses and forge to mastery.

## **RESOLVING THE PROBLEM OF LOW TEACHER EXPECTATIONS IN THE JSS SYSTEM**

The ripple effect of the stigma of the students' academic inability had become burdensome to some of the younger teachers. They too became frustrated and demoralized because their efforts were not producing the levels of anticipated satisfaction. Some of the teachers have asserted that one of the reasons for their present state or apathy was that "*they were not sure what the Ministry expected of them*". Clearly what they needed were guidance and training through a radical curriculum with concepts which will inject new meaning and reflection into what they are doing.

The students have been positive and clear in identifying that the teachers and their expectations have significantly affected their performance. Even the teachers themselves noted that they did not engage nor interact with the

students and the students in turn did not go to the teachers to seek help, not even for school-related matters, much less for their own domestic and personal issues. The teachers need training, re-training and exposure in the exercise of reflexive practice to be able to recognise and apply the appropriate techniques and strategies which can be implemented to assist these students to become critical thinkers, problem solvers and excellent readers.

With immediate effect no new teacher should be allowed to enter the classroom without being trained. Those younger teachers who are already in the system should become fully prepared and sensitised to adopt their new roles. The older teachers too can be just as or even more problematic. Historically, at the school under review, those teachers who started the system have always resisted change as they had already become entrenched in their own concepts of how things should be done. They have acquired their own professional baggage with which they are comfortable and they have become so imbued with personal and professional pains and bruises that they may have arrived at the stages of teacher burn-out, teacher apathy and/or teacher resistance to change. Many of them have therefore lost their drive, enthusiasm and motivation to want to see progress and change. For too long they have operated in the system where nothing happened, where apathy and atrophy have stepped in and as a result they have lost their initiative. In fact, some of them were merely waiting on 'retirement'. These were the teachers who needed to be re-energised or retired.

A quick fix solution is to allow them the opportunity to retire gracefully with all their benefits rather than allow them to remain and hinder the march towards

improvement. However, those who wish to continue should be trained to get out of their existing 'box' or 'mode' of operating and seek new and exciting approaches to teaching. It must therefore be mandatory that they be re-trained and re-tooled for progress.

## **ENHANCING AND CHANGING TEACHER EXPECTATIONS**

With that back-drop, it should be understandable that two of the serious implications for the new curriculum are - firstly, that of teachers' identification and acceptance of the learners as they are in their present conditions; and secondly, teachers' acceptance and willingness to change on realising the extent of the impact of their expectations and perceptions about the students' academic achievement and vice versa. Knowledge of the two implications will force the teachers to prepare for and address these situations head-on with the appropriate strategies which will cater for the students' likes and dislikes, their weaknesses and strengths, their differences and similarities and their own idiosyncrasies. Finally the teachers own expectations for the students' future development and movement towards mastery must be envisioned in the context of the school environment and the society.

*Teachers cannot restrict their attention to the classroom alone, leaving the larger setting and purpose of school to be determined by others. They must take active responsibility for the goals to which they are committed and for the social setting in which these goals may prosper. If they are not to be mere agents of others of the state, of the military, of the media, of the experts and bureaucrats, they need to determine their own agency through critical and continued evaluation of their purposes, the consequences and social context of their calling. (Scheffler, 1968. p.11)*

Scheffler (1968) has again directed teachers to identify and re-assess their purpose and their calling. Thus, teachers ought to be challenged to measure their present expectations and standards in order to determine a strategy to become and remain effective and efficient. But how can the JSS teachers' expectations that they have clearly articulated be enhanced?

Teacher Expectation is a concept which has changed overtime. In its earlier configurations teacher expectations were the generalised beliefs that teachers and students hold for each other about their future success in their learning situations. In such a setting, there is the perception of direct causation. The teachers indicate to the students their high expectations for their success and the students acquiesce and succeed (Monhardt, 1995; Hassenpflu, 1994). This concept is sometimes considered naïve. It has given way to expectations which are often termed, the perceptual bias, which is based on a simple but erroneous or over-exaggerated cause and effect relationship. Closely aligned to this perceptual bias is the sustained bias in which once the perception and expectations interact whatever the outcome the expectations remain fixed, in spite of changes in circumstances which have produced changes in performance.

Within recent times however, teacher expectation has been succinctly intertwined with teacher interaction and engagement primarily to effect change and motivate the students to desire to excel and attain mastery. This concept of expectation has maintained the inbuilt causal relationship and is measurable dependent on the teachers' initial and continued responses. Therefore, teacher

expectation is contingent on the generalised beliefs teachers hold for students' academic achievement and is demonstrated and manifested by the teachers' interactions and positive engagements with them. This type of engagement can be attained and enhanced through teachers' exercising reflexive practice, accepting the truth of the conditions as they exist with an aim to change, and constantly re-assess their interactions and engagement with the students in and out of the classroom to provide avenues for improving students' achievement levels.

Thus, teacher expectation can be measured by teachers' engagement, willingness, preparedness and ability to significantly and meaningfully impact on student's levels of motivation and academic achievement. But in the JSS system, teacher expectation is an illusionary concept and is not officially and scientifically measured and investigated even though its far reaching effect is felt in and out of the classroom. There is no official criterion or determinant to assess the teachers' failure to display and maintain good quality and high standards of performance that impinge on students' achievement for success. There is no immediate system to provide teachers with feedback on their performance in that area. In the light of the above the students and teachers have externalise their behaviour and have operated unchecked in their demonstrations of lack of respect, engagement and concern for each other. As teacher expectations have been subjective over the years the teachers have been allowed to blame the students, the parents and even the system for their own ineptitude.



It is therefore my suggestion that the Ministry of Education and the Teaching Service Commission, who are the employers, should consider the assessment of teachers' performance by their levels of expectations as demonstrated by their degree of interaction, power-sharing, concern and care given to the students.

The argument has been posited by Habermas and Stinnett (1973) that any assessment of teacher effectiveness and by extension teacher expectation should begin even before teachers are hired and allowed to enter the classroom. These theorists contend that even at the level of the Teachers' College and definitely prior to becoming a teacher the criteria for assessment of the teachers' perceived schema of functioning and their levels of expectations about all students should be operationalised and applied. These criteria should be expansive and not limited only to teachers' attainment of success at any experienced-based programme, and/or to the passing of a certain number of content courses at any stipulated examinations, even at the Teachers' College or at the University. Instead, the requirements of teacher expectations should be determined by the teachers' values and attitudes whether they are student-focused, learner-driven and prepared to move all students to mastery in spite of race/ethnicity, present social status, cultural and economic differences and levels of ability. These assessments should be carried out long before the teachers' initial entry stage and definitely before a teacher can be certified as being ready to teach. Good teachers must possess qualities and characteristics of good understanding, generosity of spirit, infectious enthusiasm and an interest and concern about all whom they teach.

As a result teacher expectations should be assessed on competency and on performance based levels of efficiency that demand that teachers acquire and demonstrate certain forms of behaviour and attitudes. These behaviours are distinctly linked to teachers being taught to use and highlight the positives in students. Teachers should be trained to recognise and note the ill-effects of favouritism and racism in the classroom, given the tools to prevent demonstrations of these and shown the importance of disassociating themselves from such situations. The subjective practices of labelling and stereotyping should also be addressed. Teachers should be given the strategies to practice reflective teaching and apply all the various and most appropriate teaching skills and other strategies that can affect and change their students' performance to develop standards of positive learner attitudes, critical thinking skills and creativity. In other words teachers should become effective educators who will be able to turn around their students' behaviour, learning disabilities and lack of academic performance to self-determination, autonomy and mastery.

To attain mastery at any competence-based and/or performance-based curriculum programmes young teachers require firstly, exposure to the necessary information and contents of their particular subject area. Added to that secondly, the young teachers should be taught how to sequence and rearrange the scope of information into individualised modules to suit their students' needs and readiness for the information before moving on to obtain mastery at the particular subject. Thirdly, the young or not so young teachers should acquire teaching techniques which incorporate the practice of reflective

research on teaching. The teacher entrants must be provided with the efficient performance-based competencies that are known to affect positively their expectations, standards and effectiveness as teachers and that would also ultimately impact on and enhance students' learning.

The notion of reflective educational teaching practice finds its genesis in the conceptualisation of Dewey, (1909/1932) who suggested that professionally moral individuals would treat their actions as experimental and would therefore seriously reflect on them and their consequences. Dewey also noted that such professional teachers would be thoughtful and perceptive about their work, especially because of the implications of failing to do so. The principles and standards that govern education and teaching will be impaired. Thus, any concept of teacher expectation must place emphasis on the teachers' acquisition of specific strategies and methods that are good, appropriate, meaningful and responsive to the students' current needs rather than on re-hashing ineffective, existing measures. Germane to arriving at high levels of teacher expectations and reflectivity is the need for any prospective or present teacher to possess a positive, normative, composite view of people, the universe and of education. Absence of these will result in a vast disconnect between the individual teacher and his/her perception of the students, the task and the skills needed to effect change.

Building on that notion, others, such as Schon (1983), highlighted the concept of teacher consciousness in the delivery of classroom practice. For him any such display of consciousness and responsiveness to classroom delivery and

techniques must force the educator, young or old to rethink the rationale and purpose for his classroom existence and practice. Ultimately then, the teacher who is thus sensitised would seek new ideas and techniques to plan, prepare and deliver lessons and lesson plans which will seek to motivate students to learn. In interpreting the challenges that can arise to make that type of paradigm shift in teacher consciousness, Brophy and Good (1986) made a pertinent observation, based on the teachers' newly acquired behaviour. Such responses may tend to be a one-way causal relationship that is generated directly by the teacher and transferred to the students. If the students' desire to learn is not commensurate with the teachers' new intention, then there is no real feedback loop or relationship established to attain that desired outcome - an improved student achievement. Thus the practice of reflective teaching will cause that teacher in that situation to change his/her sustained bias of the students and seek alternative methods to help and reach those students who operate outside of the loop.

It is reasonable to state that the attainment of positive teacher expectations and its attendant increase in student achievement levels cannot occur merely through the teachers' wishful thinking. Their hope of realising that finished product - geniuses, cannot be attained without going through the process which entails serious planning, hard decision making and determined strategising to guide students to attain mastery. Thus by (1) daily developing the strategy of establishing an approachable, congenial yet firm relationship with the students, (2) reviewing students' work daily and giving meaningful feedback, and (3)

making decisions that would challenge students to optimise their output, to ensure successful returns are necessary. For the teacher who maintains high levels of expectation, those returns will be well-rounded, talented, future citizens who are prepared to make meaningful contributions to a productive society.

Thus the positive, high levels of teachers' expectations as demonstrated by all the strategies for interaction and positive behaviours and attitudes will be so infectious that it ought to be automatically transmitted to the students. Conversely the lack of positive synergy and positive interactive thinking will continue to have a detrimental effect on the students' academic development, according to Yinger (1987). The literature has suggested several practical ways to attain this positive, daily high expectation discovery approaches to learning which are manifested in teaching styles that are hands-on and action-filled. These provide an opportunity for reflection and internalisation of new information in a non-threatening environment in which inquiry and questioning can take place without the students feeling at risk. Young and even older teachers should be so exposed to simulated teaching techniques which utilise drama, music, dance as well as different forms of media, video taping and digital cameras, new technology as tools of learning and correction of weak areas especially in all forms of illiteracy.

Additionally, reflection, reflexivity and reflexive research practice in education must mean more than new slogans or theoretical models. Instead these have the

propensity to become the new guiding principles for teaching effectively and teaching for life, itself (Quicke, 1999). No change or progress can be made without spending periods on intense reflection. Reflexivity and by extension critical reflective practice in education aims at making teachers 'critical pedagogues or 'transformative intellectuals' contend Giroux and McLaren (1986) who maintain that, based on a Marxist philosophy, teachers need to be sensitised to become aware that schools are a microcosm of the society. As such, all the ills of inequality, injustice, class, race, student violence, male under-achievement and other gender issues operate and become more deeply entrenched for the next generation. Effective teachers must therefore hold high levels of expectations for all students. They must arm themselves with the moral obligation to reflect on and to change the future society and they must see this as their ordained role. Thus these teachers should be sensitised to recognise how their actions or in-actions continue to reinforce all the ills in society. Only then will these teachers be released to be engaged in emancipatory actions and develop conscientization (Freire, 1972).

Implementation of such a practical, critical intervention strategy will challenge teachers to look at their own assumptions and bases for making decisions and getting involved in certain activities. This process when transferred to the students will require both teachers and students to identify their causal attributions and the processing activated to arrive at their decision. In order for both student and teacher to arrive at incisive answers and solutions, the teachers as well as the students must be given assignments and improvisation sessions

which will force them to analyse, problem solve and rethink their taken for granted positions on some basic but far-reaching moral, social and spiritual issues. Care should be taken to address the students' lived reality and experiences so that their own souls can be touched and quickened.

The roles of reflection on and identification of the causal attribution patterns serve two critical purposes. Determination of the outcomes of the research practice provides the teacher with both a localised, environmental picture and a broader perspective and world view of the situation. Immediately solutions will evolve which may require the whole school becoming involved in the changing of programmes and policies of approach in order to address some in-school taken-for-granted situations. However, more importantly, the teacher will recognise the need to acquire other technical, practical and knowledge skilled competencies which will empower him/her to respond more effectively to the students' needs which have been formerly identified through the research.

In order to motivate groups of individuals to move towards these noble ideals of working as a team to generate positive attributes and effort, will take a deep understanding of all the actors/players, identify their needs, strengths and weaknesses, and create a climate for development. This calls for teachers' engagement and interaction and their exuding positive expectations and perceptions. This can be activated if all teaching and other activities are centred on a theme.

Once implementation of the process begins, the teacher then finds a platform

from which to introduce and make incremental steps to move the students further towards mastery. The students should feel confident that in spite of their academic deficiencies, they are shrouded in their teachers' love and concern for them as individual students and as human beings. Class and individual journals can be prepared even by non-readers. Peer teaching and learning from each other provides a much better and more challenging approach to discovering and sharing information. Care should be taken to avoid the ills of group work where the weaker students merely become sponges and remain on the sidelines and fringes unmotivated and unchallenged.

Invariably the implications for assessment and evaluation become relevant. The mode for assessment will now include the oral in drama, dance and song, the expressive in art and craft and the supportive in background work. The written and only dominant mode of assessment which presently repels and frightens the non-reader can be reduced and downplayed until the student is ready. In the interim the student is motivated to work even within the realms of sloppiness initially as he/she is coaxed to attain mastery incrementally. Additionally, the teachers' levels of expectation will be increased and can become more measurable as the teacher recognises and begins to operate being able to measure and determine the success of *all* his students' upward attainment of proper attitudes, skills and knowledge base. This trend can be soon transferred to and infused throughout the curriculum as each teacher in the different subject areas buy into the approach and make it relevant to their students' needs.



If the teachers were to perceive their graduates as being multi-skilled, talented citizens who must be literate and numerate, innovative, critical thinkers, problem solvers, team-players, technologically competent, spiritually aware, well-adjusted socially, possessing high self-esteem, morally upright, self-motivated, adaptable to global living, environmentally conscious and the like, then the Curriculum to accomplish this output must be dynamic, creative, meaningful and visionary. Indubitably, the teachers to ensure that it is attained must also possess the capacity to meet the mandate.

Invariably there will be obstacles to the production of the ideal teacher who will produce ideal students. Barriers to becoming literate are especially challenging for the older teenagers. The teachers should therefore anticipate the students' perceived resistance to wanting to learn what they consider to be 'infant work at the adult level'. They must recognise that what superficially appears to be resistance, is in fact, embarrassment at what the students identify as a demotion of their academic selves. To buffer them, the approach should be open and relevant, using the students' own interests and activities important to them. Additionally, the existing cultural norms and expectations of the teacher, the parent and the learner must be in sync in order to attain the desired movement forward. There ought to be an agreed level of attainment to which the individual must aim and strive to attain within a stipulated period or even before. This must clearly be complemented by the level of preparedness of both the teacher and the learner to change their pre-conceived notions. These and some of the other issues are what should be recognised and addressed in any

discussion on the process of learning and/or the acquisition of knowledge (*not merely information*) as they impact on the curriculum and the enhancement of teachers' expectations. These must lead to changes in behaviours that operate at the perceived limits to the students' capacity to learn. Added to this is the role of practice in assisting students in their attempts at review, recall, remembrance, transference of skills and the development of the motivation to learn and use understanding and insight.

Not to be over-emphasized, but a factor which ought to be complimentary to the change is the teaching of content and the use of the relevant strategies and resources that are creative and suited to the students' needs. This application of appropriate learning styles which are suited and adapted to the needs of the students ought to assist the students in moving mentally forward out of their current environment and modes of behaviour. Therefore the lessons planned should be learner-friendly, media-dated, not only subject specific but also thematic in approach, possessing strong moral and spiritual components, values and socially affective relevance.

## **REVIEWING APPROPRIATE TEACHING AND LEARNING STYLES THAT CAN BE ADOPTED**

Against this backdrop to effect changes in teacher expectation which is targeted ultimately for the necessary improvements in the students' deficiencies, then the strategies adopted should cater for the students' weaknesses. They should

be so graded as to facilitate the building of blocks for mastery and future success. Success becomes more attainable once the individual believes that success is more contingent on their own wants and needs rather than on their own competencies. Failure to target successful improvement techniques is to ascribe a student forever to the cycle of failure. Students never want to be perceived as being incompetent in spite of the reality of their situation. They would never want anyone to make that discovery about them and therefore their means-ends or the agency beliefs are operationalised in the situations.

It is imperative for the teachers to truly understand how their students learn and what in fact constitutes learning. As indicated in Chapter 111, learning is different from motivation. Learning is a process which is evidenced by behavioural change, even an infinitesimal change in behaviour provides evidence that learning has taken place. So if the teachers' lessons are not geared towards attaining behavioural change, then no true learning will take place.

The learning theories are geared to assist teachers' understanding of their role and function as educators. The students have been accurate in appraising the teachers' roles. They have indicated that the approaches the teachers should adopt to impart the information have to be different, student focused and creative. The information must be relevant to their lived realities. This type of emphasis will be instrumental in relieving the challenges of those who have the literacy problem. As a result, teachers should never present in writing - on the black-board or in handouts -warmed over notes which are hardly in sync with their own manner of speaking and teaching (Millard, 2000).

What is needed is a system or an approach that the teachers can adopt to provide them with a framework to operationalise the information they want to impart in a lively creative manner to foster the students' learning process. This system must include an evaluation process which is self-regulatory and which the students can use to monitor their own progress. This approach should lead students to develop self-determination goals that result in the emergence of inner resolution, strength, more positive self-concepts and mastery.

The entire concept of self-motivation and self-discovery are now dominant modes in learning and should be encouraged. Vygotsky (1978) proposed scaffolding as a part of the learning process. The learner is guided in his problem-solving activities in steps. The students will move on after each successfully completed successive step in the performance of each new task, even those which are beyond their present abilities. Jerome Bruner (1987) added that, in order to put these newly acquired skills into practice there must be constant repetition, not merely by rote, but by extraction and induction, construction and deconstruction. Every opportunity must be provided for application, reinforcement and recall in the lived experiences and environment.

As a comprehensive facility for reshaping the curriculum into an all-inclusive and meaningful one, I suggest the use of the THEMATIC APPROACH to teaching. This approach utilises a theme, for example Carnival, or the Family which can be taught across the curriculum simultaneously. The teachers arrive at consensus as to the theme to be used. Then all aspects of that theme relevant

to the different subject areas across the curriculum are taught at the same time. This will facilitate and reinforce literacy and numeracy skills, which will highlight spelling and comprehension and will also make mathematics, science and social studies come alive. The teachers will be forced to be practical and creative. Drama and movement will become integral components in the process of learning. The activities demand that school be taken out of the classroom, into the wider community; on field trips and other visits related to research and archaeology. The projects are intense and short term. Closure activities such as Spelling Bees, craft and science displays and even an open day should be held.

The theme of Family was used by the researcher/Principal at the school under review, unfortunately in the first term after the Form Three graduates left. The intervention was very positive and achieved whole school participation as the teachers in their departments together planned meaningful work and taught them on schedule. The Closure activities were creative and included library exhibitions of work done, competitions in Spelling, Poetry and Essay writing and special recognition of the most improved students. The Thematic Approach was again successfully implemented, this time using the theme, Easter, at another trouble-prone and difficult school, which after closure for a period was about to re-open. The intervention resulted in positive changes in teacher and student behaviour and improvement in literacy levels. This intervention formed a major part of an IOB/UWI research project (Baker, 2003).

This approach uses the concept of co-operative learning as devised by Slavin (1990). This allows the individual to explore aspects of his/her environment

that will create the necessary background for conceptualizing what is taught with the necessary language inputs (Vygotsky, 1978). All the individual's creative energies, talents and non-academic skills will be explored. Every aspect of brain-based conceptualising and use of multiple intelligences as devised by Gardner (1989) will have to be adopted.

Gardner (1989) defined intelligence as the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural setting. When applied to learning, it is not just the acquisition of knowledge or the use of language and mathematical methods which include drama, dance, physical activities and other emotional components. Gardner's 8-10 Intelligences have been added to learning and curriculum development. They recognise that learning can also be attained not only from the verbal – linguistic, or mastery of language and logical- mathematical but also from the visual - spatial, musical – rhythmic, especially in the drama and dance, bodily kinaesthetic, especially in the physical education and other movements in our cultural norms. There is also provision for the personal, inter and intra – personal, the enhancement of the reflexivity and the naturalistic, emotional and spiritual dimensions.

Lazear (1994) and other post Gardner theorists attempted to point out that it was not just the knowledge of the learning style and provisions made for the inclusion of all the intelligences but what was also important was the combination or correct mix of these components which will facilitate information processing to produce learning which will create change. Lazear (1994) therefore attempted to develop his taxonomy using the Multiple

Intelligences theory. He looked at them in three categories, the cognitive, as evidenced by (Bloom,1977), the Affective (Bloom and Krathwold, 1964) and the psycho-motor (Harrow, 1972). The teachers' role will be one of facilitator to the learning process and creator of extrinsic and intrinsic opportunities to encourage students to learn. Negatives will be eliminated and the positives will naturally be highlighted. There will be no hidden curriculum. Neither will it be stylised and rigid. Mastery that is self-regulated will be attained and school will be fun. The results will be fantastic. The method of assessment and evaluation will then become realistic and relevant to what is taught and actually done.

Other complimentary teaching strategies are recommended by Meece et al (1989) to increase students' choice and enhance intrinsic motivation. Students can choose their own work partners, materials and methods to complete their activities. Critical to attaining this enhanced motivation is feedback and minimisation of students' dependence on teachers. The granting of help and support to complete tasks should be limited but accessible as the students need the space to develop and gain independence, set their own goals and see them materialise.

Care should be taken not to associate autonomy and free classroom atmosphere with unrestricted freedom. Also to be encouraged is the development of origins and pawns in the classroom setting (De Charms, 1976). Origins are those students who are responsible, assertive and who display a deep sense of internal 'locus of control'. On the other hand, pawns are reactive and display a very weak sense of personal causation for the control of their action. Additionally,

learning as a group can be very effective. The students themselves form natural, informal groupings and these can be instrumental in fostering co-operative learning (Slavin, 1990).

The Adaptive Learning Environment Model (ALEM) is another programme devised by Wang, (1976) to foster personal responsibility and autonomy in students. The programme uses a mastery-based approach allowing students to work at their individual pace. They select and determine their own exploratory tasks in drama, art, music, creative writing along with other basic skills. Studies reveal that students can manage their own learning and in so doing their tasks can be better completed as they have greater control over their own learning.

Other possible solutions to this challenge include, but are not limited to, providing tasks which are most meaningful and specifically tailored towards the students' needs. In introducing new topics the teachers' objective should be to make the topic more specific, practical and applicable to real life situations, according to Stigler and Stevenson (1991). The given assignments and instructions should also be so designed as to tap into and capitalise on the students' interests. Especially in the area of English where illiteracy rates are high, the literature suggests that reading material should focus on high interest topics, be current, up-to-date and vocabulary specific. Role play, vignettes, practicals are recommended as alternative teaching instruction. Theme teaching and team teaching across the curriculum should be implemented.

This will entail changes in obtaining information and changes in class



structures. Making the change and adopting the open type classroom as the students indicated will provide both teachers and students with a forum to express themselves more freely. In addition, the teachers will be given an opportunity to view the students in a different light, maybe as their parents and others see them. This positive response of their significant others can be so meaningful and full of impact that the teachers too will be surprised to discover how easily they will be able to show them love and the respect that they crave.

Thus the innovation and shifts in teacher involvement in extra-curricular activities can also enhance the morale of the school and boost the students' pride in their accomplishments. Students come alive on the playing fields or in areas in which they feel passion and energy. However, in the classrooms they are listless, bored and disruptive. During a school frolic or 'dollar jam' (the local name for a cheap in-school party) the students work and collaborate in joyful abandonment. There is no need for much supervision because their energies are being used up as they become involved in their passionate activity. The educators of the new century will have to hear what these students are saying because without changing their present teaching modes to being vibrant and meaningful, the school climate will continue to be non-productive and adequate mastery levels of academic achievement will not be attained.

Additionally, the new thrust must involve changes in evaluation and assessment of the students. Clearly, especially for students with learning difficulties and even for all students, an in-depth evaluation and assessment of the students'

needs cannot be a one-off, end of term assessment. Instead what is needed is a multi-disciplinary assessment conducted from varieties of perspectives to gain as much information as possible about the student, his home background, and the process of socialization, other cultural and political factors which may have impacted on his/her development (Galloway *et al*, 1994). In fact what is demanded is a clinical, individual assessment of every detailed aspect of the student's life in and even out of school in order to arrive at a documented, prescriptive referencing of the student. Each student should be treated as a special case which needs specific measures to be individually applied to correct, improve, enhance and normalise his/her weaknesses (Foucault, 1977b). Foucault suggested that each individual should be classified by his/her own individuality to make him/her a special case that can be addressed and helped. The information gathered must be open and exposed to the parents and the community so that a positive collaborative response can be made to redress the situation (Ryan, 1991).

It is therefore necessary for each individual school to work towards building academic institutions in which new norms are set. These norms must include the involvement of all students in creative, cultural and team-building efforts. These activities will help not only to empower the students to manage their own differences and conflicts, but they will also inspire them to become individuals and persons who will be positive contributors, realising their potentials and redirecting their energy for good.

## CHAPTER XIII

### RATIONALE FOR THE DIFFERENTIATED CURRICULUM - THE JSS IN PERSPECTIVE

In recognition of the findings that -

- the JSS teachers at the school under review held low expectations for their students' success
- the students perceptions revealed significant relationships with their causal attributions to their inability, to their need for more effort expenditure in order to attain higher levels of success at the double awarded difficult task of English which was impacted by the effects of the teacher
- the students said that the teachers rejected, alienated and showed no concern for them. The teachers had favourites and sometimes displayed acts of racism; and their classes were boring and lacked drama.

It is incumbent that solutions be applied to breach the gap between the teachers and the students. A differentiated curriculum is yet another plausible recommendation to be established to accommodate the various individual students' needs.

The necessity for a differentiated curriculum must be underscored and it must not be considered in a haphazard, quick-fix fashion. It must be understood that this curriculum is not to be aimed at providing an opportunity for streaming or for segregation of students into groupings for reasons of class and ethnicity as it has reportedly obtained. The differentiation is not going to encourage but will totally reject the present in-class arrangements which exclude the deviant, the

less-competent and the unwilling. This Curriculum is aimed at being totally inclusive and geared to meet each student individual needs.

It is believed that the past government's haste to put in place the much-heralded 'education for all' policy resulted in a crucial oversight. During their last year in office, 2000, for political not moral-political reasons, the UNC government operationalised an educational fiasco, in their election engineering about providing education for all. Their interpretation was at variance with the UNESCO's agreement on the Education For All Policy, EFA. The major deficiency in their innovation was the failure to provide mandatory support systems to scaffold the transformation. Concurrently a new and differentiated curriculum should have been devised to accommodate the wide range of students who entered the system at differing academic levels and who were never prepared for schooling at the secondary school level. Formerly, these students were catered for at the Post-Primary school centres.

Hurriedly, groups of selected persons were assembled to prepare a curriculum which unfortunately, followed the same counter-productive path which ultimately exacerbated the existing ills. At the end of the exercise which was controversially supervised by foreign consultants, eight core subjects were proposed, namely, English, Mathematics, Spanish, Social Studies, Science, Technology Education, Visual and Performing Arts and Physical Education. There was no clear definition of the subject labelled Technology Education and to-date it is still being defined. Visual and Performing Arts is really a combination of all the five components of the Expressive Arts, namely, Dance,

Drama, Music, Craft and Art. Physical Education as a subject is yet to gain recognition.

In their present form, the new subject offerings handed down from the Curriculum National Office, according to Bernstein (1975/1990), is made up like most other National Curricula of a 'collection of subjects', which operate in silos, in a stigmatised and meaningless manner, rather than as a practicable integration. In apposition, Quicke (1999) posited a new Curriculum for the good life in the twenty first century. His perception is that this curriculum is one that is highlighted by a deep sense of reflexivity or 'reflexive modernity', in conjunction with a moral-political- philosophical perspective which has a strong proclivity for enhancing individual responsibility and critical thinking.

Quicke (1999) contends that for students to be equipped and exposed to an education process which prepares them to live in the twenty-first century society, the deconstruction of the existing bureaucratic institutions have to occur. These must be replaced by the reconstruction of a new paradigm of a learning society which emphasizes new perspectives of the individual who ought to be person-centred, yet community driven, family oriented, yet practising cultural pluralism, possessing positive work ethics together with a strong economic life and knowledge of science in a risk society. These factors are all deeply embedded in the individual's notions of his SELF and his causal attribution to the things that matter, even in his taken-for-granted environment.

SELF, individualism and individualistic goals even though distinct entities are

inter-related. Individualism, respect for human dignity, autonomy, privacy and self-development bear special significant relationship to liberty, freedom and equality (Luke, 1995). These four elements are also inter-related yet distinct, and are necessary appendages for an individual to enjoy his privacy, to be self-determined, that is, to have the freedom to make his/her choice and live without impositions. In addition, the individual has the capability and opportunity to realise his/her potentials by having personal control over the process of realising his/her capacity.

Bocock (1986) interpreted the moral-political perspective as one in which the morals were used to recognise the individual as being human and capable of making choices about what is right or wrong. The political aspect addresses the issues of liberty, equality, justice and democracy. Democracy not merely as a political ideology, but as a social factor which emphasizes a 'way of life' in which individuals realise their potential through active involvement in the practices of the community and their society. So doing they develop a moral ethos which allows for self-determination, freedom, equal opportunity, self-development and self-fulfilment (Carr and Hartnett, 1996). Such combinations add up to motivating the SELF to achieve its best.

Any alternative curriculum should therefore not be considered alongside the traditional, grammar-type or vocational/comprehensive models, in which the divisive inequalities were perpetuated. Instead the new alternative curriculum must be more integrated, utilising and developing the strengths of the existing structure and creating a more open and all-embracing one, as suggested by Ivan

Illich (1971). Learning will then occur democratically, through participation in communities of reflexive practice which will allow the learner to 'know-how' in spite of and in recognition of his/her own abilities and skills.

Designing a school curriculum has to be embedded in the epistemological, philosophical and political thought. Barrow (1976) noted that designing a curriculum is tantamount to defining education itself. A curriculum is a step by step plan/guide to achieving learning experiences and intended learning outcomes formulated and reconstructed to expose the learner to knowledge/information/ experiences under the auspices of the school. These are to be internalised for the learners' growth and development in personal, intellectual and social competence.

Foshay (1969/1980) also views curriculum as all the experiences the learner achieves under the guidance of the school. However, what may eventually emerge will depend on the results of the power struggle between the contending views of the traditionalists, conservatives and the radicals. Historically, the traditionalists and the church-run schools have had full sway and today we reap the results of their posturing. However, the alternative education system will highlight purely classical democracy which will provide equal opportunities for all citizens to realise their fullest potential. It is not the glib cheap political rhetoric of our politicians of 2000 whose slogan was 'education for all' without putting the basic system in place to ensure that educational democracy was attained.

The practices to be adopted will be learner specific, community driven, dependent on the needs of the immediate society as it exists then and tailored to the cultural and social demands, all working around themes which can still be operationalised in all of the subject areas, for example Science. However, both the informal and formal aspects of the learning environment must be considered. The learner in this environment will be encouraged to be a creative, critical thinker who has to acquire the wherewithal to transform his society and environment into a better place. In the long run, he will change himself as he learns discipline, commitment to the task and autonomy. To accomplish this, the individual must learn to draw not only on himself but on all the creative co-operate energies and practice to sustain progress and discover 'the good of a certain kind of life' (Mac Intyre, 1991). In the long run the hitherto elusive utopian existence that is envisaged will emerge. Here the underlying relationship, the concept of reciprocity and care for each other in order are demonstrated that the individual's freedom, independence and development are maintained.

With an upsurge in crime and very little value placed on life and property, a new curriculum must place high on its agenda, moral and social components. Here both the individual and the society must take time off to look at themselves critically, to examine their rationales and values and as is necessary, reorder and reinvent their identities and structure, with a moral-reflective perspective (Quicke, 1999). Thus the new curriculum will need to be pro-active and be so designed as to be operative 'outside of the box'.



There is a need for this curriculum to possess strong reproductive as well as transformational qualities which will especially target the oppressed and the marginalized. Yet, the curriculum must be supportive of the creation of a democratic learning environment, whilst being conscious of the ills of 'choice' as it exists in the present system. This new curriculum must be sensitive enough to understand the complexity and unpredictability of certain troublesome areas and be prepared to address them forthrightly.

Application of the theories on how one learns must be present in formulating a curriculum to foster learning. However to accomplish that successfully several issues need to be clarified, such as the vision of the curriculum and by extension the school's vision which should be holistic, multi-cultural, technologically based, problem centred and learner centred whilst highlighting the affective domain. It must address the diverse range of students' needs before a variety of learning styles may have to be applied.

Therefore, in addition, to the Vision and the Mission, the Curriculum must have dimensions for change which are pragmatic, environmentally concerned, addressing the belief and value systems, eager for positive learning outcomes and possessing the ability to make structural and organization shifts. It must therefore, be student centred as well as holistic, considering all the aspects of the human development, physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual, social, moral and creative as it attempts to foster problem-solving and decision-making techniques among the recipients. It must also be intellectually challenging, providing opportunities for the learners to become critical thinkers and problem

solvers. It must also be technologically based, aligned to current modes of technology so that opportunity will be granted for its use in the learning/teaching process. Multi-culturalism is important as it caters to the needs of the various groups in the society to ensure respect for all cultures and pride in one's own achievement, personality, growth, development and self-esteem. Provision has also to be made for the expressive and performing Arts as they add another important dimension of societal 'noblesse oblige' through the drama, dance, music, craft and art. In addition, it should be performance tested, centred and designed for achievement. Social responsibility and a sense of accountability must be instilled in the learners so that they will realise their obligation to the society/ community/ies in which they live. Nationalism encourages the students to revisit the enriched history of their lives and that of our national heroes and our culture. In addition the students must be aware of international, inter-connectedness and must recognise the world as a global village. Such a vision is designed to ensure continuous learning. In this way students will acquire the knowledge they need to make them effective literate citizens in a changing world.

Thus from the onset, it is very crucial for the students to seek and establish their self-identity in the mixed up, pluralistic society in which they live. The individual can only understand and come to terms with reality when he/she begins to understand SELF with all its complexity (Berger et al 1974). It is however important to state that the understanding of SELF cannot be done in isolation, because 'no man is an island or 'a unitary subject' (Kitwood 1990). As a result, the individual has to be able to live life in spite of the daily

pressures, ups and downs, and the 'permanent identity crisis', a condition conducive to considerable nervousness (Berger et al, 1982). Thus, this form of self-identity must not only be closely aligned to and become functional in a social environment which caters for the individual's autonomy but must also demonstrate its significance through the evidence of enriched self-worth, equality, shared power relationships and mutual trust.

Perhaps one of the best areas to begin such a theme is in the family, the place which provides the first opportunity for an individual to find himself and develop language and values. Making sense of one's world and one's environment is as important as life itself. Feelings of homelessness, not belonging anywhere, of having no friend or peer can loom in crisis proportion regardless of gender or age, ethnicity or nationality. The relationships within any type of family remain intimate as well as institutionalised and hold long-lasting and life-shaping impressions on the individual, regardless of the fragility or hostility within the mosaic. In spite of the many contending forces which attempt to change the nature and structure of the family - the same sex, single parent challenges - as an institution the family still provides the best framework within which to develop collaboration. Thus, when adopting a thematic curriculum, the family also provides one of the best theme units to coagulate a school, students and a staff in relevant and meaningful in and out of whole school activity.

In October 2001, at the school under review used this theme of family to engage the staff in a whole school academic operation in which in every subject

area aspects of the family were incorporated into the syllabus of work for the duration of one month. As a result, Mathematics focused on measurement, sizes, fractions in the context of shopping for and utilising space in the family home; in English the spelling and comprehension lessons focused on the family, in Science the areas of mass and weight as they relate to the family were also addressed, and so on. The outcomes were tremendous, energising and engaging over 95% of the whole school in active participation in co-operative learning with some form of competition. The impact on the SELF was tremendous as many of the weaker students were able to gain autonomy in learning and began to excel. The other social value was that the students were for the first time exposed to see worth and value in their own family traditions.

Nevertheless, one is not over-exaggerating when one states that cultural plurality and cultural capital must be given very high consideration in a society as small as the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. On his first visit to Trinidad, the Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa described the Republic nation as 'a rainbow country' and a most cosmopolitan city. Within our recent past, racism has taken centre stage and has forced the society to become highly divisive. The politicians exacerbate the situation. If there is no intervention or systems put in place to placate the relationships between the main races/ethnicities, Africans and Indians, and if the under-current feelings are allowed to continue unabated the worst can occur. Thus, there is the need to foster cultural harmony. The differentiated curriculum provides the ideal opportunity to begin such a promotion. This form of racism cuts both ways when gender issues and religious concerns are added. The alternative

differentiated curriculum will address these under the caption of cultural diversity in harmony.

Some of the issues of race in our society have been kept alive because of the perception of the unequal spread of wealth, unemployment, un-employability, the entire economic imbalance. For which job market is the school preparing the students? With the changing trends in economics the new curriculum has to be focussed on the creation of wealth and not merely on meeting and satisfying supply and demand issues. Thus the new practical curriculum should aim at making the students employable in areas where they have opportunities to be creative, to use their skills and talents. The students would be taught to develop and acquire an understanding of the social, economic and political systems both locally and globally.

An economically literate student is empowered to function confidently, create wealth and make him/herself employable in the complex modern world, not merely as consumers but both as producers and as good citizens. These students will learn how to propel the economic system forward as they learn to transform the economy's natural and scarce resources to meet the needs of the society. This creative spirit has always been present even when, as a prime example, our fore-fathers used the discarded oil-drums to create the only new musical instrument in the twentieth century, the steel pan. Whereas, the classroom will benefit from such cultural talents, yet the young men need to be re-introduced to developing behaviours and demonstrating choices that are dependent on how one manages one's scarce resources. Economic literacy is

not only creative but extremely critical to any curriculum. This is the true underpinning for finding oneself to be economically viable, not merely being dependent and seeking hand-outs or even working as a labourer but as functioning as a manufacturer and an innovator.

A programme on economic literacy will differ greatly from the present studies on the theories of economics and pricing. The students will be required to view situations and experiences that will necessitate the making of choices within the context of the economy. The aim of such a programme is to help young people to understand the functioning of their own economic system and the contributions, inputs, relationships and experiences that are necessary to augment the wealth of their own economy and to determine their own contribution to it currently and in the future. By using key concepts the students will be made to reflect on their own experiences and use economic initiatives to arrive at solutions for their taken-for-granted financial and economic problems. The students will be forced to be realistic, practical and objective. By so doing they will be made aware of the misconceptions and misplaced values on their use of money. They will be empowered to make better economic choices and learn the value of thrift, savings/investment and budgeting.

In other words, the students can be exposed to the process of becoming more critically aware of their actions at the individual and at the national levels. They will be sensitised to the jargon. After being adequately educated on things economic they can confidently function in the complex financial world as

informed consumers or budding entrepreneurs. The areas suggested for exploration include assisting students to identify the difference between wants and needs when prioritising expenditure on a limited fixed monthly budget. This exercise can lead to discussions on budgeting and determining the differences between necessities and luxury items. Other valuable exercises are exploring career choices and determining the detrimental cost of societal ills such as drugs smoking, promiscuity, vandalism, homosexuality or even HIV/AIDS, and so on. Additionally economic literacy will allow students to conceptualise and explore relationships and inter-connectedness between economic concepts and their own experiences in their day-to-day reality. They will therefore gather information on how systems work and the jargon and terms used in the various media. Such collaboration will enhance the individual's self-identity and self-worth.

At present, at the junior secondary school under review the curriculum places many restrictions on choice – to mention a couple - the choice of subjects to be pursued and the hiring policy for teachers. One of the concerns that this research has evoked is the selection of teachers who must first acquire the reflexive practice of research even before they enter the classroom. As a consequence, these teachers ought to survey the needs of the students and the environment and adapt and adjust their content accordingly.

The non-scientific approach to the teaching of science has to be reviewed. The value of science to the student's future engagement in careers both in technical and in practical areas must be highlighted. For too long this subject area,

Science has been used as the great separator between those who excel and gain scholarships and those who fade into obscurity and unemployment. But science, *per se* is not as powerful and valuable by itself as we may have been led to believe. It is the application of the theory and the utilising atom of the natural scientific forces for good which must be taught and be developed. With the after-math and after-effects of post-war industrialization, students need to know how to secure the environment and the humans from all the ravages and onslaught of scientific experimentation. This type of focus on scientific issues for the students can open a new and interesting area of safety and security concerns in the protection of the environment.

Most importantly, emerging from all the foregoing areas of literacy, the students will be encouraged to address rigorously their own language-literacy problem. The wealth of experiences and diverse lived interactions to which they will be exposed will demand that the students improve their own language skills. Firstly, their vocabulary levels will increase and then later the jargon of the specific area will be also added. As one fights fire with fire one can fight illiteracy with words. The immersion into words and ideas will help the students to develop their thought patterns as they begin to write and read their own words. Reflexive and creative teachers will plan learning and writing activities around the students' experiences. This will lend meaning and relevance to language as the emergent literacy approach begins to be implemented. The students' already acquired language skills will be reinforced and developed. On these would be built newer and more complex and creative ways of expressing their own ideas.



In spite of the shifts and turns in education standards at home and in the countries of the super-powers, even the English National Commission's policy on 'learning to succeed' have identified the importance of knowing the pertinent needs of each country to determine the essential ingredients for its educational progress. It is imperative to verify what knowledge skills and educational training systems are required to make the education system through a differentiated curriculum produce knowledgeable graduates with the appropriate technology skills for wealth creation. It is critical for the society to narrow the gap between those who have attained success and those, who through no fault of their own, have been excluded from the benefits of a good education. As a consequence, for societal stability and cohesion, it is imperative that all the ills and the social and academic issues of the present education system be addressed now. But there is always hope.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CONCLUSION

A brief revisit to the history of the education system from 1840 to the present will unearth that the hidden rationale for educating the masses was to keep them functionally literate so that they would remain simple, devout, honest citizens. The intention was to maintain the status quo of elitism, class distinctions, domination of the oppressed, inequality and inaccessibility to the higher educational system. Successive governments have tried to grapple with these ills on all fronts by implementing a series of educational changes.

The junior secondary school system was one such innovation launched over thirty years ago. The system attempted to address initially, accessibility of all students to a secondary school education, the delivery of appropriate teaching methods and skills by well-trained deliverers and the implementation of a then modernised national curriculum which offered students an exposure to the selection of subject choices which were academic, practical and technical. However, even before the system was implemented the plan failed because the church, then the parents and later the teachers sought to change the system. Nevertheless the junior secondary double shift, community centred school system became operational with some amendments having been made to the original intention and to the original curriculum.

Notwithstanding the changes and the criticisms that the system underwent over the past 30 years, still its 2001 graduates had to wrestle with some of

the original ills of the education system only that many of these shortcomings were differently packaged. Therefore, these students were provided with access to a free education system even though the curriculum was no longer meaningful and relevant. Some of the students were and still are functionally illiterate. The teachers were no longer trained and their expectations for the students' success have shifted from the original intention of producing mastery.

The aim of this study therefore was to determine to what extent there was a relationship between what the 2001 Form Three graduating students at the junior secondary school under review, said and perceived to be the factors for their success and failure and their teachers' expectations about their academic achievement generally and especially in English Language.

The students' statements, opinions and feelings were ascertained from interviews, role-play, observations, vignettes, exit questionnaires, responses to the causal attribution questionnaire and in-depth interviews with a stratified sample of six students who were selected as the representatives of the students' academic performance along the National 14+ Examination grades continuum of high, medium and low. In addition, the teachers' expectations were assessed through the observations of the teachers' interactions and engagements with the students, from interviews and their responses to a teachers' expectation questionnaire. The outcomes when triangulated revealed the extent to which the teachers' expectations impacted on students' academic achievement and aspirations for future success.

The responses and findings were robust, over-whelming and very significant. The students indicated through their causal attributions that the task English was extremely difficult; and that they were affected by their lack of ability and resultant low grades. They also indicated that there were significant relationships with the effects of their teachers, translated into teacher expectation, interaction and engagements. In addition, they admitted that they needed to expend more effort on their studies to improve their grades. This last point was unanimously confirmed by their teachers.

As a result of the students' responses, their causal attribution patterns that emerged revealed that the students responded quite uniquely to the Causal Attribution Theory. By their making significant ascriptions to all Weiner's original causal attribution factors except luck indicated that the students attempted to mask their opinions and feelings by making ascriptions to both internal and external factors for their locus, controllability and stability dimensions. The students have accepted some responsibility for their academic outcome but they have also wisely externalised that responsibility on their teachers and on the task.

Task difficulty was the external factor to which they made double-awarded significant attributions but task difficulty is often used as an indicator of low ability levels. If this is so, and the students had also made double significant attributions to low ability, based on their perceptions of their grades received, then they, the students, had displayed causal attribution patterns which were

ego-defensive. In so doing, they were indicating that their self-esteem levels would have been impaired and they would be operating at levels of learned helplessness and gross frustration coupled with much shame and anxiety. This sense of frustration and hopelessness was compounded by the significantly negative impact of their teachers and their expectations about their efforts to succeed.

The students who were selected as the representatives of the Form Three population at the three academic levels of high, medium and low also spoke volumes through their own life-stories and their responses to their opinions of the teachers and of their JSS experience in general. The students were almost classical representatives of the psychological and emotional experiences in school. Except for the two young successful female participants all of the other four students practised skipping and breaking class and used the psychoanalytical tools to mask their hatred for their significant other adults, the teachers, and their feelings of inferiority, alienation and rejection. Their major weapons adopted were deviance and rebellion to their teachers, and seeking affiliation with their peers.

The teachers were perceived as being always late or absent or as those from whose classes the students were sent out and/or put out and to which they were not encouraged to return. Some were perceived as showing favouritism and racism and generally they were analysed as having little or rather very low expectations for the students' academic achievement. The students said that the teachers' classes were boring and not as meaningful as those they

were presently attending at their new school. The students said that they perceived the effect of the teacher as being a most significant factor in their functioning in a failure syndrome. This impact was most significantly felt by those students who performed average to good and who had the potential and the capacity to excel.

The teachers admitted that they did not really seek to help the students, and that they were happy when those who were troublesome, especially the boys were put out of the class which became less disruptive in their absence. The students claimed and the teachers confirmed that they preferred to teach a few selected students around their table rather than the whole variety of levels of intelligence. The students interpreted this behaviour as being racial and biased and a display of gross favouritism. The teachers rejected this claim.

In their defence, the teachers felt that the students misunderstood their reactions and they did not seek their help. Yet the majority of the teachers said that they had never willingly and freely sought to help any student. In fact some said that they had never helped any student at all. Additionally, 64% of these teachers felt very strongly that the majority of the students would get into trouble with the law.

Obviously these teachers did not have high expectations for the students as their level of engagement and interaction with the students remained minimal. Even though many of these said students represented the school at national events and were lauded publicly for their outstanding feats, yet the teachers

never helped those outstanding contributors in their academic pursuits. In fact, the teachers have epitomised many of the negative psychological ills, such as the inability to motivate and show interest in the students' academic performance and the often criticised unethical negative psychological impact of the Pygmalion effect.

I will be exhibiting extreme naivety if I neglected to mention the parents, who initiated the entire socialization process for the students. The parents and other significant others, including the teachers, possess the ability to mould and create the platform for the students to spring off to develop motivation and mobility towards academic achievement from an early age. They then are responsible for the initial development of the students' generalised beliefs about themselves and their acquisition of language. In their exit questionnaires, 60% of the students recognised their parents as being the most helpful person in their attainment of success, even though only two actually mentioned their father.

Capitalising on the entire process of socialization at home, and also in the school and community environment were part of the rationale of the framers of the junior secondary school system. They therefore located the 20 junior secondary schools in remote local environments and were determined to assist the students in those communities to develop eventually. But the teachers in the system were not part of the local environments. They came from outside and they came to the school with pre-conceived notions about

the students and the environs, and in most instances with the trappings of the traditional and elitist concepts of what constitutes schooling and education *per se*.

Those students of 2001 have identified the teachers, their expectations and their effects, not the home, as the significant negative causal attributor/contributor to their low performance outcomes. This response was surprising because of the proliferation of single parents in the homes, and in many cases, only the mother, or the grandmother were the care-givers. The fathers were absent and the children were often times left unsupervised. It was therefore left to the school and the teachers, to whom the students looked for that care and concern especially in the academics to provide the needed encouragement and nurturing, but those were not forthcoming. Instead the students obtained further rejection and alienation. Little wonder then that teacher effect was recognised as a significant contributor to their dislike for English and their failure at that very crucial and most important subject and their aversion and avoidance of continued failure. Unfortunately though, this serious disappointment with the teachers and school may result in the students' continued avoidance of the motivational desire to want to learn, as expectancy of continued failure and rejection looms high.

The majority of the teachers were young, and all the English teachers were female. The gender issue, even though not revealed as significant seemed to have had some effect on the male students' reactions to their teachers. Many of these said male students were not deviant in the classes of the male



teachers, but they displayed a totally different attitude in their English classes. Many of these teachers, not only those of English have not sought to nor have they continued to develop themselves professionally. In fact, the older teachers were guilty of this level of complacency and they have indicated more frustration with the students especially as they have remained trying to teach the students using the same old, re-hashed notes and teaching methods of thirty years ago.

On reflection, in thirty years, over 900 student graduates have passed through the corridors of the school annually but only a few can boast of being highly successful. Many of the students enter the school under the stigma of their being under-achievers. Therefore for many, like the most brilliant student who made the highest grade, Keisha, their entire three-year stay at the school was spent with their parents seeking help to get them transferred to another better perceived institution. As a consequence, Keisha's life at the school was not enjoyable as she spent most of her stay there withdrawn and uninvolved in the social and other extra curricular activities. However, her intrinsic motivation levels to succeed remained high and sustained and she has continued to excel at her new school. The same cannot be said of the over 90% of the students who did not receive a passing grade at the 14+ English Language examination. They have lived and persistently operated under the shroud of persistent failure. For many of them their literacy levels were quite low and the systems to motivate them to want to learn were either not in place or ineffective.

The attempts of the Ministry of Education at hiring the retired teachers as remedial teachers have not been beneficial because they have returned with their same middle class traditional old-school methods of teaching and learning and were attempting to use these ineffective, outdated methods on the twenty first century, fast foods and computer-age students.

Therefore, the teachers young and old need to be re-trained, re-tooled and re-engineered to be critical thinkers and reflexive educators. The entire curriculum needs to be differentiated to facilitate learning and the reversal of wrong values and attitudes. The different types or literacy problems must be addressed, such as the economics, the cultural and social graces, the relevance and meaningfulness of life itself, and the significance of school/education to their lived experiences. I have posited that once the refashioning of the curriculum is geared towards being more pro-active, holistic and student-centred, and once the different more pertinent lived experiences of the students are addressed in a real inter-active and dramatic manner, using video and newspaper and other forms of media which the students can develop, and once their creativity levels are allowed to be explored to the max, then these students will release a burst of energy and positive synergy which will foist them into the realms of creativity and the production of natural goods and services as their fore-fathers did out of things discarded.

The emotional trauma and the negatives can be strategically reduced if there would arise a cadre of teachers who are willing to take a fresh reflexive approach to the profession, realising that the main client is the student. This

stance will force teachers to focus on releasing that which is positive in each individual student so that he/she can be placed on the road to employability and becoming a productive citizen. It starts with a mind-set which is prepared to elicit the good out of each person. Accentuate the positives and motivate and release the students to develop their better selves. It can be done. There is hope yet which burns eternal in my own soul.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Indubitably, I recommend that the shift system at the school ends forthwith and the school be modified to a full five year, all day school. This major change will have implications for the staff and students. Here are some of the other recommendations I have already made within the body of the paper.

The members of staff should be trained in specific strategies and skills to facilitate the teaching of the more brilliant and gifted students, as well as the weaker ones. The teachers should also be requested to use their expertise across the shifts. In other words the brilliant and more experienced teachers should be placed, if even on loan, on the other shift to compensate for, and mentor the new, young entrants who were invariably placed there. Conversely the younger teachers can be placed transferred initially as a period of internship.

No new young teacher entrants should be allowed into the classroom except they have been trained and have become efficient; and demonstrate the types of values and attitudes that exude deep care, love and concern for all students without showing favour. These young teachers must show that they are familiar with and will use the research reflexive practice approach in their teaching strategies. Other provisions must be made for their continued re-training until they arrive at the mind-set that every child is important and all the nation's children must be taught at all times and under all circumstances. Any indication of racism and favouritism must be corrected immediately. The

teachers must understand and display proper ethical language codes, voice tones and words. Once that type of resolve is relayed to the students, this ought to result in increases in student motivation because every lesson must be well-planned and delivered with enthusiasm, drama and vigour that will be infectious and rewarding. The teachers who cannot or are unwilling to comply with such teacher ideals should be relegated to clerical positions on the staff. They ought to be removed from the classroom immediately for teacher expectations demand high standards in order to impact student mastery.

As a result I recommend that teachers' expectations should be assessed on competency and on performance based levels of efficiency that demand that teachers demonstrate certain forms of behaviour and attitudes that are distinctly linked to teachers' highlighting of the positives in students.. Therefore, teachers should be assessed on their use of given strategies, appropriate teaching skills and on their practice of reflective teaching that can affect and change their students' performance to develop standards of positive learner attitudes, critical thinking skills, creativity and improved academic performance to self-determination, autonomy and mastery.

As an appropriate inclusive teaching strategy, I recommend the introduction of the THEMATIC APPROACH to teaching the curriculum. This approach requires a whole school involvement in teaching the curriculum at the same time, according to a THEME. Once the staff has selected a theme to be used for a certain period of time, then all the teachers of the various subject

departments/areas must select the appropriate aspects of their Curriculum which can be dove-tailed into the teaching of that THEME to be taught and worked together simultaneously. What is therefore demanded of the various departments in each school is to re-configure, re-order and re-schedule the delivery of the content units in the Curriculum to periods in time when they can be taught across the school and shift concurrently. Immediately, one can see the prospects for reinforcement, for the students' building of schemas on which new information can be stored and then internalized. The periods needed for reflection and recall will be readily provided and enhanced. Above all, the students will be able to recognise the connection, relevance and meaningfulness of what is being taught across the curriculum to their lived reality. Learning must take place in such an environment.

All the other ills of the education system should be addressed in an open manner. The students' present cognitive skills and academic performance levels are deficient and leave much to be desired. What is needed is a differentiated curriculum which will re-focus the students to assess their own skills and strengths and use them as the starting point to develop their own creativity and economic base. Every effort should be made with the able assistance of a re-constituted and re-focussed CDD and education system to ensure that the teachers utilize all the various learning theories and teaching strategies continuously, in each class and for each lesson.

The purpose of schooling has to be re-defined to include students' preparation for employment; to become productive, marketable citizens. The nation's

most valuable resources, our human beings and human and cultural capital must not be fritted away as fodder at the end of a bullet. From an early age the students need to develop a value system in which they are taught about the preciousness and purpose of life and the presence of the Supreme God. Their own spiritual and moral values have to be re-directed and they, especially the young African males, must begin to see value in life and living. They must understand that no one dead can be of any use to anyone and that there are many good reasons to stay alive. Meaningful, relevant and purposefully directed education with a thrust to employability, cultural acceptance and upward social mobility can provide many reasons to live and attain mastery.

Thus the focus of the education system on the culture, the drama, dance, music, the sports and the like will provide another platform from which the students can divert and recharge their energies into a strong expressive Arts component. Whether one is in agreement or not, it is those students of the Arts who will be called upon to represent the country as ambassadors. They must be taught and given the opportunity to hone and employ all the social graces and skills. For the individual's own development of his/her self-esteem an association with the Arts is highly recommended.

Additionally, the significance of the Mathematics and Science subjects at all levels in the school system must be emphasized. In our education system, exposure to several professions and valued careers such as medicine, dentistry, aeronautics, aviation and engineering, are denied to individuals who

do not obtain certification in and have a deep understanding of the Sciences. This is one area in which there is a concerted ethnic bias and discrimination in the distribution of the access to these academic subjects, especially in the prestige schools. But at the JSS level even though Science is taught the significance is under-valued. With so many young males of one ethnicity being told from an early age that the area of Science is not attainable for them, little wonder then that the wide array of jobs that are science based are not accessible to them. This situation must be immediately addressed. A concerted effort should be made to have these marginalised African males see the necessity, ease and value of the sciences so that they will find another dimension in the connectivity between the relevance of the academics and technology and their future employability.

Finally I recommend a serious re-structuring of the CDD of which I am an integral member. Our engine room function is not pro-actively making the rapid changes in the system as expeditiously as they are needed. Yes, through my recent efforts the significance of the Arts is being recognised. Physical Education is also being recognised as an academic subject. However, that thrust at arriving at the position of being the main movers and re-shapers of the curriculum is not yet attained because of the need to be more involved in reflexive research practice which would zero in on the deficiencies in the individual schools and provide prompt, appropriate and meaningful solutions.



## REFLECTIONS

The journey to this point has been long and arduous. Like the students, I have learnt to understand what it means to redouble my efforts and restart at attempting to put shape, meaning and relevance to my own ideas and thoughts.

I have therefore grown and developed with the work and it is now my hope that this contribution will benefit the society.

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# **APPENDICES**



# QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix i

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ RELIGION \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_ SEX M [ ] F [ ]

HOME ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ AGE [ ] Years

Please tick off the appropriate box which best represents your true feelings about your results in English 14±

	DISAGREE	AGREE
1. I think that the grade I have received in English indicate that I have tried	[ ]	[ ]
2. I tried a new way of studying English and it worked	[ ]	[ ]
3. I listened attentively in my English class	[ ]	[ ]
4. I feel interested in studying for English subject	[ ]	[ ]
5. I studied very hard for my English exams.	[ ]	[ ]
6. I did not have enough time to study for the exams	[ ]	[ ]
7. If I had put more effort into my studies for my English my performance would have been better	[ ]	[ ]
8. Attending class lectures is not necessary to doing well in the examination.	[ ]	[ ]
9. Many questions in the English examination were tricky or misleading or unclear	[ ]	[ ]
10. The questions in the English examination were quite simple	[ ]	[ ]
11. The areas covered in the examination were not adequately explained by the teacher	[ ]	[ ]
12. The questions in the English examination were covered in class	[ ]	[ ]
13. The English examination was too long.	[ ]	[ ]
14. I could not relate the questions in the examination to my notes	[ ]	[ ]
15. There was too much material to learn in order to do the test well	[ ]	[ ]
16. I found the English examination too difficult	[ ]	[ ]
17. I think that I have a good understanding of the things taught	[ ]	[ ]
18. I used common sense	[ ]	[ ]
19. I can remember what is taught me fairly well without having much more explanation	[ ]	[ ]

- 20.1 knew most of the material but I did not know them well enough  
to make a better grade in English [ ] [ ]
- 21.1 did not understand the English that well [ ] [ ]
22. My performance on the examination depends on my ability to understand  
all the basic concepts and principles [ ] [ ]
23. Many questions in the examination required careful thinking rather  
than pure guessing [ ] [ ]
24. It is a matter of luck or chance for anyone to have done well in  
The English examination [ ] [ ]
25. I asked God to help me remember what I had studied in English [ ] [ ]
26. I prefer multiple choice questions so that I could guess the answer [ ] [ ]
27. I do better on writing essays [ ] [ ]
28. I was fortunate to get the questions that I had prepared for [ ] [ ]
29. I think I will have better luck on the next examination [ ] [ ]
30. The grade that I have received in English indicates success [ ] [ ]
31. My English teacher was often absent [ ] [ ]
32. I think that my English teacher did not understand [ ] [ ]
33. I did not have an English teacher [ ] [ ]
34. I have no appropriate place to study English at home [ ] [ ]
35. There is no one at home who will help me with my English [ ] [ ]
36. I can improve my grade, if I get much more help [ ] [ ]

I like English because

---



---



---

I dislike English because

---



---



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## THE TEACHERS' EXPECTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

In order to facilitate the research on the junior secondary school students' responsiveness to teacher expectations of them, kindly complete and return the following questionnaire.

Name ..... (optional)

Subject Area .....

Kindly tick the appropriate box.

Age: 25-30 [ ] 31-40 [ ] 41—50 [ ] 51&above [ ]

No of years as a teacher: Under 5 [ ] 5 —10 [ ] 10-15 [ ] 20-30 [ ] Over 30 [ ]

1. Junior secondary school students are very difficult to teach, Yes I I No I I  
Sometimes I I

Give comments on your response

.....'

2. You have helped students to develop their career path Yes I I No I I  
Sometimes I ]

Give comments on your response

.....

3. Students often come to you with their problems. Yes I ] No I J Sometimes I  
I

Give comments on your response

.....

4. Several of your students have the potential to fall into the hands of the law  
Yes I ] No [ ]

Give reasons for your comments

.....

.....

5. Make any suggestions, if any, for the improvement of the students of your  
school and subject department

.....

**STUDENTS' EXIT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name: .....

School:.....

Dear Students,

1. You are about to leave secondary school permanently. I want to know how you really feel now that your secondary school days at this level are drawing to a close?

---

---

2. In what ways do you feel differently now than when you were leaving the Junior Secondary School?

---

---

3. What to you is the major difference between the junior secondary school and your present school?

---

---

4. Who has been the most important person in helping you to make a positive change towards school?

---

5. State exactly what they did.

---

---

6. What are your plans for the future?

## Time

John was always breaking class,  
He ran around the school very  
John was only in form one,  
So all he wanted to do was have fun.

People spoke to him for his own good,  
But he never understood.  
He said, "What I'm doing is not a crime,"  
And, "anyhow I still have time."

A year had past,  
And John was in a form two class.  
The time went so quickly,  
And this surprised everybody.

Study your work John was told,  
But John wanted to be the best footballer in the world.  
He said, "What I'm doing is not a crime,"  
And "anyhow I still have time."

John was then in form three,  
He thought he was going abroad to meet his family.  
The end of this story for John is very sad,  
For he till this day is still in Trinidad.

While playing football he got a serious injury,  
And he could not get a job to support his family.  
The job he was so sure he would get,  
Years pass and he still hasn't gotten it yet.

He ended up living a life of crime,  
**ALL BECAUSE HE THOUGHT HE HAD TIME.**

Mr. Wood (Teacher P.M. shift)

TABLE A - Shows the Religious Groupings

RELIGION				Valid
Cum	Value	Frequency	Percent	Percent
Value Label				
Percent				
RC - Roman Catholic	1	88	29.3	29.3
29.3				
AC - Anglican	2	7	2.3	2.3
31.7				
MUS - Muslim	3	12	4.0	4.0
35.7				
HIN Hindu	4	61	20.3	20.3
56.0				
PENT - Pentecostal	5	54	18.0	18.0
74.0				
BAP - Baptist	6	29	9.7	9.7
83.7				
JW - Jehovah Witness	7	2	.7	.7
84.3				
PRES - Presbyterian	8	26	8.7	8.7
93.0				
OTH - Others	9	21	7.0	7.0
100.0				
		-----	-----	-----
	Total	300	100.0	100.0

TABLE B

Age Frequency Table

AGE				Valid	
Cum	Value	Frequency	Percent	Percent	
Value Label					
Percent					
	11	1	.3	.3	
.3	13	3	1.0	1.0	
1.3	14	38	12.7	12.7	
14.0	15	172	57.3	57.3	
71.3	16	73	24.3	24.3	
95.7	17	13	4.3	4.3	100
		-----	-----	-----	
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

**TABLE C**

**- Overall frequency Distribution and Values of the Actual Grades received by the students**

Value Label	Grade	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum Percent
	9	3	1.0	1.0	1.0
	10	2	.7	.7	1.7
	11	2	.7	.7	2.3
	12	5	1.7	1.7	4.0
	13	2	.7	.7	4.7
	14	4	1.3	1.3	6.0
	15	4	1.3	1.3	7.3
	16	1	.3	.3	7.7
	17	8	2.7	2.7	10.3
	18	5	1.7	1.7	12.0
	19	5	1.7	1.7	13.7
	20	7	2.3	2.3	16.0
	21	6	2.0	2.0	18.0
	22	5	1.7	1.7	19.7
	23	7	2.3	2.3	22.0
	24	10	3.3	3.3	25.3
	25	13	4.3	4.3	29.7
	26	9	3.0	3.0	32.7
	27	9	3.0	3.0	35.7
	28	9	3.0	3.0	38.7
	29	7	2.3	2.3	41.0
	30	10	3.3	3.3	44.3
	31	10	3.3	3.3	47.7
	32	9	3.0	3.0	50.7
	33	11	3.7	3.7	54.3
	34	9	3.0	3.0	57.3
	35	8	2.7	2.7	60.0
	36	6	2.0	2.0	62.0
	37	10	3.3	3.3	65.3
	38	2	.7	.7	66.0
	39	3	1.0	1.0	67.0
	40	7	2.3	2.3	69.3
	41	4	1.3	1.3	70.7
	42	6	2.0	2.0	72.7
	43	12	4.0	4.0	76.7
	44	2	.7	.7	77.3
	45	2	.7	.7	78.0
	46	10	3.3	3.3	81.3
	47	3	1.0	1.0	82.3
	48	8	2.7	2.7	85.0
	49	6	2.0	2.0	87.0
	50	3	1.0	1.0	88.0
	51	4	1.3	1.3	89.3
	52	4	1.3	1.3	90.7
	53	4	1.3	1.3	92.0
	54	4	1.3	1.3	93.3
	56	3	1.0	1.0	94.3
	57	4	1.3	1.3	95.7
	58	1	.3	.3	96.0
	60	1	.3	.3	96.3
	61	1	.3	.3	96.7
	62	1	.3	.3	97.0
	63	3	1.0	1.0	98.0
	65	1	.3	.3	98.3
	66	1	.3	.3	98.7
	67	1	.3	.3	99.0
	69	1	.3	.3	99.3
	72	1	.3	.3	99.7
	75	1	.3	.3	100.0
		-----	-----	-----	
		Total	300	100.0	100.0
Valid cases	300	Missing cases	0		



TABLE D

*Distribution of the Frequency the Students placed on their own perception of the grade they received*

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RECORDED STUDENT PERCEPTION OF THEIR GRADES RECEIVED

Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	101	33.7	33.7
	2	190	63.3	97.0
	3	9	3.0	100.0
		-----	-----	
Total		300	100.0	

**TABLE E :**

*Breakdown of frequency and value distribution between the students grades and their perception of the task difficulty*

**RECORDED TASK DIFFICULTY**

Value Label Percent	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cum
YES	1.00	149	49.7	49.7	49.7
No	2.00	150	50.0	50.0	99.7
NR	3.00	1	.3	.3	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

**TASK DIFFICULTY**

Cum Value Label	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
5.0	10	15	5.0	5.0
10.7	11	17	5.7	5.7
24.0	12	40	13.3	13.3
49.7	13	77	25.7	25.7
70.3	14	62	20.7	20.7
82.7	15	37	12.3	12.3
91.7	16	27	9.0	9.0
97.7	17	18	6.0	6.0
98.7	18	3	1.0	1.0
99.3	19	2	.7	.7
99.7	21	1	.3	.3
100.0	23	1	.3	.3
	Total	300	100.0	100.0

TABLE F:

*Distribution of Frequency and Values of students' responses to Home Effect***HOME EFFECT**


---

Value Label Percent	Value	Frequency	Percent	Percent
	1	162	54.0	54.0
54.0	2	138	46.0	46.0
100.0				
	Total	300	100.0	100.0

**HOME EFFECT - recorded home effect**

Cum Value Label Percent	Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
	3	77	25.7	25.7
25.7	4	85	28.3	28.3
54.0	5	122	40.7	40.7
94.7	6	15	5.0	5.0
99.7	7	1	.3	.3
100.0				
	Total	300	100.0	100.0

---