Voices from Saint Lucia:
A Dialogue on Curriculum Change in a Small Island State

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Abstract

Voices from Saint Lucia: A Dialogue on Curriculum Change in a Small Island State

This research aims to identify the issues pertinent to the implementation of new curricula in the small island state of Saint Lucia and focuses in particular on the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)[1] Harmonized Language Arts Curriculum, which was developed as part of the OECS Education Reform project. The intention of this research is to fill the gaps in significant information on, and knowledge of, how implementation processes work in postcolonial, small island states; in particular those of the OECS, by giving voice to those hitherto unheard in the reform process. The key question posed by the research: "How is the curriculum implementation process described by insider voices in curriculum discourse in Saint Lucia?" stems from my argument that successful curricular innovation in this context depends on radical but systemically cohesive change processes brought about through the decolonising method of privileging the personal voice.

The study draws primarily on the literature of postcolonial theory and curriculum change and is qualitative in nature, using a dialogic approach to collecting data by way of audio/video taped conversations, focus groups and a panel discussion. Data was collected over a nine month period through conversations with participants who were representative of various strata of the education system: from policy makers through education officers, principals and teachers. Data was analysed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006) and sorted, classified and coded through a combination of electronic and manual processes.

The results indicate that despite the plethora of reform initiatives in the region, there remains an absence of mutually intelligible dialogue within, between and among the various groups involved in the process of curriculum implementation; that this phenomenon is rooted in entrenched postcolonial attitudes and this severely hampers the success of the innovation. The findings illustrate the need for developing levelling, collaborative systems designed to circumvent historically bureaucratic strictures and structures in order to facilitate institutional support, strategic preparation, ongoing professional development and organized instructional supervision.

Veronica Simon

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[1] The OECS consists of seven full member states: Antigua & Barbuda, , Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines and two associated member states: Anguilla, British Virgin Islands (BVI)

Chapter One: Researcher Voice - Background Philosophy and Intention

The time will come
when, with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other's welcome (Walcott, 1976, p.76)

1.1 Introduction

This study is a qualitative investigation into experiences and issues related to curriculum implementation in my small island state. However, the exploration and subsequent reporting/retelling is as much reflective of my own metamorphosis as a researcher as it is of the context and populace; and I have, indeed, encountered myself in the mirror at many turns during the process.

Chapter One provides a context for the study and I introduce myself as the researcher within that setting. Therefore, it begins with a personal narrative which underscores my positionality and provides background information on the phenomenon in question and the characteristics of the case. Sikes & Goodson state, "Research practice cannot be disembodied. It is impossible to take the researcher out of any type of research or any stage of the research process" (Sikes & Goodson, 2003, p. 34). The researcher is always integral to the research and brings an amalgamation of life experiences, values and professional experience to the research process; therefore, in the opening soliloquy I present some autobiographical information which explains what brought me to the research and my orientation towards the study of curriculum in general and the language arts in particular. This is followed by a description of the context within which the investigation takes place, a statement on my philosophy and ethical cogitations, an explanation of the focus of the research, identification of objectives and key questions and its limitations. The chapter sets the tone of the

thesis, which is mostly informal, in keeping with the central motif of dialogue and presented predominantly as a conversation with the reader.

1.2 Opening Soliloquy

My involvement in education can be said to have begun in the early nineteen sixties at age four, when I lined up a variety of empty cans, bottles and dead batteries into lecture classroom formation and assigned them the names of my Infant School classmates. I remember spending hours drilling this assortment of paraphernalia in Spelling and Tables, armed with a wooden ruler in faithful imitation of the teachers who ruled my infant school world with strict discipline, rote learning and rods of correction. In my small Caribbean island of Saint Lucia, still under British rule, corporal punishment was unquestioned, even encouraged and children were expected to be seen and not heard until addressed directly by teacher or other adult. I was fascinated by the world of books and the nuances of language with its myriad sounds and patterns and my weekends were spent revelling in the cadences of my English Reader[2] as I informed my inanimate subjects/students that "Dan is a man in a van" and wondered aloud, "Can a pig dance a jig for a fig?" As I look back, I wonder if my tendency to convert tin cans to children was in any way related to the fact that my English reader introduced us to character and drama in the line, "Twirly and Twisty were two screws" and I came up with all sorts of adventures for these two. Being born British in a small colonial dependency, meant that I sang lustily, "God save our gracious Queen...long to reign over us" at school assemblies and looked forward to the annual Queen's Birthday celebrations with anticipation of the rock cakes and soft drinks which were distributed to school children after we had done the requisite

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[2] Cutteridge, J.O. Royal West Indian Readers 1st Primer. Cheltenham, UK: Nelson Thorne

waving of the British flag. So we sang with gusto as we awaited this bounty from Her Majesty and I made sure that my collections of inanimate "pupils" were suitably schooled in the singing of what was then our national anthem. These memories were still very vivid when years later, I read Austin Clarke's novel, *"Growing up Stupid Under the Union Jack"*.

With a mother who had become a teacher herself at age 15, immediately on leaving primary school, my interest in books was constantly nurtured. My mother had worked her way (as most did in those days) up from "Pupil Teacher" status through a series of examinations at the various levels until she was able to attend Teacher's College and I remember admiring the beautiful handwriting on her many projects and essays which I read thoroughly as soon as I could, even without understanding most of what I read. Apart from Derek Walcott's poem "A City's Death by Fire" the reading of which accompanied my father's vivid description of the 1948 fire in our capital, Castries, I do not remember having read any other Caribbean writers in my early years. The books my brothers and I devoured in our childhood included Enid Blyton's Famous Five series at first, then later the Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys mysteries. Our Saturday routine (after the mandatory trip to the Castries market with our parents) was visiting the public library and then the bookstore. Aesop's Fables, Arabian Nights, books by Lewis Carroll, Charles Kingsley, Mark Twain, Rudyard Kipling, Tolkien and C.S. Lewis filled my imagination. Nothing was out of bounds and when I had read every single book in the children's section of the library my mother eventually let me select books on her account from the 'upstairs' adult section, to the great consternation of the librarian. There was no other way to appease my voracious reading appetite but I suspect that she also wanted to draw my attention away from my father's Masonic Lodge books which she had caught me trying to decipher.

Education was always at the forefront of my consciousness. During the frequent losses of electricity in those days, we immediately went into "General Knowledge" mode and engaged in quizzes and competitions with our neighbours across the road, drawing on all the knowledge we had acquired in school about Caribbean and world geography, political affairs and mental arithmetic. Secondary school brought me a whole new world of English literature and I delighted in Shakespeare, wandered the streets of London with Dickens and consumed Austen, Hardy and Thackeray. Best of all, I was deemed old enough by my father, to accompany him to performances of the St. Lucia Arts Guild, a theatre company founded by Roderick Walcott, together with his twin brother Derek and other artistic friends. I was lucky enough to have seen Shakespearean plays come to life, but for the first time I began to be exposed to works by non- British writers like Lorraine Hansbury's *A Raisin in the Sun*, Kamau Brathwaite's *Odale's Choice*, Derek Walcott's musical, *The Joker of Seville* and Roderick Walcott's *Banjo Man* (I was singing the songs from these plays for months). My secondary schooling at the all-girls' St. Joseph's Convent (the counterpart of the only other secondary school on island at the time) perpetuated the rigid discipline and rote learning that characterized primary schooling. We were expected to model our lives on the blue-eyed Irish nuns whose mission was to imbue us native girls with Catholic godliness and fill our heads with enough Latin and Mathematics to successfully sit the Cambridge overseas examinations.

By the time I got into the St. Lucia 'A' Level College I was aware of that rich global world of literature just waiting to be delved into. My choice of A Level subjects were Literature, History and French. By this time the Black Power movement had caught my imagination and that of my peers and we had long, impassioned discussions on what it meant to be black. For the first time, I was able to see the history of the West

Indies as my history and I began to recognise the post-colonial themes that ran through the West Indian and African literature that I was reading. I realised that my primary and secondary school curriculum had in no way given me a sense of self. I began to read Cesaire, Garvey, Achebe, wa Thiongo, Soyinka and Armah. I read Fanon, sharing his anger and frustration in *Black Skin White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* and closer to home, Eric Williams' *Inward Hunger* and *Capitalism and Slavery*. I read Naipaul, Selvon, St. Omer and Lamming and saw my Caribbean world with different eyes; for the first time understanding why the faces of bank tellers had been predominantly light complexioned and why intonation and attitudes of hotel workers shifted according to the colour of the face before them[3] and I knew for sure that I would do nothing else if I did not teach; if I did not ensure that new generations would not skip blithely through childhood without that self-knowledge which I felt was so late in coming to me even at age 16. A critical lesson for me was the way in which literature gave one a voice; that no matter what the oppression, there was always a way to fight back – through words; and after reading Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, I knew that I could get others to feel the freedom that came from revelling in words; from the learning and unlearning that comes from writing and talking and interacting. So against my father's expectations that I would study law, I travelled to Jamaica and registered for an Honours degree in English at the University of the West Indies. I was in literary heaven as we explored every genre of writing from almost every era and culture and later, when I was finally unleashed on the students of the St. Joseph's Convent in San Fernando, Trinidad as their Literature teacher, I explored every possible means of getting students to find and learn to love their literary voices. From being a teacher myself, through professional training in

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[3] The banking sector at the time was predominantly foreign owned and accepted practise was the hiring of Caucasian or very lightly pigmented mixed race employees especially at customer service counters. Hotel workers also tended to adopt North American or British accents when attending to foreign guests.

pedagogy and finally as a teacher-trainer, my emphasis was on finding ways, not only to make children delight in learning, but also to get teachers to delight in confident engagement in the classroom and with each other. I felt that despite the still lacklustre curriculum prevalent in our post-colonial schools, it was the teacher's responsibility to imbue it with what was important to our children. By then, the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) had been born (despite much conservative outcry and fear of losing our "good British education") and Eurocentric textbooks began to be slowly replaced by some with Caribbean author names.

Later, I fine-tuned my rudimentary teaching skills by pursuing a post graduate Diploma and a Master's degree in Education and began a career as a teacher-trainer. Those years were very fulfilling. I enjoyed interacting with teachers, getting them to find their "inner child". I was astonished that so few of them read or had any knowledge of what I considered to be typical children's literature and we spent a lot of time reading and reviewing children's books. My specialty courses were The Teaching of Children's Literature and The Teaching of Oral Communication. I was able to merge the two into active, dynamic model lessons which included lots of dramatization and choral speaking and I saw teachers beginning to transform their practice by making their classrooms less silent and teacher-dominated and more interactive and student-centred. My greatest satisfaction was witnessing that transformation in action during the weeks of teaching practice, even though only a few teachers were finding their voices in schools and standing up to Principals who demanded topic separated timetables and rigid cross-year group schemes of work rather than integrated language blocks. However, those who persisted with the new methodology they had been exposed to were becoming more aware that enabling

students to take greater charge of their learning made for a more positive and rewarding classroom environment.

When I finally gave up active teaching for an administrative position, I did not entirely leave behind the world of the teacher and classroom. In my current position, while I no longer have direct contact with the processes related to the development of primary school curricula; I continue to work with schools on the professional development of teachers and I am in contact with teachers and other education professionals who pursue degrees in education and education leadership at The University of the West Indies. Managing continuing education means that I can get involved with unlimited initiatives and projects that would also entail professional development. For example, in my capacity as Head of the University of the West Indies Open Campus site in Saint Lucia, I ensured that summer programmes, workshops and conferences aimed primarily at developing teacher skills were organized and teachers got to explore Teaching Language Through Movement, Using the Visual Arts in the Language Arts Classroom and Theatre Arts in Education.

During my thirty three year career in education, I was often called upon by regional institutions like CARICOM[4], the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC)[5] and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)[6] to assist with the development of curriculum and evaluation of learning outcomes. This enabled me to interact with teachers and education officials throughout the region. Throughout my engagement with teachers, I noticed that what they seemed to relish most, was the opportunity to

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[4] CARICOM is an organization comprising fifteen Caribbean countries and dependencies, existing primarily to promote economic cooperation and unified foreign policy.
[5] CXC was established in 1972 to design, conduct and certify Caribbean regional examinations through a Council representative of the 16 participating territories.
[6] The OECS is a sub-regional grouping of nine Caribbean countries, which came into being in 1981 for the purpose of cooperation and the promotion of unity and solidarity among the members: Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, British Virgin Islands (Associate member), Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Vincent & The Grenadines.

be listened to. Often times they wanted to vent about the frustrations they faced as what one described as "small fry" in the education system; sometimes they wanted to share a discovery they had made incidentally while teaching or some fascinating resources they had come upon or simply the unexpected insights that materialised almost daily as part of their work with children. Yet, there were so few opportunities for any of these to be shared and while there was much talk about new initiatives in education generally or curriculum specifically, there was absolute silence on what was really happening throughout the system in the process of implementing these much-touted innovations.

While engaged in training teachers in the methodology of teaching the language arts, I had also noticed that while teachers were developing new understandings about language teaching, and new skills for application in the classroom during their teaching practice, once back in the school environment, they seemed to engage in behaviours which were vastly different from those demonstrated in the training classroom and in the field during their practicum; and these 'real world' manifestations were shaping their approaches to implementing the curriculum. While many of my teacher-trainer colleagues also noticed and lamented this fact, it had never been discussed or addressed in any way.

Embarking on this study was to me a natural evolution in my mission to encourage the freedom of teachers to develop their own inter and intra communication skills and those of the children in their care. I was convinced that unless teachers found their own voices through exploring and reflecting on their world, they would be unable to implement a modern curriculum designed to empower students. This research arises from my interest in curriculum implementation as a former teacher-trainer and my concern about the absolute silence regarding what was really going on with

curriculum and its implementation. While I had been thinking for some time that someone needed to shine a light on curriculum implementation in Saint Lucia, my decision to be that someone became concrete during my involvement in the development and piloting of a new Harmonized Language Arts Curriculum (HLAC) (described in 2.3, p. 36) which was designed as part of an education reform strategy for primary schools in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). I became involved with this new curriculum when I was asked by the OECS Education Reform Unit (OERU) [7]to be the piloting consultant on the curriculum reform project. At this point, the learning outcomes were being pulled together and the development consultant along with curriculum personnel from the OECS had begun to design a Teachers' Guide. Joining the team at this point enabled me to familiarize myself with the theoretical grounding and philosophy of the new curriculum, prior to coordinating and monitoring the pilot. As I piloted the curriculum in the island states of Antigua, Dominica, Grenada and St. Vincent, I observed an absence of relevant dialogue among key players, and that in fact, many schools seemed merely to have been going through the motions of yet another change exercise. (Simon 2005). This was a major influence on the topic and orientation of my study. At the end of the pilot process, I had written two reports inclusive of recommendations for the OERU. Five years later, I began to wonder how the new curriculum was doing and what was happening with it in the schools. Casual queries and conversations with teachers indicated that there had not been the smooth transition that the OERU had envisaged and perhaps it was time to find out how implementers had been dealing with it.

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[7] The OERU was a sub-unit of the OECS, which was responsible for the coordination and implementation of education reform initiatives. It closed on the completion of the reform project.

1.3 Positionality

It is widely acknowledged that the research that one does is reflective of one's philosophical assumptions and one's choice of topic, research questions and methodology is underpinned by such assumptions which constitute one's world view or paradigm (Patton, 1990; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In defining the term 'paradigm' in the context of research methodology, Hammersley (2012 p. 3) calls it "a set of philosophical assumptions about the phenomena to be studied, about how they can be understood, and even about the proper purpose and product of research". While the broadest delineation of paradigm typology identifies two major paradigms, positivist and post-positivist (quantitative and qualitative), many now shy away from using the term post-positivist to form an umbrella for modern qualitative approaches to research and have found it more useful to provide more focused sub-divisions of the philosophical stances within qualitative enquiry.

In reviewing the diversity of methodological positions and arguments, Hammersley lists a number of questions which sum up the main issues generating debate including one which echoes one of my initial reflexive questions, "Should research be aimed primarily at producing knowledge about educational practices and institutions, or should it be designed directly to improve those practices and institutions?" (Hammersley 2012, p. 2). It is my view that a researcher ought not to have to make such a distinction and in fact this is really not an either/or question. I believe that my research produces a lot of knowledge about what practitioners at all levels really think about the HLAC, how they are coping and what are the issues which consume their curriculum-related lives. I also think that it is logical to assume that decisions and subsequent strategies designed to improve practice depend a great deal on the

knowledge generated about 'on-the-ground' matters; in which case, research of this kind actually addresses both sides of Hammersley's question. He concludes that

> There is no single, all-purpose way of drawing distinctions among the various approaches that can now be found within the field of educational research (see Hammersley 2008). Rather, different typologies, operating at different levels of abstraction and focusing on various lines of distinction, will need to be adopted on different occasions for different purposes. (Hammersley 2012, p. 17).

Based on Higgs (1998) breakdown of research into three major paradigms, quantitative, interpretivist and critical, while I would place my work squarely within the interpretivist paradigm, I believe that by virtue of engaging participants in discursive activity which requires critical review, there are some natural links with the critical paradigm. Intrinsic to the interpretivist paradigm is the phenomenological approach which investigates phenomena, life events and relations as experienced by individuals (Smith, 1997; Finlay, 2009). Therefore interpretivism seeks to understand reality as it is constructed by those who live it and make meaning from it without necessarily seeking to create change. Grace and Ajjawi (2011) advise that phenomenology is compatible with the philosophy that individual world view is unique as well as culturally and historically bound; the most valuable knowledge is derived from the everyday world and the study of humans in situated contexts yields the deepest understanding of their reality. My affinity to this philosophy made it clear to me that my modus of investigation would be a phenomenological one.

It is my view that despite the plethora of reform initiatives in the region, there remains an absence of mutually intelligible dialogue within, between and among the various groups involved in the process of implementing curriculum. I continue to hear the laments from teachers and administrators that 'things are not going right' and language teaching problems persist. There are mumblings and *sotto voce* comments

from: teachers about the dichotomy between this new curriculum and its predecessor and the implications for new approaches to pedagogy; principals who grapple with having to reorient their approaches to timetabling and come to terms with conceptualizing an integrated language arts programme; district education officers who are still unsure about the philosophy of the new curriculum and how it affects their supervision of schools; and curriculum officers who have to determine, select and perhaps design materials which will support the curriculum intentions while providing the necessary support to the teacher in the classroom. However, it is not apparent that there is actually any significant cross communication among these groups and the dialogues seem to be primarily ad hoc, either intra-group or internal monologues; hence the need to uncover what these practitioners are thinking and saying among themselves. As in so many other arenas in this small island society, practitioners are intimidated about making their views known for fear of victimization or being labelled a trouble-maker. I agree with Lavia (2010, p. 30) that "the issue of researcher location...is critical to the quality of questions that ought to emerge in researching community". My positionality as past insider (having worked closely with the primary education community), current outsider (belonging to the tertiary education community and looking in on the primary system), and as community insider in my own postcolonial society, has stimulated my interest in giving voice to matters which affect the overall development of education in my country and others of its ilk. Therefore I believe I am well-positioned to ask the right questions.

The education of a nation's children should take place in an arena where views, perspectives, and philosophical persuasions are ventilated through open discussion and continuous dialogue. I am convinced that moving away from the artificial hierarchies and the attendant power struggles that characterize postcolonial

bureaucracy and stifle real communication in these islands, towards investment of human and social capital through sharing and collaboration, is our only hope of developing workable strategies for successful implementation of curricula. There is a need for voices to be heard and amplified. It is hardly likely that no talk takes place at all within the education systems, but if it cannot be heard, shared and understood by the system partners then we will continue to stumble along, blaming each other or the curriculum document, until another reform initiative takes place and we begin the cycle all over.

My research takes place in the small island context of Saint Lucia because so little is known about the micro processes of our education system outside of the broad spectrum of funded education reform. Typically, research done in this context focuses on end product problems and generally ignores the perspective of those who are expected to make the system work by transforming policy into practice. Preece, Modise and Msweunyane (2008, p. 277) conclude that policy making, by prioritizing quantitative data, fails "to capture issues of identity motivation and power relationships that may well hold the key to the success or failure of policy implementation". However, it is impossible to avoid these issues in postcolonial contexts where so many rigid social and administrative structures would still be recognizable to the original colonists. Issues of identity are critical to the implementation of policy which is meant to provide new and empowering understandings on the part of both education practitioners and students at the end of the process. Assumptions are often made by policy makers or education reformers that their vision is shared throughout the system and the need for reform is obvious to all who are affected by the change. At the same time a blind eye is turned to the colonial legacy of power relationships within which change has to be negotiated and

which in turn also impact on identity and motivation through the system. I concur with Preece et al (2008, p. 267) that "… our interpretation of the world which we inhabit influences our educational mission". However, very seldom are we concerned with the personal interpretations of those who operate within the education system and who are merely expected to play a part according to preconceived notions of their set functions within the system. So the framers design a curriculum framework to espouse the agreed policy (which in the postcolonial context is largely determined by what the world's power brokers are doing); the education officers ensure that the guides are in the schools and in the hands of the teachers; the principals make sure that their schools are doing the 'right' thing; the teachers do what they think is being asked of them and the students are expected to fall in line accordingly.

It appears that an absence of critical and individual thought characterizes the entire production line which consists of top-down communication along a perceived hierarchy, with no room for the type of feedback loops which make systems more efficient and effective and which might illustrate how groups deal with their respective mandates and how their critical interpretations influence what happens within their smaller spheres. This is why I believe that close attention must be paid to the various dialogues that generally take place out of the earshot of the policy makers and never get reflected in the broad survey feedback which tends to guide policy.

Postcolonial hierarchical arrangements normally reinforce the passive role of implementers and it is generally assumed that the education status quo is unchallengeable. I expect, by way of this research, to challenge these assumptions. It is clearly not possible to interrogate what people are saying 'on the ground' without referencing the postcolonial context within which they operate or the wider forces that impinge on what they do whether voluntarily or otherwise. Therefore the

deconstruction of voices in the local dialogue, must be done against the backdrop of the broader dialogues of the postcolonial and globalization debates.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This research aims to paint a picture of the processes, issues and implications of curriculum implementation in St. Lucia with particular reference to the OECS Harmonized Language Arts curriculum. I present the views of the various groups of educators involved in the process of implementation in an effort to identify the issues pertinent to creating cohesive structures for implementation. By engaging in this research, I intended to decipher from the dialogue taking place at all levels of the system, the commonalities and differences of viewpoint, which would impact on the facilitation of those structures. I hoped also to discover and through an analysis of the various intra group and individual dialogues, the level of 'buy in' to and the positionality of individuals on the principles of the curriculum document; their conceptualizations of the nature of curriculum and its implementation process(es) and their perception of their own roles and those of others involved in curriculum reform in the St. Lucian context. My research is intended to contribute to filling the void of the absence of information and knowledge regarding how implementation processes really work in postcolonial, small island states, in particular, those of the OECS sub region.

The study was therefore guided by the following key question:

> **How is the context of curriculum implementation and the related change process represented through insider voices in curriculum discourse in Saint Lucia?**

The following subsidiary questions were also identified:

a) **What specific issues related to the curriculum are delineated by those involved in the implementation process?**

b) **What critical constructs are relevant to curriculum implementation in the St. Lucian context?**

1.5 Significance of the Study

King (1991: 260) wryly points out that all curriculum investigation is useful; "even if results gather dust, unused in a file drawer, their potential for affecting decisions remains." However, this is not the intended fate of this study, which attempts to elucidate the process by which curriculum moves from stated policy to a teaching/learning tool in a small island context. My study is intended to evoke discussion and reflection on the part of personnel at all levels of the curriculum implementation process − from policy makers to teachers. In addition to forcing scrutiny of individual and collective roles, it is expected to raise issues such as institutional support, change management and leadership, school organization and instructional support as part of the reality of implementation in a small Caribbean society; thus contributing to emergent theory of implementation in developing countries. The curriculum implementation dialogue has been largely dominated by voices from Europe and North America and models of educational change have not considered the voices from the small-island, postcolonial state where curriculum change must confront more than the culture of the school and must take into account the very fabric of structures on which the society rests and of which the education system is reflective.

Hall and Loucks (1978), Leithwood (1982), Fullan (2001) have shown that new curricula are always difficult to implement and there is little synchrony between the

developers' intentions and the thinking and practice of teachers. Curriculum development tends to take place in the absence of an understanding of process (Fullan, 1992; Sarason, (1996)) and is largely guided by evaluation of the end users of the curriculum document – the students. As long as this continues to happen and the darkness surrounding the steps taken or procedures harnessed to get it to the classroom persists, it will be impossible to derive a holistic picture of implementation. Blenkin , Edwards & Kelly (1992 p. 30) elucidate

> ...the need for a wider understanding of the nature of the change process, the complexities of human interactions which it involves and the kinds of barriers which exist to block the implementation of change. An understanding of the subtle aspects of educational change...is essential if we are to bring about real change in the curriculum rather than that superficial form of cosmetic change with which recent years have made us all too familiar.

As policy is reviewed and repackaged, those 'subtle aspects of educational change' are often overlooked and very seldom influence the thinking behind reform decisions. This study sheds light on some of those subtle aspects: the ways in which the links of the implementation chain work and why; what exactly are the district education officers (who lack prominence in the literature) doing as the critical link between policy makers and schools; how principals are actually managing the innovation; the coping mechanisms utilised by teachers as they grapple with the implications for personal and professional adjustments necessitated by a new curriculum and the nature of the interrelationships among these groups which make up the curriculum implementation system. The gap between the intended curriculum and the implemented one is well documented in the literature. It is becoming increasingly obvious that not only is there need to understand the processes related to change and innovation, but there are idiosyncratic cultural issues which are brought to bear on

prescribed change models when they are implemented in various societies; hence the need to look closely at the subtleties resident in an understudied environment.

Evaluation of the document and of student outcomes gives but a small dimension of the issues involved in curriculum implementation and therefore cannot provide a comprehensive base for policy review. There is little point in developing new policies to address old issues if they are not informed by a realistic review of the entire process of implementation of their predecessors so that matters like clarity of structures and definition of relationships are dealt with. This study attempts to render a more holistic view of the process by bringing murky areas to light and placing the focus on the need to create strong, clearly defined frameworks which buttress the implementation process and facilitate lasting change, as opposed to the experimental approach which is so commonly taken in small states. Such frameworks can only be developed out of deep understanding of interplay and dialogue on the ground. Nowhere is this more important than in the context of developing countries which are devoid of resources to be frittered away on one innovation after another.

This study also responds to a challenge thrown out by Louisy (2001), in her article outlining a Caribbean perspective to comparative education, for Caribbean researchers to more fully explore issues by engaging in comparative studies rooted in their own cultural context. She echoes the sentiments of Crocombe (1987, p.133) that "a grossly disproportionate share of the studies of islands and island communities has been done from external perceptions". Crossley and Watson (2003, p.137) support the call by Louisy, adding that "there is already much evidence in the existing literature to suggest that, for example, improvements to the quality of education cannot be imposed, and that 'universally applicable' models of educational reform are highly problematic" especially in the case of small states and developing countries. My

research is deliberately situated in a small island state context so as to contribute to the postcolonial discourse with a view to giving voice to the globally marginalized by documenting the realities of such context. Brock & Parker (1985), comment that the compact structures of small states amplify degrees of involvement in a way not possible in larger systems. Similarly, Bray & Hui (1989 p.130), note that "small countries are not simply a scaled down version of large countries" and therefore have idiosyncratic communication or interaction structures that perhaps need to be explained from the inside out. Louisy (1997) agrees that small states are characterized by inter-dependent networks and multiplex social relationships which feature significant overlapping of roles. Therefore the idiosyncratic nature of these relationships surely influences the nature of the dialogues occurring within the education system.

It may be argued that the type of dialogue possible in a less personal and more anonymous context would differ significantly from that inherent to a small island state scenario; however, this difference in no way undermines the importance of the small state voice on the global education stage. Sassen (2009, p.26) cites 'the need to decode the national, and the need to expand the analytic terrain within which we situate globalization- that terrain also includes national spaces', and this is echoed by Appadurrai (2009) who believes that the nation state is as much a player as any other in a global world. Kenway & Fahey (2009) also point out that modern research reflects global or local relationships and illuminates levels of interconnection previously ignored; supported by Rizvi (2009, p.12) who agrees that "it is impossible to look at a place or culture without seeing it as interrelated to other places and cultures, to history and to the cultural politics of interculturality". In a shrinking world, which increasingly finds either small-state teachers or those whom they have

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taught, interacting on a broader global scale outside of their local context, it is important to develop a clearer understanding of the shaping context. Essentially, this is what Rizvi & Lingard (2010, p.65) refer to as "globalization from below' which enhance(s) global connections that resist globalization from above". Even more important, is the necessity of marginalised states and indigenous voices influencing the global dialogue as part of the decolonization 'rite of passage'. The necessity of identifying, establishing and validating the shape of one's own space is, in itself, rationale enough for me, writing as I do from what Tuhiwai Smith (1999, p.1) calls "the vantage point of the colonized". Research such as mine continues the ongoing decolonizing process as it presupposes that the stories told from this part of the globe are of no less value to international discussion than those from any other standpoint.

Kellog (2002, p.xiv) identifies the changing nature of the nation state as one of the four significant trends affecting education today. He also expresses the view that the increasing movement of teachers and students among international systems underscores the need for broader understanding of educational processes since "new ideas are increasingly being implemented in other countries, and lessons learned are becoming more relevant for many contexts defined by multiple cultures and languages". However, while this research will undoubtedly add to the discussion in the international and comparative research field, its greatest relevance is to the informed development of implementation policies which will more realistically guide and support curriculum since there is little locally generated research available to guide education policy in Saint Lucia and its sister OECS territories. Useful policy can only be informed from the ground up and ought not to be constructed entirely from a theoretical space. Isaac (2001), in her research on OECS education reform, found that there was a tendency for decisions to be made based on assumptions and;

> ...the absence of a research and knowledge culture in the ministries limited the extent to which there could be any systematic or empirical bases on which to draw the kind of textured information and analysis with which to devise sound educational policies (Isaac, 2001 p.162).

On the international landscape, particularly from the point of view of international funding agencies, the Caribbean as a region has become marginalised and practically assimilated into a generic "Latin America and the Caribbean". Initiatives, research, policies all use this tag-line, where the small island states are almost an afterthought. The small island states of the Caribbean are very distinct in culture history and life philosophy; their stories must be told and their voices heard at all levels. The CARICOM Advisory Task Force in Education emphasized the need for a "commitment by governments to view research as a key component of reform processes", adding that "research is required for a better understanding of the strengths of present arrangements, the difficulties confronted, the considerations underlying present output and effectiveness." (Carrington, 1993). Education reform is a very high priority in a region which is struggling with unacceptably high levels of illiteracy while attempting to deal with a global environment that is increasingly demanding of well educated human resources. Considerable time, effort and expertise have gone into reform initiatives like the OECS Harmonized Curriculum and this innovation and others to come, should be given every chance to succeed. This study aims to provide the "better understanding" called for by CARICOM by examining and clarifying the processes necessary for successful implementation in the local context from the point of view of those directly involved.

Most significantly, the complete silence from the ground is worrying. Seven years after the development of the HLAC, there is no documented information on how it is being implemented (if at all), what the perceptions are of those responsible for its

implementation and how exactly the curriculum went from design phase to its use in schools. We do not have a culture of policy review in this part of the world, as other societies may. Nor are there documented guidelines for implementation. Brooker and MacDonald (1999, p. 84) report that "in Queensland Australia, a formal trial lasts for up to four years, during which time a new curriculum is evaluated using data collected from relevant stakeholders in schools...and other interested parties." Sadly, this is not the case in St. Lucia where no clear-cut guidelines exist with regard to the process of curriculum implementation. This matter is not typically one which is prominent on the agenda of education personnel; yet the nature of this process and the interrelationships of those involved in it can be the main determiner of whether the intentions of a curriculum are embodied in the classroom or die on paper. In proposing a possible theory of implementation relevant to developing countries, Rogan and Grayson (2003, p.1171) point out that "all too often the attention and energies of policy-makers and politicians are focused on the 'what' of desired educational change, neglecting the 'how'." This is typical of the situation in the OECS, where individual countries have for decades replaced one set of curriculum materials with another every few years in an effort to address the problem of large proportions of the primary school population operating at levels below the respective minimum standards.

> Policymakers and educators in the Caribbean, then, have been concerned that education policy development has largely been a series of responses to international demands, with little consideration given to implementation and local conditions and post-colonial aspirations. Indeed, each new policy framed by donor agencies appears to arrive before the previous one has been implemented. (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p.113)

In their discussion on curriculum change, Crossley and Watson (2003, p.136) suggest that "successful education innovation … is more closely related to mediated action,

negotiation and collaboration between different stakeholders." This relationship is key to the success of any innovation and curriculum is no exception. Curriculum change does not occur in the single step of placing the curriculum document at the disposal of schools; rather, as modern literature consistently reiterates, it is a complex phenomenon consisting of several interrelated phases or stages and requiring the creation of organizational structures and processes as a prerequisite to successful implementation (Fullan 1992, Morrison 1998, Kelly 2009). By focusing on the "how" of educational change in relation to curriculum this study will illuminate practitioner responses to the new curriculum and the actual processes which attend its transition from theory into actualization.

1.6 Scope and limitations

This study is primarily an investigation and description of the implementation processes and procedures related to a new Language Arts Curriculum and while the insights and recommendations revealed by this investigation may possibly be distilled into an emergent theory of curriculum implementation for small Caribbean states, it does not attempt to create such theory. I attempted to begin a dialogue which was designed to provide avenues for the previously silent to make their voices heard and to create a medium for meaningful and open interaction among the hierarchical elements of the local education structure. I do not expect my research to be entirely generalisable to the Caribbean region, but the homogeneous cultural nature of the OECS means that it would certainly be a useful benchmark for the other small island states of the union.

The study began with the assumption that the OECS Harmonized Curriculum is a valid document which upholds the intentions of the planners and this aspect is

discussed only as far as it is identified as an issue which affects elements of the process; therefore, the study is limited to the implementation aspect of curriculum. It does not attempt to evaluate either the document itself or student achievement of outcomes. Kelly (2009, p.13) proposes that a definition of curriculum should embrace "four major dimensions of educational planning and practice. The intentions of the planners, the procedures adopted for the implementation of those intentions, the actual experience of the pupils resulting from the teachers' direct attempts to carry out their or the planners' intentions and the 'hidden' learning that occurs as a by-product of the organization of the curriculum …"

In this study I address Kelly's first two dimensions and focus on practitioners' understanding of the intentions of the curriculum and the procedures adopted for implementation including the resultant processes and the interrelationships among participants in the process. The scope of the study ranges from the policy perspective as expressed by the relevant personnel in the Ministry of Education, through the change implementation layers of Education Officers, principals and teachers. I examine the roles of each of these players in the change process in detail and make correlations between the various viewpoints in an attempt to build an existing scenario while developing a theory of best practice for engaging in the implementation process in the given context; not from the external viewpoint of the objectivist researcher, but primarily from that of those who are intimately a part of the process. My recommendations are not prescriptive, but based entirely on suggestions made by participants on ways in which the system can derive synergies from the relevant groups. I do not specifically investigate pupil experience or the 'hidden' curriculum; and students' perceptions are not included unless as incidentally referenced by participants. Leonard (2010, p. 115) points out that "a major decision point in the

research process is the decision as to who will be invited to participate and thus whose voices will be heard". I did not perceive the need at this point, for participant voices from the classroom or specifically from parents since the study was designed to be reflective of the dialogue taking place among those charged with the responsibility of implementation. It is expected that the view from the actual classroom would be best taken up in subsequent investigations once the implementation hurdles are addressed and all teachers are engaging with the curriculum.

Essentially, this study is a documentation of the manifestation of the phenomenon of innovation and change as it relates to the introduction of a new Language Arts curriculum in a small postcolonial community. This phenomenon is studied primarily in light of post modern curriculum discourse which purports that curriculum is in itself a social construct and useful curriculum study must include a focus on the perspective of the social reality of the implementers (Goodson, 1997; Schubert, 2008); that curriculum must be transformative and liberating (Lavia, 2007; Jules,2008) and that the postcolonial idiosyncrasies of small island states demand dialogic approaches to investigation (Freire, 1970, Crossley, 2010). Fundamental to all these discourse threads is the view that social capital is intrinsic to successful change (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Putnam 1993).

1.7 Conclusion

I have used this chapter to provide a detailed description of the context of the research and present the ontological and epistemological perspectives which form the backdrop against which the characters of the study will be presented and the voices will be played. I have also presented myself as researcher in light of my professional attributes and the personal beliefs and attitudes which define and guide my research

approach; creating a link between my early years and my evolving interest in education in general and language teaching in particular, in a country firmly shaped and still influenced by its colonial past. In this chapter I have delineated the objectives of the research and the questions which have driven it and have discussed the ethical issues with which I grappled as a researcher who would technically be considered an insider in multiple respects. Finally, I have placed the study within the realm of post modern curriculum inquiry with its attendant emphases on social construction and the centralization of participant voice.

Chapter Two will contribute further to the backdrop of the research, by describing the location and context within which the implementation takes place as well as the social realities attendant to the postcolonial setting of a small island state. In Chapter Three I discuss the theoretical underpinnings of my research and Chapter Four describes the methodological approaches. Chapters Five, Six and Seven present the voices from the field and Chapter Eight summarizes the themes identified by the voices. Chapter Nine provides an epilogue to the research and discusses its implications.

Chapter Two: The Island Voice - Dialogic Context

This history of pain, division and contradiction has created special challenges of identity and development for us. Are we, Caribbean people, the orphans of history? Are we the scavengers of civilisation, shoring the fragments of East and West against our possible ruin... These questions have represented the dilemmas of identity of the past 500 years (Anthony, K.D. 1998)

2.1 Introduction

St. Lucia shares with its fellow Caribbean islands, the angst described above, as it continues the struggle to define itself as an independent nation while dealing with the dilemmas spawned by its postcolonial legacy. It is important to bear this in mind as this chapter paints a full backdrop to the study by presenting the social, historical, geographical and educational context within which the implementation of the OECS Harmonized Language Arts Curriculum (HLAC) takes place. Only a very brief description of the development of the HLAC is included, since the conversations with the Key Informants (see Chapter 5) will provide a full picture of its genesis. Here, I introduce the small eastern Caribbean island states and provide the rationale for the introduction of the new curriculum which I describe fully in terms of its intentions and approach. I also provide a broad description of Saint Lucia, its education system and some of the issues which affect the teaching of Language Arts on the island.

2.2 The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)

The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) is a sub-regional grouping of nine Caribbean countries, which came into being in 1981 for the purpose of cooperation and the promotion of unity and solidarity among the members: Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, British Virgin Islands (Associate member), Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Vincent & The Grenadines (Figure 1 shows a map of the OECS countries in relation to the rest of the

Caribbean). These countries are also part of the larger regional grouping, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and participate in this larger forum as individual member countries. However, the OECS group seeks to maintain a high level of political harmony as evidenced by its many common positions on international issues and the practice of establishing joint overseas representation. Economic integration is also a key cohesive element, and the countries share a common currency overseen by the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB), except in the case of the associate member – the British Virgin Islands.

Figure 1 Geographical position of the OECS countries in the Caribbean

Adapted from http://boecs.org/sgp/images/stories/caribmap.gif

As far as possible, the OECS operates as a trading block, using this strategy to procure cheaper goods and services for the sub-regional population. The functions of the OECS are coordinated by a Secretariat (under the management of a Director General) consisting of four main divisions responsible for: External Relations, Corporate Services, Functional Cooperation and Economic Affairs. Each division oversees the work of several specialized work units, institutions or projects which are reflective of the common needs of the grouping. One such unit was the Education and

Human Resource Development Unit (OERU) which was responsible for the professional facilitation and coordination of educational initiatives and which stated as its mission that it was:

> To be a professional service organization, facilitating and coordinating initiatives in education that add value to the development process in OECS member states. (OECS Education Reform Unit Strategic Plan 2001-2010, p.11)

One of the primary tasks assigned to that unit was the designing of a strategy to address education reform in the OECS. The resultant strategy identified the harmonization of the OECS education systems as central to any reform initiatives. Apart from the obvious benefits from economies of scale e.g. in purchase of textbooks and other learning materials, a common system of education would assure fluidity and ease of movement of the OECS population throughout its member states by:

i. eliminating the need for placement testing of sub-regional migrant children

ii. creating equal opportunities for nationals of any of the territories to access jobs on a wider stage. [8]

Such a system would also promote resource and talent sharing as well as greater possibilities of sustaining innovations designed to improve the quality of education.

In addition to the harmonization of the education system, the strategy included the reform of several other areas, including each education sector, the management and administration of education, the financing of education and the continuation and sustenance of the reform process. Reform of primary education was high on the OERU's operational agenda in order to address standardization of the basic functional foundations for learning. Two key objectives of primary education reform were:

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[8] OECS website: http://www.oecs.org

  i. To improve the quality of primary education in the sub region [and]

  ii. To transform the prevailing practices of primary schooling from emphasis on student passivity to an emphasis on active student engagement…, integration across subject disciplines, independent learning and multilevel teaching. [9]

The first order of business, therefore, was the design of common or harmonized curricula which would facilitate the realization of the said objectives. Thus began the process of curriculum reform in the areas of Primary School Language Arts, Science and Technology and Mathematics, through a consultative process involving curriculum experts and teachers across the sub-region.

2.3 The OECS Harmonized Language Arts Curriculum

The Curriculum harmonization process began in 1998 with discussions between the OECS Education Reform Unit (OERU) and education personnel from all member states. Subsequent to this meeting, a sub-regional workshop of curriculum officers, teacher-educators and evaluation officers was held to develop basic principles for primary school Language Arts. During the following three years, under the guidance of a University of the West Indies (UWI) consultant in Language Arts education, a set of draft learning outcomes for all grade levels (K–6) was prepared and refined by this group in collaboration with principals and teachers from member countries. The intensive process involved scrutiny of language arts curricula from member countries so that the new document would reflect common principles undergirding language teaching in the OECS. A Teachers' Guide was also developed to serve as a companion document to the new curriculum, which I was engaged to pilot in four territories between 2002 and 2004 and which was officially adopted by most countries by 2006.

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[9] ibid.

The OECS Harmonized Language Arts Curriculum (HLAC) is a learner-centred one, which suggests to teachers, activities that are designed for active learner participation, the use of discovery-based and problem-solving approaches, and collaborative learning. These student-centred approaches mark its primary departure from the tradition of the preceding curriculum document which, in true post-colonial style, emphasised the role of the teacher as controller and imparter of knowledge and information. The HLAC is based on the assumption that teachers will implement a balanced and integrated programme in keeping with established modern language teaching theoretical principles. It promotes the five principles suggested by Hansen (1987) for the integration of the domains of the language arts, (i) time, (ii) choice, (iii) response, (iv) structure and (v) community. The document also cites endorsement of these principles by the International Reading Association (1992) which are paraphrased in the Introduction to the curriculum as follows:

i. All learners need time to think, to read, write, talk about and share their thoughts about the concepts to which they are introduced,

ii. learners perform best when they are given the opportunity to have some input into the selection of books for reading and topics for writing,

iii. learners make better progress when they receive feedback on what they are learning on a regular basis,

iv. an ordered and structured classroom in which goals are made clear to students can facilitate the overall goals of helping students to become keen and expert readers, proficient writers and critical thinkers,

v. both the classroom and the school make up the community in which students find support for their learning.
 (Introduction to Teachers' Guide, OECS Harmonized Language Arts Curriculum 2003).

Based on the above principles, therefore, the curriculum has implications for timetabling and lesson structure; resources within the school and classroom, and the

relationships among managers, teachers, their students and the wider community. Therefore, it was important to find out whether practitioners understood and took on board these principles and to what extent they were able to embrace this in their specific roles in the sector.

While the HLAC refers to the need for "taking the native language of the learner into account," just as in earlier curriculum versions, the issue of language policy is not addressed directly in the document; however, it is designed with the flexibility to enable tailoring to accommodate the development of multi-literacies and the use of English as a second language (ESL) methods where required. In addition, the HLAC's companion manual, the Teachers' Guide 2003 provides guidelines for approaches to facilitate non-native speakers of English. The guide, which was intended to serve as a resource for teachers, "translates the theoretical principles of an integrated curriculum into practical activities that teachers can use to help students develop the abilities listed in the learning outcomes of the Harmonized Curriculum." (Introduction to Teachers' Guide 2003) It includes notes on concepts introduced in the curriculum, suggestions for teaching activities and strategies, sample integrated units as well as a list of resource texts/websites. The preceding curriculum did not include Teachers' Guides, since it was designed for teacher-centred, linear progression through the document in the order in which topics appeared.

The piloting of the HLAC took place between 2002 and 2004 and covered samples of all infant and primary grades in four OECS countries: Dominica, Antigua, Grenada and St. Vincent. As pilot evaluation consultant, I set out five broad questions to guide my review as follows:

1. Under what conditions were the curriculum materials implemented?
2. How were the materials being used?

3. What were the stakeholders' perceptions of the key features of the curriculum documents?
4. What factors influenced the implementation process and with what effects?
5. What outcomes have resulted from the use of the materials? (Simon 2005)

My evaluation of this pilot concluded that there was a positive impact on teachers, schools and students involved although considerable challenges were obvious. On the positive side, the experience of piloting the curriculum resulted in increased understanding of the principles of good language teaching on the part of teachers and improvement in the strategies for guiding teachers through implementation on the part of curriculum officers. Students also clearly benefitted from the exposure to interesting, challenging and rewarding activities as suggested by the curriculum and Teachers' Guide. Challenges included the tremendous pressure brought to bear on curriculum officers who needed to provide guidance and support to apprehensive and sometimes reluctant teachers; the need for more curriculum support resources and the inability of principals to engage with the curriculum.

2.4 The St. Lucian Context

2.4.1 General Overview
The 612.42 square kilometre island of Saint Lucia is located along the Caribbean chain known as the Lesser Antilles between the islands of St Vincent (to the south) and Martinique (to the north) and is situated north west of Barbados. The island is one of the most mountainous in the region, composed mainly of volcanic soil. Saint Lucia, which had been originally inhabited by Carib and Arawak Amerindian populations, was successfully colonized by the French in 1660. Its ensuing history was a chequered

one, with the island being the object of fierce fighting between two colonizing entities - the British and the French - for two centuries. During this period, the island changed hands between those two colonizing powers thirteen times. By 1814, the island was finally established as a British colony and was populated mainly by African slaves and their descendants.

Subsequent to the abolition of the slave trade, some East Indians were imported as indentured labourers to supplement the work force for the continuation of the production of sugar cane, the main crop at the time. The island moved from crown colony to independent statehood in 1967 and became an independent state of the Commonwealth of Nations in 1979. Present day population estimated at approximately 170,000 (*World Bank: World Development Indicators, 2008*), is predominantly of African descent, with smaller groups of Indian and European origins as well as a significant number of racially mixed lineage.

Saint Lucia was originally divided into eleven (11) quarters or districts by the British colonial government. These are retained up to the present, but it is also divided into 17 electoral districts for the 17 seats in the House of Assembly. The majority of the population is concentrated in the north west and north central parts of the island, which are dominated by activities generated from the commercial and political capital city, Castries, as well as from the many hotels and other tourism-oriented activities located in that part of the island. A wave of technology in the past ten years has made the most remote communities part of the communication network via cellular phones and satellite television; however several small communities, particularly in the interior of the island, still face challenges of poor road conditions and unreliable transportation services.

Although it boasts the most diverse industrial base of the OECS, St Lucia's economy is fuelled primarily by its tourism service sector. Early dependence on a sugar-cane mono-crop, gave way to replacement by bananas, which have since been devastated by disease vectors, increased competition from Latin America and changes in the European Union preferential import policy. The island is now trying to expand an agricultural diversification programme as well as its small, light manufacturing industry. As part of its overall development strategy, human resources are considered to be the main basis for social and economic development of Saint Lucia, and successive governments have marked the education system high on the national agenda. In the financial year 2009/10 the share of expenditure on education was 13.78% of total government expenditure and was the second highest allocation (St Lucia Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports Statistical Digest p. xxvii).

2.4.2 The Public Education System

The 2013 Government of St Lucia Education Statistical Digest put the 2012/13 Primary School population at 16, 764 (p. xx) and the Secondary School enrolment at 13,706 (p. xxii); noting that enrolment numbers had been steadily declining for the past 16 years due to declining birth rates. Education is ostensibly free and compulsory from age five through age fifteen; however, all schools charge annual 'facilities fees' which are payable by parents, who are also responsible for the provision of textbooks and other personal learning materials. Through the Poverty Reduction Fund (now Social Development Fund), a limited number of textbooks are made available on loan to economically disadvantaged students. The Statistical Digest indicates that in academic year 2012/13, nearly nine (8.6) percent of primary school students received

bursaries from the Ministry of Education and Culture and the school feeding program catered to forty two (42) percent of primary school students (p.xxi). Both figures represent an increase over the previous year.

Primary schooling formally caters for children between the ages of 5 and 11 with classes ranging from Kindergarten (K) to Grade 6. For many decades, the acute shortage of Secondary School places meant that students who did not succeed the Common Entrance examination in Grade VI, were forced to remain in the Primary Schools or attend Junior Secondary School until they attained the age of 15; however, the introduction of Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2006, has now ensured that no child would normally be in a primary school past age 13. Primary schooling is punctuated by three major testing periods: Minimum Standards testing at Grades 2 and 4 and the Common Entrance Examination at Grade 6. The minimum standard mark is set at sixty percent (**60%**), while the Common Entrance Examination allows hierarchical access to ranked secondary schools based on the level of mark obtained. Today there are 75 public and 6 private primary schools on the island.

Up to the early 1970s only two secondary schools existed in St Lucia. These were both grammar schools, denominational, with a highly selective private entrance examination and populations of mostly upper and upper middle class students. Today, the island boasts 25 secondary schools (2 are private) which draw from an all-inclusive socio-economic and geographical base through a Common Entrance examination, the marks from which determine the school to be assigned. At the secondary level, students follow a curriculum largely dictated by the syllabuses of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) which is the regional external examining body established in 1972, and which plays a major role in establishing and maintaining secondary education standards in the sixteen participating countries of the

region. While most countries have a Lower Secondary Curriculum and switch to the CXC syllabuses in the third year, that curriculum is normally designed to facilitate the transition into the CXC syllabus content and is therefore heavily influenced by the CXC syllabus objectives. Students sit the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examination at the end of the fifth year (Grade 11) of secondary school. In 2007 the CXC introduced the Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC) "in response to a regional imperative to provide for universal secondary education… the CCSLC responds to the changing demands of education, and is designed to certify the **knowledge**, **generic competencies and attitudes** and **values** that all secondary school leavers should have attained".[10]

The Sir Arthur Lewis Community College provides tertiary level education for St Lucia largely through the provision of Associate degrees in areas ranging from business and education to architecture and agriculture. Apart from teaching the Cambridge Advanced Level curriculum (and the CAPE[11] from 2013), the College is the local body responsible for teacher training for which certification is conferred by the regional University of the West Indies. In addition to the Certificate in Education, students can access degree programmes offered by the University of the West Indies (UWI) by way of franchise arrangements with the Community College. The UWI, established to serve the 16 participating Caribbean countries, also maintains an outreach Centre on the island where St Lucians can pursue education degrees at Bachelor's and Master's level through blended modalities (online, teleconference and face-to-face).

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[10] Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) website: http://www.cxc.org
[11] CAPE is the CXC Advanced Certificate in Education, designed to replace the Cambridge equivalent examination in regional schools.

The Ministry of Education in Saint Lucia oversees the pre-school to Secondary components of the education system, creating the relevant policies and providing the mechanisms and structures for facilitating curriculum implementation. Appendix 2 provides an overview of the organizational structure of the Ministry and a chart which sums up the responsibilities of those officers at policy level.

2.4.3 Linguistic Situation

As is the case in most of the Caribbean, the effective teaching of English in Saint Lucia has been impeded by a number of problems arising out of the peculiar nature of the island's history, its social organization and socio-linguistic structure. In St Lucia, as in Dominica to the north, the situation of English-based and French-based creoles co-existing with an English official language, has added a level of complication which is recognized by teachers but remains unacknowledged by policy documents. There is no consensus among linguists on a strict definition of St Lucia's linguistic situation; however, it is generally classified by modern linguists as multilingual or varilingual (Christie, 1983, Carrington, 1984, Simmons-McDonald, 2004); however, it is clear that the situation is particularly challenging to the primary school teacher in a country where the standard language is not the first language of a large sector of the population. The official language used for instruction, policy making and international communication is what linguists refer to as St Lucia Standard English (SLSE); however, the French lexicon Creole (SLFC) known to St Lucians as Kwéyol or Patois is popularly referred to as the language of the people and is used in homes, for many social activities, in some workplaces and churches, and unofficially in rural schools. A Committee on Educational Priorities convened in 1980 concluded that Kwéyol was the principal vehicle of communication of the majority of St Lucians and that it was in

fact spoken by 90% of the population. (St Lucia Ministry of Education, 1981). The persistence of the Kwéyòl language despite its lack of official legitimacy may be largely ascribed to the fact that the French and Kwéyòl speaking island of Martinique is Saint Lucia's nearest neighbour and shares its cultural heritage as well as close family ties and there is considerable movement of populations between the two islands.

Wardhaugh (1986) identifies an important feature of language variation as resulting from social stratification, which means that language differences are generally related to social classes and educational levels. The more highly educated, who in the St Lucian context are most often those who fall into higher socio-economic brackets, tend to display more of the characteristics of what is accepted as standard speech, while original dialects are better preserved in the speech of the less educated who tend to be of lower socio-economic status in the society. Solomon (1993) also refers to the geographic context of different localities within a country; however, in Saint Lucia, large rural to urban movements over the last two decades have resulted in a blurring of social, geographic and the attendant linguistic distinctions. School populations now represent what Carrington (1993) refers to as a varilingual spectrum and the implications for language teaching and learning have become more complex.

The linguistic situation in Saint Lucia defies strict categorical definition and is particularly challenging to the Language Arts teacher in a country where the fact that Standard English is not the first language of a large percentage of the population, is hardly acknowledged in educational policy documents. Negative attitudes to the Kwéyòl language are a legacy of the island's colonial past when speakers of this language were relegated to the bottom of the social ladder and acquisition of Standard English was viewed as the only means of upward social mobility. British colonizers,

assisted by educators brought in from the neighbouring English speaking island of Barbados, made every attempt to eradicate Kwéyol to the extent of imposing severe physical punishment on children caught speaking the language on the school compound (Gordon, 1963). The English Language teacher in Saint Lucia today, still has to deal with his/her own ambivalent attitudes as well as those of the students who often have to make distinctions among classroom language, schoolyard language and home language.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided the reader with a snapshot of the island of St. Lucia and its relation to the geographical and political setting within which it is situated as one of the small eastern Caribbean island states. I also provided a brief background to the development of the OECS Harmonized Language Arts Curriculum (HLAC) and some of the issues impacting on its implementation. This will be fleshed out further in Chapter Five by the voices of the Key Informants. Essentially, this chapter provided a backdrop against which the conversations with participants play out later in Chapters 5 and 6. It painted the small island world of St. Lucia with its hierarchical education structures, declining school population and limited economy.

The following chapter explores the literature which undergirds the themes explored in this research and provides the theoretical background to the study.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Voices

To enter the curriculum field is to enter a place of intellectual debate on the most pressing educational and social issues in society, where on the ground predilections for describing, understanding and improving schooling, public policy and political curriculum discourse are encouraged, where the critical spirit is nurtured with access to the most powerful conceptual frames from the social sciences, humanities, and arts, and where habits of abstraction and theorizing are welcomed (Connelly, F.M. & Xu, S. , 2008, p. 514)

3.1 Introduction

The above quotation aptly captures the stimulus for my research by providing a concept of curriculum as fluid, interactive and closely tied to social development. Like Connelly and Xu (above), I believe that the field of curriculum is the most stimulating and all-encompassing aspect of educational study and is inextricably linked with a myriad of wider social and political issues. I also think that curriculum oriented debate must be continuous and all-inclusive, involving all stakeholders in the curriculum process. In the last two chapters, I presented the backdrop against which the voices of the research will be heard and established the social, cultural and educational context within which the curriculum dialogue would take place. This chapter explores the theoretical facets of the topic of study through a discussion of the related literature. It establishes a working definition of curriculum and explores the literature on curriculum implementation and change in particular, while examining how the voices of the literature, both global and regional, address the various implications and related issues associated with implementation. The chapter also looks at the metaphorical framework of the research as dialogue and presentation of voices. While there is no plethora of writings emanating from the region under study, I include reference to the few existing pertinent Caribbean studies. In relation to my

position as an educator who has been shaped by the geopolitical and historical aspects of a small island state and in light of the context of my research, I also discuss the literature on the postcolonial, small island state contextual viewpoint which frames the research.

3.2 The Notion of Curriculum

The concept of the term 'curriculum' is not unanimously agreed upon in the literature. Smith (2000) identifies four basic categories of descriptors for the term: (i) body of knowledge to be transmitted; (ii) product, (iii) process and (iv) praxis. Fraser & Bosanquet (2006) prefer to use the parallel descriptors: (i) a subject specific body of content (ii) the structure and content of an entire program encompassing multiple subject areas; (iii) what is experienced by students as they learn and (iv) an active and dynamic process of learning and development. Both definitions acknowledge that the notion of curriculum implies that it is multi-faceted and cannot be described as exactly one thing or the other. Essentially, the views on curriculum can be distilled into two broad groupings: those which deal with curriculum as theory (policies, intentions, desired knowledge laid out in a document) and those which consider curriculum as practice (what happens at the scene of engagement between teacher and student). The former relates to (i) and (ii) of both definitions above and the latter to (iii) and (iv). However some have questioned whether curriculum should be at all distinguished as either one or the other. Stenhouse (1975) purports that the study of curriculum should be concerned with merging the two views:

> In essence it seems to me that curriculum study is concerned with the relationship between these two views of curriculum- as intention and as reality. I believe that our educational realities seldom conform to our educational intentions. We cannot put our policies into practice… The central curriculum problem is the gap between our ideas and aspirations and our attempts to operationalise them (p.3)

I believe that Stenhouse offers the most useful definition of curriculum; one which presents a cohesive picture of all what curriculum can possibly represent. It is more productive to merge the views of curriculum by embracing a definition which would include the major dimensions of intention, procedures, student experience and by products (Kelly, 2009, p.13) since it is impossible to represent the full scope of what curriculum represents by only one of its elements. Stenhouse's perspective identifies curriculum as the framing document for policy and intention and defines curriculum implementation as the carrying out of these intentions. Frameworks are created to be implemented and the entire process runs from conceptualization and design through implementation and evaluation. Therefore, Stenhouse purports that when we speak of curriculum, we are in fact referring to the entire gamut.

Another framework for interpreting the concept of curriculum is that based on the Habermas (1972) theory of 'knowledge-constructive interests' and expounded by Grundy (1987) and Cornbleth (1990) who perceive curriculum as a social and cultural construction arising from the three fundamental human interests identified in the Habermas framework: technical, practical and emancipatory. The *technical interest* operates from the standpoint of management and structure and adheres to the view of curriculum as a product to be designed, packaged and implemented under controlled conditions which facilitate measurement of the achievement of intentions (Giroux 1981, Cornbleth 1990). This echoes the basic principles of curriculum and instruction first espoused by Tyler (1949) who stipulated that the curriculum should be made up of appropriate learning objectives, related learning activities, an organized sequence of learning activities and established procedures for evaluating their effectiveness; principles that have been used as the standard design for curriculum for decades. The *practical interest* sees curriculum as emphasizing the interaction of teachers and

students to make meaning of the content with the teacher's role as facilitator rather than technicist (Grundy, 1987). In their role as facilitator and interpreter, teachers are expected to exercise judgment based on their values, in the solution of classroom problems and engage in reflection on their practice (Ingulsrud, 1996; Nehring, Laboy & Catarius, 2010; Nelson, Deuel, Slavitt & Kennedy, 2010). This view had been incorporated by Stenhouse into his model of curriculum development which he described as synonymous with teacher professional development, much of which is expected to take place through the process of reflection on practice. Habermas' third human interest, the *emancipatory*, presents curriculum as a liberating experience arising out of the dynamic interplay of action and critical reflection resulting in intellectual and social empowerment of both teacher and student (Grundy, 1987, Barnett & Coate, 2005). Curriculum therefore enables sociological and ideological enlightenment through critical thinking and discussion in a climate of social interaction and collaboration (Carr & Kemmis 1986; Carr, 1995).

Curriculum can also be considered paradigmatically as either modern or post modern. The modern paradigm regards curriculum as characterized by a technicist orientation where standardized tests and, a focus on teacher/student output emphasize a stipulated ownership of knowledge; while the post modernist paradigm embraces the emancipatory view of curriculum which is considered dynamic, non-restrictive and emergent. Post modernists criticize the modernist view for its promotion of a dominant social class standpoint and its failure to acknowledge the voice of the marginalized; while post modernists encourage a pluralistic view of culture and context and celebrate diversity. Schubert (2008, p. 81) indicates that post modern curriculum inquiry has added a new dimension to the traditional discussion of curriculum only from the point of view of its nature and the effectiveness of its

delivery in schools. He notes, however, that "curriculum inquiry often defies clear categorization and exudes uncertainty" since many curriculum approaches incorporate both paradigms. Behar-Horenstein (2000) encourages a mixed paradigm approach, calling for the grounding of curriculum in modernist principles while at the same time imbuing it with post modern flexibility on the ground; something which Goodson (1997) had cautioned against, pointing out the irony of a post modernist research focus on teachers' voices while at the same time greater demands are being made on them for intensive, technical output. My research focus fully incorporates Schubert's view that today's curriculum scholarship seeks complicated understandings and multiple meanings of personal and public identity, modes of human association and environmental relationships in many societal venues (Schubert 2008 p.400); further, as I am writing from a postcolonial viewpoint, I am most interested in the emancipatory aspect of curriculum as implemented in my context as an interactive and social activity requiring ongoing, multiple dialogues between groups and individuals at all levels of the education system and not confined to teachers and students. My approach reflects Goodson's (1997) view that the focus on the heretofore marginalized voices should go hand in hand with an analytical look at the backdrop of structures and systems which characterize the context within which they live and work.

3.3 Curriculum Implementation and Change

Connelly & Xu (2008, p.517) make the point that "Curriculum is part of the changing social landscape of the world." In keeping with the contemporary view of curriculum as an emancipatory or critical activity, the introduction of a new curriculum is typically associated with change and expected to reflect global and local societal

movements which should provoke fluid shifts in rhetoric and discourse among those involved with its implementation. The dynamics of curriculum change extend way beyond the point of contact between documented framework and students; and the context of globalization has made the connection between policy and curriculum even more intimate (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010). However, the connection referred to is not often acknowledged or manifested in systems of education and the implications for broadening the concept of curriculum to include the entire policy-to-practice gamut are largely overlooked (Cohen & Barnes 1993). Nonetheless, implementation theorists agree that the nature of curriculum implementation is far from straightforward and it requires a variety of discursive and collaborative strategies in order to be successful (Cohen & Spillane, 1992; Mc Laughlin 1997, Giacquinta 1998, Fullan, 2007). My research is based on a holistic view of curriculum implementation as the process which links policy, theory and practice.

A number of implementation theories and models have been put forward as frameworks for the discussion of curriculum change. The major ones include:

(i) The Concerns-based Adoption Model (CBAM), (Hall and Loucks 1978) was developed to monitor people in the process of adopting innovations with the aim of identifying effective ways of assisting them towards successful adoption and includes both diagnostic and prescriptive components. Change is regarded as a process rather than an event and takes place through stages of self-questioning or concern. The model stresses the importance of systematically addressing concerns before expecting people to engage in practices of change, stipulating that the longitudinal aspect of implementation must be accommodated.

(ii) The organizational behaviour based Diffusion Model (Rogers 1995) is based on the theory that change is influenced by four main elements: the innovation itself, communication channels, time and a social system; and these elements must work cohesively. Human capital is critical to the process and sustainability is dependent on wide-scale adoption. First surfacing in the late 19th century, various studies on the concept of diffusion were synthesized by Rogers in his seminal work. The theory maintains that adoption is never synchronous and groups of adopters can be differentiated. The adoption process is characterized by five stages: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption.

(iii) The Zones of Enactment Theory (Spillane1999) identifies three important characteristics of teachers who successfully change their practice. Their enactment zones (defined as the point where policy meets practice); (a) incorporate interaction with colleagues and experts; (b) involve ongoing deliberations and self-evaluation and (c) include the use of a variety of material resources. This theory points to the importance of structures which embrace social collegial interaction, the importance of pedagogical knowledge and mastery of subject matter.

(iv) The Process of Mutual Adaptation Theory (McLaughlin (1997) states that change occurs when there is mutual *adaptation* (in which policy and organizational setting adapt to each other) as opposed to *adoption.* The process requires the involvement of teachers, as both learners and practitioners; and a clearly defined and deeply involved leadership throughout the implementation process. Mutual adaptation also requires a certain amount of latitude to be given to individual institutions to develop culturally - based interpretation and adaptation strategies.

What all of these models agree upon is the fact that implementation must be regarded as a multi- layer, multi- player process and sufficient attention must be paid to each link, stage or level and the way in which they impact each other. Goodson (2000) contends that change consists of several sectors or "chains" and the integration of these (personal, internal and external) should be the aim of a change model. He notes that the majority of changes emanate externally and are inevitably viewed as intrusive once they encounter the internal or personal. Similarly Fullan, who writes extensively about identifying the factors of educational change and the importance of investigating facilitators and barriers, moves away from the more managed and structured solution described in his earlier works, to a call for the comprehension of "the dynamics of educational change as a sociopolitical process involving all kinds of individual, classroom, school, local, regional and national factors at work in interactive ways' (Fullan, 2007, p.9).

Increasingly the literature seems to echo Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory in its discussion of the importance of shared understandings and collaborative effort as the key to successful implementation of curriculum change in particular and educational change in general. Bourdieu purports that social capital is the accumulation of resources (actual or potential) linked to group membership. It is generally assumed that much of a teacher's social capital emanates from the links which he/she forges with other members of his/her professional group; therefore it is reasonable to assume that the greater the level of collegiate interaction and the more avenues which make this possible, the greater the potential of the teacher to accumulate capital which would facilitate classroom practice whether through exchange of content knowledge, pedagogical practices or resources. The curriculum change models outlined above all privilege the accumulation of social capital by the teacher through ongoing interaction

with peers and the focus of each is on development of the teacher. Stenhouse's (1975) position that curriculum development equals teacher development has been amplified by Hargreaves (1998) and Olson, James & Lang (1999) in their argument that no curriculum change can be effected without corresponding change in the teacher, whose role in curriculum innovation Kelly (2009, p.14) describes as ' make or break'. Hargreaves concurs,

> What the teacher thinks, what the teacher believes, what the teacher assumes- all these things have powerful implication for the change process for the ways in which curriculum policy is translated into curriculum practice. (1989, p.26)

He goes on to argue that what he calls "the culture of teaching" can be a major inhibition to curriculum change and suggests that a redefinition of the role of teachers is a key strategy of implementation. The role of the teacher as agent of change recurs consistently in the literature despite the fact that their voices are so often ignored in the reform process (Olsen, 2002; Ayers et al, 2008). Spillane (1999), in his comparison of teachers who substantially changed their practice and those who had not (as part of a Mathematics reform initiative), found that teachers whose 'zones of enactment' included in-depth communication (dialogue with other players, engaged interaction with resources and personal interrogation), were able to use and contribute social capital in a way which impacted positively on their practice and enabled them to significantly change practice in keeping with the philosophy of the new curriculum. Cohen and Barnes (1993, p.207) state that "nearly any policy must be educative for those who enact it" and lamented that "though policy makers have developed extraordinarily rich ambitions for schools, educational policies and programs have not been richly educative for enactors" (op cit p.210). Obviously, without the active support of the teacher, triggered by his/her conviction that the change is beneficial and

liberating, attempts at reform are destined to remain unconverted to reality. In their call for teachers' voices to be heard, Ayers et al (2008, p.313) raise the questions, "In whose interest are these reforms?" "What will the changes mean for teachers?" and "How will teachers' voices be heard?" Hargreaves (1998, p.560) asked a similar question, "How do teachers feel about educational changes and change processes in terms of their impact on these relationships?", when he discussed the effect of change on teachers' relationships with students, parents and each other.

The persistent call for the voices and perspectives of enactors to come into focus, is reminiscent of Freire's comment,

> Revolutionary leaders do not go to the people in order to bring them a message of "salvation" but in order to come to know through dialogue with them both their objective situation and their awareness of that situation- the various levels of perception of themselves and of the world in which and with which they exist. (Freire, 1970, p. 154).

Freire goes on to insist that no positive results can come from an educational programme which "fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people" (Freire 1970, p. 154). At the implementation stage, the curriculum enters the cultural world of the teacher and must become a part of that world in order to become the living entity which is enacted in the classroom. Teachers must process curriculum through their personal world view before they can make it accessible and pertinent to students. If the policy undergirding the design of the curriculum has not taken cognizance of this cultural world, the curriculum inevitably takes an invasive and alien shape and may well encounter the resistance and hostility to which theorists like Kelly, (2009) have referred. Not only does a new curriculum come up against the personal world of the teacher, but it also encounters the idiosyncratic world of each school. Huberman (1992) draws an intriguing paradox between the worlds of

administration and classroom, which must be negotiated in order to create or develop

a school culture supportive of meaningful change:

> On the one hand, we have planful [sic] direction, long- term perspectives, identified, constraints, tangible accountability, separation of issues or tasks in the managerially distinct chunks, interaction with adults. In the classroom, on the other hand, we have relational denseness, continual improvisation, simultaneous and tangled management of events and children, mysterious or even unfathomable shifts in pupils level of interest and activity, short- term objectives (getting through the lesson, the chapter, the morning) (Huberman, 1992, pg. 8)

The teacher is at the centre of this scenario and operates implicitly as the fulcrum on

which both worlds balance; therefore by virtue of occupying such a critical position,

the teacher's lens should be intimately represented in research into curriculum change.

Goodson (1991, p. 38) argues that "it does not follow logically or psychologically that

to *improve* practice we must initially and immediately *focus* on practice", a view

which also drives my decision to focus on the voices within and the systemic context.

Increasingly, considerations of broader aspects of the life of teachers have made their

way into the discussion of the teacher's role in curriculum and the use of dialogic

approaches, storytelling and life histories has begun to position the teacher's voice as

central to understanding any aspect of what goes on in schools. Goodson and Sikes

(2001) insist that professional practice cannot be separated from the holistic lives of

teachers and that it is not possible for teachers to suspend their non-professional

selves as they enter classrooms each day. I agree with their position that what teachers

do on a daily basis is strongly linked to their life circumstances and the philosophies,

values and experiences which make up their general outlook. While my research is

not a life history per se, I found that elements of participants' non-professional lives

which affected their attitudes and actions in the work place continuously came up during conversations on implementation.

DePeza (2010) suggests that curriculum change is often explored in a clinical, performance-based fashion and underlying non-tangible aspects have been excluded from evaluation of the process. Using the qualitative exploratory/descriptive case study design to examine the management and implementation of the transition from in-service to pre-service teacher education in Trinidad and Tobago she concluded that the structural focus on change management meant that the psychological aspects of implementation were overlooked. This tendency had been noted by Goodson (2007), who laments that "the personality of change" is entirely displaced in favour of the focus on teachers' technical responses. Mendoza (2011) states that "teachers make policy and shape the intentions of the curriculum because they decide how to face those challenges in the classroom and how to deal with different situations". These decisions are largely based not only on their professional judgement, but also on their psychological and socio-cultural experiences which can only be accessed by way of in-depth dialogue with them.

It is also important to recognize that the culture of the teacher is embraced by the wider culture of the school itself. The literature suggests that individual school cultures may facilitate or hinder curriculum change and that the culture of a school is closely linked to the leadership style or disposition of the principal who is also a critical link between the policy and practice aspects of the curriculum process (Fullan, 1992; Lofthouse, 1991). As administrator *and* as instructional leader, the strategies used by the principals to merge the two roles contribute significantly to the existing school culture. The principal is most often regarded as the de facto leader in the context of bridging those worlds. Binda (1991, p. 9) noted the lack of specificity

regarding the behaviour of principals within the curriculum implementation process and suggests areas for further inquiry which include the role of the principal as facilitator, the nature of his/her personal guiding philosophy and relevant interventions. Hutton (2013) addresses this and provides a glimpse into the personal philosophies of high performing Jamaican school principals; illustrating through their voices the values-oriented, engaged approaches which characterize their successes. However, whether or not these characteristics influence curriculum change is not specified.

Referring specifically to principals' response to the implementation of inclusive education policies in Trinidad and Tobago, Brown & Lavia (2013) noted that principals were enthused on one hand but often stymied on the other hand by the ponderous bureaucracy of the postcolonial system, and they pointed to the relevance of creative, bold leadership to sustaining change. While the principal often comes under the microscope in respect of creating the culture for change, other trends of thought have shifted the lens towards a dispersed leadership model for curriculum change. Kelly (2009) for example, highly recommends the practice of the appointment of curriculum leaders from among teachers. It is interesting to note at this point that the role of district education officers and curriculum officers has hardly been considered at all in the literature.

3.4 The Place of Dialogue

Bowden & Green (2010) insist that rigour in qualitative research includes ensuring that the "voices of the researched" come through as comprehensively as possible, putting forward meanings for voice thus:

> One meaning is the voice of the individual person from whom data are gathered (individual voice). Another is a combined voice developed and agreed upon by a group of people discussing a particular issue (collective voice). A third meaning involves individual voices being made explicit with someone (normally the researcher) interpreting from them an integrated collective account (researcher-interpreted collective voice) (Bowden & Green 2010, p. 123)

Friere (1970 p. 88) refers to dialogue as an "existential necessity". Listening to and representing the voices of the researched enables the researcher to create a merger of the variety of lenses through which individuals and groups view the reality of situated context. Melles (2010 p. 37) reminds us that "qualitative research is often conducted in contexts where culture is significant as either background or foreground". The importance of dialogue in the postcolonial context is of special consideration. Small island states like St. Lucia are steeped in a tradition where communication within bureaucratic organizations is entirely one way and the idea of dialogue in the true sense of the word cannot be conceptualized within the rigidity of structure. Bureaucracies tend to muffle or eliminate the voices of those who find themselves in the middle or lower layers of the pyramid since relationships are hierarchical and largely determined from the top down (Rizvi 1989); therefore qualitative research carried out in heavily bureaucratic contexts should aim to uncover and expose elements which would not otherwise see the light of day.

Lavia (2007 p. 297) suggests that "the development of pedagogies that are critical and engaged and that are manifested as conscious action, expressed from privileging the position of the colonized" is the conduit through which the issue of lack of political will may be addressed; a suggestion which is reiterated by Jules (2008 p. 3) who calls for "an education system which is an effective vehicle of human empowerment and social transformation". Indeed, the decolonising potential of Caribbean pedagogy should be central to discussions on curriculum implementation in the region; but this

can only come about through the process of finding voice by those who are currently voiceless. Unless they develop an awareness of their authority on matters of curriculum, and confidence in their critical perception, it is very difficult for the colonized to begin to speak. Bernstein (1990) suggests that teachers, especially, should be centrally positioned in any pedagogical discourse and Kirk & MacDonald (2001) believe that teacher voice must be linked to their ownership of implementation. This is especially pertinent in a postcolonial context such as the Caribbean if Lavia's recommendation is to be made manifest. The firm central positioning of teachers in curriculum discourse would also address laments such as

> primary school teachers in Trinidad and Tobago are in fact an oppressed group. Our voices are often silenced within the design, implementation and evaluation of educational policies that are largely externally imposed and internally validated (Bristol 2008 p. 104).

There is no other means of teachers finding their space in the postcolonial milieu except through focused and continuous dialogue. Interaction and discourse within and between education system ranks is in itself a decolonising process which engenders collective imagination (Appadurai 1996) and softens the rigid rank and file barriers which define the postcolonial experience. The critical pedagogy advocated by Lavia (2007) is concerned with social injustice and seeks to change systemic or institutional inequalities by encouraging the potential to think outside of established understandings (Burbules & Berk , 1999). To this end, Freire identifies dialogue as a pedagogical method which promotes the collective thought and action which can challenge norms and lead to change.

Pressures on postcolonial societies to adopt a global agenda underline the importance of open and critical dialogue as a means of centring and shaping the global debate to

include a reflection of the marginalized through an amplification of their voices. In a technologically shrinking world, it is impossible to avoid an interrelated globalism and correspondingly difficult to avoid remaining in a postcolonial quicksand the true nature of which is masked by the urgency of getting on board or being left behind. The alternative to losing agency altogether in a world where small islands do not feature at all in the global discourse is to preserve a pedagogy of hope which Freire maintains can only be kept alive through the liberating process of dialogue. Dialogue plays a central role in making meaning through shared language, arriving at common understandings and making sense of collective experiences (Wells, 2000). Curriculum itself requires continuous dialogue if it is to be an active process which involves the active engagement of practitioners (Eisner 1990, Overly & Spalding, 1993, Schwartz, 2006). In postcolonial environments this engagement takes on the additional angle of having to develop a sense of place and self prior to meaningful global relations on terms which reflect our cultural space.

3.5 The Small Island State

The United Nations defines Small Island Developing States (SIDS) as "a distinct group of developing countries facing specific social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities". This designation, made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 identifies specific constraints to sustainable development which are characteristic of such states; including small resource bases and corresponding domestic markets, high cost of energy and infrastructure, subjectivity to natural disasters, disproportionately large public sectors and limited export and private sector opportunities. The United Nations Committee for Development Policy notes that there is no accepted definition

of a small island developing state but has included a list of such states on its website. Typically, small states are considered to be below 1.5 million in population with the term 'micro or mini state' attributed to those island states, like the OECS, with populations considerably below this statistical reference point.

While the Education initiatives arising out of the 2005 UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development have been heavily focused on educating for sustaining the viability of small states in a globalised environment, decisions made by funding agencies like the World Bank and CIDA are inevitably linked to a view of small island state needs which is primarily based on the rhetoric of sustainable development for globalised engagement. Implications for national educational policy are obvious and the literature consistently sounds a warning note as to the gap between policy largely influenced by funding priorities and culturally related educational requirements. Crossley (2010 p. 424) points out that small states' "educational and developmental needs, priorities and aspirations often differ markedly from those of the larger, more influential nations that dominate the nature and reach of global education and development agendas" and cites the need for research from within a small state context to articulate relevant priorities; a need earlier identified by Holmes and Crossley (2004) who recommend a postcolonial perspective to research undertaken in small states and stress that

> Strengthened local research and evaluation could…help small states to decolonize their education systems, reducing intellectual dependency and helping them to negotiate more effectively with external agencies (p. 199)

Pertinent policy development and successful reform cannot take place outside of the realities of the contextual framework (historical, cultural and socio-political) within which practitioners operate (King, 2009; Vulliamy & Webb, 2009; Crossley, 2010).

However, reform projects in SIDS are rarely launched from a contextual platform. Jones (1992) identifies the role of the World Bank in influencing global opinions on matters of educational development and suggests that the bank deliberately hones its style "in attempts to lead borrower country officials to its preferred way of thinking (p.266)". Isaac (2001) , in her study of the OECS Education Reform initiative focuses primarily on implications of policy and decision making by external donors in a postcolonial society; noting the tendency for small states to adopt wholesale the agenda of the funding agency and suggesting that critical reflection and discourse among those who are affected by reforms would be a useful way of informing policy.

Jules (2006) agrees that those who command the financial and intellectual resources are the ones whose "ideas and constructs" are largely instrumental in determining what happens in the education arena of small states and points to the UNESCO 2002 EFA Report which admits that countries are often pressured by donors into adopting policies and practices that are at odds with local contexts. Lavia (2007) takes this further to conclude that not only is there a clash between the two, but the results can be fatal to the very viability that funded initiatives are expected to promote.

> More than in any other instance the effect of global power over the social, economic, political and cultural lives of developing countries and small states is evident, threatening national sovereignty, and transforming education systems into regulated and instrumentalized corpses. (Lavia, 2007 p. 287)

Lavia makes this dire statement to support her call for the type of pedagogical discourse which will throw open suffocating educational structures and practices that remain fully recognisable as colonial in nature and suggests that real change and development in small states can only take place when the "dissonance" between "global policy agendas" and "decolonizing intentions for self-determination" is

addressed from a postcolonial perspective. She remains adamant that the context of postcoloniality is the fulcrum from which educational practice in the Caribbean can be reshaped to allow the "unfinished project of decolonization"(p. 293) to unfold. Holmes and Crossley (2004, p199), writing specifically of research development initiatives in Saint Lucia, also call for a post-colonial lens which they suggest is particularly "well-suited for an exploration of knowledge, values and policy in small states," (p. 199) and share Lavia's view that the trappings of colonial rule remain very much in evidence in such states. In her later study of "plantation pedagogy" in Trinidad and Tobago, Bristol (2008) also insists that a postcolonial lens be retained by researchers in this environment, positing that the education system in these islands is easily analogous to the strict hierarchical system which operated when they were colonies.

Green (2006, p. 197) on the other hand, does not concede that forces of globalisation necessarily impede "the scope of education to act as a socially integrative force" in the small state and argues that "governments across the world still exercise considerable control over their national education systems and still seek to use them to achieve national goals". However, he fails to explore the possibility that national goals may have been set according to an agenda determined by the specific stimulus of the funded goal-setting exercise. Indeed, Lingard and Jn Pierre (2006) counter Green's assertion that most countries make national identity shaping through language and culture a primary function of education, in their analysis of lifelong learning in St. Lucia, which found that

> The formal education system virtually rejects the authenticity of indigenous knowledge and the efficacy of the national language, Kwéyòl. These are afforded only token recognition, notwithstanding assertions to the contrary by some educators. (p. 307)

Jules (2006) acknowledges the possibility Green (2006) later suggests that there can be beneficial outcomes of donor agency and developing country interactions and identifies two determinants of this: (i) institutional subjectivity which is the extent to which the parties engage in "real dialogue" and the agency is actively listening to local interpretations and (ii) individual subjectivity, where the international consultant is able to embrace the national space and view his/her contribution as adding value by way of bringing perspectives of "other best practices". However, he reiterates that

> It takes an exceptionally strong political will at the national level to establish an educational agenda that does not converge with or replicate the dominant paradigm and an even greater strength to say no to funding that would result in a deviation from the national agenda (Jules, 2006, p.18)

Meanwhile, the irony of Caribbean governments which spend proportionately more (as a percentage of their GDP) on education than do their developed country counterparts, yet reap disproportionately less, is not lost on Jules (2008). What is apparent is that the education agenda espoused by the small island states of the OECS tends towards the larger global picture presented by those who fund their education initiatives and leans heavily towards grand projects which are media friendly and easily garner political points rather than the more longitudinal "real change" matters of successful implementation. This came out very clearly when I was piloting the HLAC and a number of islands were simultaneously engaging in parallel, separately funded projects of what was called *national* curriculum design. These ventures made good newscasts and gave the impression that there were a plethora of initiatives in the curriculum development areas, suggesting that more was better and providing definite proof that the governments were about serious business. In the small island state arenas, it is important that the administration of the day is able to cite specific initiatives for which they were able to get funding since this can be held up as a

significant measure of international clout and world-stage savvy; a claim which can be touted on political platforms.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have engaged with the critical themes of my research topic by relating to some of the literature which influenced my thought and supported my approach to the study. While conceding the fact that curriculum is many things to different people, I established my preferred concept of curriculum as emancipatory and laid out a definition of curriculum as a process which moves from policy to (and is inclusive of) implementation. I supported my selection of the emancipatory aspect of curriculum by relating it to the needs of a postcolonial small island state and the consensus of literature which recommends critical pedagogical engagement as a conduit through the decolonizing process. In so doing, I have created out of the literature, a description of the small island state, drawing reference to its geopolitical and social idiosyncrasies and I have also explored the importance of dialogue and voicing as an emancipatory pre-requisite for forward movement and as part of the education process. The following chapter will describe the methodological facets of the research and include further discussion of the literature which guided these aspects.

Chapter Four: Methodological Musings

All qualitative research is situationally embedded; it is historically, culturally, philosophically, theoretically, emotionally, morally, physically, locationally and temporally bound. There is no "non-lensed" view in research." Macklin & Higgs (2010 p.65)

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the methodological base and describe the practical aspects of the study. The quotation above reiterates that qualitative research is rooted in and bound by a number of personal, social and esoteric elements; therefore the methodology selected inevitably reflects the world view of the researcher in relation to the perceived purpose of the research. Based on the foregoing premise, I examine the relationship between the selected design, the epistemology and the purpose of the study, underscoring the rationale for the particular procedures used throughout the research process. I also discuss and justify my selection of the qualitative paradigm; the suitability of the methods used to the nature and aims of the study and the relevance of the case study strategy. This chapter introduces the participants and elucidates the data collection process and the analytical strategies enlisted. The ethical issues related to the methodology are also considered.

4.2 Rationalizing the Methodology

Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 105) define a research paradigm as "the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways". I have adopted the qualitative interpretive paradigm as my platform because it is reflective of my personal way of thinking and knowing and interpreting reality which is clarified in this section; specifically, I used a phenomenological lens as a means of focusing on

the meanings that participants made of their experiences with the curriculum and its implementation. The phenomenological approach has been perceived as one of the most compatible with my interpretivist platform. It allows the exploration and description of real life, complex phenomena and seeks to portray the nature of these phenomena and the related human experiences in a rich contextual format (Grace & Ajjawi, 2010). The ultimate aim is to arrive at an understanding of human experience through an intense focus on situated life experiences. I agree with Schwandt (2004 p. 41) that "the act of understanding is more like an aesthetic experience than a technical, methodical, and controlled activity". It is my view that the qualitative researcher must have the sensitivity and sensibility of the artist in order to render context and participants with fidelity.

As I was attempting to come to terms with the nature of qualitative research and its centrality to my area of study, I came across an article by Sullivan (2000), entitled, "Voices Inside Schools: Notes from a Marine Biologist's Daughter: on the Art and Science of Attention", which explored the importance of 'aesthetic vision' in interpretations applied to situational contexts in the process of qualitative research. I was excited by the way in which Sullivan used metaphors derived from her biologist mother's research, to spotlight its artistry, while at the same time comparing this to the processes used by the qualitative researcher. Using poetry and stanzaic prose, Sullivan focuses on the nature of the researcher's attention, comparing the role of researcher to that of artist. This piece was especially meaningful to me, since I have always felt that the most important part of the research process is how faithfully it is presented to the reader so that the context and participants are as alive as they were to the researcher. Therefore, I decided to use Sullivan's piece, which is based on similar orientation, to undergird my philosophy and illuminate my choice of method.

The word aesthetics, derived from the Greek *aisthanomai*, meaning perception through the senses, has made its way into discussions on research/inquiry since the work of John Dewey in the early 20th century paved the way for what is referred to as the cognitive revolution of the late 1950's (Bresler and McIntyre, 2008). The concept of the cognitive aesthetic dimensions of human interaction is often discussed in relation to qualitative research in the social sciences; the postmodern view being that aesthetic based inquiry is not a preserve of the arts but is actually a natural propensity of the social researcher. In the relatively short time since qualitative research has been accepted as a field in its own right, it has been predominantly associated with the social sciences. Today, research in education is primarily qualitative in orientation and this is particularly true of curriculum based research. Meriam (2002) points out that qualitative methodology is especially suited to the exploration of the processes of educational practice. These are often wide ranging and full of dynamics and implications which are difficult to interpret through what is often perceived as the narrower, more restrictive scope of quantitative research. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005) Since qualitative research is essentially concerned with process rather than outcomes or products, and a natural requisite of the study of process is fieldwork, the goal of which is understanding and description of behaviour; the onus is on the researcher to capture and convey the intricate variations of human behaviour. Therefore it is useful to arrive at the deepest possible understanding of this myriad of complex realities to which Lincoln and Guba, (1985) and Merriam (2002) refer. If the goal of educational ethnography is to provide rich, descriptive data about the contexts, activities and beliefs of participants in educational settings (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984), then the immersion of the researcher, the awareness of the unseen, the listening for the unsaid, are mandatory. Sullivan considers the researcher's need to

be completely saturated by the context and the prolonged engagement necessary to this type of research:

> My mother walks and sinks into an ooze,
> Centuries of organisms ground
> To pasty darkness. The sun
> Burns at her shoulders
> In its slow passage across the sky
> *(Notes from a Marine Biologist's Daughter (Sullivan 2000 p. 212)*

This verse aptly captures the requirements of qualitative research and its reliance on the ability of the researcher to become completely immersed in the situational context of study, while suggesting with the use of the word "ooze" that the process of such research is undeniably fluid and ever-changing. This is well documented by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), who also describe the non-static and "intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied" (p.10).

Qualitative studies go beyond suggesting general patterns of behaviour, towards helping to explain why something happens in a particular setting (Good and Brophy, 1987). Apart from the accurate rendition or depiction of the phenomenon being studied, the researcher's interpretation of it should provide answers to how it came about and why things are as they are, taking into consideration an array of perspectives which must be distilled into a vision that can be shared with the reader. Therefore, the human being is regarded as the primary data gathering instrument when conducting qualitative research and the use of the human instrument has been identified as a major characteristic of the qualitative method (Haggerson and Bowman, 1992; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Goetz and LeCompte, 1982). The limitations of quantitative approaches with regard to the intensive and multifaceted probing required in qualitative investigation are obvious since the aesthetic aspect of

qualitative research is largely dependent on the primacy of the human in the process. Somekh et al (2004, p2) note that

> The notion of the social scientist creating knowledge by bringing vision to the interpretation of facts was central to the work of Mills (1959) and more recently researchers such as Eisner (1991) have emphasized the importance of the social scientist as connoisseur.

Much of the literature on qualitative research makes this sort of reference to the role of the researcher in rendering as accurate and true to life portraits as possible and giving a shape or form to critical data. This is indeed, a key aspect of the burgeoning field of comparative and international research (within which this study can be placed), where rich description and attention to detail are relied upon to convey the idiosyncrasies of cultural context. Increasingly, it is felt that developing societies have been short-changed by the inability of quantitative methods, tried and tested in the developed world, to reveal the community-specific realities of developing countries.

Isaac (2001, p. 50) laments the absence of an authentic Caribbean qualitative research tradition", insisting that qualitative exploration of "difficult and elusive issues" (p.52) is more in sync with the informal orientation of Caribbean culture; and that the qualitative report is more accessible to a broader wider readership. Crossley & Vulliamy (1997) agree that qualitative research is particularly useful to developing countries. Vulliamy et al, (1990) point out that even funding agencies which are typically partial to the traditional, quantitative approach have begun to demonstrate awareness of the role of qualitative methodologies in uncovering truth and therefore guiding more accurate and effective articulation of policy. These agencies have begun to recognise that where projects are apt to effect significant change in the lives and very often the cultural ethos of a society, they must be guided by a grounded and

reflective portrait of the reality into which they will be injected. Reflecting cultural realities as intrinsic to context requires a certain aesthetic skill by the researcher, who must be aware of the intricacies of the context/culture relationship. In this regard, Sullivan (2000, p. 215) ponders on how the researcher's quest for intimate knowledge can be fulfilled by attention to those "portraits" in *How I Learned to Love Picasso*:

> At nineteen, I knew nothing, wanted to know everything,
> including why those paintings hung in the Petit Palais,
> why people lined up for blocks in the cold,
> why I stood with them blowing clouds of breath.
>
> *Les Demoiselles D'Avignon*. I stared
> at fractured shapes and faces,
> pondered all that flesh pink
> and then one leg
> where a thick blue line
> plunged from thigh to calf.
>
> I imagined that line gone.

The first stanza indicates that the researcher must share and experience the reality of the participants' world regardless of how uncomfortable that sharing may become, while the second stanza illustrates the intensity of focus required as the researcher struggles to find a unifying motif ("a thick blue line…") in the midst of the apparent data chaos ("fractured shapes and faces"). Sullivan notes also that the researcher must also question/reflect on his/her own relationship to context ("why I stood with them…"). In the qualitative research process, the researcher is charged with the responsibility of interpreting and representing the multi-dimensional contours of phenomena in context. If, as Vulliamy et al (1990) posit, the literature supports the conclusion that the primary aim of qualitative research is the generation of theories and hypotheses from emerging data, then the accurate portrayal of what is, becomes

the paramount goal of qualitative research; therefore the generation of theory should be based on a thorough examination and sound understanding of what exists. Herein lies a challenge of qualitative research. Somekh et al (2005) refer to this:

> Human experience is characterized by complexity, and social science researchers need to resist the temptation to impose unwarranted order through the application of 'one size fits all' theories. (p.3)

They go on to point out that:

> Quality in social science research rests upon the persuasive power of its outcomes and therefore, fundamentally, upon how it uses language to construct and represent meaning. (p.3)

Essentially, the use of language to render descriptions of what is, must be faithful to the essence regardless of the fact that findings may often not lend themselves to neat packaging. The educational researcher, in particular, is inevitably faced with multi-layered, complex situations which require the application of astute aesthetic vision and use of language to the sighting and interpretation of multiple realities. For example, a study investigating the process of curriculum change must address the perceptions, expectations, behaviour, attitudes and feelings of the initiators of change, the change managers or agents and the implementers who translate policy into pedagogy. The researcher must find meaning in the cacophony of voices without taking away the poignancy of that "thick blue line" to which Sullivan refers or the importance of any of the "fractured faces". It is obvious that each group will have a different story to tell since its members' experience of the change process is largely related to their group's function in the chain as well as their individual perceptions of that function. Further, apart from the general group voice, the researcher must take into account the individual voices within each group, which would be coloured by the unique perspective brought to bear on the process. Sullivan (2000) refers to the fact that aesthetic vision requires awareness of such minute detail in *When I die* (p.219)

> Write to my friends
> Tell them what time of day or night
> I died and what the weather was
>
> Tell them the color of the walls
> That last contained me
>
> Describe the quality of light in the room
> Its brightness or its grayness. Did light
> Make a pattern on my face?

Silverman (2005) reflects this view and suggests that "for qualitative researchers, 'detail' is found in the precise particular of such matters as people's understandings and interactions." (p.9).

The researcher is therefore the instrument which renders the details of the context perceptible to the reader. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe qualitative research as "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material processes that make the world visible. These practices transform the world" (p.3). However, it is the interpretive nature of this research which has attracted the many criticisms of qualitative research as 'epistemologically unsound'. The qualitative researcher requires finely honed interpretation skills. Patterns and nuances must be correctly interpreted and represented. "These interpretive practices involve aesthetic issues, an [sic] aesthetics of representation that goes beyond the pragmatic or the practical" (Denzin and Lincoln 2000 p.5). The fact that qualitative research emphasizes processes rather than causal relationships, and is not experimentally measurable, may be problematic for hard core positivists and those who base decision making on the belief that the experimental method is the only way of knowing. However, as Toma (2006 p. 405) contends, "researchers doing work within the qualitative tradition can, indeed, frame their efforts as sufficiently "scientific" without forcing their work into pre-approved quantitative moulds. Instead,

those engaged in using qualitative approaches should exemplify the equivalence of the rigor in their work and that of the scientist. To this end, Guba and Lincoln (1981) put forward the parallel concept of 'trustworthiness' as a means of considering reliability and validity in qualitative research and identify the aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as the criteria for demonstrating rigor. The qualitative researcher is nonetheless hard put to create assurance of credibility primarily because as the primary instrument of the research, its credibility depends largely on his/her efforts and ability; the craft or skill with which the world of the researched is represented.. A key question may well be whether or not the researcher, through immersion in context and intensive interview, is able to access and convey the truth beneath the surface of the apparent. However, the extent of probing, rephrasing and repetition facilitated by the qualitative interview or intensive conversation seems more likely to uncover layers of reality than would the single controlled response questionnaire more common to quantitative approaches. Sullivan refers to this key researcher ability to unpeel layers in *Beware: The Poet Comes for Tea (p.217)*:

> she sits, rattles the ice in her glass,
> laughs at small talk, but
> she's looking under your skin.
> she sees your bones, that fine crack
> in the left radius,; she hears the blood
> rushing out of the heart, leaping
>
> into its hopeful journey…
> she feels that spark at the synapse,
> flinches, just barely; you don't see.
> Later, she goes to her room and writes
>
> your life.

This poem elucidates the view that 'intensive interviews allow an interviewer to: "go beneath the surface of the described experience (s)" (Charmaz, 2006, p.26). This often means examining thoughts, feelings or earlier actions in juxtaposition to the current context in an effort to lay bare the 'bones' of truth. It also requires that there is a relationship of trust established as a facilitating vehicle in the research process.

Qualitative research is based on the central idea that human actions always occur within a context and therefore can be fully understood only in relation to this context (Charmaz, 2006, Hammersley 2008, Given, 2009). This type of research is particularly useful in discovering the answers to 'why' and 'how' questions. While it is quite possible to obtain similar findings to an inquiry conducted in different settings by way of quantitative methods, it would be difficult to generalize as to the **reasons** for the findings and establishing a common foundation for their similarity would be impossible. In other words, humans may behave in similar ways in different settings for completely different reasons and one could not make the assumption that similar patterns of behaviour necessarily arise from the same stimuli. Sullivan captures this in *Herding Fiddler Crabs* (p.214):

> It's different down here. Listen.
> Thousands of clicks,
> the small collisions,
> claws and carapaces,
> finely jointed legs landing
> in frantic succession
> on mind. And there –
> so many tiny fallings. (p.214)

Here she points to the importance of intensive scrutiny within a specific ("different") context where there are so many subtle nuances that the researcher needs to be alert to and can so easily overlook.

Essentially, the goal of the qualitative researcher is to discover patterns within complex social systems with a view to creating models of how these systems work or to discovering elements which may interfere with or facilitate their functioning in an effort to inform policy or stimulate change (my research falls into the latter category of discovery). To this end, an array of options is available to the modern qualitative researcher to enable rich and accurate description of phenomena within the context as well as to create clear and substantial comparisons where necessary. These include personal essays, narratives, poetry and multimedia texts. Regardless of option chosen, the aim of qualitative research is to capture what Meriam (1988, p.18) calls the 'nature' or 'essence' of what is being described. The fact that the researcher is no longer constrained to stiff, inflexible modes of reporting (Ellingson, 2008) allows the representation of a variety of angles or perspectives on a social phenomenon in a process referred to in ethnography as 'Creative Analytical Processes/Practice' (CAP)[12] (Richardson and St. Pierre 2005). This requires multiple-genre accounts, dimensions and angles or what is called crystallization. (Ellingson 2008, Richardson & St. Pierre 2005). By this means the realities of the phenomenon as experienced or perceived by the participant can be captured and rendered in their entirety. Therefore the onus is on the primary instrument (researcher) to bring these realities to life through the aesthetic recreation of the context. The researcher's aesthetic skills are key to the description and interpretation of this data in an analytical but holistic way, without interfering with essential truths. Cole and McIntyre (2004) add that in contemporary qualitative research, the interpretive authority does not lie solely within the purview of the researcher; rather it engages the reader in the experience of the context being described; hence the importance of descriptive skill.

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[12] Postmodernist influenced approach to ethnography which accepts that the lines between subjective and objective; author and subject are blurred and acknowledges that analysis is in essence a creative activity.

Unlike the positivist approach in which the researcher as the interpretive authority uses descriptive data to support hypotheses, the qualitative perspective, by engaging the reader in the aesthetics of the experience by way of rich, sensory detail, invites his/her active participation in making meaning relative to the research narrative. Denzin (1997) expresses the view that ethnography should validate the role of the reader in the process of making meaning or interpreting research; therefore the aesthetic experience pre-empts the disengagement of the reader. Bressler (2006) concurs that meaning making is central to qualitative research and the role of the audience/reader is key. She compares good research to art in terms of its complexity and textured richness. Leavy (2009) also reiterates throughout her book(s) that there is an artist within every researcher and in summarizing their study on the art-science relationship Eisner and Powell (2002) conclude that the aesthetic aspect is very much intrinsic to the work of all researchers in the shaping of thoughts and exploration of ideas. Therefore, the design of my study was chosen to enable an artistic knitting together of the thoughts, feelings and perceptions of the spectrum of players in the implementation process with a view to painting a holistic and realistic portrait of the context.

4.3 Discussing Design

In light of my desire to allow the manifestations of the St Lucian context to be the focus of the study, I decided to employ a phenomenological perspective to a case study which seeks to give voice to stakeholder views of policy, procedures, relationships, interactions and processes as they occur within the dynamic context of curriculum implementation. I also took on board Goodson and Sikes' (2001, p. xi) endorsement of the need for "research which explores and takes account of different objective experiences and subjective perspectives", ensuring that I made allowance for representation of a population at different levels of the implementation process speaking in different fora. In discussing the requirements of modern day curriculum scholarship, Schubert (2008, p. 401) emphasises the focus on understanding multiple meanings, identities and interrelationships in postmodern inquiry. "The interest served is deconstruction, the delineation and interrogation of multiple meanings. It involves listening to many narratives, voices appreciated as worth hearing in any phenomenon studied." This study was designed to explore the interactions, perceptions, expectations, behaviour, attitudes and feelings of the initiators of change, the change managers or agents and the implementers who translate policy into pedagogy. I wanted to listen to the multiple voices in different settings making meaning of their experiences. Therefore I decided to use the central metaphor of the dialogue, utilising different dialogic formats (informal group sessions, semi-structured interview and panel discussion) in order to draw from a range of multi-layered conversations. Jules (2008) reminds us that managing knowledge through sustained dialogue and information sharing is critical to the Caribbean region at this time if we are to redress the postcolonial legacy of education deficit. The dialogic format of my design therefore incorporated the principles of a "decolonising methodology" as expounded by Tuhiwai-Smith (1999), by moving beyond the colonial legacy of the culture of

silence surrounding educational policy in the society and giving voice to the previously unheard. This view was consistently endorsed by participants who almost unanimously expressed the need for avenues for airing voices.

The research focuses on the specific case of St. Lucia as a small island state typical to its geographical grouping. Yin (1994) defines the case study as "an empirical enquiry that investigates contemporary phenomenon within its real life context…" (p.13) and further explains that case studies may be employed in descriptive, exploratory or explanatory investigative circumstances (Yin 2009). Gray (2004 p. 123) adds that case studies also "explore subjects and issues where relationships may be ambiguous or uncertain". In the case of Saint Lucia, there has been no previous exploration of the relationships among those instrumental to the phenomenon of curriculum implementation; therefore the case study method facilitated the in-depth investigation necessary for their detailed exploration and description.

In keeping with the qualitative paradigm, I (as researcher), was the primary data collection instrument (Haggerson and Bowman, 1992; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Goetz and LeCompte, 1982). I kept in mind Wellington & Szczerbinski's (2007 p. 82) description of the qualitative interviewer as "sponge, sounding board, prober, listener, counsellor, recorder (tabula rasa) challenger, prompter" as I prepared to engage in the interview/discussions in a manner which would elicit the maximum amount of information while keeping participants at ease and engaged. Also mindful of Stephens' (2009, p. 15) exhortation that "a qualitative methodology will have at its centre a concern for context as a shaper of all aspects of the research exercise", my methods were designed to accommodate the oral, less formal nature of the St. Lucian culture. Therefore, I decided to use my central motif of dialogue also as a method of data collection, I wanted to ensure that I was able to capture voices in different types

of communicative contexts and it was important to have participants speak freely and comfortably without the strictures of formally structured interviews. While I had some basic questions that I wanted to ask and I had a list of specific aspects that I needed to investigate, I wanted to leave the interaction as fluid as possible so that matters which were important to participants would be the focus. The fact that the participants and I shared common cultural background and education interests lent itself to a conversational approach rather than an interviewer/interviewee type of interaction. Carson (1986), in exploring the use of conversation as a mode of curriculum research, considers the benefits of conversation in research to accrue to both participant and researcher and clarifies the nature of the conversational question thus:

> the nature of the conversational question is quite different from the interview question. The latter involves an effort to gather information about perceptions or practices. The former implicates a revealing of something held in common (Carson, 1986, p. 6).

Therefore, I conceptualized four levels of dialogue: (i) one on one conversations using loosely structured probing questions (participants and researcher), (ii) peer group conversations using visual stimuli, (iii) large group discussion using a mixed panel presentation as a stimulus (participants communicating across groupings and traditional hierarchical levels) and (iv) internal researcher reflection through the research journal.

i)   One on one conversation

This is essentially what is called the intensive individual interview and allows for the in-depth exploration of experiences and gives more of a "voice" to the participant by enabling him/her to tell as detailed a story as desired (Charmaz, 2006, Clough & Nutbrown, 2007). The intensive interview is one of the most common methods used in interpretive enquiry; one which allows the researcher to understand "contextually

bound" issues (Fontana & Frey, 2005) or as Seidman (2006, p. 9) puts it, "the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience". In keeping with my motif of dialogue, these were conversations between the researcher and individual participants which lasted between 90 and 120 minutes. Although the intention was not to go beyond 90 minutes in any session, it would have been awkward and imprudent to end a session while the participant was keen on expressing his/her views. Many participants indicated that they had never before been asked for their views on these issues and were grateful and eager to talk. Therefore, the dialogues generally lasted until they had no more to say or ask. Participants represented all the groups focused on in the study[13]. The conversations were guided by some open ended questions which allowed participants to tell stories, make comparisons, explore feelings and explain attitudes. Apart from the stipulated interview sessions, I had other conversations with principals when I initially visited the schools to set up schedules and examine the possible locations for the interviews. These conversations yielded rich thoughts and ideas, which informed later notes in my journal and inspired themes of some of the individual discussions.

ii)   Focus group conversations

The focus group provides a forum which allows for interactive discussion and debate, thereby immediately illuminating points of disparity as well as commonalities (Breen, 2006; Kjellin, 2008). Focus groups also allow for the observation of "a large amount of interaction on a topic in a limited period of time" (Morgan, 1997 p.8), facilitate the emergence of complex and multiple voices, many of which would not otherwise be heard, and de-centre the researcher as authority (Morgan, 1997; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005; Barbour, 2011). I used the focus group method with representatives

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[13] Described fully in 4.4 p. 90

of the largest cohort in the study, the teachers, as a homogeneous grouping, bearing in mind the view that the level of comfort provided by homogeneous focus groups also encourages naturalistic and varied forms of interaction among participants (Kitzinger 1994; Jarrell, 2000; Krueger & Casey, 2000). These conversations took place with two groups of ten and twelve individuals respectively and I used stimulus material by way of PowerPoint® slides to focus the dialogue on different themes. The slides included cartoons and other pictures intended to maintain a relaxed atmosphere while evoking discussion on experiences, feelings and attitudes (see Appendix IV for samples of stimulus material). Participants in the focus groups comprised a mixture of teachers who were pursuing the Bachelors degree in education and some teachers from my individual dialogues who had been my original sample. The former came from schools and districts other than those which had been selected for specific focus; which meant that I was able to draw opinions from an even wider sphere of teachers. I decided to use the teacher focus groups to ensure that as many voices as possible were heard from this critical mass of implementers and that they would also have the opportunity to listen to each other and share stories as a means of benefitting their own practice and professional development. While I provided the stimuli for discussion, I used a horseshoe formation for the groups, which allowed them to speak directly to each other. I positioned myself as part of the horseshoe so that there was no unnecessary focus on me and I interjected as a conversant, for clarification or confirmation or to remind participants to say their assigned number as they spoke. While I had allowed participants to select their pseudonyms which I used in transcribing the data, in order to preserve confidentiality I assigned them numbers in the focus groups. Each participant sat behind a standing card which carried her number and they were instructed to refer to or address each other by number. No one

in the groups knew whether any other had participated previously in the one on one conversations.

iii)   Panel Discussion/Seminar dialogue

The seminar format allows for dialogic interplay among the different groups of participants (teachers, principals, education officers, specialists) and adds inter-perspective enrichment to the data. It also enables some level of comparison between public and private voice. I was unable to find studies which utilized the seminar method in this way. Generally, what is known as the Consensus Panel Method uses expert panels to develop criteria for research or to arrive at consensus on issues (Campbell & Cantrill, 2001); however I could find no instances of it being used as a data collection method. I collected data by way of a larger dialogue (panel discussion) on the theme, "Implementing Language Arts Curriculum Reform: Issues and Answers", at which short stimulus presentations were made by a panel comprising one principal, one senior education ministry official, one curriculum officer, the consultant who developed the curriculum and a teacher. In order to have full interaction of stakeholders, I extended invitations for audience members to a wide cross-section of persons, including teacher trainers, parents, other ministry officials, principals and teachers as well as participants who had engaged in the earlier dialogues. While I did not include parents as a participant group per se, there were a few parents who attended the discussion out of interest and contributed as a lay audience by way of opinions and questions. The Panel Discussion programme can be found in Appendix V. After giving a welcome and general introduction regarding the purpose of the exercise, I reiterated the information from my letter of invitation that the panel discussion was part of my data collection and that while persons would not be specifically identified; they could be quoted in my dissertation. I drew attention to

the video camera indicating that it was to facilitate accurate transcription without interrupting the flow of the discussion and confirmed that the recording would be only in my possession and would not become public. I indicated that anyone who felt uncomfortable with the proceedings would be able to leave at that point; however, no one left. Then I introduced the panel members, who each made a brief (3 minute) presentation on his/her take on the topic, after which the dialogue began with questions, comments and general reactions by the audience. I moderated the lively discussion, which I allowed to proceed with no specific rules except that persons were to speak in the order in which they raised hands. From time to time, I would ask for clarification of a point if necessary, but I seldom had to since I was usually pre-empted by someone else requesting that same clarification. Therefore, I remained, as researcher, primarily an observer and secondarily a participant.

iv)   Reflection

In keeping with the qualitative research process, I kept a research journal in which I recorded thoughts, impressions, anxieties, setbacks and "aha!" moments. Recording thoughts and feelings and reflecting on them meant that the study did not seem to be a task undertaken, but an experience that I lived. Hence, I found myself having extensive internal dialogue as I pondered, weighed, assessed, wondered, debated and so on. The process of data collection resulted in changes, not only in me but also in the participants. As I proceeded, I began to realise that my expectations of a cut and dried collection of information had to give way to the recognition that qualitative research often requires continuous change and adaptation and that the internal dialogue was continuous. For example, in one instance I found myself deciding to add participants and key informants who had not been included in my original design. Interacting with student teachers pursuing their Bachelor in Education degree at the

community college, awakened the notion of using them in the focus groups to see how the perspective of teachers not currently in the classroom, would tally (or not) with that of those engaged in the daily grind. I was surprised and touched that participants generally indicated pleasure at being able to give opinions on matters that were near and dear to them but never previously discussed with them. They indicated their gratitude at being afforded the opportunity to discuss their views, frustrations and insights on their daily lives as teachers. It was clear that there was strong interest in the subject of study, since everyone that I asked to participate agreed immediately. Many expressed deep resentment that they were so often ignored and overlooked as major stakeholders in the curriculum reform process and found the dialogues to be cathartic. I was gratified that I had taken the decision to place a large focus on the voices of teachers. The use of four levels of dialogue meant that I was listening to voices in different fora and observing the interplay in communicative relationships intra and inter-groups; then later discussing these experiences with myself. I wrote about my major challenges like keeping the size of the sample within manageable proportions because, once I began to meet participants and saw how positively emotive they found the sessions, I found myself wanting to also speak with those colleagues to whom they referred but who were not part of the sample.

I agonized over being caught between juggling my own very demanding work responsibilities and the need to put my participants first when negotiating meeting times. I had to take into consideration the practicalities of participant curricular and extra-curricular activities, the rhythm of the school year and the many road trips necessary to meet participants at their location of choice. The level of stress was tremendous, but as soon as I sat down with a participant and began to dialogue, it all disappeared and I became immersed in the moment. I drew comfort from Coffey's

(1999, p. 158) reassurance that the physical and emotional demands of fieldwork should be considered "strengths rather than burdens". Through my internal dialogues, I learnt to relax and simply take in the atmosphere of each school, letting the day flow according to the tides of school life. At the same time, I became more committed to my morning practice of yoga and meditation, which I found assisted me greatly in being able to focus exclusively on a conversation and eliminate the ticking clock from my consciousness.

As I wrote to myself, it began to dawn on me that the voices I was listening to carried many echoes of their idiosyncratic school culture and ethos and that immersing myself in the ripples of school life helped me to understand what they were saying more clearly. So instead of carrying a strict time-clock to my encounters, I showed up at the schools and then let the day take its course. Inevitably, matters arose which required me to postpone a scheduled session because a teacher or principal had a pressing issue to attend to and I learnt to adapt by carving out a field day instead of a field morning or afternoon so that I could easily shift a morning conversation to later in the day. This flexibility also gave me the opportunity to simply observe the swirl of school life around me as I would either be waiting in the principal's office, resource room, general office (for the school that had one) or sitting somewhere along a corridor listening to what was going on in classrooms. Of course allocating several field days meant that I spent late hours catching up with my own administrative work since it was not possible for me to have a reduced work load; but it was a trade-off that I did not regret. The most striking thing I noted was my metamorphosis from busy, stressed Administrator, to accommodating, 'go with the flow' conversationalist each field day. My field days were almost like a yoga exercise in themselves and they slowed me down and brought a sense of calm. On reflection, each of those days

would qualify as a social activity so while I was indeed working, it was not with the sense of impending absolute deadlines that filled my normal working days.

The panel discussion which was the last data collection activity went way beyond my expectations and that evenings reflections were euphoric. I had initially thought that having a broad forum where all groups came together, would mean a stiff and stilted session with teachers perhaps inhibited from speaking frankly in front of ministry officials; however, the session turned out to be a lively and active one with maximum interaction and engagement by panellists and audience alike. This was the first time that I had listened to all voices together: teachers, policy makers, teacher educators, principals, curriculum specialists, academics and for the first time parent voices joined in. It turned out to be a very good blend and there was a certain relish on all sides, of the opportunity for discussion in a common forum. There was surprising candour on all sides and contrary to my earlier expectations, teachers were not the least bit reluctant to express their frustrations publicly, nor were policy makers and ministry officials hesitant to admit shortcomings at their end and their own personal frustrations as well. After almost three hours, participants were still hoping to have spent more time in discussion but I was forced to bring it to a close since it was already 9.00 p.m. and one panellist had to travel south while another was flying out the next day. At the end of my data collection period, it seemed to me that there was a critical need for consistent, non-threatening avenues and fora in which to hold open, honest dialogue and mutual searching for solutions. I also concluded that the fourth dimension of giving internal voice to external interaction was a critical aspect of personal development.

4.4 Presenting the Participants

To select my participants, I used non-probability purposive sampling as defined by Wellington & Szczerbinski (2007 p. 66). Since it is often posited that school culture tends to play a role in how innovations are implemented (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry, 1997; Fullan, 2007), I focused on teachers, principals and district education officers from three different education districts during the one-on-one conversations, in order to yield rich, comparative data on how implementation was taking place on the ground at individual district and school level. The districts were purposefully selected to represent both rural and urban areas from the north, south and centre of the island and the schools can be described as large, medium and small relative to country statistics. Therefore, I was able to compare schools and districts and their implementation behaviours. However, for the focus groups, teachers from other schools were also part of the conversation to expand the scope of data. Later on, during the broad panel discussion, the conversation expanded to include other voices like parents and education personnel outside of the original set of intensive interviews to enable cross-talk and allow for other perspectives and even new questions to emerge. Teachers were selected on the basic criterion of having taught for more than seven years to ensure that they had been present at the time of the transition to the new curriculum. In making the selection, I also ensured that in each school, I had a mix of Infant and Primary level teachers. Ministry officials were selected based on their relevance to curriculum implementation or support; hence the inclusion of the Deputy Chief Education Officer responsible for Instruction, the Language Arts curriculum officers and the District Education Officers for the selected schools. I also included two members of the Teacher Education Division which is responsible for teacher training on island.

Participants for individual interview included: twelve (12) teachers from three schools; the respective two (2) District Education Officers and three (3)Principals of these schools; one (1) policy maker in the person of Deputy Chief Education Officer (responsible for instruction); two (2) Curriculum Officers and two (2) teacher-trainers. I had originally selected three teachers from each sample school; however, in one case, because that particular school had a Literacy Coordinator, the principal suggested that she be included in the sample. This I readily agreed to since the sampling was not exclusively prescriptive. It was at her suggestion that I included an additional teacher from that school in my sample. I had initially included only assigned class teachers; however, Principal A pointed out that in light of her engagement with the teaching of literacy across the school, this teacher would most likely have very pertinent insights on the implementation of the HLAC. I had not been aware that some primary schools actually deployed literacy specialists in that manner and was happy to include this individual in the study. Subsequently, I extended the number in the other two schools to four as well for balance even though neither of these schools had an assigned literacy teacher. I envisaged that this aspect would also make for interesting comparisons and provide further subject matter for later discussions. My intention was to have conversed with all three District Education Officers responsible for the three districts used; however, it proved impossible to meet with the officer for School 1's district despite every effort. On three occasions I made appointments through his secretary and drove several miles to his office only to find that he had left suddenly on urgent business at one of the schools. Subsequently it seemed that there was no mutually convenient time that we could meet and I began to think that this officer had re-considered his agreement to participate and was studiously avoiding me. Therefore, I decided to proceed without him.

Focus groups comprised seven of the individually interviewed teachers in addition to teachers from other schools and districts who were pursuing the B.Ed. degree. Originally, I had envisaged one focus group being made up only of my individual participants; however, having given a guest lecture to the B.Ed. students at the Division of Teacher Education on the teaching of Language Arts, I found some of the questions afterward to be very pertinent to my area of study. It immediately occurred to me that it might be useful to include some of these teachers in the focus group since they may now have different perspectives due to their current active engagement in the study of curriculum and teaching. Therefore, I re-designed the focus group aspect into two focus groups comprising a mix of the B. Ed student teachers and those from my original sample who were able to attend.

Panellists for the Panel Discussion comprised a Key Informant (consultant to the HLAC) and four individually interviewed participants (teacher, principal curriculum officer and policy maker). The audience (whose questions and interactions were also captured for data) included some of the individual and group participants in addition to a wider range of persons selected for their stakeholder roles. Participation was by way of personal invitation but persons were also asked to indicate if they wished to bring along anyone else who may be interested in the topic of discussion. The group finally numbered fifty persons and everyone was asked to fill out a 'sign-up' sheet so that if necessary I would be able to identify and contact those who had not been personally invited. However, because of the small size of the community, most persons who attended were known to me in one way or another.

Key informants were used to provide background for the study. While the research primarily involved participants working within the education system at its various levels from policy formulation to enactment; it was also important to arrive at a full understanding of the background of the phenomenon (implementation of the specific curriculum) by way of obtaining the perspectives of persons who were either key to the inception of the reform initiative or hold positions which may be considered to be instrumental to its sustainability even though they may be outside the education system per se within country. The key informants were: the Consultant responsible for the design of the HLAC; the individual who was Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education during the design and adoption of the Education Reform initiative; the then Head of the OECS Education Reform Unit (OERU) and the current Head of the OERU.

4.5 Describing the Settings

School 1 is located in the southern part of the island in a breath-taking rural setting. The drive there was always exhilarating and inspirational for me and I stopped several times to enjoy the vistas before me and to just breathe in the clean forest air and the silence. Every time I went to School 1, I stopped my vehicle at two specific points along the forest road and spent a few moments in silent communion with nature. The school itself sits on a hill and is in command of one of those humbling views across the island. A very small school, with a student population of 121, it has a family-type feel. Most of the students come from two small nearby communities as do many of the teachers. The fact that parents and students are personally known to Principal 1 and her teachers adds to the very intimate feel of the school. Many of my various conversations with this Principal dealt with the idiosyncrasies of the communities and

her interactions with parents. Our conversations were often interrupted by her having to deal with students who were sent to her office for one reason or the other, and I was struck by her in-depth knowledge of each child and his/her issues. I noted that she took time to address each student in an engaging but matter-of-fact manner, which reflected the parent-like approach that Principal 1 brought to her management of the school. During my time spent at the school, I was able to witness her solicitous manner which also extended to her interactions with teachers. The typical hospitality for which rural schools in St. Lucia are known was extended to me at School 1 and I was always invited to partake of the simple meals (rice and peas with stewed chicken or a hearty local 'bouyon'/soup) prepared for the students as part of the school feeding programme. This was something that I had experienced during my years of teaching practice supervision and I am conscious of the marked difference in atmosphere and pace between rural and city schools.

School 2 is a city school in an area often classified by social workers as "at risk". Located within a community often fraught with violence, this school is medium sized, with a population of 313. Principal 2 is a literacy specialist by training and expressed a commitment to raising the level of literacy at her school. She also indicated that her mission was to ensure that the school became known for progress and achievement which would result in its being divested of the stigma that surrounds it because of its location. The school had recently received a facelift and boasted new and cheerful paint and a new name, all part of the efforts at 'rebranding'. My early conversations with Principal 2 revealed that she was dealing with a school population, a large percentage of whom regularly witnessed violent acts, were exposed daily to obscenities and in many cases physical and sexual abuse. Despite being weighed down by the obvious strain, she nonetheless displayed a buoyant optimism that her

efforts at transformation would yield positive results. She disclosed the fact that much of her time was spent trying to teach parenting skills to the mostly young parents of her students, in order to establish some home support and continuity for the initiatives begun at school; at the very least she hoped to convince parents of the importance of homework supervision.

Teachers at this school had been in the profession for a long time; the average being 18 years, many from the beginning of their teaching career. Principal 2 pointed to the high level of commitment displayed by her teachers who continued to strive under what could conservatively be termed very trying circumstances. She was also full of praise for the Guidance Counsellor assigned to her district, who was always supportive and accessible. I was able to have a fairly long discussion with the counsellor on one of my visits to the school and this was very informative as to the nature of the social challenges facing this school. Nonetheless, I was impressed by the sense of order which prevailed at the school, belying the many negative issues outlined in conversation with principal and teachers. However, finding time to sit and talk was particularly difficult for this principal, who spent most of her time either in classrooms providing teacher support and monitoring instruction or dealing with parents who had been summoned to the school for one reason or another.

School 3 is a large suburban school, located at the crossroads of a number of modern housing developments and straddles the urban/rural divide. The student population is diverse, some coming from other affluent suburban areas further away, some from nearby rural areas and others from the city centre. This is the only one of the three schools with an appointed vice-principal because of its population size of 950. Principal 3 is animated and self-assured and despite the obvious demands of running a large school, was very willing to converse at length especially on her innovations at

the school, of which she was very proud. She declared herself to be able to shrug off criticism and scepticism about some of her in-house policies on the part of her teachers, because she felt that inevitably, the benefits of her proposals would be seen; indeed, she was able to provide a number of instances where this had been so. The school is modern, comprising individual classroom spaces and sizable schoolyard. It boasts a formal reception office, secretary and waiting room, adjacent to the Principal's office. My interviews with teachers were conducted in the relative comfort of the Vice Principal's office which provided the perfect, entirely private environment for this kind of activity. Since this is a relatively new school, many teachers have taught previously at other schools and those who have only taught at School 3 are quite young. The modern, eclectic culture of the school seems to mirror the population mix among students and teachers and the school seems imbued with the fervent zeal for achievement which Principal C seems to emit. Throughout my time at School 3, I was always cognizant of the forceful aura of its principal.

4.6 Piloting

Two pilot stages were undertaken: (i) the pre-pilot (September 2011), during which I conducted interviews with a teacher and a principal in order to gain confidence in the informal, conversational style of interview that I had chosen and to see how the preliminary open ended guiding questions performed; (ii) the pilot (December 2011), during which I held dialogue with two teachers, one principal and one ex-Ministry official and rehearsed my data analysis.

Gray (2004, p. 214) posits that "whether an interview is successful in eliciting the range and depth of answers required will depend on large part on the skills of the interviewer". Therefore, I felt that it was important to fine-tune my approach as much

as possible before engagement with actual participants. The pre-pilot gave me a more realistic sense of the approximate length of time to expect for the sessions and enabled me to revise my field work plan. In addition, pre-piloting revealed certain recurrent themes which needed to be further explored and which had not featured in my preliminary draft guiding questions. It was clear even from the pre-pilot that my research was of interest to practitioners and the pre-pilot sessions turned out to be much longer and more in-depth than I had expected. This made me abandon the idea of trying to stick within an allotted time frame and I included the possibility of doing multiple interviews with individuals if necessary. Subsequent to the interview, these individuals were asked to provide feedback on the entire session, including frank feedback on the level of ease that they felt in conversing with me and my skill in getting them to give anecdotes and reflect critically. This preliminary pilot stage also provided the opportunity for me to become familiar with ways of keeping discussion going, maintaining participant interest and generating talk. I was also able to develop expertise in manipulating the recording machinery.

I began the actual pilot with more confidence. Pilot schools were deliberately selected for proximity to my workplace, so it was not difficult to schedule sessions for periods when pilot teachers turned their classes over to the Physical Education teacher (in the case of the city school), or after school, which was the choice of the rural teacher. A major challenge was finding a quiet spot to conduct the interview. This was especially difficult in the urban school which is located next to a busy main road. In addition the school yard/playground is a concrete quadrangle right outside the resource room; the only enclosed room apart from Principal's Office. All other classes are part of a large open hall setting, so the quietest location was a room situated right between the main road on one side and playground on the other. Needless to say, despite the closed

doors, considerable noise filtered into the room. However, this was not such a problem in the rural school, since the resource room where I conducted the interviews, is located next to the Principal's office and somewhat apart from the main classroom areas. In addition, this school is situated away from the main road, in fairly tranquil surroundings. This made me give more thought to negotiating access to interview-conducive locations particularly in my urban and suburban sample schools which would most likely be more prone to disturbances. I resolved to make interview location a priority in preliminary discussions with participants. I also recognized the need to explore the possibility of using an interview venue outside of the school premises, or perhaps considering a weekend.

A second challenge that came up during the pilot was finding a suitable time for interviewing the principal. The job of a primary school principal is particularly demanding, since in most cases there is no deputy principal. In the midst of plant management, personnel management, instructional leadership, external administrative meetings, seeing parents and other visitors, dealing with students constantly being sent to the office and completing paper work, it was nigh impossible to find even 45 uninterrupted minutes in their day. On some occasions, I had to reschedule the pilot sessions when unexpected matters arose. For example, in one instance when I arrived at the school, the pilot Principal was visibly shaken after having had to deal with a murder threat issued against her and another teacher by a Grade 5 student earlier that day and although we had set the time for our meeting, I had to make a hasty exit.

The pilot process significantly reshaped my conceptualization and expectations of the research. Firstly, I had anticipated grouping my interviews neatly, so that I would do all teachers, then all principals followed by Ministry officials. However, apart from being forced to acknowledge the fact that this was not going to be a very efficient use

of time, I began to realize that there were matters cropping up in teacher interviews that I needed to understand from the principal's or the Ministry's point of view and that moving from one systemic level to another while interviewing, enabled me to factor issues raised by individuals in one group into conversations with another group. A key example of this was in the area of teacher training needs, where it was already apparent from the pilot that the assumptions evidenced by the official approach to training and preparation were not shared by teachers and principals and that even the definition of training was not a common one.

Secondly, I had prepared my interview questions on the assumption that teachers would all have had similar levels of interaction with the Harmonized Language Arts Curriculum (HLAC), but the pilot process revealed that there were widely varying levels of familiarity. Therefore, it became evident that my interviews would have to take up at least two distinctive lines of questioning designed according to the level of use each teacher was making of the document and I had to be prepared for the fact that conversations would certainly lead in different directions and I would have to establish their level of familiarity with the curriculum very early. It was also evident from the pilot that the experiences and perceptions of infant teachers could be vastly different from those of primary teachers for a variety of reasons and this would also guide my line of questioning for individual teachers at each level. This meant also, that my selection of participants would have to ensure that teachers from both levels were included in each school sample.

Thirdly, the fact that one of the pilot Principals had been recently appointed meant that she was not able to speak knowledgeably on the implementation of the curriculum, which had been introduced prior to her appointment. Therefore, I recognized the importance of ascertaining some basic background information prior to

finalizing school selection, since a discussion of the implementation process at the school was central to the study.

The pilot period also enabled me to address some practical elements of the research: for example, I was able to test my recording technology. Generally, my selected digital voice recorder worked very well; however, subsequent to the pilot I decided to add a high quality external microphone which would be particularly useful in cases where finding an entirely quiet location would not be possible. I was able to become familiar with digital manipulation, file transfer and conversion for transcription and I used the pilot data to practice coding for analysis. I had been vacillating between using a Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis System (CAQDAS) or a manual method. Recognizing that the volume of anticipated data would be quite large, I decided that I would try the software initially and then go through manually as a comparison. In the end I opted for a combination of a CAQDAS (I used NVivo) data entry and manual coding. The pilot also allowed me to test my transcription procedures. I was able to gauge the speed and accuracy of my transcriber/typist as she transcribed the pilot data and to get a more realistic sense of the amount of time I would need to spend reading through and listening to an average interview.

Overall, piloting my fieldwork proved to be a very beneficial experience. It was already obvious that there would be participants who would have to be drawn out and those who would need little stimulus to speak at length; therefore, I learnt to adjust my questioning to suit each type. I became more adept in keeping participants comfortable and began to focus on making them feel valued and central to the research. I recognized that I would have to maintain a high level of flexibility and organize my own schedules in order to remain in sync with theirs. I became more sensitive to non-verbal cues and more adept at determining when and how to rephrase

questions for clarity; when to call a session to a close and when to just let participants keep talking. I also became more aware of my own limitations regarding the number of interviews I could do within a given time period without losing concentration and alertness. Most of all, I began to feel excited about my work and confident about my skills as an interviewer, and began to look forward to beginning my data collection and engaging with the actual participants.

4.7 Delineating Data Collection and Analysis

Creswell (1994), notes that "few writers agree on a precise procedure for data collection, analysis and reporting of qualitative research" (p. 143). Coffey & Atkinson (1996) concur that there is no one correct approach or technique but caution that the process should be methodical. However, it is generally accepted that in qualitative research, data analysis begins "from the initial interaction with participants and continues that interaction and analysis throughout the study" (Gay et al 2009).

Individual conversations took place over six months, from January to June 2012; with the exception of one teacher trainer who was not available until October, 2012. During this period I also engaged in discussion with the Key Informants as I went back and forth among participants. The majority of interviews were single sessions of about 90 to 120 minutes each (depending on the disposition of the participant). However, in two cases, due to unavoidable interruptions, two separate sessions were held with each participant. While I would have liked a continuous period of data collection, I decided to suspend this from June to August since the end of academic year and summer periods are times when it is difficult to get the attention of education personnel. This is the time of Common Entrance examinations, followed by teacher workshops in the early summer and of course, extended vacation. However, on the

positive side, this forced hiatus turned out to be extremely beneficial, as it enabled me to focus intensely on reading through and coding the extensive transcripts from the individual interviews.

At the start of the new academic year, I engaged with the two focus groups in September 2012, in sessions lasting 120 minutes and 115 minutes respectively. Finally, I collected data from the panel discussion on November 22, 2012 which brought my official period of data collection to a close. All interview and focus group sessions were audio tape recorded in their entirety and the Panel Discussion was videotaped. Recording these sessions electronically meant that I was able to give my full attention to the participants and proceedings without the distraction of extensive note-taking, and conversations had a more natural feel. I engaged a professional transcribing secretary to type the interviews and I read them through subsequently, while listening to the recording to confirm accuracy and for a virtual re-immersion into context before beginning analysis. I found that the distance afforded by the space of time between conversations and reading gave me a sense of objectivity (wanting to treat the familiar as strange) and I found myself constantly evaluating my own voice and making notes for new foci and conversational strategies in later sessions.

I analysed my data using the constant comparative method by which the researcher identifies recurrent features and concepts by means of coding data as it is collected (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006). The constant loop process by which data is gathered, examined, compared to earlier data allows the researcher to make extensive field notes and journal entries, through which common threads and recurrent themes begin to emerge. This method has the advantage of providing continuing guidance to the research as subsequent interviews can focus on areas of interest or concern identified by ongoing analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994,

Yin, 2009). During the period of data collection and constant comparative review, I was guided by the following questions as suggested by Gay et al, (2009, p. 448):

- Why do participants act as they do?
- What does this focus mean?
- What else do I want to know about that participant's attitude?
- What new ideas have emerged in this round of data collection?
- Is this a new concept or is it the same as a previous one?

By applying this questioning process to each transcript as I read and listened, I was able to begin noting common responses, reactions and concerns, comparing attitudes and possible justifications, and identifying other possible lines of questioning which I could add to subsequent interviews or which I needed to return to previous interviewees with. I also considered whether or not I needed to follow up on anything in the transcript for example adding to my participant list or scheduling a follow-up session.

The next step was coding the data and here I drew heavily upon grounded theory. Charmaz (2006, p. 46) describes coding as "the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding, I systematically reduced the collected data into categories which indicate trends and collective concepts, for comparative analysis, using Charmaz' (2006) recommended steps for qualitative data coding. The process began with initial coding by which I applied labels to all the themes found in transcripts and field notes without imposing pre-determined umbrella codes. This required uploading typed transcripts to NVivo and reading through them as quickly as they were completed by the typist. From the very first transcript read, I began to put in labels for chunks of participants' responses and I added similar responses to those labels using NVivo's sorting and classifying mechanism which refers to them as nodes (initial codes). Some responses could be

allocated to more than one label/node and the software enabled me to compile a grouping of similar responses. Once I had begun to generate groups of initial codes, I started to see ways in which more focused codes were emerging. Finally, having collected most of my data, I began to think of ways in which it could be packaged for presentation in relation to the literature; therefore, I looked for links among the focused codes and subsequent umbrella codes which could be used as the platforms for analysing and summarizing the data respectively. Table 4.1 gives an example of the progress of two chunks of data through the coding process.

Table 4.1 Coding

Excerpt	Initial codes	Focused code	Theoretical/Umbrella code
I strongly believe that they should seek advice from teachers, because we are the ones directly involved in teaching the students. We know what we are going through in the classroom...we know! (Mary; Suburban Teacher Transcripts, p.9)	Communication	Role perception	Criticality of Voice
The school cannot provide you with all materials...we need resources...we need people to come on board and help especially in this rural community where we are struggling... (Lyn; Rural Teacher transcripts p. 22)	Resources	Partnerships	Creation of Support Structures

Charmaz (2006, p. 63) contends that theoretical codes "lend form to the focused codes you have collected" and "may help you tell an analytical story that has coherence". On

completion of data collection, I had identified 25 initial codes, which I then grouped into thirteen focused codes for analysis and finally, three umbrella themes or theoretical codes for summary purposes (see Appendix III).

4.8 Considering Ethical Implications

As part of the University of Sheffield's 'Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants, Data and Tissue', my research had to be subjected to ethical review by an Ethics Review Panel to ensure that it embodied the standards expected by the University and conformed to the stipulated ethics policy. Therefore, I was obliged to present the conceptualization of my research design, the nature of my proposed engagement with participants and my procedures for collection, analysis and reporting of the research. This process was mandatory prior to embarking on any data collection. It was important to consider the possibility that the small size of the society and my past and current interactions with participants would characterize my study as insider research; therefore I needed to examine what implications, if any, this might have on my procedures.

The research involved only adult participants who gave informed consent. I initially contacted selected participants by telephone or e-mail to ascertain their willingness to participate; then they were formally asked for their assistance at individual meetings and they were provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the research, the procedures to be used, the measures to be taken to ensure confidentiality and the contact details of researcher and supervisor. After being given time to consider and clarify any issues with me, they were then asked to sign an Informed Consent form. Generally, there was little or no hesitancy on the part of participants or key informants in committing to the research.

When I began to think of my research, I was certainly aware that most of my participants would be personally known to me. I had had a long history in the St. Lucian education sector, having worked in education in that country for more than twenty years, first as a lecturer in English Literature at the local Community College, then as a Teacher Trainer in Language Arts Methodology at the same institution; before moving into Education Administration at the Community College and then the regional university. For many of these years I trained hundreds of teachers and interacted with schools, principals and Ministry officials in a multitude of ways. It was important to consider the possibility that the small size of the society and my past and current interactions with participants would characterize my study as insider research; therefore I needed to examine what implications, if any, this might have on how my work would unfold. The literature on insider research offers various perspectives of an insider researcher. One can be a member of the researched population (Kanuha 2000), or share experiential background, identity and language with participants (Asselin, 2003). One of the early definitions was put forward by Merton (1972), who considered the possession of *a priori* intimate knowledge of a community, characteristic of an insider. However, as noted by Hellawell (2006), such knowledge does not necessarily mean membership. Hellawell contends that "ideally the researcher should be both inside *and* outside the perceptions of the 'researched'" and that "both empathy and alienation are useful qualities for a researcher" (2007, p.6). Sikes and Potts (2008) refrain from offering a specific definition for the term 'insider research' but acknowledge that their book on the topic focuses on projects "undertaken by people who, before they begin to research, already have an attachment to, or involvement with, the institutions or social groups in, or on, which their investigations are based." (p. 3) While the types of insider research vary from

research on a specific organization of which one is a part to research on a wider society of which one is a member, it is generally agreed that insider research could describe any situation where there is intimate knowledge of the focus of study, whether it be by way of shared culture, historical knowledge or political relationships (Robson 1993; Brannick & Coghlan 2007; Smyth & Holian 2008).

In considering advantages and complications of insider positionality, Chavez (2008) cites ease of access to and movement in the field, ready rapport, and awareness of cultural nuances as major advantages to insider status, but cautions that social roles or community expectations of the researcher may be complicating or constraining factors. However, Acker (2000) shrugs off the insider/outsider debate as interminable and does not believe that determining insider/outsider status is critical to the work. She posits that qualitative research often requires one to be both. Dwyer & Buckle (2009) concur that it is more important to occupy the space between insider and outsider perspectives and dwelling on polarization is not particularly useful since "perhaps, as researchers we can only ever occupy the space between" (p. 8).The concept of an inter-polar space is extended by Labaree (2003) and Hellawell (2006), who envisage the researcher as insider in some aspects of the research and outsider in others, moving back and forth along multiple, parallel continuums. For example, one might be an insider relative to sharing the gender of a participant but an age-related outsider when interviewing one from a different generation. In the final analysis, according to Dwyer & Buckle (2009, p. 7),

> the core ingredient is not insider or outsider status but an ability to be
> open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one's
> research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately
> representing their experience.

I gravitated towards this viewpoint, since I perceived myself to be situated within the inter-polar space with no possibility of being either entirely one or the other.

Embracing this outlook meant that I was able to free my mind of worry about how to work from an inside or outside position and concentrate instead on engaging with my participants with an open and receptive demeanour.

4.9 Establishing Trust

The act of dialogue in itself requires an atmosphere of trust and it was important to establish the level of trust that would free the dialogues of constraint and interfere with the openness with which participants engaged with me. Apart from the information provided on the Consent Form and my initial letter, before each interview I went over the issue of confidentiality, ensuring that participants were aware that despite my best efforts, the size and intimacy of a small society means that there is always some risk of schools being identified by a discerning and determined reader. In some cases, like those of certain Ministry officials, it was impossible to provide the level of confidentiality that could be afforded to the teachers as part of a very large group; however, they were not at all hesitant to proceed. With each participant, I went over the measures I would take to protect identity as best as I could and indicated that I would not proceed further if they had any feeling of discomfort. I also pointed out that I did not have a structured interview schedule and we would be engaging in conversations where they could also determine the themes that we explored. The first part of the session took the form of casual chat about their education and teaching background, feelings about teaching, career goals and aspirations. The transition into discussions of the curriculum was generally quite smooth and would usually arise when they had been speaking of their favourite subject for teaching. I believe the atmosphere of trust was enhanced by the fact that I visited the schools several times even before beginning the one-one-one conversations. In addition, I had previously

interacted with most participants in various ways and they were quite used to me. Understanding the unhurried culture of the island was also important so that participants did not feel rushed, which could have led to unease. Therefore I operated as much as possible at participants' convenience, privileging them while making adjustments to my work and family life instead during the period of data collection.

No names of individuals, districts or schools were used in the study. Schools and districts used in the research were assigned a number (1-3) and not identified by name or actual district number; teachers were allowed to choose pseudonyms so that no grouping may be linked to a particular school while Principals and District Education Officers were also numbered to correspond with the school numbering. However, at the level of policy maker, because there is a single Deputy Chief Education Officer (responsible for instruction), it was not possible to give assurance of anonymity in this case. The same pertains to the two Curriculum Officers for Language Arts, both of whom were participants and to a lesser extent, the District Education Officers. Even though their names were not used these participants are recognisable by their roles, to those familiar with the education system in St. Lucia. The most I could do to attempt some kind of anonymity for these participants was to assign them generic Ministry of Education classification, referring to them as MOE 1- MOE 5. However, in each of these cases, I discussed my inability to completely ensure anonymity with these participants and they indicated that this was not problematic to them. MOE 1 remarked that in any case, it was time that education officials engaged in more open and frank discussion. Interviews were held in private rooms and collected written data stored in a double-locked fireproof safe normally used to store examination scripts in my private office, to which I am the sole key holder. Electronic data was downloaded

to a personal computer and kept in a password protected file pending transcription and analysis.

Interviews and focus group conversations were recorded (with the consent of participants) and transcribed. I informed participants that they were free to read the transcribed copy if they wished, to confirm its accuracy and to reiterate permission for its use. The majority of participants indicated that they were not interested in reviewing the transcripts. Only two requested review but did not require any amendments except in the case of one principal who wanted two references to Ministry individuals by name, omitted from the record. I assured her that no real names would be used in the study.

4.10 Negotiating Access

After writing to the Ministry of Education to receive permission to conduct research in public schools, I contacted participants by telephone and e-mail to explain the subject of my study and to ascertain their interest in participating. Once I had a confirmed list of participants, I followed up with a formal letter of request and an Informed Consent form, the signed copies of which I collected at the interviews. Access to the schools was arranged through discussion with principals who made suggestions regarding best times and assisted with the rescheduling of teacher commitments where necessary to allow teacher participants the block of time needed for interview. Appointments with Ministry officials and Key Informants were made entirely at their convenience. For instance, I met with Key Informant PPS at his hotel at 7.00 a.m. while he was on a short visit to the island and we breakfasted on oranges while conversing on his balcony. In the case of one participant teacher, she was more comfortable conversing at home, which happened to be near the top of a hill where the only access was a muddy track and I spent an interesting afternoon gingerly

making my way up and later practically sliding downhill, shoes in hand, to the main road.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter justified the selection of methodology and methods by relating them to the nature and purpose of the research. Each instrument used (conversation, focus group and panel discussion) was described and discussed in relation to the literature and their application within the context was related. In this chapter I also introduced the participants and provided a description of the schools, painting a backdrop against which the voices would be heard and highlighting the differences among the school and district contexts . Finally, the collection of data and its subsequent analysis were discussed and examples given of the processes used for data reduction and handling. In keeping with the central role of the researcher in qualitative research, I included some personal insights into my engagement in the field and reflections on my experiences which were recorded in my research diary.

Having set the backdrop and introduced the characters, I shall present the voices of the key informants and participants through synopses of the dialogues in Chapters Five to Seven.

Chapter Five: Voices from the Field (i): The Key Informants

"I come from a place that likes grandeur; it likes large gestures; it is not inhibited by flourish; it is a rhetorical society; it is a society of physical performance; it is a society of style" (Walcott, 1986 interview)

5.1 Introduction

From the regional point of view, the Harmonized Language Arts Curriculum (HLAC) was a grand gesture, designed with flourish and style to make a statement about self determination and the value of unified stances; but rooted in sound, well researched theoretical principles rather than rhetoric. The HLAC is presumably the antidote to the longstanding prescriptive approach to curriculum which has dominated learning and teaching in the postcolonial OECS. Walcott is correct in his description of the St. Lucian society and one would expect that such a bold gesture (defining our curriculum for ourselves) would capture the imagination of all players. In this chapter I probe respondents for their roles in the curriculum development story, their attitudes to the tasks with which they were charged and their opinions as to what went right or wrong.

The sources of data for this chapter are conversations with the key informants: (i) the consultant who developed the curriculum, (HSM), (ii) the then Head of the OERU[14], who guided its development and piloting (PHU), (iii) the current Head of the OERU (HU), and (iv) the then Permanent Secretary who had planned its movement from policy to practice (PPS). Apart from discussing the development of the curriculum and the roles they played in this; they also discussed their vision and expectations for the project by way of monitoring and feedback; and finally, how they perceived the inhibiting or facilitating factors which might impact on its successful implementation.

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[14] Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Education Reform Unit

Therefore data is presented under these headings. Here, as in the next two chapters, quotations are taken verbatim from the transcribed recordings, but descriptions of para-lingual aspects are not included. Non verbal sounds, pauses and hesitations are represented by ellipses. Page numbering relates to the unedited transcript documents.

5.2 Curriculum Development

The HLAC has its genesis in the movement towards education reform begun by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) as part of the broader global movement in this direction. PHU had been a teacher trainer prior to his assignment to head the education reform thrust at the OERU and was deeply interested in the philosophy of education. He spent a while explaining and justifying the stimulus for the harmonization project which was the need to support the political, economic and cultural integration that underpinned the union of the Eastern Caribbean states. Years after he had left the Reform Unit, he was still very passionate about its mission and the critical role it played in moving along not only the goal of education reform, but also the much larger political one of the island states achieving a unified voice on the world stage. In his soft-spoken but emphatic manner, he made it clear that without common education policies and approaches, it would have been very difficult to pursue the unification agenda of the OECS and that harmonized curricula was the perfect starting point for creating the concerted efforts towards speaking with a single voice in other critical areas.

> **PHU**: *The OERU had developed common grade names for the primary and secondary school throughout the OECS; the next logical step was tying curricular substance to the harmonized grades. Movement of students among OECS countries would naturally be facilitated if there were harmonized curricula. Obviously, harmonized curricula would facilitate harmonized standards for performance/achievement at each*

grade level; then these standards could lead to common/equivalent forms of tests/evaluation at the primary and lower secondary levels.
VS: *But apart from ease of movement and implications for personal jobs, what other economic benefits are there?*
PHU: *On a country level, for example, harmonization could also lead to bulk purchasing of a core of texts at reduced cost, in the same way that the OECS Pharmaceutical Procurement Process has led to cheaper medicinal drugs. (June, 2012; Key Informants transcripts p. 29)*

The role of the OECS Secretariat through its OERU was clearly that of instigator and coordinator of all activities leading to the development and fine-tuning of the curriculum documents in a way which would reflect the environmental realities and social needs of the populations to be served. PHU insisted that the selected approach to curriculum design was a means of promoting a post-colonial consciousness by way of empowering education personnel, including teachers, to determine the design of a working document which would have a positive effect on teaching and learning. Therefore he deliberately bucked the trend of sourcing foreign consultants for a foreign funded enterprise by contracting leading regional educators who would approach the work with insider sensibilities and who would be cognizant of the strengths and weaknesses of the education systems in the specific countries.

VS: *So you believed that this exercise was about more than simply creating curriculum?*
PHU: *Yes indeed. I successfully replaced the Canadian consultants with a core of Caribbean consultants who were more knowledgeable of the educational and socio-cultural environment of the Region. I arranged for involvement of all countries in the process through making special effort to have participation of all professional language arts personnel in the ministries/curriculum departments and teachers' colleges, where applicable. Special effort was placed on rotating the workshops among the countries so that the local teachers and principals could share in the developmental experience. It was about ensuring that benefits were wide-ranging and far-reaching. The Unit organized piloting of the programme...what we called efficacy studies... in selected grade levels in selected countries to ensure that the programme was viable and to identify material and human*

resource inputs that were necessary. (June, 2012; Key Informant transcripts p. 29)

With obvious pride in his voice, he was adamant that this project was definitely owned by the locals and that the process of curriculum development was designed to facilitate dialogue by including the voices of the classroom implementers.

The potential of the new curricula for reflecting and promoting emancipatory thinking was also a key thought in the mind of PPS. Our conversation took place early one morning on his hotel balcony while he was on one of his short visits to St. Lucia. Following his stint as Permanent Secretary, he had moved on to working with a regional organization where he retained his interest and activism in the field of education. Before I asked any questions he pointed out that it was important to first establish the impossibility of formulating policy which is expected to achieve the transformation of education in the region without asking ourselves what is the purpose of education in the postcolonial Caribbean and what must change if we are to achieve these objectives.

> VS: *People will say that curriculum should be apolitical and ask what does education have to do with postcolonial rhetoric...*
>
> PPS: *We ignore so much indigenous thinking that is so vital to chart the course of transformation in all spaces. When you look at Bob Marley's work for example, he talks about "emancipate yourself from mental slavery and only ourselves can free our minds"... that is what it is, we have to have a philosophy, we have to change our minds. Transformation is not about buying into an existing paradigm, it is about breaking new ground, redefining yourself. You cannot redefine yourself, if you do not have a vision of where or what you want to be, and certainly, if you redefine yourself by other people's yard sticks and you mimic other people you are not doing so. You are just reshaping yourself as a slave. (April, 2012; Key Informant Transcripts p. 9)*

PPS reiterated that the approach taken to education reform in the Caribbean must always be a unique one even though the outcomes may be similar in intent to metropolitan initiatives. With a level of passion similar to that of PHU, he felt that it was critical that curricula are reflective of country. There was no doubt in his mind that design of curricula relevant to the needs of small island states in a global world had to take into consideration the peculiarities of these states and the ways in which they interacted with each other and the rest of the world out of their cultural realities. Therefore, he fully agreed with PHU that it was critical to contract consultants who could bring a contextual understanding to the task, while being entirely *au courant* with and reflective of modern global perspectives on curriculum.

> PPS:...s*o the world banks and the foreign universities provide the consultants, and they come and impose their model on us, because it is their money and proposed suggestions, and it is very difficult for a consultant to propose a solution that is outside his or her frame of reasoning and ... so that is what you end up with.*
>
> *VS: So we need to convince whoever makes these decisions that we must insist on insider consultants...*
>
> *PPS: Of course! And this is what I did while I was in office. I had to stand up to the funding agencies. Let us say you hire someone who is an expert in curriculum development, they will come and look at the problem and tackle it from a pure technical curriculum point of view; but I maintain that in small islands there are peculiar similarities, by virtue of size and these peculiarities also carry tremendous possibilities and if you don't understand them... some of the fundamental characteristics of small island states... you will not really be able to provide solutions. You can't take solutions from these bigger spaces into these smaller ones. (April, 2012; Key Informant Transcripts p. 4)*

One of the Caribbean consultants contracted was HSM, who was responsible for developing the HLAC in collaboration with education officials, teacher trainers and selected teachers from the stakeholder countries through a series of workshops. While the final selection of teacher and ministry participants depended on the individual

Ministries of Education, she did have the leeway of making suggestions to the OERU as to additional persons e.g. from teachers' colleges who could also make useful contributions. I was one of those persons who came in towards the end of the development exercise, to begin piloting the curriculum and conducting workshops in the pilot countries (Dominica, Antigua, St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Grenada) on approaches to the new document. I did not have a one-on-one conversation with HSM, but I invited her to be a panellist at the Seminar and she readily agreed although she did not live on island. However, I was able to schedule the seminar to coincide with one of her visits to St. Lucia. A passionate and convincing speaker, she described her approach to curriculum design and the principles which guided her, explaining that essentially, the new curriculum was designed to create greater focus on the learner in the classroom and to stimulate engagement in more enjoyable, learner centred activity by minimizing the traditional didactic and segmented approaches to language teaching. In her presentation to the seminar audience she explained the integrated language block lesson structure which the curriculum assumptions pointed to:

> *So there was this approach to trying to revolutionise what we did with the teaching of English and Mathematics ... to enable students to enjoy the subjects more for one thing... the idea being that if you can enjoy what you are doing, if you can enjoy your learning, you will learn better. And that was just the basic philosophy of it. So for the English Language we knew that we had to make a difference because when we looked at the existing curriculum, what we noticed was the timetables for example,– I'm sure you all know we've handled our timetables in 45 minute slots, or 35 minute slots, and you get the children engaged in an activity, and after this, when they get going and they're excited you tell them "Okay the bell has gone, go on to the next thing." And they have to shift immediately to something else. And the something else, even though it uses language, would be presented in a way that was totally different as though language wasn't the focus. So, the principle was that they would have a more holistic approach to learning, okay? A more holistic understanding of what would be involved in the learning process if they could see the relationship*

> *between the domains of language itself ... and how the language underpins everything else in the curriculum* (*November, 2012; Panel Discussion transcripts p.2*)

She summed up the task at hand as a comprehensive one, which required looking across the OECS region at the existing curricula and especially at the ways in which each curriculum held "*different emphases and different standards, and different skills and competencies pitched at different class levels*." (HSM *Panel Discussion transcripts p.3*). It was a particularly daunting task since countries used varying nomenclature (e.g. Grade or Standard), had different conceptions of the role and place of the Kindergarten and used widely differing types of assessment. She continued,

> *The next thing would be to pin the standards... the skills and the competencies relevant to each grade level... in terms of what's expected of the age grade, at that grade... and begin to develop the activities... the learning outcomes... and to provide resources for teachers, so that they could actually help the children to understand the material... and to live the activity so that they would be able to understand and use the language. And then, on top of... layered on top of that... would be to go across the curriculum... everything else to see how... let them understand how language is the vehicle by which they can begin to understand math (October, 2012; Panel Discussion transcripts p.3).*

Referring to the decisions which had to be made with regard to creating a common undergirding philosophy on which the curriculum would be based, she noted that it was also important to ensure that in an increasingly globalized environment, the common standards created would have international correlations and children from the OECS would be easily able to move from a sub-regional to a regional or international system of education with no impediments; what she referred to as "*portability and transferability across jurisdictions*" (HSM; *Panel Discussion transcripts p.4*) Therefore the curriculum needed to reflect global conversations about language learning and pedagogical implications.

Parent 1: How adequate is this curriculum in preparing our children for the world?

HSM: the purpose and philosophy was to make sure that we have some international standards for skills competencies required...and regional... so that our children would not be at a disadvantage. But grounded also in the reality of the locality of where the children are... that the examples that you put in the curriculum even though the competencies and skills are pitched regionally and internationally, the materials that you give them are grounded in their own learning experience, in the environment in which they find themselves... so that it's not foreign to them... so that we can begin with what they know, and then they can begin to relate back to things that they don't know and find themselves understanding that much better.

Parent 2: And you're saying that teachers are guided on how to make sure that our children achieve these skills?

HSM: We had to take the emphasis away from teacher... teacher dominated classrooms to learner initiated activities and learner classrooms. Why? Because children learn best when they initiate, when they are allowed to initiate, to present their ideas. And they're not constrained to sitting like you are now... listening to me like I'm the teacher... Because of the research I was doing we did a lot of classroom process critiques and were able to compare classrooms and we knew that this was not the best way to... to help students. So learner oriented activities... learner oriented focus on the curriculum... also involved children working in groups, working in pairs, working one on one with teacher... so teacher had a lot of time to be able... through the activities..., to move around the class, to help individual children who needed help, to work with small groups... always with children working on activities that would interest them and they could go on from one to the other. Also working on the principle of a block of time for a given set of activities so that you wouldn't stick to 35 minutes if they're working... we'll say "okay we'll go through Language Arts", and in that block we could take stuff from Social Studies ... use the language that they can understand to help present that material so that they're learning language even as they're learning concepts in social studies. So that harmonization is across specialization subjects, across the domains of the language and across grade levels. Do you see what I mean... with the layering? And in the actual process of... of learning, it's learner-oriented so that the children become empowered as learners, they take responsibility of their learning and so on... (October, 2012; Panel Discussion transcripts p.6).

It was clear that the HLAC, and indeed the education reform movement in the OECS

had been envisaged by these informants as part of a broader decolonizing agenda

which was one of empowerment of all players; from the focus on insider consultants to the rejection of the traditional teacher-dominant approaches used in the classroom.

5.3 Monitoring and Feedback

The importance of monitoring and feedback on any innovation came up in my conversations with the key informants. I was particularly curious to know what the role of the OECS was in this regard. PHU explained that funding for the harmonization project was expected to cover only the development and testing of the curriculum product; therefore any responsibility for monitoring would be transferred to the local site (each country), "*Donor agencies usually concentrate on developing and testing a process or product*" (*PHU, Key Informant Transcripts, p.30*). Nonetheless, he averred that the OERU did made some efforts to engage with some education personnel to obtain feedback of sorts.

> VS: *So you undertook this on your own, outside of the project stipulations? How did this work?*
>
> PHU: *We needed to know what was going on...what impact it was having out there. It wasn't through formal feedback arrangements. The OERU was able to sponsor a few teacher development sessions to gather information. Much of the monitoring, however, depended on telephone and email contacts which we had gathered. Local counterparts provided information on request (June, 2012; Key Informants Transcripts p.31).*

He indicated that this informal monitoring was largely seen as his personal means of ascertaining which countries had adopted the new curricula and the level of teachers' awareness of the new initiative and regretted that there had not been a greater effort on the part of Ministries to ensure that monitoring was established as a formal part of the reform process.

Both PHU and HU felt strongly that formal, ongoing monitoring and processing of feedback were critical aspects of implementation, but definitely belonged to the local

education jurisdiction. My conversation with HU was not very long because he had not been intimately involved with the reform initiative. Speaking calmly, he indicated that the OECS had done an evaluation of the past two decades of education reform on a broad level, guided by two seminal documents: Foundations for the Future and Pillars for Partnership. However, there had been no evaluation of specific initiatives undertaken by the OERU.

> VS: *But once the curriculum is on the ground and the teacher has technically been given control... whose responsibility is it to monitor the initiative on the ground?*
>
> HU: *Implementation is the business of the Ministry of Education. OERU... as I said... we do very little in term of implementation. We develop a policy... the policy is used by the Ministry of Education, and we don't go back to supervise the implementation of the policy... the country is responsible for the implementation. If however, in the implementation at a country level, the countries come back and say... "We have challenges... Our teachers need training... Those who are supervising are not familiar with training that could enhance the implementation at the country level. But the business of the implementation, the monitoring, and the evaluation and so on is solely the business of the country* (*July, 2012*; *Key Informants Transcripts p.20).*

Conceding that he was aware that there was no monitoring of the curriculum taking place by ministries, HU acknowledged that it was impossible to make any further policy decisions without the solid data and evidence base which could be built from feedback, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum and its implementation process.

> VS: *But I know that OERU would want to know what has happened to this initiative down the road and once you find out what is happening, how to respond to something that has come out of you, finding out how it has grown up, and what is it we can put in place to make sure that continuous cyclical feedback takes place*
> HU: *You're right; the curriculum is a practical example of exactly what we are talking about. We develop a curriculum... in a sense we say this is what should be and what is going to guide teaching in all our schools. We put that material out there and through informal*

inference we get a sense that someone is using it... someone is not using it..and so on. Perhaps the system should be more formal... put it out there... let us find a means of finding out is it working as we said it should. How many people are using it...why has it been successful in terms of the implementation ... why isn't it? What are the implications for the process that we went through and the project that we produced? (*July, 2012*; *Key Informants Transcripts p.27).*

PPS insisted that much of that data would come out of feedback from teachers and their union representatives and these bodies must be an essential ingredient of the monitoring process; "*You have to make space for teachers' voices*" (*Key Informant Transcripts p. 10*). Teachers should be part of the monitoring process both as implementers providing feedback and as monitors themselves carrying out critical evaluations of their own practice, that of their peers and how things work as the implementation process unfolds, "*For transformation to succeed, power has to be shared...for you to have buy-in there must be a sharing of power and delegation of authority*" (*Key Informant Transcripts pp. 9- 10).* He pointed to his inclusion of teachers and union representatives on every Ministry committee during his tenure; something which he said had ceased after his departure.

VS: So w*ould you say that approaches to education reform in this region are significantly different from initiatives in developed countries or should they be?*

PPS: For me, one of the fundamental differences that exist between transformations here and elsewhere is the need for whole systems reform, and Fuller has done a lot of work on that. Metropolitan Canada and the UK are beginning to recognize that... despite their size and complexity. The message seems to get through that educational transformation cannot be incremental or piece meal... it has to be an entire system reform. If you change one part of the education system, it has a ripple effect through the rest of the system, and you have be consistent in how you work it out. So if you change the curriculum, you have to change how you train teachers.. we have to look at how it is implemented in a classroom, in terms of the configuration of classrooms..., all kinds of intended and unintended consequences (*April, 2012*; *Key Informant Transcripts p.4*).

Essentially, successful innovation would depend on whole system change and monitoring and feedback would need to come from along the entire chain regardless of the context. The question of who should or would do the monitoring would also need to be settled.

5.4 Inhibiting Factors

One of the main inhibiting factors identified by Key Informants was the lack of systemic cohesion within the ministry and the attendant difficulties of supporting curriculum implementation with neither a clearly articulated vision nor an operational plan. HSM summed it up when she said, "*You have to put the resources there in terms of the teacher training, in terms of the materials that you bring. So you can have the best curriculum ever in the world and if you just fling it at teachers it will just be on the shelf*" (*Panel Transcript, p. 21*). Primarily, the term 'resources' was related to the availability on the ground at school level, of teaching materials, technology and suitable physical space. Informants concurred that there were generally high levels of deficiency in all those areas and in light of the constraints of a small economy, this required creative solutions. One such solution put forward by PPS was the use of District Education offices as resource/service centres which would make up for the difficulties of replicating resources at all schools. He pointed out, as an example, that during his tenure, every district office had been supplied with high end photocopying machines which would eliminate the necessity of each school having to purchase one or beg for assistance from the private sector, and expressed regret, with some level of irritation, that this was another of his visions which was short lived once he had left the Ministry.

VS: You seem to feel that the current systemic structures in our education system mitigate against change. Why is that?

PPS: Well, I think we have gone back more than 10 years, in the space of five years... and that is a sad example of what happens between changes of government. The fundamental objective of the Ministry being viewed as a service centre has been lost... the Ministry has gone back into being a full fledged command centre, and I don't even think it is a command centre in the sense of giving direction. If you want to be a command centre, you have to have a very clear backup plan and a very strong structure of centralized control and command. This does not seem to be there, and the schools are on auto-pilot or doing their own thing with systems and ministry policies. The whole architecture ... change requires a certain architecture to support it and developing an architecture is also a change agenda in its own right.

VS: But as far as I know the District Education offices were meant to address the issue of creating the necessary synergies...

PPS: You are talking about a physical decentralization where what was happening in reality was a replication of the bureaucracy of the Ministry of education at a district level... and that replication constituting an interpolating layer of additional bureaucracy between the Ministry and the schools of the district. So instead of creating more efficiency, you just created more problems and more deficiency... because a teacher applying for vacation/ leave, instead of having to come to Castries to drop off the application, would go to the district office... when it goes there, chances are that it might get lost or misplaced... it was already being misplaced at the Ministry. Then the DEO, has all this paper work to clear... and then they were not even empowered to process it at that level... the forms still had to go the HR Department in the Ministry for it to be processed... and instead of the form going back directly to the teacher, it has to go back to the District Officer (April, 2012; Key Informant Transcripts p. 4).

PPS was convinced that the current system only succeeds in creating an interpolating layer of unnecessary additional bureaucracy between Ministry and Schools, thus interfering with the improved efficiency envisaged by the evolution of the district offices into service and support centres. Like PPS, PHU also felt that systemic structure was perhaps the main inhibiting factor and identified both political and administrative will as major issues. He referred to a document which he had prepared as Head of Unit, outlining a model for implementation, which included establishing

technical advisory committees for curriculum; however he ruefully conceded that individual country responses were ad hoc.

> *VS: Are you saying that it is impossible to control the factors which facilitate implementation?*
>
> *PHU: The degree to which this model was implemented depended on the political climate in countries, the salience of the head of curriculum, and the degree to which the harmonized curriculum was consonant with the local mandates. Some countries...St. Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, for example... made public statements of the adoption and implementation...other countries integrated the learning outcomes into their national curricula. Some countries were also in direct receipt of assistance for curriculum from other sources – St. Kitts and Nevis, Anguilla, for example.*
>
> *VS: But surely each country had a key officer who was involved with the development of the curriculum and who would have had personal buy-in which would have fuelled positive movement...*
>
> *PHU: OERU suggested a structure that would have a high probability of the innovation being sustained. The difficulty was that Heads of Curriculum were not in key leadership positions in many cases. The influence of the curriculum head was minimal in a number of cases... in some settings a change in political administration resulted in a shift of key personnel and at times in the emphasis put on the harmonized curriculum. One perennial feature was that some countries were in receipt of funding for a number of educational interventions and very often the same professional was responsible for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects... all funded by a number of other agencies, including the World Bank, the EU, DFID So of course this situation led to overload for the curriculum personnel in the countries...for example, Grenada was writing a curriculum policy, supported by another development partner... St. Kitts and Nevis received funding to develop a curriculum unit and write national curriculum from another partner...Antigua and Barbuda obtained funding to do curriculum from another agency... in the early stages of OERU Dominica received British funding to do a comprehensive education overhaul...Anguilla and Montserrat benefited continually from UK funding on all sorts of curriculum projects. Therefore, OERU had to find ways to weave the many strands together (June, 2012; Key Informant Transcripts p.31).*

The ever present global agenda seems to present a real challenge in the ability of the OECS to move forward decisively on initiatives; even those emanating from their collective vision of what is necessary for their own progress. The key informants all

pointed to a certain level of chaos inherent in the overstretching of key personnel by competing internationally funded schemes as well as in the constant chopping and changing which results from the usual political manoeuvrings in these small island states.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter considers the viewpoints of the Key Informants who were all in decision making positions pertinent to syllabus creation and development or to related policy making, facilitation or review. The education policy maker, academic consultant and facilitating agent voices held fundamentally similar views although offered from different angles. Their story is one of common understanding of the decolonising purpose of curriculum in the small island state context and the importance of reconfiguring traditional bureaucratic structures to create greater cohesion among those involved in the implementation process. All Key Informants remain cognizant of the limitations imposed by political idiosyncrasies of small island states and their persistent inability to chart courses uninhibited by the international funding agency agenda. Chapter six continues the conversations from ground level as I present the viewpoints of those engaged in the day to day implementation.

Chapter Six: Voices from the Field (ii): The School Story

As qualitative researchers we are not separate from the study, with limited contact with our participants. Instead we are firmly in all aspects of the research process and essential to it. The stories of participants are immediate and real to us; individual voices are not lost in a pool of numbers. We carry these individuals with us as we work with the transcripts. The words, representing experiences, are clear and lasting (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 8)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of the voices of those charged with bringing the curriculum to the student. For me, these are the voices that remain most with me because I spent time in the schools, observing, interacting, experiencing and just enjoying the distinctive culture of each school. What I refer to as the school story, captures the voices of the teachers who were individually interviewed from the three participant schools, as well as those who participated in the Focus groups and the Panel discussion. The Principals are also part of the school story and their voices were captured through individual interview as well as participation in the Panel discussion. For each group, I summarize the common views under subheadings which came about as I interacted with the data and recognised the common themes. I present the issues identified from the conversations as they unfolded and sum them up as the collective voice of the group to which participants belong. Some experiences are general and are summed up as such, while in some cases there are distinctive voices which stand out from the rest. In this way both comparative and contrasting views within groups are highlighted on the major issues which dominated the individual conversations, focus groups and panel discussion. Data from each method of collection is knitted together to create the overall group story. As much as possible I use the participants own voices to tell their experiences while weaving them into my own account of

experiences in the field. Because of the large number of participants, it was not possible to bring each one to life in the short pages of this dissertation; however, I give fuller dimension to some individuals who stood out from the rest in one way or another and especially those who were more forthcoming with extended information and personal stories.

The teachers, who formed the largest group of participants, discussed their feelings about their job, the nature of the support rendered to them in their practice by various other stakeholders and their level of preparedness to teach the new curriculum. They were generally outspoken and candid, often expressing gratitude that someone was actually interested in their story. Their conversations with me centred on four main themes: (i) their personal attitudes to teaching and the perceptions they held of their roles as teachers; (ii) their introduction to the HLAC and the support received in implementing the curriculum; (iii) their beliefs about the function of the parental role in curriculum and (iv) their concerns about their own levels of professional preparation. The principal's story is told from the point of view of the three principals of the selected schools (urban, rural and suburban) who were interviewed individually. One principal also served as a panel member and therefore the references for her quotations are made from both the individual and the panel transcripts. The story also includes the view of two other principals, Nancy and Paula, who attended and participated in the panel discussion. The principals' concerns centred mainly on (i) instructional leadership and (ii) change management.

6.2 The Teacher Voice

Teachers tended to speak of their roles in terms of their feelings about and attitudes to their job. The majority of teachers in the sample had been teaching for many years; in most cases at the same school and experience ranged from six (6) to thirty five (35) years. They had all completed their Certificate in Education and some were either in the process of completing or had completed a Bachelor's degree.

6.2.1 Attitudes to Teaching

Almost all reported satisfaction with their choice of career, expressed positive feelings about the profession and seemed to take genuine interest in their students. Going out of their way to ensure the success of their students was taken for granted as a normal aspect of the demands of teaching. Lyn was the literacy specialist at School 1 and had completed a Bachelor's degree in Literacy. At her small rural school, she was the expert who guided instruction in the language arts and provided advice and resources to the other teachers. She also conducted remedial English sessions with small groups from various classes throughout the day. She indicated that she had always felt a passion for teaching,

> *I believe that teaching is an art and it is a sacrifice. If you want to teach children to perform, you have to go all out to get whatever is needed and at the end of the day, when you see the joy in a child's eye; the child could read and accomplish something, it makes you feel good as a person, that you made a difference in somebody* (*March, 2012; Rural Teacher Transcripts p.23*).

Based on her belief that "you have to go all out to get what is needed", Lyn was one who indicated that she saw the interpretation and implementation of the curriculum as her main responsibility and did not wait to be told what to do. In her early forties and professionally trained, she approached the new curriculum as

a challenge and went about seeking information on new approaches to teaching language so that her students would not be "left behind". She asserted that she was very capable of meeting the challenge of the curriculum because of having developed herself professionally to Bachelor's degree level; however she indicated that when it came to dealing with the many social issues presented by students in the classroom, she did feel somewhat helpless.

Jenni of suburban School 3 also expressed joy in teaching even after twenty two years in the service. She believed that teaching was more than academic instruction and felt strongly that teachers were critical to policy making.

> *Jenni: I am very happy; that is the only job that I have done from the time I left secondary school and I enjoy it. Not only to say enjoy it in educating the children academically, but I enjoy developing the whole child. And when I do something, I like to know that I am doing it to the best that I can.*
>
> *VS: Do you think your role extends in any way beyond child development?*
>
> *Jenni: Oh yes! As teachers in the classroom, we should play a very important role in the policies that are formed. Those developing those polices need to come to teachers in the classroom to find out what they think..., what are the problems we are faced with... what do we think should be placed instead of that. I feel that teachers should be part and parcel of all policies that are made, and we would like our voice to be heard at policy decisions. I feel that if the voices of the teachers in the classroom are heard, then the problems that they are trying to control would be taken care of. I feel teachers play a very important role in that, because we are the ones in the classroom and always have to make the sacrifices (April, 2012; Suburban Teacher Transcripts p.25).*

The theme of sacrifice recurred several times, with teachers giving examples of the kinds of sacrifices they made on a daily basis for the students in their care. Many of these sacrifices involved the use of personal funds to provide teaching materials or lunch, or bus fare for children in need. However, they expressed frustration that despite the fact that most teachers went over and beyond the call of duty, they were

often criticized for not caring enough. Mariah was one of those who was very passionate about her work and endorsed the necessity of sacrifice on the part of teachers. As a member of the Panel, she responded very heatedly to one parent:

> *Parent 3: I believe, that all the innovation attempts which have failed in our schools which have over 75% of the teachers trained, is due to the fact that a high percentage of our teachers in the system are lazy. They're trained, they are qualified teachers, they are getting a qualified teacher's salary, and they are lazy to the bone. Respond to that.*
>
> *Mariah: I disagree completely! We have teachers who go to the school on weekends ... because you have something to do, you come to the school and you do it. Now, I've had watchmen chase me and tell me* **"ou pa ka wété a caii-ou? Ou toujou a l'école-la."** [15] *I had the principal to give me my own key, because I'm always at the school! I'm always at the school because ... I mean... some of the things that you have to do at the school you just cannot do it within the school hours. You will not sit and correct books while the children are there...you will not sit and make charts while the children are there... you have to find some other time to do it! So, you see, teachers make a lot of sacrifices...so we're not exactly lazy (November, 2012; Panel Discussion transcript p.29).*

Only one teacher, Ella, indicated that she was not particularly enjoying her career in teaching. My interview with her was one of my most memorable. I met Ella at her home because we had been unable to find a mutually acceptable time at the school during the term so we decided to do it while she was on Easter vacation. I set out after work one afternoon to her home which was at the end of a muddy and steep track off the main road in a rural community. I felt much safer negotiating the terrain in my bare feet and proceeded gingerly with shoes in hand to the top of the hill where her house was located. Once she had settled her young son in front of the television, she began breastfeeding her baby while we started our conversation. Her body language supported her indication that she was tired of teaching, which she attributed mostly to

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[15] "*You don't stay at your home? You're always at the school!*"

her view that students were becoming more and difficult to deal with and she did not feel that she reaped any reward from her profession.

> *VS: You have been teaching for fifteen years at the same school and you must have started out wanting to teach...what has changed?*
>
> *Ella: The children don't see the importance of an education; I find we talk a lot, we do activities and we don't get the reception that we need from the students and also from the parents. It just seems that the parents drop the children on us and that is it and we have to try to do our best with them*
>
> *VS: Yet you remain in the profession..?*
>
> *Ella: You know...right now I don't have a choice so I have to stay for now. (May, 2012; Urban Teacher Transcripts p. 6).*

Interestingly, despite feeling that teaching was a default career, Ella had been in the system for fifteen years (all at the same school). However, she indicated that she was already engaged part-time in a small retail business which may well replace her teaching career if she saw sufficient potential for growth. This was the only time that she seemed somewhat animated as she described the steps she had already taken to begin her business on a part-time basis. Her conversation with me was truly reflective of a very impassive attitude to her teaching and proved to be not only quite difficult to conduct but also the most lacklustre despite my best efforts. None of my techniques elicited more than a sentence or two in response to most of my questions or prodding and she did not evince much animation during the conversation. Responding to my question as to whether or not she would remain in the profession, she responded, "I don't know, I am discouraged now, but maybe it might change". This suggested some ambivalence and I asked what kind of changes she would like to see or which would enable her to find more fulfilment but she was unsure. I wondered aloud why she had agreed to participate and she responded with a shrug that she did not mind helping out with research. Her lengthiest contribution was on the issue of having to deal with

social problems at her school and the fact that teachers were overwhelmed by having to spend so much of their time being social workers. One issue which roused Ella from passivity was that of the inattention to the intrusion of social problems on the ability of teachers to cope in the classroom.

> *VS: So are you saying that there should be more support for the welfare of students?*
>
> *Ella: Yes! There is a lot of mouth talk but when it comes down to brass tacks, never is anything done. I'm seeing all the problems of the children place a burden on us in the classroom... we have to teach the children at the same time while dealing with the children's pressing issues...these things prevent them from learning in the classroom. It would be difficult for a child to concentrate on reading, when they have so many social problems going on with them. I tell you if I were with the Minister right now, I would ask him to give us a life line where we would get genuine social welfare support for the students. (May, 2012; Urban Teacher Transcripts, p.17)*

Jason, on the other hand, related his joy at being in the classroom and rising to the daily challenges of engaging students, although he expressed frustration at what he felt were disorganized and unreasonable demands made by the Ministry. Cheerful and obviously enthusiastic, the only male teacher in the study spoke at length on his craving for more control over his professional life. He felt that there should be mutually acceptable times when teachers were expected to engage in workshops or other activities and complained that teachers' commitments to their students were not taken into consideration when these decisions were being made. He expressed a desire to see a termly activity template so that teachers know from the beginning of each term exactly what activities have been planned by the Ministry so that they would be better able to organize their teaching activities in a way which would least interfere with students' learning.

I enjoy structure. I don't like people telling me I have to go to a meeting or the next two days we have a workshop in Castries and I have to wonder how I am going to handle leaving my students for the next two days. (*March, 2012; Rural Teacher Transcripts, p.41*)

However, while he clearly enjoyed his role as a teacher, and felt that "changing the life of a child and making that child believe in themselves [sic] is very important," Jason also expressed a desire to consider another career after he has served enough years to be entitled to a teacher's pension. He identified social work in the youth development area as his main interest and indicated that he had already done a Diploma in Youth Development and was beginning part-time study of a Bachelor's degree in that field. He expressed a strong belief that teachers should continue their education in whatever their field of interest and should devote themselves to building professional expertise. He described his own educational journey:

Jason: I have been teaching for 12 years now. I started teaching in 2000. I went to Teachers' College in 2001 to 2003, and I graduated with an Associate Degree in Education... and I also hold a Diploma in Youth Development. I am currently working on my B. Sc in Management Studies. In addition to that, I have been numeracy coordinator. In the 12 years that I have been teaching, I have only taught two grades... one year grade five and eleven years in grade six. I started specializing only in Maths and the social sciences, but because of the population, we have to be doing Maths and English. I see myself later on maybe managing a youth development centre and my teaching skills will come into good use.

VS: So as a Maths teacher by training, how do you cope with having to deal with teaching the language arts?

Jason: Surprisingly, I enjoy teaching English more than the Maths. I mean, the language gives you more scope to integrate what it is the children are going through in society easier than the Maths... Plus, because I am not really a language person, I have to end up doing a lot of research so that the content I teach the children and the method that I use is accurate and... I find more excitement in teaching the language now. use (*March, 2012*; *Rural Teacher Transcripts p.35*).

Obviously relishing the kind of challenge that prevented boredom, Jason was very active in his school where one of his relatives was Principal. He played a leading role in the school sports programme and helped students prepare for various other inter-school competitions but he felt that his formal teaching phase was coming to an end and he was looking forward to greater challenges in a related field.

The role of teacher as social worker was reiterated often, especially in the urban and rural schools. Teachers reported having to spend a large proportion of their time dealing with ensuring that students' basic needs were taken care of. Sandra lived in her school community, an inner city neighbourhood, and lamented that it was not possible to find a single child in her class who did not have serious social ills to deal with on a daily basis. To indicate the level of social problems she cited poor hygiene as the very least on a scale which included sexual abuse and witnessing physical assault and murder.

> *I was trying to help a particular student in my class who was coming to school dirty, the mother is young and everything and this child comes to school dirty every day, so I tried to wash the clothes at home, then I brought the clothes to the school and I showed her how to wash it in a bathtub and so on, showed her how to put blue in the clothes and so on. After a while, she started doing it. I brought her upstairs, showed her how to iron... now her younger sister who is not in my class, came to me with a problem and she told me she was sick and her parents had refused to take her to the doctor, and this led to other issues coming out...with abuse, sexual abuse and all of that , the can of worms just opened, so I'm saying that our children have a lot of issues and it's not just the area [geographical] but the attitude of the parents that has to do with it, because I don't believe it's just poverty, I think it's just a lot of neglect* (*May, 2012; Urban Teacher Transcripts p.8*)

Generally, those teachers who saw social ills as a problem, felt that not enough attention was being paid to this area by any government authority and that this was evidenced by the scarcity of resources when it came to counselling and other types of social support. They pointed out that one counsellor per district was woefully

inadequate and they often found themselves swamped with having to deal with a multitude of student problems which they themselves felt ill-equipped to handle.

Another key role identified by teachers, was that of policy advisor. They felt very unhappy with the fact that they were not normally acknowledged as intrinsic to policy development and as such their opinions were not sought, even on matters related to implementation for which they felt directly responsible. Teachers expressed a burning desire to be able to give feedback on the tasks which they were assigned as "ground workers" and generally felt that having their voices heard in the right quarters was the only way that the country could be assured of the usefulness of policies developed . They were particularly concerned about the general lack of communication throughout the education system and the absence of collaborative process; most of them expressing feelings of alienation from the decision making which inevitably affected their daily lives. Like Jenni, others expressed indignation that they were consistently left out of the policy making arena:

> *The Ministry and the schools need to work more collaboratively. To me there is that disconnect... the ministry is one place and the schools are another place...they need to work together. Sometimes you call the Ministry... the Ministry doesn't know what you are talking about... or the Ministry calls the school..., and the school does not know what the Ministry is talking about. One of the things they can do if they are going to implement any policy... before it is implemented, you send it to the schools... or you call teachers out...you don't do it in groups because everybody does not know what you are talking about... you have a forum where you thrash out ideas and teachers give feedback. In that way teachers would feel that they are part of the whole process. Sometimes people go to workshops, and they come back and they don't share the information. Sometimes, not even the principal they tell what transpired at the workshop. (Gabby, April, 2012; Suburban Teacher Transcript pp.17-18)*

> *I think, most importantly, policy should take into consideration the views of the teachers since we are the ones in the classrooms and know the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum. The teachers and the policy-makers should work hand-in-hand so the teachers would not*

feel left out, so when the new curriculum comes out, they would not resent it (Lyn, March, 2012; Rural Teacher Transcript p. 21).

I don't think anybody listens to us, they just stay where they are and they make the policies based on something that goes on in another country or some other part of the world, and sometimes it does not really affect us at all here. However, as teachers we have to follow guidelines and we have to do the things so we do them (Sandra, May, 2012; Urban Teacher Transcripts p. 18).

While the lack of communication among the different levels of the system was not surprising in light of the typical restrictions imposed by rigid hierarchy, I was somewhat taken aback by the fact that communication within schools was also seen as a problem and there was no set procedures for persons who attended workshops to share information with peers.

6.2.2 Curriculum Preparation and Support Structures

Teachers reported no evidence of a planned or structured introduction of the curriculum to schools. In fact, many teachers seemed unsure as to how they actually began using the HLAC. Some spoke vaguely about a workshop being held in the district, which would have been attended by one or two teachers or the principal. Most presaged their comments with "I think..." generally having to dig up the memory of their introduction to the new curriculum although at the time of data collection it had only been six years in schools.

VS: Tell me how you were first introduced to this curriculum...

Gabby: I think I remember that we did a workshop as to how to go about using it... but at the workshop they only selected a few. For example, if you are in Grade I, they would select one or two teachers to go and then the person would come back and teach those who did not go. I felt it was just pushed on us and I don't remember getting training for it... and I have been there a long time. It was just pushed on us and they said that it was the new curriculum and you just had to

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find your way... so you found it was easier to go back to what make sense to you rather than sift through (April, 2012; Suburban Teacher transcripts p.13)

Clarissa: I remember we attended a workshop...and it was introduced to myself and the principal; and we had to come back to the school to do the programme with the teachers. (March, 2012; Rural Teacher transcripts p.2)

Lyn: The principal first introduced me to this curriculum. She said, just as there was a Social Studies curriculum, there is one for the language arts and she gave me a copy of both the curriculum and the teacher's guide (March, 2012; Rural Teacher transcripts p.15).

Vivie: I think I was just handed a copy and I went through it myself. (March, 2012; Rural Teacher transcripts p.24)

Jenni: I think we were at a meeting at the beginning of the year, and the principal just gave it to us. I took it and I went through it, and I said, well, if this is what I have to use to teach then I would use it as best as I can. (April, 2012; Suburban Teacher Transcripts, p.20-21)

Ella: I can't remember how the curriculum was introduced. (May, 2012; Urban Teacher transcripts p.12)

Mariah: I remember, we had I think one workshop. But it was not enough to get teachers to buy into the whole integration of the Language Arts. Most of us left the workshop , and we're talking about the seasoned teachers who have been there for over 40 years. And they're saying "Oh We have always been doing it this way, why do you want us to change now, and it looks like a lot of work". (November, 2012; Panel Discussion Transcript, p.14)

The teachers in Focus Group 2 were at the time full time students of the Bachelor in Education (Language Arts major) programme at the Community College and they went further in describing both their initial reactions to the HLAC and their later responses; which seem to have been a result of looking back at it from a more informed position.

Rachel: The very first time I heard about it, was when the teachers from my school had just come back from a workshop where they were introduced to it... and my first question was "what?... why did they have to go and do that?... they just like to waste paper... and I also said that they like to pull people out of classrooms to go to workshops...at the end of the day, they don't check back in the schools to see if what they implemented is working... and they are just wasting people's time.

However, when I came to do the B.Ed. program, and we began looking at the syllabus itself, I was very confused...my partner and myself had to keep flipping the pages back and forth... we were not sure what had to be broken where...it just looked like a whole hot mess. Eventually, when we started looking at it in depth.. the writing... the reading... all of the various skills and looking at the components... that the objectives and the activities and what it was trying to bring out... then we started seeing the link and how everything was marrying together... denoting that language was not a separate thing scattered all over the place... it was one thing which was bigger than us and because of that... yes it has separate areas which would help to bring out what an individual is thinking... but reading, writing, listening etc, come together to make up what an individual can produce as language.

Cleo: Just like Rachel said... I was a bit confused when I got that curriculum. However, my colleague and I... since we teach the same grades... after a few weeks of sitting together going through the pages and putting the broad topics together we were able to familiarize ourselves... after a number of weeks we were able to see the link between the components... like Rachel said...it was confusing at first, but after awhile we got the hang of it... and we were able to bring that to the children in such a way that they would be able to understand it better.

Vern: My initial reaction... I was just furious because year after year, teachers only get involved at the implementation stage. You don't even hear that something new is coming... is only when it has to be implemented...then you are called to a workshop... just to hand you the document and then to go back to your school to implement. I was really mad. However, having interacted with it... along with the other teachers at the school... I realized it was not something bad and I started to simmer down and accepted it and try my best with it.

Clerona: As Rachel spoke about going to the curriculum... when we had an assignment last year, I really got a chance to peruse the curriculum... and it is quite an interesting curriculum. Once you know the philosophy behind it and you understand the theories that are guiding it, it can be a good guide to the teachers. After going through this activity, I have realized that this curriculum... like the other teachers said... that it is based on the constructivist theory... and that in teaching we emphasise that we start from the concrete to the abstract. It is only now that I am doing this course, I am really seeing the significance of it.(September, 2012; Focus Group transcripts p.16).

Even those teachers who had experienced the rather abrupt introduction of the HLAC seemed to have benefitted from their higher level studies which engaged them at a more critical level with discussion and analysis of curriculum. However, it also very clear that on the whole, schools which had the advantage of having been selected as part of the CETT[16] programme pilot, were far more comfortable with the HLAC and did not react as negatively to its introduction once they had begun the CETT programme with its attendant multiple workshops and substantially funded resources. Mariah was full of praise for the programme:

> *Our school was fortunate to be involved in CETT and because of this we were able to better understand the whole integration of the harmonized Language Arts curriculum ...the one thing that was a plus for CETT is that we had a lot of workshops...because one cannot understand the whole integration through just about 3 or 4...we had lots of workshops. I remember some people even got tired of being pulled out of the classroom but it was worth it. It was!* (November, 2012; Panel Discussion transcript p. 14)

There was a clear distinction between the plethora of material resources and technical support enjoyed by the CETT schools and the schools not involved in that project. A Reading specialist was assigned to support the teachers in the CETT pilot programme and teachers found this level of support very useful and encouraging. They also believed that the excitement of attractive reading materials and the complete redecoration of the classrooms (made possible by the influx of CETT funds) made a major difference in children's attitudes towards school and this certainly made their job easier and more rewarding. The CETT resources provided significant support for the HLAC which was heavily dependent on students being part of a print-rich environment. Positive reactions

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[16] CETT: Center of Excellence for Teacher Training; a pilot programme funded by the United States government, aimed at supporting teacher and school development in the area of literacy.

on the part of students meant a lot and served to further inspire teachers. Mariah had several stories illustrating this:

> *I come from a rural school where the parents..., they're not capable of providing the children with all this different educational material that would make the children perform better. So we were well happy that CETT gave us lots of material. We had lots of books... lots of stories... we had puzzles..., games...and the children loved that... right? They loved that so much that they would run away from home to come to school. I had an incident where a boy in the class... he was seen just lingering around the school with his home clothes on. So I called him and he told me "my grandmother didn't want me to come to school so I ran away." So what I did... I just took him into the classroom... we fed him and I kept him there with his home clothes. So that said a lot... usually we run away from school... we don't run to come to school...so that said a lot.*
>
> *Then we had our class libraries. We had activity areas and reading corners in the classroom, and this also helped with our differentiation... it helped with our varied abilities in the classroom... because you know sometimes....no matter what you give the children... some little bright child is going to finish it fast. And they need... when they're done, what do they do? ...they will just sit around sometimes, or get into mischief...but with the activity corners... it kept them on their toes... they always had something to do. There was this little class library... a corner...with books...it was carpeted... there were pillows there... and you'd find children in there, reading all the time. Even classes that were not in the CETT program at my school... they were encouraged to do the same... so we had an entire CETT school..that's how it was called...the CETT School. So the children... they were always in. They would eat, have their lunch, and by 12:30 each child would be sitting inside... and you would wonder, what is going on...but we were not forcing them to do that...that was after this whole [physical] change... they actually wanted to be inside of the classrooms* (*November, 2012*; *Panel transcript p17.)*

Mariah's pride in living up to the expectations of the project, was evident and she was one of the teachers from the OECS who had been identified at the end of the pilot as a 'teacher of excellence'. However, while those teachers lucky enough to

be part of the CETT pilot spoke glowingly of support for the HLAC, others generally felt that they lacked solid support structures and many expressed the opinion that unless you were able to depend almost entirely on yourself, you would not be able to manage at all. The feeling of professional loneliness was expressed on several occasions, and teachers indicated that they would feel more confident if there were clearly delineated structures for classroom supervision and mentoring. They identified themselves as their own primary level of support. This was particularly the case with regard to resources, the scarcity of which was much bemoaned; yet teachers seemed not to hesitate in reaching into their pockets to supplement the meagre school resources:

Mary: I find myself spending money just to help the students. I have a passion for teaching and I want to meet the needs of the students and to help them... so that when they go to another level, they are actually equipped to adapt to that level. (April, 2012; Suburban Teacher transcripts p.5)

Jenni: Whatever resources I have to get, I do it on my own. Every summer, when I know whatever grade I am teaching, I get the topics I would be doing in the grade... and then I order my resources. I do that every summer. (April, 2012; Suburban Teacher transcripts p.23)

Rachel: When it comes to resources... as it refers to tangible resources... we would love to have computers, DVD players and all these technologies to help to facilitate the teaching of the Language Arts... so when it comes to these resources, we are greatly lacking... unless teachers want to fund these things on their own to enhance their teaching... and learning of the students. It is very difficult for teachers to fund these things on their own... even to replace it is a problem. Administration does not care if your things get destroyed...so when it comes to the technological... especially now that the children are so tech savvy... we do not have it... and that in itself is keeping the effective teaching of Language Arts behind... because we are using archaic methods through no fault of our own. I mean... the students get bored from reading the same book ...and there is no visual aid so that you could look at the comprehension passage on a screen, where you could have all types of icons and images. You don't have white boards that the children can shift and move around and enjoy the lesson... and Language Arts... so that they can appreciate language...and not just something in a book.. it is something oral...

something that is interactive.(September, 2012; Focus group transcripts, pp.20-21)

The second layer of support came from colleagues within the school and sometimes within the district. This type of support was largely in terms of ideas for lessons and collaboration in lesson planning among same-grade teachers, sometimes in formal planning sessions after school or by way of informal tips and comments during the school day.

Jenni: I would say [support comes]from colleagues from my school as well as colleagues from other schools. With those at my school... sometimes we sit and discuss the curriculum. Sometimes if I am having difficult in any particular area, I get ideas from another colleague...sometimes if I have difficulty in teaching a particular concept, another teacher may go ahead and do the teaching for me... and advice from colleagues from other schools. (September, 2012; Focus group transcripts, p.11)

Livity: I would agree with her (Jenni) because at my school you would find two classes per grade, and we would plan together, support each other, get ideas from each other (September, 2012; Focus group transcripts, p.12)

Gabby: I would say the colleagues at my school gave me the greatest support because during the time of lesson planning, you would find a lot of collaboration. A lot of discussion as to what you are getting from the curriculum and what you can use (September, 2012; Focus group transcripts, p.11)

Mary: We are able to go to each other for advice. For example, you make an error on the board... and another teacher passes... she would bring it to your attention. She would not embarrass you and make you feel bad... but just to help you... because, as imperfect persons, we are growing and we learn from our mistakes (April, 2012; Suburban Teacher Transcripts, p. 8).

The greatest level of collaboration was apparent at the rural school, where the family-like atmosphere and the keen personal interest of the principal seemed to facilitate a high level of cooperation and sharing among class teachers. Teachers were not averse

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to staying after school to work together on lesson planning and to develop charts and other resource materials as a group. A certain level of collegial interdependency was evident at the schools (least at the suburban school) but there was no evidence that teachers discussed policy issues or theoretical aspects of the curriculum among themselves. Teachers generally also felt that while principals did attempt to take their role as instructional leader seriously, they were just too busy with other matters to be able to render appropriate levels of supervision. Many also expressed the view that principals themselves were not always on board with the nature of the curriculum and correlated requirements for new approaches to instruction.

Teachers also expressed disappointment with the level of support given through the Ministry units which were ostensibly created to bolster the education districts and provide professional reinforcement. With regard to support from the Curriculum and Materials Development Unit (CAMDU), there were few positive perceptions of its role and how well this role was being carried out. Several teachers vociferously reported that not enough attention was paid to them from this unit which housed the Curriculum Officers and was therefore perceived as critical to the supervision of teachers and their implementation of curriculum. Mary from School 3 and Sandra from School 1 indicated that they have received some help from one of the officers:

> *Pam: nothing much from CAMDU. I think I just saw the curriculum specialist here lately... I am not sure for what (April, 2012; Suburban Teacher Transcripts, p.31)*

> *Mary: Well there is somebody in particular that works at CAMDU... if there are any ideas that I want personally, I could get to go to him. I get that kind of direct contact with them to help me out (April,2012; Suburban Teacher Transcripts, p.6)*

> *Jenni: The only time we see people from CAMDU is when we have the SBAs [school based assessments], we will see those people associated*

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with the SBAs coming in. (April, 2012;Suburban Teacher Transcripts, p.23)

Sandra: I know we use some of the resource persons to do workshops for us, but again, I have never gone to ask for help. Yes, CAMDU has been helping; we have had [name omitted] come in to do the workshops for us. (April, 2012; Suburban Teacher Transcripts, p.16)

Jason: I am going to be very honest; the last time I saw the curriculum specialist was about two or three years ago. (March, 2012; Rural Teacher Transcripts, p.40)

Clarissa: What I feel that needs to happen, is that the curriculum specialist can give more school visits to see if the curriculum is being implemented as it should, because you can find that for the year, you hardly get any visits from the specialist. (March, 2012; Rural Teacher Transcripts, p10)

In the absence of structures or specific procedures for engaging with the curriculum department on a regular basis, some teachers appeared to rely on their personal relationship with specific curriculum officers to get help with their interpretation of curriculum. Positive remarks were made specifically about one Curriculum Officer who was singled out by several teachers as being easily accessible and helpful; but this seemed to be more on a personal than an official level. That officer had also carried out a few workshops in specific content areas where teachers experienced difficulty. However, there was general consensus that the CAMDU was not making a significant contribution to the lives of teachers in the classroom and teachers all believed that the Unit should play a far more supportive and interactive role in the implementation process.

In the case of the roles of District Offices and officers assigned therein, teachers expressed a range of views on the role of the district offices, none of which included direct curriculum supervision or direct support to schools:

VS: Let's talk about your relationship with the District Education Office and the kind of support you get there...

Clarissa: …well basically what they do is that they provide us with the curriculum (March, 2012; Rural Teacher Transcripts, p 8)

Lyn: With me, they are very efficient; if we need photocopies they provide assistance fairly well (March, 2012; Rural Teacher Transcripts, p.19)

Jason: The district office… not much help. You are left on your own to do everything. (March, 2012; Rural Teacher Transcripts, p.39)

Vivie: I honestly cannot say that I get much (support) ...maybe if they have workshops and they are geared towards certain classes and at the time I am not teaching that class... it maybe a reason why I am not getting anything much. (March, 2012; Rural Teacher Transcripts, p.27)

Pam: Not much; mainly correspondence... or maybe if we have a child who is on detention... the district education office would accommodate the child for a week rather than staying home. (April, 2012; Suburban Teacher Transcripts, p.31)

Mary: When it comes to photocopies, you could go there to get them done, especially when ours [photocopier] is not working. (April, 2012; Suburban Teacher Transcripts, p.5)

Jenni: ...only if we have to do photocopying and our machine is broken; then I would go to the district office (April, 2012; Suburban Teacher Transcripts, p.23)

Sandra: I know they assist in rolling out papers but that's just about it. If you need books or papers, I think there is a library there... but I have never used it... and I have never gone there for help anyway. (April, 2012; Suburban Teacher Transcripts, p.16)

For the most part, teachers regarded the District Office as a mere photocopying centre or repository of documents and did not conceive of its curriculum support role as going any further than the logistical facilitation of district workshops and professional development days from time to time. Few of them frequented the facility and most

had never interacted with the Education Officer directly. I had never heard before of the District Education Office functioning as a detention centre but teachers explained that it was a safer option for children who had been suspended for one reason or the other, than having them at home where they would quite likely be unsupervised.

6.2.3 Role of Parents

The general view was that parents did not play enough of a role in their children's education and too easily gave up all responsibilities to the teacher. Teachers agreed that the support of parents would make it easier for them to cope with the challenges of the curriculum, since there were many activities which depended heavily on the child's home and community experiences. Vivie who belonged to the rural community where her school was located expressed great frustration that parents seemed unable to see the connection between home and school. Having taught for twenty two years she felt that she had tried everything she could to reach out to parents for support in motivating her students.

> *VS: So are you blaming the children's homes for the lack of effort you noted on the part of the children?*
>
> *Vivie: Yes, I think it has a lot to do with it... and one other thing that we have noticed, is that... there is that dependency syndrome in the community and in the school. It is like... why do I have to try so hard, you can just give it to me... so the real effort that is needed is not there...we see it in the parents and the children. A lot of the things that we see in the classroom is the direct reflection of the community... you try to get the parents to come in with you, but then that is not one of their top priorities... even to build on the children's experiences... if you wanted to take them out, you don't really get the support of the parents in terms of...say transportation... and even if you try, you will not be able to do it all on your own. They will consider that this is not really important and the children do not really have to go on those field trips (March, 2012; Rural Teacher Transcripts, p. 31)*
>
> *VS: And you feel you have done everything possible?*

Vivie: Well we have tried to have parents workshops... at one point we had a two or three week workshop with the parents... we had the counsellor and other resource persons to come in. We tried to organize a PTA where some of the strong parents could get the others to participate. We had one before, but it died out and we have just started another one... and we are hoping that this would help bridge the gap between the school and the community... because, we notice a lot of the problems we have is with the attitude, and maybe if we can work with the attitude, then we would get the rest of it on stream. Getting the parents would really set the pace for us moving on in the right direction (March, 2012; Rural Teacher Transcripts, p. 31)

The rural teachers in particular, felt that the low level of literacy of some parents in these (mostly agricultural) areas, perhaps resulted in a lack of confidence which made them hesitant to engage their children on an academic level at home. Nonetheless, Jason was convinced that all was not lost; that despite the fact that parents generally did not support the curriculum by doing the necessary reinforcement activities at home, it was still possible for teachers to draw on the rich community experiences of the children in order to make language learning a comfortable experience for them. He maintained that the key to getting parents involved was to show them that what the children were doing in school was in fact related to the activities that parents could expose them to in their own communities and this would give parents a sense of being important and critical to their children's learning even if they themselves were not literate. To illustrate the point he was making about the importance of community experiences in teaching writing, Jason gave an anecdote of trying to get a discussion going as part of a pre-writing activity

I started teaching Grade 5 and reading "Lost in the City" and it was difficult... because many of them had never been to the city... And then I start getting them to talk about a football match or a day by the river... or how do you prepare yourself to make a bamboo [canon] for Christmas...and I got every step required! There was the problem of subject and verb agreement of course... but the details were vivid (March, 2012; Rural Teacher Transcripts, p42.)

Jason's approach was certainly in sync with that recommended by the HLAC which recommended basing learning on the experiential and validating the culture of the child. Mariah supported this view as she made a link between the activities that the CETT pilot programme enabled them to do and the level of parental involvement in her school. She did concede that this was closely related to the fact that there was funding within the programme specifically allocated to the physical enhancement of the CETT classroom. Her anecdote illustrated how parents became enthused by the excitement of change and were actually caught up in the change process themselves.

> *We changed our entire classroom. Some of us went about repainting the classrooms, because it didn't look like what ... it was not child friendly. We had those wonderful [sarcastic intonation] beige and brown walls. Around the school, beige and brown. So this did not go well with a lot of us. So we had to go out, and we redesigned the classroom. We had to include the parents. So we had a lot of parental involvement. Parents came in, they painted, they made benches and they made desks and tables, they made stages... everything! So the parental involvement was there. We had parents coming in and sitting in the classroom with the children and spending time. And that helped us a lot... especially with the discipline, because children seeing that their parents are coming… "oh mommy is the teacher's friend I better behave" (November, 2012; Panel Discussion transcripts p.16)*

Generally teachers were keen on encouraging the involvement of parents and pointed to the importance of strong PTAs, deploring the fact that these groups typically existed primarily for fund-raising and did not lend themselves, in their current form, to curriculum implementation partnerships of home and school. Sandra believed that a strong PTA would be useful not only in getting critical information on the curriculum across to parents but also in raising the awareness of parents and caregivers, of the kind of complementary activities that children need to be engaged in at home. She noted, for example, that many parents did not understand the role of play in the life of a child, believing it to be detrimental to academic learning and a waste of time.

Therefore, they went to the other extreme of forcing children to read school texts all the time. She became quite emotional while relating the sad tale of a child in her class who was not allowed to play and her involvement of the district counsellor in sensitizing parents:

> *There is a child in my class... she told me every time she played... it was her grandmother who would beat her and tell her "you are not supposed to play, go get your books". I had to bring dolls for the child, put her in the room next to me and allow her to play with her dolls... allow her to play because she couldn't play when she went home. There is need for the education of parents. The class I told you about... I informed the counsellor. She came, and there was a parents meeting and she told the parents how they are supposed to allow the children to play. (May, 2012; Urban Teacher Transcripts p. 9)*

Whether intentionally or not, Sandra was acting on the premise endorsed by the HLAC that play is critical to learning, something which is at odds with the general perception in the society that play has no place in school and that it is a frivolous activity bound to make children forget their 'school work'.

6.2.4 Teacher Preparation

Teachers were very frank about their limitations when it came to understanding the curriculum. Across grade levels and with varying number of years' service, they all agreed that training in understanding the new curriculum was quite deficient and resulted in teachers' being severely handicapped especially when faced with a non-prescriptive curriculum which required a level of expertise in translating it into action. They were especially voluble on this matter in the focus groups:

> *VS: Think back to your teacher training and how it prepared you to use an outcomes based curriculum...*
>
> *Rachel: Only up to a point! My reason for saying this is because at Teachers College we were taught so many different strategies for teaching language. However, when it came to actual implementation in the classroom... when I first went to Grade Four to teach... it was not*

that easy to do the transferring from the strategies that I learnt at Teachers College into the classroom when I began teaching. I was able to implement it at teaching practice... but for some odd reason, the link between College itself and the classroom became blurred. I don't know if it is because there was so much pressure from different sides in terms of teaching so many subjects across the board...when it came to the actual implementation, it was very difficult for me... and because of that, I became very exams focussed, I was not concentrating too much on the children's ability to produce something of quality. I felt that along the way I was just getting them to produce... and when it came to producing quality work, I felt that it was taking up too much time in using the strategies. Looking back on it now, I realize I did a great injustice and disservice to the children... because now looking at the new curriculum during the B.Ed. program, I am realizing that at the end of the day you do not just want production... because the production is mediocre. You actually want something of quality... so it would not matter how long it takes to work with a strategy, because at the end of the day language is supposed to be used for life not just for examination purposes...so when it came to Teachers College and the actual classroom, there was a great disconnect for me. (September, 2012; Focus Group Transcripts, p.18)

Cleo: Rachel hit the nail on the head. I think it [understanding the curriculum] has a lot to do with the theories... I think a lot more emphasis should be placed on that and the manner in which the teacher training is administered to the students. To be honest... when I was at teachers college... most of the time I was just regurgitating information and I did not understand why I was doing that. I just knew I had to know the things... so I was just doing that. I believe a lot more practice needs to be placed within the program (September, 2012; Focus Group Transcripts, p.18).

Gabby: It didn't! I found the harmonized Language Arts curriculum to be somewhat confusing when it came in... and because of that you found a number of teachers reverted to the old one which was in sync [chronological]. We would use both of them to try to get to where you were supposed to be... because you would find you were on one page and then you would to go to a number of other pages to get some of the concepts because of the way it was structured (September, 2012; Focus Group Transcripts pp.2-3).

Many teachers felt that the confusion experienced at the introduction of the HLAC, precipitated their move back to the familiar, prescriptive old curriculum about which they felt more confident. They acknowledged that reverting to their comfort zone (the old curriculum) was a mechanism employed to defuse the stress of struggling

with making sense of an innovation on their own and a means of retaining whatever control they could over their professional lives. This seemed to reflect the experience of teachers regardless of their age group or the period spent doing the basic teacher-training (Certificate in Education). Mary, who had been in the system for 28 years noted dryly that little had changed in the nature of teacher experience between her time in College and that of the younger crop. Shaking her head in resignation, she interjected,

> *It is interesting to hear what these teachers have to say. I left College many years ago. I am thinking, when I left College, it was as if college life was just to pick up a lot of content… and placed in a classroom, you felt kind of lost as to how you really teach a class, so I am listening to the younger teachers who got qualified a few years ago and they have the same experience that I had (September, 2012; Focus Group Transcripts, p.15).*

There was consensus that overall, the amount of time spent interacting with, and understanding the curriculum used in school, was insufficient and that too much time was spent in Teacher's College on theoretical aspects even in the curriculum course. Therefore teachers did not develop the confidence in manipulating actual curriculum documents and found themselves having to apply general principles without fully understanding how to interpret the document for implementation. The majority of teachers also identified ongoing training as essential to their performance on the job and reiterated that every new initiative should come with an adequate corresponding set of organized re-training/upgrading/refresher sessions.

6.3 The Principals' Voice

The principals spoke in unison on the issues affecting their schools and the difficulties of maintaining a level of success at their jobs. However, it was clear that the location

of the schools, the personality of the particular principal and the characteristics of the district support structures made a difference in their general approaches and coping abilities.

6. 3.1 Instructional Leadership

This was the area most discussed by principals who all described their role of instructional leader as a key one, which became even more critical during the implementation of a new curriculum. However, they felt that they themselves needed to have had more dedicated orientation and sensitization other than the introductory workshop) from the Ministry of Education, to better guide their interaction with teachers. Nonetheless, they did their best to maintain a supervisory posture at their schools. Principal 1 took a keen interest in supervising instruction despite the fact that it takes a serious toll on her time and energy. It was clear that the small size of Principal 1's school and the intimate family type atmosphere meant that she was often caught up in dealing personally with a range of matters. During our conversations, a constant stream of students and teachers alike came into her office with issues ranging from what colour the sports uniform should be (the supplier was awaiting her go-ahead), to an inconsolable crying child whose feelings had been hurt by another. In each pressing case we suspended our conversation while she attended to the matter. Thankfully, I had allocated two entire mornings to this conversation since I had a good idea of her management style from previous interactions at the school. A resident of the small rural community, she knew all her students personally and was very familiar with family circumstances and traits. Her hands-on approach was indicative of her feeling that these students were her neighbours in a close-knit community.

Despite the fact that this school has a remedial teacher (assisted by a peace Corps volunteer), Principal 1 still felt that it was important to maintain a highly visible presence in the classroom and made up her time by putting in late and weekend hours in order to complete the administrative work.

> *You have to be in the classrooms to see that the concepts are being taught, especially at our school and it has been a great demand on me with the literacy problem...especially reading. I have to make sure that they go through the steps: phonetic awareness, phonemic awareness, to the application. ...honestly, that is a challenge, it is very rough. I stay up to 7:00pm here... and sometimes on a Saturday. Maybe I need to do time management. With my management style, I cannot sit down and do administrative work when I have to be supervising the classrooms* (*March, 2012*; *Principal Transcripts p. 12-13*).

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Principal 3, on the other hand, with a very large school in the suburbs, was unable to spend much time in classrooms, but tried to assist teachers by sourcing and passing on useful reference materials wherever possible. In her mid-forties, effervescent, confident, her almost larger than life personality seemed designed to suit the challenge of running a very large combined (Infant and primary) school. Her approach was more didactic (Pam, one of her teachers, described it as "patronizing") than that of Principal-1 and she explained that the size of her schools did not lend itself easily to long drawn out consultative processes. Admitting that her teachers did not seem very interested in professional development, unless in a formal setting, she stated,

> *It is a problem getting teachers to read... I don't know why... so I have to do the reading for them... extract the information and give them the hand-outs. I try to give them something new and fresh every now and then... whether it is through briefings or staff meetings... or when we have our simple in house workshops. I try to keep them current... in terms of strategies for teaching comprehension, easy writing, and little things just to develop themselves. When I go through their schemes I sometimes have to make references for them, because they don't read.* (*April, 2012; Principal Transcripts p. 21*)

The challenge of balancing her various duties as principal was mitigated by the fact this school was one of the few primary schools fortunate enough to have a deputy principal because of its student numbers. Therefore, the task of providing instructional leadership was shared with the Vice Principal, who also made classroom rounds to compare what teachers had indicated in their scheme books with what they were actually teaching. The Vice Principal reported to Principal 3 on her observations during rounds and Principal 3 kept tabs on everyone by reviewing all schemes and record books.

> *I do all my scheme and record... so I know what is going on in every class and I can tell how the children are performing. In addition..., the school has an assessment coordinator who looks at all the tests to ensure that they reflect what scheme books indicate has been taught (April, 2012; Principal Transcripts p. 22).*

Principal 3 indicated that feeling a sense of being in control was very important to her and she tried to "maintain a presence" in the school at all times. Therefore, she also used a supervision strategy that she calls the "walk-through", where every few weeks she spent two or three hours going through the school, popping into each class for a few minutes. She said:

> *From the time you step into a classroom you can tell what she [teacher] is teaching... if she is using the right method and if the children are paying attention. Every now and again, I may stop... question the children... getting a feel of how they are doing.. and I move on (April, 2012; Principal Transcript sp.22).*

During the Panel discussion, Nancy, a very vocal member of the audience who is principal of an urban school, suggested that appropriate administrative help for principals would enable them to more effectively attend to instructional leadership:

> *What would be nice is if school principals got an assistant... and then
> the focus would be more on instructions/supervision... and being more
> involved in the curriculum and the dissemination of the information to
> students; but at present it is not a luxury that we have, and I can say
> that I am at least faulting in that area... in terms of going into the
> classrooms and being one on one with the teachers in the classroom
> (November, 2012; Panel Discussion Transcript p.23).*

Describing herself as terribly overworked, Nancy pointed out that Secondary schools
were assigned deputy principals and secretaries even though they had specialist
teachers, while most primary school principals were expected to supervise all subject
areas in addition to managing the physical plant and dealing with administrative
matters with no assistance. Paula, a rural principal who also attended the panel
discussion also confessed to feeling overwhelmed by administrative tasks and feeling
guilty at being a poor instructional leader. She noted that the introduction of new
curricula in particular, required consistent and dedicated support to principals and
teachers, especially in the early stages of implementation:

> *I don't think as principals... particularly for me...we were briefed...and
> I got to know about the curriculum through memos from the Ministry
> of Education and through the documents that were sent to the schools.
> I feel there should have been some training from CAMDU[17] in the
> implementation stage... there should be follow-ups with the CAMDU
> specialist coming into the schools to see how the teachers are
> performing... continuous evaluations of the use of the curriculum
> (November, 2012; Panel Discussion Transcript p.24) .*

Principals also identified the matter of having to deal with serious social problems on
a daily basis as inhibitive to their ability to function as effective instructional leaders.
While the nature and proportion of the social issues varied from one school to
another, they all felt that despite the allocation of a counsellor to each district, they
were still spending far too much of their time dealing with such matters. Principal 2

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[17] Curriculum and Materials Development Unit

was a literacy specialist by training and expressed great interest in the curriculum. She considered herself a very hands-on Principal, but regretted not having enough time to spend in the classrooms monitoring her teachers because her school sat right in the middle of one of the most troubled inner city areas. On the three occasions that I conversed with her, she was always in the middle of several things and her office virtually hummed with activity; seeing parents who dropped in, sending unkempt boys to the barber, receiving reports from the district counsellor and so on. However, she was very enthusiastic about my research and in addition to our one -on- one conversations, she agreed to share her views as a panellist during the Panel discussion as well. She pointed out that her school was located in what is often referred to as an 'at risk' area, rife with social problems;

> *So you have to know your culture... try your best to do what you can do so that you can move your students along. And it has been a struggle and an uphill battle... now that VAT[18] is here... we have more children having to be fed... on the school feeding program free. More parents are writing to say 'Miss, could you put my child...' [in the school feeding programme]– so these things are happening. Where we are, our children are exposed to so much. I have two little ones... their father and mother both arrested for shooting...sometime this week. They can't function...you understand? So all of these things... when you begin to make the progress and these things happen...? So, what I'm saying is that, apart from looking at the results and what's happening, we have to look at beyond just the content... and look at other issues that impinge upon learning in the children...that's critical. We have to constantly battle with behavioural issues...even in Grade 2...they have anger management problems...who wants to kill themselves...who is fighting...cursing...throwing stones...because "my mother curses me"...or "my father is not there"...and sometimes the teacher ends up teaching one lesson in a day... because she has to settle them down... When you have a child sleeping in class and you ask why, you get the response like..."my father was beating my mother last night and so I could not sleep." Sometimes I wish I could go to their homes to help...(May, 2012; Principal transcripts, p. 26).*

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[18] VAT: A value added tax had been recently introduced by the government at time of our conversation

Principals spoke in accord with teachers on this matter, which seemed to be a major problem impeding schools from placing the appropriate focus on instruction. Nancy was convinced that the rural schools were the worst affected:

> *In terms of the urban and rural schools, definitely the level of interest in the educational aspect is an issue,...where the children in my school want to learn but there are so many aspects that you are looking at: the physiological factors... a lot of them come to school hungry... some of them come to school not even having a shower and you're looking at a child who has all of these issues at home... and you think education is a priority for that child? Whereas the children from the urban schools have in excess... there is an abundance of lunch etc, and so that is not a focus for them... so when they come into school what they focus on is their school work (November, 2012; Panel Discussion Transcript p.20)*

Despite the perception of rural principals that urban schools were not as severely affected by social issues, urban and suburban school principals reported having to deal with matters related to the home and community environment of their students; in fact, Principal-3 pointed out that notwithstanding the public view of her school as "bourgeois", the intake was from a variety of communities, rural, suburban and urban and this made for a plethora of social issues ranging from transportation problems to delinquency and abuse.

6.3.2 Change Management
Principals all acknowledged that they play a key role in the management of curriculum change; however, they believed that they could not be effective within their schools in this regard without a certain level of structural change throughout the system. Principals also all felt that support for curriculum implementation should come primarily from the CAMDU and that the unit should coordinate the change management. However, Principal-1 pointed out

that the physical location of all curriculum officers in the north of the island made it difficult for them to be able to give, especially to schools in the southern and western geographical regions, the level of supervision and support for curriculum which was necessary for successful implementation.

> *They need to decentralize CAMDU... the business of CAMDU is not doing justice to our students and teachers. I have seen it happen in the music[curriculum]... we have a music specialist in the south and in the north and that is working. However, when you look at mathematics, language and the sciences... you have a specialist ...but you need two other officers, one geared for the south and one for the north; because after the one off workshops, you don't see them again unless your school is not performing... then they say a team is coming to visit. (March, 2012; Principal Transcripts p.17)*

Principal 3 endorsed this view, citing the need for structural change which would accommodate clearly defined processes for orientation, implementation, monitoring and follow up, feedback and finally, revision. She lamented the absence of definitive processes which would ensure that everyone was on the same page when it came to managing innovations. She found this aspect of her job was especially irksome since she felt that principals were essentially expected to be change managers without appropriate training, tools or supportive structures.

> *Nationally I think we need a proper structure of not just implementation, but monitoring and follow-up. I think we do like the absentee fathers...we drop the babies and we leave them with the mother to raise as she pleases... feed them if you can... make it work if you can... whichever child grows up well that's ok... whichever one falls by the wayside that's ok. And that is how we deal with our curriculum and a lot of other things in St Lucia... we just lay it down and leave it (April, 2012; Principals' Transcript p25.)*

In trying to determine her role in innovation management, Principal 2 pointed out that principals felt just as lost and doubtful as the teachers who they had to guide through the process of change. This therefore made it very difficult to convince teachers of the

need for an innovation which principals themselves felt shaky on even though they recognised its necessity.

> *The major problem for me as I see it is getting teachers to buy into the need to change...and I think that's the fundamental thing in all the innovations I have gone through... getting the teachers to buy into. And if you can't get teachers to buy into, then there's problems across the board. When there was the apprehension in not understanding why we had to go to the OECS Harmonized ... it's a political thing... teachers were sceptical... they were uncomfortable... and they made remarks like: "Hope they providing the better resources, eh, with their new curriculum"... "they changed for OECS' sake, that's political"; "I don't understand what this is all about, and they didn't consult us enough"... these are the comments that teachers were making... even us as principals... we had our doubts as well. But, as principals, having our doubts, we had a job to do in terms of getting the teachers to understand that this is the new way to go and therefore we all have to fall in line* (*November, 2012; Panel Discussion transcript p.12*)

When asked to discuss what would make their roles easier, the principals instantly flagged better communication. In general they identified communication as sadly lacking across the education system and felt that there was an absence of bridges and clear lines connecting the parts of the system from Ministry through schools. Principals felt that in the same way that they often were unaware of the rationale for certain policies, the policy makers were also oblivious to much of what happened in schools. Interestingly, principals felt no more responsible for influencing policy than their teachers did and expressed the desire for a more interactive relationship with the Ministry - one where they would feel "listened to". However, it was clear that the absence of communication went both ways. Principal 3 responded with a resounding "no!" when asked if the Ministry was aware of the strategies that she used at her school for curriculum supervision. When I mused that perhaps the Ministry ought to be aware, she responded sharply,

> *Well it doesn't really matter to me what the Ministry knows. I do things here that would work for us...Sometimes they [her teachers] would say*

we are doing things that the other schools are not doing and I keep saying to them don't worry with what other schools are doing...let us look at what works for us (April, 2012; Principals Transcripts p.23).

Principals too, shared the view of teachers that more support was needed for schools from Ministry units like CAMDU and the District offices. They believed that these units should be more involved in the everyday life of the school. Pricipal-3 felt that while the Science and Mathematics support from CAMDU was fairly decent in so far as material resources were concerned, "we get our syllabus and all our material on time", the language arts support left much to be desired. Her general view was that while there was some level of moral support from the Curriculum Officers, who assisted with school activities like the Spelling Bee, there was little in terms of proper evaluation of how schools were actually coping; "You don't get people coming to verify what you have and what you don't have", she explained. She was also emphatic about a more interactive role for Curriculum Officers, who she believed should be the first recipients of feedback from the schools on how innovations were being implemented. She shared the view of other participants that the initiative should be taken by CAMDU and officers should consistently reach out to principals and teachers requesting feedback and suggestions for improvement; in effect, strengthening and supporting the role of the principal.

VS: But have you made the Ministry aware of your very strong views on this matter?
Principal-3: I have said what I told you about CAMDU to the relevant persons... I have also said it to the DCEO (Instruction) that CAMDU needs to be more visible... I have said to her... we cannot just sit and wait for people to come to CAMDU when they have problems... we need to go out and see what problems exist. So we need people like the CAMDU personnel to come in to keep the teachers on their toes... to let them know that we too want you all to be reading... to keep abreast... know what is happening and to utilize the material to the best of their ability (April, 2012; Principals Transcripts p.21)

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I drew together the main aspects of my conversations with those 'in the trenches' so to speak; the teachers and principals who had to receive the curriculum and make it palatable to students while managing the process of changing from the old curriculum. Teachers were primarily concerned with the facts that their role in the policy process was underrated and parents were not playing their part in the process of educating their children. They expressed anxiety about their inability to settle comfortably into the new curriculum due to inadequate preparation and support in the classroom. Meanwhile, principals were most concerned about the difficulties of providing a suitable level of instructional leadership and their unpreparedness for managing the necessary changes required by the new curriculum. Both groups were very perturbed by the incursion of social ills of the wider community into the school day and the amount of time both teachers and principals had to spend dealing with such issues.

In the following chapter I continue the conversations by shifting the scene to that of the world of the curriculum supporters and teacher trainers and their views on their influence on the education system in general and curriculum implementation in particular.

Chapter Seven: Voices from the Field (iii): Curriculum Supporter/Teacher Trainer Story

In addition to the expert model of decision-making prevalent among professionals and the administrative modes characteristic of leaders of units and organizations, political modes of taking decisions on critical issues must be brought on board. Political decision-making has implications for building coalitions with other groups and so extends the unit into what was previously considered the external environment (Hinds, 2007).

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the data from my conversations with the education officials and teacher trainers. These represent the official support given to teachers and principals in the process of dealing with curriculum. I deal with these together because while both groups are linked to the school through their connection to those who work on the ground, they are also external in terms of the nature of their engagement. Those groups represent different units within the system, both of which are influenced by political underpinnings to decision making. These voices are also not often heard in relation to their own story; and perceptions of teacher trainers and education officials tend to be generic; therefore, this chapter brings a closer focus on the persons in these roles. The curriculum support /training story portrays the points of view of the officer responsible for overseeing instruction, MOE-1; district education officers, MOE-2 and MOE-3; curriculum officers, MOE-4 and MOE-5; and teacher trainers, Shanta and Joe who belong to the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College's Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration (DTEEA), the institution primarily responsible for teacher training. Those voices were captured during individual interview and during the Panel discussion which some of them attended. Education officers were interested in discussing (i) bureaucratic issues which impacted on their jobs; (ii) their perception of their roles within the system and

(iii) their philosophies regarding curriculum change; while Teacher trainers concentrated on (i) the nature of their relationship to other systemic partners and (ii) other constraints which prevented them from engaging fully in preparing teachers for the successful implementation through good pedagogical practice.

7.2 The Curriculum Support Story

This section presents the views of the education officers who were primarily interested in discussing ways in which they were constrained by existing bureaucracy. They also put forward their perceptions of the roles which they envisaged for themselves and the extent to which they were able to fulfil these. The lack of synchronicity in philosophical perspectives was also evident during these conversations.

7.2.1 Bureaucratic Issues

All education officers, regardless of level, made extensive reference to ponderous and chaotic bureaucracy as the major hindrance to smooth implementation of curriculum policy and change. I was pleasantly surprised to find that far from being defensive (which is what I had feared), these officers were very frank and forthcoming with their opinions even though I made it clear that I could not assure anonymity due to the nature of the island's education system[19] . "*That's alright*", MOE-1 said waving off my apologies, "*sometimes things just need to be said and we have to stop the sugar-coating and pretending...*" We conversed at her office, where she had recently been promoted from her former position[20] and she also served as one of the panellists during the panel discussion. In her early

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[19] explained in Chapter 4
[20] Up to the time of writing there was no one actually in the post devoted to the specific supervision of curriculum/instruction.

fifties, she had been engaged in education for more than twenty five years, having

worked at ground level as a teacher; at technical level as a curriculum officer and

at administrative/policy level as DCEO. She had also been intimately involved

with the development of the HLAC as one of the Curriculum officers who

worked alongside HSM. Her passion for education was obvious from the

intensity of her tone of voice and the extent to which she discussed and clarified

issues as we conversed. Responding to my question on why there seemed to be a

perception of a disjointed education system, MOE-1 suggested that the nature of

the Ministry's bureaucracy was intrinsic to the difficulty in creating the kind of

systemic linkage which would support the necessary communication structures.

> *MOE-1: There should be [easy interaction]... but there isn't. For example, the curriculum specialist is supposed to report directly to the DCEO [21]... but for the last five years that was not done...it was changed. If the DCEO does not have a direct line of communication... if that is taken away...then how does the DCEO guide the curriculum officers as to how they should proceed? So that did not happen. Also in terms of the DCEO meeting with principals... that request must go through the Chief[22]...the DCEO cannot go directly to principals. If the position of chief itself is undermined... then you have a ripple effect... nobody is doing what they are supposed to do... and responsibilities just fall by the way side.*
>
> *VS: But you are technically at policy-making level; why is this still so?*
>
> *MOE-1: You know what it's like! The political battles...the taking things personally...narrow-mindedness...power must be retained at all cost...or what is perceived as power...I'll say no more...(February, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts p.4).*

Her frustrations were obvious from her intonation, but there was a certain level of

resignation evident in her demeanour and body language. When I pointed out that I

was getting this sense, she confirmed that it had been a long battle and she was indeed

exhausted from having to fight continuously to do what she considered to be a major

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[21] Deputy Chief Education Officer responsible for instruction
[22] Chief Education Officer

aspect of her job. MOE- 2, in his mid-thirties and having recently moved from being a secondary school teacher to the Ministry, had a terse and blunt view on the crux of the matter:

> *MOE-2: So here it is that you have so much infighting and politics, and all kinds of things happening within the Ministry, within CAMDU, between departments in the Ministry that these things do not take centre stage; and in the end, everybody is suffering and ultimately the child suffers most…*
>
> *VS: Can you give me an example of how the infighting directly affected the curriculum?*
>
> *MOE-2: One of the things that was started... a very commendable initiative... was the curriculum mapping exercise conducted by [MOE-1]. However, that too has been sidelined because of the politics and all the infighting in the Ministry... and only one or two grades have completed the curriculum mapping exercise...that was a real eye opener for teachers. It was very burdensome in the beginning... but when they started to understand why it was being done and how it would benefit them, they really got immersed in it... they started to see how the curriculum is set up and how you linked the objectives... and how you integrate the various skills and objectives in executing your lesson (February, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts p.16).*

MOE-3, who had been in the system for more than thirty years, expressed similar frustrations about the absence of clean lines of communication among the various levels which meant that officials were never on the same page when it came to policy and it was impossible to present a unified or coherent front on anything:

> *In terms of the Ministry... the bridges are there... but I think they are broken. I look at my role as curriculum officer... we are supervised by the CEO for curriculum... we also have a DCEO Instruction... but we've not had direction as to where the Ministry is going. Whatever we are doing is based on our own philosophies and our own interests... our own input... but I don't think it is speaking of or for the Ministry of Education. I believe that things are done in bits and pieces and there is not that holistic approach so that everybody knows where they are going and how we get there (March, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts p. 34).*

Officers admitted that there was no definitive template for relationships among those at the various levels of administration and the upper policy making bodies were not fully aware of either what went on at middle levels or what obtained on the ground. MOE-2 insisted that the disconnect which began at the top, continued right through the ranks and the broken links in the Ministry itself were reflected in the absence of desired connections between curriculum officers and principals and schools. He expressed regret at the limitations of his ability, as a curriculum officer, to influence principals.

> *You see the problem is they [principals] do not report to us... and we do not in any way control or direct what they do... the most we can do is to advise and it is left to them to decide whether they want to implement or not... When I first came in... I ran into so many hurdles because principals have their own ideologies and their own agendas... but then again... unless the Chief who is their supervisor insists that principals attend a particular workshop, you have no control! Even when the Ministry approves for us to conduct workshops, principals at their own whims and fancies decide whether or not to attend...or how many teachers would go... and so some schools don't show up at a workshop, because a principal has decided that "we are not taking part in this"*
>
> *VS: So, how do we deal with that?*
>
> *MOE-2: Well, that is for the administration of the Ministry of Education to deal with... between the permanent secretary... the chief and administrators... they are the only ones who can deal with this. I am just hoping with the new Chief[23] things would be put in place to insist that principals do what they are supposed to do. Principals have so much power and autonomy that when they are misguided, they do a lot of damage... because of the power that they hold (February, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts pp. 20-21).*

MOE-2 also pointed to the disparity between his job description and what actually obtains in his daily work life, indicating that this created major

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[23] The position of Chief Education Officer had recently become vacant and a new appointee was expected.

confusion regarding reporting structures and processes of authorization. Clearly

irritated, he explained,

> *My job description says that I report to the Deputy Chief Education Officer (Instruction)...however, there is actually a separate arrangement because I do not report to the Deputy Chief... she does not sign anything on my behalf... I report to the Chief Education Officer for Curriculum who has been presented as the head of the unit (February, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts p.22).*

This officer shared the view of MOE-1 that the direct supervision of principals should

fall under the purview of the officer responsible for instruction (DCEO) and was of

the opinion that the systemic chaos at the top levels of the Ministry may well be

addressed by way of a clear reassertion of the role of the DCEO. However, he did not

perceive of any role for himself in attempting to clarify the system or improve its

functionality; stating that this responsibility was "*above my pay grade*".

Education officers observed that the systemic structural weaknesses were also

manifested in the schools themselves and resulted in some of the difficulties

experienced by teachers in coping with the new curriculum. In addition, they felt that

principals themselves did not hold common philosophies nor did they all seem to

embrace modern approaches to the teaching of the language arts; therefore the

nebulousness of any well-defined structural support meant that principals and teachers

were generally left to interpret and act as they felt most comfortable. MOE-1

explained,

> *This is a change process, but we didn't have the structures in place to assist with the change... with the management of the change. You can't expect two curriculum officers to manage that change, with close to a thousand primary school teachers... logistically, it couldn't work... yeah? Then also... at the school level... our teachers are accustomed to working in isolation. They're in the class... "this is my class!"...and that's it...but then we know that for change to happen, you need teachers to work collaboratively. That did not happen... and that was not happening... so, in many ways, we didn't get the kind of support*

that we wanted for the harmonized curriculum. They were teaching the discrete skills... and that's what the principals wanted to see on the timetable... and it was difficult for us to get them to transition to the whole language method... and then what made it even worse was our assessment regimes and procedures. A lot of our assessment is for accountability...so...the assessment regime didn't help. So then there wasn't this formative type of orientation to the curriculum... which is what the harmonized curriculum was asking for... more learner-centred... more developmental... take into consideration multiple intelligences and learning styles and linguistic differences... you know... all the wonderful approaches that would have helped the teaching... that didn't happen because the teachers know how they're being assessed (*November, 2012; Panel Discussion transcripts p.8)*

MOE-2 was also of the strong opinion that the approach to assessment favoured by the Ministry of Education was not conducive to successful implementation of a learner-centred curriculum. He spoke very heatedly on the folly of a system so heavily testing-oriented:

That is what drives education in St. Lucia... it's exams, exams, exams. The Ministry has perpetuated it as well... through their ranking systems... through the over laden system we have with exams... okay?...and teachers are not being challenged to develop their creativity and to grow in their own competence to be able to manage their students without an exam from outside dictating that "yes you're competent" ...or "no you're [not] competent" ...or "yes you're teaching what you should.. no you're not teaching what you should"... and so you have situations where a kindergarten teacher that I visited and that I was trying to guide says to me "Sir we don't have time." So if a K teacher is telling you that they don't have time that speaks volumes about the perspective... the mentality that the teachers have... all exacerbated by the situation we have with exams (*February, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts p.11).*

At the Panel Discussion, MOE-2 was just as forthright and expressed the view that even the undergirding philosophy guiding policies was contradictory and a source of perplexity to everyone in the system, whether they were Ministry personnel or working in schools. Responding to Parent 2's question asking for clarification of the Ministry's policy on language teaching, he replied,

I'm going to be taking a lot of risks tonight, in some of the things that I have to say. I am not sure that the Ministry is clear on its own philosophy... because there are many statements made that contradict positions... there are documents that reflect one posture and within the very documents you have conflicting statements... and then when you move to the field, you're supposed to be representing the Ministry's philosophy... and you start off... and I'm giving my own experience ... you start off as an advocate, only to meet the resistance... and then you go back and then you realize ... "but wait a minute.... what I thought was there, was not actually there... or it wasn't stated as clearly as it should have been stated". Even when it is stated... the question of process... as far as implications for curriculum innovation... seems to be one of the most damning where the Ministry is concerned...because how you communicate your philosophy to the implementers is key... and there are huge gaps in the communication process. So that... you pull the average teacher out of a classroom and ask them "what's the ministry's philosophy... or what's the Ministry's position on XYZ?"... and they cannot tell you. So automatically, implementation becomes flawed (November, 2012; Panel Discussion transcript, p.21 .)

The anomalies of the grade levels attached to different positions in the system was another sore point dwelt upon by MOE-3 who pointed out that while curriculum officers are at grade 15, they generally have Masters degrees while principals ranged from grade15 to17 with or without a Master's degree and District Education Officers were automatically pegged at Grade 17 as well regardless of academic qualification. Indignantly emphasizing how unfair the situation was, she asserted that in order to manage change in curriculum or anything else, changes in basic matters like appropriate remuneration and promotion would have to be made first so that personnel were not distracted by resentment and anxiety. "*Curriculum officers are very disgruntled right now*," she stated bluntly; pointing out how difficult it was for officers to get "buy-in" from persons supposedly under their supervision when these persons were operating at a higher grade level than themselves.

7.2.2 Role Perception

Officers all held clear views as to their roles, but pointed to the fact that their views were often at odds with those of colleagues and even supervisors. MOE-2 was under no illusions about the limitations of his role, but insisted that all Education officers should play a part in policy decisions which affect the business of curriculum and the process should be transparent. While there was a certain level of acceptance and resignation in his responses, he did seem to chafe somewhat under the perception that policy making in the Ministry seems to be primarily a reflection of personal philosophy. In describing his role as it related to policy development, he indicated that it was

> *very limited... because again... it is only in an advisory capacity that I serve... but I see myself having very little influence in policies of the Ministry. Again, largely it is those who have the power... whatever they feel... whatever they decide... however misguided they may be... that's what holds* (*February, 2012*; *Education Officers Transcripts p.21*)

He went on to explain that some policies were indeed misguided by virtue of the fact that they were not informed from below and stemmed largely from the political "*flavour of the day*" or whatever was in vogue from the point of view of funding agencies and believed that there was a critical role for persons at all levels regarding legitimate input into policy. Nonetheless, he indicated that he tried however he could to carry out the role that he has carved out for himself which involved primarily assisting teachers in the effective teaching of the language arts. Indeed, his body language and tone reflected his excitement when he spoke about his work in schools. His eyes lighted up as he spoke,

> *I do quite a number of workshops with teachers... I do discussions with them... I work with them when we do standardization for the SBA's...I visit schools... I have conferences with teachers... I do lesson observations after which we conference as well. As part of my poetry festival, I have been working with teachers both at the primary and*

secondary level, in using poetry as a means of revitalizing every aspect of language learning... and having students to have more affinities to the language through authentic experiences... and more fun filled activities (February, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts p.17)

The curriculum officers clearly identified CAMDU as having the primary responsibility for curriculum implementation and were unanimous in their conviction that curriculum officers should oversee the actual field implementers - the teachers. They accepted that their roles required close supervision of the curriculum in schools as well as the provision of resources support and instructional assistance. However, they pointed to the overwhelming nature of the task when only two language arts officers were responsible for all classroom teachers in seventy six (76) primary schools and all English teachers in twenty four (24) secondary schools. MOE-3 points out that they were further constrained by the mileage restrictions imposed on travelling officers, who are only allowed to claim for 300 miles per month (I noted that my odometer registered 45 miles for a single two-way trip just to School 1). Yet, MOE-2 felt that seeing the results of his efforts were worth the sacrifices. He told a detailed story of one of his initiatives, which he felt illustrated what kept him going despite the obvious strain,

For instance, I went to ---- Primary... and I did a two-day workshop with them and I think that too might have made a huge difference. In the past, I have found myself conducting workshops with one-day... trying to cover so much that it is virtually impossible to cover everything... and much suffers. So I took a position that I was going to demand more time. So I requested two days and the Ministry approved it.. and so I did that workshop in -----------. One day with reading... the other day with writing... and all along the way, showing the reading and writing connection... and I think that made a huge difference.

I went back to the school two weeks later... and I was so heartened to see some of the very things that I had recommended being implemented in the classroom... and the teachers were very excited. I saw...for instance in a grade two class... because I was recommending to them, that they start exposing the children to text structures and text

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organization... the patterns of writing... so that children's comprehension would be improved as the literature is saying... and teachers were at a loss as to "how do I do this with a grade two class?"... and I did simple demonstrations for them. For example, for cause and effect, I took a chair and I said "if someone sits down and I pull the chair what is going to happen?"... I gave them other real life situations... So I went into a Grade Two class..., the class had already begun and the teacher did not know I was coming... so that told me that was not a 'put on'... and the teacher had cause and effect on the board and had some of the same examples that I had presented in the workshop and the children were all excited and presenting many examples of cause and effect...

Then it was break time and I was conferencing with the teacher... and a little boy came in and was interrupting... and he said "Miss! Miss!... my mommy was at the sink washing dishes and the knife fell and it cut her feet"... and so the teacher said " Ok... are you telling me that is cause and effect?"..." Yes miss!"..." So what was the cause, and what was the effect?"... a little girl who was listening said, "the cause was that she cut her feet"... the teacher asked, "was that really the cause?" and the boy said, "no... the knife fell and then it cut her feet"... He was able to identify the cause and effect right there!...That made me feel so good!... However, you could go to other schools and you see the same things that you have recommended... and would be ideal in a particular situation... and they are not using it. So some people require more support than others... but the problem is, it is only me to be able to handle all of that... and to take them by the hand... and walk with them with the process that they must follow (February, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts p. 18).

MOE-4 had been a District Education Officer for four years, having spent twenty years before that as a principal. She was the only one who defined the role of District Education officers as the ones holding primary responsibility for curriculum supervision. She acknowledged that the district offices did have a physical support function, but contrary to the perception of teacher and principals, their curriculum supervision function was central,

At the district office, we implement whatever curriculum that is prescribed by the ministry...it is carefully sorted out, planned and implemented and we do so in various ways..we visit the schools... we have workshops for the teachers... and we have workshops with the principals... and we get feedback... and so on and so forth. Our main focus is implementation of the curriculum and to ensure that it is done in the right way. Education officers are the representative of the Chief

> *Education Officer. This falls under her portfolio... supervision... now she cannot be at every school... so that's why we have our little subsection... we supervise our subsection and then we report afterwards exactly what is happening on the ground (March, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts pp. 39-40).*

However, she held the same view as everyone else that the implementation was not going as well as it should,

> *MOE-4: I cannot say that I am happy... but there **could** have been... or there **should** have been more preparation. I don't think that the teachers are sufficiently prepared to get into the implementation of the curriculum...I think some of them are still lost... although the workshops were held and we tried to... but you find some teachers were still lost as to what to do. The implementation was the hard part of it.*

> *VS: Why is that?*

> *MOE-4: Maybe the methods or whatever that was used to bring out the concepts. I don't know if the teachers... sometimes... maybe they just don't accept change and they're not receptive to change... maybe that could have been part of the problem (March, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts p. 42).*

MOE-5 was the District Education Officer for School 2. We had only a brief conversation because twenty minutes after we got started a family member was hospitalized and she had to leave. It was not possible to get another mutually agreeable slot; however, she agreed to participate in the Panel Discussion and was able to air her views there. She did not think that the District Office needed to focus on the technicalities of curriculum, but that their role was more of a coordinating one designed to encourage the sharing of best practice by way of bringing the various parties together through facilitated workshops and seminar sessions. She had also worked before as Vice Principal of a Secondary school and felt that there should be closer collaboration and cohesion between the primary and secondary schools within

a specific district as a means of maximising resources as well as creating smooth
transitions for students.

> *If we decide that we are going to adopt new projects... are they going*
> *to end as usual... or are we going to take a piece of all the best*
> *practices?... And we should have a sharing of the best practices of the*
> *CETT project for example... because I think there are a lot of*
> *principles that you have mentioned... all of you... the teacher... the*
> *principal etc. you all have mentioned things that are working... things*
> *that have worked... and I don't think we should leave it lying. We need*
> *to share!... So...we will share in our district, those principles. And I*
> *don't think that...–as you correctly stated... we don't need lots of*
> *money to do those things... I don't think we do. We need to... we need*
> *the human resources to begin with... and we have the human*
> *resources(November, 2012; Panel Discussion transcript, p.31).*

MOE-2 agreed with MOE-5 that the District office should play more of a
coordinating role than a curriculum supervision one; however, he pointed out bitterly,
through one of his anecdotes, that these offices did not even achieve that basic
function because some district officers were not interested in initiatives unless there
were publicity points to be scored.

> *VS: I think you're saying that the District Education Offices are more*
> *than just facilitators of assessments and so on...that they're also meant*
> *to be repositories of resources... almost like a home away from home*
> *for teachers... in support of curriculum. Is that how you perceive them?*
>
> *MOE-2: Yes, but they're not even that at all...sometimes you wonder*
> *what they are doing. We had for instance.... CAMDU had a team*
> *visiting ------Primary... and there were a number of issues raised... and*
> *I very strongly recommended that we do not go to the schools and just*
> *sit in classrooms... that we need to do our needs assessment...*
> *interview the teachers... the principals... speak with the DEO... find out*
> *what happened before arrival and where it is we have to start. We did*
> *that and we met with the DEO and requested a brief presentation for*
> *the staff, based on our findings. When we got there the day... the*
> *materials we requested were not prepared... the DEO had not informed*
> *the schools... the DEO himself was about half an hour late... so much*
> *that could have been done that day was lost because the DEO was just*
> *not prepared... and he had agreed!... he had been informed about a*
> *week or two before the date. This is not an isolated case... most of the*
> *work the people in the Ministry Education want to push is the work*
> *that would put them in the spotlight... so they would have a news*

> *report... and the camera would be there... they would have 'district walk and run'[24]... that is the kind of foolishness that they put their heart and soul in... because at the end of the day... people would say that this person is doing work...however, the real on the ground work that needs to be done... to be able to address those kinds of issues... you don't see it being done (February, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts p. 21) .*

Officers' perception of the roles and level of efficiency of school principals varied. MOE-2 was convinced that principals were not playing a sufficiently prominent role in the instructional leadership of their schools, and felt that such a role was critical to the success of curriculum implementation. He described the majority of principals as *'very laid back'* in respect of instructional focus and insisted that for the most part they did not pay sufficient attention to the curriculum content areas. He felt that unless a principal happened to be inclined towards the language arts, it was unlikely that any great interest would be demonstrated towards that area and, it was co-relationally unlikely that sufficient attention would be directed towards the supervision of its teaching; as the principal may not necessarily understand what the curriculum is requiring of the teacher or what the philosophy underlying the curriculum emphasizes in the way of instructional methodology. Therefore, he felt that preparation workshops in the form of orientation to the basic principles and expected classroom activities or behaviours were critical for principals as well as teachers.

MOE-3, on the other hand, believed that most principals are functioning adequately as instructional leaders. MOE-3 also seemed to take a more prescriptive approach to the type of instructional leadership from the Curriculum Officer's point of view and believed that the apportioning of curriculum content by Curriculum Officers to provide teachers with clear guidelines as to what to teach and when, was the easiest

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[24] District schools fun race

solution to managing curriculum content. Interestingly, this is the type of approach originally taken by the old curriculum and it was that very didactic path that the new curriculum sought to reverse by way of empowering the teacher to make those decisions him/herself. However, MOE-3 was also adamant that the instructional leadership responsibility lay firmly in the hands of the principal and suggested that orientation and training must "start with the principal, because that is the instructional leader". She agreed that training in this area for principals was sorely needed and suggested that instructional leadership might also come from professional organizations such as the defunct Literacy Teachers Association,

> *I see this group as one where you can sustain whatever efforts you are doing in literacy by having constant meetings...conferences... gatherings... using the technology to have a group. So that's my dream...there are persons for example... who did some good studies...what is the point of having action research and you get a good grade and then it's on the shelf? (March, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts p. 33).*

Despite the difference of opinion on principals' performance in the role of instructional leaders, officers did agree that a principal's role is naturally multifunctional and that the success of an innovation largely depended on the role that the specific principal decided to privilege. MOE-3 summed up her view of the two types of principal:

> *...there are principals who are in charge of the instructional aspect of the school... and there are principals who are managers... they do not even know what is happening...; but those that are in charge... there is a strong focus on literacy and so they go out of their way to do whatever it takes... so when they get their results from Common Entrance..., from the MST[25]... they know their weaknesses and they go back and tackle it (March, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts p. 33).*

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[25] Minimum Standards Test

7.2.3 Philosophical Issues

Philosophical disconnects within departments were also obvious. The issue of penmanship, for example, was a contentious one among Curriculum Officers. MOE-2 felt that we had evolved out of the need to place emphasis on this aspect and once handwriting was legible there was no need to belabour the penmanship training; while MOE-3 felt that this was still an important aspect of the Language Arts curriculum. She justified her position emphatically,

> *We have had discussions and some people say... you don't need to teach penmanship because there are computers. When you talk about penmanship, you are talking about size.. shape... slant... spacing... height... you are even talking about the type of font... because print and cursive are two different fonts. My colleague says "I don't even know about this type of thing so it doesn't matter"... I say it matters and if we say penmanship, we don't mistake with legibility... because something can be legible but the 'M' is not shaped properly... or the 'P'. We need policy on penmanship. As a teacher... when I started teaching... we taught print from K to grade two and when they were about to leave grade two, you had 'joined print'... and then a move to cursive. Now there is no structure in terms of penmanship. Some of the new teachers cannot even write... so there is no policy on penmanship (March, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts p. 35).*

Meanwhile, MOE- 1 and MOE-2 both disagreed vehemently with this position, putting forward the view that it was this type of "*old fashioned*", "*pedantic*" approach to the teaching of the language arts, which made it difficult for schools to embrace the philosophy of the new curriculum which entirely ignores penmanship as a skill and focuses instead only on legibility in handwriting. This discussion remained in my mind for a long time because it touched an emotional memory to do with my handwriting classes in primary school and that evening I made the following notation in my journal:

> *...At that point during the discussion, I was having flashbacks to my primary school days, when beautiful handwriting was a requisite and those of us who had not mastered it were almost pariahs. I*

remembered the swish of the ruler and the unbearable burning sensation when it connected with my five year old palm, because I was totally unable to shape my letters with the lovely, swirling patterns demonstrated by the teacher. Indeed, good penmanship was a major asset in those days. I developed a serious inferiority complex where my handwriting was concerned. It became a symbol of my shame; since I got top marks in all other aspects of language. Later on, as a teacher trainer, I was horrified to see that teachers were still punishing children for "poor" handwriting and I spent a lot of time showing them that handwriting was not a language skill at all, but rather, a mechanical one more related to architectural drafting than to the language arts. I made them read up on muscular development and how fine motor skills related to manipulating a pencil were dependant on this. Therefore I felt somewhat deflated when this officer was so adamant about the teaching of handwriting and the need for prescriptive policy on this. I was also shocked at the level of passion with which MOE-3 articulated this and it was a great struggle to maintain my calm and objective demeanour. I noted mildly that the HLAC did not have any outcomes related to penmanship and MOE-3 exclaimed triumphantly that this was exactly why a policy was needed in this area (Research Journal entry: 14/03/12.)

It was obvious that principles of language teaching were not commonly held and that there was need for discussions across the board on what policy documents espoused. MOE-5 expressed the view that the general sense of disconnectedness which seemed to pervade the education system, was largely due to the fact that there was not enough emphasis placed on planning at the various levels in such a way that plans dovetailed neatly and everyone was clear on how projects related to each other and to the practitioners themselves within their various roles. She summed up her contribution passionately:

So we need to have a broad plan... and when I say we... I mean the Ministry of Education... each district should have a plan as to what we are doing... where we're heading... there's so much discontinuity...so many projects starting... ending... and there's no follow-up. But we have to decide what we are doing from today. We need to stop this... we have to make a decision... and today...not tomorrow! (November, 2012; Panel Discussion Transcripts p.31).

MOE-3 also called for meaningful change which she felt could be accomplished through extensive consultation and honest dialogue. She expressed the opinion that the country was not using a strong education platform to position itself appropriately in order to engage in the wider international discourse and was in fact adrift.

> *Personally, I believe education in St. Lucia needs to be revamped...*
> *there needs to be a consultation... I don't think we know where we are*
> *going... I don't think we are responding to what is happening around*
> *us globally (March, 2012; Education Officers Transcripts p.34).*

7.3 The Teacher Trainers' Story

Conversations with the two teacher trainers focused on the nature of the relationships between the training institution and the other partners in education as well as the difficulties of achieving optimum training levels for teachers in light of the existing relationships.

7.3.1 Relationships

Like the other participant groups, the teacher trainers reiterated the lament of the disconnectedness among key partners in the system. Shanta had been a teacher trainer for fifteen years, having taught at a Secondary school before that. She expressed the view that dealing with the education system left her exhausted. She felt that the different entities did not see themselves as one educational system within which coordination and synchronicity were critical if the goal was meeting the needs of both students and teachers. She was also quite indignant about what she perceived as a lack of respect for the training institution and a total absence of consultation on the part of the ministry;

> *The thing about the Ministry and Teacher Ed [Teacher Training*
> *Division]... there seems to be a disconnect... things are happening and*

we do not know. There is really a disconnect. We advocate certain things... the Ministry is doing something else. The Ministry believes that it is one entity... CAMDU is one entity... and Teacher Ed is one entity. Teacher Ed is never part of anything. Example...there is something called the Jolly Phonics and you would go to the schools and hear about the Jolly Phonics. When the facilitator for Jolly Phonics came... was Teacher Ed aware of it?...No! I think the Ministry just thinks that Teacher Ed is an educational institution... we do our thing and it does not affect their thing... so there is not that kind of collaboration between the two (June, 2012; *Teacher Trainer Transcripts p. 3).*

Joe, who had worked at a secondary school and later at the Ministry of Education before coming to the Teachers' College, shared this view but added that the nature of communication in the system was characteristically didactic and there was a distinct absence of collegiality especially in the relationship between Ministry and schools. He pointed out that since the Teachers' College was perceived by the Ministry as a school, it was not surprising that there would be a similar lack of collegiality. He explained, "the relationship is like that of manager with subordinates…the synchronised relationship that should exist does not…seems almost like there is a Ministry on one hand…and the schools on the other" (Teacher Trainer Transcripts p. 14). Both of these participants believed that the Ministry was internally divided and that its various facets were regarded as isolated entities with entirely disparate foci. Joe painted what he felt would be an ideal type of interrelationship which could successfully provide firm support and reinforcement to the implementation of curriculum by weaving together all the players responsible for moving conceptual policy to the goal of effective practice:

> *Joe: The way I see it working... DEO [District Education Officer] can provide support in terms of time off for teachers to attend training sessions at school or district level... can also assist with monitoring what is done. Curriculum Officers are supposed to be monitoring implementation and providing instructional support... but this instructional support can be in the form of workshops... not one off...*

but regular training sessions... classroom observation and hand holding if necessary. Teacher Training institutions need to collaborate with Curriculum Officers. The collaboration will help ensure that the curriculum is made available to Lecturers... so that exposure can be given to student teachers. Collaboration could also mean Curriculum Specialists serving as guest lecturers... to ensure that teachers in training are aware of the curriculum and the espoused methods of implementation. The teacher training institution...as part of its mandate... can ensure that methodology done at the institution reflects advances in the field... in the subject area... as well as that [philosophy] advanced in the curriculum. Student teachers... as part of training MUST have sessions in which they are exposed to the curriculum...plus guidance on how to implement. Principals need to act as instructional leaders, and importantly, monitors of implementation. If there is careful monitoring of instruction, there would be a high degree of fidelity to the curriculum. Teachers can contribute to successful implementation if they are trained and guided properly... so training would allow them to ensure that they implement the curricula as expected... and also to serve as supporters to their colleagues

VS: I must say this sounds very utopian...perfectly logical of course...but Utopian in our context. How do you get it all to work?

Joe: The CEO needs to form a monitoring team to include CAMDU Officers, DEO's, Principals and Vice Principals... Heads of Departments at schools should also form part of this. So obviously, implementation MUST be a collective activity and NOT that of CAMDU alone (*October, 2012*; *Teacher Trainer Transcripts p. 15*) .

Joe also felt strongly that there was no need for strict differentiation of roles in the supervision of curriculum and that a team effort would be more effective than allocating this responsibility to individuals or specific departments. He acknowledged that in light of the traditional hierarchical types of relationship endemic in the system, it would be difficult to get everyone to embrace his vision, but felt that such a disservice was currently being done to the children, that it was time to begin speaking frankly on leaving behind the "*hang-ups of position and power*" which were so much a part of the bureaucratic reporting relationships.

VS: So what do you think should be the most critical focus for this collaborative effort?

Joe: Training in the actual use of the curriculum…planning for its use…taking suggestions from the curriculum and implementation in the classroom...this is a perennial problem. Curriculum documents are prepared with suggestions for teachers…who in some case see them as being foreign…in many cases... there is need for more guidance…more 'holding of hands' A lot more training has to be done at school level…the usual one- off workshop activities do not help. I notice that teachers attend these and there is no observable difference in classroom performance...More work has to be done with teachers to ensure that they are implementing the curriculum as expected. Look how in many schools... teachers are still using the old curriculum documents...this hints at a need for monitoring what happens at the school level. Again.. the age old problem of monitoring emerges...there is no structured system of monitoring in the education system. Most critical to the curriculum process...teachers…they are the implementers. Many curricula... however well intentioned or planned...,can sink at the classroom level. I believe Pratt refers to implementation the great barrier reef...

VS: Surely, as the training institution, your College should take the lead in all of this...do you agree?...and is anything happening? You must know, but the way, that teachers have not spoken flatteringly of their College experiences...

Joe: I'm not surprised...At present, the student teachers have no session where they engage the curriculum. This definitely needs to be done... so that it forms part of regular pedagogy. Most student teachers have no idea what the curriculum documents look like... especially the harmonized ones... Again, there is a high percentage of student teachers who have no teaching experience... so the engagement with the curriculum would serve them in good stead...this would help them... as well as those who have taught before... to gain insight in what is expected of teachers implementing the curriculum... so that when they return to schools... they are not disadvantaged. Another important change...of course...is the greater collaboration between the Curriculum Unit and the College... and this process has already begun (October, 2012; Teacher Trainers' Transcripts p.16).

Shanta confirmed that the College had indeed begun to take some steps in the right direction by placing more emphasis on interaction with the actual curriculum and making it a more practical exercise. "*Presently the Dean is working along with the course instructor and somebody from CAMDU to really introduce the students to the curriculum*", she informed me, adding that she was very relieved to see that the new

Dean of the Teaching Division was passionate about relating College instruction to teacher's classroom lives.

7.3.2 Training Constraints

Interestingly, the matter of constraints raised another type of relationship issue which was not internal; that is, the relationship between the DTEEA and the University of the West Indies Faculty of Education, which is responsible for overseeing the training programmes of the division. The Certificate and Bachelor's degree programmes which are offered through a franchise arrangement follow syllabuses which are examined by the university, something which both teacher trainers saw as a constraining factor because of what they identified as a disconnect between what the university-approved curriculum emphasized and the needs of teachers on the ground. Teachers were implementing local curriculum (in this case the HLAC), which was often out of sync with approaches and methodology entrenched in the training division curriculum. More recently, an Associate degree programme had replaced the Certificate, but trainers noted that the new programme had made matters worse by placing even more emphasis on theoretical content. Joe pointed to the absence of a specific slot on the division's timetable for actual interaction with the curriculum in use on the island as proof that curriculum lectures were primarily theoretical and that the training programme was really not about real life teaching at all.

Acknowledging that the university did not prescribe the materials to be used in instruction of teachers, he admitted that perhaps the DTEEA itself was not doing enough to make the transition from the university's examination syllabus to the actual curriculum which it would present to its teachers. However, Shanta believed that even if trainers wanted to do more practical things, they were severely constrained by the examination oriented nature of the programme. She explained,

At the end of the three months the students have an exam to write... and you have to prepare them to write this exam. Yes you want to do all the nice things... but ...you have to make sure the students are ready for the end of Semester Exams... and because all of the courses are content heavy, the training part is so dilute now that you ask yourself... is any training really taking place?...what we have seen is that the students are getting better grades... but it is based on the theory. The program has lost the true essence of training (June, 2012; Teacher Trainers' Transcripts p. 9).

Shanta was particularly concerned that the amount of time spent on practicum was woefully inadequate and felt that a three-year programme which included a full year of "internship" would be a more useful approach to teacher-training. Noting that teachers were able to "*put on an act*" during short practicum periods and revert to old methods on return to their schools, she drew a parallel between the type of internship for other professions like medicine, which involved close interaction with human beings, and what should be applied to teachers who had an even more lasting and critical effect on the children with whom they came into contact,

We have this thing here ... when training should be at the core of Teachers' College... we have just a ten week slot in second year...a rigid ten weeks!... Now the nature of the students that come to Teachers' College has changed... some students have never been exposed to a classroom before... and for the first time... within ten weeks they have to become a teacher (June, 2012; Teacher Trainers' Transcripts p. 10).

The change to which Shanta referred was the fact that the College had begun to accept applicants who had not taught before; which was a change from the norm of having had to be in the teaching service before being considered for acceptance. However, since most of the primary school teachers had already received training and there was little turnover in the system at that level, the College had opened up to private applicants, many of whom were coming straight out of the Advanced Level programme. Joe agreed that the College training is insufficient and endorsed Shanta's

suggestion that more formal post-college training was necessary even if it was not an entire year of internship.

A second inhibiting factor identified by both participants, was the chasm between the world of the teacher-training classroom and the reality of the school world to which teachers returned after their prescribed stint at College. They both pointed to the fact that the culture and practices of the school were mostly determined by the principal and each principal had specific approaches and procedures which often interfered with teachers' ability to implement what they had learnt during their training.

> *However, when they go out into the schools, there may be different ways, because different Principals have their own philosophies. So when the students go out into the schools, some of the things [they have learnt] - they do not allow them to use. Some of the principals think some of these things are not applicable, some do not want to accept any change or allow changes in their schools (Shanta, June, 2012; Teacher Trainers' Transcripts p. 3).*

Shanta used an anecdote to drew reference to her experiences while supervising teachers during practice teaching, which indicated that teachers were often confused about reconciling what they were learning at College with the expectations of the school and often felt intimidated by principals to the point where they abandoned their practice of new approaches;

> *We were doing something yesterday... that when you are teaching Grammar, you should not teach the syllabus... but you need to use the students' products... their speech... their writing... to determine what you would be teaching. A student [teacher] indicated, "Miss you say to teach it that way..., but when you have a principal... you have five grade fives... and everybody is doing Verbs and you don't do i..., the principal reprimands you for that". So I said, "you are rushing to teach the Verbs... what about the things they do not know?...then over time, you would label the students as lazy!"... So I asked them "do you use the Creole in the classroom"? ... Some of them said "when I use the broken English (some of them still call it broken English)... that is when the students understand"... So they do see that they must work from where the children are... but they just cannot do it if the principal has her own agenda (June, 2012; Teacher Trainers' Transcripts p. 12).*

Shanta also raised a concern about the territorial behaviour of Principals who sometimes resented the presence of trainee teachers at their schools, especially if they were originally from other schools. This, she thought was another example of how difficult it was for the College to maintain favourable relationships with key partners, citing the difficulties they sometimes experienced in placing students and the fact that they were made to feel that the school was doing the College a big favour. She added,

> S*ome of the principals believe it is their school and they do not want the trainees at **their** school...when they go out into the schools... they may not be able to implement what they learn... because different Principals have different philosophies... so when the students go out into the schools... some of the things they do not allow them to use... Some of the principals think some of these things are not applicable... some do not want to accept any change or allow changes in their schools. So what happened now... is that the new Dean had to write to the CEO... hold a meeting with him... he had to visit the schools so that principals would be aware that this is not **their** school (June, 2012; Teacher Trainers' Transcripts p.3).*

Joe also pointed out that because of the limited engagement between training institution and schools, it was difficult for teachers to make much difference to their schools once they had completed training unless that particular school had a principal or proactive staff member who initiated and maintained strong links with supporting departments like CAMDU or the Teacher' College.

> *There are significant differences..in some schools, staff members have requested the assistance of CAMDU... and there is noted a high degree of fidelity to the curriculum as articulated..in others... where difficulties in relationship are experienced... teachers have resorted to the old way of teaching... There are also differences in attitude and professional independence. Some teachers prefer to keep to what they are familiar with...refusing to venture from their comfort zone...the problem of resistance to change and new things still exists (October, 2012; Teacher Trainers' Transcripts p. 14).*

Both trainers strongly recommended an emphasis on collaboration and cooperation among the systemic partners which would target the provision of support for teachers in the classroom as well as continuing education for principals especially with regard to new theories and methods which had become part of the training curriculum. They also felt that curriculum developers, funding agencies and coordinating bodies like the OECS, should bear in mind the importance of in-service training and factor that into curriculum initiatives.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the data gathered by articulating the views, experiences, thoughts and suggestions of the participants in the field who provided support to the schools and guidance or training for teachers. Data was gathered through individual conversations, and the contributions of these persons at the panel discussion. The data was presented under the common themes suggested by the words of participants themselves as they pertained to the focus and experiences of each group: ministry school support and teacher trainers. Generally, ministry officials expressed an interest in providing adequate support to schools but identified inhibiting factors related to communicative dysfunctionality among the various bureaucratic departments, vagueness of reporting/supervision structures as well as unfairness in the allocation of public service pay grades. Teacher trainers identified weakness in the College curriculum and exclusion from the mainstream of curriculum processes as their major issues.

The specific themes identified in this chapter, will be subsumed under broader umbrella headings for the purposes of in-depth analysis in the following chapter.

Chapter Eight: Voices in Unison/Discord

*We need to understand social construction of curricula at the levels of prescription **and** process **and** practice. What is required is indeed to understand the practical, but to locate this understanding within a further exploration of the contextual parameters of practice (Goodson, 2006, p. 305)*

8.1 Introduction

As indicated in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, my research was mainly intended to elucidate the second level identified by Goodson (above) i.e. the level of process. It is my view that understanding the process of its implementation is essential to any understanding or evaluation of a curriculum and I agree further that an understanding of process is only possible within an exploration of local context. However, it is inevitable that listening to the chorus of voices and deciphering the issues therein would indeed uncover matters at the level of practice, while making connections to implications at the level of prescription. Having located my research within the perspective of those engaged in the process of implementation; in this chapter, I present a discussion of the research findings in light of the collection of voices of the small island state, vis a vis the voices of the literature. Here I examine the discourse; both public and private, taking place among and within those engaged in the development, supervision and implementation of curriculum. While I place the discussion in the context of the broad issues which emerged from the multiple voices during the data collection, I attempt to go deeper into the individual and group dialogues to decipher the underlying issues, sub-texts and implications therein. As I proceeded with the various conversations, it became clear that there were three main recurrent themes under which I have arranged this analysis: (i) the criticality of voice in the implementation process, (ii) the importance of management and leadership of

change and (iii) the need for comprehensive support of change. These themes straddled the participant groups and were embedded in all the discourse, whether individual interview, focus group or symposium. In the last chapter I attempted to represent the construction of reality as experienced by the representative participants in the process of implementation and change; in this chapter I discuss this reality in light of the related literature.

8.2 The Criticality of Voice

Blenkin et al (1992, p. 219) purport that "resistance to change can now be explained as a lack of congruence between the existing school culture and the culture embedded in the change proposals". They suggest that the traditional approach to examining change by focusing on technical aspects like teachers' practice does not provide a useful platform and recommend a lens which privileges the biographical experiences of those central to the change process; "Appropriate research involves no less than getting into the heads of practitioners to gain access to their thought processes in order to interpret the world from their perspective (Blenkin et al, 1997, p.223)." This point of view permeates Goodson's (1997, 2000, 2006) writing on the centrality of teachers and their lives to the curriculum milieu. Goodson (2006, p.36) strongly recommends "reconceptualizing educational research so as to assure that 'the teachers' voice' is heard, heard loudly, heard articulately." He contends that while a lot of studies have focused on the teacher's practice, the voices of teachers are starkly absent in the curriculum discourse. Elmore (2004, p. 38) points to the separation of teachers from the decision making which will directly impact their professional lives and laments that "teachers are seldom asked to judge if this new curriculum translates well into

actions in the classroom, nor are they often asked to participate as co-designers of the ideas in the first place."

The voices of the teachers in this study are in concordance with the preceding views, as every teacher lamented his/her estrangement from policy making and lack of input and consultation on matters which affected daily practice. Practitioners' perceptions, feelings, understandings and life events are more useful and valuable in throwing light on change, since the human elements which underpin practice are most often the same ones which make or break new policy. Therefore, the notion of the school "as an arena of practice, a place where decisions made elsewhere' must be accommodated" (London 2002, p.97) would need to be deemphasised in favour of one which promotes the school as a sphere where "a new balance between personal, internal and external will have to be negotiated" (Goodson, 2000, p. 18).

Research findings suggest that the implementation and management of innovations are heavily dependent on the synergies between lives and practice and that change cannot be externally managed or manipulated. Goodson (2000, p. 26) insists that "teachers' work, their professional labour, their personal concerns and instrument is at the heart of education. To change education is to change the teachers work and vice versa" Fundamental to all these views is the fact that there tends to be a marked absence of connectivity between policy and practice in most educational contexts; something which I found to be true in the studied environment. While the intimacy which characterizes small island contexts could be envisioned as a facilitator of intense, ongoing dialogue, quite the opposite is true; in fact, smallness seems to be a prescription for inhibition, fear of reprisal for singing off the prescribed key and blind acceptance of the status quo.

Rizvi (2009, p. 104) is of the opinion that "colonialism does not cease to have salience just because a country has become independent. It continues to affect all aspects of life in one form or another. Public discourse and social institutions do not change overnight, and the colonial legacies often continue to shape post-independence and post-colonial futures." He echoes Fanon's (1968) view that freedom in postcolonial states is often fictitious since the same power structures and imbalances which defined colonialism are merely repopulated by new players on the postcolonial stage.

The persistent adherence to 'knowing one's place' in the bureaucratic thinking of small island states like Saint Lucia perpetuates the inherited colonial structures which relegate teachers to the lowest rungs of the hierarchy as the 'worker bees' who perform the routine functions of transferring knowledge to student vessels. Teacher voices in this study told an identical story to those listened to by Bristol (2008 p. 122) in Trinidad and Tobago, who found that "the way in which a teacher practices... is determined by the way in which the teacher understands the systemic relations of education, her/his role within that system and the extent to which she/he has autonomy". Bristol describes the education system in her country as clearly reflecting the constructs of the colonial plantation. She found (as I did) that the sense of being externally controlled and manipulated permeated teacher discourse and that the conclusion that all real power resided entirely outside the teacher's locus was generally accepted. I found the ruefulness and resignation in the voices of teachers when they expressed this, very troubling; many of them did not feel that there was any possibility of changing the status quo. Over and over, participants said words to effect of "no one listens to us", they just give us things to do", "we should have a say", "they don't care"; and suggested that avenues be created for their voices to be heard, even while acknowledging that should this suggestion come from them it would be

discounted and brushed aside. Their awareness of their central role in the curriculum process made what they perceived as sidelining especially difficult to bear. Interestingly, the lack of empowerment refrain permeated discussions through the systemic levels, from teachers to senior administrators; the latter describing themselves as being at the mercy of political currents which permeate their ministerial milieu and restrict their ability to make decisive changes. Indeed, those towards whom the teachers look to generate new enabling structures and to guide the forces of change, feel paralysed by a system where rigidity on one hand and political capriciousness on the other, force them to resist any tendencies to 'make waves'. The technocrats clearly recognized the systemic flaws; however, the attitude of helplessness was little different from that observed among teachers. This contributes further to the frustration of teachers who see themselves as abandoned and uncared for by those who could make a difference.

An intrinsic consideration here would be what ingredients are necessary for the evolution of the teacher from disenfranchised to empowered. Lavia (2006) in her argument for a pedagogy of hope, considers the subaltern identity of the teacher and points to the need for a critical professionalism which would effectively characterize the postcolonial education system. She amplifies the strategic role of the teacher in relation to the decolonizing process and emphasizes the potential of critical pedagogical engagement as a means of achieving broader societal change. This may well be seen as a precursor response to Appadurai's (2009, p. 46) query, "I ask how hope, if it is a social and political resource, can be shaped and is shaped by people in particular situations". The teacher, as a central symbol of hope, must be able to find avenues for the type of critical discourse which would contribute to nation building by

way of keeping education policy making grounded in the reality of the needs of those for whom it is designed.

Ironically, the Harmonized Language Arts Curriculum (HLAC) was designed to contribute to the empowerment of teachers by giving them direct control over interpretation of curriculum and the design of teaching activities; however, teachers seem to exist in an environment characterized by fear of stepping outside of perceived boundaries and have not been able to explore the power conferred by this new curriculum. Perversely, teachers indicated that they welcomed the "apportioned curriculum" prepared as a sub-document by the Curriculum Officers, which alleviated their anxieties by providing the accustomed didactic modality of externally determined sequencing of units and content. This is indeed a sad reflection on the futility of the effort which went into the development of this curriculum as a tool to break out of the inflexible, prescribed mould of its predecessor and points to the difficulties of self-actualization experienced by even the most educated and presumably empowered among us.

Spillane (1999) ties the frequent failure of implementation to the lack of congruence between teachers' own understandings and their ability to interpret policy as intended by designers. Notwithstanding the fact that teachers in this study seemed to have more problems with the lack of confidence and a deep-seated need for support than with the intentions of the curriculum, my findings revealed that there was indeed a disconnect between teachers' perceptions and curriculum intentions. Teachers frequently referred to a sense of confusion and frustration related to the task of interpreting the curriculum and creating relevant lessons. Much of this seemed to stem from the fact that firstly they felt inadequately prepared for the level of autonomy that the HLAC expected from the teacher and secondly, they did not believe that any attempt to

implement such autonomy would be favourably regarded by their supervisors. Schwartz (2006) addresses this matter in his discussion on the intentions of the written curriculum. He reminds us that a curriculum is written for teachers and actually lives or dies according to the responses it elicits from them. Therefore, Schwartz (2006; p. 449) proposes a 'rehearsal curriculum' which would allow the teacher "to work through a process of learning, as a rehearsal for directing his or her students through that same process". Implicit in this view is the idea that the tendency of educators to regard a curriculum merely as content to be passed on, must give way to the understanding that active engagement with the curriculum on the part of teachers is critical. This is a distillation of David & Doune's (2001, p.558) perspective that ownership of curriculum change is actually anchored in the teacher and it is the teacher's voice which is the authoritative one by virtue of "their immersion in the local context of implementation"

However, the pivotal role of the teacher which is emphasized in the literature on implementation does not feature in the St. Lucian context and teachers' voices are certainly not central to any policy decisions. Perhaps this is directly related to the fact that, unlike the successful teachers in Spillane's (1999) research, whose enactment zones were characterized by ongoing collegial deliberations and conversation (see Chapter 3), St. Lucian primary school teachers operate in a fairly isolated environment where the individual classroom is their restricted domain throughout the school day. Bristol (2008, p. 101) asserts that "in the tradition of the staffroom a dialogic space is created which facilitates a particular conversation around the inter-relationship between society, economy and education"; however, few primary schools in St. Lucia possess the luxury of a staff room. Potential staffroom spaces have been commandeered for school libraries or computer laboratories, so the teacher's world is

the assigned classroom where the throne (teacher's desk) is the symbol of his/her authority and locus of control as classrooms are predominantly set up theatre style with students facing the teacher's desk and chalkboard. In the schools that I visited, teachers tended to remain at their desks even during the lunch hour and to complete any after school work; thereby making it impossible to create dialogic spaces during the day.

The isolation of teachers in separate spaces for the entire day militates against genuine professional development which requires collegial interaction, as well as precludes opportunities for the healthy discussion necessary to facilitate understanding of new challenges and development of coping strategies. It replicates the plantation style division and separation of similar groups, as a means of maintaining order and complicity while discouraging group communication and potential for collaborative proactivity or dissent. In the case of principals, they did not perceive the Principal's Association as being proactive in addressing matters of policy which affected the work of schools or the functions of principals. Rather, they found that their professional association pandered to the unhealthy competition among schools, which was engendered by the MoE's test results-based ranking system; something which creates inter-school rancour and precludes a unified voice among principals.

8.3 Management and Leadership of Change

The literature makes a clear distinction between management and leadership in schools; and while there is no consistent or agreed definition, there is general consensus that management encompasses the tangible, operational aspects of maintaining the smooth running of schools while leadership refers to the development

of social networks and systems which build capacity for development and change (Leithwood et al, 1999, Fullan, 2002, 2006, Miller, 2013).

The St. Lucian education system fosters the postcolonial concept of good schools as well managed, disciplined and orderly learning environments which prove their efficacy by way of excellent academic results from their uniformed student ranks. The emphasis is on the maintenance of an optimal culture in which the foregoing attributes are achieved and this is encouraged by the propensity for ranking and labelling schools within the system as top schools or bottom schools. Leadership is not a term customarily used in the postcolonial context and institutions are typically expected to be managed rather than led. In the education sector, the training of principals focused primarily on making them good managers and the University of the West Indies' Bachelor's degree in Educational Administration became a requirement for those who aspired to the rank of principal. Interestingly, once the university changed the programme from Educational Administration to Educational Leadership, there was less interest from the Ministry of Education in supporting those teachers who wished to pursue this avenue towards advancement and promotion. In-service training of principals by the MoE has also been fixated on Total Quality Management using models and rhetoric from the business world as a means of enhancing their professional management styles and operational skills. This is by no means peculiar to St. Lucia and Beepat (2013, p. 71) writing from the Guyanese context, notes that "school management is still the dominant model adopted by school principals who function more as managers rather than educational leaders".

Global literature tends towards privileging leadership over management in schools (Deal & Peterson, 1999; MacGilchrist & Christophe, 2004; Elmore, 2008) and Caribbean academics concur that the leadership paradigm is sorely needed in a

context where there is much more to be changed than the organization of the school day or basic administrative practices (McCallum, 2013; Brown & Lavia, 2013). Shotte (2013) writing out of Montserrat, insists that the history and current redevelopment needs of that island would best be met by a transformational style of leadership and Miller (2013) agrees that this is the particular style which should characterize Caribbean schools. Transformational leadership is inclusive and broad based, recognizing strengths and skills in multiple individuals and promoting a team approach to problem solving and change through shared responsibility. It is a concept alien to the postcolonial world which was built on the premise that nothing works unless there is a clearly delineated hierarchy and an indisputable person "in charge". Beepat (2013) argues in favour of Spillane's (2006) concept of distributed leadership as a useful paradigm shift suggesting that school leadership should be a collaborative enterprise among MoE, principals and teachers. This concept found favour among teachers in the study, who believed that they were undervalued and under-utilized and that their abilities to share in the leadership of change were not acknowledged. They pointed to the fact that several among them had pursued the B. Ed Literacy degree but were simply returned to the regular classroom with scarcely a nod to their specialist skills, with the exception of Sophie, who was not assigned to a specific class and functioned as the Literacy specialist at her rural school; leading the language teaching as best as she could within the constraints of examination pressures. Teachers were right in pointing out that the HLAC assumed a certain degree of linguistic currency among teachers, which they did not necessarily have except if they had pursued the Literacy programme; thus it made sense to have a language arts leader who would be able to help them make the link between Creole grammatical rules and what would be classified as 'errors' in the English language, thereby enabling a greater understanding

of the second language issues of many children. Principals in the study did not express aversion to the idea of teacher-leaders in specific curriculum areas. They maintained that it was impossible for them to fulfil the role of instructional leader as well as administrator; pointing out that instructional leadership required a level of time-consuming, hands-on activity which their administrative responsibilities did not allow.

The discussion of management, leadership and attendant styles is particularly pertinent to the implementation of curricula in St. Lucia. Essentially, the HLAC is a modern curriculum being implemented in an anachronistic colonial framework and accompanied by the tensions inherent in such a conflicted context. It is a brave attempt to subvert the dominant, tightly controlled pedagogical practices characteristic of small island schools, and replace them with the type of practice which enables an empowered teacher to design learning experiences around students' cultural reality. In other words, it is a curriculum of "hope" designed to facilitate the critical pedagogical practices underscored by Lavia (2006). Inevitably, the management and leadership of change in these circumstances face major challenges which are often underestimated or go uncounted. The introduction of the HLAC created a sense of unease among teachers in particular but also proved unsettling to other groups. Essentially, teachers felt cast adrift and left on their own to cope with the unfamiliar terrain of an integrated Language Arts curriculum which required a certain level of independence, creativity and skill which they did not possess. This is not surprising in a postcolonial context where the inflexibility of bureaucratic structures deprive those in the lower ranks of the system of the ability to think and act independently and create syndromes of addiction to stringent chronology and clearly defined directives.

Brown and Lavia (2013, p. 53) explain that "a key feature of colonial rule was a civil service systematized to carry out dictates emanating from an external source" which maintained the segregation that propped up the order of the hierarchy in which each knew his/her well-defined place. Teachers had been accustomed to a prescriptive type curriculum which laid out content and procedures sequentially and was directly linked to testing and measurement of specific objectives. Curriculum officers also operated within this comfort zone where the neatly laid out teaching syllabus could be easily monitored by way of a simple checklist as to whether or not a teacher or a school had actually covered the required segments allocated to a particular month, term or academic year; hence the decision to 'apportion' or break down the curriculum into something resembling its predecessor. This was justified by the argument that teachers were not coping with the interpretational demands of the HLAC and apportioning was a means of helping the teacher. Principals have always been in favour of tightly structured, chronologically arranged curricula because they found this easy to follow when teaching schemes and lesson plans got to their desks, since they had a point of reference which did not require any in depth understandings of philosophies related to language learning. Therefore, the HLAC, which turns all of the foregoing on its head, presents a serious problem to all three groups: teachers, education officers and principals.

First of all, this curriculum gives recognition to the linguistic reality of the OECS and makes it clear that children are not operating solely in monolingual contexts and that acceptance of the home language is fundamental to the principles on which the curriculum is based. The curriculum document stipulates that Creole speakers are to be provided with a non-threatening and nurturing environment in the language classroom in order to develop into fully-functional bilingual citizens. This principle

creates a great level of discomfort among practitioners, who are operating within a context where the concept of a first language, closely associated with communication among enslaved people, possessing equal status with the standard desired language of the colonizer is virtually impossible to internalize.

The ambivalent attitude of St. Lucians to the Creole language persists in the absence of a language policy where the status of the language would be established and documented. The reluctance of succeeding political administrations to act on accepting existing related policy drafts or facilitating a final revision for enactment, perpetuates the feeling that there is something not quite acceptable about the language and a sense of shamefaced and apologetic embarrassment accompanies the sporadic public calls for a clear declaration of a policy on language. Generally these calls are made around culturally significant dates like Emancipation Day, National Day or Independence Day, by bodies like the St. Lucia Folk Research Centre, but discussions are not sustained beyond the specific occasion/celebration. While accepting the cultural and historical impediments to openness regarding the highly emotional issue of first language in the classroom, curriculum consultant HSM expressed the hope that implementation of the HLAC would spur technocrats to prod political administrations to endorse the necessary policy which would liberate teachers into making appropriate decisions for all groups of students. Arthur & Martin (2006, p. 177) note that "in many postcolonial societies, teachers and pupils face a daily challenge of accomplishing teaching and learning in a language which is not their own".

My conversations with teachers revealed that especially in the rural setting, teachers had no choice but to utilize the first language as they engaged with students (especially in early years) in an effort to clarify concepts but this was done in ad hoc

fashion and largely as a last resort or measure of desperation. They admitted that the use of the Creole generally facilitated children's comprehension and alleviated frustration in the classroom, but expressed the fear that in the absence of policy, they would be taken to task for encouraging children to retain what many consider to be an impediment to acquiring good standard English and therefore could not make this a regular practice. The fact that teachers had never had the opportunity for critical engagement with the HLAC meant that they were unaware of the level of empowerment conferred by the new curriculum and the way in which it redresses the exclusion of Creole speakers from the mainstream of the English language classroom by placing value on pedagogical acceptance and utilization of first language and community experience.

Brown & Lavia (2013, p. 53) argue that "one purpose of the primary school is to facilitate the maintenance of an inherited system of elitism which for all practical purposes is steeped in a culture of exclusion". While their argument is in reference to the exclusion of children with physical/mental disabilities, it resonates in the case of St. Lucia (and Dominica) where a parallel argument can be made with regard to Creole speaking children who receive the clear message that their maternal language is not acceptable and that those who come to school with a Creole first language are linguistically disabled and unwelcome. The era when Barbadian principals were imported into St. Lucia by British officials with a mandate to stamp out the 'barbaric' Creole from schools through corporal punishment may be long past, but the stigma lingers.

 Secondly, the HLAC presents language as integral to every aspect of life and learning and therefore not to be taught in the traditional manner as an isolated subject. While this integrated approach has formed part of the teacher training curriculum content

since I taught at the Teachers' College two decades ago, there have been many obstacles to its becoming entrenched as normal pedagogical activity in St. Lucian schools. The traditional disaggregation of the various facets of language to the extent of having separate "subject" slots identified for grammar, comprehension, oral reading, spelling, composition and so on has been extremely difficult to dislodge. For years, teacher trainers fought a hopeless battle with school principals to timetable language arts blocks which would allow newly trained teachers to engage in the integrated language teaching methods which were being taught to them. With the advent of the HLAC, integrating the language arts became a goal of curriculum officers, led by MOE-1 who had been one of the regional education officers deeply involved with the development of the curriculum. At the time of my research, all schools in the study had timetables which reflected the language block; however, teachers and principals identified another issue which made the block a purely artificial concession to modern teaching – the matter of assessment. Examination orientedness is an enduring characteristic of the postcolonial Caribbean society.

Reflecting the colonial insistence on maintaining demarcations between the educated elite and the uneducated masses, the current system of continuous testing and measurement consistently differentiates between the achievers and the non-achievers; with achievement being tied to the ability to successfully navigate the culturally biased, differentiated skill testing through minimum standards tests, common entrance examinations and formal end of term tests. The issue of over-testing was raised consistently by teachers and curriculum officers who cited this as a major impediment to the proper use of the HLAC and to the ability of teachers to engage in the type of student centred, integrated activities that modern day teaching demands. The pressure of continuous testing further undermines the confidence and creativity of teachers and

encourages them to teach to the test in order to prove themselves by way of student performance and averages. Principals, ever cognizant of being under the microscope of public school ranking, naturally demand to see schemes of work from teachers, which clearly demarcate the linear progression of students through the syllabus in each sub-area or 'subject' of the language arts. These linguistically disjointed schemes present satisfactory proof that teachers are covering the required tested topics. Testing of the language arts continues as it has done for decades and there is no ostensible correlation between the approach to evaluation proposed in the curriculum and the ways in which students are actually tested. This is another serious aspect of the disconnect between curriculum philosophy and actual practice. Therefore the intentions of the outcomes based HLAC which recommends the holistic evaluation of each student's progress encounter a road block as teachers scramble to get students ready for various standardized tests by teaching discrete skills specific to the particular standardized test which they are to encounter next.

Thirdly, while the HLAC empowers the teacher as curriculum facilitator, at the same time it de-emphasizes his/her role as classroom controller and places the student as central to all classroom activity; however, it is not easy to envisage how either of these intentions can easily become a reality in the St Lucian classroom. The description in the introduction to the curriculum document states that it is

> a learner-centred curriculum in which the suggested teaching activities are designed for full learner participation, discovery, problem solving and the fostering of ownership of the concepts to be learned. ...The teacher facilitates learning and the total development of learners through preparation of appropriate tasks / activities; by helping students to learn how to learn...by helping students to experience the holistic nature of learning through appropriate cross curricular content links and by sowing the relationship of what is learned in school to everyday life experiences (HLAC p.vii).

When conversations turned to relating what happened in their classrooms to this description, most teachers pointed out that while this was all very desirable, the HLAC presupposed an amount of teaching time which was not realistic in light of the numerous pressures on the teacher to complete certain content within a specified period; therefore the onus was on him/her to maintain control of the learning activities. In essence, there just was not time for indulging in the time-consuming practice of the discovery method, nor did teachers feel that they had the time for exploring ways in which they could create cross-curricular links in any meaningful way. School terms are very tightly structured and actual teaching time is limited since at least three weeks each term are devoted to revision and prolonged testing and measurement. In addition, both teachers and principals are concerned about the number of 'extraneous' activities (e.g. school sports, music festivals, inter-school quizzes and other competitions) in which schools feel pressured to participate and which they feel swallow large chunks of instructional time. Teachers seem to feel that they are constantly on a race against time (the finish line being the ever-present spectre of the Common Entrance examination with each teacher blaming the one in the previous class level if students are not ready) where they are to be judged. Principals also feel the pressure of judgement of their schools in the critical eyes of Ministry and general public and are therefore obliged to keep the pressure on their teachers; often querying the need for lessons which require oral (generally referred to as noisy) activities like drama and poetry. Therefore, a curriculum like the HLAC which emphasizes the importance of exploring language through sound and action is a difficult fit within existing school culture and would require a herculean effort to manage its piloting through the change process to successful implementation. The implications for managing and leading this change are numerous; requiring

coordination of all systemic partners, a mutual understanding of what needs to be changed, why and how; and certainly a significant cultural adjustment on the part of schools. All of this requires a backdrop of continuous dialogue and obviously the creation of structural spaces within which this might take place.

Teacher change is perhaps the most fundamental aspect to be considered but also the most complex since much of it depends on individual responses as Fullan (1991; p. 117) points out with the pithy but provocative statement that, "Educational change depends on what teachers do and think. It's as simple and as complex as that". The literature illustrates that teachers do not respond homogeneously to the demands of change and the related issues are oftentimes more personal than professional. This is the realization which fuels the life history research of Huberman (1993), Goodson & Hargreaves (1996), Acker (2000) and Goodson & Sikes (2001) who maintain that the life world of the teacher is intrinsic to his/her behaviour in the professional setting and cannot be separate from the examination of any school phenomenon, including curriculum implementation and change. Goodson and Numan (2002, p. 274) caution that "If teacher perspectives are not considered, it is likely that a new crisis of change and reform will be generated" since ignoring the centrality of teachers to the process could very well result in a backlash of obdurate passivity and even outright resistance to initiatives. Therefore the sensible management of curriculum change would have to consider the impact of change on teachers' personal lives and how this force would vary according to the specific life situation of the teacher. This is what Goodson (2007, p. 138 refers to as "the personality of change", which he stresses can be viewed as a facilitator rather than a roadblock to the change process.

Teachers' response to change can be perceived as relative to age, gender, career longevity and professional status which in turn all have a lot to do with their

perception of the meaningfulness of their work and the level of personal engagement in such work. While my research did not take a life history approach per se, it was obvious from the teachers' voices, that the level of ennui and resentment of the continuous demands made on teachers to try the latest en vogue approach to teaching this or that, was greatest among the older teachers who tended to feel that they were experienced enough to be left alone to do what they had been doing for so long and they did not need the constant bombardment. This was evident in the case of Ella[26], who was marking time while waiting to embark on a private enterprise career, and was reminiscent of the Cohort 3 teachers described in Goodson's (2007) research, who showed marked changes in body language when talking of plans and interests beyond teaching. While Huberman (1992) found that resistance to change was significant among mid to late career teachers, he noted that this was not only age-related but had roots in the oftentimes negative nature of teachers' experiences over their teaching lives. Goodson et al (2006) suggest that nostalgia, whether social or political, certainly plays a part in the un-receptiveness of older teachers to new ideas. The youngest teachers tended to be most accepting of the HLAC, perhaps because they had not been subjected to the number of trials and errors which were part of the experience of the older group. In addition, the younger teachers, especially those who were pursuing or had recently pursued their education degrees, were most familiar with and therefore most tolerant of the philosophical grounding of the curriculum and were less likely to view the prospect of change itself as a challenge. This latter group was most concerned about what they considered to be a disorganized approach to implementation and argued for a more structured environment in which procedures for the management of change were clearly evident. They were also generally the

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[26] Chapter 6, pp. 126-128

least accepting of the stiffness of the prevailing bureaucratic order and the most insistent that their voices should be heard loudly and clearly.

Essentially, during the course of the conversations, the voices began to differentiate themselves into (i) younger, technologically savvy teachers who are passionate about their work and keen on being allowed to implement what they had learned and the innovative ideas which they were bringing to the table; (ii) younger teachers who are teaching either as a stop-gap measure or because they could not find any alternative; (iii) older teachers who are marking time until retirement and would prefer to keep things within the comfort zone which they have developed; (iv) older teachers who are still passionate and are willing to embrace new ways of doing things but would like to have strong supporting or even hand-holding structures which allow them to manage change. Hargreaves & Goodson (2006, p. 23) purport that "teaching and change in schools are driven by a generational centre of gravity, a dominant demographic of teachers who are of a particular age and career stage".

> They are more assertive about their own learning and career needs and more vigilant about protecting the boundary that separates their work from their lives. They do, however, resent the process of reform when it actively undermines their professional image and working conditions, and they dislike the surrounding culture of cynicism and embitterment among older colleagues that standardized reform has created. (Hargreaves & Goodson 2006, p. 26).

The teacher participants who resembled the above description were indeed those from groups (i) and (iv) who took a more professional view of teaching and had pursued graduate and post graduate education related to their field, as opposed to those who held Teaching Certificates as their highest level of education. The most professionally assertive voices were from those who expressed passion for teaching, desire for progressive change but a reluctance to be used as scapegoats and to be denied the

necessary support which would facilitate their ability to 'move with the times' and hence did not exhibit the expected change-embracing behaviours. The oxymoron herein is explained by hooks (1994, p. 142) who contends that "many teachers who do not have difficulty releasing old ideas, embracing new ways of thinking, may still be as resolutely attached to old ways of *practicing teaching* as their more conservative colleagues." The progressive, modern professional teacher may very well be paralysed by fear of change while at the same time embracing it in principle; something, which along with the inter-dynamics of the teacher groups, has implications for how change leadership should be envisaged within the schools.

Overall, it was impossible to identify, extract or describe a broadly held vision for the management of the change to the new curriculum. Participants were generally vague as to how the HLAC was actually introduced and few seemed to have had an actual orientation to the curriculum and the ways in which it differed from the one which it replaced. It was difficult to determine who was actually responsible for the movement of the document into implementation mode; policy makers seemed to assume that education officers would take charge; education officers did not evince the level of confidence in their understanding of the document which would have enabled them to design the necessary orientation sessions and expected principals to be responsible for preparing their teachers; principals did not think that it should be their responsibility since they were not curriculum specialists; teachers felt that the curriculum was rather unfairly thrust upon them to manage as they saw fit. This passing of the buck response was characteristic of the conversations I had with each group and the greatest sense of frustration came from the teachers with whom the buck indeed stopped and who were fully aware of the fact that they would be evaluated on the success or failure of a

curriculum to which they had had very little introduction or orientation and which had been 'diluted' and 'confused' by the apportioning exercise.

Cohen (1990) makes the case that it is the lack of understanding of curriculum precepts which inhibits teachers from implementing required change. The same pertains to persons at higher levels of the bureaucratic chain who are often unable to relate policy intent and base principles to their own comprehension of what is/should be (Spillane et al, 2002; McLaughlin, 2008). My conversations with participants except for MOE-1, revealed no evidence of a sense of ownership of the curriculum or an ability to discuss in depth its characteristic features or requirements. This general proclivity to remaining beneath the radar of responsibility is also typical of the postcolonial society where failure carries the repercussions of blame and punishment. 'Passing the buck', therefore, is normal behaviour which protects from finger pointing and enables one to say "It wasn't me; I just did what I was told" or, "Well I passed it on and they should have dealt with it". I could not help but get the feeling during the conversations, that while participants expressed annoyance that the implementation process seemed so disorganized, they perversely relished the fact that the absence of lucid process meant that they could claim helplessness in the face of a domineering bureaucracy.

The challenge of managing a change process in an environment where there is a high level of confusion among all the players is considerable. Even more formidable is piloting this process in the multiple and culturally diverse school environments. Hall & Hord (1987, p. 3) state that "To be most effective in facilitating change, principals in the schools and persons in the district offices and elsewhere must understand the dynamics of the change process as it occurs *within* schools". Therefore all players ought to have a central focus on the arena of implementation and a mutual

understanding of its idiosyncratic culture, strengths, weaknesses and needs. Hall & Hord (1987) also point out that teachers and schools move through a number of developmental stages as part of the implementation process and it is important to pay attention to the relevance of their individual experiences to the success or failure of the innovation. However, in the St. Lucian context the concept of implementation seems to carry a broad, generic view of schools on the part of policy makers and education officers and I got no sense that catering to the specific needs of schools and their inhabitants was an option considered by anyone other than principals and teachers. Yet my data clearly reveals that the disparity among schools with regard to culture, teacher orientation, access to resources and the approach of principals is a wide one with intrinsic elements which obviously determine the manner in which change can unfold in each specific school. For example, participants from schools which had participated in the USA funded Centres of Excellence for Teacher Training (CETT) pilot programme were far more comfortable with the demands of the HLAC on teachers' creativity and lesson preparation skills than were those from non-pilot schools. . Principals of these pilot schools also appeared to be more accepting of the curriculum principles and more positively disposed overall to the concept of change. Much of this positive attitude seemed related to the quantity of teaching/learning materials available through the CETT programme through the considerable US funding assigned to the project, as well as the fact that schools had ready access to the Reading Specialist attached to the project and who was in charge of monitoring and providing professional support.

The brushing aside of inherent disparities is obvious in the way that schools are judged and ranked by virtue of students' academic performance. No recognition is given to the fact that there are inequalities of resources and levels of

parental/community support. In the postcolonial environment, there is little credence given to continuous evaluation and rewards are reserved for top performers. Terminal evaluation is what counts, as in the case of the Common Entrance examinations which put high performing schools and Grade 6 teachers in the spotlight while totally ignoring those schools whose performance was characterized by phenomenal progress even while they remained in the bottom quadrant; or those pre-Grade 6 teachers who would have made sterling contributions to the academic development of the celebrated top students. No concessions are made by the MoE to the fact that the playing field is far from level and the stigmatization of 'low-performing' schools is perpetuated. Implementing change without considering the reality of sub-contexts is unthinkable. The literature clearly indicates that it is not possible to consider implementation without acknowledging that there is no 'one size fits all' approach and individual school reality should guide the process of change in each instance (Goodson, 2000; Sugrue, 2008). The linking of "institutional autonomy to overall educational change" (Tedesco 1997, p. 538) is also a critical part of the process if schools are to be engaged and enthusiastic. This suggests that more than simply managing the process from the top down, there is need for ensuring that there are designated leaders on the ground to create and maintain momentum for its sustenance. The issue of leadership as critical to successful implementation has to be paramount in the change process.

8.4 Creation of Support Structures

Goodson (1997; p. 111) suggests that it would be impossible to present a full picture if we only "promote stories and narratives, without analysis of structures and systems". The conversations definitely painted a picture of the structures and systems

characterizing the conduit of education in St. Lucia; one participant going as far as to describe them as "broken". It is not difficult to imagine that the introduction of a curriculum whose principles, philosophy and approaches are so markedly different from those of its predecessors, without paying careful attention to supporting elements would be highly inadvisable; to put it mildly. The absence of synchronicity and coherence of interpretation makes it difficult for the various groups to act as partners in the process of bringing the curriculum to the students. The roles of the middle players (District education officers and Curriculum Officers) are especially murky particularly in the minds of teachers and principals. Specific responsibilities and jurisdictions seem to overlap; for example, District education officers organise curriculum training workshops for their districts as an activity related to the district office and not necessarily tied in to the work plan of the curriculum officer. Curriculum officers claim that they are not always aware of planned district activities even when these relate to their designated specialist area. Teachers are also unsure as to whether or not the DEO should be evaluating them in curriculum areas or this should be the job of the curriculum officer or principal. There was little evidence of collaboration between COs and DEOs and there were no work plans drawn to my attention, which pointed to a shared vision of what needed to be done in specific areas of teacher/school needs. Meanwhile, principals were primarily focused on ensuring that teachers kept up with schemes of work and that preparation for the numerous activities and examinations were proceeding in timely fashion.

Further, there was no evidence at all that the Teacher Training Division was considered to be a key partner in the implementation of curriculum and the division seemed to be pursuing its own agenda of preparing teachers to pass their certificate examinations almost entirely to the exclusion of the curriculum on the table.

Divisional staff interviewed admitted that the teacher training curriculum placed undue emphasis on the theoretical aspects of teaching and did not engage extensively with the reality of what teachers were called upon to do in their everyday classrooms; however, they also felt that teacher trainers, as specialists in their field, were not often consulted by other partners and were largely excluded from education policy decisions and exercises like curriculum workshops. Principals also complained of feeling isolated from decision making processes and not having the necessary support in dealing with curriculum matters.

To sum it all up, at no level of the system is anyone clear on how the parts actually relate to each other and this creates considerable frustration among all players. Therefore it is difficult to perceive clear, supportive roles and structures within the bureaucracy. In an effort to clarify the situation, I attempted to get an organizational chart from the Ministry of Education and a sense of how the system is envisaged at least from the top down; however, it was impossible to get anything other than a draft organizational chart which had been done by PPS three administrations ago.

Jules (2008, p.3) makes the point that "we do not take sufficient account of the systemic ramifications that need to be addressed in order to guarantee successful implementation". He suggests that fundamental aspects of support like textbooks which reflect curriculum philosophy and approaches, orientation to synchronized instructional methods, reorganization of classroom spaces and adjustment of assessment methodologies are often overlooked in the process of implementation and this undermines the effect of change. It is not enough to join the global trend of education reform in order to attract funding for initiatives, but the implications of preparation and ensuing support should be a central part of the initial planning and funding negotiations. This means that small island states like St. Lucia must find the

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fortitude to negotiate with funding agencies and sponsors with a sustainable support agenda in mind but Jules (2006, p. 21) admits that "small states have had a particularly difficult time in the international arena negotiating their education reform agenda", something which requires considerable strength of political will. Both past and present Heads of the OECS Education Reform Unit confirmed that funding for the education reform covered the development of curricula but did not stretch to the development or provision of implementation support; and that this was entirely the domain of the respective governments.

The fact that funding always seems to stop short of implementation means that innovation content is often designed/created, but sustainable procedures for implementation are not written into the plan nor are they costed and this makes them failure-prone. Hence the inevitable cycle of mendicancy continues with implementation failure resulting in another cap in hand approach to donors for new initiatives which will again be implemented without the necessary structural review and support in unending manner. MOE-1 agreed that it was not easy to obtain funding for initiatives once they were on the ground and that the CETT project was an anomaly in this regard only because it was part of a wider global initiative. She emphasized that donors were more interested in ensuring that funding was in keeping with global trends which emphasized policy and documentation reform as opposed to undergirding practice, which seems to give credence to assertions by Rizvi (2009) and Magilchrist & Christophe (2011) that globalization and postcolonialism are sides of the same coin. The paternal 'donor knows best' attitude pressurizes small island states to agree to and adopt policies which may be only partially or not at all reflective of their real educational needs. It would be very unfortunate if this innovative HLAC, which is well located within the framework of the OECS, were to be abandoned and

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replaced with yet another initiative simply because it was not given the requisite nurturing in order to take root.

Clearly, the new curriculum requires not only a significant ontological shift on the part of teachers, but also a commitment from the policy makers to ensure that the level of preparation in schools is sufficient to accommodate the articulated requirements of the HLAC and that these requirements are facilitated by relevant support systems. My research echoes the findings of Higgins and Rwanyange (2005, p. 22) who studied the education reform process in postcolonial Uganda and found that "the disconnection between the different levels of the system has led to a lack of awareness of the impact that the particularities of the local context have on implementation". They recommend greater emphasis on improving local partnerships and integrating the levels of hierarchy. Similarly, in St. Lucia, there is need for well-conceived roles for a variety of sectors as part of a synchronized support network which would provide the necessary fuel for the movement of the curriculum through the stages of implementation.

Of great significance is the fact that the teacher training institution stands aloof from the everyday processes of education; a perception that was reiterated by many participants, some of whom drew reference to the physical location of the College on a hill overlooking the city of Castries as symbolic of its distance from the practicalities of implementation. Teacher trainers themselves acknowledge that they feel isolated from both policy decision making and actual practice, unless they are engaged in the supervision of student teachers during their practicums. They are the first to admit that the fairly artificial world of the practicum experience bears little resemblance to the stark realities faced by teachers on their return to the classroom where they feel that the demands of principals, Ministry and parents pressure them

into the path of least resistance; however, there is little that trainers can do to remain part of the post-training experience unless there is a system in place for monitoring and follow up. The necessary close collaboration between training institution and Ministry is not evident; trainers point to the fact that no one at the Ministry sees fit to ensure that copies of new curricula are made available to the College and note that there was a considerable lapse between the time the HLAC was introduced and when they became aware that it was now the required curriculum. It was easy to discern that relations between the College and Ministry were less than warm and certainly not highly interactive.

Bristol (2008 p. 92) creates a parallel between the role of the plantation overseer and that of those officials assigned to positions of pedagogical authority within the MoE and this would include the curriculum officers and district education officers whose purpose she describes as "to control, direct and modify the work of the classroom teacher from their external positions of their authority over the teacher". The hierarchy of the St. Lucian education system certainly exemplifies this perspective and teachers are generally accepting of the jurisdiction which education officers hold over them; in fact many complained that there was not enough scrutiny and supervision from those officers, which they equated with lack of interest. However, the younger teachers described the ideal situation as more of an interactive relationship whereby they would feel comfortable in articulating their areas of concern and requesting assistance in overcoming content and pedagogical weaknesses. Principals also interpret the frequent presence of officers in their schools as a sign of the level of interest in the specific school and an acknowledgement of its importance ranking.

Overall, the expectation of consistent and tangible guidance and support from education officers is a shared one, although the expectations of the nature of this support is wide ranging. EOs are perceived as a critical link between the policy makers and the practitioners and expectations are high on both sides; from above, they are expected to ensure that policy decisions are adhered to and carried out smoothly and from below they are looked towards to help schools make a smooth translation of policy into practice in light of each school's peculiarities. The feeling of being torn between the two sides of an hierarchy where they fall in the middle, was clearly expressed by the Curriculum Officers in particular; as they felt that the onus on them far exceeded the tools available to them to do the job. They were particularly discouraged by the fact that they numbered only two for the subject area and felt constantly overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task of attending to the clamouring needs of so many teachers, schools and districts; a situation which MOE-2 identified as the reason for using the shortcut of reverting to a more prescriptive, abridged curriculum document to appease teachers' demands for assistance. To compound matters, the secondary schools, also served by the same officers, have their own demands for attention. The likelihood of creating additional language curriculum officer positions in a country where the education budget is already ponderous, is very slim; therefore the need for collaboration among the middle levels (in which I include the training institution) of the system is urgent. EOs agree that if there was some way of adding the curriculum expertise of Language Arts trainers to the provision of ongoing school support, this would certainly be a credible approach to the problem on the ground; however, this would require the kind of intense inter-partner dialogue and good will which would enable the synching of post-training in-service programmes and curriculum demands.

It is not possible to conceptualize the implementation of curriculum in a vacuum bereft of related resources from which teachers can draw for their practice. Teachers in St. Lucia typically resort to using their personal financial resources to purchase instructional materials to enhance their lessons. PPS during his tenure, had envisaged District Education Offices which were well stocked to serve the needs of teachers in each district, but in most cases this had boiled down to a photocopying machine and a few books. MOE-1 explained the bottom line that the ministry simply did not have the kind of budgetary allocation which would enable district offices to remain the fully stocked support centres they could have been. The role of the private sector in education was called into question during the Panel Discussion and examples were given of cases where certain schools were "adopted" by companies which provided a level of financial and in kind support, for example by way of computer donations. However, other participants pointed out that this in itself created further disparities among schools since not all schools were situated in areas where possible corporate partners were located and it was indeed up to the Ministry to assure schools of equitable access to necessary resources.

Participants were in general agreement that local communities should take some responsibility for the success of their schools through strong PTA representation and the incorporation of schools and their curriculum into community projects. This is certainly reflective of the philosophy of the HLAC which maintains cognizance of the community orientedness of the school and privileges the cultural world of the child by suggesting teaching and learning activities which draw from his/her experiential background without prejudice. The exploration of community culture in the classroom reinforces positive self-images by reinforcing the value of the child's reality and its applicability to his/her education thus providing a useful tool with which to navigate

the school world and its curricular requirements. Participants were also of the general opinion that deepening school community ties was a matter of urgency for schools and articulated the need for a coordinating/facilitating body in this regard.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter laid out my summary, final analysis and evaluation of the data collected during my research, using three umbrella headings which aptly encompassed the themes identified during the initial continuous data analysis characteristic of qualitative methodology. Herein I condensed the various voices into the refrains which typified participants' responses. Recurrent themes fitted into choruses calling for (i) a need to ensure that all voices are heard in the process of implementation; (ii) transparency in management and leadership of change and (iii) the creation/identification of structures which would buttress innovations as they become part of the context. These refrains seemed to echo much of the literature; in particular that which deals with postcolonial situations and their idiosyncrasies. In this chapter, I also concluded that in order for the HLAC to stand a chance of successful implementation, all three umbrella themes should be spotlighted in an effort to ensure sustainability and prevent the recurrent cycle of failed innovations. In the next chapter, I shall summarise my conclusions in specific relation to the research questions and make recommendations which arise logically out of my analysis.

Chapter Nine: Epilogue

It would, perhaps, be inconsistent to fail to acknowledge that the researcher's voice is there among all others... (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 35)

9.1 Introduction

The previous chapters created the backdrop, laid the groundwork and populated the context with a chorus of voices, both literary and practical, in the discussion of curriculum implementation and corresponding change in a small island state. In this final chapter, the prevailing voice is mine as I sum up my months in the field as captured through my researcher lens, distilling the essence of the cacophony of voices into an organized chorus. Here I draw conclusions based on my interpretation of what my participant voices have been saying regarding the context of their practice and the various aspects of their professional lives. Stenhouse (1975, p. 4) states that "a curriculum is an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice". This means that essentially, a curriculum is in itself a voice and this voice should be part of a harmonious chorus of implementation. This study not only paid attention to what the human voices were saying on the ground, but whether or not they (as voices of reality) were in sync with the voice of intention. Data were gathered by way of one to one conversation, focus group conversations and a panel discussion which brought together the various groups who form part of the implementation process. The study was guided by **one key question** which aimed to paint a general picture of the implementation process as it takes place in St. Lucia from the point of view of participants as they discussed aspects of role perception, bureaucratic structures and the effect on monitoring; and **two subsidiary**

questions which sought to (i) identify and clarify specific issues related to this process, and (ii) establish the relevance of views from the literature to my findings in the context. The summary of my findings is laid out in relation to these questions and in my recommendations I discuss interrelationships, matters of professional support, training and implications for external agencies. I close on a general note regarding the way forward for creating a receptive context for curriculum change in St. Lucia.

9.2 Research Conclusions
Key research question: How is the context of curriculum implementation and the related change process represented through insider voices in curriculum discourse in Saint Lucia?

For this question, I considered the general context of curriculum change in St. Lucia where I look at how participants viewed the idiosyncrasies of curriculum change in St. Lucia and described its characteristics, aspects of its management and their instinctive perceptions of their role in the change process. With the exception of the policy level participants, everyone described the process of implementation as erratic and without the semblance of being properly thought out.

(i)   Teachers were particularly embittered by the view that they seemed not to be considered as important to policy making and their opinions were never sought on any matters related to education. They insisted that their voices were the most pertinent in light of their strategic role as primary implementer and indicated that they knew best whether curriculum was workable or not and what was needed in order to make it most effective. Yet, they were consistently overlooked and ignored in the process except when students were being evaluated for performance. With unison, teachers demanded more respect for themselves as professionals with expertise in their chosen

field, instead of workhorses hired to put children through school while earning hierarchical position points for their individual schools.

(ii)   Principals also believed that they were not taken into consideration enough when new curricula entered schools. They perceived themselves as instructional leaders who were not regarded as such but rather, forced to maintain the role of manager due to the MoE's perception of what a principal was expected to be. They pointed to the fact that the in-service training received was management oriented and articulated the irony of their being regarded as management, while at the same time judged and held to account for the academic performance of their schools. They attributed their inability to function effectively as leaders to the unrealistic expectations of their wide-ranging responsibilities and called for more curriculum oriented training which would enable them to guide their teachers more efficiently and support them more comprehensively in their interpretation of new curricula. Principals saw shared leadership as desirable, recognizing that there were teachers with specialist training; and believed that if their schools were adequately staffed they would be able to assign teachers with specific expertise to subject leader roles.

(iii)   Curriculum officers and district education officers felt that there was not enough clarity to their functions and responsibilities and the overlap created some tensions. Further, COs viewed the grading system for public servants as discriminatory towards them since they were assigned to a set grade level, while being called upon to supervise principals and liaise as equals with DEOs, who were automatically appointed at a level above theirs regardless of academic qualifications. COs also felt that their importance to the system was undervalued; and they were expected to maintain impossible levels of supervision which were entirely disproportionate to the ratio of officers to schools and teachers. At the same time, they

did not receive the practical support of their Ministry as they were constrained to an unrealistic set amount of mileage per month and no one was interested in making a special case for their demanding supervision roles. They felt that these circumstances hindered their ability to effectively support the curriculum by interacting meaningfully with teachers and schools. Meanwhile DEOs felt that they were unfairly expected to provide pedagogical support which they did not perceive as their responsibility since COs were appointed specifically for that purpose. They saw themselves as the glue holding school districts together and ensuring that schools were marching in step cohesively as district components and they reflected a certain district ethos which was reflective of the leadership of the officer him/herself. They exuded a proprietary attitude towards their districts and took immense pride in those schools which surpassed national means; however, they did not feel that their role in curriculum implementation should extend beyond the provision of physical and material resources for the use of district schools.

Overall, participants called for more structure to the system and felt that a less chaotic context would enable them to participate more meaningfully within their perceived roles. They believed that policy was handed down in an autocratic fashion which left no allowance for individual or group responses nor did it take into consideration the multiple cultural realities within the context. They pointed out that broad, uniform expectations of schools were unfair and felt that distinctions should be made among schools with subsequent support and bridging procedures implemented according to idiosyncratic need. Evaluations should take into account the school's history, background and demographics; with measurements being carried out against its specific context.

Subsidiary Research question (i): What specific issues related to the curriculum are delineated by those involved in the implementation process?

For this question, I pulled together the specifics mentioned by participants either as deterrents to implementing curriculum or as nuts and bolts necessary for successful implementation.

(i) **Resources:** Participants believe that the meagre resources to which all but the most fortunate schools had access, make their jobs more difficult and unrewarding and certainly interfere with successful implementation. Throughout the system, there is a refrain of too little attention being paid to finding creative and imaginative solutions to the paucity of modern paraphernalia which supports teaching and learning in the classroom. They identified reading material, electronic interactive facilities and access to means of enhancing the physical environment of their classrooms to make them more conducive to learning.

(ii) **Professional development & preparation:** Secondly, the matter of sensitization and training is very high on the agenda as teachers and EOs point to levels of discomfort with interpretation and manipulation of the curriculum for teaching. Areas of difficulty recurrently identified include teaching Main Idea and Critical Thinking; integrating learning outcomes for lesson planning and creating effective cross-curricular units. Regular workshops, the identification of master teachers for demonstration of best practice inter and intra district and greater support from the teacher training institutions were seen as ways of overcoming the expressed difficulties. Essentially, teachers want more intensive workshops prior to introduction of new curricula, which would focus on its new features and characteristics, the principles on which it is based and practical ways of adapting their classroom

practice. They also feel that refresher workshops would dispel the sense of abandonment and the attendant jadedness that creeps into the teacher psyche after a while.

(iii) **Social issues:** Participants feel that it is not possible to implement curriculum effectively in an environment where the infringement of social and psychological issues makes it difficult for children to learn; therefore more attention should be paid to the provision of dedicated counselling support for schools in order to free teachers and principals from the burden of interrupting designated duties to attempt to deal with matters beyond their professional competence. Principals point to the fact that the current situation with one counsellor per district and one truancy officer for the entire island is entirely absurd and provides very little support which would allow them to monitor implementation effectively.

(iv) **Absence of dialogic opportunities:** The strongest and most recurrent refrain is the lack of opportunities for dialogue, feedback loops and collegial interaction. Participants are adamant that it is not possible to engage in development and implementation of curriculum without the type of synergies which emanate from engaged discussion and respectful relationships among all partners in education. They feel that once there are clear and open avenues for ventilating ideas, opinions, queries etc. everything else would fall in place and the energy or partners working together would make change happen.

Subsidiary research question (ii): What critical constructs are relevant to curriculum implementation in the St. Lucian context?

For this question, I sum up the aspects of the broader literature which have clear implications for the development of a set of constructs which would guide curriculum

implementation planning and evaluation in the local context. While the development of a model lies outside the scope of this study, it is certainly a logical next step for follow up research.

The St. Lucian context supports Hall & Loucks (1978) view that the process of change requires systematic stages which begin with addressing concerns and methodically preparing them to engage in the practices of change. Participants believe that there is no alternative to laying out a coherent plan of implementation to which all involved can subscribe. While it is clear that human capital is critical to sustainability of innovations, they did not buy into the Rogers (1995) notion that there is always need to go through the entire five stages (awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption). Instead, interest and adoption seem more closely linked to and dependent upon the extent of preparation. With regard to McLaughlin's (1997) perspective that mutual adaptation (policy and setting adapting to each other) is essential, there is a feeling on the ground that this is desirable and school culture ought to be significantly informative of policy; with participants insisting very strongly on the establishment of transparent feedback processes which would facilitate such adaptation. The context also clearly exemplified Spillane's (1999) Zones of Enactment Theory, with participants confirming that interaction with colleagues, self-evaluation and access to a variety of material resources positively influenced their ability to change or adapt their practices.

The social capital of the teacher is critical to the change process (Bourdieu, 1986). In essence, the social aspects of change as described by Goodson (1991, 2000) feature very prominently in the St. Lucian implementation landscape, with teachers in particular asserting that external change must be integrated with the internal and personal. Participants reiterated that while attention to aspects of practice is required,

more emphasis should be placed on the personal and psychological needs and socio-cultural experiences which interact with their working lives (Goodson & Sikes 2001, De Peza, 2010).

Participants are particularly disturbed by the rigidity of system structures and opine that the nature of the postcolonial St. Lucian society and its bureaucratic trappings must guide implementation planning especially in the face of modern, socially oriented curricula; therefore a decolonising agenda should not be covert (Lavia, 2007; Jules, 2008). As such, the centrality of dialogue (Freire, 1970) to the entire curriculum process and in particular the privileging of the teacher's voice (Kirk & MacDonald, 2001; Olsen, 2002; Schwartz, 2006; Ayers et al, 2008) is key to all planning activities. Above all, participants feel that the reality of St. Lucia as a small state with minimal resources ought to guide identification of needs and decision making, endorsing the views of writers like Isaac (2001), Jules (2006), Lingard & Pierre (2006), Lavia (2007) and Crossley (2010) that a postcolonial sensibility should permeate pedagogical discourse.

9. 3 Recommendations

My recommendations arose out of the major issues identified by participants and my analysis of those issues. I also examined the most critical factors illuminated by my consideration of the data; determined what I thought to be the greatest needs within the context and put forward five main areas for future focus.

9.3.1 Creating Enlightened Professionals

> Postcolonialism's contentions surrounding the relationship between knowledge and power are linked directly to education, both as an institution where people are inculcated into hegemonic systems of

reasoning and as a site where it is possible to resist dominant discursive practices. In this way, education has a systematically ambivalent relationship to postcolonialism. On the one hand it is an object of postcolonial critique regarding its complicity with Eurocentric discourses and practices. On the other hand, it is only through education that it is possible to reveal and resist colonialism's continuing hold on our imagination. Education is also a site where legacies of colonialism and the contemporary processes of globalization intersect (Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia 2006, p. 257).

Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia (2006) refer to education as intrinsic to the decolonizing process. Lavia (2007) also emphasizes the clear link between education and regional history, politics and culture and suggests that the teacher, as subaltern professional, must become socially aware through engagement in a practice of critical professionalism; a view that I believe must be taken on board by practicing teachers as they seek to engage in enlightened practice. This means that teachers must stop waiting for permissions and depending on external agencies to act on their behalf and begin to actively examine their roles and positions in order to make critical decisions related to their professional lives. This is certainly possible through active and engaged professional groups and associations like the now defunct Language Teachers Association which would draw strength from a solid membership core and thus provide the level of amplification necessary for the teacher's voice to be heard loudly, decisively and influentially. Unless the teacher perceives him/herself to be a legitimate voice in determining the postcolonial odyssey, it would be impossible to emerge from the stifling hierarchy which undermines self-confidence and paralyses hope/action.

9.3.2 Pedagogical Support

It seems to us that in respect of improving pedagogical practices, some level of trust of the teachers and their professionalism is needed within a supportive professional development framework and the creation of teacher professional learning communities within schools. This

demands investment in teacher professional development (Rizvi & Lingard 2010, p. 103).

Professionalism and ongoing professional development are fundamental to engaging with the new curriculum and supporting change. It is not feasible to maintain a climate of interest and engagement in schools if teachers are simply processed by the training college, returned to their schools and abandoned. Post-training follow-up and monitoring requires a system in place for continuous professional development jointly managed by Ministry and Teacher Training College. The teacher training programme cannot remain a largely academic, theoretically skewed one. Now that the College has created its own Associate degree in teacher education, there is also room for insisting on an internship year during which teachers can be supported in the classroom as they implement the required curriculum over an adequate period of time and the bonds between training college and schools are maintained. The training college needs to be a critical partner not only in educational policy definition but also in ongoing school practice. Close collaboration between Training College and Curriculum Officers is the only answer to the problem of providing adequate guidance and ongoing pedagogical support to schools

9.3.3 Identifying and Including External Support Structures

Reinforcing school culture should be viewed as a means of supporting and sustaining change. While it is important for schools to work on this from the inside, external partners are critical to the ability of schools to absorb change and to position themselves to deal with it positively; therefore, education reform and the implementation of new curricula must embrace the full range of partners, both active and supportive, as a prelude to success. PTA structures must be solid and responsibilities well articulated in relation to curriculum reinforcement. The same pertains to creating school-private sector links within communities whether for the

purpose of facilitating field trips (soundly recommended by the curriculum) or providing material resources. The role of the OECS Secretariat cannot be simply to source funds relative to the global donor agenda. The body has to provide the backing for governments to speak out on what their needs really are and the kind of assistance required. The relevant unit of the OECS Secretariat has a level of responsibility to see projects through to desired outcome even though governments must step in and adopt the major responsibility of implementation. Another aspect to be considered is the provision of general key (especially electronic) resources made widely available to implementers, which would take the onus off individual Ministries of Education to come up with expensive individual databases, special websites and resource materials. Funding can be sourced to create and maintain websites devoted to sustaining curriculum initiatives of the Unit.

9.3.4 Leadership of Change

Change should be both managed and led. Management would include the visualization of the introductory process, inclusive of orientation, training workshops, creation of monitoring and feedback mechanisms, provision of necessary resources and other support structures; while leadership would require on the ground day to day planning, mentoring, supervision, encouragement. The identification of a change leader/champion/facilitator is critical to smoothly implemented and sustainable change since this person must be the broker operating as a key point among the policy document, the implementers and the system within which they operate. However, leading change should not be viewed as a necessarily linear or hierarchical process. The specific requirements for change must be clearly identified and each correlated to the most appropriate change leader for the particular aspect. For example, a teacher with expertise in literacy can lead his/her school or district in Second Language

Approach planning; or a District Education Officer can lead the mobilization of community and private enterprise to contribute to the development of district libraries and other resources for use by district teachers.

Visionary leadership must also recognize what Miller (1992, p. 77) identified as "the need to compensate for socioeconomic deficiencies" in certain primary schools. The disparity among urban, suburban and rural school populations cannot be glossed over in an effort to create a single banner for leading change. Therefore, the diagnostic capabilities of change leaders are essential if they are to create operational plans which address the task of levelling playing fields in order to prepare them for generalized innovations.

9.3.5 Creating a Culture for Change

Goodson (1994 p. 24) advises that "development of our studies of curriculum at individual and collective level demands that our historical analyses work across the levels of individual lives and group action and assess relations between individuals, between groups and between individuals and groups". Matters relating to personal lives, like salaries and position along professional scales, impact on how individuals perceive and value themselves; and this in turn influences how they behave in relation to their colleagues. The issue of grade level disparity between Curriculum Officers and District Education officers needs to be addressed since this is a cause for what can be debilitating dissatisfaction and resentment as well as awkwardness of relations. This means that intensive and perhaps independent review of traditional structures and policies must be undertaken in an atmosphere of openness and commitment to resolution, with a sensibility to wider regional or international parity. However, achieving such openness of discourse is no easy task in a small society. Van der

Eyken, Golden & Crossley (1995) arrived at a similar conclusion in their study of educational reform in Belize, which, although not an island state, possesses similar postcolonial characteristics. They surmised that "in a country where formal hierarchies remain an important element of the social fabric, it is difficult to disagree with the power structure" (p. 40). Therefore finding ways of surmounting deeply entrenched reluctance to question the status quo is fundamental to creating a climate conducive to real change. In this regard, Lingard, Rawolle & Taylor (2005, p. 774) recommend "a critical engagement with the work of Bourdieu [as a] useful agenda for moving forward the study of education policy and processes in the context of globalization…". Such engagement would need to address the fact that postcolonial structures are heavily bureaucratic and incommodious; making them extremely difficult to unravel and restructure. Bourdieu(1998) views the tightly structured nature of bureaucracies as especially hostile to change and I contend that persistent, continuous dialogue which incorporates all levels of the bureaucracy is the best tool for beginning the ventilation necessary for re-visioning. Brydon & Tiffin (1993 p. 12) state, "to decolonize is not simply to rid oneself of the trappings of imperial power; it is also to seek non-repressive alternatives to imperialist discourse". The one-way communication trend which characterizes the education system in St. Lucia can no way be described as discourse and it can only be reversed if all parties feel equally empowered to voice the entire gamut of opinions, concerns, satisfaction, outrage and so forth. The symposium which was the last facet of my data collection provided a good yardstick for the type of dialogic space which is critical to creating partnerships and initiatives born out of understanding and common disclosures. The fact that the various stakeholders could come together in open discussion without the inhibitions bred into bureaucratic system proved that it is possible to transcend the postcolonial

barriers with the provision of the right ambience and arena. As complex as this may seem and despite the potential for cultural clashes (Kirk & Macdonald, 2001), this collaborative approach can be facilitated and supported by ongoing open discourse and clarification of principles and philosophies to alleviate the prevailing murkiness and fear of change. Such collaboration requires dialogic spaces which form part of the normal structure and day to day operations at all levels of the education system. The lack of staffrooms or assembly areas dedicated to teachers needs to be addressed so that they can easily find an enabling environment in which to throw out ideas, ask questions, share practices or simply vent when necessary as a means of achieving the social awareness to which Lavia (2007) refers. Bristol (2008) also calls for a revolution (a transformation of teachers and their practice). I believe that this should include a demand for curriculum discourse and spaces within which their voices can be heard and from which they can launch a foray towards meaningful inclusion in the policy cycle. Staffrooms can also be the environment within which visiting Curriculum Officers or Teacher Trainers can interact with teachers in informal fashion, further breaking down the stiff bureaucratic barriers.

9.4 Conclusion

> "Revolutionary leaders do not go to the people in order to bring them a message of "salvation" but in order to come to know through dialogue with them both their *objective situation* and their *awareness* of that situation – the various levels of perception of themselves and of the world in which and with which they exist. One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people. Such a program constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions notwithstanding." (Paulo Freire, 1970 p. 154).

The HLAC was of revolutionary design, born out of a need to redress the persistent colonial orientation of its predecessors, which did not facilitate efficient holistic

language teaching and learning but instead turned it into silos of language "subjects" which went against all modern principles of language assimilation and expression. It attempts to locate the power of pedagogical decision making within the classroom by way of teacher-student transactions. However, the struggle of the HLAC to survive in a post-colonial climate where systemic structures could not accommodate a document which liberated the teacher and placed the student front and centre, is debilitating and will continue to be so unless the critical restructuring and design of an enabling environment takes place. Therefore, it is not enough for future curriculum studies located in this context to centre on classroom activity in isolation, but the impact of socio historical/cultural factors must be the backdrop to research done in small island states. Curriculum reform in postcolonial states must be revolutionary by nature if it is to effect the type of change that will make a sustainable difference in the inhibiting status quo which currently obtains. The importance of dialogue cannot be overemphasized as a liberating vehicle of self-expression and assertion on the part of "the people" at all levels. No policy is implemented in an absence of culture and its acceptance, success and sustainability depends entirely on how it interacts with the social reality of a given context. Teachers and principals must understand how the curriculum relates to their world view as well as to the general school ethos in order to assimilate its principles into daily classroom practice and school activities; Education Officers must buy in to the philosophies espoused by the new document, be able to recognize points of departure from standard practice and identify specific areas of need; teacher trainers must situate the curriculum within their theoretical and practical training while encouraging student teachers to interrogate its principles from the perspective of their own philosophical stance; policy makers must be prepared for initial resistance and hostility and mitigate this through appropriate avenues for

gradual orientation and pertinent feedback; private sector and community enterprises must be part of the curriculum loop within which they recognize that curriculum is all-encompassing and its success is often dependent on a level of resources to which their contribution is critical. None of the foregoing can take place in group or individual silos; the key is creating, reinforcing support structures and determining what needs to be in place to buttress reforms by way of engaging implementers and providing the necessary resources; therefore, as education reform initiatives continue and small island states like St. Lucia endeavour to be equal players on a global stage, they must recognize first and foremost that the creation of fora for ongoing dialogue and interactive engagement in understanding elements of change has to be a central aspect of the preparation for real change.

9.5 Post-script: The Way Forward

There is hope on the horizon. The St. Lucian society has been evolving slowly but definitively into a place where people are generally less hesitant in voicing opinions, especially in the public media. Over the past ten years, the number of radio and television stations has increased significantly, attracting growing audiences to the proliferation of talk shows (some more irreverent than others). The island currently boasts nine (9) television stations and at least sixteen (16) radio stations. Perhaps largely influenced by the island's much expanded access to cable television and internet radio, these media have enabled voices to be heard especially on political issues. Political parties have also harnessed the mass media as an effective means of keeping their agenda in the public eye. The advent of social media has also removed many of the cultural inhibitions from a society in which people never had trouble talking about other people's business while keeping their own feelings and opinions

under lock and key. Facebook, Twitter and blog discussions have enabled a level of public discussion previously unimaginable, even though primarily among specific groups, while radio talk penetrates socio-economic strata. This means that the shedding of certain shackles has begun: those which maintained that opinions and views were the preserve of citizens with certain levels of education or economic worth.

While the majority of those public conversations have to do with topics like politics and religious beliefs, there is no reason why the media cannot be harnessed in the same way for discussions on education. For some reason, the education system remained fairly sacrosanct and has not been laid open to the kind of scrutiny that has been given to the political system. While it is clear that the public is not entirely happy with what is happening in education in the country, the unspoken view seems to be that this particular discussion needs to start from within.

In subscribing to Lavia's (2006) call for a pedagogy of hope, I maintain that hope can only be shaped though dialogue; through the collective sharing of stories and understandings of experience. By way of having opened channels for the sound of voices hitherto unheard in education in St. Lucia, this study can be viewed as a major stepping stone along the decolonising pathway.

I began the research with the primary motivation of finding out what was happening to an innovation in which I had invested much time and professional effort; however at the end of the research process, I realized that it has created a greater responsibility than merely satisfying my curiosity and consideration must be given to some level of activism based on all this new information. In light of the tremendous success of the Panel Discussion which I used to set the voices against each other, I envisage hosting

a similar forum for the presentation of findings and sharing of insights gained from this research. My data collection process revealed the deep-seated desire and need for the 'subaltern' to speak and for educators at all levels to be able to interact in a non-hierarchical setting. In light of the current talk trends in St. Lucia and the fact that as a small and compact society it is far easier to hear each other, I believe that this is a very opportune time to push for an in-depth airing of long-stifled issues in education.

The provision of safe discursive spaces is certainly a major step towards the empowerment of the unheard; through the assurance that personal stories can be told across the chasms of artificially created silos. To this end, I intend to use my position as Head of the University of the West Indies site in St. Lucia to facilitate such fora on a regular basis by adding a pertinent 'edu-talk' seminar to our current list of outreach activities. I also expect that this research will spawn a number of related pieces for my future academic writing and publication.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Documents Used as Part of University of Sheffield's School of Education Ethics Review Procedure

Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct Research in Schools

University of Sheffield,
School of Education
388 Glossop Road,
Sheffield, S10 2JA
United Kingdom

January 9, 2012

Ms. Marietta Edward

Deputy Chief Education Officer (Instruction)

Dear Ms. Edward

I am seeking permission to conduct interviews with principals and selected teachers of the following schools: Dame Pearlette Louisy Combined School, Marchand Combined School and Banse La Grace Combined School. I also wish to interview the District Education Officers for the aforementioned schools. Interviews will be conducted between January and June 2012.

I am currently reading for a PhD in Education at Sheffield University and my research interest is in the area of curriculum implementation. My research examines the process by which curriculum change is introduced in a small Caribbean state and I have selected St. Lucia as the site of study. My focus will be on the recently introduced OECS Harmonized Language Arts curriculum.

In light of the paucity of documented research on curriculum innovation in St. Lucia and the wider region, this research would be useful to an understanding of the processes which are part of the transition of a new curriculum from policy to practice. I expect that its results will be pertinent to future curriculum planning, development and implementation in St. Lucia and other similar states.

The research is qualitative in nature and will employ the use of interviews and focus groups which will mainly take place outside of school hours but will, where convenient to participants, use school premises. The interviews are not expected to involve any stress or discomfort to participants. The will be expected to answer questions and engage in conversation related to their roles and their interactions with others engaged in the curriculum implementation process.

Participants have been selected for interview/focus group because of their familiarity with both the previous curriculum and the OECS Harmonized Curriculum, which will enable them to give an informed account of the change process. All participants will

be required to sign a consent form. Participation is entirely voluntary and participants may withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason.

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of data and participants will not be identified by name, exact place of work, or district. Random letter and number codes will be assigned to each participant. All data will be securely stored and audio-tapes will be destroyed on successful completion of the study.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Sheffield Research Ethics Committee. The completed study will be made available for academic and public use by the Sheffield University Library.

Any concerns about the project may be discussed with the supervisor of the research, namely:

Dr. Jennifer Lavia

Sheffield University

e-mail: j.lavia@sheffield.ac.uk

Thank you for your kind collaboration in contributing to the documentation of key knowledge and information which will guide future educational development in our country.

Sincerely,

Veronica Simon

(e-mail: edp09vs@sheffield.ac.uk)

Letter to Participants

University of Sheffield,
School of Education
388 Glossop Road,
Sheffield, S10 2JA
United Kingdom

Dear_____,

I am currently reading for a PhD in Education at Sheffield University and my research interest is in the area of curriculum implementation. My research examines the process by which curriculum change is introduced in a small Caribbean state and I have selected St. Lucia as the site of study. My focus will be on the recently introduced OECS Harmonized Language Arts curriculum.

In light of the paucity of documented research on curriculum innovation in St. Lucia and the wider region, this research would be useful to an understanding of the processes which are part of the transition of a new curriculum from policy to practice. I expect that its results will be pertinent to future curriculum planning, development and implementation in St. Lucia and other similar states.

The research is qualitative in nature and will employ the use of interviews which are estimated to last approximately 60 minutes each at a location of your choice; and focus groups which are expected to last 90 minutes. Since I am using a semi-structured format, there may be need for a follow-up interview in some cases. This will also be at your discretion. The interviews are not expected to involve any stress or discomfort. You will be expected to answer questions and engage in conversation related to your role and your interactions with others engaged in the curriculum implementation process. In the event that you need to travel to attend the interview, costs of such travel will be reimbursed as appropriate.

You have been selected for interview/focus group because of your familiarity with both the previous curriculum and the OECS Harmonized Curriculum, which will enable you to give an informed account of the change process. Participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason. In the event of withdrawal, any data already collected from you, may be used for the purpose of the study unless you make a specific request to the contrary in which case such data will be immediately destroyed.

Interviews will be audio-taped to allow for ease of transcription. You will be provided with a copy of the transcribed interview for verification. Every effort will be made to

ensure confidentiality of data. You will not be identified by name, exact place of work, or district. Random letter and number codes will be assigned to each participant. All data will be stored in a double locked fireproof safe to which I have the only electronic code and key. Audio-tapes will be destroyed on successful completion of the study.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Sheffield Research Ethics Committee. The completed study will be made available for academic and public use by the Sheffield University Library.

You will be required to sign a Consent Form (attached) prior to participation in the research.

Any concerns about the project may be discussed with the supervisor of the research, namely:

Dr. Jennifer Lavia

Sheffield University

 j.lavia@sheffield.ac.uk

Thank you for your kind collaboration in contributing to the documentation of key knowledge and information which will guide future educational development in our country.

Veronica Simon

(758) 451-1128 (h)

(758) 452-3865 (w)

(758) 713-1182 (c)

Participant Consent Form

I agree to take part in this research which is to investigate the process by which curriculum change is introduced in a small Caribbean state (St. Lucia)

The researcher has explained to my satisfaction the purpose, principles and procedures of the study.

I have read the information sheet and I understand the principles and procedures involved.

I am aware that I will be required to answer questions as part of an interview/ focus group and that the interview will be audio taped.

I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will normally be seen only by the researcher and will not be revealed to anyone else.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without incurring consequences from doing so.

I understand that should I withdraw from the study, data collected may be used by the researcher for the purpose of the study unless I expressly request otherwise.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

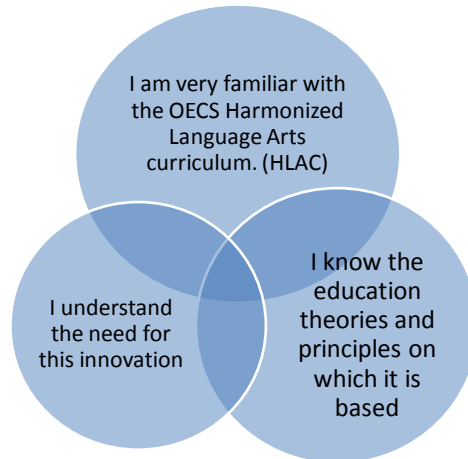# Appendix II: Structure of St. Lucia Ministry of Education
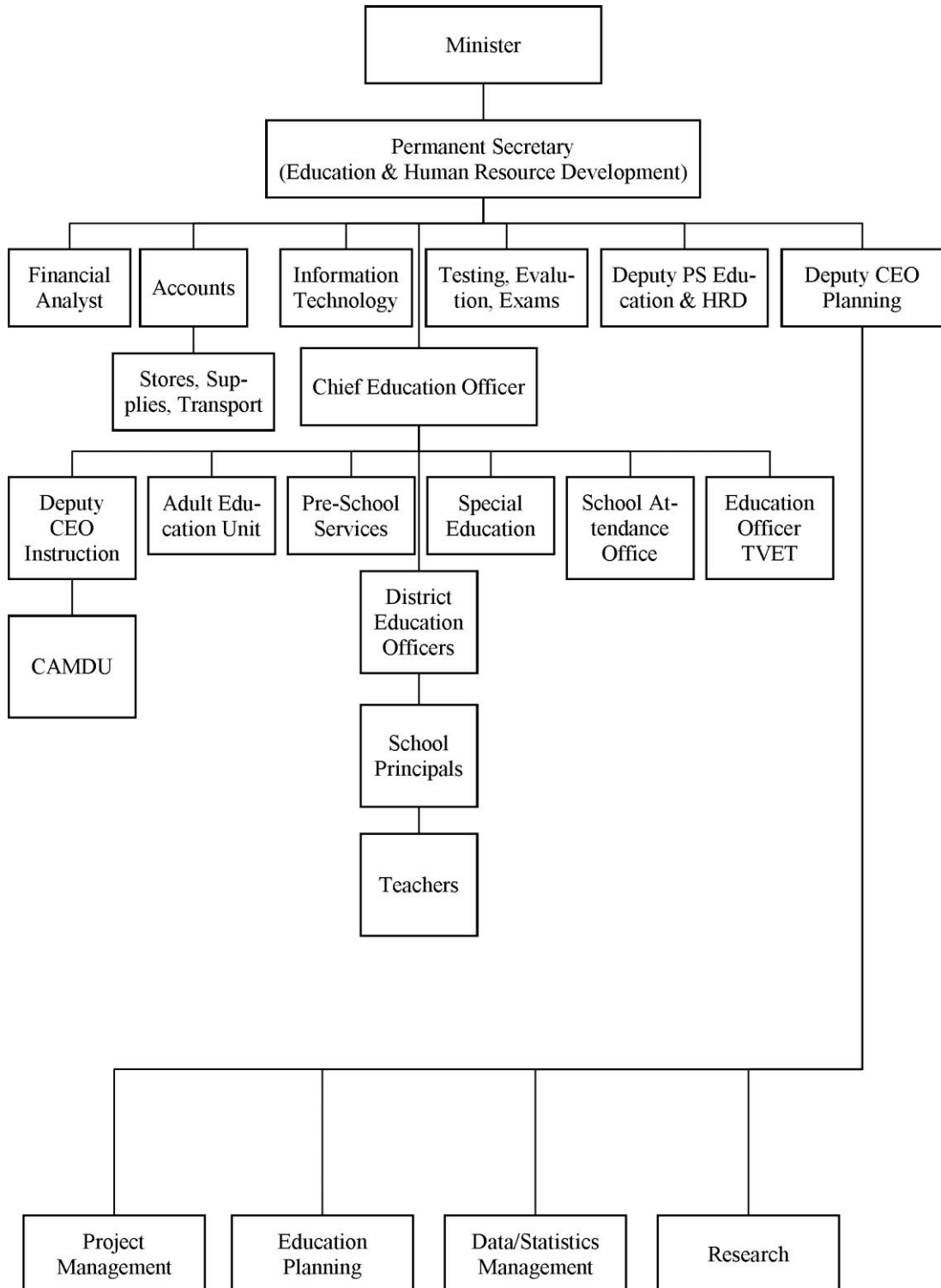
Appendix III: Data Coding

Theoretical Coding (Umbrella Themes)	Criticality of Voice	Management & Leadership of Change	Creation of Support Structures
Focused Codes	• Attitudes to Teaching • Philosophical issues • Role perception	• Curriculum Development • Monitoring & Feedback • Instructional leadership • Change management • Bureaucratic issues	• Inhibiting factors • Curriculum preparation • Role of parents • Teacher Training • Partnerships
Initial Codes	• Teaching style • Collegiality • Communication • Feedback avenues • Professional development • Departmental interaction • Working space • Content knowledge	• Language policy • Social issues • Remediation • Student needs • School culture • Supervision • Readiness	• Teacher/school needs • Curriculum requirements • Curriculum evaluation • Apportioned curriculum • Examinations • External/community factors • OECS responsibility • Resources • Interrelationships • Private sector

Appendix IV: Sample Focus Group Stimulus Slides

To what extent does the following describe you?

I am very familiar with the OECS Harmonized Language Arts curriculum. (HLAC)

I understand the need for this innovation

I know the education theories and principles on which it is based

Which of these most adequately describe your initial reaction to the HLAC? Tell us why
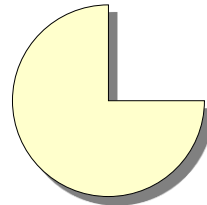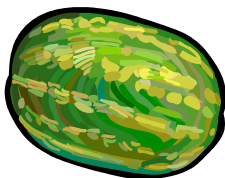
React to this statement

- "I have all the ingredients I need for the teaching and learning of the Language Arts in my school"

Select one of these proportions to represent your input into curriculum decision making and explain your choice

Appendix V: Panel Discussion Programme

Implementing Language Arts Curriculum Reform: Issues and Answers

22 November 2012
7 pm
UWI Open Campus St. Lucia
Morne Fortune, Castries

PROGRAMME

Welcome and opening remarks.................................Veronica Simon

Introduction of the Panel..Panel Members

Consultant Presentation..HSM

Policy Maker Presentation MOE-1

Education Officer Presentation.............................MOE-2

Principal Presentation...Principal 2

Teacher Presentation...Mariah

Question/Discussion Segment..........................Audience & Panelists

Closing Remarks & Vote of Thanks ....Veronica Simon