

School Culture

Comparative Analysis of Organizational Culture in Two Primary Schools in St. Lucia

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Abstract

This study explores school culture in two rural primary schools in St. Lucia Blossom and Peabright. The evidence suggests that the cultures of the two schools were distinctly different.

Case study research used an interpretative paradigm to draw on data from interviews, observations and documents. The data was analysed to examine the schools' vision mission and goals, teachers' and principals' beliefs and expectations, and to assess the structure and practices, processes and strategies to understand how the two schools worked.

This research revealed that the values captured in the vision and mission statements, the consensus on definite goals, and the shared beliefs and expectations at Peabright appear to function as the depository of what was held sacred 'high student achievement and performance' at the school. This guiding philosophy was the explicit covenant that seems to guide the collective practices, processes and strategies at Peabright.

Blossom was guided by unwritten rules and shared beliefs and expectations but no explicit vision and mission statements, or goals. The shared beliefs and expectation of sport though not articulated as a guiding philosophy, provided a common identity and played an important role in the success that Blossom enjoyed through sports.

Blossom was led by a principal who employed a mix of different styles in an environment plagued with an array of individualistic beliefs and varied practices except on students' innate athletic ability for sport, moral development of students, discipline and physical environment. The absence of community and parental support except for sporting events, the dissident teacher sub-cultures, perceived differences in political beliefs and affiliations between the principal and community were some of the contributory features of the school culture.

Peabright was led clearly, by a forceful and focused leader who engaged a repertoire of leadership styles to keep the focus on a common purpose that underpinned the behavioural norms, which shaped the emergent school culture. Some of the features of that culture were high expectations, setting high standards, rigid social structure, emotional support system, dedicated and committed teachers and protection of the school environment.

This study reflects on leadership styles and practices, teacher productivity and internal school culture. In addition, it draws attention to the way schools work within small rural communities in a developing world context.

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Abbreviations

BT1	Blossom Teacher 1 - grade level 1
BT2	Blossom Teacher 2 -grade level 2
BT3	Blossom Teacher 3 -grade level 3
BT4	Blossom Teacher 4- grade level 4
BT5	Blossom Teacher 5- grade level 5
BT6	Blossom Teacher 6- grade level 6
BT7	Blossom Teacher 7- grade level 7
BT8	Blossom Teacher 8- grade level 8
CARICOM	Caribbean Economic Community and Common Market
HT	Head teacher
IQEA	Improving the Quality of Education for All
MOE	Ministry of Education
MSIP	Manitoba School Improvement Programme
OECS	Organization of Easter Caribbean States
PT1	Peabright Teacher 1- grade level 1
PT2	Peabright Teacher 2- grade level 2
PT3	Peabright Teacher 3- grade level 3
PT4	Peabright Teacher 4- grade level 4
PT5	Peabright Teacher 5- grade level 5
PT6	Peabright Teacher 6- grade level 6
PT7	Peabright Teacher 7- grade level 7
PT8	Peabright Teacher 8- grade level 8
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction -Rationale of Study

The observation of interactions among colleagues with varying dispositions, attitudes and actions that also spent the greater part of their lives working in organizations kindled my interest in organizational culture. The desire to understand and unravel organizational culture was fuelled by Schein (1997) and inspired the focus of this doctoral thesis: an analysis of the organizational culture in two primary schools in St. Lucia.

The rationale for this study is due to the attention and the intrigue that surrounds organizational culture. There is great interest in the contribution of culture to the nature and success of schools. It has become an important topic in the discourse on school leadership. The intention of this study is to add to the dialogue so that practitioners and researchers may begin to consider whether it has implications, for those who are interested in improving schools.

The perception that organizational culture has some influence on school improvement has created tremendous interest among practitioners and researchers in the topic. There is a fair amount of talk in the business world that the culture of organizations can impede or enable their success. Others argue that growth and improvement can be achieved through cultural change, and persons who work in organizations with the right culture are inspired to work above and beyond the normal expectations.

School principals are expected to exert a powerful influence on the culture by promoting shared vision and understanding, and instilling the behavioural norm and practices in teachers to achieve the goals of the school. Teachers too, create their own reality stemming from their beliefs and how they construct meaning in the school environment, thus generating different cultures in different schools based on the dynamic interactions. The literature on organization culture implies that culture helps sway performance, and that some organizations, including schools, can change or shape their cultures to achieve the desired outcomes. Researchers including Cheng (2000; 1993), Chapman and Harris (2004), Stoll (1999) and Hopkins (2001) seem to believe that school culture influences school improvement. On the other hand Hargreaves (1998) argues that school culture has no direct link to student learning.

However before engaging in discussion about what culture can and cannot do, or addressing issues related to reshaping or changing culture, or deciding whether culture change is an illusive dream as argued by Sarasson (1971), it is imperative to understand the nature of culture that currently exist within organizations including schools. Hence the culture of two different schools will be examined to expand our understanding of the different dimensions of school culture.

1.2 Importance of Culture

What is it? Culture is a complex phenomenon that permeates organizations. According to Atkinson's (1997, p.113) description it is that 'which makes an organization tick'. Its foundation is rooted in the underlying assumptions that give rise to the behaviour, beliefs, norms and values that guide what goes on in an organization (Schein, 2004). Hence, culture is multilayered; the underlying layer consists of the beliefs, values and assumptions which influence the outer layer of practices that can be observed (Peterson and Deal, 2002). Some researchers (Beare et al, 1989; Anderson, 1996; Schein, 2004; Nias, 1989; 1999; Harris and Hopkins, 2000; Stoll, 1999; Hargreaves, 1995) believe that culture has far-reaching effects on every aspect of the organization. Peterson and Deal (2002) claim it envelops or represents the personality of the organization.

Hargreaves (1998, p.248) claims 'culture may be a cause, an object or an effect of school improvement, indeed all three are possible'. It contributes and has a significant impact on the internal environment of a school and will affect whatever goes on within. Leithwood and Jantzi emphasized organizational culture and included it as one of five conditions in a framework to support learning within the school. They described culture as 'norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions that shape members' decisions and practices (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2004, p.456). Succinctly, culture can be described as shared values and belief (Deal and Kennedy, 1982) and as assumptions that guide how people work and interact (Schein, 2004).

Why the interest? Schein (2004); Peters and Waterman (1982) and Deal and Kennedy (1982) argue that culture has some influence on the success and performance in corporate organizations. Nias (1989); Stoll (1999); Sergiovanni (2001); Peterson and Deal (1998) seem to believe it influences whatever goes on inside a school. If this is the case then, it may impact negatively or positively on school performance as culture can either

enable of disable organizations. It depends on what purpose and function it plays in the school's dynamics. Stoll (1998, p.4) explains that 'the real essence of school culture-people's beliefs, values, and norms will influence how they reaction'. If so, it may prove to be a powerful barrier to change and improvement, since as explained by Sarason (1971, p.89) 'to change one's way of thinking.....is not easy'. Stoll (2003, p.96) argues that 'culture describes how things are and acts as a screen or lens through which the world is viewed....each school has a different reality or mindset of school life...a school culture is shaped by its history, context and the people in it'.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) claim that every organization has a culture, this culture may be fragmented, difficult and challenging, or cohesive and productive, however it is not obvious to the outsider. What is emerging from these different viewpoints and arguments on culture is that it seems to be a phenomenon, indeed a complex one, which requires an in-depth understanding of what it is, and how it is manifested in schools. The challenge to researchers is to understand the nature of this chameleon to encourage reflection 'on the way we do thing around here' (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, p.4), and on how it shapes the life of the school. The analysis of organizational culture may expose some of the challenges encountered and solutions employed by principal and staff as they engage in the reality of their schools, and as they attempt to make sense and function in that environment.

1.3 Role of leadership

Leadership and culture are interrelated, paying attention to what is important and managing change is central to leadership (Schein, 2004). Sergiovanni (2001) recommends that school leaders focus more on the symbolic and cultural aspect of leadership than on the instructional and behavioural, as is currently done. He re-emphasizes the significance of school culture as a medium available to school leadership for promoting successful schools. It connects students, teachers and parents through shared values, beliefs, myths, traditions, symbols, and artifacts to create a unique school community (Sergiovanni, 1995). Its importance is confirmed by Schein's (1997, p.5) statement that 'the only thing of real importance that leaders do is create and manage culture and the unique talent of leaders is their ability to understand and work with culture'. School culture and leadership are two of the main features in the school improvement model 'Improving the Quality of Education for All' (IQEA) that is currently employed in schools in the UK

(Harris and Hopkins, 2000). Sergiovanni (1995) defines leadership as a culture builder, capable of harmonizing shared values, beliefs and behaviour.

Strong cultures build strong cohesive organizations, but the culture must suit the purpose and goals of the organization (Handy, 1993), and the need for different cultures may emerge as goals change. Once a strong culture is established it sets the rhythm and path to achieve the desired outcomes, based on shared vision and goals. However, teachers are also creators and communicators of a vision (Staessens and Vanderberghe, 1994), they may uphold their own vision or as argued by Hargreaves A. (2005), they may resent and consider the principal a threat to the comfortable toxic culture that they have created to suit their needs. Deal and Kennedy (1998) explain that toxic cultures are evident in schools where staff is fragmented; student needs are secondary to teachers' comforts. Failure of leaders to achieve unity of purpose that is necessary to create the homogenous culture advocated by Schein (2004) or Sergiovanni (2001) may not be due to the absence of effort and determination but to the challenges and complexities within schools. People in a school are from diverse backgrounds and it may be naïve to expect a school to exist as one homogenous culture. Stoll (1999) argues that different sub-groups may exist with their own set of values and beliefs to create sub-cultures, but these may pose no threat if their values and beliefs are not disruptive to the predominant values and beliefs that exist within a school.

Policy makers and practitioners also recognize that school leadership plays a central role in developing successful schools (Bell et al, 2003). While it can be argued that the staff of a school, or groups of teachers and also school leadership create their own school culture, the school is not immune to the society and the immediate community. Parents uphold their own concepts of what makes a real school. Politics or change in education policies are external influences that are brought to bear on a school culture (Stoll, 2003). Government expectations as demonstrated in education policy, the contribution of the founders, thus the history of the school (Levin, 2003) and community interactions (Beare et al, 1989) contribute to the overall school culture. Stoll (2003) argues that it is one of the most important complex concepts that has been most neglected in education. Other issues surrounding organizational culture such as: its effect on how well organizations perform; whether it has any impact on student learning; it is complex multilayered, and

hard to pin down; and that organizations create their own cultures are some of the concerns that fuelled interest in the study of school culture in the two selected schools.

1.4 Choice of case study schools

This study responds to Nias (1989, p.144) call for 'empirical evidence of detailed case studies of the culture of individual schools' to compare and identify the similarities and difference between them to make sense of their culture. The analysis of culture will be undertaken in two rural catholic primary schools, in the same Education District, situated five miles apart with variation in assessment at the national level, to understand the significant issues that contribute to the shaping of the culture of each of the schools. One of the schools, Blossom, is experiencing a steady decline in enrolment from 455 in the 90's to 286 students in September 2005. Peabright's enrollment increased from 200 eighteen years ago, to 432 students by September 2005.

This study will explore how the teachers and principal work in the two schools: the values that are encapsulated in the schools' vision and mission and how they guide the work in the two schools, and the beliefs and expectations expressed by the teachers and the principals, since as argued by Pajares (1992) beliefs are prime motivators for action. Goals are preferred outcomes that organizations strive to achieve; they operationalize the school mission and also provide direction (Sergiovanni, 1995). This study will look at what specific goals influence the decisions, structures, policies and practices within the two schools and what day to day tasks are undertaken by teachers and principals to accomplish them. Sergiovanni (1995) argues that successful schools are built on a strong foundation of interpersonal relationships. As teachers engage in the daily activities in the school they interact and exchange ideas. They may or may not collaborate as they try to make sense and construct meaning. Do the nature of the relationship and how the staff communicate and collaborate hinder or enhance the purpose of the schools? One of the schools is headed by the same principal the only original founder, whereas eight of the original founders are current members in the other school. Is it possible that the history of the school influence how the teachers and principal work? These are some of the other issues that will be investigated in the two case study schools to understand the present school culture in each school.

The education Act (1999) provides guidelines for schools in St Lucia. The prescribed national curriculum outlines exactly what should be taught to students. The national standardized assessment tests mandated by the act and the allocation of approximately 25%–28% of the recurrent annual budget to education (Government of St. Lucia Estimates, 1993/1994–2003/2004) are attempts to improve and raise standard of performance in schools. However, as argued by Levin (2003) politicians and policy-makers have limited ability to influence changes where it really matters: within internal organizations. Cohen (1995) argues that the changes in student performance that policy-makers appear to be concerned about, are really dependent on what teachers do and their ways of working in the classrooms. Walker and Dimmock (2002) claim that life in a school is the result of interaction of societal, local and school cultures, and that organizational culture is influenced by both internal factors and external context. Beare et al (1989) and Sergiovanni (1995) agree that what seems to be emerging as a much more powerful factor is that the best schools have developed a culture within which there are myriad ways to influence how well students learn. These concerns will be addressed by investigating the characteristics that influence and are embodied in the culture of each of the two selected schools. The exploration of the various and complex issues that contribute to shaping school culture will be guided by the objectives outlined below.

1.5 Objectives of this study

Schools are complex organizations (Handy, 1993; Bell, 1988) with a multitude of interactions, reactions and processes and are impacted by both external and internal environment. Sergiovanni (1995; 2001), Beare et al (1989) and Schein (1997) emphasize that schools that are successful diligently create, nurture, manage and continue to work to maintain the right culture that promotes teaching and learning. Hence this research seeks to analyse school culture and will be guided by the following objectives:

- 1. Identify the characteristics that contribute to shaping and maintaining the school culture in the two schools.**
- 2. Explore the influence of school leadership style and sub-culture on school culture.**

The objectives point the following research questions:

- 1. What features contributed to shaping and maintaining the culture in the two schools?**
- 2. What is the influence of leadership and sub-culture on the overall school culture in the two schools?**

The evidence to make sense and to unravel the culture of the two case study schools will be drawn from Ministry of Education documents, personal observations, archival school records, school logs, narratives and interviews with teachers and principals.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the rationale for investigating school culture. The issues that will be explored are summarized in the objectives and research questions. Chapter 2 explores the difficulty encountered in arriving at a consensus on a definition of culture, and seeks a definition to guide the research. The problems that are encountered in analyzing culture are due in part to the definition, selection of elements, the levels under exploration, led to the development of a culture framework to conduct the investigation.

The research design and the rationale for collecting multiple sources of evidence to build a thick description of the schools in the two cases studies are explained in chapter 3. The findings related to the two cases are presented in chapter 4. In chapter 5, the data is analyses, compared and similarities and differences between the two schools are delineated and discussed in relation to the issues and theories noted earlier in the literature review on school culture. The conclusion and recommendations are outlined in chapter 6. Limitations of the research and identification of new areas that required further investigation are discussed.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In its analysis of school culture, this study will explore the characteristics and leadership contribution to shaping and maintaining the culture in two schools in St. Lucia. To set the background for the study, this chapter begins by searching for a definition and the main constituents of culture. Both Nias (1989) and Prosser (1999) indicate the need to establish a clearer definition of culture, as the vague definitions ascribed to the term may be one of the weaknesses that plague culture research. In addition, if the intention is to analyse culture it is imperative to disentangle its constituent elements. Hence, an exploration of the different elements of culture will be undertaken, as well as the school leader's role in shaping and influencing culture. School leaders play a critical role in the life of the school. They are seen as cultural builders (Sergiovanni, 2001), they create and manage the culture of their organizations (Schein, 2004) or attempt to promote a school environment that is conducive to learning, and thus justifies inclusion in this research.

The second half of the chapter provides an overview of existing research on school culture for three main reasons: to highlight their contribution to our knowledge on school culture; to inform but also to identify the issues and challenges to advise this study; to differentiate this study from the previous studies and to explain how it makes a contribution to the existing body of knowledge on school culture.

2.2 Definition of Culture

Before engaging in the analysis of organizational culture it is fitting to start by searching for a definition of *culture*. However, the point made by Brabander (1993) is worth noting before proceeding:

Organizational culture does not differ conceptually from culture in general. ...organizational culture refers to the cultural equipment that is relevant to life within an organization. In principle all aspects of culture are also part of organizational culture....only a subset of the orientations that are relevant to culture in general are addressed in the study of organizational culture....cultural orientations whatever their content are important to an organization when they

have an impact on the work that is done and on the way the work is socially organized in an organization.

(p. 81)

Prosser (1999, p.7) forewarns that although the term culture is widely used, there is no one definition or mutual agreement on its meaning: 'as with previously favoured terms, its meaning is mostly dependent on its author's discipline. Indeed writers rarely explicitly address the issue of meaning, instead relying on definitions to implicitly convey meaning'. Prosser and Warburton (1999) view culture as a construction of reality within an organization and different cultures exist because of the way different realities are created. Stoll (1999) agrees with Prosser and Warburton (1999) and goes on to argue that it is a complex concept that seeks to explain existence and reality within an organizational setting and is shaped by history, context and those who work there. Geertz (1973, p.14) on the other hand provides a converse definition in an attempt to convey the meaning of culture by stating; 'culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed, it is a context, something within which they can be intelligently described'.

Pettigrew (1979) realizing the difficulty with definition of culture, observed that if we treat culture as a vague ethereal concept then it may be difficult to subject it to analysis. Therefore 'a potentially more fruitful approach is to regard culture as source of a family of concepts and the offsprings of culture ... are symbol, language, ideology, beliefs, ritual and myths' (p.574). Peterson and Deal (1998) offer a different perspective on the composition and influence of culture:

Culture is the underground streams of norms, values, beliefs traditions, and rituals that have been built over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. This set of external expectations and values shapes how people think feel, and act in schools.

(p. 28)

Peterson and Deal (2002) revisited their definition and added more variables in an attempt to make it clearer. They posit:

Culture exist in the deeper elements of a school: the unwritten rules and assumptions, the combination of rituals and traditions, the array of symbols and artifacts, the special language and phrasing that staff and students use, the expectations to change, and learning that saturate the school world.

(p. 8-9)

They explained that students and staff who enter a school environment pick up the culture immediately. Students intuitively discern positive or negative differences in a new school; new staff sense the rules and expectations that are not written, the folk tales, the accepted norms and rituals, the gatekeepers of school values, the storytellers. The deeper layers of culture are demonstrated in outward manifestations that can be intuitively picked up and learned by new members. Hoy and Miskel (2001, p.176) also define organizational culture in terms of the deeper layers 'shared orientations that hold the unit together and give it a distinctive identity'. They further stated that it is shared norms, values, philosophies, perspectives, beliefs, expectations, attitudes myths and ceremonies, but there is disagreement on what is shared and the intensity of shared orientations among organizational members.

Cranwell-Ward, Bacon and Mackie (2002) also introduce the deeper layers of assumptions and their relationship to values and behaviour patterns. They posit that culture is the acceptable and repeated behavioural patterns learned from previous generations. This acceptable pattern of behaviour is derived from communal interpretations of values and beliefs based on internal assumptions. Their explanation is not different to Schein's (2004) perspective, who suggests that culture is an abstract concept, created through group interactions and composed of both the visible and tangible aspects that are driven by invisible underlying hidden forces. It is the consequence of an intricate learning process of a unit based on shared norms and history. He encapsulated it in this more formal definition:

As a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

(Schein, 2004, p. 17)

Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989), who propose that the intangible elements consisting of philosophy, ideology and values influence behaviour and functions within a school, share similar thoughts on the definition of culture. According to them, 'culture is that system of shared meanings, cognitions, symbols and experiences which are expressed in the behaviours and practices of the members of an affiliated group' (p.177). It is summarized succinctly by Walker and Dimmock (2002, p.69) as 'the enduring sets of beliefs, values, and ideologies underpinning structures, processes, and practices which distinguishes one group of people from another'.

Prosser (1999) explained that the abundance of meanings ascribed to culture and associated concepts such as tone, ethos, atmosphere and climate have restricted culture research in schools. However Prosser's own explanation does not move it forward much either. He posits: 'organizational culture then, is *a way of looking at and thinking about* behaviour of and in organizations, and offers a useful perspective for understanding what is occurring in schools' (1999, p. 11, my emphasis)

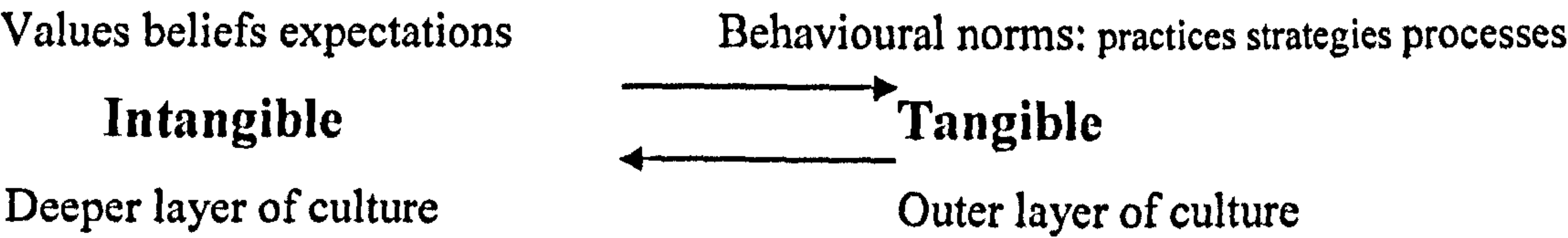
The associated concepts of tone, ethos, atmosphere and climate are used to research different aspects of the school environment. According to Peterson and Deal (2002), climate seeks to explain the tone, feelings and morale in a school. But Kallestad et al (1998) and Forehand et al (1964) view it as the characteristics of an institution. Ethos is used to denote the character, health and identity of a school. Ethos is used in a more subjective fashion and alludes to values, principles, ethics or features that are not easily measured. As pointed out by McLaughlin (2005, p.308–309) 'the concept of ethos is notoriously difficult to analyse for at least two reasons. First it is closely akin to, and often described in terms of related notions such as ambience, atmosphere, climate, culture ethical environment and the like'. McLaughlin (2005) goes on to describe ethos as well as tone, atmosphere and climate as intangible, but they are used to examine school environment. The interchangeable use of meanings further explains the elusiveness of defining the culture concept.

Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989), Cranwell-Ward, Bacon and Mackie (2002), Peterson and Deal (2002) and Schein (2004) share the view that culture in organizations consists of a deeper underlying layer of assumptions, beliefs and shared meanings, ideologies and values. This intangible layer cannot be observed but underpins the verbal

and conceptual demonstrations, expressions of behaviour, visual manifestations that can be observed in organizations.

Common themes seem to be emerging from the array of definitions used by the different researchers. Culture is multilayered and the different layers of culture consist of both tangible and intangible constituents. The innermost or deepest layer consists of basic assumptions, an intangible component, driven by unconscious processes; it represents the essence of culture according to Schein (2004). The intermediate layer consists of intangible components identifiable as values, beliefs, ideology, norms or expectations, which are often expressed as desirable attributes that organizations ought to emulate. The deeper layers influence the outer layer, of behaviour and practices of an organization Beare et al (1989).

Although Schein (2004) proposes three distinct layers, two innermost layers and a third outer layer, there seems to be agreement that an inner layer of intangible constituents drives the outer layer consisting of practices. Hence, this study adopts the definition that culture is an organic fluid system of shared values, beliefs and expectations and perceptions that influence behaviours and practices, strategies and processes within a school. This definition will avoid ambiguity, help guide the research questions and give direction to the research. This study also accepts that culture is multilayered and seeks to investigate two layers of culture: a deeper layer consisting of values, beliefs expectations and an outer layer, consisting of practices, strategies and processes. A diagrammatic representation of the two levels that will be investigated is shown below:



The relationship is dynamic as the influence and effects of the two levels are mutual. Values influence behaviour, but behavior and practices are potential levers that can in their turn influence values and beliefs.

Now that the definition and layers of culture that will guide this research are established, attention will be focused on the constituent elements and limitations of the concept in

order to understand some of the issues and restrictions that might be encountered in conducting the research on school culture.

2.2.1 Research limitations posed by the concept of culture

The various definitions and the features of culture impose limitations that should be understood before engaging in culture research. As previously discussed, culture is a difficult concept to define precisely, and therefore the meaning bestowed by an individual researcher will influence the nature of research conducted. Stoll (1999) explains that if culture is defined from an anthropological angle it takes the form of customs, rituals, symbols, stories, language and artifacts and can be observed in relationships, behaviours and how people work. Is it shared meanings, beliefs and values (Geertz, 1973; Stoll, 1999), or what keeps the herd moving west (Deal and Kennedy, 1983), or assumptions taught to new members as the correct way to solve problems (Schein, 2004), or a collection of sub-cultures (Thrupp, 1999), or 'the way we do things around here' (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, p. 4).

Smircich (1983) argues that if there is no agreement on the meaning of culture then the application of studies on organizational culture will be based on dissimilar perspectives, which leads to this quandary; 'how then can we critically evaluate the significance of the concept of culture for the study of organizations' (p.339). The concept of culture was advanced from anthropology and even within this discipline it is defined in different ways depending on whether it is annexed to cognitive, symbolic or structural anthropology or psychodynamic theories. The cognitive perspective recognizes culture as a system of knowledge and beliefs that members share. The symbolic perspective of culture highlights shared symbols and meanings, whereas the structural and psychodynamic perspectives view culture as an unconscious process demonstrated through the unaware or taken for granted patterns of action (Smircich, 1983). Schein (2004) refers to the unconscious process as the deepest layer of culture which presents the most difficulties to researchers.

The woolly definitions ascribed to the culture concept, for example, 'culture is an expression of the unconscious' (Smircich, 1983, p.351) may be a major contributor and barrier to clearly focused empirical research. In addition the difficulty in 'cutting of the culture concept down to size' (Geertz, 1973, p.4) due to its complex composition and numerous variables, further contributes to the challenge of such research. This may be the

reason why Hargreaves (1999) suggested that school culture is dealt with in a rather general way in the school effectiveness and school improvement literature, or for the deficits of frameworks to analyse school culture (Hargreaves, 1998).

The multilayered dimension of culture also introduces further complexity for research. Schein (2004) suggests that culture exists at three different levels within an organization. The first level is identifiable through visible or tangible manifestations consisting of practices, behaviour patterns and artifacts. A second level encompasses beliefs, norms, rules, values that guide behaviours. The deepest or intangible level is composed of basic assumptions which are taken for granted, patterns that are non-negotiable or unconscious processes. This level will no doubt pose particular difficulty for researchers, as it will require an appropriate design to research the unconscious. Heck and Marcoulides (1996) also propose three interconnected levels. The outer level of practices is designed to achieve the organizational goals, and second level consisting of the beliefs and value systems supports the organization's mission. Leaders endeavour to align values with goals, structures, policies and practices. The deepest or core level of culture consists of the assumptions of the individuals who work within the organization. However this study will focus on two levels: an intangible deeper layer and an outer tangible layer. The multi-level composition and the varied definitions pose restrictions to culture research, but there is a further constraint arising from terminology entanglement.

Although the terms; *climate*, *culture* or *ethos* are used to research the school environment, culture is subsumed under climate by some researchers. For instance Shann (1999, p. 391) uses this opening statement to explain research on culture, 'this study investigates school culture as an aspect of school climate and explores its relationship to academic achievement'. Houtte (2005, p.71) seems to agree with Shann's (1999) notion that climate subsumes culture by stating 'climate, encompassing culture should be reserved for picturing the school in its entirety'. In addition, some main concepts are used interchangeably under each umbrella term. For instance, Donnelly's (2000) conduct of a qualitative research '*In pursuit of school ethos*' concluded that ethos, defined as observed practices and interactions, departs from the values and beliefs in one Irish school. Shann (1999) investigated how a culture of caring, involving perceptions of teachers' commitment, relationship and cooperation among students, led to school effectiveness. Kallestad, Olweus and Alsaker's (1998) investigation in Norway 'focused on certain

cultural and social system aspects of school climate ... these aspects represent the patterned relationships of persons and groups, belief systems, values, cognitive structures, and meaning within an organization' (p.71). Although this list of factors is not very different to Schein's (2004) or Beare et al, (1989) or Stoll's (1999) perspective on culture, they are used to investigate climate, and thus explains the confusion with the concepts mentioned above. The research identified above also subsumed culture under climate, but Hargreaves (1995), Deal and Kennedy (1982), Heck and Marcoulides (1996) and Hoy and Miskel (2001) refer to culture as a separate entity that influences organizational behaviour and practices. Prosser (1999) argues that climate studies are conducted by school effectiveness researchers, whereas culture studies are conducted by school improvement researchers. There may be credibility in this argument since school effectiveness provides a list of indicators that can withstand measurement through survey approach from a quantitative stance. However, school improvement seeks to understand processes and functions which are more suited to in-depth qualitative studies.

Though the overlap between culture, ethos and climate is quite fuzzy, the intention is not to separate, or to indulge in the semantics of the different terms, but to argue that the choice of terms and definitions, layers under investigation, constituent features, purpose of research and the inclination of the researcher, are all determinants of methodology, which in turn will affect the type and quality of research undertaken. This study seeks to analyse school culture from a qualitative standpoint and has established that it will adopt the definition that culture is an organic fluid system of shared values, beliefs and perceptions that influence behaviours and practices, functions and processes within a school. The problem with the multilayer aspect of culture was addressed by identifying that the two layers of culture, the deeper layer consisting of values and beliefs, and the outer visible layer of behaviour and practices will be investigated. The subsequent section will seek to identify the constituent features of organizational culture relevant to schools to construct an appropriate culture framework to guide the research.

2.3 Features that influence school Culture

History of school

Historical events and past practices are precursor to the present. Stoll (2003, p.96) indicates 'a school culture is shaped by its history, context and the people in it'. She went on to argue national politics and education policies influence the culture of schools.

(Levin, 2003) also believes that different elements in a school are shaped by the contribution of its founders, by the distinctive historical actions and that present arrangement within a school is usually determine by what went on before, and how people think about the present. Stoll (1998) specifically indicates that in the early years of a school its dominant values that emanated from its founders make the culture explicit. The values and the unique identify is shared with newcomers, teachers, pupils or parents.

Education policy

Educational policies may influence the values of a school (Stoll, 1999) and the practices within the school. The St. Lucia Education Act (1999) provides the written guidelines to guide curriculum implementation and assessment, and how teachers and principals work in schools. It stipulates that schools are to follow the prescribed national curriculum. The frequency of assessment to be determined by the Minister will be conducted 'for ascertaining that they have achieved in relation to the attainment target' (p.75). Teachers are to 'encourage students to learn by teaching them diligently and faithfully...observe the standards of the school established by the staff and principal....promote effective relationship with parents (p. 69-71).

Duties of principals include developing satisfactory relations with parents, engaging the community in school affairs and developing procedures for parental and community involvement; supervising and directing teachers but taking responsibility for the preparation and implementation of the school plan; formulating with the assistance of the staff the overall aims and objectives of the school and formulating policies to implement them. The principal should deploy and manage all teaching staff and allocate particular duties to them, organize and implement the prescribed curriculum and evaluate the standards of teaching and learning in school, and ensure that proper standards of professional performance are established and maintained. The Education Act also specifies that schools should include extra-curricular activities, cultural heritage and traditional practices in their activities. Schools should be open at all times during school hours for inspections and visits by Ministry personnel. A principal who fails to perform is liable to disciplinary action by the Teaching Service Commission (Education Act, 1999).

Levin (2003) argues that government expectations are demonstrated in education policies. The Education Act (1999) mandates the publication of profiles of schools including attainment level in the core and foundations subjects, the program of study and assessment arrangement and national attainment targets in the St. Lucia National Gazette to inform the public on performance of schools. The external agenda directed by government policy has implications for schools, school leaders and staff. Glatter (2003) argues that educational management studies tend to ignore the fact that school leaders work within a governance framework. While empowering schools is high on the agenda, government continues to seek control of what and how schools work by defining and determining the product quality, which has been decided at the state or central level.

The next section sets out to identify other key features of culture to include in the culture-framework. Culture is made up of a multiplicity of interrelated variables (Trice and Beyer, 1984) but with regard to organizations Wilkins and Ouchi (1983) dispute that some of them are more essential than other or some may be more crucial to one organization than to another. Although there is no clear confirmation on which ones are more significant; several recurrent characteristics of organizational and school culture seem to surface in the work of researchers, thus indirectly indicating their importance in culture studies.

Beare et al's (1989) comprehensive list of school culture variables include: values, philosophy, ideology, aim, curriculum, language, structure, rituals, ceremonies, teaching/learning, operational procedures, rules, regulations, rewards and sanctions, metaphors, stories, heroes, physiological and social support, parental/community interaction, visual symbols namely facilities, equipment, artifacts, memorabilia, crest, mottos and uniforms.

A summary of the list from Schein's (2004) study of corporate culture include: espoused values, formal philosophy, group norms, shared meanings, mental models of linguist paradigms, behaviour regularities, embedded skills, habits of thinking, rules of the game and metaphors. Nias (1989) calls for an investigation of values and beliefs as they constitute the deeper layer of organizational culture.

2.3.1 Values and Beliefs

Hargreaves (1999) attempted to outline the main features of school culture as beliefs, attitudes and values, these being the underlying layer that are responsible for the

behavioural and external manifestations in the form of practices, routines, habits, ceremonies and rituals. The terms ideology, beliefs, symbols, language, rituals and myths are condensed under one umbrella called culture (Pettigrew, 1979). Schein's (1997, p. 8–14) ten characteristics that are associated with organizational culture include espoused values, formal philosophy and shared meanings.

Beare et al (1989) also noted the importance of values, philosophy and ideology in cultural framework for assessing school culture. Values and beliefs that are embodied in the underlying layer of culture, affect the noticeable behaviours and practices of a group. According to Pettigrew (1979, p.575) philosophy or ideology give impetus to organizations by promulgating attitudes and beliefs, usually based on moral obligations, or may be more appropriately explained as a way of 'mobilizing consciousness and action by connecting social burdens with general ethical principles'. Shared values and beliefs subtly or overtly influence the practices of teachers, students, parents and leaders. However, the paradox of espoused values and values in use is synonymous with espoused theory and theory in use (Argyris and Schon, 1974); espoused beliefs or belief in use may also exist in schools. But, since beliefs cannot be seen they must be inferred from behaviour (Argyris and Schon, 1978) and remarks. However in the attempt to understand organizations it is imperative to detect the possible gaps between what is espoused and what is actually done (Argyris and Schon, 1978) as very often they are incongruent.

Values are propositions of what is meaningful and right and important to people. Sergiovanni (1995) argues that shared values enrich school environments and foster commitment and collaboration of the whole school community. They are an integral part of culture that sustains commitment to practices in organizations. Hopkins (2001) contends that school improvement is underpinned by a steady and uniform set of shared values that should support the school improvement drive but most importantly the 'most successful forms of school improvement are characterized by a relatively consistent set of values' (p.24).

Philosophy

Bjerke (2001) defines organizational philosophy or creed as beliefs, values, aspirations and priorities. Values can be explicit or implicit. The implicit values are not likely to be reflected in the organization's philosophy.

Vision and Mission statements

Values and beliefs or the philosophy of organizations are captured in the vision and mission statements. Teachers who are committed to shared vision are guided by a sense of purpose and direction (Hargreaves A., 1995) and action. Shared vision helps to harness collective energy (Fullan, 1993) and collective attitude (Fink, 2005). A good atmosphere exist in some schools 'a sense of real culture of cooperation and achievement, you can be sure that this does not occur by accident. It is likely to be the result of a vision shared by all staff, good selection and training procedures and effective policies' (Fleming 2000, p. 31). But as explained by Daft (1999) although shared vision is an attractive ideal that inspires people to commit themselves to achieve the organizational goals, it is not easily attainable, 'its achievement require the cooperation of conflicting parties'(p.288). On a more pessimistic note Preedy et al (2003, p.5) posit if we accept the non rational model of organizations, places with diverse groups and interest then organizational culture 'may be characterized as ambiguous and anarchic...where shared and consistent values are seen as an abstraction, a myth shared by leaders for the purpose of control'. Morrison (2002, p. 58) also argues that organizations run the danger of using vision and mission as prescriptive mandates that 'risk narrowing down the activities of diverse groups and people into mind control and thought police, hardly the opening up of minds for which education stands'.

However Hoy and Miskel (2001, p.178) put forward 'values are conceptions of what is desirable...shared values define the character of the organization...and give the organization a sense of identity'. They further argue 'if the members know what their organization stands for, if they are supportive and aware of its values then they will probably be more cooperative and organizational life maybe more meaningful to them'. Nias (1999, p. 66) highlighted that values and beliefs are often ignored in culture studies in favour of behaviour: when this is done it weakens the culture; we 'ignore the most fundamental attribute of school cultures, that is they are rooted in a shared vision or a mission which is itself the manifestations of jointly held internalized beliefs and values'. She further argues that beliefs and values are the heart of particular culture.

Goals

There may be discrepancies between stated goals and what schools do in reality, but goals are desired outcomes that organizations or individual strive to attain. They concretize the

mission and provide direction for schools (Sergiovanni, 1995). Specific goals influence the decisions, tasks, structures to achieve them, but ambiguous goals hinder rational thinking and behaviour (Hoy and Miskel, 2001). When written in symbolic language they map the general course but when they are precise and exact, they may act as instrumental and directional control. They function as designs 'to program schools daily activities.... to gain instrumental power over what teachers are doing at a given moment and to provide ready measures of how well they are doing these tasks' (Sergiovanni, 1995, p. 159). From Bamberg and Andrews's (1991) perspective if a school's goal is to improve students' results in examinations, when this is achieved then the school can claim success. Leaders who are serious about school improvement according to Hopkins (2001) should possess the ability to communicate shared values and goals that focus on student learning and achievement. Collectively the shared beliefs, guiding principles, mission statements and goals 'form a covenant of shared values that function as the cultural center of the school-the repository of that which is held sacred by all' (Sergiovanni, 1995, p.161). However, Ryan (1993) cautions that internal complexities in schools created by the different mix of people each with their own set of values inevitably leads to conflicts and power struggle and would require constant negotiation.

Teachers' beliefs and expectations

Values and beliefs may not always be consistently shared. Consequently it is vital to understand if shared values and beliefs exist as they are one of the determinants of teacher behaviour. Teacher beliefs are good indicators of their actions and according to Pajares (1992, p.307) 'attention to the beliefs of teachers and teacher candidates should be a focus of educational research and can inform educational practices in ways that prevailing research agendas have not and cannot'. Sergiovanni (1995, p.160) argues statements of beliefs function a cement that bind people together to a common purpose, provide direction as they engage in working for the school- 'the more successful the school the stronger is this bond and the stronger is the link between beliefs, decisions and actions'. Schwartz and Davis (1981, p.33) view culture as 'a pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by members of an organization. These beliefs and expectations produce rules for behavioural norms that powerfully shape the behaviour of individuals and groups in organizations'.

2.3.2 Behavioural norms: structures; practices; processes; strategies.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) claim organizational culture consisting of structures, procedures and strategies and policies are not hard, nor invisible like values, but they are generally analysed in culture studies. The strategies, structures, policies and practices: constituents of the outer layer of culture in organizations are designed to achieve goals and therefore focus on all tasks necessary to accomplish them. In schools, these tasks include curriculum implementation, the leader's role in goal realization, teamwork, collaboration and participation, management and administrative tasks (Heck and Marcoulides, 1996). The empirical research: Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA) focused on the internal school environment, the school culture, and identifies key areas such as: developing appropriate structures that facilitate collaboration and empowerment; clear vision that is built on consensus; processes that enhance learning; and meaningful use of data to guide improvement strategies within the school (Harris and Hopkins, 2000). The Manitoba School Improvement Programme (MSIP) focused on cultural change within schools by: emphasizing the need to incorporate internal and external support; focusing on clear teaching and learning outcomes; teacher professional development; fostering unity through shared consensus, commitment and collaboration; and effective use of evaluation and performance management (Harris, 2000). El-Dor (2003) claims that culture can be explored under five main categories: policy; visible artifacts; and ideology- values and beliefs; structure; interpersonal relationships.

Structure

Stoll (2003) made specific reference to the importance of structure among the group of behavioural norms that are important in school culture studies. Both Stoll (2003) and Hopkins (2001) noted the interdependence between structure and culture. Schools that are well structured are organized around core ideals and values that direct how people conduct their work or define 'the way we do things around here' (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, p.4). Structure provides a framework within which people in an organization operate and endeavours to control and standardize distributive actions (Gronn, 2002).

The traditional structure depicts a typical pyramid with manger/leader at the top with everyone else in layers below. Effective as it may be in stable conditions, it can hinder and obstruct progress and growth in fluid and turbulent environments. Traditional structures are effective for supervision and control, but in complex environments people

need more flexibility freedom and responsibility to make decisions. People who are empowered do need a fluid structure, but also some form of boundaries are essential in schools even if impervious and fuzzy, to provide some guide as to how work is divided and what roles teachers are expected to play (Daft, 1999). Hargreaves (1999) explains that there are two types of structure: physical and social. The physical structure demarcates the position of lunchrooms, classroom layout; workshops will influence the social interactions in schools. The composition of the social structure includes how power is distributed, level of influence, position and authority; more so culture is dependent on the underlying structure. Hopkins (2001) argues that structure impact on working relationships that are facilitated by networks with defined procedures and channels that encourage maximum participation in schools.

Rules, regulations/policy

A bureaucratic structure depends on rules, regulations, procedures, mandate and authority to get people to do what is expected of them. While routine, standardization and recipes work well in stable environments with modest expectations, commitment and outstanding performance require something different: a loose structure and tight cultural environment. The bureaucratic and traditional concepts are based on the assumption that schools are linear, well organized and operate in a predictable environment. Characteristics of linear organizations include: discrete goals and tasks, measurable outcomes, operating procedures, clear line of authority, and management control in stable environments with loose culture (Gronn, 2002). Non-linear theory of organizations on the other hand assumes that schools are complex organizations but they operate in tight cultural environment (Sergiovanni, 1995). Peterson and Deal (2002) argue that the unwritten rules, though not spoken about, they influence everyone and exist in the deeper layer of school culture. Hoy and Miskel (2001) also agree that rules and expectation that are not written are intuitively picked up and learned by new members.

Handy (1993) outlines the two tensions, diversity and conformity, both equally important in organizational structure and culture. Conformity ensures standardization and standard procedures, control of process, central control, specialization and a standard product. Rules and procedures dominate this uniform environment. Catering for diversity is also critical in schools with diverse interactions stemming from varying expertise, meanings and understandings. How meanings are interpreted and how actions are perceived create a

deeper foundation for strong school culture. Handy (1993) agrees that conformity in school reduces cost, students can move freely between schools, and receive standard certification. But the need to experiment and nurture creativity that often do not succumb to logic is best facilitated in strong culture and loose structures (Gronn, 2002).

Schools will have diverse goals due to the responsibility placed upon them but their focus as outlined by Beare et al (1990) should be on student learning and all other goal generated activities should be subsumed under this prime goal. An enhancing structure facilitates goal achievement. According to Hopkins (2001, p.155) 'structures ... generate cultures which not only allow structures to work but also justify or legitimate the structure'. They are interdependent, and hence exploration of structure is particularly important in this culture research.

Ceremonies and rituals

Ceremonies are used to dramatize and strengthen values and beliefs, and the ritualistic daily activities bind and bond members (Deal, 1988) and strengthen social structure. The rituals observed in the day to day activities may be seen as routines to coordinate, integrate and motivate. Deal and Kennedy (1982) describe them as programmed day-to-day routines to reinforce the behavior expected in the organization.

Interpersonal Relationships/ Social Network

Other relevant practices of a strong school culture were revealed by Chapman and Harris (2004) from investigating leadership practices in ten failing schools and strategies used to improve and sustain standards in eight schools. Both studies show that poor relationships among students, staff and parents led to mistrust and low expectations, thus creating a negative culture. But some of the effective practices identified by both studies include: building team spirit and collaboration; focus on goals that generate school improvement or more precisely on teaching and learning; building a cohesive community with parents; creating a learning community with continuous learning and professional improvement to promote staff expertise; collecting and using data to inform and improve on practices; seeking external support; and lastly, purposeful leadership. Fullan (2001) argues that the foundation for successful school lie in working relationships among teachers, which includes collegiality, communication, trust, support and help, learning on the job, getting results job satisfaction and morale, all of which affect what goes on within a school.

2.3.3 Messages and statements about schools

Metaphors

The metaphors expressed by teachers portray what images they carry in their minds about the school. Some metaphors associated with schools such as factory reveals rigid mechanistic standards; happy family depicts support and care; and laissez-faire implies any thing is acceptable. They are analogies but when used they give a lucid and a clear indication of the how an object is perceived and how one thinks about a subject. Metaphors are not consciously chosen, they convey our beliefs and 'our values are most powerfully revealed by means of the comparisons we make' (Beare et al, 1989, p.188). Smircich (1983) also agrees that values, beliefs and assumptions that cannot be explicitly revealed are often captured in metaphors. They capture what is believed about the school (Bates, 1981) and explains how the organizations function (Morgan, 1986).

Stories and Myths

Stories and myths are common methods used to convey values and to keep traditions alive. The stories told also offer a glimpse of the school's past. The distinct beliefs of organizations, some of which are unconscious are mirrored in: myths and stories; ceremonies- forms of celebration and rituals-regular routines. They may help shape organizations (Bolman and Deal, 1997). Stories and myths may influence perceptions but they also reveal how the organization is perceived (Bjerke, 2001). Beare et al (1989) claim every organization has its fair share of doubtful stories and tales. Every culture every religion capture 'those things which are most difficult to put in words –like values for example- can be imaged in a story... it reinforces the culture by repeated tellings of it' (p.190).

According to the Deal (1988) myths are usually fictitious but they embody popular ideas. New recruits learn the ways of an organization from the myths, tales, and stories and from the key models or heroes (Handy and Aitken, 1990). Beare et al (1989) argue while myths they may be fictitious they are more 'true' than real life stories. They are inventions of groups or individuals who try to make sense of their reality as they perceive it. They are active powerful and influence what happens in schools. Myths often embody an ideology or they reinforce a philosophy.

Heroes

Heroes personify the values around which the organization is built and reinforce the values that members wish to sustain. They encourage emulation of characteristics and it would do well for school to cultivate some. They may be found among those within the school, past students who have gone on to achieve success or associates (Beare et al, 1989). They serve as inspirational and motivational source, and represent tangible expressions of the values that the organization seeks to reinforce and remember. Indeed, they embody and represent a school's core values (Deal, 1988, p. 217).

Visual artifacts

Visual artifacts described as school's livery, constitutes facilities and equipment, crest, mottos, memorabilia and uniform. They differentiate organizations and are indeed outward expressions of beliefs (Beare et al, 1989). The arrangement of facilities and hard structure, such as organization of classrooms and staff rooms, may influence teachers' interaction and relationships (Hargreaves, 1999).

Relationship with parents and community

Stoll (2003, p.96) pointed out that the community in which the school is located influences the school culture since the parents have their own perceptions of what 'a real school is'. The significance of the home, school and community involvement was also acknowledged by Beare et al (1989). This feature should not be overlooked, because Walker and Dimmock (2002, p.172) also posit that there is a continuous exchange or 'an interplay of cultural elements' between school, community, society and region which no doubt affect what happens inside the school and how well students learn.

2.4 Culture and role of leadership

To Greenfield, (1986, p.142) 'Leadership is a willful act where one person attempts to construct the world for others' and they may attempt to influence others to accept values that they uphold. Hopkins (2001) refers to a values leadership that involves building a consensus on values and beliefs that is supported by actions within the school. Leaders are vital for developing a common vision, motivating others to act in accordance with the vision, building commitment to shared goals, ensuring implementation and at the same time developing consistency within a community of teachers to bring about school improvement.

While principals are at the helm of the school, they are not the only ones who create vision. According to Staessens and Vandenbeerghe (1994, p.193) 'teachers are also creators and communicators of a vision, in other words a vision is not created by leaders, but is developed collectively through action and reflection'. Fullan (2003) also argue that school principals have a moral imperative which involves changing culture by harnessing the 'the passion and commitment of teachers, parents and others to improve the learning of all students (p.41).

On the other hand, Schein (1997, p.15) claims leadership and culture are intrinsically linked, to the extent that he refers to them as 'two sides of the same coin'. One creates the other. The culture predisposes the leadership that can function within it, and if leaders are not aware of the entrenched culture, they will be managed by it. The values and belief systems of the school, which originate from students, teachers, principal, parents and the community, form the intangible component of school culture. The other component of school culture relates to the functional or structural component where the values and beliefs are translated into norms and practices (Anderson, 1996).

2.4.1 Leadership values, beliefs and practices

Leaders champion and encourage manifestations of shared values and beliefs (Schein, 1997) that are supported in shared practices that enhance school performance. The optimum condition is one with a homogenous culture, shared values and common modes of behaviour for advancing the school's goals. However, cultural dynamics and complexity within organizations should not be overlooked as they give rise to diversity of meaning, expectations and behaviour. Under such conditions, micro-cultures flourish and extraordinary demands are placed on leadership to manage and maintain successful schools. In addition, the dynamics of internal school culture and external societal culture is a potential source for creating further tensions that influence school culture and collective effort. Hence organizational culture should be viewed as an ongoing process with shared responsibility among all participants, because each has the ability to alter or influence it (Angus, 1996).

A shared culture promotes flexibility, freedom and responsibility to make decisions that is better facilitated by a distributive form of leadership. Empowerment gives individuals more latitude to accomplish their jobs through distributive action (Daft, 1999), but distributed actions that are directed towards teaching and learning are more likely to

improve performance. Little (1990) and Timperley and Robinson (2003) support empowerment but indicate that vigilance is important, since in collaborative environments mutual support and camaraderie among colleagues sometimes take precedence over the tasks of teaching and learning. Then, leaders are challenged to keep teachers focused on achieving the primary purpose of the school, to ensure teachers teach and students learn, and avoid mistaking congeniality that does not support learning for collaboration (Hargreaves, A., 1995).

The literature on school leadership is replete with lists of strategies that leaders should employ and characteristics that leaders should possess if they are to lead successful schools. Harris (2003) posits that in the 1990s the effective leader was expected to demonstrate four main characteristics: identifying mission and goals; good school management; a high learning climate and a strong culture. Fullan (2002) identifies four level of leadership: the instruction leader, a first level leader, is devoted to this main goal; second level leader works to reduce the learning gap between students through analysis of data followed by action; third level ensures the success of other schools through social and moral obligation; fourth level the moral/spiritual leader works for the welfare of the planet and all humankind since he sees understands and connects to the bigger picture.

While the fourth level is highly inspirational and sounds good, in St. Lucia principals work within a frame that has been predetermined, by which performance is measured. The measure is very clear; it is the percentage of students who pass the minimum standards tests based on the national prescribed curriculum. Harris (2003) explains it in terms of externally imposed mandated decrees imposed by government policy. Angus (1996) argues that leaders are expected to be manipulators of culture, but there are a range of other influences that school principals have very little control over such as history of the school and national education policies among many others.

However school leaders do have some measure of control over what happen within the school and according to Hopkins (2003) school leadership should be linked with school improvement by adopting a whole school approach that is seen both at the level of practices in the classroom, and in the culture, specifically in the way people work in the school. Schools, like other organizations, require that people work to achieve mandates and hence conflicts may arise. Nevertheless, leaders who are likely to lead successful

schools are challenged to maintain the collective effort of teachers, promote viable strategies in an environment that enhances student learning, and to remain vigilant of conflicting culture that hinders school improvement.

Schools may require more than ‘the way we do things around here’ (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, p.4) but require leaders to take control and manage meanings or manage a community of minds, (Sergiovanni, 1995) which is a daunting task for one person. As Bell (2000) points out, leadership is central but no one person can manage schools alone, nor can they carry the burden of motivating others. Leader and staff must work as a team in a ‘collegial’ rather than a hierarchical environment.

In schools where leadership is non-hierarchical teachers work collaboratively and collegially in a culture that is more likely to enhance school improvement (Hargreaves, D. 1995). But Hargreaves A. (1995) believes terms like ‘collaborative’ and ‘collegiality’ are aspirations. They seem to exist in a continuum, they have different meanings in different contexts and are difficult to implement. In practice, there are different versions. Hargreaves A. (1995) specifically addressed contrived collegiality as a style of administrated, controlled collaboration and collegiality. Under such conditions, work is regulated compulsorily; teachers are mere implementers, activities are fixed and predicable and perhaps do not facilitate school improvement much. Hargreaves A. (1995) views contrived collegiality as managerial tricks. Instead, principals and teachers should develop collaborative working relationships built on trust that are more conducive to improvement. The process of building trust was not discussed.

2.4.2 Leadership styles

Leadership is expressed in different ways depending on where it is exercised and within what culture. Leithwood et al (1999) identified six leadership styles: instrumental (focuses on student learning); moral (pays attention to duties, values, commitment and obligation); participatory (expressed in shared decision-making); managerial (oriented to achieve goals and targets); contingent (adapted to meet demands within a context) and transformational (adopts a comprehensive approach to leading). Fullan (2003), Gronn and Ribbins (1996) and Bryman (1996) argue in favour of new leadership models; transformational, charismatic and visionary as the panacea for schools. The Hay Group (1998, p.9) also identified six leadership styles:

Coercive- do it now in this way; authoritative- let me tell you where we are going; affinitive- the most important thing is that we all get on with each other; democratic- we will make decisions together; pacesetting-watch me do it I'm setting the standard and coaching-lets explore what happened and identify what we can do differently next time.

Leadership style from Heck's (2002) perspective is conditioned by the values, beliefs and practices of principal that varies from one context to the other, implying that leadership maybe situated. Ribbins (2001) seem to support Heck (2002) by arguing that the school and the people within it create a complex environment with as many realities as there are individuals and that leadership requires understanding within the current environmental, institutional, historical, cultural and indigenous perspective.

Harber and Davis (2002) argue that it may be impractical to transport a model of leadership from the developed world to third world countries. Educational goals may be entirely different, as are cultures and ways of working. Schools may operate under different leadership styles, or combination of styles, or create their unique style. Blase and Anderson (1995) distinguish between open and closed styles of leadership, which either facilitate or impede improvement. Open leaders tend to be facilitative, democratic and empowering. They use culture to move organizational goals and diplomatic strategies to create increased opportunities and participation in a professional and humane school climate. Closed leaders are adversarial, authoritarian, dictatorial, bureaucratic and transactional. They employ contractual rewards to advance either individual or organizational goals.

Chapman (2003) argues the leadership model that is more likely to improve schools will be grounded in collaborative work, team building involving all the major stakeholders inclusive of principal, teachers and parents and support staff. Bell (2000) claims that leaders need to work collegially, but Hargreaves A. (1995) contends collegiality is an illusive dream and does not exist. On the other hand Sergiovanni (1995) posits that schools which operate as community families led by moral leaders are more likely to deliver quality education.

It appears that there is no clear blueprint on which style works best. It is also possible according to Beare et al (1990) that effective principals can be dictatorial or distributive, but they must all possess mastery of teaching and learning i.e. they must be educational leaders. They must understand and know the curriculum. Such leaders influence actions, relationships among people, structures (Riley, 1999) and other cultural variables to ensure that the curriculum is taught and students learn. Leaders' values, beliefs and practices contribute to the shaping of their organizational culture, but schools are not isolated from the culture or the expectations of the society and the government. This calls for the kind of leaders who can harmonize the expectations, values and beliefs of society with that of the teaching staff and parents, and also find ways of working to improve student learning. They make sense and work within that environment (Schein, 1997) which includes both society and school and indeed requires managing what Sergiovanni (1995) called a community of minds.

Schein (1997) encourage leaders to study their cultural environment to identify dysfunctional and functional elements in order to survive and fulfill the purpose of the organization. Though he was advising the corporate world, some of his wisdom - where applicable - may be valuable to school leaders. From Fink's (2005) perspective, leadership is judged by result. The result is demonstrated by the success of the school. The style of leading is secondary to school performance and whichever style can harness the sense of purpose and provide direction to achieve success within a particular environment should be regarded as successful.

However, Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995) indicate that effective schools are led by purposeful and firm leadership. This role is vital as cultural conflicts are likely to occur from various sources, including differences in values and beliefs between groups, community expectations, assigned roles, favouritism and social structure (among many others) that either stimulate or hamper the learning environment. Morgan (1986) upholds the view that fragmented cultures hinders processes within schools.

2.4.3 Sub-cultures in schools

Sub-cultures may not be an impediment to the organization, this happens when diverse values beliefs and practices affect coordination in the school (Brabander, 1993). Bolman and Deal (1997) seem to believe that differences exist in schools, and principals, staff, parents and students should find ways of working since conflicts will not disappear. Sub-

cultures will exist anyway because of diverse backgrounds and values. The challenge is how to craft the school environment to obtain maximum teacher productivity and efficiency for improving students' learning. Leaders may need to work purposefully to keep vision, values and belief systems aligned with school improvement and exercise firmness to ensure it influences and permeates all behaviours and practices that support learning in schools. However Deal (1988, p.210) posits 'sub-cultures are clearly evident to anyone who visits a school'. Hoy and Miskel (2001) ask whether schools possess one culture or a combination of sub-cultures.

Bennett (1993) explains that integrationist culture is based on homogeneity, but culture of ambiguity or fragmentation exists and gives rise to sub-cultures and very often in the study of organization culture, we may find several sub-cultures within it. They may arise from internal situations and be based on gender, subject department, physical division of school, or diverse mix of individuals but usually there is fluid movement between sub-groups. The homogenous culture functions in stable and predictable environments, (Sergiovanni, 1995), but in complex organizations like schools with uncertain, ambiguous environments, fragmentation and sub-cultures tend to flourish. This notion is supported by Angelides and Ainscow (2000) who argue that plural usage of the term culture appears in the school effectiveness literature, leading one to believe that there are multiple cultures or sub-cultures in a single context.

School culture consists of values and beliefs that are shared by a group of people from diverse backgrounds. According to Starratt (2002) students bring their different sub-culture from home and the community to school. The values and beliefs may be different or entirely opposite. Teachers also create their own sub-cultures. When sub-cultures do not support the overall organizational values and purpose, or there is no affiliation to them, they may be detrimental to the achievement of organizational goals. Peterson and Deal (1998) describe these cultures as toxic where fragmentation, apathy, purposelessness and negative or opposing values exist. Hargreaves A. (1995) identified four contrasting culture that may exist in schools: fragmented individualism where the teacher seeks refuge behind closed classroom doors; balkanization – usually predominant in secondary school, where division and separate groups prevail with divergent values and beliefs competing for power, position or ascendancy; Contrived collegiality-imposed collaboration; Collaborative culture – common values and agreement and team work.

On the other hand, sub-cultures may be beneficial to organizations. Their challenge to the *status quo* may avoid compliance to norms and lethargy and force change initiatives. Such groups share the basic values but are given the liberty to express them through various mediums (Bennett, 1993) that are not damaging to the organization. Schools may exist with inconsistencies and contradictory values at times, when espoused values do not always match actions and practices (Meyerson and Martin, 1987). Schools may be challenged to implement diverse goals, due to the responsibility placed upon them at different times by different stakeholders; however the focus of leaders as outlined by Beare et al (1990) should be on student learning. Deal (1988) explains that sub-cultures exist in all schools. Students and teachers create their own sub-cultures, the structure and procedures in the school may promote sub-cultures, and more sub-cultures will surface and thrive in the absence of a strong school culture. Successful schools require all sub-groups to keep moving in one general direction (Deal, 1988). Hopkins et al (1996) went on to argue that successful schools have collaborative cultures which according to Nias et al (1989) respect individuality and value the existence of groups but at the same time recognize that a culture of collaboration is more favourable in schools.

This section highlights the role of leadership to justify inclusion in a culture framework to investigate school culture. Values and beliefs shape practices but school leaders act as gatekeepers of the schools, they are potentially placed to harness the collective power of values, beliefs and supporting practices to promote a lively community of learning (Deal and Peterson, 1998). It is timely to consider some empirical research on school culture to understand how well cultural issues are addressed, and how they may further contribute to the development of a conceptual framework.

2.5 Empirical Research on School Culture

The different definitions of culture, the interchangeable use of terms, and research methodology contribute to the deficiencies of culture research. Culture, tone, atmosphere and ethos are usually studied from a qualitative/interpretative stance whereas quantitative/positivist is the preferred method for climate; seldom are both paradigms employed (Prosser, 1999). Cheng argues:

Many recent studies and debates in this area suffer from a number of major methodological and conceptual drawbacks, such as confusion in concepts,

arbitrary use of cultural terms, over attribution to cultural effects and ignorance of the level of analysis.

(Cheng, 2000, p. 208)

This will no doubt have consequences on the findings. Different researchers have undertaken several empirical cultural studies in the past. Cheng (1993) undertook a quantitative study on organizational culture and effective schools in 54 secondary schools in Hong Kong. He investigated the relationship between school culture and ideology (values and beliefs), and how behavioural practices (leadership, structure, interaction, attitude and commitment) and student achievement differ in effective schools with strong cultures and ineffective schools with weak cultures. His findings on school ideology suggest that schools' values beliefs and assumptions strongly influence school performance. Davis (2003) also conducted a quantitative study in China to investigate the beliefs of teachers and students, and the implications these beliefs might have on language teaching and learning. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the total population of 18 teachers and from 97 students out of 352 and analysed using SPSS statistical package. The findings reveal that both groups held similar and opposing beliefs.

Both studies are relevant given that beliefs shape, guide and influence behaviour and practices. But beliefs are subtle and deep-seated: a quantitative investigation using one survey instrument and subjecting the data to quantitative analysis may not provide a comprehensive portrayal of beliefs or culture. The integrity and soundness of these studies could have been enhanced by interpretative approach using observations and interviews.

On the other hand, Pritchard et al (2005) conducted qualitative research in 18 district schools in the United States, in seven high culture rating and seven low culture rating school districts. The aim was to determine the relationship between seven cultural categories of behaviour and practices (social/people, educational programs/climate, codes/rules, extracurricular activities, physical facilities, location/community involvement, and special feature/uniqueness) and student achievement student attitude. Onsite visits, students' comments and essays, interviews, documentary analysis and student achievement were used as sources of evidence in this research. The multiple sources of evidence and the level of analysis revealed the robust nature of this research.

The findings imply that school culture and student performance are not isolated from the district culture. The major source of data was based on students' perceptions from analysis of essays; hence this research acknowledged the voices of students, often overlooked stakeholders in educational research.

Taylor and Sobel (2001) also conducted an empirical study in the United States to investigate pre-service teachers, beliefs on their behaviour and practices in the classroom. The data was collected via questionnaires that included both closed and open questions. Teachers wrote comments to the open questions and thus the researchers considered that it provided qualitative data. The study confirms what is well established - that beliefs drive practices - but the methodology is questionable. While qualitative data provide in-depth information on beliefs, caution should be exercised in treating superficial responses to questionnaires as qualitative data. Zohar, Degani and Vaakin (2001) conducted a similar study regarding teachers' beliefs on high and low level achieving students in Israel. The results from the forty interviews with teachers revealed that high level thinking was not suitable for low level thinking students. Teachers' beliefs may influence their actions in the classroom and might have implications as to how instruction is delivered to low level thinking students. The deficiency of this research arises from the use of one research instrument: the study could have been more robust from data triangulation.

It also appears that very few culture studies have been undertaken in schools in the developing world. Scheerens (1999) identified the following three effectiveness studies: Glewwe et al's (1995) research was undertaken in primary schools in Jamaica; Van de Werk et al's (1999) study was based in Indonesia, and Nyagura and Riddell (1993) researched secondary schools in Zimbabwe. Scheerens (2001) alleged that the majority of studies undertaken in the third world tend to investigate physical inputs and not internal characteristics related to school working environment. Glewwe et al's (1995) study mentioned above sought to determine from a quantitative stance factors that contribute to school effectiveness. While it was not a culture study, they investigated school organization climate and control (community involvement, autonomy of school, work-centered and orderly environment) which are aspects of school culture; pedagogical inputs (time on task, curriculum, teacher qualification); and pedagogical processes (teaching practice in the class). The study concludes that organization climate and control,

and pedagogical inputs had very little impact on student achievement, though pedagogical processes were slightly correlated with student achievement. Reliability of the findings could have been enhanced by the application of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Third world research seems to equate improvement with amount of resources and inputs available (Scheerens, 2001). Scheerens (1999, p.37) on the other hand, complains about the absence of a theoretical framework, stating 'there is no explicit theoretical framework although interesting interpretations of the results contextualized to the particular national context is given'. Fuller (1987) in his work on the factors which raise school achievement in the third world asks some interesting questions which this study might help to provide answers to. His questions relate to conditions in the school that might influence student achievement, for instance management practices, social structures, and the relevance of processes and the social practices. Later Fuller and Clarke (1994) proposed that part of the solution to raising achievement may lie in understanding cultural conditions, specifically classroom culture. The limited identified studies from the third world do not offer much help in moving this framework forward. Few of them focus on aspects of culture. They suffer from methodological issues or absence of theoretical framework.

In this current study the work of James et al (2006) may be a more appropriate path to guide and understand the relevance of culture although their study was not a study of culture *per se*. Their robust research married school effectiveness with culture by identifying a wide range of characteristics that produce a strong dynamic culture. James et al (2006) undertook interpretative research using interviews and observations to find out what behaviours and practices make schools effective. They identified a similar set of features to that identified earlier by Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore (1995) but in addition identified two others: the school and the community; and the overall approach. Furthermore, they identified six characteristics: leadership; mindset; teaching team; efficient organization and management; engagement of parents; and support from wider community, that, according to them, 'sustain the core culture of the school, the central characteristic' (p.128). They further explain:

We have explored the ways in which the six key characteristics contribute to the central characteristic. The main point to emerge is that each characteristic

contributes to establishing and sustaining the school culture. It is focused on the main task of ensuring effective teaching and enriching teaching and learning.

(James et al, 2006, p.150)

While the aim was to identify characteristics that make schools effective, this seems to be the best indirect study of school culture done so far. They acknowledged that leadership is essential, but teachers too contribute immensely to the practices that enhance learning environment in schools they concluded that it was indeed the culture of teaching and learning which supports these practices and thus made these schools effective.

This current study is fundamentally different to James et al (2006) in that it seeks to understand what values (vision and mission statements) and beliefs and expectations-the inner layer of culture; and the outer layer of behaviours and practices guide the two schools. Hence it seeks to interweave two levels of culture, the underlying level and the outer level. It considers the influence of teachers and their contribution to the school culture puzzle.

2.6 Critique of Empirical Research on Culture

Review of some of empirical cultural studies identified above reveals the type of deficiencies alluded to by Prosser (1999), that cultural research tends to use mainly one paradigm; (Cheng, 1993; Davis, 2003), or a superficial application of both paradigms (Taylor and Sobel, 2001); or use one research tool (Davis, 2003; Cheng, 1993); to explore culture. The methodological integrity and depth of the findings are compromised by the issues identified above.

However this study shares some common features with the previous studies on school culture identified above. Cheng (1993) compared ideology (values and beliefs) and practices in different schools from a quantitative stance. Davis (2003) also investigated beliefs of teachers and students from a quantitative standpoint. Taylor and Sobel (2001) and Zohar et al (2001) applied qualitative research to investigate teachers' beliefs. The former employed only questionnaires whereas the latter used only interviews. Pritchard et al (2005) use multiple sources of evidence based on student attitude and achievement variables of culture to compare and predict culture of schools and district.

This study is different from a methodological standpoint. It intends to draw on multiple sources of data: observations; documents; interviews and narrative to make sense of the school culture from an interpretative stance. Another significant difference lies in the wide coverage of cultural variables, and the investigation of the two levels of culture: values and beliefs the intangible layer; behaviour and practices the outer layer, and the role of leadership in two schools.

It pays attention to Prosser's (1999) opinion that empirical culture studies usually explore observable, behavioural characteristics, which they refer to as culture; school culture research rarely focus on culture by itself, but frequently in relation with effectiveness, or improvement studies. It heeds Nias's (1989) concern that research on culture seems to have disregarded the investigation of values and belief systems that are at its core, but instead looks for one or a group of practices to explain beliefs, without identifying the exact nature of that belief. Pajares (1992) also argues that beliefs of teachers have been overlooked and in spite of arguments by other researchers that teacher's beliefs should be a focal point of research as confirmed by Nespor (1987, p.317):

In spite of the arguments that people beliefs are important influences on the ways they conceptualize tasks and learn from experience ... little attention has been accorded to the structure and functions of teacher beliefs about their roles, their students and the subject matter areas that they teach and the schools that they work in.

Hoy and Miskel (2001, p.188) also acknowledge that although 'frameworks for examining school culture in terms of values, beliefs, and ideology are available; the determination of culture at this level of analysis is not easy'. Hargreaves (1998) also noted that an apparent framework seems to be missing for the conduct of in-depth study on school culture.

However, it was crucial to understand some of the difficulties associated with analyzing culture in order to seek ways to overcome them during this research. Some of the difficulties arise from lack of focused definitions, multilayered aspects of culture and the relevant characteristics for studying school culture. This study intends to overcome some of the identified weakness by undertaking the exploration of the values, beliefs (the

deeper layer of culture) as well as the practices (outer layer) of both teachers and principal within the two schools. A definition of culture was established to avoid uncertainty, assist in identifying some of the research questions and provide a general direction for this research. This study has addressed Hargeaves (1998) concern, another weakness of culture research, due in part to the absence of an appropriate framework, by constructing a conceptual framework to guide this study. The extensive review of characteristics from both corporate and school cultural research from different researchers identified earlier in the literature including: Beare et al (1989); Schein (1997); Chapman and Harris (2004); Harris and Hopkins (2000) and Harris (2000) were undertaken to identify the relevant features that will be investigated in this research.

2.7 Culture Framework

Some of the main features for analyzing school culture are incorporated in the first part of the culture framework. The second part of the framework addresses the contribution of leadership by exploring leadership practices and styles and the influence of homogenous or sub-cultures on the cultural paradigm in the two schools in St Lucia. It may enhance our understanding of Harber and Davis (2002) argument that it is impractical to transport models of school leadership to different contexts.

Table 2.1 Culture framework

Part 1	history of school; education policy	
	Deeper layer of culture intangible	Values captured in vision and mission statements Goals, beliefs and expectations
	Outer layer of culture tangible	Behavioural norms: structure- regulations, policies, rituals practices- teaching and learning; strategies and processes- performance management, rewards and sanctions, ceremonies Interpersonal relationships consisting of communication, commitment and collaboration, social support.
	Metaphors, stories and myths; heroes, visual artifacts Parental and community support	
Part 2	leadership practices and styles	
	Sub-culture	

2.8 The Direction of this Research

Nias (1989) argues that many writers stress that educational practices are entrenched in values, beliefs and assumptions. Shared vision and mission of schools stem from underlying deeply held beliefs and values that lie at the centre of school cultures. Thus, to understand the culture of a school, it may be necessary to establish what values and beliefs are shared and deeply held by school members. Nias (1989) goes on to posit that there is a dearth of research findings to establish the connection between values and beliefs and practices and calls for more empirical evidence from comparative case studies of individual school cultures to understand the link between the values and beliefs and the observable practices, if we are to speak about school culture convincingly.

Empirical research on the link between value and philosophical systems and teachers' roles is rare and seldom considered when studying culture (Marshall, 1993). Hence, this study is timely and well located to add to this body of limited knowledge on culture, by exploring the values beliefs and assumptions based on vision/mission statements and the culture variables in the two schools. The framework responds to Hargreaves's (1998) contention that teachers and researchers are beginning to embrace the influence of school culture but they lack a conceptual framework and the exploratory tools to investigate it.

A school's beliefs, values and expectations are manifested in the vision and mission statements that are often written and visibly displayed. But the question is; are they supported by the schools goals, the behaviour and practices of teachers and principals, to the physical structures and facilities? Could culture possibly be the missing link (Wagner and Masden-Copas, 2002) required to improve school performance in St. Lucia? Researchers like Sergiovanni (1995); Hopkins (2001); Paterson and Deal (1998); and Hargreaves (1995) suggest that culture may be the missing variable in the school improvement equation. Wagner and Masden-Copas (2002) also suggest that school culture may have a greater influence on school improvement than the strategic plans, curriculum reform, assessment, evaluation, and effective school strategies that have been applied to achieve school effectiveness. These arguments highlight the relevance of this research on school culture but, most importantly, this research will add to the body of existing research in the developing world, and specifically to the body of culture research, which, Scheerens (1999) and Fuller and Clarke (1994) indicate is lacking at this point.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter identified the difficulty encountered in defining and analysing culture, and established the definition of culture that will guide this study. It responds to the weaknesses of culture research identified by Prosser (1999) in terms of vagueness of definition and Hargreaves's (1998) concern regarding lack of a conceptual framework by constructing a framework to guide this study. It addresses Hoy and Miskel's (2001) argument on the lack of analysis of culture at the level of values and beliefs, and finally the concern expressed by Pajares (1992) and Nespor (1987) on the scarcity of research on teachers' values and beliefs. The originality of this research stems from the methodology and the exploration of values in vision and mission statements, and beliefs and expectations the inner layer of culture; and the outer layer of structures, practices, strategies and processes.

Hoy and Miskel's (2001) comment on the difficulty of analysis at the level of values and belief call for a robust and detailed research design to address this concern. The next chapter describes and justifies the methodology. The primary secondary and subsidiary questions that guide this study are outlined. The data sources required to answer the research questions and the rationale for the selection of a range of different research tools to investigate the culture in the two schools are explained. An overview of data collection and analysis method is presented, followed by a discussion on the application of validity reliability and triangulation in interpretative research.

CHAPTER 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to analyze via case studies the organizational culture of two primary schools in St Lucia. The study was guided by the following two main questions:

- 1. What features contributed to shaping and maintaining the culture in the two schools?**
- 2. What is the influence of leadership and sub-culture on the overall school culture in the two schools?**

The first main question points to the following secondary and subsidiary research questions.

A school culture is shaped by the history of the school (Stoll, 2003) and the government educational policies (Levin, 2003; Glatter, 2003).

Secondary question:

- 1. What is the influence of the school's history and the education policy on the culture of the school?**

This question points to the two subsidiary questions:

- What is the influence of the school's history on the culture of the school?
- What is the influence of the national education policy on the culture of the school?

As explained in the literature, organizational culture is shaped by a combination of features: visual symbols; values, beliefs and expectations; structure and policies; rituals and ceremonies; interpersonal relationships; metaphors myths and stories; heroes; parental involvement and leadership among many others. To examine and understand organizational culture requires an investigation of what features exist and how they interact to shape and maintain the culture of each school.

The deeper layer of culture

Moreover the shared invisible layer of values, beliefs and expectations may influence the actions and behaviour of the organizational members. That which is important and

valued; the core beliefs of what organizations are about are articulated in the vision and mission statements. Sergiovanni (1995) argues that goals operationalize the school mission. Shared vision harnesses collective effort (Fullan, 1993). School members also uphold their own beliefs (Pajares, 1992) which may or may not be congruent with that of the organization.

The outer layer of culture

According to Deal and Kennedy (1982) the outer layer of culture in organizations consisting of structures, procedures and strategies and policies are usually analysed in culture studies. Heck and Marcoulides (1996) argue that teamwork, collaboration and participation and management and administrative tasks are designed to achieve the purpose of the organization. Beare et al (1989) explain that metaphors, stories, myths and heroes are good mediums for deciphering school culture. Stoll (2003) speaks about the input of parents since their perceptions also influence culture of a school.

Secondary question:

- 2. What features are evident in the work of the school and how do they contribute to shaping and maintaining the culture of each of the schools?**

This secondary question was explored through the following subsidiary questions.

Questions on inner layer of culture:

- What values are encapsulate in the vision, mission, are they supported by school's goal and to what extent are they shared by the staff and the principal?
- What beliefs and expectations are expressed by the teachers and the principal of each school and are they shared?

Questions on outer layer of culture:

- What structure and policies, practices and strategies guide the school?
- What is the influence of interpersonal relationship/ social network on the work of the school?

Other relevant questions:

- What messages are convey about the school through visual symbols, metaphors, stories, myths and heroes?
- What is the influence of parental involvement on the culture of the school?

Schein (2004) posits that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin. However the cultural dynamics, complexity within schools and external context are contributing conditions for micro-cultures to flourish, and extraordinary demands are placed on leadership (Angus, 1996). The second main question points to the following secondary and subsidiary questions:

Secondary question:

3. What is the influence of school leadership on the school culture?

This question was investigated through the subsidiary question:

- What practices and styles were demonstrated by the school leader?

Secondary question:

4. What is the influence of sub-cultures on the overall school culture?

This study employed a form of interrogation (Brown and Dowling, 1998) to systematically enquire and investigate (Morrison, 2002) the features and the role of leadership in the two primary schools in St. Lucia from an interpretive standpoint.

The research path will be discussed below.

3.2 Research Paradigm

Guba and Lincoln (1998) define paradigm as the philosophical belief systems and values that guide the ontological, epistemological and methodological choices of research enquiry. The paradigms, whether interpretive or positivist, are rooted in their respective ontology, epistemology and methodology to create their own domain (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Educational research is frequently studied from a qualitative or quantitative standpoint or a combination of the two methods. The qualitative method is governed by the interpretive paradigm. Cohen et al (2003, p.22) explained that the main endeavour of the interpretive paradigm is to 'understand the subjective world of human experience'. Schwandt (1988) further explains that the interpretivist attempts to clarify and understand how meaning is constructed, by engaging and deciphering the meaning conveyed in the language, actions and interactions of people, or situations in the environment. This study examined interactions and behaviour within two schools to interpret how the teachers and principals make sense of their own reality. Hence the interpretive approach was more appropriate for this study as it facilitated 'the study of things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998 p.3). The examination of school culture required interacting, negotiating and developing close

relationships with the school staff to reconstruct meaning which could be better facilitated by using the qualitative method.

3.3 Research design

The paradigm or the basic beliefs that guide the investigation (Guba and Lincoln, 1998) is link to the research design and the methodology. Every research study is guided by a structure, which acts as a map, with various steps to guide the research process. This map is created by reflecting and shaping ideas based on objectives and research questions, up to the process of interpretation (Radnor, 2001). It operationalizes the process from general to specific, from abstract to concrete (Cohen et al, 2003) and thus forces the researcher to descend the ladder of abstraction and develop a guide to conduct the research.

3.3.1 Qualitative method

The qualitative method is a naturalistic mode of enquiry that seeks to investigate real-world conditions, however the data tend to be context specific (Best and Khan, 1998), cannot be easily replicated, or used for generalizing. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998, p.42) 'qualitative researchers study spoken and written records of human experience'. Stake (1998, p. 86) argues 'some case studies are qualitative, some are not'. This research is located within the interpretive paradigm and qualitative method hence it is a qualitative case-study that employed diverse data collection tools to furnish detailed and in-depth information on the two schools.

3.3.1.1 Case study

Case studies permit the construction of an apparent boundary to study complex interactions (Schostak, 2002) within them. The term 'case study' is used as a framing mechanism to enclose the two schools within an imaginary boundary to subject them to intensive investigation and to collect a significant amount of data on each school. This is not unusual, since case study can be built on a single unit (one case), or more than one (multiple cases) within the same study (Yin, 2003). It allows the researcher to throw the spotlight on a bounded entity to facilitate the study of social meanings and networks through in-depth mode of enquiry (Schostak, 2002). From Borg and Gall (1989, p.402) explanation, 'a case study in its simplest form involves an investigator who makes a detailed examination of a single subject or group or phenomenon'. They further explained that it requires the collection of a vast amount of data in order to produce in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, and often incorporates a variety of qualitative data

collection methods. Stake (1998) said it is a purposive and concentrated inquiry into a unit.

The case study approach has several strengths. It enabled this research to identify, select and separate the two schools base on location, enrollment and examination results from the external context (Yin, 2003). This was useful: since this study examined culture in two schools that were similar in many ways with some contrasting features. It is a popular mode of naturalistic enquiry for small-scale research (Evans, 1984), particularly if manpower and resources are limited. Due to the focused spotlight on each school, it allowed an in-depth study of an intricate set of interactions and elements of culture within each one that contributed to the overall understanding of the school culture. As explained by Wellington (2000), case studies have several attractions; they are enjoyable, interactive and insightful. They are grounded in reality and therefore hold the attention of the readers.

However, case studies have limitations. The inherent weakness due to the small sample size requires caution in attempting to generalize findings; however the intention was not to generalize but to provide in-depth material about the phenomenon under study, to increase understanding on school culture. Case studies are subjective, and researchers are reminded to retain a detached stance of objectivity to maintain the integrity of the data. Stake (1998, p.104) argues they tend to be context specific, however one can learn from a single negative case, which can help to refine theory and establish limits of generalizing, and 'the utility of case research to practitioners and policy makers is in extension of experience'.

3.4 Rationale for sample selection

Two schools, Blossom and Peabright from the same geographic location were chosen for the case study. They are located in rural communities from the same Education District. They are supervised by the same Education Officer. They appear to be similar in terms of students' background and parental occupation and qualification of staff and principal. They differ in the quality of the physical structure and enrollment. Blossom has a superior physical structure with spacious classrooms but it is experiencing a steady decline in enrollment. Peabright is smaller with less space but the student enrollment is increasing. Students entered the schools at age 5, with no previous exposure to pre-schools. Six years

later, after exposure to a common national curriculum, all students of grade 6 sit the national standardized examinations. Another difference between the two schools is exhibited in student attainment in national minimum standards examinations. The evidence from the St. Lucia's Educational Evaluation and Examinations Unit (1999–2005) on students' attainment for the two schools illustrates that students' performance at Peabright has been consistently higher than that at Blossom for seven years, and Peabright overall school mean performance has been higher than the national mean. On the other hand, Blossom's school mean has been lower than the national mean. The national mean is based on the examination scores of all students who sit the national minimum standards examination. The difference in student attainment in examinations in the two schools was consistent from 1999 to 2005 up to the time of data collection.

The selection of the two schools as a unit for case study indirectly influenced the choice of participants. Eight teachers from each of the schools, one from each grade level, and the two principals participated in the interviews. Each school has eight grade levels. The number of teachers and classes per grade level vary in the two schools. Peabright has two classes and two teachers for all grade levels but one, but Blossom has one class and one teacher for most grades except three. Hence only one teacher per grade was selected to keep the number of interviewees even for both schools. The selection was done by randomly withdrawing one of the two names from a bag. The sample was fairly representative since more than fifty percent of the staff from each school participated in the interview. Several research tools were used to gather different types of data for breadth of coverage, to triangulate for data integrity and to establish validity and reliability or truth-value of the material.

3. 5 Research Tools

Based on Yin's (2003) advice, interview, observations and documents were used as research tools, to gather the same type of qualitative data from each case. The choice of research tools was based on their suitability for collecting the research material required (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998), to answer the research questions on school culture.

3.5.1 Interviews

The interview questions were piloted with two randomly chosen teachers from each of the two schools. It was a worthwhile exercise as it helped in clarify and reword some of the questions, and to estimate the time required with each interviewee. It provided an

opportunity to focus on specific issues which may have been overlooked (Janesick, 1998) and to make appropriate changes before collection of the actual data for the main study. It offered the opportunity to practice voice projection, pitch and intonation, and to become familiar with the dictation machine. Interview is a powerful method of gathering information on subjective issues through dialogue.

The interviews were conducted over a period of four weeks, during the observation period in the two schools. Semi-structured interview was chosen instead of unstructured or structured. The former is unfocused and the freedom given to participants can provide a wealth of irrelevant material, whereas the latter is too focused and limits freedom to explain or change sequence of questions if required. The semi-structured interview which combined elements of both, guided the interview conversation with the eight teachers from each school. The twelve semi-structured interview questions appear in Appendix 1.

The interview schedule was not rigid, the flexibility enabled adequate coverage, but the order of questions was changed to suit the particular issues raised by the teachers or the topic of discussion. The two-way 'conversation with a purpose' (Burgess, 1984 p.102) provided rich data to answer the questions and to fulfill the purpose of the study. Moreover this semi-structured interview enabled collection of broad data for the same questions from the teachers and principal of both schools. The process was not straightforward as the study required gathering information that had 'truth value' (Walker, 1985), based on what participants believed, valued, and perceived about the school, fellow teachers and students. Hence beliefs and expectations, aspects of the inner layer of school culture were captured during this exercise. Sometimes interviewees may not speak the truth about a sensitive issue if it reflects negatively on their performance or organization, or if it compromised job safety (Walker, 1985). To gain confidence both interviewee and interviewer signed a privacy contract prior to the interviews. Responses were recorded on a hand-held dictation machine, with accompanying notes to capture everything that was revealed at the time. Probing was used to add the dimension of depth to the data, but not for swaying or prejudicing responses. It was stopped immediately when signs of discomfort such as sighing, fidgeting, rolling eyeballs or closing of eyelids became obvious.

Schein (1997) advised researchers to be vigilant of their own prejudices and examine their own assumptions and values, because often they enter a situation with assumptions of how organizations should work. The aim was not to pre-judge but to listen and observe, and to direct the conversation solely for the purpose of obtaining information, in order to understand and examine the culture of each of the schools. One interview was conducted per day. Interview data were transcribed and a hard copy was given to the teacher the day after interviewing for verification, and to omit issues which might create discomfort before analysis and inclusion in the thesis. Teachers, principals and researcher provided their own interpretations and meanings (Miles and Huberman, 1994) on practices, processes, procedures and interpersonal relationships; aspects of the outer layer of school culture, therefore to reduce biased interpretation, interview data from the different interviewees were compared for confirmation and proof of truth. The researcher was not detached from the environment hence it was difficult to separate external information from personal beliefs and convictions when deciphering information (Miles and Huberman, 1994), but the problem was minimized by continuous reflection and adopting a detached mental stance during the entire process of interpreting interviewees' responses. The gentle reminder 'Whose voice is this', assisted in disentangling researcher's and interviewees' beliefs. As much as possible the integrity of the information was maintained by triangulating different sources of data on the same sub-theme that was captured with different research tools. The different types of data were carefully analysed and compared.

Analysis of interview data

Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to conceptualization of the data as the first step in data analysis. It involves careful examination, categorizing and tabulating (Yin, 2003). The interview questions were constructed to elicit information on the sub-themes. Flick (1998) suggests that interview transcripts could be interpreted by reducing the narrative texts through paraphrasing, summarizing and categorizing. Wellington (2000) refers to this process as data reduction that deals mainly with sorting themes, clusters of themes and categories by immersing and reflecting on the data, then taking it apart and recombining bits. The transcripts were read several times to familiarize, to understand and to conceptualize what was said and not said. It required deliberation, reflection and comparison during the entire process to disentangle the complex network of ideas related to the sub-themes that emerged from the transcripts.

The transcripts were taken apart in different bits, by closely examining words, phrases, sentences, or phrases that addressed concepts (Strauss et al 1990). They were linked to the themes or the issues identified in the secondary and subsidiary research questions outlined at the beginning in this methodology chapter. The sections of quotes, from teachers and principals that addressed a specific sub-theme were grouped under the related themes where they fitted best. A sample of interview transcripts appears in appendix 2. The sub-themes with related quotes were used to construct the evidence in chapter 4. A deliberate decision was taken to present several actual quotes from teachers and principals in the presentation of findings to enable the research to stand up to scrutiny. They were then summarized, analyzed, interpreted and compared under the themes in chapter 5.

Huberman and Miles (1998) commented on the difficulty in using qualitative data due to the questionable mode of data analysis derived from subjective interpretation that may lead to variable conclusions. For this reason, the quotes of the interviewees were included to provide sufficient information, so that another researcher may understand the relationship between actual data, interpretation-analysis and conclusions, thus establishing an 'audit trail' (Punch, 1998) for this research. The arguments that quantitative data analysis is transparent and can be compared and reproduced by other researchers are often presented in favour of quantitative research. Often it is argued that this is not the case with qualitative data analysis, which utilizes comparison of abstract concepts resulting in even more abstraction (Punch, 1998). The systematic approach of guiding the reader with the actual quotes of teachers to the researcher's interpretation and analysis is an attempt to overcome this skepticism and to establish the transparency of this piece of research. In narrating the themes or elements of culture the voices of the teachers were used according to Stakes (1998) to help tell the story well and to tell it all in the presentation of findings.

3.5.2 Observations

Although the interviews provided invaluable information on culture, 'it has often been through sight visits and observation that we have seen the power of positive culture in action' (Peterson and Deal, 1998, p.28). Observation is an indirect form of enquiry that situates humans under a microscope. It draws out defensiveness or self-restraint actions and deception (Reason, 1998) to create a serious difficulty for the researcher. As Wellington (2000, p.93) suggests, 'observation requires time, acceptance, carefully

negotiated access, tact' since humans tend to behave the way they ought to and may keep up the pretence for an extended period when under observation. I, in the role of observer-as-participant without actively participating in the actual environment under study (Adler and Adler, 1998), observed and collected information on incidents, actions and practices strategies and daily tasks; aspects of the outer layer of school culture. The data was recorded from a semi-detached stance with no attempt to influence or manipulate subjects.

There was no tight schedule; the aim was to gather information to furnish answers to the research questions. Daily field notes were written on the spot in a relatively natural setting as incidents related to each of the following behavioural norms were observed: curriculum implementation; teaching and learning; professional development; monitoring performance; structure; communication and interaction; commitment; collaboration; social support; rules and regulations; rituals and ceremonies; rewards and sanctions; parental and community involvement. Notes were made on visual symbols and leadership style, practices and sub-groups. The observation notes for each school were recorded in separate notebooks and are available for perusal. The data obtained from observation were carefully deciphered and compared to interviews findings in Chapters 4, under the sub-themes where applicable.

Interpretation of behaviour was not easy and events that could not be understood were omitted during the analysis of the material because of the difficulty in deciphering the deeper meaning behind people's actions, and to avoid observer bias. The observer-as-participant relied on impressions, intuition and reflection to decipher and discern behaviour from subjective interpretation of events and to categorize them in the appropriate sub-themes. Schein (1997, p.17) cautions that the tangible aspects of culture are 'easy to observe and very difficult to decipher' and would require deeper levels of enquiry by comparing with the other sources of data to understand whether they were indeed the way the schools worked rather than accidental occurrences. The practices that were observed were also compared to the interview scripts since 'observation produces especially great data when combined with other methods' (Adler and Adler, 1998, p.89).

3.5.3 Documents

Documents already exist in a definite form and cannot be individually designed to suit a specific research purpose unlike other research tools, but the existing data is drawn on as

a source of evidence (Johnson, 2004). Prior to visiting the schools, the following documents published by the Ministry of Education St. Lucia were perused: Statistical Digests (1999–2005); Common Entrance Results (1999–2005); Ministry of Education Annual Work Plan (1999–2005). This exercise was undertaken to obtain factual information on schools' ranking and performance, students' attainment in standardized tests at grade 6 for an extended period between 5 to 10 years, location and of school and enrollment ad staffing details.

The exercise was tedious and time consuming, but it provided valuable information that aided in the selection of the two schools. Although this data was simple and straight forward it provided inferential information (Lincoln and Denzin, 1998) which prompted the desire to explore these two schools that are located within close proximity in the same Education District, with different levels of attainment.

The following documents were examined at the two schools during the month of observation: logbooks, development plans, teachers' weekly and monthly plans, curriculum, attendance registers, samples of students' work, photo-albums, and visitor's books. Relevant notes were made to corroborate evidence from interviews and observations. Notes on vision mission and goals were particularly important. They were written values and open declarations of what the schools stood for and what was important to them. The documents from the two schools yielded historical information about the schools and community, background information about students, such as age, religion, names, addresses and occupation of parents, attendance, all of which assisted in gaining a good perspective of the school community and students, school planning and assessment strategies and activities.

However, documents are not without their own set of limitations as a research tool. They may not be accurate, reports may be biased, there may be different versions arising from different interpretations of events, and some of the incidents may not be accurately recorded (Frankel and Wallen, 1990). While the information from the Ministry may stand up to scrutiny as they are verified public information, the information from the schools was corroborated with other sources of data.

The research design was carefully mapped and the processes were executed to gather information with truth-value to satisfy the research purpose, and to add to the body of existing knowledge on school culture. The process required working closely with participants to gather the information. While case studies may deal with matters of public interest, at all times the privacy and interest of the participants were of utmost importance. They provided opinions and views that may expose them to risk and embarrassment, hence it was imperative to consider ethical issues to ensure minimal disturbance and distress both during and after the research. Stake (1998) also advise that maintaining a strict code of ethics is another criterion for judging a good piece of research.

3.6 Ethical Issues

All researchers face ethical decisions and dilemmas (Klatch, 1988), more so in interpretative research since most of the data collection methods and instruments are administered within close setting with respondents. In some cases, the researcher may become the research tool (Cohen et al, 2003), possibly during observation. The intimate bond required working conditions that did not violate the rights, integrity, trust and honour of the parties involved. The guiding ethical principle of this study was based on Bassey's (1999) discourse on ethics presented under three broad headings:

Respect for democracy based on the freedom to ask, receive and give information. During interviews and observations teachers and principals were not coerced or misled into giving information. The objective of the study was explained and school members were given the opportunity to ask and receive clarification during a short meeting on the first day. Staff from the two schools was not intimidated but given the freedom to seek clarification on issues related to my presence in their school at any time that was convenient to them.

Respect for truth refers to avoidance of self-deception and deception of others, and requires trustworthiness in data collection, analysis and reporting of findings. The interview data was transcribed and interviewees were provided with a hard copy the following day to verify the written material, and to obtain permission to use what was recorded during the conversation. The observation notebook, one for each school, was circulated among school staff at the end of observation period. The findings were tightly coupled to the analysis in this study.

Respect for persons by treating teachers, students and principal with dignity and respect and observing their rights to privacy. The anonymity of schools and teachers were protected by substituting pseudonyms in this study. Anonymity in small case study research is a crucial ethical issue as it relates to protecting the identity of the participants who furnish the information for the research. Withholding the names of exact locations of the samples protected individuals and schools from embarrassment and victimization and avoided them harm, betrayal of trust or exposure to discriminatory acts.

Robson (1993) raises another serious consideration through this question: Who has responsibility and ownership for the knowledge generated from the research? There is no easy answer to this question either in the data protection acts or intellectual property rights. This decision was negotiated with principals, teachers and Ministry officials at the onset of data collection, at the gaining access stage, where both parties agreed that the information would be made available to the two main libraries and the Ministry of Education of St. Lucia.

Addressing ethical questions and issues poses complications since there are no right answers, and very often it depends on the integrity of the researcher. Respect and concern for the well-being of staff and respect for the research community guided this research. This study avoided deceptions, reported the data with integrity, did not coerce or deceive participants, involved them without consent, or exposed participants to mental, emotional or physical stress (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). As mentioned earlier confidentiality and anonymity were addressed by not recording actual locations or names of schools, teachers or principals. The welfare of participants was not ignored and the moral responsibility to protect their privacy (Busher, 2004) was seen as an obligation. To reduce apprehension, a contract agreement on confidentiality and anonymity was drawn up for signature by the principals and the researcher during the first encounter at the gaining access stage of this study to provide reassurance.

3.7 Access

Access is about persuading all respondents and participants to permit the researcher to enter into their world. This study engaged a continuous process rather than a single incident, since it required accommodating and facilitating an outsider in each school's environment. An initial letter seeking permission was mailed to the Chief Education

Officer in St. Lucia and copied to the District Education Officer for the Education District; the President of the Principal's Association, the two principals and all teachers from the two selected schools and the Teachers' Union Representative. The researcher also met with staff from the two schools for 30 minutes on the first day to explain the purpose of the study, type of information sought, length of time required with respondents, and how the findings might be beneficial to all parties (Robson, 1993).

Negotiating acceptance was essential since it necessitated spending a considerable amount of time in the two schools and inevitably would encroach on respondents' time during working hours. Pring (2002) refers to another dimension: giving participants access to both data and conclusions for criticism and scrutiny, giving them the right to reply, to investigate and provide alternative conclusions with the same data, thereby opening a forum for cross-examination. The transcripts were typed and given to the each interviewee the following day for approval. The findings of this thesis will be presented to the principals at the annual principals' workshop; copies of the thesis will be presented to the Planning Unit of the Ministry the Education and to the two main libraries in St. Lucia.

The next section explains the relevance of validity, reliability and triangulation to this research. Bassey (1999) seems to believe that validity and reliability are concepts that are applicable to survey and experiments, but qualitative research requires an alternative concept, 'trustworthiness': especially case studies, which require data collection from questioning, observing or reading accounts about people's actions.

3.8 Validity

The positivist and interpretative paradigms are fundamentally different and the interpretation and application of validity and reliability in quantitative and qualitative case study research may also be different. From the interpretative stance, validity is the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings (Altheide and Johnson, 1998) or the trustworthiness and authenticity (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). From positivist angle it is the extent to which it does what it claims to do, or set out to do. Internal validity is judged by how correctly the findings answer the questions, and the results match the conclusions, within a specific context. External validity addresses whether findings can be generalized in different contexts and reliability asks if findings can be replicated if the study is repeated (Bassey, 1999; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998).

The validity of qualitative research is usually suspect because of its subjective nature, contextual situations, conditions and interactions and interpretations. These will impact on validity and reliability and often it may not be possible to make generalizations, nor can the research be repeated to produce the exact findings (Burns, 1990). However this does not make the findings untrue within a specific context. But awareness of the dialogue on validity and reliability were noteworthy and encouraged this researcher to engage in continuous reflection both on self and on the research process to ensure loyalty and search for information (Altheide and Johnson, 1998) on elements of culture in the two schools. Cohen et al (2003, p.105) suggest a move away from the traditional definition of validity that is applicable to quantitative research and rather to look towards 'honesty, depth, richness and scope of data achieved, the participants approached, the extent of triangulation of evidence and disinterestedness or objectivity of the researcher' to address qualitative research.

Validity was addressed at every step during the research process, for example: careful designing and piloting of research tools; unbiased interpretation and analysis of data; reporting the actual voice of interviewees; triangulation by comparing evidence from various data collection methods such as interviewees, documents and observations; provision of transcripts to interviewees for confirmation; and provision of contextual information on the two schools, to strengthen the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings. Other possible areas that could have contributed to the collection of flawed data and thus led to bias, such as questionable prompting and probing, dubious questions, selective reporting were avoided. During the analysis of data from interviews, the researcher was guided by this question to minimize prejudices: 'did I measure or capture what I set out to measure, and what are the possible sources of error or biasness' (Moyle, 2004, p.187). At the data interpretation stage the main aim was to present respondents' views, use several reliable sources, avoid selective data, and avoid making unsubstantiated generalizations.

3.9 Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which the research can be repeated by another researcher given the same conditions and circumstances, to produce the same results every time (Basse, 1999). Reliability may be interpreted as the stability of methods and findings (Johnson, 1994), or the extent to which the findings can be replicated or reproduced in another

setting (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Again this is difficult within the interpretative paradigm in a case study that is subjected to explaining, describing and interpreting meaning from the actions (Janesick, 1998) and therefore this study attempted to provide robust and truthful and authentic data.

To maintain the integrity of the data collected, the advice from Bush (2002) was followed closely. This centered on the need to put a great degree of emphasis on the designing instruments, techniques of data collection, testing and piloting. The interview questions were carefully designed and piloted with the same sample within the same context. Bush (2002) noted that it is more difficult to ensure reliability in semi-structured interviews due to the diverse interpretations and understanding obtained from different respondents, more so when prompting and probing are used because it is difficult to ensure reliability from verbal communication. Respondents saw and responded to transcripts. Information from interviews, and observations were compared for truth value.

Brock-Utne (1996) argues that many realities can coexist within the same phenomena, therefore multiple meanings and interpretations can be derived from a situation. Cohen et al (2003) also suggest that 'reality is multi layered': two researchers could come up with different findings in the same situation, and both could be reliable as there might be different interpretations of the data. Replication may not be a good measure of reliability for qualitative research because of its naturalistic situations, contexts and uniqueness of responses from respondents.

However this study strove for reliability by accurately recording and interpreting data, careful selection of respondents, and provided an explanation of the method of data collection and analysis. It established a trail of transparency by accurately recording the research process from research questions to conclusion, more so to establish the link between data analysis interpretation and conclusion.

Transparency of research process or 'audit trail', referred to by Punch (1988), is another way of addressing reliability and validity in qualitative research, because some of the concepts and definitions of reliability and validity applied to quantitative research are not applicable to qualitative research. Guba and Lincoln (1998) encourage the use of trustworthiness and Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) authenticity and fidelity as alternatives to validity and reliability in interpretative research.

3.10 Triangulation

Triangulation was applied to ensure both validity and reliability, particularly in this qualitative research. It was not a tool for either one but an option to validate the research findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Hammersley and Atkinson (1989 p.199) refer to triangulation as ‘an attempt to relate different sorts of data in such a way as to compare and counteract various threats to the validity of our analysis’. Yin (2003) went on to explain that a researcher will be more confident if the study uses data from interviews, records and documents and all of them provide the same information which lead to the same deduction. He went on to explain that ‘this type of triangulation is the most desired pattern for dealing with case study data’ (p.83). It is a discovery method to strengthen the integrity of the research. Janesick (1998) from perusing Denzin’s (1978) work explained four types of triangulation may be employed: triangulation of data; investigator; method or theory. This study employed data triangulation by obtaining evidence from interviews, observations and documents, for comparison and to cross-check the data in an attempt to establish validity (Cohen et al, 2003) and reliability. Johnson (1994) also suggests that it is imperative to present and compare different research evidence to avoid prejudice and inaccuracy in the conduct of interpretative research.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter reiterated the objectives and research questions that guided the study. The choice of research paradigm, design and the rationale for case study was explained. Methods of data collection and analysis were described, followed by the application of validity, reliability and significance of triangulation to minimize inaccuracy and strengthen the trustworthiness of this study. The findings of this investigation that were obtained from observations, interviews and documents on school culture in the two schools will be presented in the chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4 Presentation of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This study drew on a variety of sources: interviews with teachers and principals, observation of visual symbols such as the physical environment, memorabilia and photographs, items on the bulletin board, teachers and principal at work, staff meeting, lessons taught, students' work books, communication and interaction among teachers and principal, interpersonal relationships; parents and community members, other general activities around the school, government documents, school logs, and narratives from non school members to satisfy the two primary questions:

What features contributed to shaping and maintaining the culture in the two schools?

What is the influence of leadership and sub-culture on the overall school culture in the two schools?

These questions pointed to the primary secondary and subsidiary research questions outlined in chapter 3. The evidence from Blossom teacher grade 1 (BT1) to BT8; Peabright teacher grade1 (PT1) to PT8 and the principals (HT) is classified under the sub-themes identified in each of the subsidiary research questions. However before presenting the results, the background of schools in St. Lucia as well as the background of the two schools, Blossom and Peabright will be presented to enhance our understanding our of their culture.

Background of schools in St Lucia

Within the St. Lucia context, schools and churches form the heart of small rural communities. For this reason, boundaries between church, schools and communities are almost non-existent. All primary schools in St. Lucia, including the two primary schools selected for this case study, are state funded. They are guided by a national curriculum and standardized examinations at grade 2, 4 and 6 to provide feedback on students' attainment and schools' performance. Students who succeed the national grade 6 examinations are transferred to secondary schools. Students in grades 7 and 8 are given the opportunity to re-sit the qualifying examination for entry to secondary schools.

Education at the primary level is free, compulsory and mandated by the Education Act (1999). Delivery of high-quality education has been articulated at the governmental and regional level in different forum, and gave rise to several policy frameworks: Organization of Eastern Caribbean States Education Development Project (OECS 2001); The Future of Education in the Caribbean (1996); Education for All 2000–2015 (2000); St. Lucia Sector Development Plan 2000–2005 (2000). However the St. Lucia Education Act (1999) is the primary policy document that guides how schools should work in St. Lucia.

The Ministry of Education and the Catholic Church jointly supervise the majority of primary schools with the exception of the newly built urban schools that are entirely state owned and managed. The national school feeding programme introduced in the 1980s is established in all rural primary schools. Schools have no control over the intake of students. Parents exercise free choice in school selection; however the choice is usually dependent on proximity to home. The students have no prior exposure to pre- schools at the point they enter rural primary school at the age of five. These establishments are not available in rural communities; they function mainly in urban settings. In rural farming communities, mothers are usually housewives or self-employed farmers.

The fathers share similar backgrounds; they are generally farmers, fishermen, bus-drivers or factory workers. Few members of rural communities are employed as teachers in the rural schools, or are engaged in clerical work. Hence, the students of rural primary schools are from working class families, share similar socio-economic backgrounds, and speak the same language. Most of the schools, in fact 64 out of the 78 primary schools in St. Lucia are located in rural communities (St. Lucia Educational Statistical Digest, 2003). The source of school funding, school maintenance, staffing, principals' and teachers' level of qualification, management structure and religion, are about the same, except the schools are located in different parts of the island.

Education Policy

Teaching the prescribed national curriculum, national assessment of students and informing the public of passes in examinations and schools' performance are mandated by the Education Act (1999). Catholic schools are expected to teach the prescribed national curriculum and religious knowledge, but ways of working, operational processes

and procedures, internal structure are the responsibility of teachers and principals. The Education Act (1999) mandates: that the principal deploy, manage all teaching staff, allocate particular duties to them, organize and implement the prescribed curriculum; schools should include in their activities cultural heritage traditions and practices; schools should be supervised by personnel from the Ministry of Education and principals undertake the supervision of the quality of teaching and learning at the school level.

4.2 Case study: Blossom

Blossom a catholic primary was founded 24 years ago. It serves students of mixed sex from grades 1 to 8, age range 5-13. Blossom is centrally located in a small rural farming community. The students live within 3 mile radius from the school, most of them walk but a few use the public transport to get to school. Initially the school had an enrollment of about 455, but it has since decreased to 286. The school is headed by a female principal who has been in post for 24 years. She is a trained teacher with a Diploma in Educational Management. The school has 12 staff members (1 male + 11 female) of which 10 are trained. The special needs teacher is not assigned to a class.

Blossom has eight grade levels. It has only 1 class and one teacher for all the grades except for grades 4, 5 and 6, which has two teachers per grade. Hence one teacher from each grade was interviewed. Among the eight teachers interviewed four of them: BT1; BT2; BT4 and BT8 are from the community, they have been on the staff for over ten years except BT8 who has been there for about 2- 3 years. The non community members: BT3; BT6 and BT7 have been at the school for over ten years, but BT5 joined the staff in January 2003. The interviewees were trained teachers.

Five staff members are from the immediate community while the others including the principal are non-community members as they live further away and are usually referred to as 'outsiders'. There is no assistant principal at the school.

From observation the school principal spent the majority of time in the office. Incidents such as one teacher walking away during a discussion with the principal, slamming classroom doors if principal was nearby, or belligerent statements made during casual discussions in small groups appeared as open hostility toward the principal.

The shop keeper who operated the nearby grocery shop narrated that the principal interacted less with teachers from the community than with those who lived out of the community. The other community members in the nearby shop made it clear the principal was not liked or respected.

History of the school

The principal was the only original founder who remained at the school since it was established 24 years ago. The school has an interesting history as told by different community members and one of the teachers who heard the story from her parents. They narrated that this community supported the opposition government party, but the principal was affiliated with a different party; therefore she was unpopular and viewed with suspicion from the inception of the school.

The teacher elaborated that the parents assisted the school in fund raising initiatives but they thought the principal mismanaged the funds, now they do not trust her. According to the story told about the school *'they pulled away...this is what I heard from the parents in the community because I was very young then'* (BT8: interview). They withdrew their support then, stopped coming to the school and the entire community became suspicious of the principal. The principal confirmed that the parents and the community *'don't like me because I am not from the community...they thought I was from [a specific political party]'* (HT: interview).

However, it is generally believed, that the students from that particular community are born with a special gift – *'its in their genes...they are naturally good in sports'* (BT4: interview). Based on some of the teachers' comments, community sources and the shop keeper's narrative, it appears that the parents supported their children and not the school during sporting events. The school logs reveal that the size of the teaching staff continued to decrease as the enrollment decreased. The staff turn over was relatively high in the past. Five teachers were replaced 2003, and three in 2005.

Implementation of the Education Policy

Blossom was guided by the national prescribed curriculum. The core subjects were taught, and students were subjected to national assessment as mandated in the Education Act (1999). Based on observation, Blossom paid particular attention to sports and cultural

events. The principal indicated that the Education officer's visits were sporadic and attention was focused on solving social problems.

Visual symbols

Building

The school has a good setting for learning to take place. It consists of three large concrete buildings fashioned in a u-shape with a very large paved central courtyard. It is spacious with an average of 25 students in large classrooms. It *'is equipped it has the staff it has the facilities it is well situated'* (BT7: interview) and *'the environment is very safe'* (BT1: interview). However, four classrooms in one wing were not in use. BT2 also explained that the parents are now choosing to send their children to Peabright. During an informal discussion the Peabright principal narrated that she had no space to accommodate any more students from Blossom because Peabright was overcrowded. Blossom has a staffroom, library, large principal's office, telephone, computer with internet connection, two large high speed photocopiers, resources rooms, sick bay, water fountain for students and portable water dispenser for teachers. The classrooms are adequately furnished with (imported/ made in UK) desks and individual chairs for each student, but there was a noticeable absence of learning apparatus in some of the classrooms except for blackboards and chalk. The school has good sporting facilities such as volley-ball and net ball courts, and a large field for track and field events.

Memorabilia

Any visitor to the school would be impressed with the display of 37 trophies, of which 8 were awarded for academic performance and the balance for sporting and cultural events. They were prominently displayed in the special cabinet in the reception area. Several school albums were filled with photographs of sporting and cultural events and trophies. The Hall of Fame on the exterior wall of the school building displayed exhibits and photographs of sporting events. It appeared that the school was proud of students' sporting and cultural accomplishments based on the numerous trophies on display.

Mottos Crest and uniform

The School's motto '*Self-esteem the key to self-confidence*' was observed in the school logbook but it was not seen anywhere else in the school. Students wore the mandatory school uniform with the engraved school's crest. The students I spoke to during the lunch hour could not remember the school's motto. The sports uniforms, worn by students during sports lesson, were colorful and well designed.

The Philosophy

Vision and mission

When I began perusing the school log books the vision and mission were discovered in an archived logbook dated 1994. One staff member confirmed '*it is written in a book somewhere*' (BT1: interview) some of the teachers had not seen it '*I have not seen the vision and mission of this school I only heard about it once during a staff meeting, but I cannot recall it... I have never seen it written anywhere*' (BT6: interview). However it is written and '*it is in the office*' (BT5: interview). One teacher saw it '*on paper... we plan to put it up I have a copy of it I saw it at the beginning of the school year*' (BT3: interview). One noted '*I do not think this school is using a vision and mission for school improvement*' (BT8: interview). Some teachers did not remember it, '*What we do with it is another thing; cannot remember ... it has to do with the total development of the child*' (BT2: interview). The principal expressed the view that '*the vision and mission are used to direct the school*' (HT: interview).

The vision and mission statements for Blossom are:

Vision: '*Every child at the Blossom Combined School is exposed to effective teaching, learning, training, studying and experiences, should be able to acquire knowledge, skills and ability to help him/her grow as a useful and productive citizen in the society*'.

Mission: '*The mission at the Blossom Combined School is to mobilize parents, students and teachers to develop a healthy climate which will enhance student interest and which will be conducive to learning*'.

Goals

Blossom's goals were written in the same archived logbook dated 1994. The archived goals were:

- *To develop self esteem*

- *To improve student performance and achievement*

During the interviews two of the teachers identified both different and similar goals: *'improving passes in examination also trying to get a good image for the school'* (BT1: interview), *'academic achievement and linking the community with the school'* (BT6: interview). Some of the other teachers were not aware of the school's goals *'not off hand but there are school goals'* (BT3: interview) or professed lack of ownership ... *'most of them are the goals of the principal ...'* (BT2: interview) and or lack of consensus *'I can talk for my goals ... I want the students to excel. But I am not aware of the goals of this school'* (BT8: interview). The principal identified *'good citizens'* (HT: interview) as her main goal. It appeared that some of the teachers and principal identified different and individualistic goals. They also spoke about their beliefs and expectations.

Beliefs and expectations expressed by teachers

About students

One staff member believed that *'students can perform much better'* (BT8: interview). Other members believe *'we have students who are very well disciplined'* (BT5: interview) while another expected them to *'change their values and morals and also do well in academics'* (BT4: interview). Academic performance was expected *'other than improving on academic achievement, I expect them to become more social individuals'* (BT7: interview) and *'high expectations we focus on examinations'* (BT6: interview). Some of the other teachers expected students to become good citizens develop independence and contribute to community. Academic performance and moral development were the two main expectations of the staff, but one teacher expressed the belief that the students at Blossom were capable of performing better.

About fellow teachers

One member of the staff voiced *'I believe the teachers here have the potential to produce excellent work and get the students to the next level ... majority of us teachers [from community] contribute to the welfare of the students'* (BT1: interview). Another teacher claimed *'I believe that the staff works well in ensuring our students meet the expected level of work'* (BT3: interview) but BT5 believe *'the students and the teachers are not together'* (BT5: interview). Teachers seem to express different beliefs about fellow teachers. Some of the teachers from the community believed that they were more

dedicated and committed but they assumed that all teachers attempted to assist the students. They did not discuss their own expectations of their peers.

About the school

Some of the teachers '*believe that this school ...can perform as good as any other school on this island...it was safe*' (BT7: interview). One teacher pointed out '*the school has potential to do better than they are doing now ... there is room for improvement*' (BT5: interview). Most of the teachers indicated that the environment was safe. BT6 conveyed the sentiment of the others in this expression: '*all cultural events which are celebrated in the island are done here*' (BT6: interview). Some teachers expected cooperation and togetherness as well as community interaction, '*school is like a community of its own and there is no effort to bring the two groups together*' (BT2: interview) but one teacher expressed that it was essential for '*students to perform at the level we want them to*' (BT4: interview). One teacher seems to believe that the school administration did not support the staff.

Beliefs and expectations expressed by principal

The principal held strong beliefs about the students, teachers, school and the parents. She expected students to become '*good citizens and can contribute to community*', and expects students '*to be well mannered and those who go to secondary school to return and make a contribution [to the community]*' (HT: interview). Other beliefs such as '*I believe we have good infrastructure and environment ... we excel in sports that's the only time parents get involved in their children education in the school*' (HT: interview) were also expressed. She articulated the belief that the '*teachers are hard working*' (HT: interview). From observation it appeared that the staff did not work as one team. The principal did not discuss her expectations of teachers.

Behavioural norms: structure, practices, processes and strategies.

School structure

The structure governed the procedure and processes at the school. Some of the teachers from the community perceived that they were not treated fairly: '*selected few are considered as senior and they will go to the office and together with principal will write circulars ...*' (BT1: interview). However BT7 related '*we sit and plan together...at staff meetings we sit give and get feedback*' (BT7: interview). Some teachers were seen

visiting the office more often than others, but during the staff meeting the only one which I observed, the principal did most of the talking while teachers listened, but did not attempt to make an input.

However some of the teachers were not happy with the decision making process '*a lot of the time decisions taken at staff meetings what you expect to be the end product is not what happens or most times you are just told this is going to happen*' (BT1: interview), or '*they are just imposed on teachers*' (BT2: interview). The staff was divided with '*2 or 3 persons in different groups*' (BT4: interview), and some of the teachers mentioned that the principal spent time with one of the groups. The staff shared and supported each other in small groups. From observation some occupied different spaces in the school and refrained from using the staff room. It was obvious that the staff was polarized and their territories were well demarcated. During break time and lunch time the local teachers spent time in one block while the non-community teachers occupied another wing.

Rules and regulations

Other teachers believe roles and responsibilities existed but they were not enforced, as '*teachers do what they want*' (BT1: interview). Although there were no written rules for students and teachers, the school was guided by established behavioural patterns, '*when you come in you just follow the others ... you see what is happening and you just follow*' (BT3: interview). The school's time table served as a guide to regulate activities, but some teachers were more attentive to the schedule. Most of them responded to the bell and attempted to start the classroom teaching on time. Students were well disciplined, exhibited good manners, and showed respect for the teachers and the principal.

Rituals

The daily rituals of praying and singing were observed at Blossom. The ringing of school's bell, which was an attempt to call everyone to attention. Students prayed before and after each class, followed by 10 minutes for roll call which varied in the different classes. The teachers taught the subjects on the school's time table. Some appeared more dedicated than others: they started the lessons on time; interacted and gave individual attention to students and were not in a hurry to stop teaching and send the children off as soon as the bell rang for midmorning break. Although teachers did not record time of arrival and departure from the school, most of them arrived before the 9 a.m. bell. The school allowed 15 minutes for mid-morning break and 1 hour for lunch daily. The

teachers attempted to follow a routine based on the school's timetable, but occasionally few teachers loitered in the walkway outside of their classes in small groups during teaching time. The principal's daily activities include ringing the bell, talking to students in the yard, visiting a few classes and documenting school events in the school logbook. I did not observe a school's assembly during my stay at the school.

Main practices, processes and strategies.

Teaching and learning

The teachers devoted 1 hour for numeracy and 1 hour for literacy daily. Other disciplines such as science, social studies were taught in 40 minute slots three times per week. The extra-curricular activities: art, music, sports dance and drama were taught once per week. All classes participated in sports during the allocated time. Teachers and students were often seen working together on the sports courts during lunch and break time.

Some of the teachers identified weakness in teaching *'a good group of students at one level performs poorly at the next level because of the weakness in teaching ... that is the main reason why the school is not performing today'* (BT8: interview). They were not happy with teachers' performance *'I think that we do not prepare them to go out to seek secondary education and to move on from there'* (BT6: interview). One teacher explained:

we give a lot of attention to the top students ... little time to the low students ... we have students in grade 7 who cannot read, and sometimes the teachers don't try' but 'lots of students who are performing extremely well in sports but they are not performing well academically... teachers were not working very well together...

(BT4: interview)

Another teacher confirmed the need to pay more attention to slow learners: *'most of the children were not getting that [education] ... over 20% of the students leave school and cannot read and function in the society'* (BT2: interview). One teacher pointed out: *'the teachers have the skills and the potential to be able to reach every student in the classroom, but it is not being done'* (BT8: interview). Some of the teachers attempt to teach the students *'we work hard to ensure students succeed in examinations especially the national examinations...we are doing better than a lot of other schools so...some*

level of learning is taking place' (BT3: interview). Others stated that the school was making an effort *'we do try to help everyone so that by the time they leave here there will be an improvement even if it's in their behaviour or reading skills'* (BT7: interview). But another teacher expressed a different opinion on the teaching and learning: *'I don't think we have adequate facilities and the personnel to get them to achieve'* (BT5: interview).

One of them perceived: *'there are some committed teachers who do their best especially the teachers who are from the community ... they work hard and go all out to deliver a good quality education'* (BT2: interview). She was supported *'we try our best... those from the community'* (BT1: interview). It was noticeable that some teachers worked very hard, particular the grade 1 teacher who taught the 5 year olds. She behaved like a typical caring mother. The grade 8 teacher actively engaged the students and appeared dedicated. The grade 6 teacher who prepared the cohorts for the national examinations worked diligently. She was meticulous, and explained the questions to the students in both the English and Mathematics lessons before setting them to work. Those who could not complete the lesson in the allocated time received help during break or lunch time. But a few of the teachers appeared uninterested in the subjects that they taught. They made little attempt to prompt or assist some students to complete the written work. Their classrooms were dull; they sat or stood at the front of the class for the entire lesson.

Monitoring teachers' performance

One teacher was happy with the monitoring process: *'I will not say we have problems with teachers who are not performing ...'* (BT7: interview). But another teacher expressed concerned: *'nothing is done here the teacher just continues to fail the students, some teachers work hard and some teachers don't do anything and others do not see anything wrong with that ... its goes on here like a cycle'* (BT8: interview). Another teacher noted *'I don't think...it's rarely handled'* (BT5: interview). Others were not satisfied with principal's method of engagement in the process: *'there may be a little discussion but most times you don't know how well you are doing...she intervenes but most times she makes you feel bad'* (BT1: interview). When poor performance became obvious the principal took action: *'if it is brought to the attention of the principal you are cautioned'* (BT6: interview). Although it was not regular the principal attempted to monitor teachers, *'a few circumstance where you would see principal talking to a person or visiting that person's class on a more regular basis'* (BT3: interview) The principal devoted time and

monitored new teachers more than the existing staff, *'she does a lot of observation, especially with new teachers, she observes and discusses a lot'* (BT4: interview). The principal also indicated that she *'supervises their [new teachers] classes'* (HT: interview). From observation the principal visited three younger teachers whom she monitored more often, but the staff was generally left on their own to get on with the teaching.

Strategies to improve teachers' performance

Some of the teachers spoke about strategies to improve teachers' performance at the school level *'we plan...professional development workshops...'* (BT4: interview), or *'sometimes we host workshops and expose the teachers to different teaching techniques'* (BT7: interview). The principal also explained that she *'discussed weaknesses'* (HT: interview) with weak teachers. Some teachers were enrolled in distance learning programs, or other self development programs at the national community college. They were often seen leaving the school immediately after the 3 p.m. bell to travel to the main town to attend classes.

Monitoring students' performance

Some of the teachers corrected and gave prompt feedback to students on their written work, but in some classes correction of written work was delayed, sometimes by two weeks. Continuous assessment of students was not apparent, *'we lack a means of assessing because our assessment is only based on end of year results'* (BT1: interview). While they were not monitored frequently by means of regular classroom tests, the results obtained in national standardized examinations provided feedback on students' performance. BT3 spoke about the school performance *'performance wise ...I would say no...we perform below or just at the national mean'* (BT3: interview). Blossom school mean performance has been below the national mean from 1999 to 2005 (Examination Report 1999-2005).

Strategies to improve students' performance

Few teachers assisted weak students *'if they are not performing we give homework ... assist at lunchtime, after school, early morning'* (BT7: interview), but *'It was up to the teacher in the classroom ... few would stay back after school'* (BT6: interview). Others employed in-class strategies, *'students are streamlined in A, B and C'* (BT4: interview) to improve student's performance. Weak students were identified by class teachers and

withdrawn for support by special needs teacher but the benefit was questionable *'we are suppose to group the children according to ability but we don't do it due to lack of resources ... the special needs teacher pull the weak students out of their classes but it does not always work'* (BT5: interview). The principal indicated that teachers *'group students with similar problems and teach them in small groups'* (HT: interview). From observation the special needs teacher was engaged in paperwork most of the time, but she also taught reading to small groups of students. BT3 explained that the school performed well in 2002 because they gave extra help to students that year. The school relied on teaching the curriculum as a means of improvement *'for school improvement we use the curriculum and on Wednesdays we have certain programs e.g. we have activities for students who wish to develop skills in sports'* (BT6: interview). Some of the teachers were seen with copies of the prescribed curriculum during teaching time. BT5 indicated that the school has a school development plan but it did not turn up during the period of observation. The teachers who live nearby, as well as those who live out of the community, left without delay after dismissal of the students at 3 p.m.

School review

The school depended on external assessment to determine how well they were doing, *'we look at our performance in external exams like common entrance and other exams by the Ministry of Education[MOE]'* (BT2: interview).

Rewards and sanctions

One teacher expressed the need to recognize teachers for good performance, *'teachers who put in extra effort are not praised'* (BT2: interview). From perusal of school albums other photographs and observation of trophies, students received more accolades for outstanding performance in sports than for academic performance. The other teachers did not discuss reward and praise.

Ceremonies

Blossom's ceremonies include St. Lucia National Day, periodic church services and distribution of sports awards to students. Frequency of celebrations could not be ascertained *'we go to church sometimes...not often'* (BT6: interview) or *'we do not do much celebrations...the teachers don't come'* (BT8: interview). Sport events, annual

sports day and cultural events, namely La Rose, La Margarete, and Creole Day were the major activities celebrated according to the photographs and accounts from the teachers.

Interpersonal relationship/ Social network

Communication

The school shared information by circulating memos and circulars. The principal pinned up bulletins and notices or other bits of information on a board in the principal's office. BT6 expressed *'we should improve on communication people keep grudges'* (BT6: interview). One teacher explained that the atmosphere was tense because *'teachers and principal would lash out at each other ... relationship is not good a lot of hear say a lot of conflict ... a lot of problems during meetings'* (BT4: interview). Another teacher confirmed *'at parents meeting the principal would say 'I have not discussed it with the staff but however ... like she makes the decision right there'* (BT1: interview) and confirmed *'you hear it on the outside before you come in'* (BT2: interview).

BT7 attests that teachers shared information *'if a teacher goes to attend workshops she circulates the handouts'* (BT7: interview) but another explained *'only friends know about workshops'* (BT8: interview).

Commitment and collaboration and teamwork

From observation some teachers and the principal kept a reasonable distance at the school; however teachers searched for social support and comfort by banding in small groups. Some of the teachers expressed the view that they were genuinely concerned about the working conditions *'most of the commitment comes from teachers' personal feelings and not necessarily from principal's effort the teachers from the community who work here are more committed than those from the outside'* (BT2: interview). Collaboration appeared to be weak *'there is no team spirit... they work in isolation in their classes'* (BT4: interview). Some teachers were disillusioned, *'I am disappointed in the level of commitment by the people here and their level of seriousness'* (BT6: interview). One teacher felt that building commitment and collaboration at the school was not a priority *'the need for principal to do it does not exist'* (BT3: interview). However the principal explained *'they work hard in individual classrooms not much sharing ...teachers from the community do not like outsiders'* (HT: interview).

Social support

From observation teachers from the community and those from the outside congregated in different groups. There was an obvious camaraderie in these groups as they talked, laughed and supported each other in their small teams during break and lunch time. Some of the teachers were concerned '*generally there is a sense of caring for the students*' (BT3: interview). Another teacher commented about the staff at the school '*they are not friends, you do not know who to talk to here...principal does not trust teachers*' (BT4: interview). Other members indicated '*there is always conflict between principal and teachers*' (BT2: interview) thus hindering a sense of community as '*relationship among staff is not good enough*' (BT6: interview) at the school.

Images and messages conveyed in metaphors, stories, myths, heroes and heroines

During my first week of observation at the school, the façade of togetherness, cordiality and unity was portrayed; they smiled, greeted and assisted each other in setting up the classrooms. It was only during the second week that the pretence began to disintegrate. The strained atmosphere and discord became noticeable through the body language, segregation during lunch time and odd remarks about one another.

Metaphors

The metaphors that emerged during the interviews conveyed that the school has a atmosphere that is '*tense... but students are warm*' (BT6: interview), '*a family*' (BT3: interview), '*a budding rose...growing but here is potential*' (BT5: interview), '*potential that has not been tapped*' (BT2: interview) a family but fragmented: '*pizza...parts represent each child and also teachers with head on the side of the outsiders*' (BT8: interview). Those who are not associated the school believe it is a wonderful school '*from the outside it's a vision of loveliness but ... there is a lot of pressure within it*' (BT4: interview) as they were not aware of the problems. There were undesirable principles '*a place where one thing is said and another thing is done*' (BT1: interview) which could contribute to confusion as there was no consistency yet it was '*a determined school*' (BT7: interview) and '*a good place to learn*' (HT: interview).

Stories

While staff members did not tell their own stories, they indirectly gave an insight about the school by relating the stories and myths that circulated in the community. One of the

stories was based on comparison of performance between Blossom and Peabright: *'they [parents] hear that Peabright is doing well in common entrance and they believe that their children will perform at a higher level if they go there'* (BT2: interview). Other stories were told about the poor cooperation among teachers, and that the parents were responsible for the anti-social behaviour of the students. One of the stories seem to indicate that the principal was not trusted by the community or the parents they thought *'she [principal] was using them and ...the school to raise funds for her personal use... got suspicious [the parents] it was an issue of trust'* but there are positive stories from the same teacher *'once you hear Blossom you know you have good athletes they go to other schools and continue to excel and perform outstandingly'* (BT8: interview). The stories about students' athletic ability were well accepted *'we are well known for producing quite a few of the top athletes in sports'* (BT7: interview). The 29 sports trophies on display in the office bear testimony to the stories about the sporting ability of students. Local teachers were perceived in a negative manner because they lived in community that embraced a culture that promoted only body gyration and dance, the community was backward, and poor performance of the school were other stories told about Blossom.

Myths

The emerging myths were about the ignorance of the people from the community: *'St. Lucians use to say Blossom people [people from the community] were very ignorant ... so people did not want to associate with that image ... and did not want to say they were from Blossom'* (BT4: interview). This powerful myth on students' innate sporting ability which was identified earlier and linked to the school's history *'it's in their genes ... they are naturally good in sports'* (BT4: interview) was accepted without doubt or question by everyone whom I interacted with during my observation period. But BT6 was cautioned *'the people on the outside told me so you are going to Blossom you don't know how these people are'* (BT6: interview), on the attitude of the people from this community.

Heroes and Heroines

The school's heroes and heroines emerged from sporting events: *'athletics that is what we are known for'* (BT5: interview) and *'we do well in sporting activities'* (BT7: interview). The staff was confident *'we do drama singing but the highlight is sportsso we go for our trophies and keep them here'* (BT4: interview). The school and parents were proud of their heroes: *'our students are very good sport men we are proud*

of that the community is proud too ... and during sports they [parents] would run alongside their children and shout -run my child run to win- and they would run three or four laps with the child' (BT8: interview). Another teacher confirmed *'our students are very good sportsmen we are proud of that and the community is proud too'* (BT6: interview). School sport, an extra-curricular activity mandated in the Education Act (1999) is treated with varying degree of seriousness by schools but it appeared important to Blossom *'we have lots of trophies for sports'* (BT5: interview).

Relationship with parents

Most of parents waited outside of the school fence for their children, few were observed inside of the compound. Some of the teachers recounted that there was no relationship between the school and the community, after several failed attempts to organize a Parent Teacher Association (PTA); the school gave up any effort to pursue this objective. Some of them indicated that parents did not cooperate or support the work of teachers in the school except for sporting events *'the parents have not been so cooperative...when we have sport all the parent are enthusiastic... its part of the culture here'* (BT6: interview). Some explained that the resentment towards teachers and principals created the breakdown of relationship. Most of the teachers indicated that parents were not sufficiently engaged in the school. Some saw the need for parental involvement *'the parent ... needs to be part of the school ... parents should be involved ... They hear [about the school] and from their own experience they are not positive and don't give support... parents don't like the teachers'* (BT1: interview). The principal summed it up:

very clannish...if one say kill everybody follows...it's a strange place...getting better...they wanted to walk in the school anytime and take their children home ... do not understand rules and regulations we have come a long way...the thinking is changing slowly.

(HT: interview)

One teacher confirmed *'parents are not as supportive'* (BT5: interview) another pointed out *'parents believe the school can do it all...if we don't get high passes they blame the teachers the students and everybody else except themselves'* (BT2: interview). But they did not cooperate or *'support the principal because she is from a different community'* (BT4: interview).

Principal and sub-culture

Practices and style

From observation, the principal focused on administrative side of the school and engaged in documenting, and clerical matters than interacting with all staff members, or visiting all classrooms. Her sphere of communication and interaction were limited to four or five teachers. They visited the office more often than the others and spent more time talking among themselves during break or lunchtime. She communicated formally with the staff mainly through written memos. Some of the teachers handed their scheme of work and lesson plans at the prescribed time. The principal promptly corrected and returned them to the teachers.

With minimum support from staff or parents the principal worked in isolation. A dictatorial/authoritarian style of leading was perceived by some of the teachers. The principal attempted to control the school, *'most of the time it was like authoritarian'* (BT4: interview) or *'an autocratic management style'* (BT8: interview). From observation the authoritarian/autocratic leadership style was more apparent when dealing with some members of the school's staff. She appeared to command by tone and manner and was very formal in her dealings with them. Teachers professed conflicting, and opposing opinions. BT6 perceived that *'the relationship between principal and staff was good because if we are doing something it is not good it is brought to your attention'* (BT6: interview) and *'the principal pass around to ensure teachers are teaching'* (BT7: interview).

Some teachers perceived that the communication and collaboration were inadequate and the principal overlook the fragmentation *'principal encourage and cause that kind of division among the staff'* (BT4: interview). During my observation period the staff remained segregated, and some of the teachers from one of the groups complained of the favouritism demonstrated by the principal. The principal expressed *'there is a lot of division...'* (HT: interview).

Sub-Cultures

From observation the school staff was divided into three sub-sets. The first consisted of five members (four teachers and the principal), referred to as 'outsiders' because they were not from the community. The second sub-group consisted of five community

members, and third was a loose alliance of three new teachers. Some of the teachers' spoke about the division *'we have two groups here, those from the community and others from outside...This staff is divided into factions...It's like a tug of war here'* (BT8: interview). The division existed because:

...there are 2 or 3 factions in the school, and it had to do with where the teachers live ... principal from a different community. It has a lot to do with trust and what is said about certain persons and being able to accept corrections, and making the right choices about decisions taken

(BT4: interview)

From the principal's perspective *'outsiders work better... those from community felt maybe inferior'* (HT: interview) partially explains why the two distinct groups exist at Blossom. The notion that *'teachers from the community on one side and another group of teachers from outside the community...and encouraged by the principal'* (BT2: interview) caused further fragmentation among the staff. From observation the two groups demonstrated overt hostility towards each other during the latter part of my stay at the school. The various comments and narratives from community members implied that the students and their parents supported and were in solidarity with the group of teachers from the community. Also it was a closed community and generally they did not embrace new comers easily, but it has always been that way. The two groups of teachers worked separately and differently at the school.

Summary

The school taught the core subjects mandated in the Education Act (1999) but particular attention was paid to sports and cultural events. The schools history is rooted in perceived political division between the principal and the community. However the school had its own distinguishable emblems and a good setting for learning to take place. The vision mission and goals were not known or shared by all staff members. Teachers expressed an array of individualistic goals, beliefs and expectation: academic achievement, improve school image, school and community linkage, cooperation, staff worked well, division between students and teachers, varying level of teacher commitment, importance of cultural events, moral development, discipline, good and safe physical environment. The

principal also expressed goals, beliefs and expectations. She identified good citizens, hard working teachers, disciplined students, good environment and sports.

The teachers worked within a loose social structure, but their daily routine was guided by the school's time table. Although the school was hindered by inconsistent practices and ongoing monitoring of performance some of the teachers were very committed and dedicated to the school. The teachers were aware of some of the problems besetting the school such as poor communication, collaboration and absence of social support. This caused fragmentation of the staff, but they search for support in small groups. The students were distinguished for athletic skills, and the stories and myths were centered on the athletic abilities of the students. The myths portrayed the community residents in an off-putting manner. Although the parents stayed away because of long standing grievance with the principal, they were supportive during sporting events. Meanwhile the principal, attempted to control activities within the school but she worked with minimum support in the sanctuary of her office.

4.3 Case Study: Peabright

Peabright is a catholic primary school that serves students of mixed sex from grades 1-8. It is centrally located in a small rural farming community, about 5 miles from Blossom. The school was built as a temporary structure to accommodate about 200 students. Now it is overcrowded with an enrollment of 432. The school is headed by a female principal; a founding member of the school who has been in position for 3 years. She worked along side and succeeded the founding principal. She is a trained teacher with a diploma in Education Management. The school has no deputy principal. The staff consists of 15 members (13 female, 2 male) of which 13 are trained.

The school has eight grade levels with two classes per grade except grade 7, which is assigned to one special needs teacher. She is assisted by one of the grade eight teachers. Eight staff members one from each grade level were interviewed: PT1; PT2; PT3; PT5 and PT7 worked at the school from its inception and are referred to as the senior teachers, they live in the immediate community; PT4 has been on staff for ten years; PT6 for one year and PT8 for four years.

About half of the school's staff and the principal do not live in the immediate community. The principal was often seen talking to the teachers before morning classes.

History

The retired male principal who was in position for fifteen years, assisted by eight teachers the current principal was a staff member then, were the founders of Peabright. One of the teachers explained *'when we started the school...we had only about 6 to 8 teachers ... we worked together ... every year 1 or 2 were added ...these would be inculcated into the culture of the school... like a family'* (PT1: interview). The school was built 18 years ago, to reduce overcrowding at Blossom and to locate a school closer to students' homes. The stories about the school's past relate to student performance in examinations *'we have a record of performing well at exams ... it's the attitude ... which comes from the culture of the school ... I hear it from all about'* (PT8: interview). One community member related that the core group of teachers who started this school is still there and they continue to work consciously and unyieldingly to maintain the high standard. The past principal was well loved by the community, he was gentle and never raised his voice but he was firm.

He recommended the current principal, someone with similar traits to replace him. An ancillary staff member explained that the parents supported the school from inception and they still do, because the teachers treat the students like their own. Some of the teachers said the school was guided by principles and the members of the community including the parents knew what was acceptable. According to the warning received by PT6 when she indicated her interest to join Peabright staff '*you are going to Peabright you will always be on your toes*' (PT6: interview) seem to imply that the school's reputation was linked to hard working teachers: a place where poor practices were not tolerated.

Implementation of Education Policy

The school taught the core subjects mandated by the Education Act (1999): literacy; numeracy; social studies and general science were taught in the morning and the arts were taught in the afternoon. The principal mentioned that visits from Ministry Personnel were infrequent but the principals were often called out to attend meetings at the Sub-Education office with the District Education Officer.

Visual symbols

Building

The physical environment was safe, but not impressive from the outside. The school was housed in three separate old wooden sheds propped on concrete blocks off the ground; divided into small classrooms, with a small inner courtyard. An average of 29 students was packed inside each classroom with 3 feet perimeter of walking space. Peabright was '*not fortunate like other schools we do not have a computer room, a school library, staff room*' (PT5: interview). Resources were inadequate but '*in spite of the little we have at the school in terms of work space, lack of resources blackboard, office ... with just the little we try to do the best*' (PT2: interview). From observation the classroom walls were covered with colourful posters, charts and learning material developed outside of school hours by the teachers. The locally manufactured school's furniture appeared quite worn-out now. The principal's workplace served as office cum storeroom and could not accommodate more than two visitors at one time. However the school had one desktop-photocopier, one computer with internet connection and a telephone.

Memorabilia

A passerby who saw the depilated physical structure would probably harbour doubt about what was going on inside, but the numerous photographs that were displayed at Peabright depicted students receiving trophies for spelling, mathematics, science, general knowledge and a few for sports. The majority of trophies displayed in the principal's office were awarded for academic excellence.

Mottos Crest uniform

Peabright's motto '*The tree of knowledge will never wilt*', derived from a competition among the staff, was written on the students' copybooks, and visibly displayed adjacent to the school's crest on one of the walls of the school building. The students recited the school's motto daily after the morning prayers. One of the teachers explained that the school's motto and the crest were inspired by the tree in the court yard. All students wore the school uniform decorated with the school's crest to school.

The Philosophy

Vision and mission

A framed copy of the school's vision and mission statements was displayed on the wall in the Principal's office. They were written on the school's development plan 2005–2006, students' copybooks, and the school's bulletin board. They are:

Vision: '*To create a learning institution where every child recognizes the value of schooling and education, becomes self motivated, aims to perform successfully, and demonstrates the responsibility for and accountability for his/her learning*'.

Mission: '*A high standard of student discipline, integrity and interdependence are to be fostered in the school's environment where every child is seen as a unique, where his potential must be maximize, and where he has a right to the acquisition of knowledge and the development of the appropriate skills and values that will enable him to be resourceful and responsible in his community. These experiences will characterize student-centered classrooms, which will promote enquiry problem solving, democracy, risk-taking, and the celebration of success*'.

The interview comments seem to indicate that the staff accepted the vision and mission statements, '*this is what we use as a guide...it is said if you don't know where you are*

going any road will take you there....so we use our vision and mission to guide us in planning the work for the students' (PT5: interview). They used the vision as a source of inspiration, *'we always tie our assembly to our vision statement'* (PT6: interview). Some members reported that the students remember it, as it is used to remind them of their purpose for being in school. The principal expressed the view that *'all teachers know it [vision and mission] we expect all students to know it our parents are very much involved and know it'* (HT: interview). One teacher highlighted its importance *'we enforce it as it relates to our achievements to ensure we do what we are supposed to do'* (PT3: interview). The school was student-focused *'our vision and mission concentrate on students'* (PT2: interview). The synergy of vision mission goals and supporting strategies were apparent, *'the vision and mission are displayed in the classroom...our school plans, goals are all on par with the vision and mission'* (PT1: interview). The interview statement seem to convey that principal, teachers and students knew, accepted, shared and supported the vision and mission of the school.

Goals

Peabright had three written goals:

- *Increase level of students' performance*
- *Increasing effectiveness*
- *Changing focus from teacher-centered to child-centered learning*

These goals were printed on the school's development plan which hung from the bulletin board in the principal's office. During the interviews they identified achievement, performance, teach students as individuals, high standards, as the main goals of the school. The principal explained *'we all work together to achieve the goals related to the vision and mission'* (HT: interview). One teacher emphasized *'individual attention so that they [students] produce to the maximum of their ability'* (PT6: interview) and the *'primary focus is school achievement'* (PT4: interview). Achieving the goals of the school was of paramount importance as teachers in the school believed that they should *'help each child to achieve... work to their best to achieve the goals of the school'* (PT1: interview). The teachers aim was to help students perform at *'a high standard'* (PT8: interview) and *'to make students learn to achieve the objectives'* (PT3: interview). PT5 indicated *'our goals aims and objectives are specific we work and set ourselves certain targets'* (PT5: interview). The principal conveyed her main goal in this caption *'main*

focus is success' (HT: interview) of students. The goals identified by the teachers and principal appeared to be similar but worded differently to the written goals of the school.

Beliefs and expectations expressed by teachers

About students

The beliefs expressed by the teachers were related to high performance '*not merely successful but the grade the average which we receive must be of a high standard to show that they have given their best so that when the students go out there they perform very well*' (PT6: interview). The beliefs were centered on examination results '*we set very high standards for our students... to perform at 60% but now we expect 65%*' (PT3: interview) and students ability '*believing that each child has the ability to perform*' (PT2: interview).

They expected students to achieve '*we have high standards and expectations... to get every student to perform at least at an average of 60 or 65%...*' (PT2: interview). Some expected students to '*excel at whatever they do*' (PT7: interview) and to be persistent, '*we expect them to try even if it is hard that they continue to try*' (PT4: interview). They harboured high expectations: '*we expect some students to perform at 80% ... the level that we set for individual students are based on their ability*' (PT8: interview) and confidence in students' ability.

About fellow teachers

Teachers believed that they cooperated and worked to ensure that the students learned and succeeded. They believed that they helped fellow teachers to improve on teaching strategies. They exhibited team spirit, '*we have a good team of teachers who are hard working*' (PT1: interview), and '*team effort*' (PT6: interview). They believed '*the teachers here are educators ...they are working*' (PT3: interview), and were consistent in their effort '*at this school we don't play around we teach the children*' (PT7: interview) but '*we work as a family*' (PT4: interview). They expected all teachers to be committed and dedicated to the improvement drive at the school '*it is an unwritten rule we expect teachers to go the extra mile ... to ... raise the level of performance in every classroom*' (PT8: interview).

About the school

Some members of the staff indicate that the school was student centered '*I believe this school put the children first... fosters discipline*' (PT4: interview) and efficiently managed '*I believe this school is well organized*' (PT6: interview). Other teachers believed that they worked in a good institution: '*my school is one of the best schools in the island where children are well behaved*' (PT7: interview). This sentiment was confirmed '*I believe this school is a good place and a good school altogether....its a good quality school*' (PT8: interview). Some expressed confidence in both teachers' and students': '*at Peabright combined school we can be the best ...we work as a family and there is a lot of unity and team work*' (PT2: interview). Most of teachers believe that they worked in one of the best schools; it promoted discipline, and unity among staff members. One teacher said:

My school is working to the best of its potential we expect to do well every year, and if we fail we try harder to do better...we expect to perform at the top of all the schools in St Lucia.

(PT1: interview)

Beliefs and expectations expressed by principal

The principal expressed distinct beliefs and expectations of students, teachers, school and parents. She believed that '*every child can achieve*' (HT: interview) and expected '*every child to succeed...above his level...we expect every child to perform*' (HT: interview). The principal believed the school was very fortunate because '*we have a culture here where every teacher is committed every teacher can give her best to ensure every child succeeds... I believe every teacher who works here is committed*' (HT: interview). She believed '*parent are very much involved*' and that at the school '*we worked as a family towards achieving the same goal to ensure students succeed*' (HT: interview).

Behavioural norms: structure and policies, practices processes and strategies.

School structure

The school appeared well organized and teachers executed their tasks with urgency and seriousness. One teacher summed up:

Everybody is working all the time they are well organized and are engaged in different activities ... all work together towards one common goal that is school improvement ... we have a very good organization with teachers and students working together.

(PT7: interview)

Responsibilities were structured and managed, '*principal will delegate responsibilities*' (PT4: interview), but '*when it comes to organization that's the key thing for this school..... every teacher is part of a committee ... teachers ... placed under supervision of senior teachers...its a rigid situation...it's the principal ... her management skills*' (PT6: interview). The school had no formal senior management team but the senior teachers were entrusted to assist the junior staff and to undertake different roles, '*we meet very often ... different committees take care of different goals ... the committees get back to the entire staff and we discuss ... the senior teachers oversee what is going on ... if we cannot handle it then we take it to the principal*' (PT2: interview). One teacher stated:

We are a school with a different focus ... we have a structure ... through this structure we obtain results ... and the results has shown it to be good ... but we keep revising structures because with time things will change ... there is a foundation ... we are given the opportunity to build on it.

(PT8: interview)

Rules and regulations

From observation both teachers and students strictly adhered to rules and regulations to maintain an orderly environment. The rules were essential '*we have rules in place, which we discuss... we have to abide by the rules we do our best*' (PT7: interview) '*this is a place where you cannot be late and you must always be prepared*' (PT6: interview). The rules were not only applicable to teachers; students too were expected to abide by them:

Every child knows ... the rules of the school they know the expectations of the school. From the time they enter the kindergarten class they begin to learning the rules of the school and it is enforced all along all the classes have the same rules ... the school's rules are on the exercise books.

(PT1: interview)

Observations reveal that the environment was heavily regulated, and kept under control with rules, school policies and discipline. The rules were precise and well-defined, to the extent that they stipulated how many words should be written on a line in students' copybooks. Apart from the general school rules, individual class rules and regulations were pinned on the walls in classrooms. One of the teachers explained that the teachers were not allowed to deviate either: *'we have expectations and unwritten rules which we all follow... I am relatively new when I first came I was very impressed by the way things are done, there are rules and regulations there are different policies'* (PT8: interview). Another young teacher who had been on the staff for only one year narrated her experience and why she had to learn the ways of the school. She explained that she learned the unwritten rules by listening and looking at how the others behave because when she came in as a new teacher she knew she had to fit in. She noticed that what they were doing was good because *'that is why the school has such a good reputation'* (PT6).

Rituals

The daily rituals that were observed seem to reinforce the rigid routine. Students were on task and maximum time was devoted to teaching and learning. Teachers and students entered classrooms 15 minutes before the 9 a.m. bell. The school was guided by a master timetable with detailed daily and weekly activities. The clock in every classroom reinforced the importance of time on task. The systematic record-keeping in log books, the obligation *'to pray and sing every morning'* (PT2: interview), adherence to daily time tables, the compulsory 3.00-6.00 p.m. lesson planning sessions on a Thursday afternoon, and weekly assemblies seem to create a steady and stable school environment. The school's bell was a well respected artifact of the school. Rituals were used to inspire students *'we tell our students every morning that we are proud of them...it's every day like a ritual'* (PT1: interview).

Main practices, processes and strategies.

Teaching and learning

The teaching and learning activities appeared to be purposely directed *'our school is one ... where quality education is the main goal'* (PT4: interview) and the *'the emphasis is on academic'* (PT8: interview). The teachers at Peabright appear to focus on the core subjects outlined in prescribed national curriculum. The national prescribed curriculum

and national assessment results were available to every teacher. From observation the teaching was rigorous planned and executed. One teacher explained how teachers worked: *'we set our work above the normal so that we can really test the students to see how well they are achieving'* (PT5: interview). From observation the teachers appeared consistent and systematic in their teaching. Another teacher explained *'everything has to be done in unison so that every class feels that they are part of the school's team'* (PT1: interview) and they explored different teaching strategies to enhance student learning.

The emphasis was on raising the level of students' performance: *'we try our utmost best as teachers to make the children learn...we find what areas they are weak at and plan activities and strategies to help them ... children don't develop together some are slower'* (PT4: interview). They implemented different strategies *'at school level we have a programme ... individual teachers do different things for different students... peer tutoring, teachers teach after school free of charge ... we see the improvement based on our results that makes us proud'* (PT8: interview). This teacher further confirmed, *'we take different approaches... we work towards achieving the vision differently'* (PT8: interview). They were steadfast *'we want the best for our children ... we try hard'* (PT4: interview), and confident *'we ... give the best possible education'* (PT7: interview). PT6 explained it in this way, *'from the time you step into the door you are prepared to work'* (PT6: interview). From observation the teachers were focused, busy and highly motivated. But the principal visited every classroom to ensure that the teachers remained on task. Teachers prepared weekly schemes of work and daily lesson plans for each subject. Groups of teachers remained after school to construct teaching aids to enhance the teaching and learning. They engaged in small talk but their discussions were also centered on students and incidents in the classrooms.

Monitoring teachers' performance

The principal was observed walking around and visiting some classrooms two or more times during the day. Most of the teachers seem to be satisfied with the current level of performance of their peers: *'we do not have poor performing teachers here ... if we do we help ... during initiation we teach new teachers the culture of this school'* (PT8: interview), *'it's a rare case here'* (PT4: interview). A senior teacher, PT5 confidently stated *'I don't think presently I have this problem ... if a teacher is weak in one area then we share in the teaching and learning process'* (PT5: interview) but that was the main

role of the head *'principal will talk to the individual teacher ... it is not something that happens often here.... we hold one-to-one conferencing with the teacher'* (PT2: interview).

Strategies to improve teachers' performance

When the school encountered poor performing teachers the principal *'discuss with senior teachers and then would meet with the teacher'* (PT3: interview). The principal, who appeared vigilant at all times, explained *'we look at what's happening and what they can improve on...one to one...grade level conferencing'* (HT: interview). One of the teachers explained how teachers were held accountable:

We do ... clinical assessment ... sometimes we do revision but most of our teachers are qualified so we would sit as a group and ask what problems they are having in what areas and find persons who are more qualified in that area to help that teacher ... if a teacher is not performing that teacher will be assessed and interviewed along with other grade teachers [who teach the same level] so the teacher can see that there is a disparity among the students' performance.

(PT1: interview)

Professional Development

Both teachers and principal indicated that professional development was undertaken at the school level. Several recent publications, including Stronge, Tucker and Hindman (2004) *'Handbook of qualities for effective teachers'*, and Gabriel (2005) *'How to thrive as a teacher leader'*, were observed among the collection of educational resource material and improvement books in the principal's office. The school was a long-standing member and subscribed monthly to the *Phi Delta Kappan*, a journal for educators. During a casual discussion the principal said that the school promoted compulsory continuous in-school learning and the staff was required to study one book per year for professional development. Everyone participated in the exercise *'we have professional development day all the time to develop ourselves so that knowledge is filtered to the students'* (PT8: interview). From observation it seemed that young teachers consulted and worked along with senior teachers.

Monitoring students' performance

The teachers explained that regular testing at both class and whole school level helped to identify weaknesses of students, *'we looked at the results of the minimum standards the common entrance, we look at how the students perform in the classroom'* (PT7: interview). Or *'we write our weaknesses where our children fall short'* (PT3: interview) and *'assessment throughout the term end of term... end of year'* (HT: interview). Some teachers had copies of the national examinations results on their desks, others were observed perusing the tables of results from the Ministry of Education. They corrected and provided feedback to students in lessons. They discussed students' performance informally during lunch time.

Strategies to improve students' performance

The school developed strategies to deal with students' weaknesses *'after common entrance minimum standards examinations... we look at classes with weaknesses and we work on them we develop learning centers and we stay back after school'* (PT2: interview). PT1 explained *'they [students] sign a contract and at the end of the time we review the contract with them'* (PT1: interview). She explained that tracking individual students was useful as it helped set academic targets to raise the level of achievement to suit individual students' ability. From observation some teachers devoted time outside school hours to teach students. Several teachers spoke about the importance of high performance, one of them captured it in this manner: *'the average that we receive must be of a high standard'* (PT6: interview). Another teacher explained how Peabright made it possible:

The (MOE) has set standards, but we have our own standards, because at Peabright Combined we do not believe 60% is high enough ... so we set ourselves a minimum of 70% in certain grades and even in the lower grades a minimum of 80-85% so am ... its because we want our students to excel so in our work plan we clearly set out the testing and evaluation which we do quite often. If students are not performing ... We try to identify the students quite early and place them in that setting where the special needs teacher can help.

(PT5: interview)

School review

Both teachers and principal indicated that Peabright had a holistic approach to school review and improvement, and they do not deviate from the school's goals since '*The goals are related to school improvement*' (PT7: interview). The examination result serves dual purpose: summative and formative '*from our examination results we discuss our weaknesses and failures we have departmental meetings for infants juniors and seniors*' (PT3: interview). The improvement strategies were described by one staff member: '*we meet and created a five year development plan. ...on a termly basis and the end of the year we conduct an assessment or a review to see what was achieved*' (PT5: interview). The principal indicated that they planned collectively '*it's a staff activity, each term we have a general review of goals*' (HT: interview). The interviewees' comments seem to indicate that annual school review, end of term review and systematic planning were built in the school improvement process.

Rewards and sanctions for performance

The teachers acknowledged that students and teachers were rewarded for good practices, but incompetence and poor practices were promptly dealt with. Teachers were accountable, '*the principal will call in and speak to that person*' (PT4: interview). Students too were chastised by the teachers for disobedience, lateness, and incomplete class work. One teacher used the cane in my presence, but during the third week of observation at the school, the sound of the cane was often heard coming from more than one classroom. The principal and teachers often praised the students either during assembly or in the classrooms. Whilst engaging in small talk during the lunch hour a senior teacher, PT1 explained to the others that it was very important to keep reminding the students that teachers were proud of them. She explained that it was necessary to repeat it often and to continue to remind them that they [students] were very bright children, which evoked laughter from her audience. Some of the teachers professed that the effort of corporate sponsors such as the hotels and business houses who assisted the school, outstanding teachers, and students who performed outstandingly in common entrance and minimum standards were highlighted and acknowledged.

Ceremonies

The school celebrated achievement '*we always give out lots of prizes for first second and third and to those who try very hard*' (PT5: interview). The principal narrated that and

parents and school sponsors were invited to the ceremonies and church service at Peabright. They celebrated end-of-term awards day which usually started with thanksgiving mass followed by distribution of certificates, trophies and merit badges to students and teachers for outstanding performance. One teacher cited the following annual celebrations: school anniversary; St. Lucia National Day and end of academic year awards.

Protection of the school and new staff recruitment

Some of the teachers and the principal stressed that they felt it was important to protect and preserve the school. One of the younger teachers explained *'during initiation we teach new teachers the culture of this school'* (PT8: interview). Another senior teacher commented, *'this person would have to fit in ...we have a certain culture and I would not like to see any new person come in ... and break the trend and the norm'* (PT5: interview). Some of the teachers expect a new recruit who is *'ready to work, to accept corrections and always on her toes'* (PT6: interview) and *'can share ideas...once it will enhance our school and the learning of our students...to get the right person we look into their background before they come in'* (PT3: interview). The principal also confirmed, *'we let that [new] teacher know what the school stand for and what we expect...so that the culture is filtered down...so when they join...they fit into it well'* (HT: interview). A staff member explained the process *'before they come in the principal would notify us about this person and ... teachers would find out about his person's background and discuss'* (PT4: interview). During an informal discussion, the principal confirmed that everyone at the school, carefully screen new recruits before they were recommended for appointment by the Teaching Service Commission.

Inter personal relationship/ Social networking

Communication

Some of the teachers stressed that there was an open door policy whereby everybody knew what was happening *'we know everything that is going on in each classroom'* (PT1: interview). Information was shared: *'meeting with staff every month'* (PT2: interview) and *'we meet on a regular basis if targets are not achieved we ask why and what has to be done'* (PT5: interview). This transparency was not only for teachers, students too were incorporated in the information network: *'The children know what they are [goal] and what our expectations are. We speak to them about it...we plan together we discuss our*

shortfalls and how we are going to improve' (PT7: interview). Parents were not excluded they *'help us to identify problems at meetings'* (PT3: interview). From observation, the communication channel was open with frequent exchange among staff, students and parents at Peabright. The teachers spoke to parents before and after school, but the principal's office was open to them at all times.

Commitment, collaboration and teamwork

Commitment and Collaboration appeared central to Peabright, *'the teachers the principal everybody you see at this school we work together ... the teachers are committed as a staff'* (PT5: interview) and the *'team spirit it there and we make every child everybody's business'* (PT1: interview). One staff member explained:

during the first week before opening of school we came in... sat reviewed and discussed some of the goals ... were related to excelling in certain subjects, attitude of boys towards education ... assisting ... weak students ... performance in the classroom

(PT7: interview)

They spoke about joint-decision making *'we also meet with senior staff members and discuss but they do not make decisions it still has to be taken to the entire staff and then we take decisions'* (PT2: interview). The teachers were often seen either working or consulting in teams or just enjoying the company of their when they were not engaged in the classrooms.

Social support

The teachers were friends. The atmosphere in the small kitchen was filled with laughter, jokes at lunch time. One teacher voiced:

We work as a family ... teacher is never fearful or ashamed to go to another teacher to ask for help ... We have our ... ups and downs but like any family we do not let it get out of the school ... we solve our problems right here ... I have been here for 18 years I like my school very much.

(PT2: interview)

The teachers and students appear to work in a family atmosphere, '*...teachers and students working together*' (PT7: interview) with support '*what makes my school special is the quality of the relationship we enjoy at this school*' (PT5: interview). A new teacher confirmed '*I have been here for 1 year... and I have not regretted that I came here*' (PT6: interview). Another teacher commented:

we care for the children they are like our own children ...this is not a place where you will get hurt and feel unsafe... the school makes us so happy ... we want to be here ... because the children inspire us ... that's why we are always happy'

(PT4: interview)

One of the senior teachers explained '*its team effort we do it not just for self satisfaction and glorify but we do it for the students*' (PT5: interview). Some of the teachers were observed petting and hugging the students during the day and a few of the teachers hugged each other on arrival in the morning. One teacher recounted during an informal discussion that she would rather vacate her post than accept a transfer to another school.

Images and messages conveyed in metaphors, stories, myths, heroes and heroines.

Metaphors

Peabright was '*a bee hive everybody ... is working all the time they are well organized and are engaged in different activities*' (PT7: interview). From observations the staff planned all lessons and began teaching on time '*maybe a work place, a factory*', (PT3: interview) or '*a business institution*' (PT1: interview). Teachers were engaged in different activities but they indicated that they cooperated and team-work when necessary. The school treated members as '*a family and everybody work together*' (PT4: interview), but it was also '*a moulding block*' (PT8: interview) a school that expected uniformity and conformity. Another teacher described it as '*a home... one of the great schools in the island*' (PT6: interview), '*a tree of knowledge*' (PT5: interview) and '*a family...team work... unity sharing*' (PT2: interview) '*a family*' (HT: interview). However during a casual discussion one teacher complained that she was under pressure all the time and that she felt burnt out and tired.

Stories

One of the stories about the school that was recounted in the history seem to indicate that teachers were expected to work tirelessly with no rest; *‘when I was coming here my friends told me you are going to Peabright you will always be on your toes you will be like a donkey working’* (PT6: interview). One staff member reported:

... people say the students who have been to the Peabright Combined are well disciplined, well brought up and they work well ...I have heard people from the community actually arguing about the performance and which school is the best from the ... area ... and Peabright is a contender

(PT8: interview)

Other stories conveyed that Peabright was a disciplined school, with a record of performing well at examinations, with dedicated hard-working teachers, and with well established and accepted norms of behaviour. The school had a type of culture, a reputation, which was positive and wholesome.

Myths

The main myth was linked to a massive green tree that grew in the centre of the small court. The principal narrated its importance and link to the school: The tree never wilted not even during the hot summer months, because the school’s spirit resided in that tree. They addressed students under the tree during special occasions, and the school’s motto ‘the tree of knowledge will never wilt’ is linked to that tree. She suggested that it was a source of inspiration to everyone at the school.

Heroes and Heroines

Based on teachers’ comments and observations the school’s heroes and heroines were the students who performed outstandingly well in examinations. It was generally accepted that *‘there was something distinctive about the students who have passed here’* (PT8: interview) and the staff *‘was proud of the students, their achievements... they inspired the teachers’* (PT4: interview). The eighteen trophies for academic excellence were displayed in the principal’s office; the remaining six were awarded for sports.

Relationship with parents

The principal reported that the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) assisted, and community members worked voluntarily for the school. She explained *'parents, teachers students all work cooperatively to make the school a better place'* (HT: interview). Some of the teachers stressed, *'their parents are very much involved in bringing this [performance] about'* (PT7: interview) because it was important that *'the staff the parents the students everybody works together at the Peabright Combined school'* (PT4: interview). They were invited to the school: *'we get parents and resource persons to come in and help in the school'* (PT2: interview). According to one teacher the parents also monitored students' performance *'the parents are well involved in the school ... they came in and said this is not the kind of report I saw in the past something is wrong'* (PT6: interview). The parents were observed walking around freely, and few of them assisted the school's janitor to clean up the yard. The principal allowed some mothers to remain in the classroom with the 5 year olds, who experienced difficulties in settling down during the first week of school.

Principal and sub-culture

Practices and style

The principal interacted with all members of staff. She appeared attentive and listened but often asked for explanations. She appeared very deliberate in her action and steadfast sometimes. Although she was quite firm, the teachers seem to respect her as their leader. The principal explained *'at this school it's all about performance'* (HT: interview). One teacher expressed *'principal is an initiator...a motivator she inspires'* but elaborated on monitoring strategies *'she looks at the work of the teachers she assess the students and if I am not performing to the principal's expectations she would call me and pull me up and this is how we do it here... that's what she does'* (PT5: interview). Another corroborated *'we discuss it then principal would approach this person...other resource persons speak to that person'* (PT7: interview), but the principal also provided social support *'the principal is always in and out of the class and when she is around she give you the strength to work'* (PT6: interview). The principal stressed importance of ownership, *'we develop together... [plans, goals] to see how we can improve the school'* (HT: interview). The principal indicated that she monitored student achievement *'we look at individual students as they move from one level to the next'* (HT: interview). PT6 summarized the role of the principal:

It is one of the great schools in the island ... I believe it's the principal. Her ways... her management ... She may be very tiny but when it comes to her managing skill, she possesses it. She maybe someone who rides the back of teachers as some of the teachers may say but I believe if she was not like that and did not possess these skills this school would not be what it is now.

(PT6: interview)

From observation the principal utilized the skills of the senior teachers. She spent more time observing the activities of the school. She read students' work and corrected teachers' lesson-plans and also attendant to administrative side of the school. She often stayed back to work in the office after school. The principal commanded sometimes, and did not hesitate to tell the teachers that they should not waste time when they are at school. On one occasion she openly chastised a teacher who came in exactly at 9 a.m. for arriving late. The teacher sheepishly laughed it off.

Sub Culture

During the observation period, permanent sub-groups were not evident, but social groupings existed. The main social group consisted of nine teachers and the principal. A smaller group consisted of three teachers, and three other loners, who spend most of the time in separate classrooms. Barriers or boundaries were not apparent as teachers moved freely between the groups, though they exhibited preferences. PT8 seem to indicate that groups posed no threat to the school *we uphold the same vision*' (PT8: interview). Another teacher confirmed *'we do not have cliques in this school...we mould new person...'* (PT3: interview) and supported *'I don't know of any cliques...things are monitored closely'* (PT5: interview). However PT2 categorically stated *'we tell the teacher what is expected ...like any family we do not allow it to get out of hand'* (PT2: interview). From observation the teachers appear to work in a close network of interpersonal relationships but the principal conveyed *'... we filter so when we get our teachers ... they are committed to the children welfare'* (HT: interview).

Summary

The rundown physical structure contained numerous memorabilia depicting the school's academic achievement. The work of the staff and principal was guided by school's shared

vision and mission, and their activities were underpinned by the schools' three primary goals. The school's mandate was aligned with the education policy and they worked to fulfill all the criteria outlined in the Education Act. They harboured high expectations and set high standard both for themselves and the students. They believed that the students had the ability to perform and they were consistent and dedicated to the tasks required to achieve high performance in examinations. They crafted a social framework with rules regulations and policies and daily rituals to maintain the normalcy and stability. The main and primary task of teaching as well all other strategies was engineered to accomplish high student attainment in national examinations. The school did not compromise on monitoring performance at all levels: students, teachers, and whole school. The appropriate intervention strategies such as rewards and sanctions, compulsory in-house continuous learning to improve on professional development were institutionalized. The school did not leave anything to chance, the staff and principal cautiously protected the school from opposing values and beliefs by carefully selecting and recommending persons with similar views and perspectives for appointment to join the staff. They co-opted the parent and the community in the school's activities. The principal promoted the school's vision and mission. She was quite forceful in her approach and skillfully built commitment to achieve the goal of the school by engaged everyone in the process. A mix style of leading akin to dictatorial/authoritarian/ coercive was evident at the school.

CHAPTER 5 Analysis Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

5.1 Introduction

In the literature review features of school culture and the role of leadership were identified for investigation in this study. In chapter 4 case studies were presented, focusing on findings and description of the features of school culture and leadership that were evident and in the two schools.

In this chapter these two case studies will be reviewed and compared to explore the features which contribute to shaping and maintaining the culture of the two schools. The data revealed that some of the features that were present in the schools were strongly linked. They were grouped and presented under 9 themes that were discussed in the literature about school culture. In presenting the two cases, the history, education policy and visual symbols were presented first as background information for Blossom and Peabright schools. But history and education policy were analysed and discussed last, since their influence were revealed after investigating the internal activities and ways of working within each of the two schools. Visual symbols were presented under the theme: messages and statements.

5.2 Analysis interpretation and discussion of themes

The same nine themes will also be used in the analysis interpretation and discussion in this chapter. A discussion will be undertaken under each theme but 'guiding philosophy' and 'beliefs and expectations' will be discussed jointly at the end of the two themes as they relate to the deeper layer of school culture. Structure, practices processes strategies and interpersonal relationships are constituents of the outer layer of school culture.

- 1. The guiding philosophy**
- 2. The expressed beliefs and expectations**
- 3. The school structure**
- 4. Main practices processes and strategies**
- 5. Inter personal relationships**
- 6. Messages and statements about the school**
- 7. Relationship with parents**
- 8. The principal**

9. History and education policy

5.2.1 The guiding philosophy

The vision mission and goals will be analysed and compared under this theme. Vision and mission statements may serve as prescriptive mandates (Morrison, 2002) and articulate the values and priorities of organizations. They are open declarations of what organizations stand for and what is important to them. The shared vision and mission help to harness collective energy (Fullan, 1993) and collective attitude (Fink, 2005).

Vision and mission

Both schools had vision and mission and written goals. However there were significant differences in the visibility and content of these within the two schools.

They were located in different places: at Blossom the vision and mission statements were written in an archived logbook dated 1994. Blossom staff was not familiar with the school's vision and mission. At Peabright vision and mission statements were displayed in the principal's office, on school development plan, on students' copybooks and on the bulletin board. The staff members were familiar with them, and also the students.

The contents were different: at Blossom the vision focused on the child becoming a 'productive citizen' which is future oriented, and the mission addressed creating school climate and parental involvement. Peabright's vision focused on successful performance of students, the mission addressed disciplined and resourceful students, student centered-classrooms and celebration of success. The staff at Peabright accepted that these statements of intent that 'draw attention to what is important' (Robinson, 2001, p. 100) should guide all activities at the school: They were related to student performance and achievement, and were therefore used to plan for the desired goals.

Goals

Goals are desired results that organizations strive to attain, but ambiguous goals hinders rational thinking (Hoy and Miskel, 2001). Sergiovanni (1995) argues that goals program daily activities and provide instrumental power over teachers to determine their actions and how efficiently they execute their tasks.

Blossom's two written goals, 'develop self esteem' and 'improve students' performance and achievement', were recorded in archives, but not publicly displayed. Hence the staff identified individualistic goals to guide their actions at the school. Peabright had three written goals: 'improve students' achievement', 'increase effectiveness' and 'focus on child-centered learning'. They supported the vision and mission of the school. They were known and accepted by the staff and the principal.

Because the key elements of the guiding philosophy were not visible, and used regularly in planning at Blossom, the staff was left to forge ahead in isolation: the main focus and the intention of the school were not defined to serve as a medium to guide collective actions. But at Peabright the shared values of the school identified in the vision and mission guided the behaviour of teachers but as explained by Hoy and Miskel (2001) they also defined the character and gave the school a sense of identity. They informed decision making to guide the teaching and learning at activities at Peabright. The goals were specific, and their primary focus driven by the underlying values in vision and mission (high student achievement and performance) guided the activities within the school.

The teachers worked differently in the two schools. At Blossom the teachers' individualistic goals appeared to guide their practices, but the consensus on the values in vision and mission and the shared goals appeared to drive teachers' collective effort and may be partly responsible for the unified teacher practices at Peabright.

5.2.2 The expressed beliefs and expectations of the staff and the principal

Beliefs and expectations when shared generate rules for norms of behaviour of individuals and groups to shape the culture of organizations (Schwartz and Davis, 1981). Pettigrew (1979) also agrees that values and beliefs are embodied in the underlying layer of culture. They affect and effect the noticeable behaviours and practices of a group. The main features of culture, shared beliefs, attitudes and values are responsible for external demonstrations of behaviour (Hargreaves, 1999). Sergiovanni (1995) argued in favour of shared values, but shared beliefs too can foster a culture of commitment and collaboration in schools.

Beliefs and expectations

The teachers at Blossom and Peabright held similar beliefs and expectations on students' discipline, but they differed in the other areas. Blossom's teachers emphasized social

development of the child, physical environment and sports, but Peabright's teachers emphasized high standards of achievement, high expectation in examinations, teacher commitment and unity. However beliefs and expectation cannot be seen as they reside in principals' and teachers' minds but Pajares (1992) argues teachers' beliefs are good indicators of their actions. The beliefs and expectations of individuals may predispose their feelings, their outlook and how they approach their daily responsibilities at the two schools.

Ryan (1993) argues schools are created by the different mix of people with values and beliefs that may not always be consistent. Blossom teachers and principal shared similar beliefs and expectations on students' discipline, moral development of students, quality of the physical environment and extra-activities (cultural events/ sports). They held contradictory beliefs on the level of commitment demonstrated teachers. Peabright teachers and the principal expressed similar beliefs and expectations: students' high performance, high standards and expectation in examinations, teacher commitment and unity at the school.

Discussion

The organizational philosophy or creed were expressed in values, beliefs, aspirations and priorities (Bjerke (2001) by both schools. The shared vision and mission statements and specific written goals that Hoy and Miskel (2001) argue are necessary to influence the decisions, tasks, structures were absent at Blossom, hence teachers' commitment to individualistic goals guided the school. Hoy and Miskel (2001, p.139) explain that 'beliefs play a pivotal role in motivating individuals to act' but both shared and contradictory beliefs and expectations, which appeared to be aspects of the deeper layer of Blossom' culture, influenced the school.

The shared values captured in the vision and mission statements, the consensus on definite goals and shared beliefs and expectations appear to 'function as the cultural center of the school-the repository of that which is held sacred by all' (Sergiovanni, 1995, 161): features of the deeper layer of school culture at Peabright. The philosophy was the explicit covenant of the school. This consensus appeared to guide the collective action at the school.

Vision and mission statements, the written expression of values, have several implications for an organization. Caldwell and Spinks (1988, pp. 174–175) put forward that vision can become ‘the heart of the culture of an organization’. If it is shared by all teachers then it can direct all activities, structures and process within the school environment. There is a good atmosphere a real culture of cooperation and achievement in some schools, but this happen when there is consensus on vision (Fleming 2000) mission and goals, and when everyone knows and embraces the purpose of the organization.

5.2.3 The school structure

The physical and social structure, rules regulations and rituals will be discussed under this theme.

Hargreaves (1999) claims that the two main types of structures, physical and social, have profound impact on school culture; dimension, layout and location even down to placement of water fountains will influence the social interaction in schools. The composition of the social structure, which includes position, level of influence, power status and authority impacted on relationships and productivity. Both aspects of structure are important elements in school culture. They control how people work in the schools (Gronn, 2002). They encourage not only physical linkages and interaction, but also the atmosphere of exchange and dialogue among teachers, principal, students and parents. Structure and culture are interdependent (Stoll, 2003). Structure impacts on working relationships and facilitates networking underpinned by procedures that encourage participation in schools (Hopkins, 2001).

Physical structure

At Blossom the physical structure was adequately laid down and conducive for student learning. It consists of three large concrete buildings with spacious classrooms. It was equipped with large staffroom with portable water dispenser for teachers, library, sick-bay and water fountains for students. At Peabright the physical structure was small and cramped, but teachers made it conducive for learning with clean classrooms, neatly arranged rows of desks and benches and leaning aids designed by teachers. It had no staffroom or library or water fountains for students.

Social structure

The Blossom staff worked in a fragmented social structure consisting of sub-units and individuals following inconsistent practices. The assumed unequal distribution of power and authority among the staff created a situation whereby not all members conformed to rules, roles and responsibilities, '*teachers do what they want*'. The principal's affiliation with one of the sub-groups and heavy handed approach in an attempt to control and standardize distributive actions (Gronn, 2002) contributed to the friction at the school.

In contrast, Peabright the staff appeared to function in a social structure that promoted conformity and homogeneity. Relationships and practices were closely monitored and teachers' responsibilities were clearly defined. The structure appear to exhibit more characteristics of a rigid system (Gronn, 2002), but some degree of fluidity was permitted which enable teachers to shared in the decision making and problem solving at the school. The principal applied management skills to 'keep the herd moving west' (Deal and Kennedy, 1983) by directing the course of the school either through delegation or control. Most of the teachers appeared to accept the existing management structure; they did what was expected to achieve the school's goals. They worked hard and collectively, to achieve what they imagined was best for the school. They protected the current social arrangement by carefully selecting, indoctrinating and monitoring new staff members, which may also be one of the deliberate strategies use to guard against the formation of sub-cultures and opposition to the current pursuit of the school.

Rules and regulations

Rules and regulations help maintain an orderly environment but they also assist in defining and controlling actions (Gronn, 2002). The unwritten rules, though not spoken about, influence everyone and exist in the deeper layer of school culture (Peterson and Deal, 2002).

Blossom teachers' were guided by unwritten rules laid down by their predecessors. These rules and expectation that are not written were intuitively picked up and learned by new members at the school (Hoy and Miskel, 2001). The students, though not guided by written rules, were well disciplined and well mannered.

On the other hand Peabright was guided by written rules and regulations. The school policed the learning environment by enforcing rules and regulations and school policies, to keep teachers and students on task and to keep the school moving in a direction to achieve the goals. They were unquestionable as they were seen as an important strategy '*foundation*' for keeping the school on track. Sometimes organizations develop courses of action that may appear unyielding and firm, but if accepted, they eventually become an established way of operating, as demonstrated in the enforcement of rule and regulations at Peabright.

The students from both schools were disciplined and exhibited good manners. Though it requires more than good manners to enhance learning outcomes, well mannered students are likely to be more attentive and benefit from the instruction offered in the classrooms.

Rituals

The daily rituals bind and bond (Deal, 1988) thought not rigidly, the collective action and practices at Blossom. The unwritten rules contributed to lenient behaviour that was apparent at the Blossom.

In contrast Peabright engaged rigid daily rituals to ensure students were on task and maximum time was devoted to teaching and learning. The day to day rituals and routines and rigid timetables kept the teachers focused and accountability. They served as useful mediums for coordinating, integrating and reinforcing established ways of working to strengthen desirable practices at the school (Deal and Kennedy, 1982).

Discussion-

Social structures, described by Hargreaves (1998) as the underlying architecture of culture, are interrelated: structure creates the conditions that support the values, beliefs and practices but culture permits, enables or disables the existence of the school structure.

Both the physical and social structures, aspects of the outer layer of school culture were different in the two schools. Blossom, with superior physical structure, was guided by unwritten rules that enabled them to work in a structure of dissension. A very loose structure, founded on individual judgments existed at the school. New members learned the habits and attitudes from their predecessors to perpetuate the current social structure

and the culture. This may be the reason why Stoll (2003) suggested that school structure is closely linked to, and influences school culture.

In contrast Peabright, housed in a collection of old wooden sheds, developed a rigid social structure to control behaviour at the school. They designed a social structure to coordinate the activities of members through the assignment of roles and responsibilities within a system that flourished on policies, rules, regulations, and rituals. The members were permitted to exercise initiative and judgment in a collaborative and joint decision-making atmosphere, which appeared as a collegial structure (Fidler, 2002). It also promoted interrelationships and connectedness (Stoll, 2003) but at the same time members were not allowed to deviate. The school appeared to function as a contrived collegiality system that flourished on imposed collaboration (Hargreaves, A. 1995) to facilitate achievement of its goals. The structures in the two schools were different but as argued by Hopkins (2001) structures generate cultures that allow that particular structure to work but the culture also endorses that structure. According to Stoll (2003) well structured schools are organized around core ideals that define 'the way we do things around here' (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, p.4). People who are empowered need a fluid structure but some type of boundary is essential even if it is fuzzy or impervious: it provides a guide and defines expected roles of teachers (Daft, 1999). Structures and policies, features of the outer layer of organizational culture (Deal and Kennedy, 1982) are designed to achieve goals and therefore focus on all tasks necessary to accomplish them.

5.2.4 Main practices, processes and strategies

This theme includes teaching and learning, monitoring teachers' performance, professional development, monitoring students' performance, strategies to improve students performance, school review, rewards and sanctions, ceremonies, protection of the school culture.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) identified strategies and practices as features of the outer layer of school culture. Harris and Hopkins (2000) made specific reference to structures that facilitate collaboration and empowerment, processes that enhance learning, and meaningful use of data to guide improvement strategies. Harris (2000) confirms the need to make effective use of performance management, fostering unity through shared consensus, commitment and collaboration, since they affect the internal environment and how schools work.

Teaching and Learning

Teachers at Blossom and Peabright taught the prescribed curriculum. Whilst all teachers at Blossom engaged in teaching and learning the consistency of practice among teachers was impeded, because some teachers were not as committed as others; they worked in isolation behind closed doors in their classrooms. While some teachers acknowledged that the students were academically weak, they blamed the level of resources, each other, the parents and even principal, but they were not prepared to take responsibility for student performance. The belief that their efforts were not appreciated by the principal further demotivated them.

On the contrary, Peabright teachers dedicatedly and collectively focused on teaching the content of the curriculum, as the success of the school was based on national examination of the nationally imposed curriculum. They appeared unperturbed by lack of ownership of the curriculum. This issue was highlighted by Lofthouse (1994), who argues 'the threat is to accept the imposing the monolith of a national curriculum without ever owning it' (p. 146) may disempower and limit commitment in some schools. Peabright teachers understood the relationship between quality of teaching and student performance and accepted responsibility for students learning.

Since the Blossom staff was divided, they found it hard to seek help to improve on teaching strategies because of the limited communication and frail relationships at the school. The efforts of the few, who were committed, were not sufficiently dense to create a major impact at the school. Some members engaged in shifting the blame or consolation '*we are doing better than a lot of other schools*'. On the other hand Peabright teachers engaged collective effort and held the primary belief that all of them were committed to the same purpose. They identified weaknesses, planned collaboratively and actively experimented with different strategies to raise achievement in the classrooms. They dedicated themselves to the task of achieving the main goal, and the values outlined in the vision and mission statements: students' achievement and performance.

Monitoring teachers' performance

Teachers were monitored in both schools but with different intensity and consistency. While Blossom's teachers were not consistently monitored, when monitoring was undertaken, it fuelled the hostility that existed between the principal and some of the staff

members. Class visits were infrequent. However, the principal spent some time monitoring the new recruits who may have been more receptive to her presence than some of the original staff members.

Peabright's teachers were continuously appraised and monitored. Senior teachers assisted with the supervision of junior colleagues, but the principal was vigilant and monitored the teaching and learning continuously to keep the school focused on the school's primary goal. The performance of teachers was compared on the basis of the results obtained by students from the same grade level. While the grade level conferencing appeared as a collaborative effort to enhance performance, it imposed intense self and peer scrutiny by comparing efforts. In this way teachers were forced to be accountable: to explain how and why students had or had not performed at the expected standard. The continuous monitoring of teachers' performance at Peabright helped to identify teachers' weaknesses. The school provided appropriate support, and senior teachers worked collaboratively and shared best practices to improve teaching techniques of junior staff.

The weakness and irregularity of monitoring staff's performance at Blossom may in part be responsible for the inconsistent progress of some students: *'a good group of students at one level performs poorly at the next level because of the weakness in teaching'*.

Both schools undertook teacher professional development. Peabright facilitated compulsory continuous in-school learning to enhance teachers' professional development. It was mandatory for all teachers to participate in the exercise to expand on skills and proficiency: to improve teaching strategies. However, it was not an ongoing and strength of Blossom. Teachers' skills and efficiency were not continuously enhanced by professional development at the school.

Monitoring students' performance

Developing procedures to monitor progress (Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore, 1995) can enhance students' learning by providing feedback to heighten awareness, especially of weaknesses that require attention.

Students' performance was monitored at both schools but the frequency and use of the information generated varied. Both schools were subjected to the three compulsory

minimum standards tests that were administered at grades 2, 4 and 6 by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to monitor schools' performance annually.

Blossom's internal assessment was not regular and the MOE's minimum standard tests results were not adequately reviewed to identify weaknesses and inform decisions for students' needs.

Peabright differed in the intensity and steadfastness applied to monitoring students' performance. The school monitored and assessed students continuously to generate information for summative and formative purposes. They analysed the MOE mandatory minimum standards examination results and in-house end of term and end of year re-examination to identify weaknesses, the extent of curriculum coverage and students' level of proficiency. The school's work plan clearly set out the frequency of testing and evaluation of students. The school's minimum pass mark was higher than the national examinations set by the Ministry of Education.

Strategies to improve students' performance

Both schools employed strategies to improve students' performance. Blossom's strategies for student improvement included withdrawal and support for weak students by special needs teacher, feedback in class and homework from a few of the teachers. It was difficult to discern the impact of the special needs teacher but it is likely that weak students may well be worse off without this support.

In contrast Peabright developed a comprehensive system to improve students' performance. They strove to maintain high standards through early detection of weaknesses matched with appropriate intervention strategies: working contracts for students, after school lessons, homework from all teachers and assistance from special needs teacher. Peabright tracked individual students and set higher academic targets to raise the level of achievement to suit students' ability. Teachers devoted time outside of school hours to teach and to review performance with individual students.

At Blossom since student monitoring was not systemically built into the school's framework of activities, the improvement strategies were not consistent and sufficiently focused in all classes. At Peabright the regular in-house testing at both class and whole

school level helped to inform on performance. As a result they developed plans and strategies to suit individual students and classes.

Whole School review

The schools differ in school review. Evidence to show that Blossom engaged in whole school review was not apparent. Teachers aimed to achieve whole school improvement by teaching the national curriculum. Improvement strategies to develop students' sporting skills were in place at the school. At Peabright, annual school review was systematically built in the school's annual programme of activities.

Rewards and sanctions ceremonies

Students at both schools were rewarded but rewards and sanctions for teachers varied. Students at Blossom received more accolades for sports than academic achievement. Blossom had a different emphasis: the collective belief on sporting events and the support from parents and the community during sporting events, may explain the outstanding performance and numerous rewards that were obtained by the students for sports. The ceremonies seem to revolve around sports and cultural events. It appeared that the school did not sufficiently reward or sanction teachers' performance at the school.

At Peabright the students received more awards for performance in examinations than sports. They were praised but also punished. Teachers were rewarded but sanctions were also applied to deter poor practices among teachers and to promote work ethic that was conducive to academic goals of the school. Peabright's ceremonies were focused academic performance which they celebrated '*with lots of prizes*'.

Both students and teachers worked differently in the two schools. The outstanding performance in sports and the numerous rewards for sports at Blossom seem to act as prime motivators for teachers. They actively assisted students to improve on their sporting skills outside of working hours. At Peabright, the academic performance which brought in the trophies for academic recognition of students, were underpinned by a dedicated team of hard working teachers in the classrooms. The application of sanctions for students and teachers who were not performing at the accepted level could be quite threatening. Rewards and sanctions may have motivated students in both schools, but the absence of

sanctions for Blossom teachers and enforcement for Peabright's reveal another main difference in how the two schools functioned.

Protection of the school culture

Blossom did not demonstrate evidence on protection of the school from outside influences. The school worked with two opposing teacher sub-cultures. But Peabright protected the unity in the working environment by guarding against the formation of opposing sub-cultures.

Gary (1988) explained that individuals are afraid of losing control and fear that the organizations will descent into chaos. Peabright actively protect the internal school culture. Fear of disruption of the environment that Peabright had carefully and collectively designed kept the school vigilant to preserve the school culture. The principal and the teachers shield their creation from outside interference by careful selection of teachers: *'We have a certain culture and I would not like to see any new person come in ...and break the trend and the norm'*. They discouraged the formation of opposing sub-cultures with opposing beliefs: that could be both a threat and barrier to cooperative effort and goal achievement, or pose challenges to the established ways of the school. The school avoided 'the blight of toxic cultures ... school where staff are extremely fragmented, where the purpose of serving students has been replaced to the goal of serving adults, where negative values and hopelessness reign'(Peterson and Deal, 1998, p.28).

Discussion

The practices, processes and strategies aspects of outer layer of school culture were undertaken with varying level of intensity and efficiency in the two schools. At Blossom the task of teaching and learning and associated activities were not sufficiently focused. The staff dispelled the internal reality within the school by engaging in blame and identifying other reasons why the school could not perform better, employing defensive behaviour, splitting, and projecting (James et al, 2006). Meaningful use of data to guide improvement strategies (Harris and Hopkins, 2000) were not afforded sufficient attention. Focusing on clear teaching outcomes or teacher professional development (Harris, 2000) or performance management of teachers were not high priority, hence weakness and appropriate intervention strategies were not addressed. While sanctions and rewards to

inspire the staff were not in place the students were inspired and rewarded for sporting excellence during the schools' ceremonies.

Peabright emphasized the task of teaching and learning and all other activities at the school were built around this main task to ensure that students learned. They monitored the performance of students and teachers and used whole school review to identify weak areas that thwart the progress of the school. Rewards and sanctions were applied as leverage to keep students and teachers focused on the objective of the school. In fact Fleming (2000) argues that it is by no accident that some schools have a good culture, it is deliberate and often the result of good selection of staff, training, useful policies and shared vision. The compulsory in house learning enhanced teacher professionalism. The staff's and principal's deliberate and mediated action by careful selection of new recruits protected the school's environment. They enforced rules and regulations and policies, to protect the school's boundaries. Collectively they learned, reflected, and developed strategies and school improvement plans to strengthen the school. The rewards and sanctions provided avenues for recognizing those who emulated the organization's values and beliefs (Deal, 1988) for deterring practices but also for promoting and developing values that synchronize with that of the school through timely celebrations and ceremonies.

5.2.5 Inter personal relationships

Communication, commitment and collaboration and social support will be discussed under this theme.

Communication

Good relationship and communication are enhanced when people work in a collaborative environment (Fullan, 2001), then they are more likely to discuss and build consensus, share information and identify solutions to common difficulties.

At Blossom only some teachers were involved in discussions or aware of issues that affected the school. The restricted communication impaired the relationship '*teachers and principal would lash out at each other*' and contributed to fragmentation of the staff.

In contrast Peabright promoted an open communication channel with frequent exchange among staff, students and parents. Teachers nurtured the team spirit to maintain unity but the emphasis was student performance and communication surrounded this main concern.

The absence of exchange and openness at Blossom affected the sense of community both within the school and with the parents. The distrustful between principal and teachers reinforced the conflicts at the school. But the open door policy at Peabright promoted transparency and invited dialogue. The principal and teachers met and discussed regularly, planned together and involved parents in problem solving.

Commitment and collaboration

Teachers at Blossom worked in an environment that impaired team work and collaboration: *'teacher from the community do not like outsiders'* The teachers' and principal's commitment to an articulated shared purpose was weak, and the absence of clearly defined goals, made goal consensus impractical, as they worked separately.

At Peabright teachers and principal were committed and they work collaboratively in a joint decision-making environment to achieve the common goals: *'the teachers are committed as a staff'*.

The communication barrier diffused commitment and cooperation and the principal's effort could not bridge the gap at Blossom. The school worked as a loose collection of sub-groups of teachers. Peabright staff worked collaboratively to overcome barriers to school improvement and to reinforced best practices in the classrooms. Disparity in teacher commitment in the two schools may be due to the level of engagement in the decision-making process and team effort, both of which are essential for teacher productivity and collective effort

Social support

The poor relationships hindered unity and friendship at Blossom: *'you do not know who to talk to here'*. The teachers did not feel cared for. The lack of trust among teachers, principal and parents cultivated a difficult if not turbulent learning environment at Blossom.

In contrast, at Peabright the teachers and the principal shared a deep friendship, a sense of care and concern prevailed among the teachers, students and principal. They appeared happy *and* this factor enhanced their well-being. But it also appeared that their personal pride and success were coupled with the success of the students and the school.

The environment of conflict, instability and unhappiness at Blossom may have had and affected teacher motivation as they worked with minimum support from their peers. But the internal relationship at Peabright, the team spirit among teacher and principal, and cooperation from parents provided emotional security and psychological support to the teachers. They communicated, collaborated and committed themselves to achieve the shared goals of the school.

Discussion

Elements of the outer layer of school culture communication, collaboration and collaboration and social support were different in the two schools. The communication barrier at Blossom hindered the working environment as teachers were not generally friendly to all their colleagues. The decision-making process and collaboration appear to be weak, and teachers appear to work in a conflict-ridden environment in isolation in their separate classrooms. Commitment and collaboration are critical in the support of a maintenance structure (Hopkins 2001), but the deficiency at Blossom diffused teacher effort at the school. The social network was inadequate: teachers did not feel appreciated; they felt no one cared, neither principal nor parents, which further contributed to the fractured school environment. Joint venture at the school was difficult except for sporting events. However as argued by Hopkins et al (1996) the culture of schools predisposes the collaboration and communication activities which encourage conversation on issues affecting the school. Some of the teachers made no effort, but the principal did not make any attempt to pull the staff together either.

Some of the features that shape the school environment, more so social interaction and emotional support and their influence on learning (Angelides and Ainscow, 2000) were not neglected at Peabright. They occupied a critical role of equal importance to the management structure at the school. The interpersonal relationships, emotional connectedness, bonds of friendship and camaraderie among staff and the emotional attachment to the workplace were all evident at Peabright. These features contributed to the enthusiasm and to the optimistic attitude that the staff exhibited at the school. They

worked with soul. Hopkins (2001) suggests that teachers' resolve and confidence are strengthened in a collaborative setting to enable them to take greater risk and share practices that enhance learning. The support and mutual trust among the teachers promote a sense of community. Fullan (2001) also argues that working relationships among teachers, communication, trust, support and help are factors that affect what happens inside a school. Blossom suffered from a major draw back: lack of trust which contributed to the anxiety and conflict at the school.

5.2.6 Messages and statements about the school

Metaphors, stories, myths, heroes and visual symbols will be discussed under this theme.

Metaphors

Bolman and Deal (1997, p. 230) state 'metaphors compress complicated issues into understandable images affecting our attitude, evaluations and actions', and provide mental models and paradigms that expose beliefs and assumptions about schools. They capture what is believed about the school (Bates, 1981). They are analogies not consciously chosen but when used they give a lucid and a clear indication of the how an object is perceived and how one thinks about a subject (Beare et al, 1989).

Different metaphors were use to describe the schools. The metaphors used by the teachers at Blossom were:

- *'It's a vision of loveliness but ... there is a lot of pressure within it'.*
- *'A family.*
- *Tense... but students are warm'.*
- *'Potential that has not been tapped'.*
- *'Budding rose... growing but here is potential'.*
- *'Pizza...parts represent each child and also teachers with head on the side of the outsider.'*
- *'A place where one thing is said and another thing is done'.*
- *'A determined school'.*

The principal described the school as '*a good place to learn*'.

The metaphors indirectly depict how teachers perceived the school and how it operated. The projected models imply that Blossom presented an illusion, an impression, of care and togetherness, it had the potential, but lack of unity and division among staff, students and principal prevailed. It was place with irregularities, maybe not guided by principles,

but a determined school with a good environment for learning. Metaphors depict how the organization functions (Morgan 1986). They conjured images of discord and division, a façade of togetherness and semblance of happiness, a family in a strained atmosphere, hindered by strong-minded staff in a divided environment with untapped potential.

The teachers at Peabright employed a different set of metaphors to describe the school. They were:

- *'A bee hive everybody ... is working all the time they are well organized and are engaged in different activities'.*
- *'Maybe a work place, a factory'.*
- *'A business institution'.*
- *'A family and everybody work together'.*
- *'A family...team work... unity sharing'.*
- *A home... one of the great schools in the island'.*
- *'A tree of knowledge'.*
- *'A moulding block'.*

The principal describe the school as 'a family.'

In contrast these metaphors of Peabright indicate teachers were expected to work as a cohesive unit, to be systematic in their effort, to be organized and work tirelessly. A factory 'depicting rigid mechanistic standards (Beare et al, 1989), but at the same time cooperate with peers and work as a family. They were expected to strive for knowledge but conform, obeyed rules and followed guidelines,

While metaphors convey that both schools worked as a family they also revealed the differences. Blossom consisted of several sub-cultures, disunity among staff; a despondent group of people who were not engaged in collaborative work. But the images and messages in the metaphors of Peabright suggest that the school function as a highly efficient organization: with unity, teamwork, good interpersonal relationships, hard-work, commitment and collaboration, structured roles, hierarchical structure, intolerant of dissension, with defined rules in a nurturing environment.

Stories and Myths

Stories

According to Beare et al (1989) every organization has its fair share of allegoric stories and tales that are more convincing than any argument based on facts or knowledge. Every culture every religion capture 'those things which are most difficult to put in words –like values for example- can be imaged in a story... it reinforces the culture by repeated tellings of it' (p.190). Different stories were told about both schools.

The teachers repeated some of the stories that circulated in the community about the school. The stories about Blossom imply that the parents of students who attend Blossom believe that their children will perform better if they were transferred elsewhere. Internal conflicts divided the school, poor performance, lack of unity among staff parents and principal, suspicion and mistrust of principal by the parents and the community were indirectly expressed in stories about Blossom.

The stories about Peabright were centered on academic achievement, good practices and good behaviour. One of the stories about Peabright '*it's the attitude from the culture of the school ... I hear it from all about*' seem to convey a distinct school culture. Community discussions and debates were centered on the relative position of Peabright in league tables. The school had a positive image with disciplined students. However teachers were expected to work ceaselessly. The community knew and accepted the principles of the school.

Myths

Myths are usually fictitious but they embody popular beliefs (Deal, 1988). Beare et al (1989) argue while they may be fictitious they are more '*true*' than real life stories. They are inventions of groups or individuals who try to make sense of their reality as they perceive it. They are active, powerful and influence what happens in schools. Myths often embody an ideology or they reinforce a philosophy. The two schools were shrouded in different myths. They conveyed different messages and images about the two schools.

One main negative myth referred to the inherent ignorance, shame and low self-esteem and embarrassment of the people from the community where Blossom is located. A positive myth that was often highlighted about school and community relates to the

beliefs about students' innate athletic ability, *'it's in their genes ... they are naturally good in sports'*,

One main myth about Peabright was associated with the green tree of knowledge in the small courtyard. It was forever green, and served as a source of inspiration to the students and the staff. They equated that tree to knowledge and kept the myth alive with special events to influence the students learning. Linking the tree to the school's spirit, gave their concept substance and a tangible medium to reinforce students beliefs about knowledge.

The stories and myths added to the credibility of the metaphors about Blossom, and help explain that the culture of the school was embedded in separation, discontentment and mistrust of leadership. The stories about Blossom portrayed and preserved a damaging image that may influenced beliefs and create doubt about Blossom's academic capabilities. However, the myth about sports may explain why the sport was so high on the school's agenda and the daily practices of sports drill on the courts. While the school did not openly declare that sport was important to them, or that it was valued by the school, it appeared to be a prominent feature of the school culture. It was shared by parents and the community based on the stories myths, and the beliefs and practices at the school.

On the other hand the stories about Peabright indicate that the school was guided by sound practices that impact positively on students' performance. The myth about the green tree made it a hallmark and a sacred place, to conduct only special assemblies and motivational speeches. The stories and myths reinforced the metaphors about Peabright. They furnished a clearer picture of the school culture. It appeared to possess a culture that was centered on student achievement, discipline, hard work, high standards and expectations, dedication, intolerance of poor practices and inefficiency. The values identified in the vision and mission, the beliefs and expectations of teachers and principals were reflected in the stories, myths and metaphors about Peabright.

Heroes and heroines

Beare et al (1989) explained heroes emulate values and characteristics that organizations which to build or reinforce and do would do well for schools to cultivate some. They

may be found among present or past members who achieve success. Both schools had heroes but they emulated different characteristics.

Blossom's heroes and heroines emerged from sporting events: '*athletics that what we are known for*'. The school and the community were equally proud of the students' talent, and the 29 trophies bore testimony to the students' accomplishment as they continued to excel in sports.

Peabright's heroes and heroines were the students who performed outstandingly well in examinations. The school recognized this as '*something distinctive about the students who have passed here*'. They proudly displayed the academic trophies to inspire others and to openly proclaim what was important to the school.

The heroes of both schools serve as an inspirational source as they represent tangible expressions of the values that organization seeks to reinforce (Deal, 1988).

Visual symbols

Memorabilia are objects or articles that are either kept or displayed. Beare et al (1989) describe them as livery that helps to differentiate organizations. They preserve memories, essential for reminiscing and telling stories about an organization's glory to both newcomers and members, reminding them of what is important.

The visual symbols were different in both schools. Blossom had superior physical structure with larger classroom and more resources. Numerous trophies for sports and the photographs of sporting and cultural events were displayed. The school was surrounded with sporting facilities and playing courts. Most of the students were not aware of the school's motto that addressed 'confidence and self-esteem'. All students wore the school's uniform.

In contrast the students at Peabright were taught in small wooden sheds divided in small classrooms with numerous learning charts on display. Many trophies for academic achievement and photographs of academic events were exhibited at the school. Most of the students knew the school's motto 'the tree of knowledge will never wilt'. All students wore the school's uniform.

The display of sporting trophies and playing facilities at Blossom, and trophies for academic achievement and learning charts at Peabright indirectly exhibited the emphasis and the prominence of different activities at both schools.

The mottos were also different. Blossom's motto addressed '*moral and social development*' of the child but Peabright's motto specified '*knowledge*'. They highlighted the different pursuits of the schools. Wearing the complete uniform at Blossom and Peabright maintained the separation and uniqueness of both schools.

Discussion

Metaphors attempt to create verbal imagery of an entity. They capture underlying values and beliefs, (Beare et al, 1989). They are unconscious processes and projects assumptions of people within an environment that would not be explicitly revealed (Smircich, 1983).

The metaphors of Blossom conveyed lack of unity, segregation, division among principal, staff and students and the prevalence of sub-cultures at the school. The stories allude to poor performance, in a conflict riddled and dysfunctional school environment. Starratt (2002) explained that when sub-cultures do not support the overall organizational values and purpose, or there is no affiliation to them, they may be detrimental to the achievement of organizational goals. The negative myth of innate ignorance of the people, children included, may perpetuate beliefs that could possibly be detrimental to the school's performance: according to Bjerke (2001) they influence perceptions and also reveal how organizations and people are perceived. On the other hand, the positive myth about students' innate athletic ability mobilize consciousness (Pettigrew (1979) and were powerful determinants of actions (Pajares, 1992) and sources of inspiration to students parents and teachers; thus enabled the school to produce top athletics, receive numerous trophies and excel in sports. The choice of heroes or models used to teach new recruits (Handy and Aitkins, 1990) and the collection of trophies acquired for sports at Blossom depicted distinct beliefs and help shape the organization (Bolman and Deal, 1997). Blossom's motto was archived but the visibility by distinguishable school uniforms was mandated by the Education Act (1999).

The metaphors of Peabright informed and depicted the desired collective practices that were important to the school: a highly efficient structure with homogenous practices. The

stories substantiated the metaphors and projected that the culture of a school, the way we do things around here (Deal and Kennedy, 1982) supported achievement and performance: the explicit values outlined in the vision and mission statements of the school. On the other hand the heroes and trophies for academic excellence at Peabright reveal both their importance and differences in the two schools. Crests mottos and school uniforms mandated by the Education Act (1999) were the distinguishing items that gave visibility (Beare et al. 1989) and help define the personality Peabright. The physical structures, while superior at Blossom compared to Peabright, seem to have negligible impact on student learning in the two schools.

5.2.7 Relationship with parents

The importance of home and school involvement (Beare, et al 1989) as well as the interplay between schools and community, affect what happens inside schools (Walker and Dimmock, 2002; Stoll, 2003). The relationship between schools and parents were distinctly different in the two schools.

At Blossom the existing hostility between parents from the community, principal and teachers hindered efforts at building linkages. Lack of respect and trust, and dislike for people who were not from the community, teachers and principal included, and different political affiliations were some of the possible contributors to the poor relationship and interaction between school and parents. The parents were hesitant to co-operate and they provided minimum assistance for the school's endeavors except during sporting events. Then they forgot differences and worked alongside their children to ensure that they excelled, which confirms the importance of sports to parents. After several failed attempts the school gave up on forming a Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

In contrast the community and the parents of Peabright participated in the life of the school. The parents were expected and encouraged to work in partnership with the school through the PTA. Both school and parents seem to understand that this joint venture and collective responsibility were critical to the development of the students. The parents were not involved in a superficial way; they also focused on their children's performance and held the school accountable if students were performing below the expected standard: *'they came in and said this is not the kind of report I saw in the past something is wrong'*.

The parents of students at Blossom supported sports and cultural events at the school whereas at Peabright they supported and focused on academic performance of the school. The principal and half of the teaching staff from Blossom were not from the community, although a similar situation existed at Peabright, the principal and staff established and maintained communication and positive relationships with the parents. However, the parents and community seem to exhibit different emphasis and interests. Parents from both communities were supportive, but their choice of focus brought success and a sense of fulfillment to them and to the school. The difference between the two schools lay in the area that they chose to emphasize with the support of their parents.

Discussion

The trust and support that Fullan (2001) identified as critical for good relationships did not exist between parents from the community and Blossom. The school worked with minimum help except during sports and cultural events. But at Peabright the parents expected their children to perform and hence developed a keen interest in the school. They remained vigilant and held the school accountable for their children's performance. Parents too harbour their own perceptions of what is a real school (Stoll, 2003), the support and the expectations of the parents and the community had a profound impact on the internal school environment and how the teachers worked. The mutual respect, appreciation and cooperation were conducive to a school environment built on high expectations of both stakeholders.

5.2.8 The Principal

Practice, styles and sub-cultures will be analysed and discussed under this theme.

Practices

Commitment, trust and collaboration are essential for a productive working environment (Chapman and Harris, 2004). Differences surfaced in principals' practices in the two schools. Blossom's principal worked with minimum support. While she did not attempt to involve most of staff, their resistance also hindered the principal's effort. Absence of an inclusive social network and support caused alienation at the school. In an atmosphere challenged with discord, the principal withdrew into the office and attempted to manage and control the school with written directives from her desk. Information was not readily available to all teachers and some teachers did not support the principal. Hence the

principal was unable to harness the collective energy of the staff to create a social structure that was conducive for a pleasant learning environment or for maximum teacher productivity. However, the principal attempted to monitor and supervise some teachers, provided feed back to some teachers on written plans, and conducted periodic staff meetings and professional development workshops. She attended to the administrative work of the school.

Peabright's principal worked differently. She promoted the school vision, and worked collaborative with the staff to secure commitment to the goals of the school. Through team effort and good communication channels (Fullan, 2001) the principal and staff developed structures at the school to facilitated goal achievement. Peabright's principal controlled the school through active involvement. She vigilantly monitored the implemented plans and whole school review to ensure targets were met. Both students and teachers were monitored and there was no hesitation to point out incompetence. The principal did not always dictate, but listened, valued opinions of the staff, and empowered them to take actions that were beneficial to the school. She was quick to delineate what was acceptable or unacceptable at the school. She established an inclusive social network at the school. She co-opted teachers and parents in the decision-making process which encouraged an atmosphere of openness through dialogue, discussion and participation. The two principals used different styles to control their school.

Styles

Blossom's principal communicated and collaborated with few teachers, and did not consult with the entire staff priory to making decisions. Her decrees were communicated by means of paper trail since she had limited interaction with some staff members. It appeared that the principal leadership style of command from the top was designed to maintain control of the school. However the appropriate structures with well defined goals, rules, and the authority (Gronn, 2002) were not in place to support the processes and procedures for effective management. Chaos and division seem to prevail despite the authoritarian/autocratic leadership style and the projection of 'I am in control syndrome'.

On the other hand, Peabright's principal was vigilant and strict as she directed the course of the school. On closer inspection a pseudo-collegial environment was created by the principal with help of the senior staff. The mode of operation was aligned with

Hargreaves's A. (1995) contrived collegial description: work was regulated, some activities were compulsory and fixed in time, and monitoring and planning were controlled to ensure predictability. Nevertheless, within this contrived environment that was nurtured by the principal, she shared power, collaborated, encouraged team-work, and involved teachers in the decision-making process, which are also features of collegiality. She employed a mix of different styles: coaching when necessary, other times coercive, democratic but also authoritarian (Hay group 1998) to move the school's main agenda forward.

The practices and styles were different in the two schools. The practices of both principals aimed at controlling, but Peabright's principal was more focused than Blossom's principal. It appeared that Blossom's principal engaged one predominant style but Peabright's principal employed a *mélange* of different styles. Schein (2004) argues leadership play a vital role both in the creation and management of culture. The contrasting leadership styles and practices seem to have had an influence on the culture of both schools. It is difficult to determine whether the parents' attitude and community's ingrained suspicion of outsiders influenced Blossom's leadership style and practices, in order to adapt and survive within that environment. One seems to have impacted and influenced the other. Whichever style was adopted seems to have created contrasting school cultures. The teachers and principal at Blossom spoke extensively about problems with sub-cultures in the school.

Sub-culture

Though school leaders would prefer a consistent homogenous culture (Sergiovanni, 1995), Blenkin and Kelly (2000) explained that culture is dynamic and schools are places consisting of varying interactions and intersections of sub-cultures. The task for leaders is to steer the school in one direction of school improvement in spite of the differences that might exist. Successful schools require all sub-groups to keep moving in one general direction (Deal, 1988). Small sub-groups existed at both school but their level of cohesion and reason for their existence varied.

At Blossom the two distinct sub-cultures divided by their peculiar relationships, interests, identity, socialization, political connections and the history of the community existed. Their existence forced the teachers to work in a stressful environment. The disharmony

and alienation thwart collective effort the school. The balkanized teacher culture, based on division, and separate groups with prevailing divergent values and beliefs (Hargreaves A., 1995) at Blossom, that strived on discord could be a major challenge to any leader.

Whilst teachers from Peabright did not belong to fixed cliques, the existence of small sub-groups presented no threat to the wholeness of the school (Brabander, 1993). Teachers worked in a close network of interpersonal relationships. They shared the same values outlined in the vision and mission, beliefs and expectations, goals and worked as a team.

The two opposing camps at Blossom with individualistic goals, absence of shared vision and mission, with few common beliefs and expectations created a fragmented social structure. The conflicts and division within the school were in part created but also maintained the sub-cultures. However this was not the case at Peabright since the loose social groups posed no risk to the structure and to the goals of the school.

Discussion

Blossom: In the principal's attempt to control the school, some teachers became resentful and uncooperative. It affected the functions at the school. The principal was unable to gain commitment on shared mission and goals, develop a good school management structure, or develop a high learning climate and a strong school culture (Harris, 2003). The principal's authoritarian/ autocratic style, and affiliation with one of the sub-groups fuelled the division among teachers.

To overcome emotional isolation they banded in small groups, which created a major rift in the school's social and management structure. Blossom exhibited some of the features of a stuck school: low consensus, teacher uncertainty, low commitment, isolation, individualism and learning impoverished (Rosenholtz, 1989). It was a worrying situation but the principal appear to have little control of the situation. The school seem to suffer from the description by Peterson and Deal (1998, p. 28) 'the blight of toxic cultures ... school where staff are extremely fragmented, where the purpose of serving students has been replaced to the goal of serving adults'. The two teacher toxic sub-cultures emerged to create the fragmented school culture.

Peabright: The principal collaborated, consulted and coerced teachers into accepting a highly organized but tight school structure: underpinned by performance management and

social support. The application of technical and instructional skills and social expertise sustained a productive school environment that focused on student achievement. With the assistance of senior teachers, the principal translated the values in vision and mission statements and the goals into norms and practices (Angus, 1996) to build a cohesive school culture. She developed working relationships built on trust (Hargreaves, 1995), avoided emergence of sub-cultures by careful selection of staff and developed capacity building at the school by engaging teachers in compulsory continuous learning. While she motivated and inspired teachers, she held them accountable for the performance of their respective classes and required explanations of those who performed below the school's standards.

With a focused, strong, and controlling approach, though power was shared sometimes, the principal ultimately decided and directed the course of the school. Power and position and hence the use of contrived collegial (Hargreaves, A. 1995) structure seem to have provided an adequate mode for leading using a mix of different styles. Both theoretical and empirical research confirms the role of leadership in the creating successful school. Mortimore et al (1988) identified it as purposeful leadership and Sammons et al (1995) as professional leadership. This study reiterates the significance of leadership but takes the position to a different level, to forceful and focused leadership. The emphasis and focus was in one direction: student learning and achievement, guided by shared philosophy charted the course of Peabright as the school worked in a tight structure and a tight culture.

5.2.9 History and education policy

History and education policy will be analysed and discussed under this theme.

History

According to Levin (2003) distinctive historical actions affect how schools operate. What happened in the past affected the present practices and the social structure in both schools. Stoll (2003) argues that a school's culture is also shaped by its history.

The histories of the two schools were different. Blossom was headed by the only founding member of the school, one with different political inclinations to the parents and the community members. The political differences engendered the mistrust of the principal, thus the foundation for enmity was laid down from the inception of the school.

The tales and myths about community members and the principal and political loyalty had a significant influence on how the two interacted: the relationships, level of support and functions within the school were affected. The tales told in the past about misuse of school funds created further misgiving about the school's principal.

On the other hand eight founding members, principal included were working at Peabright. They laid the foundation and created the operating framework for the school. The legacy set up by past principal, based on positive relationship and collaborative work with parents has continued to this day. The current principal and the staff were able to build on that strengthen and the partnership with the school. The structures, procedures and the guiding philosophy were shaped by most of the teaching staff and the current principal, *'when we started the school... we had only about 6 to 8 teachers so we worked together and every year 1 and 2 [teachers] were added and these would be inculcated into the culture of the school so we were like a family'*.

Education policy

Educational policies may influence what happens inside schools (Stoll, 1999) or may not. The Education Act (1999) provided guidelines on curriculum and areas of assessment. It addressed several aspects: principal should manage staff, prepare implementation plans, promote effective relationships with parents, include extra curricular cultural heritage traditions and practices in the activities of the school, and publish profiles of schools' attainment in core and foundation subjects. Both schools were guided by the Education Act (1999). Blossom seems to emphasize the cultural section but Peabright's focus was on the core subjects. Both schools were guided by the Act but they chose to prioritize different aspects. Both schools receive the same level of support from the District Education officer.

Discussion

The history of both schools seems to have had an influence on their present environment (Levin, 2003; Stoll, 2003). The foundation of Blossom was rooted in political division from its commencement. The political differences and distrust of principal by both parents and local teachers; the principal practices and style; new teachers who pick up the culture of the school from older teachers and the principal, had serious implications and affected how well they worked as a team. The community's resistance to outsiders, and

withdrawal of parental support, created the initial dilemmas that reverberate in the school today: a divided school rooted in teacher sub-cultures.

The parents of Peabright welcomed the school as a valuable addition to the community. The principal and some of the staff members designed the school framework and created the vision, mission and goals of the school. Indeed the school was an actualization of their common struggle, hard work and shared dream. They laid the school's groundwork that they are still protecting to this day. The principal practices and style with careful selection of staff (Fleming, 2000) crafted the school's environment. The direction was set from the onset and the remaining founding members continue to chart and protect this course, a culture that promoted high school performance and achievement. The history of both schools influenced and shaped their cultures.

Both schools were influenced by the Education Act (1999). Blossom paid attention to the extra-cultural aspect of the Education Act (1999) the low priority area. Schools are not judged by their performance in any other area except on attainment in examinations in core subjects. However, if schools were judged on sporting ability Blossom would probably be the one of the top performing schools in St. Lucia. Other sections of the Act, such as preparing development plans and establishing effective relationships with parents were not evident in the work of the school.

Peabright was guided by the Education Act (1999) that emphasized that schools' success was determined by passes in national examinations. The main business of Peabright was about student attainment in examinations which mirrored the same national goal identified in the Education Act (1999). The principal implemented the guidelines but the school paid minimal attention to cultural activities. The emphasis on teaching the core examination subjects was in part responsible for Peabright's level of performance and position in the top 25 schools in the island (Educational Evaluation and Examinations Unit, 1999-2005). The Education Policy influence what happened inside both schools. But it was more pronounced at Peabright as the school paid attention not only to the core subjects but in addition developed all the other activities: parental involvement, development plans, monitoring and managing teachers.

5.3 Summary

Schein (2004) argues that leadership plays a vital role both in the creation and management of culture. The contrasting leadership styles and practices, absence or presence of sub-cultures seem to have had an influence on the culture of each of the schools. It is difficult to determine whether the attitude of parents and community members and ingrained suspicion of outsiders, influence Blossom's leadership style and practices, in order to adapt and survive within that environment. One seems to have impacted and influenced the other. Whichever practices and style that were adopted by the principals and the interplay of the different features: vision mission and goal consensus; beliefs and expectations; and the interaction of structures, policies, processes and strategies identified above in the two schools seems to have created contrasting school cultures. Vision and mission statements, the written values, beliefs and expectations have several implications for organizations.

Although Blossom had no shared and explicit vision mission or goals, it had an implicit shared belief and value of sports: a feature of the deeper layer of the school culture. This shared belief held within the school fostered commitment, collaboration and practices in sports: features of the outer layer of culture, to excel in this field. But, the division on other key issues, and practices created a fragile and fragmented school culture that thrived on division and sub-cultures. The external context: historical link with the community and the parents had a major influence on shaping the culture of Blossom.

However at Peabright, the shared vision or mission which are 'manifestations of jointly held internalized beliefs and values' (Nias, 1999, p.66), consensus on goals and common beliefs and expectations, acted as a cohesive force to keep the staff collectively focused in one direction. Peabright chose to keep a tight rein to prevent deviation from the charted path that was tried, tested and proven to bring success in the past. Bamberg and Andrew (1991) proffer if a school's goal is to improve passes in examinations when this is achieved then the school can claim success. The philosophy, shared beliefs and expectations the inner layer of culture (Hoy and Miskel, 2001); underpinned the structures, practices, strategies and policies, the outer layer of culture that was designed to achieve the purpose of the organization (Heck and Marcoulides, 1996). Synergistically they contributed to shaping the culture at Peabright.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION OF STUDY

6.1 Introduction

This study set out to investigate two questions: What features contributed to shaping and maintaining the culture in the two schools? What is the influence of leadership and sub-culture on the overall school culture in the two schools? These two main questions are addressed below by reflecting on the research outcomes and review of the key findings that appear to be important and influence the way the two schools worked.

6.2 Features that shaped and maintained the culture in the two schools.

Question: What features contributed to shaping and maintaining the culture in the two schools?

At Blossom the features that contributed to shaping and maintaining the culture were:

- Unwritten rules
- Shared belief and expectations on physical structure, moral development of students, disciplined students, sports.
- Contradictory beliefs
- Loose social structure
- Inconsistent behaviour norms
- Loose social network
- Teacher sub-cultures
- Parent/community school division
- School history

The unwritten rules and the shared beliefs and expectations appear to function at the deeper layer of the school culture. Blossom was guided by unwritten rules that were learned by listening, observing and following the behaviour of the established staff rather than by specific and clearly written vision and mission statements or school goals. The shared beliefs and expectations of teachers and principal were manifested at the school: the physical environment was safe and adequate; the students were disciplined and well behaved. The shared beliefs of teachers, principal and parents on sports were also manifested; the school excelled and was very successful in sports. It confirms Sergiovanni's (1995, p.160) claim that beliefs bind people together to a common purpose, 'the more successful the school... the stronger is the link between beliefs, decisions and

actions'. Their beliefs in sport bonded them to a common purpose to excel in the field. Bjerke (2001) argues in some cases implicit values (which also holds true for beliefs) are not likely to appear in the stated organization philosophy of organizations. However whether explicit or implicit they were important, they were in the minds of people and provided a common identity and a sense of direction at Blossom and played an important role in the success of that organization in sports (Deal and Kennedy, 1983).

The assumption (Peterson and Deal, 2002) revealed in the myth about students' innate ability in sports was also reflected in the powerful beliefs shared by principal, parents teachers and the community of sport.

This common direction and purpose was not obvious in other areas due to contradictory beliefs, which also seem to exist at the deeper layer of the school culture. The guidance from unwritten rules, atmosphere of hostility and conflict that hindered team spirit and communication and teacher sub-cultures, damaged the social fabric and collaborative effort at the school. They functioned in a loose structure with behavioural inconsistencies: features of the outer layer of its culture. Gronn (2002) argues that loose structure nurtures creativity but works well in a strong cohesive culture. However this unified culture was not apparent at Blossom.

The parents' perceptions also affected the school culture; they remained detached and provided limited support except during sports and cultural events. The history which influenced the perceptions and perpetuated some of the beliefs about the school had a profound influence on the school's internal function and its culture (Stoll, 2003; Levin, 2003) Blossom's history was rooted in separatism based on differences in perceived political beliefs and affiliations and mistrust of principal. These beliefs set the stage for sub-cultures to flourish, and parents' withdrawal from the school.

The school did not appear to pay equal attention to the main goal of student attainment, the expectations of the government defined in the Education Act (1999) and to the extra-curricular aspect: a low priority area in the Act. The interplay of these different features appeared to shape and maintained the culture: how the teachers, principal and students worked at the school.

At Peabright the features that contributed to shaping and maintaining the culture were:

- Shared Philosophy
- Shared goals beliefs and expectations
- Setting high standards and high expectations
- Rigid social structure
- Acceptable norms of behaviour
- Protection of the school culture
- Parental support
- Shared history
- Alignment of school's purpose with Education Act (1999)
- The principal

Peabright was guided by specific and clearly written shared vision and mission statements and goals: shared beliefs and expectations on high standards of achievement and high expectation in examinations. Collectively they functioned as the cultural repository (Sergiovanni, 1995) of the school and appeared to exist at the deeper layer of the school culture.

Hoy and Miskel (2001) claim that expectations are good predictors of job satisfaction, performance, and foster good work ethic and hard work if teachers believe it will lead to desired outcomes. The principal and teachers held unified belief about students' and teachers' ability. Their belief in students' ability to attain high standards (Heady and Kilgore, 1996) and high expectations motivated and increased the emphasis on teaching and learning at the school. The behavioural norms- (teaching and learning, performance management and intervention strategies, a contrived collegial environment and supportive interpersonal relationships), which seem to represent the outer layer of the culture, were designed to secure high attainment in examinations. However this good atmosphere, this sense of culture of cooperation and achievement was not accidental. It was the result of shared vision, selection of staff, training and policies (Fleming, 2000).

The tight social structure enforced the rules and regulations: to program school activities, to gain power over teachers (Sergiovanni, 1955) and the daily rituals secured the boundaries of the school. In addition, Peabright purposefully protected the school from conflicting beliefs and outside influences by meticulously selecting new staff. The

parents' expectations and perceptions of what is a real school (Stoll, 2003), their mutual and continued support helped fashion the internal environment. The shared common history of the founding members, their common beliefs, expectation and practices, parents' expectations and appreciation from its inception assisted in the shaping the school culture. Peabright crafted its activities to also satisfy the main objective in the education policy; they synchronize their main goal with the explicit goal of the Education Act (1999). It was a school culture that was purposely created and shaped to serve one main purpose: student attainment in examinations. The principal maintained that focus.

6.3 Influence of leadership and sub-culture on the overall school culture.

Question: What is the influence of leadership and sub-culture on the overall school culture in the two schools?

The principal's style, presence, association with a sub-group and practices influenced the school culture. The principal's dictatorial cum autocratic style at Blossom may have been attempts to assert her position and to maintain control at the school because of the inconsistencies, however it promoted internal friction. The principal's presence, despite dislike and mistrust of parents and association with one of the sub-cultures, fuelled the resentment at the school. Her attendance contributed in shaping and helped maintain the existing culture of separation and conflict: the toxic culture (Peterson and Deal, 1998) at Blossom. As the only original founding member, both her previous and current practices also contributed and influenced the internal workings 'the way we do things around here' (Deal and Kennedy, 1982, p.4).

Lack of clear guidance from the principal, political differences, and the history of the school aided in the emergence of the two main sub-cultures, each presumably with its own set of beliefs, representing the balkanized sub-cultures identified by Hargreaves A. (1995) as disruptive elements to school's progress. Their existence created challenges that weakened the social network and interpersonal relationships, which impacted on practices at the school. The toxic environment and leadership's inability to harness the collective energies of the school's staff, demonstrated the effect and strength of the toxic sub cultures at work at Blossom.

Peabright's principal championed and encouraged manifestations of shared values and beliefs (Schein, 1997) and worked as the primary concierge of the shared vision mission

and goals of the school. She developed a unique style of leading to controlled all activities, in a contrived collegial environment where work is regulated and controlled, activities are fixed (Hargreaves A., 1995) to protect the school culture.

The principal guarded the school against opposing sub-cultures at the school to promote what appeared to function as a homogenous culture. With the support of the staff, the principal resisted changes that they believe might impact negatively on the school culture that they had carefully nurtured. The absence of opposing sub-cultures enabled the principal to engage her energies in other meaningful activities that were beneficial to the students and to the school. As a founding member, she helped shaped and in her current position works to maintain the culture as it currently exists.

The repertoire of different features in both schools coupled with distinctive leadership styles and practices and sub-cultures contributed to the creation of dissimilar cultures in the two schools. It is difficult to prioritize and determine which ones were more important as they were all interlinked and impacted on each other.

However it appears that the external influence from the parents and the community, the history and the teacher sub-cultures and shared belief on sports were main contributors to shaping and maintaining the culture at Blossom. Possibly in a different environment, Blossom would be considered highly successful as a sporting academy, but sport is not a priority of the country and the government in St Lucia. Despite the division created by history and political affiliation, they overcame the difference during sports. The success realized in sports at this school reinforces the argument on the power of shared beliefs.

But it seems that the predominant features at Peabright were the philosophy, shared beliefs and expectations and goals, the common history of the principal and the senior teachers, the school leadership and protection of the school culture. They appear as the main contributors to shaping and maintaining the school culture. It seems that Peabright School had greater control over shaping and maintaining the school culture, but the external context had a greater influence on Blossom's culture.

6.4 Key Findings

The evidence from the study revealed that the theoretical concepts related to structure and leadership style proposed by different researchers were not obvious as explained below.

Structure and rules: According to Gronn (2002), tight structure with clearly defined boundaries stipulated by rules and regulations imitating the bureaucratic style do not work well within the complexity of schools. Gronn (2002) argued that tight structures are more applicable in stable environment with modest expectations, but commitment and outstanding performance require a loose structure and a tight cultural environment. However, the contrary evidence surfaced in this research at Peabright. The investigation demonstrated that the school had committed teachers, performed outstandingly and was deemed successful by the Education Authorities, government teachers and the parents in St Lucia. It operated within a tight structure and a tight culture.

Collegial Environment: Hargreaves A. (1995, p. 208) contends that contrived collegiality promotes 'inflexibility and inefficiency'. The study furnished evidence to show that Peabright appear to work well in a contrived collegiality: in a highly inflexible but efficient structure with regulations, rules, school policies, compulsory mandates, working towards fixed predetermined outcomes. All were present and integrally linked in the management of the school. What works well and proves to be effective in one school may not necessarily work in another as their contexts may vary.

Leadership style: Distinct leadership style identified by Hay Group (1998) or Gronn and Ribbins (1996) or Leithwood et al. (1999) or the moral and spiritual leader Fullan (2002) were not distinct in the two schools. It seems that both principals draw on a combination of different styles to suit the purpose and the culture of the school, which may imply that, it is impractical to import models of leadership as argued by Harber and Davis (2002).

Toxic sub- Cultures

The study of Blossom confirmed the power and influence of toxic teacher sub-cultures on school environment (Paterson and Deal, 1998). Despite the conflicts and differences, the effect of shared belief 'sports' on teachers' sporting practices at Blossom also confirms Nias (1989), Schein (2004) and Hargreaves (1999) claim that practices are underpinned by shared beliefs and values, and Pajares (1992) argument that teachers beliefs are prime motivators for their actions.

History

The historical background (Levin, 2003) and the external context demonstrated by parents' participation or non-participation in both schools had profound influence on their school

culture. It justifies the argument by Stoll (2003) and Prosser and Warburton (1999) for the inclusion of history and external context in the study of school culture.

6.5 Limitations

This study makes a unique contribution to culture research. It painted a broader picture of school culture with more depth by investigating a larger number of cultural elements, unlike other research (Cheng, 1993; Davis, 2003; Taylor and Sobel, 2001) that either investigated one or a small sub-set of the variables. It engages multiple tools to obtain a range of data from the same population to produce a thick description (Yin, 2003) of the two schools. The data was obtained on site by the researcher to produce first hand information and knowledge of subjects under investigation thus enhancing the sincerity of the study. However, the study suffers from some limitations. The two schools are located in a small island developing state. The context of St Lucia is different from other parts of the world: the economics, expectations from government, cultural and religious background may be different. These factors will probably make the findings more specific to small islands than to first world countries with large populations, larger schools populated with students from multi-ethnic student backgrounds and with more resources.

Although the two rural schools share similar characteristics with other rural primary schools in the island, even within that context the relationships and dynamism of groups and communities create unique situations; hence this study can only provide a snapshot of the culture of two different schools in the island.

The evidence was based on the analytical skills of one person and case studies data, more so interviews and observations, are usually open to different interpretations. However, the evidence from the range of data obtained from documents, observations, interviews and informal narratives were corroborated to gain an in-depth understanding, to provide access to the deeper layer and the outer layer of each school's culture.

Another limit of this study stems from my presence as an observer in the schools. An observer who spends a short time in a new environment will always be an intruder, an outsider looking in. It takes time to enter the inner sanctuary of organizations; hence deeper issues are concealed, as groups conspire to protect their territories and interests.

Organizations secrets are sacrosanct to its members and selective disclosures are allowed during encounters with outsiders.

The issue of reliability and validity is usually queried and poses problems for qualitative researchers. This study provided a trail of evidence and used multiple data sources to minimize the query. Even so, the research findings from a one-person research are never without doubt.

6.6 Implications: Policy and Practitioners

Although the Education Act (1999) stipulated that teachers are to 'encourage students to learn by teaching them diligently and faithfully...observe the standards of the school established by the staff and principal....promote effective relationship with parents' (p.69-71). Duties of principals include developing satisfactory relations with parents, engaging the community in school affairs and developing procedures for parental and community involvement. Principals should deploy and manage all teaching staff and allocate particular duties to them, organize and implement the prescribed curriculum and evaluate the standards of teaching and learning in school, and ensure that proper standards of professional performance are established and maintained.

These stipulated activities in the Education Act (1999) guided the activities at Peabright. But Blossom was quite lenient in the application of this mandate, except the attention paid to 'include in the activities of the school, cultural heritage traditions and practices' (p.73). The mandated prescriptions seem to have limited control on the schools since they were able to exercise and chose the limit of this control.

The study illustrated that school context, parental and community support and expectations, community politics, staff beliefs, expectations and practices, social interaction and leadership played a significant role in the creation of the culture of the schools. Hence externally driven mandates designed to influence schools in St. Lucia are less likely to succeed if they disregard the uniqueness of schools, and the role played by teachers and principals. The schools were not monitored by an external body. They did not receive assistance from outside interventions. The examination results were the only means used for accountability by the Ministry of Education. Hence government and practitioners may

need to reconsider and rethink a new set of strategies to support schools. The following are identified for consideration:

- Introduce Education Intervention Teams to assist schools in the identifying clear vision mission and goals, and to work collaboratively with them to develop and implement the supporting strategies.
- Recognize that the primary purpose of school is to ensure that students learn. It may require that principals and staff engage in critical analysis of their actions, and engage continuous debate to identify best practices that fit the unique context of each school to satisfy that purpose.
- Principals' and staffs' engagement in identifying their school culture. Culture change may be initiated by cultivating the desired practices as they are easier to change than values and beliefs.
- Recognize and reward schools that build linkages with parents and community.
- Encourage continuous learning and professional development in schools for regeneration and to combat burnout. Energize leadership with continuous training and retreats and promote self and external appraisal for accountability and formative purposes. Leaders of good schools should keep an 'autobiography' of activities as a means of sharing best practices within the education systems. Contractual appointments and stringent selection criteria are other possibilities for recruiting purposeful leaders.

Education policies are not necessarily the best levers for improving schools (Levin 2003). It might be useful to research the impact of government policy on school culture to understand what adjustments might be useful in creating effective change.

While the study did not set out to investigate community politics, it surfaced as an important and influential force in the life of Blossom. Investigating community political affiliations and influence on how schools work, and the influence of community culture on the school culture might enhance our understanding of schools in small communities, more so in the developing world.

6.7 Recommendations for Future Research on Culture

This study provided an overview of the culture of only two schools. The following recommendations might be beneficial to add to the limited existing body of knowledge and to unravel the mystery of school culture:

- What assumptions, values and beliefs underpin the practices of school principals?
- How do school leaders build commitment and collaboration in schools?

The research evidence demonstrated that teachers played a significant role in their school culture. Research on teachers and their ways of working might be informative to practitioners:

- The impact of teachers' beliefs and expectations on their practices.
- How do teacher sub-cultures emerge and what are their influences on schools?
- The influence of social network and emotional support systems on teachers' performance in schools.

The features that contribute to the school culture in a small developing island do not support the theoretical proclamation on leadership, rules, regulations and appropriate structure. Further investigation on the following might illuminate the nature of those differences and how they work in different contexts:

- Research on school structure with particular emphasis on practices that exist in schools in different contexts.
- What leadership styles are effective in the third world context?
- In-depth investigation on schools' unique practices, by looking for the eclectic rather than the generic ways of working in schools.

Reflections on the way forward for other schools

Creating good schools is a long premeditated process that requires the input of all stakeholders. Schools that consider their unique circumstances, the external conditions, and pay attention to the basics of teaching and learning that aim for student learning are on the right path. However, schools are human institutions and the power of people can make extraordinary things happen. A striking outcome of this research was the way teachers worked and their influence on the school culture. Creating good schools that cater to students needs may have more to do with how teachers work in their classrooms under the guidance of an acceptable style of principal to create a culture which serves that purpose.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Eight teachers and the principal from each school were asked the following twelve interview questions:

No	Questions
1	From your observation of what goes on in your school, what do you believe is the main focus of your school?
2	When one works in a place and is familiar with an environment, this person develops certain beliefs and expectations about the place; what are your beliefs and expectations about this school?
3	What are your expectations of the students in this school? And teachers?
4	Would you recommend this school to a parent who wants his or her child to receive a good quality education? Why?
5	If a new person were to join the school staff what are some of the qualities or characteristics you would expect and believe that this person should possess?
6	How are the vision and mission of the school used to achieve school goals?
7	Do you know how the goals were developed?
8	What do you do as a team to ensure that the goals are achieved?
9	How does your school assess teachers' performance?
10	How does your school assess students' performance?
11	What metaphor would you use to describe this school?
12	What is special about your school?

Appendix 2: Samples of Interview Transcripts

Teacher	Blossom	Peabright
1	the onus is on the teachers ... but there is nothing here to make you put your heart into it except the children	We work as a team ... teachers are part of the decision making
2	I don't really know ... Most of the commitment comes from teachers' personal feelings and not necessarily from principal's effort. The teachers from the community who work here are more committed than those who are from the outside. They are basically the backbone of the school	...there is a lot of unity and team work ... We also meet with senior staff members and discuss but they do not make decisions. It still has to be taken to the entire staff and then we take decisions
3	The need for the principal to do it does not really exist ... you see what is happening and you just follow	we meet as a staff and look at the common problems through out the departments. Parent also helps us to identify problems at meetings ... The principal would encourage different teachers to chip in ... We discuss it and talk about it to ensure we do what we are supposed to do
4	There is no team spirit but teachers work in their classrooms. They are not friends you don't know who to talk to here. But sometimes principal would call teachers to discuss plans ... about 3 years we saw a change but the commitment was not there ... If new persons came in with new vision it was not easily accepted the principal saw it as defiance to authority	The principal will delegate responsibilities ... the teachers work together ... we are like a family
5	we meet we discuss ...	the teachers the principal everybody you see at this school we work together ... the teachers are committed as a staff
6	I am disappointed in the level of commitment by the people here and their level of seriousness	every teacher is part of a committee
7	The principal pass around ...	We plan together we discuss our shortfalls and how we are going to improve it
8	Nothing. I cannot say I am not sure. The teachers who are committed here, their commitment comes from within ... the school does not do anything to build commitment ... there is no unity	We work together on these things and then decide on how they are to be achieved

Teacher	Blossom	Peabright
1	at parents meeting the principal would say 'I have not discussed it with the staff but however ...' like she makes the decision right there	the team spirit is there and we make every child everybody's business so that we know everything that is going on in each classroom
2	There is always conflict between principal and teacher and sometimes ... you hear it on the outside before you come in	meeting with staff every month ... we discuss and try to resolve
3	I don't think I would know who is performing or not performing ... few instances ... see principal talking to a person or visiting that person's class on a more regular basis	We discuss weaknesses ... to make sure we do not see the same mistakes ... repeated ... we meet as a staff and look at the common problems through out the departments. Parent also helps us to identify problems at meetings

4	teachers and principal would lash out at each other ... relationship is not good ... principal does not trust teacher ... a lot of hear say a lot of conflict ... a lot of problems during meetings ... Most of the time it was like authoritarian	The principal will delegate ... teachers ... will volunteer ... we help we don't shun ... we encourage ... we don't damper
5	She likes to write she put everything on paper and when we meet we discuss	we meet on a regular basis ... if targets ... are not achieved we ask why and what needs to be done ... what makes my school special is the quality of the relationship
6	We should improve on communication people keep grudges ... if we doing something which is not right it is brought to your attention and it up to the teacher how she deals with it	vision and mission statements are discussed ... the parents are well involved in this school ... they come in
7	If a teacher goes to attend workshops she circulates the handouts ... So we do share information ... at staff meetings we give and get feedback	The children know what they are (goals) and what our expectations are. We speak to them about it. We plan together we discuss our shortfalls and how we are going to improve
8	Only friends knew about workshops, only certain circulars were circulated. It was not fair and open principal has an autocratic style	its not ... imposed we work together ... then decide on how they are to be achieved ... we teach new teachers the culture of the school

Teacher	Blossom	Peabright
1	selected few are considered as senior and they will go to the office and together with principal will write circulars. A lot of times the decisions taken at staff meetings what you expect to be the end product is not what happens or most times you are just told this is going to happen	...so we know everything that is going on in each classroom...teachers ... 1 or 2 were added and these would be inculcated into the culture of the school
2	most of them are goals of the principal they are just imposed on the teachers ... teacher who did little work were uplifted	we meet very often ... different committees take care of different goals ... the committees get back to the entire staff and we discuss ... the senior teachers oversee what is going on ... we solve our problems here ... if we cannot handle it then we take it to the principal
3	when you come in you just follow the others ... you see what is happening and you just follow	we all want what is best for the school ... when anybody come in they just become part of ... we do not have cliques in this school ... people are on task they are working as they walk in ... They know what is expected ... we look into the background of any new person before they come in ... we have orientation for them
4	Teachers work in isolation in their classrooms ... there should not be 2 or 3 persons in different groups ... principal did not trust us and does not want criticism. Most times it's like authoritarian	principal will delegate responsibilities ... most times teachers will take it upon their own to volunteer
5	we have a school development plan ... the principal has it ... she like to put everything on paper	don't know of any cliques ... we work cooperatively ... will not allow anybody to come in here and bring down the level because if that person can't adapt to the school's goals very quickly then I personally will have a problem with that
6	relationship among staff is not good enough	When it come to the organization that's the

		key thing for this school ... every teacher is part of a committee ... teachers ... placed under supervision of senior teachers ... This school has an environment where children are at home ... it's a rigid situation where they know they have to learn ... it's the principal ... her management skills ... have not regretted that I came to the Peabright Combined school ... now I am in a situation where I can explore and give out what I have learned from my experiences
7	we sit and plan together ... at staff meetings we give and get feedback	everybody is working all the time they are well organized and are engaged in different activities ... all work together towards one common goal that is school improvement ... we have a very good organization with teachers and students working together
8	some teachers work hard ... and some teachers don't do anything ... it goes on here like a cycle there is no unity ... she treats members from the two factions differently ... the principal has an autocratic management style ... she expects others to do things her way ... but at the same time she is not interested in what is really happening in the school either	we are a school with a different focus ... we have a structure ... through this structure we obtain results ... and the results has shown it to be good ... but we keep revising structures because with time thing will change ... there is a foundation ... we are given the opportunity to build on it ... we take different approaches ... we all uphold the some vision but we work towards achieving the vision differently

Teachers	Blossom	Peabright
1	what you believe will work in your classroom is not what the administrator feel will work ... majority of the teachers here work well	we have contracts for each child ... weak child recommended to the special needs teacher ... we change the teacher around to see if it's a particular teacher who has the problem young teacher work along with experience teacher so that she can build up and improve on her performance
2	there are some committed teachers who do their best especially the teachers who are from the community ... they work hard and go all out to deliver a good quality education	Everybody just do well here ... New teacher are placed with a senior. We also have plans for individual classes, especially for common entrance, minimum standards exams. We look at classes with weaknesses areas and we work on them ... get them into groups. We develop learning centers we stay after school to develop games ... we always share ideas. We help the children use the learning centre. The teachers provide work to the better students and then focus on the slow ones. We also do peer teaching, the students learn from each other and that works well. We get the parent to volunteer and come in to help in areas they can. Last year we had the SENT program and one teacher worked very well with the slow ones. She work with about 3 or 4 students and it worked very well with them
3	we are doing better than a lot of other schools so ... some level of learning is taking place ... Performance wise I would say no ... we perform below ... or just at the national mean ... we had better performance in 2002 ... we introduce after school lessons, extra	The main focus of my school is to make our children learn ... we hold meetings with parents and teachers where we write out weaknesses ... special teacher who put students from the same class in little groups and work with them according to a timetable

	work, team teaching ... I remember we wanted to obtain better results for examinations one year and we developed a Hall of Fame that year to recognize children who are motivated to perform better	
4	Academically we are not 100%. But I do have some A+ students ... maybe about 4 or 5 in each class that are way up and the others are way below ... and I feel those way below could be better ... You see we give a lot of attention to the top students and we give little time to the low students ... teachers were not working very well together. They work in isolation in their classes but they are not friends ... we have students in grade 7 who cannot read, and sometimes the teachers don't try	we try our utmost best as teachers to make the children learn on a daily basis ... we find what areas they are weak at and plan activities and strategies to help them ... children don't develop together some are slower ... try to seek different ways to make students learn
5	if the child is above average then that child would get the tuition to achieve but if they are below average I don't think we have adequate facilities and the personal to get them to achieve	everybody you see at this school we work together we created a development plan ... objectives are specific ... we work and set ourselves achievable targets. We set our work above the normal so that we can really test the students to see how well they are achieving
6	I think that we do not prepare them to go out to seek secondary education and to move on from there	every child is a learner and individual attention is given ... my children are at this school ... when they come home the way they talk about the new material they discuss ... I can testify work is being done in the classroom ... they are in different classrooms ... they are more open to talk to listen to news ... to read more ... because of this school
7	over the years we have been doing well ... not everyone ... but we have had students who have excelled in the academics ... we do try to reach every student	during the first week before opening of school we came in sat reviewed and discussed some of the goals ... were related to excelling in certain subjects, attitude of boys towards education ... assisting ... weak students ... performance in the classroom
8	a good group of students at one level perform poorly at the next level because of the weakness in teaching ... That is the main reason why the school is not performing today	an unwritten rule we expect teachers to go the extra mile ... to ... raise the level of performance in every classroom ... the level that we set for individual students is based on their ability ... individual teachers do different things for different students ... at school level we have a programme ... peer tutoring, teachers teach after school free of charge ... we see the improvement based on our results that makes us proud