PRACTITIONERS’ MEANINGS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP:
CASE STUDIES OF JAMAICAN HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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ABSTRACT

Guided by the symbolic interaction premise that meaning is found in the interaction of individuals with their world, this study set out to describe and analyse how selected high school principals in Jamaica understand and practise school leadership by exploring how they view their circumstances, and how their meanings of leadership are modified by the contexts of their work.

To gain insight into how Jamaican principals conceptualise and experience leadership, the study adopted a qualitative, collective case-study design. A purposeful sampling strategy was used to select four exemplary high school principals such that gender, school location and organization were varied. Data were sourced from semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation sessions and integrative diagrams as well as from school, principal and official Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture documents. Within-case and cross-case analyses were conducted using grounded theory modes of analysis, specifically the systematic processes referred to as open and axial coding.

Findings from the within-case analysis are presented as four individual cases that communicate the salient features of each principal’s leadership and context. In the first case entitled Mother of the Poor, the principal defines school leadership as the pursuit of excellence within a framework of valuing and caring for students. The principal at the centre of the second case, The Reculturing Principal, portrays leadership as transforming school culture so that it is receptive to change and committed to growth and improvement. The principal featured in the third case understands leadership as a response to students’ social problems, diminished self-concept and dysfunctional community relationships – hence the title The Principal as Social Architect. The final case presents The Community Principal who conceptualizes leadership in terms of building caring, co-operative relationships among all involved in the schooling process with a view to developing community connectedness.

Findings from the cross-case analysis are presented as two broad themes that characterize the principals’ conceptualization and interpretation of school leadership. The first theme - ‘Leadership as values-driven’ - identified care and respect, social justice and excellence as the common values that defined the principals’ leadership, permeating their interactions and informing their decisions. The second theme -
‘Leadership as responding to and acting on context’ - revealed that dynamics related to personal, school-community and policy contexts also entered into and interacted with their understandings of leadership. While all four principals in this study were guided and informed by common values, they applied them to their leadership in individual ways, modifying their approaches and emphases in response to a range of contextual elements that were both dynamic and unique. Generally, the principals conceptualized leadership as a moral undertaking, and values together with context emerged as powerful influences on how they defined, interpreted and enacted school leadership.

Findings from this study contribute to local knowledge about principals and school leadership. Currently, perspectives on what constitutes school leadership depend on frameworks developed for other environments even though the extent to which these are applicable to a Caribbean context is unknown. Furthermore, in the context of recent shifts in policy, it is important to understand what and how principals think about leadership. In this respect, the findings may serve as a guide for future decisions about leadership training and professional development for principals and aspiring principals.
DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This thesis represents the original research of the author. This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Mairette Newman

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION

A quarter of a century after James MacGregor Burns described leadership as “one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” (1978, p.2), definitions of leadership continue to be characterised by complexity and uncertainty and scholars in the field of educational leadership point to the absence of a clearly defined consensus about the meaning of school leadership (Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley, & Beresford, 2000; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). Far less disputed however, is the relationship between leadership and school outcomes and it is generally acknowledged that principal leadership is a critical component in the quest for school effectiveness and improvement (Bush & Glover, 2003; Cawelti, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Therefore, attempts to make explicit and accessible understandings of what constitutes school leadership are important, especially for a small, developing country like Jamaica where the education system is ‘strapped’ for resources. Moreover, for a post-colonial society striving for intellectual independence, it is equally important that insights into what constitutes school leadership be articulated through local voices. Mindful of these issues, the research study reported here set out to explicate the concept of school leadership as understood and experienced by four, selected high school principals in Jamaica.

Beginning with a brief description of the context, this chapter explains the central research question and rationale that guided the study. It then presents a justification for the research and concludes by providing an outline of the study’s six remaining chapters.

Context of the Study

No stranger to the discourse of Education, the concept of school leadership continues to command interest and attention. Chief among the reasons for attaching such importance to school leadership is research that consistently underscores the relationship between strength of principal leadership and school effectiveness (Andriessen & Drenth, 1998; Day et al., 2000; Leithwood et al., 1999). The quality of the leader impacts on the motivation of teachers and this in turn, affects the quality of teaching and students’ performance (Barth, 1990; Fullan, 1992; Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Robbins and Alvy
(1995) point out that “policymakers, practitioners and parents” (p.1) continue to regard leadership as a key to improving education.

In Jamaica, this relationship is reflected in policy documents such as the recent White Paper (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001) that speaks to the commitment and capacity of principals to formulate development plans and implement reform measures designed to improve student performance, teacher performance and school effectiveness. The very title of the White Paper, *Education: The way upward. A path for Jamaica’s education at the start of the new millennium* points to an overriding belief in education as a primary tool for the country’s development. Furthermore, the White Paper presents schools as conduits of change and human, social and economic development. This conviction is reflected in the declaration that:

….. Jamaica can deal with its economic and social challenges if we unite around progressive strategies for change, optimise our investment in education … accomplished by a united effort centred around our schools as the focal point of intellectual and social growth and development. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001, p.30),

Such a statement places tremendous faith in and responsibility on those charged with leading schools – the principals.

However, even in a climate where internationally acclaimed educational researchers acknowledge the importance of school leadership, where local policymakers rely on the professional knowledge and expertise of principals and where parents entrust them with their most vulnerable and prized resources - their children - many of Jamaica’s high school principals take up leadership responsibilities with little or no professional development in leadership. The general assumptions are that school leadership is primarily concerned with efficient management of the institution, good teachers will make good leaders, and teaching and classroom management skills are transferable and therefore can be applied successfully to areas outside the classroom.

The situation is exacerbated by a dearth of leadership education and training opportunities for those who either aspire to or are in the principalship. Formal courses in Educational Administration are offered in the island’s universities and teacher training colleges. Currently, all undergraduates reading for a Bachelor of Education
degree at university do ‘Educational Administration’, a three-credit (45 hour) course while those pursuing a Diploma in Education at a teachers’ college do a two-credit (30 hour) course entitled Professionalism and Educational Administration. Those pursuing a Masters degree may choose to specialise in Educational Administration but to date, there exists no opportunity to specialize in Educational Leadership. Moreover, these courses are often criticized for being too theoretical. The very course titles – under the banner of Educational Administration - suggest a managerial focus with what Hallinger and Bridges (1997) refer to as a “custodial mentality” (p.592).

Currently, primary school principals are benefiting from training in school management as part of the Primary Education Support Programme (PESP) jointly funded by the Government of Jamaica and the Inter-American Development Bank. Under the institutional development component of the PESP, a Diploma programme in education and school management comprising five modules and totalling 150 hours, is being made available to eight hundred primary school principals; one hundred principals are accessing tuition and financial assistance to pursue the programme over four months at a North American university while the remaining principals attend courses delivered locally on weekends and over summers. All newly appointed primary principals are required to complete the diploma within two years of appointment. However, no such programme is available to principals in the secondary system. Current and aspiring principals in the secondary system who wish to specialize in Educational Leadership must look outside Jamaica for academic and professional development.

Other opportunities are less formal; for example, the Jamaica Teachers’ Association, the major professional organization for teachers, offers short seminars and professional development courses in administration and supervision. Although new principals and vice-principals can also access the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture’s (MOEY&C) three-day training workshop for new appointees, such training focuses on personnel, financial, and records management rather than on leadership functions.

Unlike the United States, Jamaica does not have in place a formal system with a ready supply of trained administrators who are promoted to administrative posts as they become available. For Jamaican school administrators, training occurs on the job, when they are already in their administrative posts. Errol Miller (1985) has described the
preparation of educational administrators in the Caribbean as an informal “system of in-service-apprenticeship” (p.37). In the years leading up to appointment as principal, individuals may serve as classroom teachers, followed by a period with senior teacher or head of department responsibilities and finally appointment as vice-principal. Administrative experience is accumulated through temporarily representing or acting for heads of department, vice-principals and principals who are on leave. Classroom experience, a track record of positive relationships with students and teachers and evidence of involvement in community activities take precedence over formal professional preparation. “The unwritten assumption is that in order to administer education one must be familiar with it from the perspective of the teacher …” (Miller, 1985, p.38).

In addition to considering established assumptions and conventions that form the backdrop to the principalship in Jamaica it is also important to identify recent trends that are emerging. Consistent with the observation that, “The process of globalisation is carrying educational policies across borders to an extent and at a pace never seen before” (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001, p.197), Jamaican principals, like their counterparts in other parts of the world, must interpret and respond to global changes in education. In particular, the tendency to view education as a business and cultivate cost-accounting approaches to determine effectiveness and monitor institutional processes is impacting on Jamaican principals. Official MOEY&C views and policies emphasise the expectation that principals will focus on improved quality and effectiveness through developing school plans, meeting targets, generating performance data and implementing reform initiatives (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001). Part of this thrust to increase efficiency and improve performance includes plans to introduce contracts linked to an appraisal system for new principals and vice-principals. Other systemic changes such as curricular and structural reforms like the Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE)\(^1\), the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE)\(^2\) and the move to decentralise the management and administration of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture by reintroducing regional offices and

\(^1\) The Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) is a new post-secondary qualification equivalent to ‘A’ levels set by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), the regional examination body responsible for school leaving examinations in 16 Caribbean territories.

\(^2\) The Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE) refers to the new Grade 7-9 national curriculum introduced into all secondary type institutions in 2001
establishing the National Council on Education (NCE) are part of the official drive to improve student performance and school effectiveness. Initiatives such as the Cost-sharing Scheme, the Income Generating Project, the National Textbook Rental Scheme and the recently introduced examination fee subsidy to cover four subjects in the region’s school leaving examinations together with new budgetary and financial management requirements, all serve to intensify the principal’s work.

A recent reform that has affected principals in the secondary system concerns the thrust to upgrade former new secondary schools to high schools. Built in the 1960s, new secondary schools have been characterised by non-selective entry, a high percentage of children from the lower socio-economic groups, a vocational curriculum and low status in comparison to traditional high schools. Despite the ROSE programme designed to establish a common curriculum for Grades 7-9 and the Secondary Enhancement Programme which seeks to bring the resources of upgraded schools in line with those of traditional high schools, there remains a gulf between the quality of traditional and upgraded high schools. Statistics published by the National Council on Education (2002) point to a substantial gap between the performance of students in traditional high schools and those in upgraded high schools in the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (the examination taken by Grade 11 students in the English-speaking Caribbean, commonly called CXC). Principals of the newly upgraded high schools are being challenged to raise their standards to match traditional high schools even in the face of knowledge about the differential in their student intake brought about by the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT), a selection examination that determines the type of secondary school a student is placed in. The traditional high schools attract the strongest GSAT students resulting in a disproportionate number of students with literacy, numeracy and behavioural problems being placed in the upgraded high schools. Nevertheless, social and political pressure on principals to improve student performance persists.

At the same time, the emerging culture of accountability is also affecting principals of traditional high schools who are under pressure to raise academic standards especially

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3 The National Council on Education, a statutory body established in 1993 with a mandate “to stimulate the development of education in Jamaica” aims to ensure continuity in educational policies and programmes and is particularly concerned with increasing community participation in policy formulation.
since the NCE has made available data on the examination performance of students from different high schools in eighteen CXC subjects (National Council on Education, 2002, 2003). Furthermore, analyses of these data by Stephen Vasciannie (2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2003) in a series of newspaper articles combined with published rankings of schools according to students’ performance in selected CXC subjects have focused public attention on students’ final grades as measurements of school effectiveness. In the absence of statistical analyses that provide information on value added over the years from Grade 7-11, CXC grades are likely to remain the chief criterion for determining effectiveness.

Added to this is the social pressure on schools and those who work in them, to compensate for the collapse of tradition, family and church which have become “…shell institutions …inadequate to the tasks they are called upon to perform” (Giddens, 2000, p.37). In describing educational strategies for the Caribbean, a recent World Bank report recommends re-conceptualising - “…the management, infrastructure and human resources of the school” (The World Bank, 2000, p.6), thus making it the focus of the learning community. Schools, and by implication their principals, are expected to bring community into the schools in the broadest sense by functioning as primary sources of fellowship, support and community spirit. Related to this are the socio-economic and political realities associated with working in an environment where approximately one-third of the population lives below the poverty line; where unemployment is 24.3 per cent (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 1999b); GDP per capita is US$1487 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 1999a); and where violent crime is one of the highest per capita in the world – with a population of 2.5 million, Jamaica recorded 1,139 murders for 2001, 15 of which were of police officers, (Amnesty International, 2002; United States Department of State, 2000). The ensuing social problems, embedded within a culture of partisan politics, political violence and garrison communities, add to the complexity of what it means to be a principal in Jamaica.

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4 The garrison community is a post-independence socio-political feature that grew out of the Michael Manley and Edward Seaga regimes of the 1970s and 1980s. The term refers to any depressed community that displays fierce loyalty to one political party and identifies with the party leader.
Another recent trend has been competition from developed countries facing a teacher shortfall for qualified, experienced teachers; this recent challenge facing Jamaican high school principals has also fuelled the focus of this study. The aggressive recruitment strategies of the New York City Board of Education (NYCBE) and agencies from the United Kingdom which hired over 450 Jamaican teachers primarily from the secondary system, for the academic year 2001/02 have led to high staff turnovers in several local schools. The NYCBE and British recruitment agencies have signalled their intention to continue recruitment seminars to satisfy their countries’ teacher shortages and this has led to serious concerns among principals about the impact of a ‘teacher drain’ on their schools. Among those departing are Jamaica’s most senior and experienced teachers - future principals and vice-principals.

Marsh (1997) and Fullan, (2000b) suggest that in a climate of restructuring and reform, in uncertain times and unpredictable environments, the job of school principal has become increasingly complex and constrained. Given the shifting and expanding demands on Jamaican principals, there are likely to be competing notions and uncertainty within the profession about what school leadership means. This research developed out of a perceived need to explore Jamaican high school principals’ concepts of school leadership and the implications of these concepts for leadership practices in such an environment.

**Research Focus**

In view of the attention paid to school leadership by educational researchers, the faith and responsibility placed in principals generally and the expectations and challenges surrounding the role of Jamaican high school principals specifically, it was felt that insight into how successful principals conceptualise and experience leadership within their own complex, unique contexts was an area worthy of attention.

**Research purpose**

This study set out to describe and analyse how selected high school principals in Jamaica understand and practise school leadership by exploring how they view their circumstances, and how their meanings of leadership are modified by the contexts of their work. The central research question for this study was: How do selected Jamaican high school principals define and interpret school leadership within the context of their
work and experiences, and what are the consequences of these meanings for their leadership practice? Arising from this were three guiding questions designed to give shape and direction to the research process but not necessarily to be answered explicitly:

1. What meanings do Jamaican principals attach to leadership and why?
2. How are these meanings related to the ways in which they engage in leadership?
3. To what extent do their definitions of and approaches to leadership practice interact with the contexts within which they live and work?

It was not the purpose of this study to debate what constitutes effective leadership; the study’s purpose was centred on meanings of leadership. However, as Chapter 3 explains, the selection strategy required that participants be nominated based on their reputation for success; as a result effective leadership was taken as a given. This understanding was reflected in the interviews, when occasionally the participants prefaced “leadership” with the adjective “effective”; however, the central concern was always on the meanings they attached to leadership rather than to effectiveness.

**Research methods**

Glesne (1999) explains that research purposes associated with qualitative-interpretivist inquiry are focused on contextualisation, understanding and meaning (p.5-6). Underpinning this research was symbolic interaction theory (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 1998; Forte, 2001) and this influenced the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. In order to explore how principals understand and practise school leadership, the study adopted a collective case-study approach (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995) using field observations, documents and interviews with selected high school principals as data sources. Data were analysed using grounded theory modes of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). By focusing on leadership as it is understood and practised by principals who are considered exemplary, the study aimed to present practitioners’ context-based understandings and experiences of successful school leadership, examine how aspects of context influence their viewpoints and the way they lead, and discuss ways in which their perspectives exemplify educational leadership theory and scholarly research.

**Justification for the Study**

Given the context just described, this research focus was considered important and relevant for both academic and practical reasons. These are explained briefly in turn.
Firstly, neither the MOEY&C nor any of the major lending agencies that traditionally support Jamaican educational projects - the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) - have commissioned studies into high school principals. A search of Dissertations Abstracts International found that the most recent studies into the Jamaican principalship were conducted a decade ago (Linton, 1994; Simmonds, 1994). Indeed, since James’ (1975) proposal for the professional preparation of Secondary school principals in Jamaica fewer than twenty postgraduate theses have focused on aspects of the principalship and of these, only nine feature high or secondary school principals as subjects or participants (Aiken, 1989; Allen, 1979; Buckley Jones, 1988; Cameron, 1991; Gunter, 1988; Magnus Brown, 1988; Reid, 1976; Richards, 1988; Wright, 1989). It would seem then that principals in general, and high school principals in particular, are a neglected species in the landscape of local literature.

Moreover, this study differed from these previous studies in that it sought to problematize the notion of leadership by documenting how principals think and speak about the ways they lead, emphasising meanings and understanding. Whereas earlier studies concentrated on principals’ traits, skills and tasks (Buckley Jones, 1988; Gunter, 1988; Magnus Brown, 1988; Reid, 1976); motivation and job satisfaction (Aiken, 1989; Allen, 1979); and teacher-principal or board-principal relationships (Allen, 1979; Gunter, 1988; Richards, 1988; Wright, 1989), the study reported here focused on how principals conceptualise school leadership within contemporary contexts. Although Scott-McDonald’s (1989) case studies describe the content and characteristics of two principals’ work within the special demands and constraints of the environment, her findings relate to primary school principals. Wright (1989) also used case studies to include social and cultural contexts as a major dimension; however, when considered in the light of current shifts in educational policy and the attendant changes in principals’ roles as described earlier, her findings, like Scott-McDonald’s, now appear dated.

Further justification for studying Jamaican principals relates to Gronn and Ribbins’ (1996) call for more research into the contexts in which principals have to work and to Ball’s (1993) assertion that, “School leadership is not…. achieved in a social or political vacuum” (p.225). The importance of attending to the power of cultural, social and
contextual influences in relation to leadership is increasingly being acknowledged (Day et al., 2000; Dimmock & Walker, 1998, 2002; Moller, 1998; Walker & Dimmock, 2000a). In the absence of locally derived knowledge, there exists a tendency to rely on frameworks developed by North American and British researchers for perspectives on what constitutes school leadership even though the extent to which these are applicable to a Caribbean context is unknown. According to Miller (1985):

> It could be that existing theory is already sufficiently powerful and capable of incorporating Caribbean experience in a meaningful and constructive way. But the possibility also exists that the specificity of the circumstances in which administrative theories have been developed is sufficiently at odds with Caribbean experience as to make the mere adoption of such theory not feasible. (p. 41)

Fourthly, given the polarised social, economic, political and cultural conditions that differentiate the developing post-colonial islands of the Caribbean from the more developed, historically powerful, and larger countries, the understanding of school leadership among Jamaican principals is likely to be somewhat differently defined from those of their counterparts in North-American or European environments. Conducting this research in a Caribbean setting not only contributes to local knowledge about school leadership but by considering the extent to which views espoused throughout international research literature are evidenced in data collected from Jamaican principals it also allows for the emergence of a differentiated, Caribbean articulation of the meaning and reality of school leadership thus widening the research lens.

In addition to these four academic reasons, there are several practical reasons that justify the focus of this study. First of all, the findings can serve as a guide for future decisions about leadership training. The Ministry of Education and Culture’s (2001) White Paper on Education links school improvement with school leadership; therefore, understanding and examining what and how practising principals with a reputation for success think about school leadership, how they lead, and the extent to which their understandings and realities are implicated in their leadership approaches, are prerequisites if deliberations about preparation of future school leaders are to be informed. As Caribbean scholar Earl Newton (1985) has concluded, “Planning
professional development and preparation programmes requires an indigenous knowledge base about the realities of school administration in a given context” (p.99).

Arising from this concern, it is worth considering the consequences of inaction. In the same way as foreign universities have entered the Jamaican market in recent years to offer postgraduate degrees where they perceived a need, they will recognize a gap in the provision of leadership development and begin to offer leadership training to practising and aspiring Jamaican principals. Without local data, local input, and a clear sense of “the voice of practice” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p.1) there is a danger that the pedagogical shape and content of any emerging leadership programme may simply mimic the characteristics of successful programmes elsewhere. The responsibility to research the local context, to investigate the ‘realities’ of educational leaders and to evolve a leadership development programme of its own, grounded in such research, lies with Jamaican educators - this study is an attempt to move in that direction.

Finally, in so far as this enquiry extends understanding of the principalship in Jamaica, it provides practical insights into issues that directly concern principals thereby satisfying Southworth’s (1995) argument that research should be of interest to those who are studied.

**Conclusion**

This opening chapter is the first of seven chapters. It has presented the focus and rationale for the research reported in the dissertation. Background information related to the role of Jamaican high school principals and the leadership training and educational opportunities available to them has been included in order to establish the context. This chapter has also provided a justification for the study as well as a description of its purpose and guiding questions. The remaining six chapters are now briefly outlined.

Chapter 2 presents and critically assesses alternative theories for understanding and describing educational leadership, research studies on leadership in action as well as the research methods associated with them. Chapter 3 describes the theoretical framework that informed the research question and the associated methodology that in turn informed the selection of data collection and analysis procedures. The participants are described, the rationale for using grounded theory methods of analysis is explained and
associated ethical and procedural issues are discussed. Chapter 4 presents an overview of the development of secondary schooling in Jamaica to establish the historical legacies which today’s high school principals have inherited and the social and political contexts within which the concept of school leadership has evolved.

There are two chapters that focus on analyses of data: Chapter 5 comprises four cases, each organised around a central theme that portrays an individual principal’s understanding and practice of leadership. Chapter 6 discusses the cases theoretically, highlighting similarities and differences in an effort to examine what the combined cases reveal about principals’ understandings of the concept of leadership for Jamaican high schools and how context influences that understanding. Finally, Chapter 7 reviews the study’s purpose and methodology; summarises the findings; considers the strength and limitations of the findings and identifies theoretical and practical implications, particularly for principals’ professional development and leadership training. It closes with suggestions regarding possible directions for future research.

The following chapter presents a review of the research and scholarly writing about educational leadership that were used to frame the study reported in this dissertation.
Chapter 2

FRAMING LITERATURES

There is some debate among qualitative researchers about the most appropriate time in the research process to conduct a literature review. Glaser (1978) and other grounded theorists (Chenitz, 1986; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) recommend delaying the review of literature until data collection and analysis have begun, warning against the dangers of being overly influenced by the preconceived ideas, conceptual frameworks and theoretical commitments of others. However, it is generally felt that the benefits of early interaction with the literature outweigh possible effects of undue influence (Merriam, 1998). In this study, the literature review began during the conceptualisation phase of the study, well in advance of data collection and was continually revisited and extended throughout the collection and analysis phases of the research process. In particular, there was a tendency to move back and forth between the analysis and the literature in what was a recursive type of interaction described by Merriam as “a dialogue with previous studies” (1998, p.50) and by Glesne as “a dance with the literature” (1998, p.21).

The purpose of this chapter is to identify and discuss the range of literature that provided a theoretical and empirical frame for the study. Drawn from several interrelated areas in the field of educational leadership, the three most pertinent sources were:

- theories of educational leadership;
- studies that define and describe principal leadership;
- scholarly work and technical literature on global trends and national policies that have implications for emerging views of what constitutes school leadership.

Each of these areas will now be examined in turn.

Theories of Educational Leadership

In describing literature about leadership, Hodgkinson is reported to have remarked, “... it is a shambles, a mess full of philosophical confusion” (Ribbins, 1997, p.4). Similarly, Andriessen and Drenth (1998) have observed, “The area is swamped with competing models - and it is becoming difficult to retain a global view” (p.321). More recently Day et al. (2000) have referred to “a voluminous literature on leadership...which offers a bewildering array of theories, models, principles and
strategies” (p.14). Bush (1995) too, points to a variety of theories several of which overlap and adds that the discourse of leadership is confusing: “…similar models are given different names, or in certain cases, the same term is used to denote different approaches” (p.23). Even the very definition of leadership is controversial (Leithwood et al., 1999; Southworth, 1995). In the face of this abundance of literature and apparent confusion, and mindful of the fact that there are no recent studies which examine the relationship between leadership theory and practice among Jamaican principals, it would seem useful to consider theory in light of shifts in emphases over the years. To this end, this section of the review considers theories under two broad headings: traditional theories that have endured and more contemporary theories that have developed in relation to recent educational changes and reform.

**Traditional theories**

Early leadership researchers and theorists were interested primarily in leaders’ personal traits and characteristics, their behaviour, the kinds of work they did, their styles and strategies. In time, researchers began to look beyond questions of behaviour, style and traits to consider the nature of organisational culture and the ways in which it influences and is influenced by leadership. Studies in this category argue that strategies effective in one context will not necessarily work in another so that leadership will present differently from one situation to the next (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Fiedler, 1967; Fiedler & Chemers, 1984). Gradually, interest developed in metacognitive processes. Based on the assumption that leaders’ behaviours are influenced by what and how they think, the focus of enquiry in the field of educational leadership was shifted to leaders’ decision-making and problem solving processes (Leithwood et al., 1999).

The 1980s and early 90s saw an interest in transactional and instructional leadership models. The former relates to the idea that the leader’s purpose is to ensure members carry out tasks efficiently in an effort to achieve the organization’s official goals. Driven by policies, control mechanisms and procedures, transactional leadership has a bureaucratic, managerial conception of leadership. Hierarchical structures mean that power rests in the persons who hold positions and titles. Instructional leadership assumes that the source of authority and influence is expert knowledge and skills about pedagogy, usually demonstrated by the principal, who is primarily concerned with developing school mission, managing instructional programmes, and promoting school
culture (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Both transactional and instructional perspectives can be considered more traditional than contemporary as they incorporate and stress trait and behavioural approaches. A major component of transactional leadership concerns establishing goals, developing structures to facilitate achieving those goals and distinguishing management and leadership. Similarly, instructional leaders focus on the development of mission and goals and according to Ogawa and Bossert (1995), they manage, “the educational production function by setting schedules and establishing policies and procedures” (p.43). Although Leithwood (1994) describes instructional leadership as “a dying paradigm” (p.502) on account of its failure to address second order changes, it remains relevant because of its focus on the fundamental business of schools – teaching and learning. As evidence of its renewed prominence in Britain, Bush and Glover (2003) refer to the inclusion of instructional leadership in the Leadership Development Framework of the National College for School Leadership (2001) and to Southworth’s (2002) recommendation that it be incorporated into leadership development programmes.

In sum, traditional theories distinguish themselves from more recent theories in four critical ways: they assume leadership by an individual who is considered competent and has authority to make decisions; they prioritise instrumental and managerial concerns; they measure success by goal attainment; and they are characterised by bureaucratic, hierarchical organisational structures. Overall, they present a static picture of leadership, one in which the followers “…are merely acted upon or led with no evidence of dialogue or clear relationship between the leader and the followers” (Fennell, 1999, p.257).

**Contemporary theories**

Recognising the inadequacies of transactional and instructional models to stimulate improvement within contemporary organisational contexts, scholars have begun arguing for moral and transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Bhindi & Duignan, 1997; Bolman & Deal, 1997; Duignan, 1997; Greenfield, 1991; Leithwood, 1994; Ramsden, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1992). Moral and transformational theories have sought to move the bureaucratic and managerial focus from centre-stage and balance it with a focus on values, moral authority and capacity for change. Three writers who represent these popular perspectives and have contributed to recent thought about the nature and
function of educational leaders and what makes for successful leadership in the 21st century are Thomas Sergiovanni (moral leadership), Kenneth Leithwood (transformational leadership) and Christopher Day (values-led contingency leadership).

Moral leadership
Premised on values, moral leadership asserts that what leaders symbolise and communicate is more important than their style. According to Sergiovanni (1992) moral authority is the power base, “the cornerstone of one’s overall leadership practice” (p.139). While not discounting other dimensions of leadership, Sergiovanni places a premium on the moral dimension, arguing that bureaucratic, psychological and technical-rational authority need to be de-emphasised and in their place, moral and professional authority need to be emphasised. The purpose of moral leadership is to increase sensitivity to the “rightness of decisions” thereby increasing participation and creating a more democratic organization and community. The power to make decisions and affect change is distributed throughout the organization and authority and responsibility are shared. Consequently, all members of the community - students, parents, employers and other community representatives - are joined in a coordinated effort to achieve common goals. Sergiovanni argues that such commitment to the concepts of stewardship, empowerment and collegiality means that leaders and followers are inextricably bound up; they allow one another to exist - “Without followership, there can be no leadership” (Sergiovanni, 1992, p.85).

Transformational leadership
Underpinning transformational leadership is the assumption that change is a central feature of any educational organization and that organisational goals need to change. Leithwood et al. (1999) argue that the central role of contemporary leaders is to increase the organization’s capacity for change, to inspire and transform the thinking and behaviour of others and to impact on the organization’s culture in such a way that it is changed. Furthermore, they stress positive change, “Transformational leadership entails not only a change in the purposes and resources of those involved in the leader-follower relationship but an elevation of both – a change ‘for the better’.” (p. 28).

Within this model, the traditional pyramidal organisational structure is discarded in favour of a dispersed, moving pattern of leadership, focused on the human rather than
the structural dimension. Working teams, committees and focus groups are engaged in problem solving and decision-making with the formal leader as a participant, preferring to lead from the middle rather than the top. Although the leader is an authority figure who may well initiate the ideals and vision of what is possible, leadership does not reside in any one fixed place or person for all time; rather, expertise and competence supersede any formal position. “Leaders change with the issue” and “Power is attributed to whomever is able to inspire commitments to collective aspirations.” (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 9).

Values-led contingency leadership

Values-led contingency leadership has its origins in research conducted in Britain by Day et al. (2000) in the 1990s in twelve schools, involving over 200 interviews. The focus of values-led contingency leadership is on the betterment of students and staff in the institution; its main purpose is to create and facilitate conditions for individual, professional, organisational and community growth. This person-centred perspective combined with a recognition of the influences of social, economic, cultural, political, professional and personal contexts on leadership, challenges the more traditional models that propose neat solutions and recommend ‘one-way-to-lead’ type approaches, thereby ignoring the complexity of leadership.

Day et al. (2000) identify five dimensions that combine and interact to characterise leadership behaviour. These include: a core set of personal and professional values used to sustain and generate commitment to a philosophy and vision; recognition of the power of context so that leadership is transactional and transformational but always “human and principle-centred” (p.163); commitment to continuing professional development and empowerment; emphasis on self development and emotional intelligence; ability to manage competing sets of tensions and dilemmas while at the same time achieving a positive outcome.

These three contemporary leadership models embody common key ideas about leadership – it involves personal and professional morals and values and ethics; it is about transforming and redesigning the organization to create a new culture; it treats power, authority and responsibility as the property of the group rather than the individual so leadership does not always flow from the individual invested with the
position; it is embedded in a cultural context and therefore requires pooling the energies of the community in pursuit of shared visions and goals; it focuses on human development, creating conditions for student, staff and community growth and success; and it draws on transactional and instructional practices as supportive, not dominant strategies. In particular, contemporary models provide alternative ways of defining and ultimately practising school leadership by challenging the assumptions and values of traditional models that ignore the complexity of leadership and propose ‘one way to lead’ type approaches.

The traditional and contemporary theories just described served as points of reference from which to explore how Jamaican high school principals conceptualise and engage in school leadership and provided a platform on which to situate the study’s findings.

**Principal Leadership**

The study also drew upon empirical literature that defines and describes principal leadership practice, in particular research that considers leadership as a social process, studies that seek to explain effective principal leadership and inquiries that use qualitative approaches to examine principal leadership. This work is now examined in detail.

**The social nature of leadership**

A number of studies highlight the multidimensional nature of school leadership pointing to the complex interactions among the leaders, those who are led and the contexts in which they lead (Day et al., 2000; Foster, 1997; Knight & Trowler, 2001; Leithwood et al., 1999; Southworth, 1995). The transformational and values-led contingency theories outlined in the previous sections stress the interaction of all parties, as they pool their commitment and energies to achieve a common purpose of providing excellent teaching and learning experiences. The very title ‘transformational’ relates to the positive changes that take place as a result of these interactions. Leithwood et al. (1999) and Day et al. (2000) argue that the complexity of leadership is in part bound up in the notion that leadership is not just about what leaders know and do but also about why and how they think, act and interact. Both theories advocate the kind of leadership that structures the environment in such a way that empowerment, teacher and community participation, and shared decision making about issues that directly affect them, are prioritised.
Likewise, Southworth, (1999) supports a view of transformational leadership as involving “considerable social skills of advocacy, inter-group relations, team-building and inspiration without domination” (p.50)

While not discounting that there are generalisable characteristics of effective leadership, scholars are recognising that there are subtle forces at work and are critical of theories that overemphasise human agency and treat the socio-cultural context as constant or those that overemphasise environmental complexity and neglect human agency (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996; Ribbins, 1997). Gronn and Ribbins, (1996) explain that when context is understood as “the sum of the situational, cultural, and historical circumstances that constrain leadership and give it its meaning, context is the vehicle through which the agency of particular leaders may be empirically understood” (p.454). They make a case for an interpretive approach to leadership that recognises the relationship between the individual and context as both implicative and reciprocal and propose a “contextualized perspective” (p.453) that uses ethnographic and biographic modes of enquiry for the study of leaders in action. In a similar vein, Foster (1997) and Foster and Suddard (1999) present a conceptualisation of leadership that transcends individual roles and behaviours to encompass the context and processes of leadership. She describes the context as comprising participants’ perceptions of the nature of the relationships among school community members and defines processes as the purpose and manner in which participants construct meanings about experiences within the context. According to Knight and Trowler (2001) good leaders are aware that their actions have multiple meanings so they develop frameworks. “Good leading is about “sensemaking” and sensemaking involves - “authoring as well as reading” (p.46).

The growing interest in urban school leadership as distinct from non-urban, in primary and tertiary school leadership as distinct from other levels, and in non-Western leadership contexts as different from those in the Western world is a reflection of the importance attached not only to context generally but more specifically to societal and national culture in relation to the study of leadership. It is becoming increasingly obvious that the different socio-economic conditions that characterise contemporary urban and non-urban schools, especially in the United States, are differentiating the practice of leadership among respective principals (Cistone & Stevenson, 2000; Kimball & Sirotnik, 2000). In response to educational leadership research that assumes a
Western cultural context, writers are beginning to examine culture as a crucial component for understanding leadership. By alluding to Chinese and Japanese cultures, Cheng (1998) describes how differences in cultural values are reflected in educational values, policies and practices. Woodrum (2002) argues that cultural values shape the principal’s role and impact on individual and group interactions. In a study that examines how leadership and culture are intertwined in two schools located in the northern region of Western Canada, Foster and Goddard (2001) report that the preference for Western notions of schooling and leadership held among the educators in the region conflicted with student, parent and other stakeholder expectations that the school should “adapt to the cultural and linguistic reality of the local community” (p.8). A similar concern with cultural context is considered in the work of Hallinger and Leithwood (1996, 1998b), Leithwood and Duke (1998), Walker and Dimmock (2000b) and Wong (1998). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that structures such as social context and culture are embedded within an understanding of leadership.

**Effective principal leadership**

Many studies seek to understand and describe leadership behaviours and traits in successful school leaders in an effort to determine what constitutes effective principal leadership (Bhindi, 1997; Daresh, Dunlap, Gatner & Hvisdak, 1998; Day et al, 2000; Foster, 1997; Leithwood et al., 1999; Ribbins, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1990, 1992). There is general agreement that charisma, moral vision, personal and professional values, intellectual stimulation, together with person-centred interpersonal practices, modelling and high performance expectations are among the key components. Leaders who invest in and demonstrate personal traits such as enthusiasm, persistence and emotional intelligence tend to elicit trust, loyalty and commitment from the other members of the learning community and this contributes to their effectiveness. However, these studies acknowledge the complexity of leadership and conclude that what constitutes effective leadership varies from one context to another.

While Hallinger and Heck (1996), Leithwood et al. (1999) and Fullan (2000a) underscore the ability of truly effective leaders to manage and sustain change, others describe the effective leader as one who has the “wisdom” (Knight & Trowler, 2001, p.178) and “emotional intelligence” (Day et al., 2000, p.175) to contend with the challenges. The challenges that leaders identify are many and vary in emphasis from
one study to another. There is widespread acknowledgement of the proliferation of expectations coming from government, policy makers, parents, students, teachers and communities, each with its own set of demands and needs (Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001; Ferrandino, 2001; Fullan, 1992). Managing tensions and dilemmas, balancing academic work with administrative duties, dealing with the uneasy relationship between transactional and transformational versions of leadership, reconciling “conflicting priorities” and generally managing the “paradoxes of leadership” are the major difficulties faced according to studies conducted amongst those in leadership positions (Daresh et al., 1998; Day et al., 2000; Knight & Trowler, 2001; Leithwood et al., 1999; Ramsden, 1998; Ribbins, 1997; Robilliard, 2000). In Ferrandino’s (2001) study, for example, principals nominated topics such as school-based management, professional development, promotion and competitive marketing of the school, creating a positive learning environment for an increasingly diverse population and providing for a new generation of digital learners as most challenging. Fullan (2000a) concludes that leaders must accept that there is no magic panacea, “no clear solution” to these dilemmas and that they must overcome their dependency on management theories and external solutions and look inward in order to meet the challenges (p.162).

Leithwood et al. (1999) identify leaders’ ability to find emotional balance in their work and life as important to successful leadership. Studies in which participants describe what it feels like to be leaders consistently reveal how the intensity of the job often leads to feeling overwhelmed and stressed (Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001). The work is hard and requires investing time and energy such that the personal life of principals is often compromised (Southworth, 1995). The importance of support systems, resilience and personal renewal strategies for combating and controlling emotional burnout are underscored by a number of writers (Daresh & Male, 2000; Day et al., 2000; Leithwood et al., 1999). It appears that the capacity to experience leadership as rewarding and satisfying in the face of challenges and difficulties and to remain positive is important for successful leadership (Daresh & Male, 2000; Lyman, 2000; Ribbins, 1997; Richard, 2001).

A qualitative approach
Leadership studies that have adopted a qualitative approach to understanding school leadership were a significant source of influence, particularly on the design of this
The dependence of traditional research on the use of surveys, questionnaires and quantitative approaches to the study of leadership has been described as a methodological constraint (Andriessen & Drenth, 1998; Gronn & Ribbins, 1996). A belief that quantitative data alone cannot uncover “street realities” (Ball, 1987, p.8) coupled with research that acknowledges the important role played by principals’ underlying ideas, knowledge and beliefs (Day et al., 2000; Leithwood et al., 1999; Southworth, 1995) has given rise to a body of literature that attempts to discover something about leadership from the perspective of the leaders themselves.

The emerging interest in leaders’ accounts, their perspectives on leadership, their expectations, experiences and challenges, the critical issues they face and their felt-experiences has resulted in qualitative research that uses biography and ethnography and draws on in-depth interviews, observation, document and narrative analysis as information gathering techniques. For example, Southworth (1995) concentrates on the beliefs of a primary school teacher together with his actions, so that what is produced is a “portrait of the subject … a biography” (p.1). Ribbins (1997) describes a research project conducted with Brian Sherrat in Britain where the principal was both subject and internal researcher, who reflected on praxis and thereby provided a type of autobiographical account while the external researcher observed and interviewed other stakeholders to produce a biographical account. A similar concern for an integrative understanding of leadership underpins research conducted by Quong, Walker, and Bodycott, (1999) who present leaders’ stories as rich opportunities for understanding leadership. They propose, justify and apply the Context, Intuition, Influence (CII) framework to analyse extracts from such stories. The context frame refers to the circumstances in which the leaders work and the meanings they attach to these; intuition relates to leaders’ subjective interpretations of what happens in their work lives; and the influence dimension attempts to explore the reasons and influences behind what leaders do. Dimmock and O’Donoghue (1997) use a life history approach to explore the relationship between key events and influences in the lives of six Australian principals, the external and internal contexts of their schools, and how they successfully implement change in these schools. Increasingly, as researchers recognise the complexity of school leadership and seek to better understand how leadership works, they are finding new and interesting ways to tap into the private worlds of their subjects to examine how they construct their understandings of leadership.
Viewed holistically, the literature synthesised in this section suggests that the complex interplay between principals’ perceptions, experiences and actions, their relationships with school community constituents and their responses to the multiple contexts within which they work is important for understanding how principal leadership is defined and practised. It also emphasises qualitative approaches as a useful pathway for developing an integrative understanding of principal leadership.

The following section focuses on scholarly work and technical literature related to policy and reform that provide insight into how school leadership in Jamaica might be understood.

**School leadership in Jamaica**

Mindful of Knight and Trowler’s advice that analysis of leadership should “use a microscope as well as a telescope” (2001, p.44), this section of the review attempts to contextualise contemporary school leadership in Jamaica by describing both global and national educational trends. It begins by describing global trends that are fuelling change in education systems generally and in turn, are influencing the emphases and direction of policies and reforms in Jamaica. It then identifies several national policies and reforms that are having an impact on the way school leadership is understood and practised at the local level.

**Global trends**

Changes associated with globalisation have impacted on education in both overt and subtle ways: “It is affected structurally, in policy terms, in practice terms and in the experiences that young people bring with them to their education” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2000, p.420). Trends and policies generally regarded by writers as responsible for the most profound changes include: the view of education as a business (Day et al., 2000; Grace, 1995; Leithwood et al., 1999; Porter & Vidovich, 2000; Whitaker, 1998); the spread of devolution and decentralisation (Ball, 1987; Marginson, 1995; Smyth, 1997); “standardisation of effectiveness, quality and accountability measures” (Whitaker, 1998, p.17); a shift towards higher levels of access and participation (Hecht, 2000); an expanded curriculum and with it changing approaches to teaching and learning (Hargreaves, 1997; Marginson, 1995) and the expectation and cultivation of educational
institutions to serve as repositories of community spirit (Hargreaves, 1997; Leithwood et al., 1999; Sergiovanni, 1994).

Such trends are reflected in policy changes and reforms that have implications for the way in which school leadership is conceptualised and practised. One troubling consequence of these reforms has been increased management responsibilities of principals, moving them towards a chief executive role (Grace, 1995; Ribbins, 1997). According to Marginson (1995), “The principal of today needs as much skill in financial and personnel management, and negotiation and public relations, as she or he has in classroom teaching, syllabus design and catering for the educational needs of children from different backgrounds” (p.17). A concern for cost efficiency combined with a commodification of education has placed principals in a market culture where they are expected to articulate a mission and demonstrate entrepreneurial ingenuity (Grace, 1995). At the same time, this market orientation creates a tension between principals concerned with management and teachers whose chief concerns are teaching, learning and the needs of students thus widening the gap between teachers and principals (Ball, 1993; Bottery, 1993; Grace, 1995). The principal’s role as professional educator has diminished and shifted to the Heads of Department or other senior staff within the school.

In a similar vein, Grace (1995) observes that the scholarly and professional qualities characteristic of principals in the past, are today superseded by a “streetwise capacity to survive and exploit market opportunities” (p.44). Ironically, accountability and quality measures that are designed to improve effectiveness and quality often have the opposite effect; they merely increase principals’ workloads and force them to channel their energies into management, marketing and bureaucracy rather than educational concerns (Day et al., 2000; Smyth, 1997).

Although school-based management offers communities an opportunity to participate in the management of their schools and share experiences, expertise and cultures, this is undermined if the school is poorly resourced - devolution policies, “can tie up the school community and the principal in impossible management and funding tasks” (Marginson, 1995, p.18). Furthermore, the combination of school-based management and a market orientation encourages institutional and professional competitiveness -
“an unintended consequence of the self-managing school movement is that it is creating huge vacuums of professional development at the local level” (Hargreaves, 1997, p.8).

Another consequence of structural reforms, the growth of a market culture and an emphasis on standards and accountability, is an increase in ethical dilemmas faced by principals as they grapple to find ways of reconciling the intrinsic moral values of the school with the bureaucratic expectations and mandates of government (Dempster & Mahony, 1998; Wildy & Louden, 2000). Faced with competing pressures from government policies, parent and community demands, corporate interests, student needs, teacher values and professional allegiance, the contemporary principal must find a way to integrate conflicting aspects of the total role.

Local research confirms the trend that the job of the principal is becoming more complex and conflicting. In her review of Jamaican studies related to educational management, supervision and the principalship, Evans (1997) concludes that as a consequence of having to carry out a wide range of administrative duties, Jamaican principals neglect “important aspects of the principalship such as professional development and instructional leadership” (p.30).

Generally the literature reviewed in this section suggests that global trends in education are felt at the national level through policy decisions and reform initiatives. The following section identifies more specifically several recent national policies and reforms that are having an impact on the role of Jamaican principals.

**National policies and reforms**

Educational policy and reform in the Commonwealth Caribbean are being driven by economic imperatives. According to Miller (1999a), “The current attempt is to restructure and refocus education to serve economic ends. The motivating force is material progress. The mission is to produce the consumer and the consumer society” (Concluding Discussion, para. 7). However, although the world’s educational systems are beginning to exhibit a number of common features as a result of the changes taking place, research suggests that the impact of the changes has not always been felt or interpreted in exactly the same way (Dale, 1999; Green, 1999; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998b; Porter & Vidovich, 2000). While there is evidence of policy convergence, these
policies are not necessarily played out in the same way because educational needs and contexts across the world are not uniform (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1998). Miller (1999a) makes a similar observation with respect to the Caribbean: “It is playing catch-up with the First World, but being forced to do so in its own way bearing in mind the resource gaps” (Caribbean Comparisons with the Industrialized Anglophone World, para. 12)

Further support for attending to local policy comes from Southworth (1999). In an article that examines the relationship between school leadership theory, practice and policy-making in Britain, he calls for more research into the power of policy makers’ influence upon practitioners’ thinking about leadership. These positions suggest that understanding leadership involves attention not only to global changes but also to local policy as it enters into and affects interpretations of leadership held among those who lead.

This study therefore has considered current policy directions and emphases as outlined in official Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture (MOEY&C) documents such as the Green and White Papers on Education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1999; 2001). Collectively the language and content of these documents point to an alignment with several of the global trends outlined in the previous section. These include: the image of education as a partnership with contractual arrangements and attendant cost-sharing commitments for parents and the private sector; the creation of a system that is “performance-driven and results-oriented” (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2000, p.6); increased management responsibilities for principals; accountability measures aimed at efficiency and cost-effectiveness; Boards of Management responsible for “rigorous adherence to prescribed regulations” and ”careful observance of national policies” (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001, p.15); and the cultivation of schools as community social and cultural resources.

Reforms too can have implications for the way in which educational leadership is understood and practised. In 1993 Jamaica embarked on a programme to rationalise its secondary system characterised by six different types of institutions offering a variety of secondary programmes. The Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE) programme (1993-98) aimed to improve access to, equity in, and quality of education at the Grades
7-9 level. It was primarily a curriculum reform initiative that introduced a comprehensive, common curriculum for Grades 7-9 and heralded a shift from teacher-centred to student-centred methodologies. Reform documents such as the philosophy statement and guidelines for the new national Grade 7-9 curriculum point to an emphasis on activity based learning, self and peer assessment and “a change in values and attitudes of both teachers and learners” (Rainford, 1998. p.79). Implicit in this, is a thrust towards instructional leadership and particularly the principal’s responsibility to acquire and manage resources.

Policy and reform documents, the policies and reforms themselves and the dynamics of implementing them, together with global challenges and national expectations, are likely to have had an impact on how principals understand and experience school leadership in Jamaica.

**Conclusion**

This review has presented three strands of literature as relevant to the study’s focus on how Jamaican principals conceptualise and practise school leadership. Firstly, theories of educational leadership provided a framework through which to analyse leadership. Managerial leadership values efficiency and emphasises tasks, functions and outputs while instructional leadership values professional expertise and draws attention to ways in which principals influence teaching and learning through teachers. More contemporary models such as moral and transformational leadership highlight the purpose of leadership, prioritise professional values and focus on ways to increase commitment among school community members to the school’s goals and their capacity for growth. The value of Leithwood’s transformational leadership and Day’s theory of values-led contingency leadership is that in addition to a series of theoretical concepts, they provide empirical data to support these concepts. Furthermore, these models present managerial and instructional practices as supportive dimensions thus allowing for an integrative, multidimensional understanding of leadership.

The second strand of literature included in this review focused on empirical studies that seek to define school leadership by pointing to universal leadership skills, practices and professional knowledge as well as a range of contextual factors in their descriptions of leadership. Such studies suggest that effective leaders are predominantly visionary,
people-centred, collaborative in their approach and skilled at managing competing tensions and dilemmas. Studies that report cultural, social and organisational variables as playing a significant role in how leadership is interpreted emphasise the ability to modify approaches according to the contextual conditions as important to successful leadership. Included in this section were studies that advocate a qualitative approach to exploring leadership. These studies allow for a context-based approach that honours the perspective of the participants and acknowledges the complexities of how leadership is constructed.

Also used to frame this study were scholarly works that explore how global trends influence the nature and direction of policy and reform as well as technical literature related to national policy. Collectively, this body of work suggests that policy and reform initiatives influence how leadership is interpreted.

These three strands helped shape the study’s focus and informed the research design. In so far as they influenced how observations were conducted and how questions were asked, they also affected which concepts surfaced during data collection. In addition, they facilitated analysis, sensitising the researcher to particular concepts and providing points of reference from which to discuss the study’s findings and draw comparisons.

Having outlined the themes and issues from the literature that frame this study of how Jamaican high school principals conceptualise and practise school leadership, the following chapter will describe the study’s methodology and report on the methods selected for data collection and analysis.
Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study reported in this dissertation aimed to describe and analyse how selected Jamaican high school principals define and interpret school leadership within the context of their work and experiences, and to examine the consequences of these contextual circumstances for their leadership practice. This chapter describes a theoretical framework and a methodology that are consistent with the characteristics of qualitative case study adopting grounded theory methods of data analysis. It provides a brief description of symbolic interaction as the theoretical perspective informing the selection of guiding research questions and methodology. In addition, it provides a rationale for using case study methodology, describes the sampling strategy and the composition of the sample, and details the data collection procedures and methods of analysis. The chapter closes with a brief explanation of procedures adopted to address trustworthiness, authenticity and ethical issues.

Theoretical Perspective

“Research questions are inevitably theoretically informed” (Silverman, 2000, p.76). The focus of this study on how Jamaican high school principals understand and engage in school leadership made symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 1998) an appropriate theoretical framework for informing the study’s design and methodology. In addition, the study’s purpose and guiding questions call attention to the interplay between the principals’ interpretation of leadership and the context in which they find themselves – this too, made symbolic interaction an appropriate theoretical framework.

Underpinning Blumer’s theory of symbolic interaction are three tenets: individuals act towards things on the basis of the meaning these things have for them; these meanings emerge through a process of social interaction with others; and these meanings are checked and modified through an interpretive process and “in light of the situation in which [the actor] is placed and the direction of his action” (Blumer, 1969, p.5).

Blumer’s three tenets are particularly useful for framing this study. The first tenet implies that key to understanding people’s behaviour is exploring how they define and interpret components in their world. According to (Charon, 1998), “…we can understand what is going on only if we understand what the actors themselves believe
about their world” (p.210). The first guiding question of the study reported here - What meanings do Jamaican principals attach to leadership and why? - was based on the interactionist position that human action is influenced by people’s perspectives, what they think, and how they define what is happening (Charon, 1998) and so it sought to understand the definitions and interpretations principals give their actions. Recognising that, “Interpretation is not an autonomous act ” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p.36), Blumer’s second tenet emphasises that action also results from social interaction. As individuals interact they take one another’s acts into account and so meanings become, “social products… creations that are formed through the defining activities of people as they interact” (Blumer, 1969, p.5). Because principals interact with a variety of individuals from inside and outside the school community – students, teachers, board members, other principals – they are continually engaged in defining and interpreting meaning; on this basis, the second guiding question of this study – how do the meanings they hold relate to the way in which they engage in leadership – was included. The study’s third guiding question focused on the interplay between the principals’ definitions and their experiences within a general climate of educational reform and in their specific situations. It took into account the possibility that if leadership was experienced differently, it was likely to be defined differently. This notion is compatible with Blumer’s third tenet that individuals define and redefine their situations as they go along in their action and Forte’s (2001) contention that, “A person is embedded in a social and cultural milieu, and his or her behaviour is a response to transactions with others in this milieu”(p.33). The third guiding question set out to consider whether the contexts in which the selected principals worked affected their definitions of school leadership and the extent to which these definitions and interpretations determined their actions. Symbolic interaction does not deny that personality traits, role obligations or factors associated with the physical, socio-economic or cultural environment, are valuable for understanding behaviour but they are significant only in so far as they enter into and affect the defining and interpretive processes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

The overall focus of the three guiding questions of the study reported in this dissertation is in keeping with the prominence symbolic interaction gives to interpretation and “the active part” that individuals take, “in the cause of their own action” (Charon, 1998, p.28). The implications of these assumptions for the selected methodology, data collection and analysis procedures are now examined.
Methodology

As explained, the assumptions underpinning this study’s focus were aligned with the theory of symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 1998; Forte, 2001). These assumptions imply that reality is not an objective phenomenon, rather it is a function of individuals interacting with their world and that there exist multiple, socially constructed realities that are complex and ever changing. Respecting these assumptions also means that in order to understand a phenomenon, research should seek to unpack the inherent complexities of meaning in context. It further implies that researchers should honour and preserve the voices and emotions of the research participants when reporting their findings, perceive themselves as research instruments and assume “the posture of indwelling” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p.25). These predispositions are synonymous with a qualitative or interpretive mode of enquiry as described by several writers (Glesne, 1999; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990).

More specifically, this study encompassed case study methods as defined by Merriam (1988, 1998) and Stake (1995). For the study reported here, where understanding the meaning and experience of school leadership constitutes the knowledge to be gained from an inductive mode of enquiry, the case method can be classified as qualitative.

Case studies can be categorised in a variety of ways: by purpose (Borg, Gall, & Gall, 1993; Yin, 1994); by special characteristics (Merriam, 1988); or by the process of carrying out the research (Yin, 1994). Another kind of definition focuses on the unit of analysis. Stake (1995) and Yin (1994) for example, describe the case in terms of boundaries and limitations that determine what will be investigated. Because this research design selected four principals for study, each of whom was instrumental in learning about school leadership in Jamaica and because there was “important coordination between the individual studies”, it qualified as a collective case study (Stake, 1995, p.3) or a multiple-case study (Yin, 1994, p.14) The research lent itself to selection of case study as a research strategy for several reasons. Firstly, case study inquiry facilitates concentrating on a single phenomenon (school leadership); secondly, it attends to context by studying participants in their natural settings engaged in real-life interactions; thirdly, it allows for development of holistic “thick description.”
(Geertz, 1973) thereby extending understanding of how participants interpret their experiences and what is happening to them and within them; and fourthly, it incorporates several sources of evidence to foster understanding the phenomenon under study from several perspectives.

**Sampling**

In order to identify “information-rich cases” (Patton, 1990, p.169) and optimise selection of the best people for informing an understanding of school leadership, a “purposive” (Merriam, 1998, p.61) or “purposeful” (Freebody, 2003 p.78; Patton, 1990 p.169) selection or sampling strategy was used. Stake (1995) advises, “Even for collective case studies, selection by sampling of attributes should not be the highest priority. Balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is of primary importance” (p.6). Nomination of participants was based on consultation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture’s six regional directors. To ensure that there was some common understanding of the term “exemplary school leadership” among the six directors, selection criteria were negotiated. These included: evidence of sustained improvement within the school community; capacity to make a difference; receptivity to recent reform initiatives within the secondary system, for example the Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE) programme; and wide acknowledgement amongst professional peers of their effectiveness. Additional criteria included at least two years’ experience as principal in a public urban high school and current appointment as principal in an urban high school. From the sixteen nominations received, nine principals were contacted through letters, email correspondence and telephone calls inviting them to take part; two declined, two did not respond and five expressed a willingness to participate (see Appendix A. for letter of invitation to participate). Based on principal gender, school type and geographical location, four principals were selected. They were then sent additional details about the nature of the research, areas to be covered in the interviews and the procedures involved. (see Appendix B for Information sheet and Consent Form)

**Participants**

The final sample included one male and three females with experience as principals ranging from two to twenty-four years. All, except one, were in their first principal post and had served at their current schools as vice-principals before being appointed
principals. None had teaching responsibilities. Two principals worked in all-girls schools and two in co-educational schools in urban centres located in the western and south-central areas of the island as well as the Kingston metropolitan area. More detailed information about each participant can be found in the individual cases presented in Chapter 5.

The study was restricted to principals of public high schools because the few existing private high schools are not schools of choice and function largely as “fallback for children failing to get into the public high school system” (Miller, 1990, p.359). Although all principals in the study worked in the public system their schools’ origins and histories were markedly different. One, a trust school founded almost 275 years ago, became part of the public system from as early as 1920; two Roman Catholic church schools founded in 1925 and 1948 were incorporated into the public system in 1959 and 1958 respectively; and the fourth, a government institution established in 1979, gained high school status in 1988. Appendix C provides details of the principals’ experience and qualifications, school size and other contextual details.

**Data collection techniques**

According to Freebody (2003), “Case studies are empirically omnivorous” (p.82). Case study data collection is typically multi-method and multi-source and symbolic interaction is “based on a methodology that emphasises interviewing, observing people act in the real world, and determining how people define the situations they act in” (Charon, 1998, p.233). To gain insight into how participants conceptualise and experience leadership this study sourced its data from semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation sessions and integrative diagrams as well as school, principal and official Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture (MOEY&C) documents. These data gathering procedures are now described in turn.

**Semi-structured interviews**

Merriam (1988) distinguishes between types of interviews using a continuum ranging from highly structured, standardized, questionnaire-type interviews at one end, to the unstructured, exploratory type of interview at the opposite end. Semi-structured interviews were used in this study to explore each principal’s understanding and experience of school leadership. Semi-structured interviews provided a useful means of
learning about how principals construct and negotiate the meaning of leadership while gaining insight into events and experiences from their perspectives and in their own words and thus were in keeping with the tenets that constitute a symbolic interaction framework. They provided a balance between getting the principals’ perspectives and attending to context by probing for intentions, conditions and strategies. The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that the open-ended questions encourage individual responses while the broad structure that frames the questions ensures that data across participants will be comparable (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

For each principal, in addition to an initial informal meeting, a series of three one-to-two-hour interviews, took place over a six-week period. With three of the four principals, interviews were conducted in their offices during the course of a normal school day and were therefore subject to minor disruptions; however, in the case of one participant, interviews were interruption-free because they did not take place on the school compound. All interviews were audiotaped with the participants’ permission and researcher-typed transcripts were later returned to them for modification or addition of material.

The underlying philosophy and design of qualitative research requires that the researcher develop a relationship characterised by trust and respect with participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Glesne, 1999). The first face-to-face meeting focused on becoming acquainted with the principals, building rapport and establishing a climate of researcher and participant as collaborators in the research process (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). With three of the four participants, this initial visit also incorporated a tour of the school; the tours gave the principals an opportunity to introduce members of the school community, talk about their achievements, and share their plans and hopes for the future. This initial meeting also facilitated the collection of data related to school demographics, the history of the school and general background information.

The subsequent interviews, designed to be exploratory and conversational rather than interrogative, sought to collect descriptive information about thoughts and experiences associated with being a principal of an urban high school in present day Jamaica. The first of these were semi-structured interviews comprising exploratory questions framed around the study’s three guiding questions and designed to tap into the principals’
specific experiences. These semi-structured interviews explored questions concerning how the principals understood and experienced their role and function; how they were leading and why they were leading in particular ways; their relationship with the community and other stakeholders; changes in education that were impacting on their work and life in school; their perceptions on the future of the principalship in Jamaica; and the challenges and rewards they were experiencing. The use of an aide-memoire (Woods, 1986, p.81) was deemed more appropriate than a research protocol with standardized questions. The relaxed structure of the aide-memoire provided the flexibility to probe, to take advantage of opportunities to seek for explanations that enriched the data and to ‘go with the principals’ flow’ while at the same time ensuring that topics raised were relatively consistent across interviews and pertinent to the research focus. (see Appendix D for copy of aide-memoire). The questions were altered slightly in response to participants’ inputs; they evolved from the situation at hand because both the interviewer and interviewee were free to probe, digress or elaborate on any issue or topic.

The final interview tended to be less structured than earlier ones. It focused on unanswered questions from earlier interviews, ideas and questions based on interviews and interaction with other principals in the study and important leads garnered from observation sessions and examination of documents. As with earlier interviews, probes and follow-up questions were grounded in the participants’ responses to initial questions. The emergent design of qualitative studies implies that new questions and insights may emerge or initial interests may evolve during data collection and these can feed into subsequent data collection activities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Indeed, several months after departing the data collection site during a period of intense data analysis, it became necessary to contact one participant by email to seek clarification and additional information.

**Concept mapping**

Concept mapping was used to explore the principals’ personal constructs about what they believed to be important for effective leadership. This has been a useful technique for revealing and analysing constructs underlying individuals’ theories and beliefs (Cooke, 1999; McMeniman, Cumming, Wilson, Stevenson, & Sim, 2000; Novak, 1998; Novak & Gowin, 1984) In its simplest form, the concept map is a structured process on
a topic of interest that can be used to help individuals articulate their main ideas and describe how they are interrelated in pictorial form (Trochim, Cook, & Setze, 1994). The concepts on the map were expressed in the language of the participants and decisions about what was meaningful and relevant and how concepts related to one another were theirs. In this sense, concept mapping functioned as a collaborative research tool that valued participants’ perspectives, thereby supporting the qualitative nature of this study.

To begin the exercise, participants were directed to a statement (*Effective leadership for the Jamaican high school*) that served as a prompt for developing and maintaining focus. First, they were asked to generate 25 – 30 words or phrases that represented or embodied their understanding of the focus statement and write these down. Then they were asked to examine these words and phrases to ensure they were consistent with the focus statement and sufficiently clear for the essential meaning to be understood and then write each on a self-adhesive label. Next, they were given A3 paper with the inclusive concept label, *Effective leadership for the Jamaican high school*, pasted at the top. Working with the A3 paper and the labels, they configured a map to illustrate their understanding of effective leadership by deciding how the words and phrases they had generated were related to one another and arranging the labels on the paper so that they made sense. Finally, they glued the labels to the paper, drew arrows to link related concepts and named them in such a way that the nature of their relationships were made clear.

Novak & Gowin (1984) recommend conducting an interview with participants during or after the map has been drawn in order to minimise researcher misinterpretation of the structures on the map and to explore more fully the meaning intended and the thinking behind the labels generated. In view of this advice and Yorke's (1978) warning that, “meaning is anchored in the shifting sands of semantics”, participants were asked to explain the thinking behind the map and to clarify and justify choice of labels.

However, in this study, the concept mapping exercise did not go entirely according to plan. The initial intention was to conduct the exercise during the first meeting before more formal interviewing began. However, following resistance from the first principal, it was decided that this timing was inappropriate and that the exercise should be delayed.
until later in the series of interviews. Another principal had to abandon the exercise before it was complete to respond to an urgent matter and during the subsequent attempt to complete the map, the principal was rushed and distracted. Nevertheless, data from post concept mapping interviews with three of the four principals were included in document analysis.

Non-participant observation

The aim of observation is for the researcher to become grounded in the research context in order to study the participants consciously and deliberately in their natural setting and observe patterns of behaviour as they engage in events and interact with others (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Glesne, 1999). Observations provided an opportunity to witness first-hand the interactions of the participants and then ask them in interviews about the meanings of their actions. In this study each principal was observed for several hours over the course of four to six visits. Every effort was made to conduct observations involving both individual and group face-to-face interactions with a variety of stakeholders, in formal and informal situations - teachers, students, parents, administrative and ancillary staff, board members, Ministry personnel, community members, past students at meetings, functions and outdoor events, in staffrooms, offices and on verandahs.

Observation data were collected in the form of field notes using strategies recommended by Glesne (1999). In the first instance, the fieldwork notes were jottings of two kinds: “substantive field notes” (Burgess, 1984, p.167) which attempted to record and describe, without any interpretation, details and information about the setting, events, actions, interactions and dialogue; and observer comments which represented the researcher’s interpretations, impressions and speculations about what was being seen and heard. As soon as possible after each observation session the field jottings were expanded into more extensive field notes by using a tape recorder to recall information. Also included in these audiotaped field notes were analytic commentaries such as the researcher’s interpretive thoughts and reflections about provisional concepts, questions to probe or new topics to include in future interviews. In this way, data collection and analysis activities began to merge. These audiotaped field notes were later transcribed for formal data analysis.
Document analysis

While the interviews were the dominant source of information, supporting information was sought through document analysis. Like observation data, documents can corroborate, extend understanding or lead the researcher to query data gleaned from interviews. “Documents corroborate your observations and interviews and thus make your findings more trustworthy” (Glesne, 1999, p.58). They also provide “historical and contextual dimensions” (p.59) to interviews and observations. A variety of documents related to the principal’s role were reviewed; these included official documents such as job descriptions, performance reviews, school guidelines and policies, principals’ annual reports, and excerpts from school development plans as well as less official documents such as letters to the editor of a national newspaper written by or about the principals who participated in this study. In addition, with the principals’ permission, some “unpremeditated documents” (Borg & Gall, 1989, p.813) such as correspondence between the principals and members of their school community, were examined. These documents were a valuable source of learning how people felt about what was happening in their schools and how it was impacting on them.

Analysis and management of data

Merriam (1998) describes the goal of data analysis in case studies as “communicating understanding” (p.193). In order to construct meaning and arrive at such an “understanding”, this study adopted constructivist grounded theory methods to analyse the case study data. These methods are consistent with the study’s symbolic interaction framework; as Denzin (1992) observes, “At the methodological level interactionists employ a variety of interpretive qualitative approaches including … grounded theory” (p. xv). Charmaz (2000) recommends constructivist grounded theory methods because they assume “that people create and maintain meaningful worlds through dialectical processes of conferring meaning on their realities and acting within them” (p.521).

Coding

The data for this study were analysed using Strauss and Corbin’s grounded theory modes of analysis, in particular the processes of open and axial coding. At the heart of this approach are two continual analytic procedures – “making comparisons” and “asking questions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).
**Open coding**

Strauss and Corbin describe open coding as “the part of analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of the data” (p.62). In this study, some preliminary analysis took place during data collection; however, line by line open coding, did not begin in earnest until the transcribed interviews, field notes and documents were collated and thoroughly read. Incidents, actions and meanings were labelled using both *in vivo* and sensitising concepts and then grouped together using the constant comparative method. Figure 3.1 illustrates line-by-line coding of an extract from the third interview with Margaret Russell, one of the participants in the study.

Figure 3.1 An example of open coding (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 3-15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview statement</th>
<th>Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think it's crucial for a principal to have a vision, some idea of where the school needs to go, is to go and needs to be. I don't think that everything in the vision can be expressed or needs to be expressed so some things are hidden, they're underlying but the vision needs to be shared. School is about life and life doesn't go on without values so there have to be shared values as well. So based on the vision that the principal has, I mean that is not the only vision for at some point discussion has to take place to agree on shared vision where everybody is comfortable with where the school does need to go and coming out of that the shared values. Then networking is important because it's not just the principal and the teachers who would have the vision and carry through the vision – everybody involved in school life has to participate.</td>
<td>principal's personal vision  setting direction, goals  implicit values  explicit values  schooling as a moral enterprise  shared vision, shared values  principal as initiator  dialogue, negotiation  consensus, shared vision  common goals, shared meaning  shared values; networking  teachers &amp; principal as actors  active involvement of stakeholders  meaningful participation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), codes have properties and properties have dimensions. Several of the codes presented in Figure 3.1 together with concepts that were generated from the other coded documents, contributed to a major conceptual category eventually called ‘shaping the vision’. ‘Shaping the vision’ had four sub-categories or properties: ‘defining personal vision’, ‘negotiating shared vision’ and ‘motivating and inspiring others towards accepting the vision’. The concepts that together constituted ‘defining a personal vision’ were: ‘personal values’, ‘professional
knowledge’, ‘beliefs about schooling and education’ and ‘perception of community needs’. ‘Personal values’ in turn, varied along a dimension: non-negotiable – negotiable. Similarly, professional knowledge ranged from what the participant described as “firm knowledge” about educational trends and research to “guesswork” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 90-91). Identifying the properties and dimensions of codes in this way helped to extract detail from the data and develop the categories.

A crucial tool for interacting with the data in this way was memoing. Memos were the means of making explicit both descriptive and conceptual thoughts about the data and provided a record of how categories, their properties and their dimensions were evolving. They were used to lift the data to a conceptual level, to discover categories and clarify their meanings. The following series of memos attached to ‘polishing raw diamonds’ an in-vivo code generated from Norma Wilson’s interview data, serve as an example of how memoing helped to integrate codes and move the analysis forward.

Figure 3.2 An example of a series of memos: ‘Polishing raw diamonds’

16:03, Jan 26 2003.

The first interesting thing for me about this extract is the phrase "raw diamonds' hence the use of an in-vivo code. By using 'diamonds' to describe the students, Norma implies that they are precious, highly valued, shining and bright. The use of the adjective 'raw' suggests that they can be made even brighter and more valuable with some polishing. (The usual phrase is rough)

What are the properties of these 'raw diamonds'? In her words, "They are poor but they are bright"; they come from disadvantaged homes, live in depressed communities - so one property seems to be related to their origins, their living in difficult social circumstances. The other property seems to relate to their achievements and their potential - they can remain in the 'raw', unpolished state or they can shine. Consider raw - polished as one dimension of the property extent or degree of refinement.

According to Norma, by the time they do their CXC exams in Grade 11 they have been polished. It would seem then that under conditions where polishing is available they can excel. This leads me to a series of questions:

What does the polishing involve?
If it is a process of rubbing down, refining, little by little over time how is it to happen? What facilitates its happening?
Who is responsible for polishing? Surely not just the principal? How does she see her role?

What are the consequences of polishing or not polishing?

22:36, Jan 26, 2003
Polishing raw diamonds seems to involve attending to a variety of needs: academic, financial/welfare, emotional and adopting an attitude of ‘in loco parentis’ Teachers, past students, parents and other groups all have an input into the polishing process over the years

0:20, Jan 27, 2003
If one of the conditions that led Norma to describing the students as ‘raw’ relates to impoverished circumstances then attending to welfare needs becomes part of the polishing process. Furthermore, attending to welfare involves contributions from several sources within the school community: the students themselves - those 6th formers who assist with the breakfast programme; past students at home and abroad and local donor agencies

Academic provision for special needs: she details her efforts to offer a particular group of students an appropriate curriculum. – the PFL programme This has involved foresight, expense, planning, seeking outside help, co-operation and negotiation with an outside agency, teacher commitment, a willingness to experiment, explore new ground and take risks.

Polishing raw diamonds also includes providing students with experiences and exposure to things external to and different from their normal lives so that they can see what is possible – look at her emphasis on cultural activities. She implies too, that moral and spiritual upliftment is part of the polishing process – how is this demonstrated in practice?

Exploring codes in this way was experimental and frequently led to breaking data into two separate codes or sometimes merging a code with similar codes. For example, an early code entitled ‘providing a safe environment’ was merged with another code called ‘protecting students’. The latter was retained as an appropriate title as it became clearer that the principal’s understanding of herself as a protector related to physical safety and security issues for students not only while in school but also on their way to and from school.

Sorting data segments into concepts and categories, identifying patterns and continually revisiting, rearranging, refining and modifying categories to reflect emerging elements was a highly recursive process.
Axial coding

While open coding focused on identifying the general properties and dimensions of categories, axial coding focused on more specific features and their relationships within and between categories. According to Charmaz (2000) and Strauss and Corbin (1990), axial coding involves reconstructing the data that have been fragmented by open coding through a process of examining the antecedents, context, interaction and consequences surrounding each category and from this, making connections between it and its sub-categories. In this study, axial coding was based on the four dimensions of Strauss and Corbin’s coding paradigm model; each concept was examined in terms of the conditions that gave rise to it, the context in which it was embedded, the strategies by which it was managed and the effects of those strategies. Again the memoing process was a critical means of documenting the researcher’s interaction with the data and providing a record of the study’s conceptual work. In comparing the relationships between and among categories a collection of memos grew in which questions, ideas, decisions and tentative theoretical links were articulated. The memo presented in Figure 3.3 illustrates how axial coding was used to conceptually expand a category so that its position in relation to other categories was clarified. At the time the memo was written, this category was still tentative. It was called ‘understanding the school as a community resource’.

Figure 3.3 ‘Understanding the school as a community resource’: an example of a theoretical memo using Strauss and Corbin’s coding paradigm model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.43 pm, Jun 24 2003</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I use this concept as the axis around which others are examined what do I get?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAUSES: Why does this happen?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of school - troubled, poor communities, inadequate infrastructure;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal conditions - parental issues, general social deterioration, violence;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her view of school leadership as service-oriented (See ‘personal scaffolding’ node)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRATEGIES: What does she do to make it happen?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes interventions to address social deterioration eg. parenting programme, grief counselling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes school services and expertise freely available eg. pm classes, MOEC w/shops</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shares school facilities with community groups eg. f/ball, church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurtures values that foster social responsibility eg. community service requirement, feeding of street people, staff outreach.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONDITIONS: What needs to be in place for this to be successful?
A strong internal community (a consequence in 'cohesion and interdependence' is a condition for this category)
Commitment to idea of collective responsibility from students and teachers (listed as a strategy in cohesion and interdependence)
Consistency, a fair system for deciding how resources are shared

CONSEQUENCES: What are the effects of strategies?
Benefits: Improved school-community relationship, community connectedness, residents feel a sense of ownership, support, security and protection.
Reaffirms/ supports identity of internal community
Potential for reciprocity
Drawbacks: heavy demand - conflicts, juggling, wear-and-tear

This memo paved the way for consolidating links between ‘understanding the school as a community resource’ and a number of other sub-categories and properties that were up until this point, either discrete or only loosely connected to it. Indeed, this memo contributed to the subsequent decision to change the name to ‘positioning the school as a community resource’ to reflect more specifically the texture of the relationship between this category and others. Further revisions later in the data analysis, resulted in ‘positioning the school as a community resource’ being designated a property that helped to define a major conceptual category labelled ‘stretching out’.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe another phase of analysis which they refer to as selective coding – “the identification of a core category or story around which analysis focuses” (Ezzy, 2002, p.92). Grounded theory studies concerned with generating substantive theory, use selective coding to identify the central category or basic social-psychological processes associated with the phenomenon under study. However, in the study reported here, analysis did not go beyond the category generation and description afforded by open and axial coding, as these were considered adequate for a collective case study whose purpose was to describe and analyse meanings and understandings of school leadership not to generate or extend theory.

Cross-case analysis
Merriam (1998) notes that collective case study research involves two levels of analysis: within-case analysis and cross-case analysis. In addition to analysing the data for each
case using the procedures described above, cross-case analysis was used to identify patterns that extended beyond the individual case. Winegardner (2000) explains cross-case analysis as an attempt “to see processes and outcomes that occur across many cases, to understand how they are qualified by local conditions and thus develop more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations” (p.14). In this study, the themes and categories between and among cases were compared and contrasted to discover how the principals’ perspectives were similar, how they were different and why. A collective case study design combined with grounded theory methods of analysis increases the possibility of “...understanding a single-case finding, grounding it, by specifying how and where and if possible, why it carries on as it does.”(Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.29).

**NUD*IST**

To assist with storing, coding and retrieving interview, observation and document data, NUD*IST 5 (non-numerical unstructured data indexing, searching and theorising; Richards & Richards, 2000) a computer programme originally developed to provide “a range of software tools, from which users could choose according to their theoretical and methodological needs” (Richards & Richards, 1994, p.458) was used. Because this study was designed to include four cases, each of which contained data from four sources and each source, in turn, produced multiple documents, it was anticipated that data would be voluminous and complex. Attention to data management therefore, was an important consideration. The NUD*IST programme proved to be a useful tool not only for storing, searching and accessing the contents of a variety of data documents but also for keeping a record of methodological and theoretical memos. The facility to attach memos to a node was particularly useful for recording reflections, questions and insights as they emerged during data analysis and for reviewing at a glance, the thinking that informed each category. The fluidity and flexibility of the programme’s index system facilitated changes such as revisions to definitions and the continual reshaping and reconfiguring of the categories through shifting, merging or even deleting nodes. Apart from simplifying the process of coding and categorising, and providing a record of how each category evolved, NUD*IST also acted like a map or compass, keeping the researcher focused and in touch with the part of the project being worked on at different points during the analysis. Although NUD*IST can be used for complex theory construction (Cannon, 1998; Gahan & Hannibal, 1998; Richards & Richards, 1994), in this study it was used primarily as an indexing and searching tool.
Procedural issues

In addition to a detailed description of data collection and analysis procedures, the manner in which a research study takes account of and attempts to address issues related to validity and ethics is also indicative of its rigour and merit.

Trustworthiness and authenticity

The validity of qualitative data is addressed by establishing trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) “Terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.14). Among the verification procedures identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985), Merriam (1988), Stake (1995) and Yin (1994), several featured in this study: triangulation; member checking; rich, thick description; and detailed accurate records of data collection and analysis procedures.

The use of multiple sources and data collection methods, commonly referred to as triangulation, was a feature of this study. Interview responses were compared with data from concept maps, observations and documents. Member checking was employed when transcribed interviews and drafts of cases were returned to the respective principals for validation. One of the participants added an explanation to a comment in one of her interview transcripts and asked that a sentence describing a particular achievement be removed from the draft of her case as she felt it was a risk to anonymity. One principal made no changes at all while the other two suggested minor changes to the case and to the transcripts. In these ways, triangulation and member checking served to increase the study’s credibility.

Scholars writing about qualitative research methods have redefined the traditional view of external validity as measured by statistical generalisability or generalisability of results and replaced it with concepts such as fittingness (Guba & Lincoln, 1985) and analytical generalisation (Woods, 1991). Schofield (2002) recommends that qualitative researchers maximise ability through studying “what is, what may be and what could be” (p.180). Alasuutari (1995) argues that the term ‘generalisation’ is inappropriate for qualitative research, preferring in its place the term “extrapolation” to describe the procedure used by qualitative researchers to demonstrate “that the analysis relates to
things beyond the material at hand” (p.157). Similarly, Maykut and Morehouse (1994) maintain that qualitative studies are not so concerned with the generalisability of results as with “a deeper understanding of experience from the perspectives of the participants selected for study” (p.44). Stake (1995) proposes naturalistic generalisation, a process that entails readers recognising patterns and similarities from a study and using them to explain their own experience. Case studies can influence readers’ constructions of meanings as they associate findings presented in the case with their personal experiences (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Merriam (1988) refers to this way of viewing generalisation as “reader or user generalizability” (p.211). In a similar vein, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) writes, “In the particular resides the general”. She argues that writing that reveals “the complexity and detail of a unique experience or place” makes it possible for readers to “see themselves reflected in it” and “feel identified” and that “in the single case … the reader will discover resonant universal themes” (p.14). The purposive sampling strategy used in selecting participants for this study together with findings presented as in-depth, ‘thick’ description embedded in narrative portraits from which readers can “understand and draw their own interpretations” (Patton, 1990), have addressed some of these transferability issues.

In addition to transferability issues, this study also attended to dependability and confirmability criteria. Clive Seale (2002) recommends illustrating instances that contribute to a category so that readers can judge for themselves analytic rigour and dependability of the outcomes. Other writers recommend use of an audit trail to enhance confirmability. In this study, the NUD*IST programme assisted with data storage as well as with the maintenance of accurate, detailed, comprehensive records of methodological decisions taken as the study progressed. These records constitute an audit trail thereby fostering dependability and confirmability of the findings. The illustrations of how open and axial coding were undertaken and the examples of theoretical memos and a coding paradigm included earlier on in this chapter, are part of the chain of evidence that constitutes this study’s audit trail.

**Ethical considerations**

Ethics is intrinsic to an inquiry that is committed to symbolic interaction because of its emphasis on participants’ perspectives and the personal interaction required by the methodology. Interviewing, in particular is a moral activity because, “the personal
interaction in the interview affects the interviewee and the knowledge produced by the interview affects our understanding of the human situation” (Kvale, 1996, p.109).

University requirements necessitated thinking about ways to address ethical issues prior to conducting the research. Ethical procedures included: providing potential participants with clear information about the nature of the research and relevant details before they decided to participate; ensuring that they understood they were free to withdraw from the research at any time; seeking their consent to audiotape interviews; protecting anonymity by using pseudonyms and changing other identifying information; asking them to read and corroborate their respective interview transcripts by adding, deleting or modifying text; and inviting them to read the drafts of their respective cases and comment on how they are presented and interpreted. The University’s Human Research Ethics Committee granted ethics clearance before data collection commenced.

**Summary**

This chapter has justified and explained the research design and methodology. It began by describing symbolic interaction as the perspective that provided the theoretical underpinnings of the study. In addition, it has explained how case study methodology, data collection and analysis procedures that included semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation and document examination together with grounded theory methods of analysis were consistent with this theoretical perspective. Using examples, the chapter has also illustrated how open coding and axial coding were used to extract detail from and make explicit the connections among the data segments. Finally, it has examined steps taken to address the trustworthiness, authenticity and ethical conduct of the research.

Before presenting individual cases and discussing analytical findings in Chapters 5 and 6 the following chapter will provide an overview of the broad context in which the study’s participants operate by outlining the historical, social and economic influences that have acted and continue to act upon the educational system in Jamaica.
Chapter 4

JAMAICAN HIGH SCHOOLS: HISTORICAL FORCES AND CONTEMPORARY REFORMS

“Education is a social phenomenon intricately interwoven in the social, economic and cultural fabric of any given society” (Miller, 1984, p.27). By implication, principals as educational leaders are not immune to the historical background that has shaped the system in which they work nor are they shielded from the legacies and contemporary influences that interact with the contexts in which they operate. Accordingly, for research that aims to describe and analyse how Jamaican high school principals understand and practise school leadership it is important to consider both the historical milieu surrounding the system of education they have inherited and the interplay of political, social and economic parameters at different points throughout its development.

The first part of this chapter briefly explores socio-historical dynamics as they have affected the evolution of secondary education in Jamaica, from pre-emancipation up the establishment of the Ministry of Education in 1953. The second part of the chapter adopts a more contemporary focus, describing the major policies and reforms of the last fifty years and assessing their impact on secondary education, particularly in relation to the traditional high school system in which this study’s participants work as principals.

The Hand of History

When writing about the history of Jamaican education, authors rarely allude to the arrival of Columbus in 1494 and the island’s subsequent colonisation by the Spaniards. This suggests that this period in Jamaica’s history had no significant bearing on educational developments. However, it is important to take note of one outcome of Spanish colonisation: the annihilation of the Arawak/Tiano people. As Miller (1984) has pointed out, the slaughter of Arawak/Tiano society and with them any legacies of indigenous cultural and socio-political structures, removed the possibility of an ancient parent culture interacting with competing cultures. This, in turn, facilitated the entrenchment of British colonisation, the effects of which remain indelibly etched into the fabric of Jamaican society. The extinction of Arawak/Tiano culture together with two hundred years of slavery, accounts for the pervasiveness and intensity of the colonial experience, which until Independence in 1962, was the single most dominant
historical dynamic to shape the Jamaican system of education and specifically the culture of the high school.

For convenience, the first part of this chapter is organised around three periods that correspond roughly to critical landmarks in the development of secondary education. These periods have been designated as follows: Setting the stage for secondary education (1655-1878), establishing secondary education (1879-1911) and colonising secondary education (1912-1952). The treatment of these periods is necessarily brief and selective as events are considered only in so far as they have a direct bearing on the purpose, nature and definition of secondary education as it existed at the end of the colonial era. Furthermore, the socio-historical dynamics of these years have already been well documented by several Caribbean scholars elsewhere (eg. King, 1987, 1999; Miller, 1987, 1990; Turner, 1987).

**Setting the stage for secondary education: 1655 – 1878**

This period encompasses both pre- and post-emancipation years. Though there was no formal system of secondary education during this period, it is important to trace the establishment of the elementary schools, as the high school system that eventually emerged was primarily a response to elementary schooling for ex-slaves.

Between 1655 when the British arrived and Emancipation in 1838 there was no formal system of learning in Jamaica. Slave children received no education though the missionaries, who championed their cause, were permitted to teach them Christianity; reading and writing however, were forbidden. In Jamaica’s plantation economy, it was generally felt that, “… education would make the slaves unfit for and disinclined to perform manual labour” (King, 1998, p.46). However, this was not the case for the white population. Children of wealthy planters were privately tutored until they were old enough to be shipped off to school in England. In addition, as early as 1694, some wealthy landowners and philanthropists began making bequests to establish trusts and maintain schools for white children whose parents were too poor to provide for their education. Through these means a number of endowed elementary schools, which were later to become high schools, were founded. These included Manchester in 1694, Wolmers in 1736, Mannings in 1738 and Ruseas in 1777 – all prominent high schools today. It was not until after Emancipation in 1838 that schools for the masses - elementary and normal schools - were established.
The beginnings of formal education: elementary schools and normal schools

Following Emancipation the responsibility for establishing schools and organising a system for the ex-slaves fell to the Churches. Elementary schools were established for the blacks and poor coloureds and for the first ten years, Britain allocated annual grants to the missionaries to operate these schools since they were already providing religious education for the slaves. Not surprisingly, these grants were inadequate and there was a chronic shortage of schools and teachers. Guided by the aims of British imperialism which regarded the West Indian colonies as agricultural outposts, and influenced by the wealthy landowners who sought to ensure a ready supply of cheap labour, the Colonial Office recommended a curriculum focused on literacy, numeracy and vocational skills.

Coinciding with the establishment of elementary schools was the founding of teachers’ colleges, which became the avenue for the black population to access secondary education. These teachers’ colleges, referred to as ‘normal’ schools, articulated directly with the elementary schools. Those who were trained as teachers were drawn from amongst the brightest in the elementary schools.

The beginnings of secondary education: high schools

The Jamaican ruling class made up of whites and privileged coloureds, continued to send their children abroad, to local preparatory schools established through endowments, or to private schools run by the missionary societies of the churches. Between 1838 and 1878 secondary education was largely the domain of the churches and the trusts; they financed and managed their schools with no assistance from the state. The Catholic Church established the first two secondary schools, St George’s College and Immaculate Conception High School in Kingston, in the 1850s, for the upper and middle classes. King (1987) reports that the nonconformist churches too, attempted to set up their own secondary schools as they were not prepared to send their children to the elementary schools nor to schools run by the Catholics. Thus the churches contributed to this dual system of schooling: the elementary schools and the normal schools for the ex-slaves, now the new working class, and the high schools for the wealthy coloureds and the whites of modest means.

In essence, Emancipation did little to alter the pyramidal social structure shaped by almost 200 years of slavery. The majority black population accessed a low status, inferior education and remained largely illiterate; in comparison, education for the white
and brown population was elite. The following section describes the formative period during which secondary education was officially established and the Jamaica Schools Commission was empowered to organise a system of high schools.

Establishing secondary education: 1879 – 1911

As a result of the continuing decrease in sugar prices many planters were finding it increasingly difficult to send their children back to England to be educated so in 1879 the Crown Colony government appointed the Jamaica Schools’ Commission, to establish and administer a formal system of secondary education. Public funds were allocated for its development because the ruling class began agitating for government investment in secondary education on the grounds that the middle-class browns deserved a better education than that available to blacks in the elementary schools. Within a decade of its establishment, the Jamaica Schools’ Commission had reorganised most of the educational trusts converting the endowed elementary schools into secondary schools. However, education for whites and browns was deliberately kept superior to and separate from that provided for the majority black children. The very concept of secondary education reflected the concerns of those in power.

The concept of secondary education

Secondary education was considered a privilege reserved for those worthy of it, who would value it – the upper and middle classes. It was generally felt that the black working class population did not need a secondary education. It was argued that, “The experience of secondary education would elevate them above the station in life in which they had been placed by the Almighty” (King, 1998 p.49). Besides, it was important for those in power to minimise the perceived threat an educated black population would pose.

In any case, fee paying high schools with limited places were beyond the reach of black children who by virtue of the inferior curriculum offered at the elementary schools were in practice excluded from the few scholarships made available to students for high school education. King (1987) mentions three criteria for admission to secondary schools: “membership of a higher social class” (p.94), ability to pay and knowledge of Latin, none of which elementary school students could fulfil - the former two because they were ex-slaves, black and poor and the latter because the elementary school curriculum focused on literacy, numeracy and vocational skills and Latin was not
among the subjects deemed appropriate for ex-slaves. Thus, the concept of secondary education was synonymous with middle-class education.

Teaching and administration
In keeping with the dual nature of the system, schools for ex-slaves and schools for the ruling class were staffed and administered differently. Whereas teachers in the elementary schools were drawn from several categories - missionaries, students from the normal schools, literate coloureds and brighter students from the elementary schools – those in the secondary schools were either products of secondary schools or teachers recruited from England as there was no provision locally for training secondary school teachers. Their principals were university graduates from England, selected because of their religious affiliation and their subject discipline. Furthermore, elementary and secondary schools were administered separately: the former by the Education Department and the latter by the Jamaica Schools’ Commission. The structure of the system, particularly as it related to access, curriculum, finance and management was such that each social group was prepared for a different type of occupation: the wealthy whites at the top of the pyramid for the political, economic and administrative positions, the coloureds and poor whites for middle management positions such as the lower levels of the civil service and teaching, and the blacks for jobs of low status mainly in agricultural and domestic spheres (Scott-McDonald, 1989). As Miller (1990, p.63) has commented, “The social reality was colour discrimination in educational provision”.

Gradually the state became more financially involved in education, offering scholarships, establishing policy, setting standards and opening one government secondary school in 1911 - Cornwall College. Thus, Church control began to shift. However, the government had neither the resources nor personnel to completely control the system. Because the churches owned most of the school buildings and maintained control over day-to-day operations, their views still had to be considered (Turner 1987). The following section describes attempts by the state to develop secondary education.

Colonising secondary education: 1912 – 1952
Following an assessment of Jamaican high schools by His Majesty’s Inspector of Schools, H. H. Piggott, in 1911, the Jamaica Schools Commission implemented several measures that had an impact on secondary education. Firstly, Law 34 of 1914 replaced Law 34 of 1879. The revised law defined secondary education as those studies that went
beyond reading, writing and arithmetic to include “Latin, English Language and Literature, Modern Languages, Mathematics … the higher branches of knowledge” (Miller, 1987, p.114). In effect, this shifted the concept of secondary education from one previously defined on the basis of birth, wealth and status to one based on content or curriculum. Secondly, recognising the inadequacy of fees and endowments to support secondary schools let alone expand capacity, the Commission successfully sought increased government financing through a grant-in-aid scheme to assist with buildings, scholarships, salaries and teachers’ pensions. Thirdly, private Church schools were gradually incorporated into the public system. This move increased the number of available places, especially for girls, and paved the way for a state system of education.

Miller (1987) describes the period between 1912 and 1943 as “one of modest expansion and rationalization, but not one of fundamental change” (p.141). Although the new arrangements for secondary education switched the balance of control from a church system with government assistance to one of state control with assistance from Churches, it did not alter the governance structure beyond the Governor’s power to appoint two board members to each grant-aided school. The management of education was still largely the responsibility of individual schools; they were responsible for daily operations, hiring teachers, establishing conditions of service and setting their own entrance examinations up until the end of the 1940s.

In addition, the dominance and valorisation of British culture permeated every aspect of Jamaican life; even “… intellectual authority resided outside the society”(Miller, 1984, p.38). Society’s leaders were British or locals who had studied and spent time in Britain. The system of education was patterned off the British system. Ideas about education and schooling were often adopted wholesale or at best adapted to local conditions. The examination system was British, the textbooks came from Britain, so too did the teachers and principals. Figures for 1952 reveal that almost 45 per cent of high school teachers were British (Miller, 1990).

However, during the late 1930s and early 1940s British ideas and British leadership came under challenge from several local political activists. A series of events culminating in universal adult suffrage in 1944 resulted in Jamaica electing a Local Assembly to manage her political affairs; this represented the first step towards majority
rule and full independence in 1962. This shift in political power to blacks brought with it expectations about access to education including secondary education (Miller, 1990).

Within this socio-political context, the Kandel Commission of 1943 submitted its recommendations concerning the future development of secondary education for Jamaica. At the heart of these recommendations was a definition of secondary education that differed from previous definitions that had been based initially on social class and then later on curriculum content. The new definition conceived of secondary education as “education for adolescence, a stage of human development” (Miller, 1990, p.144). Kandel, a professor of education from Columbia University, questioned the custom of prescribing British educational ideas and practices as solutions for Jamaican problems and proposed fundamental change. The major changes proposed were: the establishment of a single policy-making body and the integration of the various levels and types of schools into one system; selection of students for secondary school based on merit, not ability to pay; a curriculum grounded in Jamaican experiences and the abolition of British examinations; provision of different types of secondary schooling, catering for different needs and abilities; and a test at the end of primary school to determine the most appropriate type of secondary education for each child. Although not all of Kandel’s recommendations were adopted as his committee had intended, their influence extended into the 1950s and 1960s. What evolved was a series of educational reforms aimed at expanding provision and increasing access to secondary education particularly for black children from working class homes. These reforms of the past 50 years are the focus in the second part of this chapter.

The Contemporary Backdrop

Whereas nineteenth century struggles had focused on emancipation from slavery, twentieth century struggles turned to decolonisation and the fight for political independence. ‘Educational democratisation’ became a catchphrase. This concern was reflected in the educational sector’s measures to dismantle dual track educational provision whereby elementary education was provided for working class children and secondary and university education were the preserve of the ruling class. Another catchphrase was ‘national relevance’ heralding a thrust towards Jamaicanising the system. In his discussion of the economic, social and psychological legacies of colonialism facing Jamaica, Michael Manley, Prime Minister in the 1970s, described Jamaica’s educational system as having been “imported lock, stock and barrel from
England without a moment’s thought about its relevance to Jamaica’s needs and aspirations” (Manley, 1974, p.21). Up until this time, the reforms in Jamaica’s education system had all been influenced by British modes of thinking; indeed the criticisms and disagreements surrounding Kandel’s report in 1943 stemmed in part from a reluctance to put aside the traditional British values and frameworks of the past. However, the spirit of nationalism in the years before and immediately after Independence inspired attempts to achieve social transformation and national development through education and to root reform in a specifically Jamaican vision of social reality.

Against this background, the second part of the chapter is organised around two periods that delineate particular emphases in Jamaica’s education system. These periods have been identified as follows: decolonising and emancipating secondary education (1953-1979) and reforming secondary education (1980 – today).

Decolonising and emancipating secondary education: 1953 – 1979
In the years following the transfer of power from the colonial government to elected representatives (1953) and Independence (1962) the focus was on decolonisation. Reforms sought to address deficiencies of the colonial era by expanding and Caribbeanising secondary education. These included both systemic and curricular reforms that influenced the way schools were administered and managed; selection criteria for students; the number of school places available; the nature of curriculum and examinations; and training of teachers and principals. These features are now considered in turn.

School administration and management
To begin with, the dual system of governance was abolished in 1953; the Board of Education responsible for elementary schools and the Schools Commission responsible for secondary schools were integrated into one Ministry of Education. The Minister of Education, who replaced the former Colonial Director of Education, was now answerable to the Jamaican people rather than a colonial office and was responsible for finance, policy, and setting salaries. Each school had a board of management that was relatively autonomous, responsible for daily operations, admission of students, employment of teachers and financial affairs but operated within the guidelines of the Ministry, reported to the Minister, and was subject to audit by the Ministry. In
government schools, the Ministry nominated the board; in Church and Trust schools they shared nominations. In 1978 the composition of the board was democratised to include a more broad-based representation from within the school community. Thus, other stakeholders – teachers, administrative and ancillary staff, parents, community members and past students – became involved and the main elements of school-based management as it is known today, were planted. Under the new democratised arrangements, the school board now had the power to nominate a principal but could not appoint him/her; in contrast, the Minister had the power to appoint but not to nominate.

Selection of students

One of the changes that had a significant impact on the culture of the high school was the introduction of the Common Entrance Examination in 1958. This examination administered at the end of Grade Six, screened entry into the secondary system based on performance in the examination rather than on ability to pay and social background as in previous years. High school principals, who had previously selected admissions, were now obliged to confine most of their intake to the list of Common Entrance awardees sent to them from the Ministry of Education. However, the principal retained the power to admit students who had not been awarded a place through the examination, provided there was space available after the quota from the Ministry had been placed. Performance in the Common Entrance also determined the proportion of tuition fees to be paid by the students. The top 2000 awardees earned free places; a further 2000 earned grant places (government paid half the fee and the parents the other half); remaining places went to full fee-paying students. Two problems arose with this selection process. Firstly, the top performers in the Common Entrance were children from the private primary schools commonly referred to as preparatory schools so in effect, the free places were being awarded to children from homes where the parents’ ability to pay for education was already established. Secondly, many of the students awarded grant places were unable to take up the opportunity, as their parents could not find the other 50 per cent of the school fee in addition to general school expenses. Both these trends defeated the purpose of the free and grant place policy designed to increase access to secondary education among the poor. In practice, high schooling was still the realm of the middle and upper classes. The 70:30 quota system introduced in 1964 was an attempt to redress this concern by allocating 70 per cent of the free 2000 places to children from public primary schools and 30 per cent to children from preparatory schools; this too did little to correct the imbalance as between 1962 and 1972 the
proportion of lower class students admitted to high schools moved only slightly from 9.3 to 10.9 per cent (Miller, 1990).

However, one measure that did alter the social composition was the introduction of free education in 1973 under Prime Minister Michael Manley. According to Miller (1990), lower class admissions moved from 10.9 per cent before free education to 15.7 per cent. Free education altered somewhat the selection process for high school admission - gone were the free place/grant place/full fee paying bands and the 70:30 ratio. Instead the Ministry assigned 95 per cent of the places in each school based on the Common Entrance results thus allowing each principal five per cent discretion to admit additional students. Because the number of places available and examination performance varied from parish to parish, it meant that the mark required for a free place also varied from parish to parish. Free education was supported by welfare schemes so that children from poor homes could apply for additional assistance to help cover expenses related to transportation, uniform, books and lunch.

**Access**

Up to 1953 only five per cent of the population received a secondary education (Miller, 1999b); expansion therefore was imperative. Expansion of the high school system was brought about through church schools joining the public system - the number of high schools in the public system increased from 30 schools in 1953 accommodating 8000 students to 45 schools in 1978 accommodating 50,000 students (Miller, 1999b). Additional places were created by converting high schools from boarding schools into day schools and introducing a shift system for some schools. However, the expansion of secondary education concentrated not so much on increasing the number of spaces in high schools rather on providing places in different types of secondary schools. As a result, Jamaica moved from having one type of secondary school - the high school – to having five types by the end of the 70s - traditional high, technical high, comprehensive high, vocational and new secondary. Among the five different types of secondary school, the traditional high school continued to enjoy the highest status.

One of the first attempts after Independence to democratise and diversify the educational system was the New Deal for Education funded by UNESCO and the World Bank. This project sought to expand secondary education with the building of 50 Grade 7-9 junior secondary schools in the 60s – these were later expanded in 1974 to include
Grades 10 and 11 and were classified as new secondary schools. These new secondary schools accommodating over 80,000 students in 1978 offered the greatest capacity but were low status: entry was non-selective as students were drawn from neighbouring feeder schools; the curriculum was vocational; and students were prepared for local examinations which had little currency among employers and other educational institutions. Miller (1999b) comments on the irony: “The greatest access to secondary education was offered through a type of school that attracted persons of lower social status.” (Expanding Access, par. 19)

Additional diversification efforts concentrated on the introduction of six technical schools and three comprehensive high schools through external loans and bilateral aid. These institutions, like the new secondary schools were established as avenues for society’s poor to access secondary education and featured entry requirements that were a mixture of selective and feeder; therefore, they did not acquire the same status and value as that attached to high schools. The intention had been to increase equity but the result was further stratification - a class-based segregated system in which middle-class children accessed secondary education in traditional high schools and the majority of children coming from the lower classes accessed secondary education in one of the other school types (Evans, 2001; Miller, 1990).

Curriculum and examinations
The formerly strictly academic high school curriculum gradually introduced technical and vocational subjects. In 1972 the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) set about developing curricula, materials and examinations to replace the British Ordinary (‘O’) and Advanced (‘A’) level examinations. Five years later the first set of CXC examinations were administered so that today the Council offers school leaving examinations taken at the end of Grade 11 in 34 subjects to students in 16 Caribbean territories. More recently, this regional body has introduced the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) a post-secondary qualification to replace ‘A’ levels. Jamaican high schools no longer teach ‘O’ level syllabuses; for Grades 12 and 13, most schools are in transition, offering both ‘A’ level and CAPE syllabuses.

Training for principals and teachers
Prior to the establishment of the University of The West Indies in 1948 there was neither local nor regional training available for secondary school principals or teachers.
The Faculty of Education established in 1952 began offering the Diploma in Education in both full-time pre-service and part-time in-service modes, marketed at graduates who wished to pursue careers as secondary school teachers. In this way, more local secondary subject specialist teachers became available. The Bachelor of Education degree introduced in 1966 was initially conceived as the means of preparing personnel for leadership positions in the schools (James-Reid, 1996). Other training opportunities were made available through scholarships and the expansion of tertiary education generally. The teachers’ colleges, originally focused on preparation of primary school teachers, began offering programmes in secondary teaching. Local capacity increased sufficiently to phase out recruitment of foreign teachers and principals by the end of the 70s. This constituted the Jamaicanisation of the teaching force and the pool from which principals and other administrators were drawn.

Many of these reforms have influenced the development of secondary education in Jamaica in very positive ways; in particular, more high school places were made available and more children from the lower socio-economic groups were accessing high school places than in previous years. Nevertheless, the system was still stratified and the inequalities and inequities, most of which could be attributed to Jamaica’s colonial past, have continued to be a source of concern among several scholars (Evans, 1997; King, 1998; Miller, 1990; Turner, 1987). The major difference between previous and current eras related to the criteria that stratified the high school system – race and ethnic origin have been replaced by social class (Miller, 1990). In spite of reforms, the high school has retained its status as the preferred school of choice.

Reforming secondary education 1980 – today
The final section of this chapter traces the major policy decisions of the last two decades in a climate of structural adjustment. It examines the impact of some of these initiatives on high schooling and particularly on the expectations, role and work of principals.

Oil price increases in the 70s, a recession in world economy, high foreign interest rates and natural disasters have undermined an already fragile economy and led to harsh structural adjustment policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Devaluation of the Jamaican dollar (from J$1.75 = US$1.00 in 1978 to J$60.18 =US$1.00 today) has had grave consequences for education. One key structural
policy relates to the mandate requiring that government cut spending on human capital investment activities. Bailey and Tomlinson (1996) point out the irony of such a policy:

The same international agencies that had supported Caribbean governments’ efforts to democratise education systems in the 1960s were, by the 1980s, advocating contraction of public funding for education. These cutbacks have had a negative impact on both the internal and external efficiency of educational institutions in these countries. (p.208)

Attempts to reduce public spending, improve internal efficiency and at the same time address issues of access, quality, equity and social issues have continued. Some of these are now described briefly in order to contextualise the conditions under which the principals who participated in this study have articulated their ideas.

**Cost recovery**

Cost sharing, introduced in 1993 requires parents to contribute to the cost of their children’s education. The fees charged vary from school to school. This is because the statement of estimated expenditure submitted to the Ministry by each school is based on what the school thinks parents can pay. For the academic year 1998-1999, 78 per cent of high schools charged over J$6000, some charged over J$8000; in contrast over 70 per cent of the comprehensive high schools charged below J$4000 (Evans, 2001).

Another source of financial support has been the private sector. To date, the contribution of the private sector has focused on curriculum-related projects, provision of food and equipment, materials for improving the school environment, technical help with special projects, books and other resources. For example, provision of computer laboratories in all secondary schools is the result of private sector intervention. However, the balance of public and private funds is a delicate issue. The Ministry of Education continues to resist suggestions from donor agencies to have it divest secondary education to private concerns. In comparing reforms in the Caribbean with those in the industrialized countries of the Anglophone world Miller (1999a) explains: ‘There is no advocacy that private schools would do a better job than the public schools. There has been no attempt to dismantle the public system’” (Caribbean Comparisons with the Industrialized Anglophone World, par.4). Indeed, private high schools in Jamaica do not have the status of public high schools. In general, children who attend the handful of private high schools in Jamaica have either not succeeded in earning a place in a public high school of choice, have been expelled from a public high school or
are children of diplomats preferring to access a North American type education. Privatising high school education would signal a return to the elite system where quality education is accessed only by those with the financial means thus undermining modest improvements in access to secondary education over the years.

In addition to increased involvement from the private sector in education, structural adjustment policies have called for the application of market principles in other ways. High school principals in Jamaica have taken on increased management responsibilities in comparison to their counterparts a decade ago. As schools grew larger and the principal’s responsibilities increased, department heads were appointed and in this way principals shed some of their administrative responsibilities. Up until the 1980s high school principals taught a few hours per week in their specialist field, usually to the upper forms. Nowadays most principals are non-teaching. In addition to their duties as professional educators they are expected to produce school development plans, generate performance data and generally demonstrate entrepreneurial ingenuity. Although measures such as high stakes tests and league tables introduced in the United States and Britain are not in place, the issue of accountability is a much-discussed topic with a proposal to introduce contracts linked to an appraisal system for new principals and vice-principals currently under consideration.

**Equity**

The variety of school types, differential allocation of human, material and financial resources, and the multiplicity of terminal examinations and certification procedures within the Jamaican secondary system is a breeding ground for inequities. Therefore reform in the 90s has sought to rationalise the system. The Reform of Secondary Education Project (ROSE) 1993-1998 funded by the World Bank has introduced a common curriculum for all Grades 7-9 students in public schools, regardless of the school type. High schools, too, have had to implement these curricular reforms and principals have had to negotiate ways of integrating ROSE content and methodologies into their school programmes while ensuring that their overall product remains high quality.

ROSE has also involved phasing out new secondary schools and upgrading them to either comprehensive high schools or secondary high schools. This has met with a new unofficial nomenclature to distinguish these new secondary high schools from the
original high schools; the former are now referred to as upgraded, reclassified or non-traditional high schools and the latter as traditional high schools. Because the distinctions between the school types is so stark when CXC examination results are examined, principals of the upgraded schools are especially challenged to improve student performance. The incorporation of principals from all secondary schools, regardless of type, into a professional association for principals should assist in the integration process even though some of the original associations, formed on the basis of school type, still function as individual groups.

Another recent attempt to increase equity has been the Government’s commitment to paying for CXC examination fees in four core subjects for all secondary students deemed qualified by their teachers to sit the papers. In fact, within days of the October 2002 general election that took place while fieldwork for this study was underway, the research participants were summoned to Ministry meetings where the policy was outlined for them. Principals had to explain the parameters of this new measure to the students, parents and teachers and implement a fair means of determining who would benefit from the scheme before the deadline to submit examination fees a mere two weeks away from the announcement.

Social climate
In the same way as both history and reforms have impacted on Jamaica’s secondary high school system and the way principals lead their schools, so too have current social realities. An increasingly diverse student population has meant that high school principals have had to respond to social problems such as poverty, neglect, domestic violence and unemployment. High schools are now providing services to rescue at-risk and in-crisis students through welfare assistance, homework centres, school-feeding programmes and parenting workshops. The textbook rental scheme, another ROSE offshoot, provides textbooks in five subjects to all secondary students and this helps to an extent. Also the Secondary Schools Financial Assistance Programme, designed to assist families who cannot afford to pay their portion of school fees, assisted 33 per cent of children attending secondary school according to the Planning Institute of Jamaica’s 2001 survey. However, non-traditional social problems such as violence, parent absenteeism, and gang related reprisal killings are emerging and are cause for serious concern among those leading the nation’s schools. In a society with a population of only 2.6 million, where 893 murders have been recorded for the first 10 months of 2002,
where 42 people died violently in the first nine days of November 2002 and where 10 children were gunned down in the month of October alone, it is hardly surprising that high schools that have already incorporated values and attitudes, peace education and conflict resolution initiatives into their school programmes are now moving to introduce grief counselling to help their school communities cope.

Research conducted in the 1990s suggests that there are improvements with respect to access and equity but that distinctions linger. A tracer study by Brown (1994) shows that children from all social classes are represented in all school types including high schools. Nevertheless, the gap between school types is substantial - the percentage from the different social groups who attend high school is unevenly distributed, with only 20 per cent of those from the poorest segments attending high school in comparison to almost 46 per cent of those children from homes classified in the wealthiest segments (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2001); students from traditional high schools perform significantly better in CXC examinations (Vasciannie, 2002b); and children from high schools are more likely to aspire to high status managerial and professional careers than their counterparts in other types of secondary schools (Brown, 1994). These findings explain why parents are so anxious to have their children enrolled in a traditional high school. In this respect, Scott-McDonald’s (1989) opinion still seems to ring true: “… there are really only two systems: the high schools and the others” (p.20).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a historical overview and discussion of recent policy initiatives and reforms, sketching the background of the Jamaican high school system and by extension describing the cultural contours and socio-economic climate that shape it. Several points deserve attention as they relate to the context that principals of traditional high schools have inherited:

Firstly, almost all of Jamaica’s 46 traditional high schools have inherited an institutional strength. History demonstrates the variety of goals and masters that these schools and those who work in them have had to serve – legacies of which have been preserved in some form or the other in today’s system. Initially, education was the beneficiary of philanthropic bequests whose goals were primarily religious. This phase was followed by a denominational system that sought to use education for the promotion of Christianity and specific religious beliefs. After Emancipation, education was used
primarily to achieve social and economic ends and later as Jamaica moved towards Independence and the State gained more control, education became the means towards political ends. More recently with the onset of structural adjustment, educational policies have been economically driven. Elements of these different systems have been preserved and are discernible in today’s high school system: trust funds established as far back as the early 1700s are a source of financial support for the 11 trust high schools; the Church stills operates 31 high schools and these schools enjoy access to a variety of Church resources. Yet they are not private schools - they have been incorporated into the public system and are heavily involved in and comply with government policy. In this mix of traditional high schools, only four are government-owned.

The historical perspective also explains the foundation of high schooling as an elite system reserved for the privileged. Today’s traditional high schools were established for a white clientele, and later concentrated on preparing the upper and middle classes for administrative and professional careers. Their curriculum, examinations and extra curricula activities reflected the needs and aspirations of their middle-class clientele and were for many years the colonial version of the English grammar school. Most high schools were originally private Church schools and although they are now all public schools, they are aligned with specific denominations and therefore continue to enjoy the benefits of a relationship with the Church. Trust schools have a similar resource base on which to draw. In addition, these traditional high schools benefit from a higher per-student subvention from government than other types of schools (Evans, 2001). Their resource base is further supplemented by the advantage of having access to a middle-class community, parents and past students who support the institution. Even now with the introduction of cost-sharing, high schools are charging higher fees than other school types. Linked to this is their ability to attract and retain more qualified teachers than other school types.

Thirdly, the social meaning attached to high schooling in Jamaica cannot be underestimated. The historical, political and socio-economic circumstances under which high schools were established and have developed explain their relatively privileged position today in comparison to other types of secondary institutions. Historically, traditional high schools have represented the best chance for upward social mobility and have therefore been the most sought after schools; employers, parents and tertiary
institutions generally value high school education over other kinds; those with a high school education more readily find employment; and high school graduates are more likely to qualify for higher status and higher paid jobs. For these reasons the traditional high school is held in the highest regard for as Miller explains it has been a “broker institution for every major social group” (Miller, 1990, p.353).

It is this social demand for high school education that has driven the recent conversion of 79 government-owned new secondary schools into secondary high schools. So far, the multitude of reforms and the inclusion of other schools in the family of high schools has not altered the high social demand for school places in traditional high schools. Socio-political change forces together with new policy directions and emphases have eroded the traditional high school’s exclusivity in terms of wealth and colour while current reforms have concentrated on disintegrating exclusivity with respect to class and on improving quality. Technically, with ROSE, all secondary high schools are working with the same curriculum and working towards the same examinations yet the perception of the traditional high school as a differentiated, qualitatively superior type of school persists and is likely to persist until these newly upgraded high schools begin to challenge the traditional high schools in terms of quality. It remains to be seen if, in time, they will acquire a social meaning and currency on par with them.

As Gardner (1990) wrote: “Leaders cannot be thought of apart from the historic context in which they arise, the setting in which they function … and the system over which they preside” (p.1). By describing the historical forces and social realities that frame Jamaica’s high school system, this chapter has attempted to foreground the social constructions of meaning, power, roles and relationships that the principals who participated in this study have inherited. How these influences interact with the ways in which they understand and practise good leadership will be considered in the theoretical chapters that follow.
Chapter 5

THEORETICAL FINDINGS

It will be recalled that this study set out to describe and analyse how selected Jamaican high school principals define and interpret school leadership. Questions guiding the research were:

1. What meanings do Jamaican principals attach to leadership and why?
2. How are these meanings related to the ways in which they engage in leadership?
3. To what extent do their definitions of and approaches to leadership practice interact with the contexts within which they live and work?

This chapter is the first part of a theoretical discussion that focuses on these questions. It comprises four cases - one for each principal who participated in the study – and it presents the results of within-case analysis. The four cases are assembled in one chapter because it is important to understand that collectively, they represent one body of data used to produce the cross-case analysis in Chapter 6. Each case provides a portrait of the principal’s understanding and practice of leadership, organised around the major categories and corresponding properties that emerged during data analysis. Beginning with a brief description of the context surrounding the principal’s leadership, each case details the meanings the principal attaches to school leadership and illustrates how these are demonstrated in everyday practice. The focus throughout is on the underlying values and beliefs that support these meanings and practices. Brief references to literature are integrated throughout each case in order to relate the principal’s conceptualisation of educational leadership to contemporary theories.

Case #1 - Norma Wilson at Morrow Park High

The school context

Morrow Park High School for Girls is situated on the fringe of several ghetto communities. A ten foot chain link fence and a uniformed security guard manning the gate are stark reminders that like the gangs and dons who control the surrounding inner-city neighbourhoods, the school too, has had to physically stake out its territory and sphere of control in an attempt to protect itself from the general climate of unrest and violence that characterize urban Jamaica.
A Trust school and one of the oldest in the West Indies, Morrow Park is a curious blend of old and new. Colonial style buildings with wide verandahs stand alongside more modern two and three-storey classroom blocks. The grounds and buildings are well kept; signs direct the visitor to different areas of the school compound; the classrooms appear neat and orderly and, as classes change, students move purposefully from one building to another. This general atmosphere of order and efficiency gives the impression that, unlike the rest of the island, this school has been totally unaffected by the previous weekend’s onslaught from Tropical Storm Lili. However, I knew from an earlier telephone conversation with the principal that it was not unaffected. Too busy dealing with storm damage to meet with me as scheduled, she explained, “Lili has not treated us too harshly but we are having to mop up and restore the office to its original condition” (NW Ob 1 Oct 1 8-9). Only the overflowing dumpsters to the back of the compound, some loose sheets of zinc and board piled in a corner and the row of mops drying in the sun, remain as testimony to the massive clean-up that had taken place over the previous two days.

The principal’s office is typical of those found at the middle-management level in corporate Jamaica - air-conditioning, a 'state-of-the-art' computer, a public address system, a large desk, and a table and several chairs to accommodate visitors and working groups. The school’s sense of history and pride in its successes are on display through the collection of photos on the walls; many are black and white and though dated they are well preserved. In addition, a laminated and framed page embossed with the school crest and entitled History of Morrow Park is displayed above the door.

At the time of the research there are 64 teachers and approximately 1262 students at Morrow Park High. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture (MOEY&C) assigns students to Grade 7 based on their performance in the Grade Six Achievement Test (GSAT) examinations. According to the principal, approximately 80 per cent of the students are from underprivileged and depressed areas. She is grateful for groups like the New York Past Students, Proxy Parents and other similar organizations, without whose financial support several students could not remain in school.

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5 The identifying code is: Participant’s initials; Interview /observation field note/ document #; Date; Line/paragraph #.
The principal

Just a few years short of retirement, Norma Wilson is the oldest and most experienced of the participants in this study. A principal for twenty-five years, nineteen of them at Morrow Park, she has also led her school for the longest. Beginning as a science teacher, Mrs Wilson progressed rapidly from senior teacher to head of the science department at an Anglican boarding school for girls in rural Jamaica and finally to vice-principal, all within five years: “I moved very rapidly while I was at St Bernard’s. I wasn’t vice-principal very long before I became principal.” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 61). In fact, she served as vice-principal for only one year before she was asked to act for the principal who had gone on leave. Almost a quarter of a century later she appreciates the five years she spent as principal of St. Bernard’s, “It was a wonderful experience to live at the school … I got tremendous development, spiritual development” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 181-185).

Although Mrs Wilson describes the decision to take the job at Morrow Park as involving some degree of apprehension and uncertainty she is very clear about what has kept her there for nineteen years: “If this was a school for rich people’s children I would have left long ago” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 517). The nature of this sentiment explains her informal title - ‘Mother of the Poor’ - a sobriquet bestowed on her by friends and colleagues as a result of her passion and capacity for soliciting assistance for her various causes.

Mother of the Poor

As Norma Wilson hangs up the telephone following a conversation with a colleague from another educational institution seeking help for a student wanting to transfer from a school in rural Jamaica, she tells me by way of explanation, “They call me ‘Mother of the Poor’” (NW Ob 2 Oct 2 184). The image is apt; in many respects she conceptualises and frames her understanding of school leadership in moral terms and describes her leadership approach as encompassing the functions of a family: attending not only to students’ educational needs but also to their economic well-being, physical safety, emotional, psychological and spiritual development. Like a mother who wants the best for her children and does all in her power to facilitate their successes, she believes that school leadership is about minimizing and overcoming circumstances that militate
against the achievement of excellence and creating a school culture that encourages and rewards the pursuit of and demonstration of excellence. She defines the goals of leadership in terms of providing “the best schools we can” (NW Iv 3 Oct 31 484), supplying students with “a first world education” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 40) and working to “improve performance and the quality of grades” (NW Ex Doc 2 par. 3).

At the heart of Norma Wilson’s understanding of leadership lies a caring orientation characterised by a commitment to protect and nurture those less fortunate and a belief in the power of education to improve their future prospects. This orientation provides her with a sense of mission: “I figure this is my work for the country – these children have good minds but they have poor circumstances. We must educate people in the ghetto from the parents right up, not just the children but the parents too” (NW Iv1 Oct 2 149-150). Her dream of a boarding facility at Morrow Park “so that I could have the girls who don’t have parents or who live in the ghetto … keep them here, have some house mothers, give them proper training, proper values, take them to Church” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 480-484) reflects her sense of care, her belief in education as a means of social mobility and the importance of religion as a vehicle for moral education. Given the large percentage of students at Morrow Park who come from underprivileged and depressed communities, this ideal is understandable.

In unpacking some of the meaning associated with understanding and experiencing leadership as being a ‘Mother of the Poor’ two dominant conceptual categories emerge: ‘caring for students’ and ‘creating a culture of excellence’. These categories help explain the relationship between Norma Wilson’s conceptualisation of leadership, her leadership practices and the context within which she works.

Caring for students
Mrs Wilson’s caring approach resembles the care-based perspectives theorised by Noddings (1984, 1993) and Starratt (1991) and supports Norris, Barnett, Basom & Yerkes’ affirmation of care as, “a basic ingredient for transforming today’s schools” (2002, p.88). Her understanding and practice of caring is demonstrated primarily through three key properties or concepts: ‘polishing diamonds’, ‘protecting students’ and ‘breaking the cycle of poverty’. The properties of the first major category ‘caring for students’ will now be discussed in turn.
Polishing diamonds

One striking feature of Mrs Wilson’s care orientation to leadership is her belief that the students can achieve in spite of poverty, violence and a culture of despair. Embedded in her repeated references to them as “raw diamonds” (NW Iv 1 Oct 2 25; NW Iv 2 Oct 3 513) and her assertion that “they are poor but they are bright” (NW Iv 1 Oct 2 22), is the notion of cherishing and valuing students. She orchestrates her leadership to reflect this value. One of her goals therefore, as an educational leader, is to promote students’ total development, to develop their potential and increase their value by providing them with experiences and exposure to things external to and different from their normal lives so that they can see what is possible. This goal prompted her to purchase a school bus because “many of our girls even in 6th form … don’t know where the University of the West Indies is … what Jamaica has to offer” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 498-500). Her desire to expand their horizons has resulted in the school offering thirty-five extra-curricular activities, being actively involved in a wide range of competitions, drawing on successful past students as role models to address the students at assembly and other school functions, and working with Alumni chapters abroad so that each year several girls benefit from the opportunity to travel.

Mrs Wilson is conscious that in a climate where migration, poverty, and other social trends threaten to disintegrate the traditional extended family structure, many students have no positive role models or sources of emotional support outside of the school community; as she explains, many students don’t live with their parents, “They don’t really live with anybody, they are ‘ATM’ children” 6 (NW Iv 1 Oct 2 17-18). As a result she believes it is important to provide for students’ moral and spiritual development so she attempts to shape their attitudes and values by integrating her own value system into her leadership practice at every opportunity. Thus she actively builds the Christian character of Morrow Park, supporting practices such as prayer, religious song, Bible readings, and references to God in assembly, before staff meetings and at other school functions. Similarly, her message at assembly one morning highlights the importance of using, “talents and gifts bestowed on us by God to further ourselves and serve others who are less fortunate” (NW Ob 4 Oct 7 12). In concluding her annual report to the school community at Prize Giving, Mrs Wilson publicly links her personal and

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6 Automatic Teller Machine: she is referring to those students whose parents have migrated and send funds for their support through banking or remittance services.
professional values when she declares: “All of this could never have happened without God’s guidance. This school is truly God-blessed” (NW Ob 5 Oct 24 34-35).

Because care and protection of the disadvantaged, constitute the lifeblood of Norma Wilson’s understanding of leadership, student need is the operative force defining her decisions and practices. It is this aspect of her understanding of leadership that empowers her to innovate and explore alternative avenues without waiting for ‘political permission’. This attitude is consonant with Lyman’s view that “Caring implies flexibility” and “a willingness to reach beyond the rules” (2000, p.147). Her introduction of the school’s Preparation for Life (PFL) programme is an example. This is a programme specially developed in conjunction with HEART (Human Enterprise and Resource Training) - Jamaica’s agency responsible for vocational training. The PFL programme caters to 26 Grade 10 girls for whom subject teachers deemed the CXC syllabuses inappropriate, so that when they complete Grade 11 they will leave with a HEART Certificate. Mrs Wilson has also won the assurance from HEART's director that these girls will be admitted into their programmes at the end of Grade 11. Her concern that these girls leave school with meaningful qualifications and some sense of direction, takes precedence over bureaucratic, and to some extent, historical issues. Although she has not formally sought Ministry approval for the programme she has support from the Board and intends informing the Ministry in due course: ‘They can always quarrel but it is already done and my Board knows about it.” (NW Iv 1 Oct 2 90). Coming from a traditional high school, offering a conventionally academic curriculum, with a reputation for preparing students to take ‘A’ level and CXC examinations, an initiative such as this is both unorthodox and bold. However, when viewed in the light of her care orientation towards leadership, such a move makes perfect sense.

As ‘Mother of the Poor’, Norma Wilson is committed to finding solutions to the social problems that interfere with students’ potential to succeed. At Morrow Park, she deliberately set about establishing a network of relationships that have allowed the school to develop a consistent and comprehensive welfare programme. For example there is a breakfast programme that is jointly funded by the Canadian chapter of the alumni and the PTA; Food for the Poor donates food supplies; local food distribution and manufacturing companies contribute products; and a group of 6th formers come early to school each morning to assist with the preparation of breakfast for those
students on the programme. The school also does 60 cooked lunches per day for students who cannot afford lunch.

An understanding of school leadership that embodies caring for students demands that she attend to students’ special needs, often involving personal intervention. She expresses her concern for a student who had excelled at the Penn Relays\(^7\). Because Mrs Wilson knows that this girl's athletic talent is likely to be her passport to a better future she is insisting that she take Biology as a CXC subject. She wants her to remain focused on her studies in the hope that she will receive a track scholarship to attend college somewhere in North America. Also, she is anxious that this girl should not repeat her mother's mistake - her mother too, was a budding athlete until, at 17, she became pregnant – so Mrs Wilson takes a personal interest in this student’s progress.

**Protecting students**

‘Protecting students’ is another property that helps to define the major category ‘caring for students’. Mrs Wilson believes that Morrow Park’s position on the edge of several depressed communities imposes on her as school leader, a specific responsibility to ensure students’ safety and security. She recalls that in the past criminals used the school as an escape route from hostile territory into the safe haven of their own community. A series of violent and threatening incidents on the school compound led to her insistence that her staff and her students be protected to some degree from criminal elements and so the Board agreed to erect a security fence and employ a security guard. She senses that her emphasis on adequate security arrangements together with the good rapport she has built up with her ancillary staff has helped to create what is now a reasonably safe environment for the girls while in school.

She explains how in more recent times transportation has become a safety and protection issue for which as school principal, she feels obliged to find a solution. She discovered that the girls were taking unlicensed taxis commonly referred to as ‘robot’ taxis and the privately owned buses ‘executive buses’ home from school - neither of which she approves of - the first because they are illegal and there had been a series of abductions by criminals posing as taxi drivers, the second because they are expensive.

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\(^7\) The Penn Relays is the oldest, biggest and most prestigious track meet in the U.S. hosted annually by the University of Pennsylvania. The high school events attract thousands of athletes, many from outside the U.S. Each year Jamaican runners dominate the high school events, winning the girls’ 4x800m every year since 1985 and 19 of the last 20 girls’ 4x100m. For Jamaican students, success at the Penn Relays is a vital opportunity to earn a U.S college scholarship.
and they play loud often lewd music. She began the academic year with a new rule –
students were to use public buses only. She realised however that banning other modes
of transport was unreasonable if the public system was not meeting their needs. She
describes how she stood outside the school one afternoon for over an hour during which
time only one public bus with limited space stopped while several empty taxis passed.
She resolved the problem by drawing on her excellent relationship with her board
Chairman, stating her concern for the students’ safety to persuade him to use his
influence to provide a special service to collect the students each afternoon and take
them to a central point downtown. Following this, a relative of a Morrow Park student
wrote a letter to the editor of the major national newspaper, thanking Mrs Wilson for
taking a stance to organise safe transport for the girls, describing her intervention as a
demonstration of “genuine concern in an atypical leader” (NW Ex Doc 1 par. 6).
However, as ‘Mother of the Poor’ Norma Wilson’s reaction was typical - it was
consistent with her value system and at the same time it met the expectations of the
school community.

*Breaking the cycle of poverty*

The third property that constitutes ‘caring for students’ has been labelled ‘breaking the
cycle of poverty’. Deeply rooted in Norma Wilson’s concept of leadership is a moral
and social responsibility not only to protect and provide for the less fortunate but also to
break the cycle of poverty, dependence and despondency in a more permanent way.
Concerned about an increasing “paralysis” among the students brought about by “a
pervasive element of hopelessness …that questioned the purpose of achieving” (NW Ex
Doc 2 par. 4), she defines school leadership by its capacity to articulate and uphold an
alternative value system to that offered by the socio-cultural environment. When
considered alongside her views about the purpose and the desired outcomes of
leadership, this position suggests a general orientation to moral leadership - theory that
stresses the importance of leaders’ personal values (Greenfield, 1999; Hodgkinson,
1991, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1992). Moral leaders encourage community members to
adhere to these values, focus on humanistic concerns and are committed to creating
more democratic societies through capacity building in others.

*Creating a culture of excellence within a framework of care*

The second major conceptual category that makes up Norma Wilson’s understanding of
leadership has been labelled ‘creating a culture of excellence within a framework of
care’. Guided by a moral imperative to promote excellence, she focuses on moving students and staff forward in such a way that they believe in and value academic achievement; in practice, this translates into creating a culture of excellence. Two properties that represent how this is done are: ‘influencing curriculum and instruction’ and ‘adopting a management perspective’. As a moral leader therefore, Mrs Wilson does not discount the instructional and managerial dimensions of leadership but these are moderated within an abiding central focus on the good of the students.

Influencing curriculum and instruction

‘Influencing curriculum and instruction’ emerged as an important property of the category ‘creating a culture of excellence’. The pursuit of excellence is reflected in her decision to move the school above and beyond its limitations so that the girls get “a first world education” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 150). She stresses, “Morrow Park is not an average school. I tell the girls all the time - we don't aim for mediocrity; we have to aim for excellence so you need to do more than the average.” (NW Iv 3 Oct 31 192-194). To this end, she believes that school leadership should have an instructional focus if it is to effect classroom and school improvement. For her, this means prioritising curriculum and teaching/learning issues over other concerns. For example in her response to ROSE, the MOEC standard curriculum introduced for all Grade 7-9 students, she adheres to policy but she is not confined by it. Unconvinced that ROSE on its own is sufficient to maintain top quality, she convinces her staff to incorporate content beyond what is recommended. The end product, what she describes as a “hybrid ROSE” (NW Iv3 Oct 31 188) ensures that quality is not compromised. She explains:

In my opinion, the methodology is good but the content is deficient as it is written for the average child and ... Morrow Park is not an average school …. So, we have - both myself and the V.P.’s - influence on the curriculum. (NW Iv 3 Oct 31 186-203)

In addition to her active involvement in curriculum design, she also uses professional development opportunities and the annual appraisal process to explore ways of improving teaching and learning with the staff.

Adopting a management perspective

While emphasis on improved quality of teaching and learning is an important construct in Mrs Wilson’s belief system, there is also evidence of her commitment to a management perspective particularly as it relates to supporting her instructional role.
Thus the category ‘creating a culture of excellence within a framework of care’ had one other prominent property entitled ‘adopting a management perspective’. Mrs Wilson believes that the recently installed management information system is a powerful means of influencing teachers to pay closer attention to analysis of grades. She is particularly pleased that Morrow Park teachers are now using data generated by the system to monitor students’ progress, compare the performance of classes and individuals in specific subjects, identify weaknesses and adjust their teaching, all with a view to improving student learning.

In addition, she believes that a goal-setting, planning approach is key to school leadership. She alludes to the school’s development plan regularly - in a meeting with staff, during a speech to parents and students, in conversation with another principal and on eight separate occasions during our three interviews. She attaches importance to the planning process because it fosters reflection and has encouraged her to examine her leadership practices: “It forces you to look at the school … to look at yourself and see have you done the best you can do…. It was a real eye-opener. I found I was doing everything” (NW Iv 3 Oct 31 238-245). Although she has subsequently tried to modify her approach she continues to conceive her leadership as an individual activity in which she, as the appointed leader, is personally responsible for all that happens. She explains:

I try my very best to delegate and give out the things to everybody according to what they can do and leave them with it. It's not that I go and interfere but if you really want to get what you want, to succeed with the vision you want for the school, you have to follow up every single thing yourself. (NW Iv 3 Oct 31 250-254)

However, she attributes this view of leadership to a personality trait rather than external expectations or mandates, acknowledging, “I have to know every detail and I have to be sure that things are set and everything is done … I am too much of a perfectionist and I know it.” (NW Iv 3 Oct 31 272-277).

This image of the leader as “the accountable officer” is also marked in her approach to financial and resource management. She reminds teachers, “If anything goes wrong I know I am going to jail” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 105-106). However, her attention to financial and resource management is not primarily a result of the fact that she reports to the Board and the MOEC; rather it stems from a conviction that a strong resource base, financial acumen and a concern with how resources are used, are vital for enacting a
vision of school leadership built on caring for students and pursuing excellence. She argues that leadership goals and plans that seek to address student welfare needs and activate school improvement projects depend on access to money and resources beyond what government can provide. She acknowledges that her attention to financial and resource management is not viewed as positive by everybody; however, this in no way undermines her opinion of resources as a key ingredient if the school is to truly care for students and facilitate the pursuit of excellence. This belief has led her to attend financial seminars as part of her own professional development. She stresses, “… you really have to have your finger on the money because you cannot run a school without cash, not if you really want to give the children a first world education.” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 138-140).

The equal importance that Norma Wilson attaches to her instructional and managerial roles supports Marginson’s (1995) view that “The principal of today needs as much skill in financial and personnel management, and negotiation and public relations, as she or he has in classroom teaching, syllabus design and catering for the educational needs for children from different backgrounds” (p.17). Even with increased management responsibilities, her role as an educator does not appear to have diminished; in fact she views her instructional and managerial roles as complementary rather than competing. In this respect, her experience is somewhat different from that of principals in developed countries. An accumulating body of research shows that the increased management responsibilities of principals in Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the United States is moving them away from concerns related to teaching, learning and the needs of students towards a chief executive role (Ball, 1993; Bottery, 1993; Day et al., 2000; Grace, 1995; Ribbins, 1997; Smyth, 1997).

Concluding comments
For Norma Wilson, leadership is firstly about ‘caring for students’, a conceptual category that describes a way of thinking about and relating to students that in turn, drives her role in their development. The value she places on students, her recognition of their potential, her commitment to move them beyond the limitations of their circumstances and the respect she affords them are all located in caring. The properties that help formulate this category include: ‘polishing raw diamonds’, ‘protecting students’ and ‘breaking the cycle of poverty’. ‘Polishing raw diamonds’ consists of attending to students’ academic, psychological, physical welfare and personal needs and
this is related to protecting students from social and institutional challenges by creating structures to maintain a safe, secure environment, physically, emotionally and morally. The extent to which the values, actions and outcomes associated with polishing and protecting students are communicated and sustained, determines the success of breaking the cycle of poverty.

The second conceptual category – ‘creating a culture of excellence’ - is mediated by ‘caring for students’ for it is through the pursuit of excellence that leadership seeks to subvert the cycle of poverty, despair and underachievement. ‘Creating a culture of excellence’ refers to an understanding of leadership as involving classroom and school improvement processes designed to help students be the best they can be. Related properties include: ‘influencing curriculum and instruction’ and ‘adopting a management perspective’. According to Norma Wilson, leadership influences curriculum and instruction by prioritising professional development and monitoring student achievement. A critical element of a management perspective is accountability, not only financial accountability to the Board and the Ministry but academic, moral, administrative and professional accountability to the school community. These properties are related in so far as dimensions of innovation, such as risk-taking and creative use of resources, are often motivated by curriculum and instructional issues and draw on a management perspective for support.

Norma Wilson’s conception of leadership as moral combined with her emphasis on care and commitment to creating a culture of excellence are consistent with a social justice theory of leadership (Larson & Murtadha, 2002). The value she places on students; her belief that despite economic and social barriers all children can succeed; and her acknowledgement of the role played by religion in her interpretation and practice of leadership are features recognised by those writing about leadership for social justice. Her view that education can help students increase their life chances and her attention to issues that limit students’ capacity to achieve are further evidence of an understanding and practice of leadership aligned to social justice theory (Nussbaum, 2000). Pointing to the link between achievement and “freedoms to achieve” (p.153), Larson and Murtadha (2002) write: “Freedom from violence, unconditional support and concern for health and nutrition are educational considerations that reach beyond … demands for improving academic achievement” (p.155).
Case #2 - Margaret Russell at Holy Spirit High

The school context

Tucked into the hillside overlooking the city, flanked on either side by a church and a convent, Holy Spirit High School gives the impression of being small and private. In fact it is neither. One of 38 grant-aided church high schools in Jamaica, 11 of which are Catholic, it has been a public institution for over forty years. Originally established in 1925 as a small boarding school for economically poor Catholic girls in the Weston Harbour community, by 1959, the school had grown to 71 and expanded its facilities and curriculum sufficiently to meet the requirements for status as a grant-aided school. Today, Holy Spirit serves 1260 girls from a variety of religious backgrounds, who are admitted into Grade 7 on the basis of their performance in the GSAT examinations. They come from predominantly poor, working-class and lower-middle-class backgrounds and live in inner-city communities, communities on the outskirts of the city as well as semi-rural districts. Many come from homes where parents or guardians are unemployed; not surprisingly therefore, over fifty per cent of the school population accesses the benefit that waives their contribution to the government imposed cost-sharing school fee. A large percentage of parents who work are employed to local garment factories or hotels, some of which pay the school fee for children of employees. However, in recent times a small number of girls from middle-class homes are selecting Holy Spirit High as their school of choice. The principal describes the parent population thus:

Many of ours are unemployed …When you send for the parent of a child who is giving trouble you don’t have to negotiate for time. They’re not working so they can just come…. We don’t get the lawyers and the doctors; they go to Weston Harbour High. But I know we have come a long way because…. we are getting one or two wealthier persons opting to send their children to Holy Spirit High. But we will always get the brighter of the poor. (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 349-363)

Holy Spirit High is an appealing, peaceful place. Built on an incline, two adjoining three-storied buildings overlook a hillside garden: tiers of white-washed benches beneath shady trees, plants and shrubs, an aviary and the shells of two brightly painted, pink and beige buses converted into book rooms. Behind the two main wings lies an assortment of smaller, humble structures - a refurbished container is used as the typing room; old, zinc-roofed classrooms serve as needlework and art rooms; while the original
hostel houses a guidance department, a sick bay, and a prayer room. All are testimony to
the creative ways this school has explored to accommodate its burgeoning population.

The principal

At 43, Sr. Margaret Russell is the youngest of the principals in this study, the only
ordained participant and at the time of data collection, the only one whose career in
education spans less than twenty years. Nevertheless, she is not the least experienced
principal having spent over half of her years in education in administrative positions - as
vice-principal for three years and as principal for the last seven.

Although her father was a schoolmaster and her mother a teacher and later an education
officer, the young Margaret never even considered a career in education. She explains, “
I have always wanted to be a psychologist or some kind of therapist” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21
73). However, upon graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry and
Mathematics she started teaching, found that she enjoyed it and as she put it, “I started
getting interested in religious life and I had to work in a teaching community” (MR Iv 1
Oct 21 79-80).

Her involvement in religious life is one factor she identifies as influencing her
leadership approach. In particular, she attributes her training as a postulant leading up to
final vows and with it, exposure to subjects that explored self-understanding,
communication and human relations as helping to shape her as a leader. She explains:

So in terms of accepting myself, knowing what my strengths were as person,
knowing what I could manage and couldn’t manage, a lot of that came from my
own training, my own formation and my early years as a sister, just knowing who
you are and accepting that. (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 12-17)

Other sources of influence in her personal life that she feels have converged to impact
on her leadership style include her parents, both educators, and her own experience as a
student in a prominent Kingston girls’ high school in the 1970s. She explains how her
interest in education, her emphasis on discipline and her organisational skills grew out
of these early experiences:

So things like a love for education and both of them [parents] disciplinarians and
very organised people – they had a big influence in my life. In terms of just
believing and knowing that a school can be run properly - I went to St Martin’s
when St Martin’s was St Martin’s. It was a well-run school. (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 49-54)

In speaking with Sr. Margaret one cannot help but notice her humility; when talking about the initiatives and improvements that have taken place in recent years, she tends to deflect praise onto the school community, liberally using the pronouns “we”, “us” and “our”. In contrast, a senior member of staff, Marcia, credits Sr. Margaret with initiating the key changes that have set Holy Spirit on the path to improvement. She speaks definitively about how Sr. Margaret’s “excellent powers of analysis” (MR Ob 2 Oct 17 par. 2) helped her to identify what needed to be changed. She relates that when Sr. Margaret took office, she was already aware that teachers were over-relying on traditional methods of instruction; that there was insufficient school community participation in school planning and decision-making; and that there existed inadequate documented policies and guidelines. Marcia summarises the impact of Sr. Margaret’s leadership on Holy Spirit High saying, “She has taken the school back from the edge” (MR Ob 3 Oct 17 par. 4) and links Sr. Margaret’s successful leadership to her penchant for continually asking, “What more can we do to improve?” (MR Ob 3 Oct 17 par. 2).

**The reculturing principal**

These remarks are instructive for they suggest not only that the school has improved under Sr. Margaret’s leadership but also that what she does has grown out of the context in which she leads. In addition, both comments capture her orientation to leadership: an orientation that focuses on change, growth and a continual search for improvement.

The centrality of the concept of improvement to her understanding of leadership is evident in her description of leadership as involving “some drive for change and for things to be better than the way they were before” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 56-57); her comment that “Life is about growing so no matter how good I am … there’s always room for improvement” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 562-563); and her refusal to grow complacent: “You can't just say, ‘Hooray we're getting good exam results so let's keep on doing what we're doing’” (MR Ob 1 Oct 9 par. 7). However, Margaret Russell is concerned about improvement as more than an end result; she recognises that improvement must also become a value and a belief to which the school community subscribes. As a result, she is busy challenging her school members to build a professional culture - one that is open to change, values continuous learning and takes responsibility for developing the
student into “a well-integrated Christian person, morally upright and emotionally stable” (MR Ex Doc 2 p. 3) prepared for “responsible citizenship” (MR Ex Doc 2 p.1).

Sr. Margaret describes and explains her understanding and practice of school leadership in ways which, when combined, resemble what Fullan (1998, 2001) calls “reculturing”-a process that changes habits, fosters a desire for new skills, transforming practice and ultimately leading to improved student performance. For Sr. Margaret as for Fullan, “reculturing is the sine qua non of progress” (2001, p. 44). Features that are identified in the literature as crucial for reculturing include: a sense of shared values; collaborative relationships; a concern for reforms geared towards improved teaching and student achievement; and an emphasis on personal growth and continuous learning. (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Peterson, 2002)

Framing Sr. Margaret’s understanding of leadership as reculturing is a useful way of capturing the complex relationship that exists among the components of school leadership, as she perceives them. The following sections explore the two dominant conceptual categories that define her understanding of school leadership – ‘shaping the vision: giving meaning to change’ and ‘realising the vision: supporting the meaning of change’. Each corresponds to the construct of reculturing and provides a practical means of illustrating and accounting for her understanding and practice.

**Shaping the vision: giving meaning to change**

According to Sr. Margaret, a school leader recognises that “You can’t change people by force” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 138) and that successful school improvement is hindered when people within the organization, “in their hearts don’t believe … that things can be different ” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 60-62). She believes that school improvement depends on individuals developing a personal understanding of and focus on why things need to be modified or done differently. Based on this, the concept of shaping a school vision that gives meaning to change is central to her thinking about what constitutes school leadership. The relationship between an emphasis on vision building and successful school improvement, especially for those working in restructuring environments, is a recurring theme in the literature (Day et al., 2000; Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Leithwood et al., 1999).
Data analysis revealed three properties associated with ‘shaping the vision: giving meaning to change’. These were: ‘defining a personal vision’, ‘negotiating a shared vision’ and ‘motivating and inspiring others towards accepting the vision’. According to Sr. Margaret shaping the school vision involves attention to these three interdependent processes. These are now discussed in turn.

**Defining a personal vision**

Sr. Margaret believes that “it’s crucial for a principal to have a vision, some idea of where the school needs to go, is to go and needs to be” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 3-4) and that this personal vision is arrived at through the interaction of professional beliefs, guiding values, local knowledge and educational knowledge. Her vision for Holy Spirit High is about change; it is guided by her belief that the overall purpose of school leadership is to enable growth, improvement and continuous learning among members of the school community and by other professional views echoed in statements such as “every child is teachable” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 559) and “There’s no point in turning out girls who have seven subjects at CXC but who get zero for social skills” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 616-617). Her vision is also anchored in what she refers to as “the underlying” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 8), a platform of guiding values that includes respect for self and others, collaborative relationships, self-discipline and honesty - values she not only articulates but strives to model. She reasons, “I can’t convince people of a need to change or a need to do something different if I do not demonstrate integrity and present a professional image” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 94-96). In addition, she recognises that her awareness of and sensitivity to the community’s expectations, norms and practices, facilitated by three years as vice-principal, have been important for gaining an understanding of barriers to the kind of “future” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 41) she envisions for the school. This is part of what Deal and Peterson (1999) refer to as reading and assessing the school culture. She believes that a good leader will complement local knowledge with professional knowledge and that this too contributes to the vision. With respect to the latter she explains, “… the vision has to be guided by some trends, some firm knowledge, not any guesswork. So, the importance of some knowledge, statistics and knowing what the research is saying - you have to have some idea.” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 89-92). However, she is clear that the principal’s personal vision is “not the only vision” and that “at some point discussion has to take place to agree on a shared vision where everybody is comfortable with where the school needs to go” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 9-11). This remark
echoes Fullan and Hargreaves' recommendation that principals’ visions “be provisional and open to change … part of the collaborative mix” (1992, p.120).

*Negotiating a shared vision*

Shared vision is another important component in Sr. Margaret’s construction of school leadership. She describes how she uses her personal vision and her platform of personal values to engage community members in ongoing dialogue about common values and a vision. She refers to this process as ‘networking’:

> Networking is important because it's not just the principal and the teachers who have the vision and carry through the vision – everybody involved in school life has to participate. …it also involves students and parents, the school board, … and the admin staff and the ancillary staff who can sometimes get left behind or left out. … Although the principal has a vision for the school in his or her mind there has to be dialogue. And collaboration is with it because these two things go together. Dialogue is not possible unless there's some spirit of collaboration in the school and it is out of that you can arrive at the shared values and the shared vision. (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 13- 25)

Through the productive dialogue and direct involvement inherent in the networking process Sr. Margaret establishes a unity of purpose and a common focus on ways of improving teaching and learning that in turn help the school community be more open to and make sense of the changes taking place.

The value she attaches to a “spirit of collaboration” surfaces several times throughout the interviews and is reflected in documents such as the school’s ‘Mission Statement’ and the ‘Guidelines and Policies for Teachers’ booklet. It is not surprising therefore that she identifies it as an important strategy in negotiating a shared vision. Underpinning the dynamics of collaboration is “a sense of respect” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 32). She is of the opinion that, “Unless you respect persons you’re not valuing their opinions and dialogue will not take place so you will not get very far with growth as a school” (MR Iv 3 28-30). Her practice of having parents, board members and staff of all levels working together to arrive as a shared vision through “spelling out what is important to them” (MR IV 1 Oct 21 710) is one example of the effort she has made to foster a collaborative climate.
Motivating and inspiring others

The property ‘motivating and inspiring others’ also emerged as an important construct in Sr. Margaret’s understanding of leadership. She is quick to point out that inspiring people to believe in the vision, building commitment to it and motivating them to move towards realising it are crucial. As she puts it:

An important part of effective leadership is to motivate, to remind, to let people know when things are going well, to affirm, to provide another burst of energy to carry through the vision. Persons need to be challenged; it's easy to get complacent. (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 33-37)

She believes that successfully motivating and inspiring others towards accepting the vision depends on the leader’s moral integrity and personal qualities working together to establish respect, credibility and a measure of trust in the vision and in the leader. On this matter she says: “…personal integrity has a big part to play. You have to be seen as a moral person, as a person who should be believed by anybody that your vision makes sense and that the school vision makes sense” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 74-76). A demonstrated passion for change and a visible presence also feature as important qualities for inspiring others. She stresses that a leader, “has to live that vision, …must never lose that passion” (MR Iv 3 Oct 31 46), should not “be locked up in an office doing paperwork” because leadership is “a real presence, something visual” (MR Iv 3 Oct 31 50-53). She also identifies charisma as a source of influence: “I know that I have to at least appear as if I know what I am about if I am to convince anybody that we're going anywhere at all. Confidence has to be there” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 68-71).

Sr. Margaret focuses on shaping the vision because she believes that values, vision, integrity and passion are the magnets that earn commitment and energy. In a similar vein Sergiovanni (1999) argues for “purposing” (p.86), a concept that encompasses vision plus covenant while Leithwood et al. (1999) describe “vision building” (p.59) as vision plus commitment. In describing authentic leaders Bhindi and Duignan (1997) and Evans (2000) identify values and personal integrity as central to inspiring trust and building credibility without which transformation cannot begin.

When Sr. Margaret points out that the vision “needs to be revisited” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 87) and “might actually change a bit” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 18) she is recognising that it evolves. However, what remains fixed is the value position of reculturing as a worthwhile goal; the vision revolves around transforming the school culture such that
those involved interpret change as meaningful and significant. However, she suggests that on its own, an emphasis on reculturing as a value is insufficient to transform school culture, that equally important is an emphasis on reculturing as a process. This means that the processes associated with giving meaning to change are integrated with processes that support the meaning of change. In the second major category entitled ‘realising the vision: supporting the meaning of change’, the discussion shifts from reculturing as a value to reculturing as a process. Although these categories are presented separately, Sr. Margaret describes them as occurring simultaneously. Indeed Fullan (1998) argues that deep and genuine change grows out of practice so that changes in practice often precede changes in values.

Realising the vision: supporting the meaning of change

The second major conceptual category that emerged from data analysis has been labelled ‘realising the vision; supporting the meaning of change’. Sr. Margaret implies that leadership seeking to transform school culture goes beyond building commitment to the vision; it actively works to sustain and support that vision so that it becomes a reality. She maintains that the drive for improvement must be reflected in the school’s daily operations, students’ behaviour and particularly in their academic performance. She stresses the importance of the latter: “No matter how a person appears to be doing well or appears to be relating well with the students … you have to look at the results” and although she recognises that in external examinations “the percentage passes are good ….”, she voices her concern that “… there should be more girls getting grade 1’s” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 113-121). She is not unusual in this respect; principals participating in an Ohio Principals’ Academy are reported to have, “realized that visions and missions for schools are no more than empty rhetoric unless they are attached to results for students” (Fawcett, Brobeck, Andrews, & Walker, 2001, p.407). In striving to connect the vision with action at Holy Spirit High, Sr. Margaret has concentrated her efforts on two key areas - changing practices among staff, students and parents and changing structures to support these practices and to facilitate new ideas especially those that foreground student and staff learning. At the same time, she strives to balance the tensions associated with these changes. The three properties that represent how this is done are: ‘changing practices, ‘changing structures’ and ‘balancing tensions’.
Changing practices

‘Changing practices’ refers to opportunities and strategies that Sr. Margaret deliberately uses to introduce elements into the culture that support and reinforce the school’s vision as well as eradicate those that hinder its achievement. One critical means of changing habits and practices at Holy Spirit High has been through investing in personal and professional development for academic staff. She explains that, “From the beginning I knew that one of the main things we needed to change was teachers – how they see themselves” (MR IV 1 Oct 21 203-205). Because she rejects the notion of “compartmentalizing your life” and is convinced that, “the professional is not disjoint from the personal” (MR IV 1 Oct 21 229-230), she ensures that aspects of personal development are included in the professional development sessions. In an attempt to integrate training more closely with the vision, the school’s Mission Effectiveness Team (MET) has assumed responsibility for organising staff development activities at the beginning of each term. She believes that through these sessions, teachers will gradually come to see themselves as professionals and believe that learning and a spirit of enquiry are important. Her view of professional learning as integral to the change process is substantiated by Fullan and Mascall’s (2000) assertion that “There is a symbiotic relationship between professional development and school improvement” (p.35).

She has also initiated staff training in the use of computers as a teaching tool in the belief that technology is a way “to inspire our young people who are not inspired in the ways we are accustomed to” (MR IV 3 Oct 30 149). Convinced that a fundamental change in teaching practice, such as a move towards student-centred learning or the use of technology in the classroom, must be supported by availability of resources as well as training, she has organised not only to equip the school with an additional computer room but she has purchased a multimedia projector and a digital camera. Furthermore, the policy whereby she lends staff money to buy personal computers is also designed to support the habit of using the computer for professional purposes. She believes too, that as a leader, she can encourage professional development by setting an example. Recently she took steps to nurture her own growth and improvement by attending university in the U.S. over several summers to complete her Masters in Education.

Arising from professional development activities is the practice of reflection which she values as a powerful means of changing habits and mindsets. To this end, she has introduced an annual staff retreat to provide opportunity for the staff to reflect, revisit
the school vision and engage in dialogue about what they have been doing, how well it has worked and what new things will be done. She considers the importance of reflection in her own work: “The course I did over the summer – I have to look at certain things and the way I do them. Maybe I leave too much up to the heads” (MR IV 2 Oct 29 159-161). In addition to in-service training, continuing education and opportunities for reflection, she views professional collaboration as another avenue for fostering positive practices so she encourages teachers to contact other schools, to get ideas and share successes. There is support in the literature for placing this kind of emphasis on personal growth and continuous learning in the quest to transform school culture (Day et al., 2000; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Leithwood et al., 1999). According to Fullan (1993, 1999, 2001) nurturing a culture of change and improvement means not only that the leader provides opportunities for teachers to participate in purposeful staff development activities and upgrade their technical knowledge but also encourages them to build learning relationships with colleagues and reflect on effective practice.

Another strategy critical to realising the vision at Holy Spirit has been a focus on promoting positive student and parental habits through means other than rules and regulations. For example, among the students, habits of self-control, and respect for the rights and feelings of others are encouraged through initiatives such as the ‘Peace Board’ project, inspirational maxims posted on the stairwell walls, addresses at assembly and class discussions on ways of resolving conflict other than through violence. Recognising that many students are “on their own and the parents just not involved … [parents] just leave their children to manage through high school” (MR IV 1 Oct 21 734-737), Sr. Margaret is continually searching for ways to increase and improve parents’ participation in the schooling of their children. One way this has been done is by focusing on PTA activities that underscore parental responsibility to duty and their partnership with the school, such as actively engaging them in the visioning process, inviting them to share their expertise and skills by working on physical plant projects or making presentations at Careers Day. She reports some amount of success in this area: “ A PTA meeting in the early 90s would have had about 50 parents. … A PTA meeting now – it’s standing room only in the cafeteria … for where we’re coming from, that’s a massive improvement” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 729-735).
Changing structures

In addition to ‘changing practices’, the conceptual category ‘realising the vision: supporting the meaning of change’ is also defined by ‘changing structures’. In particular, Sr. Margaret focuses on mechanisms that impact on relationships that in turn facilitate changes in habits and practices. The manner in which she uses structures to facilitate new ideas supports Fullan and Hargreaves’ (1991) conclusion that effective principals use policy, decision-making structures and evaluation as mechanisms to effect change and improvement. Her remark that, “rules are not for those who are well-behaved and disciplined … it’s to pressure those who are not behaving” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 504-508) is in keeping with this understanding. She maintains that, “the effective leader has to know how to manage change” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 62) and that “things have to be ordered and structured and disciplined” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 115).

An important aspect of this order and structure relates to the priority she has placed on communication. She describes communication that outlines policies, rules and procedures as influential, particularly on improving student-teacher-parent relationships. Regular letters, reports and meetings with parents serve to keep parents “in touch with the pulse of life” at the school. (MR Ex Doc 1 p.4). The writing and distribution of individual handbooks for students, teachers and parents has served to establish clear guidelines and rules concerning expectations, behaviour and discipline. She feels that “students and staff knowing and understanding boundaries and limits” (MR Iv1 Oct 21 704) help to remind all groups about common values and individual responsibilities, while “having something on paper for consequences” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 51) can inhibit behaviour and practices that undermine the school vision.

In addition, she is trying to move away from a traditional hierarchical structure by involving staff in decision-making. The establishment of a Mission Effectiveness Team (MET) to see to the actualisation of the school’s mission statement and the move to have Heads of Department check teachers’ lesson plans and spearhead professional development activities specific to their subject areas, are designed to expand leadership roles within the school and challenge senior staff to see “themselves as part of management … a part of the ‘they’ of administration” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 162-163).

She also describes how she is attempting to put in place a system of structured support for academic staff in a bid to establish internal accountability as a means of improving
teaching and learning. Now that routine checking of lesson plans has been accepted she has begun to move towards teacher analysis of grades and reflection as ways of encouraging teachers to be accountable. She plans to introduce classroom observation as soon as the level of collaboration and trust within departments is sufficiently developed that teachers feel comfortable with observing one another. Her overall goal is to gradually introduce structures that will assist staff in aligning their personal sense of responsibility for student performance with the school’s expectations as well as official Ministry of Education teacher appraisal processes.

Reculturing as a process is further demonstrated by how she has worked towards increasing the school’s capacity to solve social problems; sometimes this results in new ideas being incorporated into existing structures. The latest initiative, an extension to the welfare and guidance programmes, is a referral system for ongoing professional therapy that targets not just individual students but also their parents or guardians. Because the school recognises that “it is difficult for a child to perform academically and grow and mature in a healthy way” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 379), when “things have become too far from the ideal in the homes” and when “there is just not enough in terms of dialogue between parent and child at home” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 410-412), it has begun organising family therapy sessions for families in crisis. This initiative is the result of the school vision that seeks not only to improve student performance but also to expand the school’s role as a community resource. The school also acts as a community resource by accommodating teenage mothers from the local Women’s Centre who wish to continue with their formal education.

Although Sr. Margaret alludes to changes in structure, she does not consider them to be as important as changes in beliefs and practices. This position is borne out in the literature; Leithwood et al. (1999) recommend strategies that focus on “commitment” rather than “control” to effect lasting change (p.24). Similarly, DuFour, (1995), drawing on Fullan’s work on change, concludes, “Those who seek to bring about meaningful change must address both structure and culture … changes in structure do not necessarily result in changes in culture” (p.36).

**Balancing tensions**

While both ‘changing practices’ and ‘changing structures’ describe how Sr. Margaret’s leadership influences implementation of the vision, the final property focuses on her
thoughts concerning the spirit and sensitivity with which practices and structures are changed. For within her understanding of leadership is a conviction that changing practices and structures will not work unless the leader has the capacity to act on the vision within an understanding of the people with whom and the context in which she works; she expresses this as “having the eye for knowing where the balance needs to be” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 648). Linked to this is an explicit acknowledgement of the leader’s personal qualities such as “flexibility” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 72) and “ingenuity” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 99), what she terms, “the personal wherewithal” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 44) that helps carry through the vision. The data analysis uncovered some of the meaning in “the eye for knowing where the balance needs to be” and in “the personal wherewithal” and these meanings can be found in the property labelled ‘balancing tensions’. This property is explained in the following paragraphs.

Despite some success in moving the Holy Spirit community towards change and improvement there continue to be several challenges with which Sr. Margaret struggles and it is in meeting these challenges that she finds she must balance tensions, particularly tensions between knowledge about change and knowledge about context. For example she refers to the thinking that led her to postpone an earlier attempt to introduce teacher appraisal. The “fear in people’s eyes” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 103) convinced her that persuasion and a greater degree of comfort were needed rather than pressure or compulsion. She explains her reasoning: “So when I saw the fear about the evaluation, I backed off for a while because again now it is about trying to have people believe that they really do need to … perform well” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 143-146). She believes that if she is to help staff translate their beliefs about change into action she must challenge her staff but she must also gauge how much pressure can be brought to bear by “feeling out the temperature” (MR Iv 1 653). Her allusion to the paradox of having a staff who are sometimes “passive … who don’t mind being led” and at other times “resent being led” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 646-647) also underscores the importance of the leader’s capacity to balance staff members’ tolerance for direction and control with their desire for self-directing and collaborative opportunities. Similarly, in the struggle to come to some common agreement about what is acceptable behaviour among students she has had to balance tensions between values she holds dear and community norms; for example she admits to instances when, “I will impose some things because I don’t want to see it in this school” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 761), yet “with some issues I count my losses” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 754). The tension between where she wants the school to
be, what needs to be done, and the extent to which conditions are favourable and how she feels she can act, is perhaps the most challenging. By way of example she explains, “As a leader, as much as you want to be informal and non-threatening as possible, you have to be formal … with things that need change, informal doesn’t always work” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 p14). This capacity to manage tensions is presented in school leadership literature as an essential platform for effective leadership (for example Day et al., 2000; Grace, 1995; Leithwood et al., 1999; Smulyan, 2000; Walker & Quong, 1998).

**Concluding comments**

Taken together, the main constituents of the category ‘realising the vision’ - ‘changing practices’, ‘changing structures’ and ‘balancing tensions’ - demonstrate reculturing as a process. In addition, they complement the notion of reculturing as a value located in the first conceptual category called ‘shaping the vision: giving meaning to change’. Sr. Margaret’s emphasis on shaping the vision, particularly gaining a commitment to the values and beliefs underpinning it, together with her focus on changing habits and practices through mechanisms that are in harmony with the vision, suggest that at its core, her understanding of leadership is governed by principles of reculturing.
Lignum High School is located in one of Kingston’s uptown, middle-class, residential neighbourhoods where well-kept gardens, well-fed dogs, padlocked gates and grilled verandahs prevail. However, Lignum High is not a neighbourhood-based school; students come from all parts of Kingston, St Andrew, “some from as far away as Harbour View and Spanish Town” (KE Ob 3 Oct 15 16), and though a few come from middle-class homes, most are from lower-middle, working-class and poor backgrounds. Established in 1979 as a fully-government owned co-educational institution with 600 students, Lignum High now has over 1200 students with 55 teaching staff who prepare students in a range of academic and practical subjects for Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) and Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations. It is the smallest, youngest and only school in this study that has been a government-owned school from its inception. Since its reclassification as a high school, it has been given a limited number of Common Entrance awardees each year and the current perception is that Lignum is one of the better resourced, higher achieving and disciplined institutions among the upgraded or non-traditional high schools.

The administration block is a busy area: phones ring and are answered; the radio, a low hum in the background, is turned up on the hour for news briefs in order to monitor reports during this tense, uncertain period that is pre-election Jamaica, and a constant stream of people moves in and out of the main office. Teachers come to sign the attendance book, to read the notice board, to collect materials and to chat with colleagues, for the school has no communal staffroom, so the main office serves as a central point for them. Parents, guardians and others wishing to speak with the principal or vice-principal have begun to congregate, some from as early as 7.00am as it is still early in the new school year and there are registration, placement, financial standing and other unanticipated problems requiring the principal’s intervention. The small waiting area quickly fills up as visitors are directed to take a seat and almost immediately begin to fan themselves with whatever documents or envelopes they have in hand, for in spite of the early hour, the heat is intense; others prefer to stand outside on the walkway, still within earshot so they do not miss their names when called. Several times during the course of the morning the principal emerges from his inner office to escort a visitor to the counter that separates the restricted area from the public waiting area or to attend to a matter elsewhere on the school compound. On one occasion he smiles apologetically...
at those who are still waiting, assuring them he will be back shortly. This news is
greeted with nods and a few “Yes Sirs” except for one woman who jumps up to follow
him outside, venturing, “Sir, just one thing…” and she proceeds to state her case (KE
Ob 2 Oct 14 par. 8). After less than three minutes of muted conversation, she heads for
the exit and he sets off in search of the Grade 11 supervisor.

The Principal
Early in his career while working as a trained teacher at Renfield Secondary, an inner
city Kingston school, Kenton Edwards discovered that prioritising student needs and
advocating for ‘at-risk’ students was not a professional position shared by all his peers.
He recalls, “At one point there was the view that I was perhaps undermining
administration in the sense that I was on the side of the students” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 39-
40). This view and the indifference of the school towards students whose anti-social
behaviour was, he felt, largely the result of “neglect and living in poor conditions” (KE
Iv 1 Oct 14 417), disturbed him. He explains: “I never liked the way the teachers were
so far removed from students and distanced themselves … I couldn’t see my colleagues
really caring and showing concern and love for the students” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 50-57).
Frustrated by his inability, as a teacher, to “influence the direction that the school must
take” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 319) and convinced that he had “something to offer” (KE Iv 3
Oct 22 56), Kenton Edwards decided that he would have to become a principal if he
wanted to “do things differently” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 31). According to him, “it is because
you believe you can make a difference why you want the opportunity to make that
difference – that is where the desire to lead comes from” (KE Iv 3 Oct 22 57-59).

He explains how his daily struggle at Renfield to understand and help troubled students
also developed in him “an interest in social problems and how they impact on the
individual” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 64-65). This interest, together with the need to upgrade his
qualifications in order to move into administration where he felt he would have more
influence, led to his decision to read for a degree in sociology at the University of the
West Indies and eventually to his appointment at Lignum, first as vice-principal for five
years, then as acting principal for three years and substantive principal for the last three
years.

He believes that his appointment as principal has invested him with influence and power
he did not have as a teacher: “I am happy that I’m now in a position where I can make a
contribution to what I think is good by virtue of my position” (KE Iv1 Oct 14 300-302). This view of leadership as residing primarily in the principal’s office supports his conviction that as principal, his beliefs and actions should influence others. In this regard he says: ‘If I believe in something then I persist and insist and then people realise and understand … people come around … they respect my position” (KE Iv1 Oct 14 215-217).

The principal as social architect
Kenton Edwards acknowledges the influence of those early years on his views regarding the purpose of schools and his professional beliefs both of which inform how he practises leadership. He maintains that schools and those who lead them should take responsibility for making society a better place:

My view is that the school has to take its cue from society. If there is something that is wrong in society it means that the school has to correct it. All the while it is the school as a socialising agent that has to make the corrections in the society. I believe that as the principal you have to be aware of some of the things, the social problems in society, the kind of attitudes that are displayed in society and ask yourself do you want this to continue five ten years in this society? If the answer is no then you must start to do something in your way in your school. (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 142-150)

McCurdy, Manella and Eldridge (2003) express a similar view of U.S. urban schools as socialising agents when they write: “Schools have the potential to offset the toxic effects of community and family risk factors by providing a stabilizing and enriching environment where important academic and social skills are taught and influential adult-child relationships can flourish” (p.159).

In order to provide such an environment, to “make a difference” (KE Iv 3 Oct 22 57) and “do something in your own way in your own school” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 150) Mr Edwards believes that a principal must first read then respond to the school’s context. Reading the context is about understanding and reflecting on what is; responding to context is about defining and creating what should be. Pre-conditions for both involve a perspective that takes into account individuals’ behaviour in relation to their circumstances, a refusal to accept what is, and a belief in the capacity of schools to make a difference to children’s lives and ultimately to society.
On reading the context at Lignum High, Kenton Edwards found many students who were lacking the social and developmental support necessary to prosper in school and were therefore underachieving. Responding to the context has involved activating a vision focused on total student development through the dual process of dismantling the barriers that impede student growth and achievement and at the same time fostering conditions that promote growth and achievement. Describing himself as a principal with a “‘children come first’ philosophy” (KE Iv 3 Oct 22 113), Kenton Edwards is using his position to focus not only on students’ academic needs but also their developmental and social needs. This perspective of his role comes close to one of the metaphors identified by Beck and Murphy (1993) as relevant for 21st century school leadership - “principal as social architect” (p.192). In describing the emergence of this metaphor they write that principals “need to see education as one element of a larger attack on the problems facing at-risk children” (p.192) and argue that failure of schools to respond to social problems and at-risk children may result in “a dual-class society not unlike that found in many third-world countries” (p.192). The “principal as social architect” is a useful metaphor for interpreting Kenton Edwards’ understanding and practice of school leadership. His desire to make a difference to students’ lives and indeed to society together with his view of education as serving students’ social and developmental needs as well as their learning needs, are made meaningful when it is remembered that he is principal of an upgraded high school operating within a socially stratified secondary system in a developing society where children of poor parents are under-represented in high schools and where “disparity in access to secondary education by children from different social groups” (Evans, 2001, p.151) continues to be a problem.

Qualitative analysis of the interview, observation and concept map data revealed two dominant conceptual categories that embody the main components of his conception of school leadership: ‘building student morale’ and ‘improving student behaviour and academic performance’.

Building student morale
In justifying the emphasis he has placed on improving student morale at Lignum High Kenton Edwards shares what was for him a defining moment in his decision to address the issue of student morale. Two years earlier, following a series of violent incidents and anti-social exchanges on the street and on buses between students from Lignum and those from a neighbouring, traditional high school for boys, the principals of both
institutions sought to reconcile these student differences at a meeting where student and teacher representatives from both schools as well as police community relations personnel and University of the West Indies (UWI) peace education consultants were present. The meeting appeared to be productive; however, during a break in proceedings, one of Mr Edwards’ students approached him and reported that two students from the boys’ school had passed her group and one had remarked, “‘See oonu, oonu mus’ jus’ fe step ‘pon’” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 451). He had expected the boys to deny, or at least be reluctant to admit to the comment. However, when, in the presence of their teachers, he asked, “‘Why you say that?’ and one said, ‘Well sir, it’s a tradition’” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 455-456), he began to understand how stereotypical notions of inferiority and superiority associated with school type, are allowed to persist. He recounts the ensuing dialogue with the teachers: “I turned to the teachers and asked, ‘That’s a tradition over there?’ They denied it but you know I wasn’t certain. It hit me a certain way” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 457-458). These exchanges illustrated clearly for him that the perception of non-traditional high school students as being less than worthy is both pervasive and deeply engrained not just within the students themselves but within institutions and society as a whole.

Concerned about the power of self-fulfilling prophecy and convinced that, “it all boils down to how the students see themselves” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 469-470), he has made building student morale a focus at Lignum. He does this in two important ways that have been labelled: ‘inspiring positive beliefs in and about students’ and ‘replacing ambivalence with care’. These concepts are discussed in the following sections.

*Inspiring positive beliefs in and about students*

‘Inspiring positive beliefs in and about students’ is an important property associated with the conceptual category ‘building student morale’. It refers to the strategies Mr Edwards uses to establish positive images of self-worth among students and to dismantle psychosocial barriers that impact on their identity and aspirations. He believes that deep internalisation of inferiority is inhibiting achievement in almost every aspect of their lives. He therefore invests a great deal of energy in activities and practices that influence not only how students think about themselves but also how others think about them.

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8 A highly denigrating comment. The Standard English translation - “Look at you! When we think about you, we know that you deserve only to be stepped on” - reduces the effect.

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He recognises that among the students at Lignum High, factors such as fragmented family patterns, poverty, social instability and other negative life events, have combined to erode their self-esteem. He states, “Our students here at Lignum need to develop a greater sense of pride, self-esteem, self-confidence. They are still grappling, they are not sure of themselves we have to help them to be more assured and confident” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 116-119). Consequently, activities that strengthen self-concept come high on his agenda. For example, he believes that strong cultural roots can enhance the adolescent's sense of identity, so he promotes cultural awareness and cultural activities as often as possible. The Lignum Heritage Day celebrated during National Heroes week each October, is one of the chief avenues for highlighting the school’s heritage. In the lead-up to National Heroes Day as part of his address to students at assembly, the principal highlights the importance of heritage: "It is your national heritage that gives you a sense of self-awareness and a sense of pride … without your heritage you are nothing" (KE Ob 2 Oct 14 19- 22). He extends the theme of heritage to incorporate loyalty to one's country and concludes the assembly by asking the students to recite the national pledge and sing the national anthem.

Another way in which he works to strengthen students’ self-esteem and build personal pride is through motivational talks that encourage belief in self and through involving successful past students in school life. He is particularly pleased that on the teaching staff he has several past students and that a past student who has just completed medical studies in Cuba is taking the initiative to start a past students’ association. He also thinks that accentuating achievements enhances positive perceptions of self. As a result, he has planned to introduce incentives outside the formalities of prize giving, to publicly acknowledge student achievement. Designed to highlight group rather than individual achievements, these incentives will reward classes for “the best kept area, the most outstanding in academic performance, in their dress, in behaviour, how they keep their classroom” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 107-109). He makes sure that every time he gets a favourable report about students from outside the school, he shares it with both staff and students.

Quality of student self-esteem also depends on the level of social appreciation they experience from teachers, family members and the community at large. He is concerned that many students internalise the prejudices of teachers and others regarding their ability and capacity to succeed and therefore have low expectations of themselves and
often adopt a fatalistic attitude to schoolwork and to life in general. He points out that, “Parents can destroy students’ confidence as well as teachers. So we have got to be careful because once the confidence of a child is destroyed then the child is virtually a non-person, cannot function well and cannot excel” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 76-79). Given these conditions, an important part of inspiring positive beliefs involves dispelling doubts and prejudices about students among teachers and other members of society.

He uses his position as principal to constantly remind teachers about the impact negative attitudes and low expectations can have and he urges them to assist students in overcoming feelings of self-doubt and low self-esteem by using positive language and setting high expectations. In this regard, he has worked to change the school policy that prevented students from taking eight subjects at CXC arguing, “We shouldn’t say that they can’t do any better. Though some teachers say our students cannot do eight subjects, that they must concentrate on fewer, I say no” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 474-476).

Kenton Edwards is conscious that because Lignum is not a traditional high school his students face social prejudice. The manager of a company who accommodated some Lignum students on work experience told him, “she was pleasantly surprised at the behaviour of the [Lignum] students” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 332-333) and by their general attitude which she described as better than that displayed by students from a prominent traditional high school who were also on work experience at the time. Though such reports are heartening, Mr Edwards himself is not comfortable making comparisons; however, he recognises that the social meaning generally associated with non-traditional high schools is one of inferiority and low expectations. He hopes that by developing in his students a version of themselves as succeeding, they will challenge this perception. On this matter he says:

The tendency is that people make this kind of comparison between this school and a traditional high school. I don't say anything. I keep on telling my students that they are as good as; they are no worse than; they can do as much as. (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 334-347)

In these ways, Kenton Edwards seeks to dismantle barriers that prevent students from seeing themselves as worthwhile individuals. Several of these barriers are similar to the challenges confronting caring leaders as listed by Lyman (2000). She includes “low expectations and deficiency views of students associated with race and class”, “parents
who seem not to care” and ‘traditions, structures, and associated practices that demean and objectify people” (p.140) among the factors that school leaders must combat.

Replacing ambivalence with care

Another property associated with the category ‘building student morale’ was ‘replacing ambivalence with care’. According to Kenton Edwards, students who do not feel cared for, cannot believe in themselves, therefore caring interactions are a precondition for building student morale. He believes that as a leader, he is responsible for generating a collective will among teachers to engage in relationships that make students feel they are cared for. He distinguishes between being cared for and feeling cared for, stressing the latter: “They must feel that their teachers care and have their interests at heart and that they will help them” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 101-103). The centrality of caring relationships is widely acknowledged among those who write about educational leadership (Beck, 1991; Beck & Murphy, 1993; Noddings, 1993; Norris et al., 2002; Starrat, 1991). Drawing on several studies as evidence, Kratzer (1996) points to a relationship between a caring school environment and student motivation and achievement. Similarly, Lyman (2000) concludes that caring leadership enhances learning. By championing love and care as core values and cultivating caring relationships Kenton Edwards seeks to ensure that the ambivalence that characterised relationships in his previous school is not repeated at Lignum.

Through the school's vision statement, in staff meetings and at assembly Mr Edwards continually reaffirms the vision of Lignum as a caring school. Words and phrases such as “understanding” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 62); “warmth” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 183), “supportive, facilitative role” (Iv 2 Oct 15 34); “acceptance” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 38); and “positive interactions” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 146), which he uses to define caring teacher-student relationships, make clear his expectations. He reminds his staff: “We must extend to them [students] much more love because some of them are not getting any at home” (KE Ob 4 Oct 22 74-75).

He believes that as the principal he must be a visible role model so he demonstrates care in his own relationships, especially with students. His practice of walking around the school campus to interact with students, his protective attitude towards them, his approachability and availability are evidence of his modelling care in his relationships with students. He says: “I like to be among the students and to know that they can
approach me and hold a conversation with me and that they are not frightened away” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 100-102). Conscious that he has been “accused of being insensitive” (KE Iv3 Oct 22 139) and that his “children come first” (KE Iv 3 Oct 2 113) philosophy is open to misinterpretation, he recognises the importance of ensuring that teachers understand that he cares for them too and that the emphasis on improving student morale does not threaten staff morale. He explains his viewpoint thus:

When I tell teachers that children come first it doesn't mean that I have no concern for teachers. I am concerned about teachers but they have to understand that I am placed here in order to see to it that the students benefit … I tell teachers I have to be concerned about you too because without you we won't achieve anything. But we are primarily here for them [students]. (KE Iv 3 Oct 22 114-122)

He affirms building student morale as a critical component of school leadership at Lignum High largely because it is a condition for student growth and achievement. The two properties of ‘inspiring positive beliefs in and about students’ and ‘replacing ambivalence with care’ have emerged as the processes that he considers important for building student morale because he is convinced that students who have been encouraged to believe in themselves and who feel cared for are more likely to respond positively to efforts designed to improve their behaviour and academic performance. Student behaviour and academic performance are at the centre of the second conceptual category discussed in the next section.

**Improving student behaviour and academic performance**

On reading the context at Lignum High, Kenton Edwards recognised, that as a consequence of low self-esteem among students, indiscipline and underachievement were interfering with their potential to succeed. He therefore set out to develop Lignum “into a first-rate school where the students are well-behaved, well-disciplined and decent” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 325-326) and to “start a kind of crusade to lift grades” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 142-143). On this basis, the second conceptual category that describes his understanding of school leadership has been called ‘improving student behaviour and academic performance’ Emerging from this category are three prominent properties: ‘focusing on student empowerment’, ‘managing student behaviour’ and ‘raising academic standards’. Each of these is now examined in turn.
Kenton Edwards believes that improving behaviour and academic performance is supported by the kind of leadership that creates opportunities that lead to student empowerment and that empowerment in turn, depends on students and their teachers believing in their potential to succeed. In this way, the properties of ‘inspiring positive beliefs in and about students’ and ‘focusing on student empowerment’ are linked.

Mr Edwards regrets that in the past, his leadership has not always been empowering because missing from his interactions with students were three essential components: trust, support and autonomy. He gives an example of how his lack of trust and support thwarted the efforts of one particular student who had “energy and an idea’ and who was prepared “to assume leadership, take on a project and display a sense of responsibility” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 82-83). At each stage of the planning, he rejected or found fault with her suggestions. Denying her any autonomy, he sought to control the project – a response he now describes as “a sort of break in the whole process … hindering rather than facilitating” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 84-85). However, the interaction marked a turning point in his interpretation of his role and specifically his attitude to student leadership. He reports, “that incident caused me to do a lot of reflection”(KE Iv 2 Oct 15 87) and thereafter he resolved to endorse student-led initiatives and to use his influence as principal to encourage teachers to empower students.

The ensuing focus on student empowerment is evident in his desire to explore new avenues that encourage students to discover their potential, demonstrate responsibility and exercise self-reliance. He says, “It would be good if more and more students could develop an interest in assuming leadership roles and positions. We need to look at how we can make provision for that” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 96-98). He believes that in addition to traditional student leadership roles as prefects or on student council, structures such as co-curricular activities and the house system as well as the work experience programme are also providing students with opportunities to practise decision-making, problem-solving and leadership skills. Because these activities involve them in determining their own actions and taking responsibility for their decisions they are important avenues for empowerment and a powerful means of boosting morale.

Another important means of empowering students is through classroom interactions and activities. He is concerned that sometimes while teachers “purport to help children …
they maybe make them feel more a sense of dependence which is bad” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 10-12), so he has begun promoting teaching/learning activities that develop independent learning, critical thinking and problem solving skills. In this respect, he adopts an instructional approach to leadership using his position as principal to indirectly influence classroom practice (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Heck, Larsen & Marcoulides, 1996). In particular he encourages assessment practices that are empowering:

I tell my teachers if you are marking a paper … let us take mathematics and all the problems are wrong, all ten, don’t mark all of them ‘X’... The X thing is a turn-off. And it cannot help. Our students need to find out why something is wrong, develop pride in their work … Get them to self-correct, this will give them confidence. (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 112-117)

As well as working through teachers, he addresses the students directly on the issue of “taking responsibility for their learning” (KE Iv 3 Oct 22 102). He feels that with students whose day-to-day realities are rough, whose parents are absent or have abandoned their responsibilities, it is important to reiterate the message that they have a degree of control over their futures and that their decisions rather than their circumstances determine what they become. He reminds them of their responsibility as students to take advantage of the learning opportunities provided by the school thus:

I am saying that poverty does not make you necessarily a criminal … once you are exposed, and we are exposing you, once you are ambitious, once the opportunities are there, you must go for it. We are here to help you. Whatever you need to do to achieve those goals we are here to guide, to assist you so you can achieve your goals. (KE Ob 1 Oct 14 67-72)

The focus on student empowerment is also evident in the approach he has introduced for managing student discipline and behaviour – a concept discussed in the next section.

Managing student behaviour

‘Managing student behaviour’ is the second property intrinsic to the conceptual category ‘improving student behaviour and academic performance’. According to Kenton Edwards discipline is a cornerstone of student growth; as he put it: “Discipline is critical. There is nothing that can be achieved through indiscipline” (KE Iv1 Oct 14 435-436). At Lignum he has set about managing student behaviour in two main ways: reinterpreting the meaning of discipline and strengthening policies related to discipline.
Reinterpreting the meaning of discipline is an outcome of his ‘social architect’ perspective. He understands student discipline as extending beyond policies and structures designed to reduce the levels of antisocial behaviour, to include approaches that foster self-discipline, commitment to individual goals and a mental attitude of personal responsibility for decisions and actions. In keeping with his perspective that takes into account individuals’ behaviour in relation to their circumstances, he argues for discipline that is sensitive to context. The success of this move to reinterpret discipline, which he refers to as “practical discipline” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 432), depends on positive student-teacher relationships and a caring school climate.

He presents ‘practical discipline’ as a system that rewards positive behaviour and draws on conflict resolution techniques for managing student behaviour, unlike traditional methods that focus on punishing negative behaviour. Indeed, he wants to shift the school away from a reliance on traditional forms of discipline which he describes as, “strict, strident…bordering on aggression” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 193-194), and incorporate care and counselling in the dispensation of discipline. Short, Short and Blanton (1994) advocate a similar approach in their discussion of alternative ways for principals to think about school discipline policy. They criticise punitive approaches on the grounds that they simply produce temporary compliance and do little to move students towards a mental or moral commitment to acceptable behaviour.

Reinterpreting the meaning of discipline also involves securing teacher commitment. Mr Edwards knows that for some teachers it has been difficult to reconcile a caring, non-punitive approach with a commitment to discipline and order. He describes his attempts to convince them that “a little bit more caring, a little bit more loving …will impact on them [students] so that they become more tolerant … more peaceful and understanding and then we won’t have all this anti-social behaviour” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 165-169). Although reinterpreting discipline in this way has met with resistance from some teachers who feel they are losing control and complain that, “this thing about caring and loving has contributed to heightened tension in the school” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 187-8), he has observed a change in their approach to disciplining the children “at least in my presence” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 200). However, because he believes so firmly that “there is a positive relationship between sensitivity and discipline” (KE Iv 3 Oct 22 163), he continues to advocate for discipline tempered by sensitivity, encouraging staff
to “listen to the children … not just shut them up, listen to their point and after they have aired their views, then talk” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 171-173).

Initiatives that reflect the emphasis on ‘practical discipline’ include: the expansion of a support network for students through the counselling department; the development of a programme in social graces; involvement of form teachers in pastoral care so they build a relationship with the students in their form; a series of conflict resolution meetings to reconcile the differences between Lignum students and boys from a neighbouring school; the introduction of a breakfast programme to discourage students from purchasing from vendors outside the school; the silence drill following lunch break each day to encourage reflection and introspection; and the use of prefects and members of the student council to monitor student behaviour not just on the school campus but at the bus stops and on the buses.

The emphasis on managing student behaviour also finds expression in a number of school policies that have been strengthened or modified. Mr Edwards has introduced the ‘Student Regulations’ and the ‘Code of Conduct for Parents’ to establish clear guidelines about expectations and consequences for student and parent behaviour. In addition, he reinforces and supplements the content of these official documents through letters to parents and addresses at PTA meetings as the need arises. At the same time, his desire to respond to behavioural problems in ways that are sensitive to context is clear from the following statement describing the school’s disciplinary system: “Each infringement is viewed as it relates to the offender, to other individuals, to the school community and to the wider community” (KE Ex Doc 5 p.6).

Since becoming principal he has been instrumental in introducing a policy on student involvement in co-curricular activities because he believes that a regulated programme of co-curricular activities supervised by members of staff is a critical part of the school infrastructure that influences student behaviour. With involvement in these clubs and societies comes responsibility, feelings of self-worth, self-discipline and improved behaviour. He recalls one student who was “giving us no ends of problems … she was very loud, the virago type” and he credits her “transformation … and changed behaviour” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 43-48) to her involvement in the Key Club. He sees sports too as a powerful means of assisting students to develop disciplined attitudes and behaviour.
One aspect of discipline that has been cause for concern over the years and has been given special attention relates to student behaviour that tarnishes the reputation and image of the school. Under present regulations, fighting automatically results in a three-day suspension; for other kinds of public misconduct, students are allowed to remain in school but they are taken out of school uniform for a short period. Unpunctuality continues to be a major challenge so in preparing the next school plan Mr Edwards is “looking at punctuality” and has “even formulated a goal and a possible policy to share with staff and parents” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 359-361) that would refuse students entry to school after 9.00am. Aware that long distances coupled with an inadequate and discriminatory public transport system often contribute to students’ difficulty in reaching school on time, he explains, “We say school starts at 7.40, devotion at 7.45 and first class at 8.10 … there are all kinds of problems at Half-Way-Tree … the buses come but the conductors allow only adults into the bus and the students must wait” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 364-370). However, he feels that while such a policy may seem severe, the ‘after 9.00am.’ rider makes allowances for transport problems.

In general, Kenton Edwards has sought to manage student behaviour by instigating initiatives and aligning policies so that they support the idea of ‘practical discipline’.

**Raising academic standards**

‘Raising academic standards’ is the third property that defines the category ‘improving student behaviour and academic performance’ and is another important component in Kenton Edwards’ understanding of school leadership. Although he believes that improved morale and behaviour will have a positive impact on academic achievement, he also employs more direct measures aimed specifically at raising academic standards. In particular, the need to improve student performance in regional examinations has become a major focus. Distressed by Lignum’s “disappointing CXC results” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 126) he has embarked on a “crusade to lift grades” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 143) by addressing issues related to teaching practices, curriculum, and resources. Such an emphasis is not unusual; global changes such as the commodification of education, have led to increased attention to inputs, processes, and outcomes (Day et al., 2000; Grace, 1995; Leithwood et al., 1999; Whitaker, 1998). As Porter and Vidovich (2000) put it, “‘Performativity’ has become the norm” (p.7).
Mr Edwards uses meetings to engage staff in discussion about the common goal of raising student performance. For example, in deciding how best to allocate contact teaching periods to meet the curriculum requirements he proposes, “two theory, two practical, two SBA’s”; however, in pointing out that each group of students has different needs and that subjects differ, he adds, “I can’t tell you what to do” (KE Ob 4 Oct 22 11-12) and advises teachers to use their professional judgement. At the departmental level he urges heads to make their meetings “more productive … to look at the syllabuses and the topics that are taught and the difficult areas and explore these topics … to use some sort of a team teaching approach” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 130-134). He also encourages staff to upgrade their qualifications once they qualify for leave and to attend professional development seminars and workshops. He describes his dismay on discovering reluctance among teachers to attend a recent three-day workshop being organised by the Ministry on the grounds that they could not afford to miss three days of classes. He spoke to the teachers individually and made attendance compulsory for at least two of the days arguing, “People have to go to workshops; that is how they will know what is taking place in the subject areas and the syllabus and also get the kind of help where methodology is concerned” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 187-189).

One of Kenton Edwards’ current challenges involves moving staff towards a culture of teacher accountability in which they routinely use assessment data to inform their teaching. In addition to the traditional December and June examinations, teachers are now expected to administer tests every six weeks and “to analyse very carefully, sit down and look at it [the grade sheet] very carefully … and see where and how students are falling down” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 127-128). Furthermore, in classes where the majority of students are scoring below 50 per cent, he has decided as principal to intervene personally by “going to the classes to find out why that is so … and calling in the parents … to discuss why because this must not happen a second time” (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 137-141). The “fifty per cent plus” regulation (KE Ex Doc 5 p.7) and the academic targets described in the school development plan represent the official textual expression of these initiatives aimed at improving academic performance.

Another priority in the school’s efforts to improve academic performance generally has been an upgraded and extended reading programme that caters not just to students in Grades 7-9 for whom foundation textbooks are available but also to those in Grades 10 and 11 where there continues to be a reading problem. Because so many students read
far below their grade levels they have self-esteem problems and fall behind in all their subjects. He believes that the enhanced reading programme has contributed enormously to the school’s exceeding its academic target of 60 per cent of students with passes over 60 per cent in English Language.

Kenton Edwards correlates access to resources with progress when he says: “The resources are necessary. We need the money so we can get ahead” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 646) and considers availability of resources as critical to effective teaching. Convinced that “Teachers want to know that the principal will help them with their teaching … be it materials for class, equipment or furniture ” (KE Iv 3 Oct 22 92-94) and that more up-to-date library material, computers and a refurbished Chemistry laboratory will go a long way towards improving students’ grades in several subject areas, he views resource provision as one of his major responsibilities as a principal. He explains that as an upgraded high school, Lignum attracts special government funding from the Secondary Schools Enhancement Programme and as a ROSE participant, it qualifies for World Bank assistance; therefore, he is preparing “two school development plans – one for the World Bank and one for government enhancement” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 623-624) in order to access funding and assistance. He also affirms the importance of partnerships with community groups as important sources for addressing resource shortfalls – the Lions Club has contributed books as part of the reading programme and he hopes that the soon-to-be-established past students’ association will also commit to specific building and resource projects.

Concluding comments

Kenton Edwards’ understanding of school leadership encompasses a focus on student morale, behaviour and academic performance. As a pre-condition for improved student behaviour and academic performance, building student morale features prominently and analysis of the data suggests two necessary strategies – inspiring positive beliefs in and about students and replacing ambivalence with care. Furthermore, by combining opportunities for students to explore their potential and develop a sense of responsibility, with teaching and learning practices that develop independent, confident thinkers, Kenton Edwards maintains a focus on student empowerment – another important concept within his understanding of leadership. This focus on empowerment is carried through into the school’s approach to managing student behaviour. In a similar vein to the “principal as social architect” metaphor (Beck & Murphy, 1993,
his emphasis on building morale, empowering students and instilling self-discipline combined with his caring approach and his redefinition of what were once family and parental responsibilities as school issues, can be understood as responses to a social deficit problem, what Leithwood et al. (1999) refer to as, “declining social capital among students” (p. 54). They argue that in schools where students face economic hardship and high levels of social instability, effective leadership seeks to provide students with social capital – the “attitudes and dispositions toward personal effort, and the realistic but robust self-concepts required for them to benefit from the opportunities, demands and rewards provided by good schools” (p.45).

At the same time, Mr Edwards’ concern with raising academic standards can be understood as a response to social realities: Ministry expectations that schools set and achieve academic targets, social tendencies that compare reclassified or upgraded schools like Lignum to traditional high schools, and media reports that measure school effectiveness according to performance in CXC examinations. However, his “principal as social architect” perspective prevents him from confining his assessment of school leadership effectiveness to high scores and awe-inspiring scholastic achievements. As the codes and properties underpinning the category ‘Building student morale’ reveal, leadership is also about making a difference and adding value to students’ lives in non-academic ways. This conception of school leadership is summed up in a Barry Chevannes’ quotation prominently displayed on his office noticeboard. It reads:

What will make any school great is not the saintliness of its intake but the character of its output. Not even the monastery expects sainthood from its novices. Greatness is achieved and traditions built, not in producing saints out of saints but in bending the wayward, reigning on the recalcitrant, taming the wild, building the self-control of the seeming uncontrollable.

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9 Professor of Social Anthropology and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Barry Chevannes has published extensively on gender, parenting, religious ideology and Rastafari culture. This quotation is from an article entitled “The Munro Five in Context” published in The Sunday Gleaner, January 6, 2002.
Case #4 - Audrey Grant at Springfield High

The school context

On the outskirts of the parish capital, surrounded by a tangle of shanties half hidden behind zinc fences and rubbly lanes, lies Springfield High School. Predictably, security is tight for adjoining the school are several volatile communities whose names are synonymous with poor living conditions, violence and other negative characteristics of urban poverty. Indeed, for two days during fieldwork, residents in one nearby community mounted roadblocks and engaged the security forces in stone throwing and missile exchanges to protest the police killing of a popular community member. At the entrance to the school is a large sign asking visitors to dress modestly and to conduct themselves in a peaceful manner while on the compound.

Established in 1948 as a co-educational Catholic high school with an enrolment of ten, the school grew rapidly, moving location twice, opening its doors to non-Catholics and joining the public system in 1958 as a grant-aided high school, before settling on church lands at its current site in 1960. The tremendous growth of the school can be attributed to the principal at the time, a Catholic nun, who saw the need to support the post-Independence thrust to promote social equality in the education system by expanding the school’s academic curriculum to include training in practical, business and vocational subjects more in keeping with comprehensive high schools. In this way, Springfield High began providing secondary education not only for Common Entrance Examination awardees but also for children who were unable to secure places in the more traditional grammar-type high schools.

Today, Springfield is a large school by any standards: twenty-four buildings on a fifteen acre campus; approximately 2500 students, 2300 enrolled in Grades 7-11 and almost 200 in Grades 12 and 13; 120 teachers; and close to 40 ancillary and administrative staff. Though the school draws its students from a cross section of society the majority are from the lower socio-economic groups or from homes where the extended family structure and values are being eroded by powerful economic and socio-political forces such as migration, the drug trade and gang-related activities. According to the principal: “Most of my students have single parents and of those single parents, some of them are in prison or abroad or elsewhere” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 44-145).
To this day, physical evidence of the school’s Catholic origin remains - a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a crucifix and reminders to ‘Pray the Holy Rosary’ permanently painted as borders on noticeboards. In addition, the Church appoints the Chairman and five representatives to the Board; the school continues to benefit from the support of the local parish church, priests and the Archdiocese; and each year staff and students publicly celebrate Springfield’s rich Catholic heritage in a formal ceremony.

The principal

Principal of Springfield High School Mrs Audrey Grant recognises that her appointment two years ago as principal of a school with historic ties to Roman Catholicism is something of an anomaly: “I am a Seventh Day Adventist by faith - complete opposite to Roman Catholic” (AG Iv1 Oct 24 63-64). However, she feels that her track record of more than thirty years at Springfield, teaching every grade, co-ordinating a variety of events and serving seven years as vice-principal plus one year as acting principal, made her a strong candidate for the principalship and contributed to the Board’s decision to recommend her appointment. As she puts it, “I’ve had a wide exposure” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 400). At the same time, she makes the point that her family and socialisation prepared her for school leadership. Drawing upon childhood memories, she talks about her parents who were “education conscious”, who gave her “an early push” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 24-25) and saw to it that their eight children benefited from a secondary education. In addition, she considers an Adventist upbringing that nurtured young people as “Missionary volunteers … who would run youth school … and had been trained to lead out” (AG Iv 2 Oct 29 168-170) as influential. To some extent Audrey Grant views her appointment to the principalship as destiny fulfilled - she recalls how her father, a farmer, related to her a dream he had in which he saw her “as head of some great thing though he didn’t know what it would be”. Even as she laughs that at 90 years of age he is finally “basking in the fact that his dream has come true”, she acknowledges that becoming a “… principal of a very large school with great responsibilities” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 20-24) has meant a lot to him.

Audrey Grant is also conscious of ways in which her professional experience and the school context have combined to affect the way she constructs and practises leadership. For example, she counts the twelve years she spent as a Jamaica Teachers’ Association contact teacher as one of the major influences. She states:
I can rely on those experiences now because I think I really learnt what teachers need and what teachers appreciate. So I capitalise on that kind of knowledge … I wasn't aware of it at the time but it did pave the way for the relationship that I have with my teachers now. (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 140-146)

She also attributes her teaching experience in an inner city Kingston school prior to coming to Springfield as having influenced her approach to leadership because it developed in her an understanding of how economic disadvantage and partisan politics can impact on communities. On this matter she says:

I taught for one year at St Margaret’s junior secondary teaching mathematics in Kingston, downtown. So maybe that's why I can deal with the situation around me here. Because in the 70s when I did that one-year there, the time was getting bad, the politics you know. (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 34-37)

It comes as no surprise therefore, when later she associates the way she thinks about and practises leadership at Springfield with the location of the school and the nature of the surrounding community: “The thing that has had the greatest impact on me as a principal here is the community itself, the depressed community…” (AG Iv 2 Oct 29 10-11). The importance she attaches to the local community, indeed her very description of the surrounding area as a ‘community’, is revealing; for where most tend to perceive the area surrounding the school as a troubled or dangerous place, Mrs Grant prefers to see it as a community. It is this perspective that frames her definition of leadership for Springfield High School.

**The community principal**

According to Mrs Grant leadership in a school such as Springfield depends on a worldview that prioritises loving and caring about people. She articulates this in two separate statements: “… this job means loving people…. You’ve got to love people, to be close to them” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 4-7), and “Again I must emphasise love of people. In this area really, if you didn’t care about people you wouldn’t stay” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 51-52). Such a view is not unusual; writers like Beck and Murphy (1994), Lyman, (2000), Noddings (1984, 1993) and Starratt (1994) all advance the idea that effective leaders incorporate an ethic of care to give meaning and purpose to their leadership.

Data analysis suggests that for Mrs Grant loving and caring about people are made meaningful by creating a network of relationships that behave like small communities nested within a larger community. She gives a clearly defined statement linking
This priority is reflected in the two dominant conceptual categories that have emerged from the data: ‘reaching in’ and ‘stretching out’. Both categories encapsulate why and how she promotes and supports community-mindedness which is sustained through a network of relationships between and among individuals and groups both within and outside the school in order to effect school improvement. ‘Reaching in’ and ‘stretching out’ correspond quite closely to two strands of thinking that Shields (2003) calls “schools as communities” and “schools in community” (p.37). She describes the former as creating “a sense of belonging, comfort friendship and security” within the school itself and the latter as focusing on “school relationships with its wider communities”. These categories emerging from the data also demonstrate that in many respects Audrey Grant uses an ethic of community to guide her leadership practice. The concept of an ethic of community proposed by Furman (2004) places a moral responsibility and commitment to engage in communal processes at the heart of leadership practice. An ethic of community understands community not as a product but as “an ongoing set of processes” (p.219); it presupposes a sense of moral and social responsibility and emphasises relationships, communication, dialogue and teamwork. These concepts and several communal processes described by Furman as embodying an ethic of community, feature extensively in the two conceptual categories ‘reaching in’ and ‘stretching out’ explored in the following sections.

**Reaching in**

Community-mindedness cannot survive without a strong internal community. The conceptual category ‘reaching in’ has three properties that describe the processes and conditions that Audrey Grant considers critical to developing a strong, integrated internal community. These are ‘building quality relationships’, ‘empowering teachers’ and ‘cultivating cohesion’. The following sections examine each of these properties in turn.
Building quality relationships

As earlier quotations reveal, Mrs Grant believes that leadership values the power of quality relationships between and among administration, staff and students. She distinguishes quality relationships as those that engender support and harmony among staff and students, both of which depend on people knowing, understanding and respecting one another. As she says, “There must be a type of trust … your presence should not back people off you” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 127-128). Building supportive, harmonious relationships therefore, calls for her knowing her staff and students but also for staff and students knowing her through time and association. The importance she attaches to getting to know and understand staff members is expressed in the time she invests in informal exchanges and face-to-face interactions with all levels of personnel as we move around the campus during fieldwork. She believes that such expressions of interest help increase levels of commitment and ultimately action. She enjoys opportunities to interact informally with people and believes that they too appreciate her presence: “Yesterday evening I stayed out there with them [grounds men] to plant those things, just standing around and chatting with them, you know, talking with them. They love that. And I like the freedom to be myself” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 345-347). She believes that supportive relationships are constructed through visibility and active involvement in a wide cross section of social and professional activities. She explains her thinking thus:

I get involved in everything. If it’s sports, I change and I put on my sneakers or my track shoes and I'm out there … . If it’s social, I am there. I go and I dance with my teachers or if it's games, I'm in there. I get involved in every aspect of the school life. … if my male teachers are helping me out with something I'll stay as late as I can, encourage them and make sure that they know I'm there with them. It's us, and not they. (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 163-171)

Through the principal’s active involvement in school work and visible support for school events, staff and students feel that they are being supported and they grow to know her; by the same token, she learns more about their capabilities and preferences and gets to keep her eye on the pulse of whatever is happening.

Building quality relationships also entails a focus on harmony among members of the school community and Mrs Grant maintains that this depends on a leader’s human relations skills: “Human relations and human relations skills – that is the key” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 169). Within the images of referee (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 165, 176), counsellor (AG Iv
that she uses at several points to describe her role, is an implicit understanding that as a leader, her work is accomplished through balancing authority, advice and empathy to encourage harmonious relationships. Several encounters observed during fieldwork support these images. In the wake of a physical dispute between one of the school’s security guards and a male student, she remains calm and works to diffuse the situation by listening to their accounts and encouraging each to listen to the other’s perspective of what took place. However, they repeatedly interrupt and object to what the other is saying; the student continues to threaten the guard and the aggression festers. She decides to interview them separately so she lets the guard leave with the intention of recalling him later. She listens sympathetically to the boy’s protests concerning the guard’s behaviour: "'Im deal wid me like a prisna, drag me and shub me and tell me mi mus’ come affa de school compoun'". She enquires into his home life and counsels him to consider, "When you do him something what is going to happen to you?" (AG Ob 3 Oct 29 par. 6). At the same time, she balances this empathy with firmness, making clear her position with respect to his behaviour and reading to him the grounds for student suspension from the Ministry of Education Code. After he departs Mrs Grant struggles with the decision to suspend him. She recognises that the student did not respond well to the guard, in part because in the ghetto community where he comes from all young men harbour a deep, "hatred for police or anybody in uniform” (AG Ob 3 Oct 29 par. 7). She also questions the guard’s behaviour for his remarks appear to have been inflammatory and his body language aggressive - all this in spite of the school’s attempts to give their guards some amount of training to help them deal with adolescents and her personally explaining to them that they should never touch the students. She knows therefore, that in her talk with the guard she will have to balance diplomacy with direction. Above all, she worries that suspending the student and keeping him out of school for several days can potentially, “lead to more harm than good when he is not living in good circumstances” (AG Ob 3 Oct 29 par. 8). Her only certainty is that the boy had left her office a little calmer, satisfied that at least he had a voice and his principal had listened.

On another occasion during mediation between students and their Mathematics teacher in which it becomes increasingly clear that the students’ disruptive behaviour stems from their dissatisfaction with the content of their lessons, she again demonstrates her faith in an approach that balances honesty with sensitivity and support with direction for inspiring the kind of trust and confidence that leads to harmonious relationships. Her
discussion with the students focuses on student responsibilities as well as teacher and principal responsibilities. Reminding them of their school code to which they had pledged to be respectful to all members of the school community and to work co-operatively to solve problems, she urges them to evaluate the appropriateness of their behaviour and to consider how they could have handled matters differently. Before leaving she promises to review the teacher responsibilities with the teacher. Some days later she rationalises her approach to the issue thus:

If we love people we try to make sure we don’t hurt them intentionally. We guide or correct them but we try to make sure that our correction is done in a decent way so that people will appreciate you. In all of this, people must trust you. They must know that what you are doing, you are doing because it is right. (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 78-82)

For Audrey Grant, school leadership is about quality relationships, and quality relationships source their supportive and harmonious dimensions from the interplay of knowing and understanding people, being actively involved and drawing on human relations skills.

The centrality she ascribes to quality relationships as a precursor to establishing a sense of community finds support in the literature. Indeed, her declaration that, “the main thing about leadership is people – the relationship between the leader and those you lead and between the various groups” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 124-125) echoes Fullan's (2001) opinion that, “…leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups” (p.5) and Barth’s (1990) assertion that, “The success of a school … depends above all on the quality of interactions between teacher and teacher, and teacher and administrator” (p.19). Her views on what needs to be done to develop relationships that embody community-mindedness also conform closely to existing theories and research. For example, she stresses the principal’s interpersonal skills, a propensity for talking and interacting with people, and an ability to feel empathy and inspire trust and confidence as essential for creating supportive, harmonious relationships particularly with and amongst staff; likewise, the principals in Day et al.’s (2000) research identified “relationship-centred qualities and skills” (p.45) as essential in their definitions of effective leadership. West-Burnham, (2001) argues that “interpersonal intelligence” (p.1) is key to leadership. He describes interpersonal intelligence in ways that resemble Mrs Grant’s leadership: a capacity to “engage with
others, to show genuineness and regard” (p.2), to respond with empathy and to listen effectively combined with “emotional self-management” (p.2).

‘Building quality relationships’, the property unpacked in this section, complements the second property - ‘empowering teachers’ - the focus of the following section.

Empowering teachers
Mrs Grant believes that promoting community-mindedness among teachers depends on leadership that empowers and supports them and that such an approach draws on knowledge about their dispositions, goals and capabilities if it is to be meaningful. In this way, the properties ‘building quality relationships’ and ‘empowering teachers’ are linked.

Because she is convinced that in a school as large as Springfield, “Leading is not a one-man show; … it could never work in an institution like this” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 149-150), she supports teacher initiatives, delegates and shares leadership responsibilities – all empowering practices that build leadership among teachers. She declares, “I give everybody a free reign so that they can use their initiative” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 158); however, she ensures that initiatives are in keeping with the “school’s situation and overall plan” (AG Iv 2 Oct 29 151). Occasionally, she finds that a project, “… needs guiding and toning down and getting it back to what we want it to do” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 159-160) so she will “lead from the front” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 162). Generally however, she reports that delegation works well at Springfield because her staff has grown to understand her expectations through the quality relationship they have built over time. She explains, “I delegate things to my teachers and they enjoy it … they know I like things done in a certain way and it must be of a certain standard” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 420-422). However, she points out that delegation is not about her abdicating responsibility, rather it is about being “an officer of every committee” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 158), sharing responsibility and promoting a team approach. When she asks teachers to lead teams, giving them the freedom to run with a project and challenging them to take responsibility for their decisions, she always makes herself available as a resource. Her assertion that, “In building the team spirit, you have to be there yourself. You can't say, ‘Well you do this and you do that’ and nobody ever sees you leaving your office and being a part of the team” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 154-156), is very much in keeping with the community-mindedness she is seeking to effect.
As the leader of a teaching community Audrey Grant expects support from and gives support to her teachers, especially the kind of support that enables their effectiveness and ultimately student learning. She believes that to learn well, students need teachers who are professionally and emotionally comfortable: “Where there are good teachers, where the teachers feel good about themselves and respect themselves … we get results and at least 80 per cent of our students will emulate them” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 465-467). Consequently, support for teachers comes high on her list of leadership responsibilities as she seeks to enable their effectiveness through attention to professional development, resources and physical amenities. She invests heavily in professional development primarily through accommodating the school’s Thursday afternoon in-service training sessions and encouraging staff to attend MOEY&C workshops. In addition, she has recently created a new post for an experienced teacher to provide professional guidance and support for new teachers, who, faced with a large institution such as Springfield, sometimes, “… wane, so we try to keep them alive …and help them along with their professional development” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 207-208). However, Mrs Grant’s concern for teacher needs and her support go beyond professional development to include provision of improved physical amenities, particularly the kind that afford teachers a degree of dignity for she argues that “teaching deserves some of the pampering that people in the private sector get” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 442-443). Ever conscious that the multitude of subject-based staffrooms scattered over the school campus, their limited facilities and inadequate space militate against teacher relationships and a professional community spirit, Mrs Grant dreams of improving physical conditions for her teachers one day by building a two-storey staff centre with communal office and recreational facilities. In the meantime, she hopes that the staff dining room that is being built will at least allow the teachers to eat in comfort and in some small way serve as a structure for connecting teachers to one another.

_Cultivating cohesion_

The third property that supports the conceptual category ‘reaching in’ relates to cohesion. For Audrey Grant cultivating cohesion is about more than building school loyalty through events and symbols; it is also about deliberately foregrounding collective commitment, interdependence and shared community responsibility in a school whose size and physical layout increase the likelihood of isolation and fragmentation. These emphases are evident in several ways.
Firstly, school policy dictates that in order to graduate all students must be involved in at least two extra-curricula activities such as sports teams, performing groups or student clubs and societies for each of their first five years at Springfield. Traditional structures such as the house system, subject departments, year group and class projects are also encouraged as a means of deepening relationships between and among staff and students and of reaffirming group commitment. As she says: “We encourage things where they are in small groups; they develop a bond … and they know each other” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 182-3).

Another means of strengthening the ties that bind members is through committees established to work on common goals or joint tasks. By garnering teacher and student expertise and support from across disciplines and grades, the school is better able to identify solutions that address student needs that are not discipline specific. The Boys’ Day programme, the pilot project for single sex classes and the Reading programme are examples of innovations where teachers have taken collective responsibility for improving student performance, shared their knowledge and skills and collaboratively implemented the programmes. Furthermore, by routinely realigning and changing the composition of teams and committees to suit different purposes or tasks, the school community remains cohesive yet also fluid and flexible.

Mrs Grant’s focus on collective responsibility is evident in her drive to address social deterioration manifest in increasing instances of coarse behaviour, indiscipline and disregard for the feelings of others. She talks about infusing what she calls “dignity” into everything the school does: “I’d love to move this school from being vulgar and loud to just be - you know - not docile but cultured” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 476-477). She believes that this cannot happen unless all members of the school demonstrate respect for the school and towards one another. Staff input in developing the school plan, students’ signing the school code, the beautification programme and the emphasis on professional conduct are among her chief ways of reminding staff and students of their responsibility to dignify the school. The language of shared responsibility is also evident in her interactions with various groups. In her address to the parents of Grade 11 students she draws attention to the “partnership” (AG Ob 2 Oct 24 par. 3) between them and the school in preparing and supporting students for external examinations. Similarly, in her talk with the grade 10 Mathematics class (described earlier on pages
114 - 115), she reinforces the idea of shared responsibility for learning and co-operation between teacher and students saying, “You must support Mr K.” and reminds them that they signed to a school code that highlights co-operation and respect for others.

By sustaining traditional structures that promote common goals, realigning committees that focus on cross-disciplinary tasks and using language that highlights co-operation and mutual support, Audrey Grant advances collective commitment and responsibility - important characteristics in her concept of community. Her emphasis on teacher empowerment, collective commitment and shared responsibility as a basis for quality staff relationships leading to a strong internal community is also borne out in the literature (Barth, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1994, 1999). As Graves (1992) points out, teachers in a genuine community feel, “a sense of ownership, efficacy and power leading to real commitment and responsibility” (p.63).

Complementing ‘reaching in’ and the three properties ‘building quality relationships’, ‘empowering teachers’ and ‘cultivating cohesion’ is a second major conceptual category entitled ‘stretching out’. This category and its properties are the focus of discussion in the following sections.

Stretching out
A second striking feature of Audrey Grant’s understanding of her work as a community principal stems from her belief that Springfield is historically tied and obliged to serve as best it can, the communities in which it is located. As she relates the circumstances that led to their establishment, she explains her thinking:

I am sorry for these people because I’m told that they eventually came here when they were bulldozed from Kingston and all these lands were belonging to the Roman Catholics and then the school put up the wall …. I’m told it was Archbishop P. who gave permission for them to settle on the lands … I get great satisfaction from working with them and knowing that our school is serving some kind of purpose. (AG Iv 2 Oct 29 32-39)

This community orientation is demonstrated in a number of ways which together complement ‘reaching in’ and have been brought together in the second conceptual category entitled ‘stretching out’. Whereas ‘reaching in’ focuses on shared responsibility through deepening relationships within the internal school community, ‘stretching out’ focuses on social responsibility through broadening relationships and
working with the external community. Data analysis suggests that ‘stretching out’ treats social responsibility as two-pronged; it involves positioning the school as a community resource and at the same time valuing and responding to the external community as a school resource. Both of these properties, described below, explain how and under what conditions Audrey Grant forges links and relationships that weave together the resources of the school and those of the community for mutual benefit.

**Positioning the school as a community resource**

Mrs Grant attaches great importance to community work because she believes that schools and those who work in them have a responsibility to help improve the lives of others. On this matter she says:

> We are here to serve – I mean it's a service we are rendering that we hope the people will appreciate and that it will change their lives eventually, to let them know no matter where you live … once you know what you would like to become and you can work towards your plan, you will get there, no matter where you live. So we do a lot of community work. (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 53-59)

This attitude is also reflected in routine tasks: “I always sign my correspondence ‘Yours in service’ for it's a service that we are doing” (AG Iv 2 Oct 29 177-178). It is this interpretation of the school’s purpose and her role as school leader that has influenced her decision to make Springfield a social, educational and recreational patron for the surrounding communities. This occurs in several ways.

Firstly, she nurtures values that foster service and social responsibility amongst students and staff. The 30-hour community service requirement for Grades 12 and 13 and student outreach programmes such as the feeding of the street people are ways in which students “render service” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 222) and put into effect the school’s “emphasis on mercy” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 224). The staff decision to adopt five Basic schools from the adjoining communities and to assist them with materials and provide professional support also demonstrates their commitment to community service. Mrs Grant is especially pleased with the combined efforts of staff and students to host an annual Christmas treat for the upper grades in these schools. She herself models community service values through her active involvement with a community-based organization that provides skills training for school dropouts.
Linked to the emphasis on outreach through service is the practice of making school services and expertise available to the wider community. In addition to the once per term training sessions with the Basic school teachers, Mrs Grant releases her teachers as trainers for MOEY&C workshops as long as arrangements are in place to cover the classes they will miss. As the Education Officer seeking her permission to use her Business Administration teacher for two upcoming seminars remarked, “It is not competition anymore. It is co-operation. It is our children” (AG Ob 3 Oct 29 par. 7).

Another way of offering school services to the community has been through an evening school programme and the provision of free tuition to promising residents from nearby communities: “We give scholarships to those who cannot afford to pay for lessons because as educators we know that education is the answer. Without education the ghetto mentality will prevail” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 59-62)

Furthermore, by openly sharing the school’s facilities and accommodating community activities in school buildings, Mrs Grant has successfully connected the school and the community. As she explains, “This is an area where several thousands of young children are jammed up in a little lane so we have to make the school available” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 123-126). Sports, church and cultural groups from adjoining communities are now rostered to use the football field and the hall on a regular basis and this has resulted in their gradually perceiving the school facilities as theirs so they are protective of the school. Mrs Grant recalls, “Last school year a fridge was stolen from my Home Ec. Centre down at the junior school and when I enquired about it, I got back the fridge. It was brought back” (AG Iv 2 Oct 29 47-50).

Mrs Grant believes that in addition to welfare and professional support for the external community, Springfield must also include interventions that address social problems as part of its campaign to become a socially responsible school. To this end, the school has embarked on a parenting programme to assist, “parents and children who are undergoing physical verbal or emotional abuse” (AG Ex Doc 5 par. 1) and is planning to pilot a grief counselling programme next term to assist students and their families whose relatives and close friends have died violently.

Offering the school as a community resource in these ways improves school-community relationships and at the same time provides unifying experiences for the student and teacher groups involved, thus reaffirming internal community identity.
Valuing and responding to the community as a school resource

A second property that emerged from the category ‘stretching out’ has been labelled ‘valuing and responding to the community as a school resource’. ‘Stretching out’ is about deepening school-community connections but such connections are not one-way. They are governed by the principle of reciprocity – in as much as the school is a community resource, the community is also a school resource. On this basis, Mrs Grant encourages practices that acknowledge the worth of community members and welcomes initiatives that capitalise on the combined knowledge, skills and resources of school and community.

One of the ways in which she has done this is by revitalising the past students association so that they have grown into a valuable resource on which the school draws for support with sports and beautification projects. She relates how she first organised to bring them together at a party, “on my lawn there and I started with those I taught and knew they were influential and so on. It was way beyond my expectations because over two hundred of them turned up” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 201-204). However, the past students are more than a source of financial support. Every year the school selects a different profession, identifies past students who have excelled in that particular profession and honours them as a group at a special ceremony. In this way successful past students represent a source of inspiration and function as role models for current students; at the same time the school is publicly acknowledging the value of past students to the school community and celebrating their contribution to the wider community.

Another of Mrs Grant’s initiatives has involved drawing on residents from nearby communities, particularly tradesmen and labourers, for casual jobs such as projects sponsored by the past students’ association or the parent teachers association. She also believes that it is particularly important as a school leader to forge a relationship with the residents through face-to-face interaction and participation in community activities and social occasions. She describes how she and her vice-principals have developed a relationship with the residents:

We take a walk in there at least once for the term. … We have developed a good rapport with them. We attend funerals and so on because if there's a death over there and the principal doesn't go it means that I've fallen out of favour or something. (AG Iv 2 Oct 29 26-30)
Mrs Grant believes that these associations have helped to develop a protective attitude among some of the citizens towards Springfield students and teachers. She points out that the school feels safer knowing that if “outsiders, like people hiding from places in Kingston, come and interfere … if residents know, they will deal with it” (AG Iv 2 Oct 29 44-46).

There are signs that parents too are entering into a productive relationship with the school. Mrs Grant cites the success of a Fun Day that raised J$480,000 organised by the PTA the previous year. During fieldwork, a parent, who at one time played cricket for Jamaica and now volunteers his time to help coach the school’s cricket team, arrives in her office announcing, “Mrs Grant, I’m here to make you an offer you can’t refuse” (AG Ob 3 Oct 29 par. 10) as he details plans underway to secure corporate sponsorship from a large fast food company for the school’s cricket team.

Indeed, promoting community connectedness extends to collaborative ventures with other school communities. In a rather unusual partnership with another educational institution, Springfield co-produced an original musical with a prominent all-boys high school. With the production team drawn from both schools and the combined talents of over 100 students and teachers, the two institutions co-operatively created a script and staged a series of performances at both schools.

The conceptual category ‘stretching out’ illustrates that for Mrs Grant, community is not so much about a place; rather it is about a network of relationships where students, teachers, parents, past students and those who benefit from the school share responsibility for it and contribute to its development and the success of its students. Her care orientation together with her assertion that “education is the answer” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 62), and her belief that a quality education can influence community capacity for social change, accounts for her emphasis on developing a positive relationship between the school and the community by positioning the school as a community resource and valuing the community as a school resource. Carter (1999) writing about the relationship between education and development in poor rural US communities argues that educational opportunities and school-community partnerships are crucial for developing the human and social capital necessary for meaningful social change. Similarly, Kilpatrick, Johns, Mulford, Falk, & Prescott (2002) report that based on research conducted in rural Australia, school-community partnerships are beneficial to
all parties and result in “an increased capacity of individuals and the communities as a whole to influence their own futures” (p. 93). In addition, they link successful school community partnerships to principals who are aware of community needs, inspire commitment to the idea of community connectedness, engage in empowering practices and provide ongoing support for outreach activities and collaborative ventures. According to Riggins-Newby, (2003) principals of urban schools too, can make their schools “community magnets” (p.8) by working closely with parents, community representatives and neighbourhood advisory councils. Several other writers have also suggested that success as a school community depends on addressing problems together as a community, providing social support, helping students’ families, networking and encouraging partnerships with a variety of groups (Epstein, 1995; Graves, 1992; Sanders & Harvey, 2002). These are among some of the strategies used by Audrey Grant as she strives to make Springfield High a centre for community development.

Concluding comments

Viewed together, the two categories ‘reaching in’ and ‘stretching out’ demonstrate that Audrey Grant defines leadership in terms of leveraging relationships built on care, mutual respect and co-operation with a view to developing community connectedness. This orientation is a response to context: the focus on developing a network of internal relationships that is described in ‘reaching in’ is prompted by a large school population while the network of external relationships that is highlighted in ‘stretching out’ is, to a great extent, a response to the physical location of the school. The ‘reaching in’ ‘stretching out’ relationship is symbiotic; a strong internal community built on quality relationships is the platform for extending care and concern beyond the school gate to include others in the school’s purpose and is the foundation for developing community connectedness. At the same time, engaging in co-operative activities that broaden the school’s relationships provides the kind of unity experiences that strengthen internal relationships.

Creating and sustaining strong school communities is a proposal pervasive throughout the leadership and school improvement literature (Barth, 1990; Day et al., 2000; Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1994, 1999, 2001) and particularly amongst those who advocate caring leadership. Especially relevant to the Springfield context is Toffler and Toffler's, (1995) view that tight connections among school, family and community members is a necessary focus for large schools that are
by virtue of their size and complexity potentially impersonal, lonely environments for staff and students.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has presented and analysed findings from interviews, observation and document analysis as four individual cases. For each case, the major conceptual categories together with the dominant concepts and properties that were developed from open and axial coding, were presented and analysed. In this way, within-case analysis has provided an understanding of how each principal conceptualises and practises leadership within his or her respective context.

Collectively, these four cases provided the body of data used to inform the study’s cross-case analysis. The following chapter, Chapter 6, discusses the four cases as a whole and presents the cross-case analysis based on themes emerging from the data.
Chapter 6
THEORETICAL DISCUSSION OF CASE STUDIES

It will be recalled that this study set out to explicate the concept of school leadership as understood and experienced by four selected high school principals, using case study methods as defined by Merriam (1998) and Stake (1995). For reporting a multiple case study, Borg and Gall (1989) recommend, that following the presentation of individual cases, cross-case analysis should highlight similarities and differences between and among concepts and themes across cases. In a similar vein, Merriam (1998) describes multiple case studies as involving both within-case and cross-case analysis, with the latter seeking to “build abstractions across cases” (p.195). By examining each case individually, the previous chapter presented the “within-case analysis” (Merriam, 1998, p.194); by examining what the combination of cases reveals about principals’ understandings of school leadership for Jamaican high schools, this chapter presents the “cross-case analysis”(p.194). The purpose of cross-case analysis was to identify themes that summarise critical aspects of the principals’ conceptualizations of school leadership together with any variations of the themes that emerged across the four cases.

The remainder of this chapter is organized into three major sections: a brief overview summarising the main findings of each case; the presentation of two themes that emerged as a result of cross-case analysis together with a discussion of these themes in relation to existing school leadership literature; and concluding remarks that summarise the findings from cross-case analysis

Overview of the Four Cases

Huberman and Miles (1994) warn, “there is a danger that multiple cases will be analyzed at high levels of inference, aggregating out the local web of causality and ending with a smooth set of generalizations that may not apply to any single case” (p.435). Mindful of this warning, and in an effort to remain grounded in the particular even while abstracting more general themes that cut across cases, the cross-case analysis presented in this chapter is prefaced with a brief overview of the salient concepts and processes embodied in each of the cases presented in the previous chapter.

Case #1 - Mother of the poor

The within-case analysis uncovered two major conceptual categories – ‘caring for students’ and ‘nurturing a culture of excellence’ – that together with their respective
properties make up Norma Wilson’s understanding of leadership and illustrate what others mean when they refer to her as ‘Mother of the Poor’. She conceives of school leadership as the pursuit of excellence within a framework of valuing and caring for students. Given this philosophy and the Morrow Park context, her role as school leader involves being a social advocate, a strong educator and a judicious manager. Her views about the purpose of leadership and the desired outcomes suggest an orientation to moral leadership (Greenfield, 1999; Hodkinson, 1991,1996; Sergiovanni, 1992) while her emphasis on care and attention to issues that limit the capacity of poor students to achieve are consistent with a social justice theory of leadership (Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Nussbaum, 2000; Shields, 2003).

Case #2 - The reculturing principal
Sr. Margaret’s understanding of school leadership revolves around the related concepts of personal vision, shared vision, improved practices and changing structures, all located in two conceptual categories named ‘shaping the vision’ and ‘realising the vision’. As she describes the processes involved in shaping and realizing the vision at Holy Spirit High, she presents her leadership role in terms of inspiring commitment, facilitating change and enabling improvement and continuous learning among members of the school community. Her desire to transform the school culture so that it is committed to growth and receptive to change suggests an affinity with the notion of leadership as reculturing (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 1998, 2001; Peterson, 2002).

Case #3 - Principal as social architect
Two important components in Kenton Edward’s construction of school leadership include building student morale through processes that inspire positive beliefs and communicate care; and improving behaviour and academic performance through initiatives designed to empower students, help them manage their behaviour and raise their academic standards. He believes that leadership has to concentrate on integrating students’ identity development and caring relationships with instructional and management approaches if it is to be effective with at-risk students and at the same time meet Ministry and public expectations. The emphases on student morale, behaviour and academic performance reflect his understanding of school leadership as a response to students’ social problems, diminished self-concept, home instability and dysfunctional community relationships. This conceptualization parallels calls for school leadership
that focus on building social capital among students (Beck & Murphy, 1993; Leithwood et al., 1999).

**Case #4 - The community principal**

The concepts underpinning the two conceptual categories ‘reaching in’ and ‘stretching out’ exemplify Audrey Grant’s understanding of leadership as building caring, cooperative relationships among all persons involved in the schooling process with a view to developing community connectedness. Her desire to improve the lives of the less fortunate in society and her belief that a quality education can influence capacity for social change have led her to conceptualise her role as a service-oriented one with quality relationships and community-mindedness featuring prominently. Three significant strands of research that relate to Audrey Grant’s understanding of leadership are: theories and investigations that foreground caring (Beck & Murphy, 1994; Lyman, 2000; Noddings, 1984, 1993; Starratt, 1994); those that advocate a focus on creating and sustaining strong school communities (Day et al., 2000; Leithwood et al., 1999; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1994, 1999, 2001) and those that link social justice issues and an ethic of community (Furman 2004; Shields 2003).

Table 6.1 presents a summary of the dominant features that characterise each participant’s conceptualization of leadership. The research study’s guiding questions together with critical concepts generated from data analysis have informed the organizing framework.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother of the Poor</th>
<th>Reculturing Principal</th>
<th>Social Architect</th>
<th>Community Principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Core values</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care &amp; protection of the disadvantaged</td>
<td>Respect for others</td>
<td>Care</td>
<td>Love &amp; care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic excellence</td>
<td>Growth, improvement &amp; lifelong learning</td>
<td>Student identity development</td>
<td>Co-operative relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaborative relationships</td>
<td>Social responsibility</td>
<td>Community service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To promote excellence by minimising circumstances that militate against student achievement</td>
<td>To enable improvement &amp; continuous learning through transforming school culture</td>
<td>To add value to students’ lives by developing their personal, academic and social capital</td>
<td>To effect school improvement through building a sense of community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dominant emphasis</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiatives that cater to students’ moral, psychological, economic and academic needs.</td>
<td>Attitudes that nurture a culture receptive to change</td>
<td>Dismantling psycho-social barriers that prevent academic success</td>
<td>A network of positive, productive relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major conceptual categories</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for students</td>
<td>Shaping vision</td>
<td>Building student morale</td>
<td>Reaching in to deepen internal relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a culture of excellence</td>
<td>Realising vision</td>
<td>Improving behaviour and academic performance</td>
<td>Stretching out to broaden community relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key concepts</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ well-being &amp; total development; Student safety &amp; protection; Inspiring hope; Academic achievement; Improved teaching &amp; learning; Goal setting &amp; accountability; Resource management</td>
<td>Personal vision; Shared vision; Inspiring trust &amp; commitment; Collaboration; Structures &amp; policies that support vision; Improved academic performance; Professional development; Balancing tensions</td>
<td>Sensitivity to context; Caring relationships; High expectations; Positive self-concept &amp; school image; Student empowerment; Practical discipline; Improved grades.</td>
<td>Quality relationships; Service to others; Shared leadership; Cohesion; Reciprocity; School as a community resource; Community as a school resource</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cross-case Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) explain cross-case analysis as an attempt “to see processes and outcomes across many cases, to understand how they are qualified by local conditions, and thus to develop more sophisticated descriptions and more powerful explanations” (p.172). The following cross-case analysis examines understandings of school leadership and associated practices across the cases presented in Chapter 5. In order to do this, the four cases were compared for emerging themes corresponding to the central research question - How do selected Jamaican high school principals define and interpret school leadership within the context of their work and experiences, and what are the consequences of these concepts for their leadership practice? The results of the cross-case analysis are presented as two broad themes that characterize the participants’ conceptualization and interpretation of leadership for Jamaican high schools. The themes are:

• leadership as values-driven and
• leadership as acting on and responding to context.

These two interrelated themes are explored by highlighting common elements and variations across the four cases. Table 6.2 (p.132) and Table 6.3 (p.145) display exemplar quotes that reflect dimensions of each theme and these are discussed in relation to theories, research and issues raised in the educational leadership literature.

Theme 1 – Leadership as values-driven

In recent years those writing about educational leadership have highlighted the role of values in underpinning approaches to school leadership (Day et al., 2000; Gold, Evans, Earley, Halpin & Collarbone, 2003; Moos, Mahony & Reeves, 1998; National College for School Leadership, 2001, Sergiovanni, 1992). Debate about the nature and direction of these values revolves around tensions between what principals value and what policy-makers and others involved in the educational process value. Grace (1995) argues that among British principals, government’s managerial, market-dominated values compete with principals’ more humanistic, socially democratic values and Wright (2001, 2003) contests that in a climate where values are defined not at the local level by principals themselves but at the political level, principals are engaged in “bastard leadership”.

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As the role of values in the conceptualization of school leadership among the participants in this study is considered, Sr. Margaret’s comment that, “School is about life and life doesn’t go on without values” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 8) serves to contextualise the theme of values-driven leadership. All principals articulated personal and professional values that informed their understanding of leadership and were observed weaving them into their interactions and leadership practices. The nature of these values, their origins and the ways in which the principals affirmed them, emerged as they described their experiences and discussed their views on education, the role of schools and the purpose of school leadership. Although they did not dictate that their schools should uphold these values, they aligned them with the school vision and communicated them through modeling, mission statements, goal setting and decisions about their leadership focus and practices.

Table 6.2 presents the substantive values that formed the scaffolding on which these principals interpreted leadership and displays exemplar quotes that encapsulate their value commitments. These values are: care and respect, social justice and excellence
Table 6.2  Theme 1 - Leadership as values-driven

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Care and Respect</th>
<th>Mother of the Poor</th>
<th>Reculturing Principal</th>
<th>Social Architect</th>
<th>Community Principal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Care and Respect</td>
<td>I have no doubt in my mind that they like me and they know I love them (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 307-308)</td>
<td>Unless you respect persons you're not valuing their opinions ... so you will not get very far with growth as a school (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 28-30)</td>
<td>Love is important. When I mention love here I mean love for people, for your staff, for your students. (KE Iv 3 Oct 22 103-104)</td>
<td>This job means loving people ... you’ve got to love people, to be close to them (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 4-7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice</td>
<td>I figure this is my work for the country – these children have good minds but they have poor circumstances. We must educate people in the ghetto from the parents right up (NW Iv 1 Oct 2 149-150)</td>
<td>There's a sense of helplessness – that's one of the things I don't like. Because you know that it is difficult for a child to perform academically and grow and mature in a healthy way in a particular home environment. Sometimes we can help, but sometimes things are just too complex for us (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 376-380)</td>
<td>It [leadership] has to do with a love for people and education because education involves people. You love education because of what it can do for people and because of also your concern for people, poor people in your society. (KE Iv 3 Oct 22 33-36)</td>
<td>It's a service we are rendering that we hope ... will change their lives eventually (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 53-54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>I tell the girls all the time - we don't aim for mediocrity; we have to aim for excellence so you need to do more than the average. (NW Iv 3 Oct 31 192-194).</td>
<td>We don't get the top, top top students but at the same time there should be more girls getting Grade 1's. (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 119-120)</td>
<td>I am not satisfied with the number of students in a class who are getting below 50. ... We have been talking about how to improve that. We need to see more classes where all students are getting above 50 (KE Iv 2 Oct 15 Oct 117-120)</td>
<td>“The subject is not just Maths but success. We want you to be successful students and successful citizens” (AG Ob 1 Oct 23 7-9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I just want the girls to be the very best they can in everything they do (NW Iv 3 Oct 31 285-286)</td>
<td>I don't like mediocrity in anything at all so excellence is a must. (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 567-568)</td>
<td>Our focus is on chemistry and what can be done to improve the passes and to increase the numbers of students taking it. (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 631-632)</td>
<td>This is an institution of learning and if students come here and leave as the way they came there would be no purpose for their coming here (AG Iv 3 Nov 189-190)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Care and respect

As Table 6.1 (p.129) indicates, care for individuals emerged as a core value in the principals’ conceptualisation of school leadership; as stated by Mrs. Grant, “If you didn’t care about people, you wouldn’t stay” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 52). Indeed, it is clear from the exemplar quotes in Table 6.2 that care and respect for students featured most prominently. Mr. Edwards says, “I like to know students are taken care of” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 298); Sr. Margaret declares, “I hate to hear teachers write off children” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 521) and embedded in Mrs. Wilson’s repeated reference to students as “raw diamonds” (NW Iv 1 Oct 2 25), is a commitment to caring and respecting them. Moreover, care for students extends beyond their academic needs to concern for their total development. Norma Wilson dreams of a boarding school to increase students’ exposure to “proper training, proper values, take them to church” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 484); Audrey Grant wants to develop students’ “dignity … refinement and culture” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 475); and Kenton Edwards focuses on strengthening students’ identity and building their social capital. Similarly, Sr. Margaret advocates attention to the development of the whole person as crucial because, “There is nothing more pathetic than a person who is academically brilliant who is not coping socially or emotionally … not able to self-guide” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 607-608). These are a few examples of how caring was manifested through practices that address students’ total development. In this respect, these principals come close to Mayeroff’s (1990) description of the purpose of caring as facilitating growth, self-actualisation and development in others.

However, as Table 6.2 illustrates, these principals’ understanding of care was not confined to students but included their staff and their communities whom they treated with respect and dignity. Sr. Margaret’s emphasis on “shared vision”, “dialogue” and “collaboration” and Audrey Grant’s belief in shared leadership and giving teachers “a free reign so they can use their initiative” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 158) are grounded in their belief that respect for others through ensuring they have a voice is fundamental to care. During fieldwork as we walked through the school, academic, administrative and ancillary staff members were acknowledged, many were introduced to me and their special services and contributions to school life were affirmed. Norma Wilson was particularly eager for me to meet the canteen staff and introduced each one by name, singling out Miss Campbell, “who at 84 has been with us for 50 years” (NW Ob 2 Oct 2
Kenton Edwards introduced one of his grounds men who had been ill and absent for a period, enquired about his health and added, “This is a hard worker” (KE Ob 3 Oct 15 108). These principals also displayed an intimate knowledge of their colleagues’ personal lives, enquiring into family and domestic matters and supporting and encouraging them. Norma Wilson stopped by one teacher’s desk to ask if she had succeeded in completing the readings for an assignment she had been trying to write as part of her Masters programme. Both Norma Wilson and Audrey Grant prioritized their attendance at funerals to support staff members who had lost family, over administrative duties. When Audrey Grant invited one of the school’s retired teachers to work part-time with the school choir reasoning, “Some people when they’re old if you don’t give them something to do they just die. They need to feel useful.” (AG Ob 1 Oct 23 32-33), she was using an ethic of care to guide her decisions and actions. Like Noddings (1984, 1992) and Lyman (2000) these principals understand caring as a way of relating to people.

The importance the principals attached to treating people with respect and dignity echoes Beck’s (1994) position that caring is grounded in a belief that all individuals are worthy of respect. Analysis of the cases also revealed that the four principals in this study subscribed to a protective, nurturing type of caring geared towards helping poor or disadvantaged students and their families to develop their potential and improve their life chances. This perspective aligns with Lawrence-Lightfoot’s (1983) conclusion that an important aspect of caring relates to having regard for and treating with respect “the weakest members” of a community (p.349) and Lyman’s (2000) observation that caring leaders cater to individual needs.

While the principals’ understandings of care as a value share many features, their enactment of caring varies. Beck and Newman’s assertion that “caring takes many forms and has many faces” (1996, p.172) and Lyman’s view that, “Caring is always a personal path, crowded by complexity” (2000, p.152) are true of these principals as each one channelled his or her caring through different emphases and practices as dictated by their contexts. For Norma Wilson and Kenton Edwards caring has meant addressing circumstances that impede academic success; for Sr. Margaret it has meant facilitating growth and continuous learning while for Audrey Grant it has been about building community. Although they demonstrated care in ways unique to them as individuals
and to their schools, all their practices embodied respect and appreciation for the worth of all in the school community; an emphasis on increasing individuals’ worth through formal learning or other opportunities for growth and self-development; and cultivating an ethic of care through visioning, goal setting and modeling.

Social justice
In this study of Jamaican principals, analysis of the cases revealed that as an extension to caring, social justice was also deemed an important value. Furman and Shields (2003) point out that the components of a social justice perspective are many and varied. However, the collective work of scholars such as Larson and Murtadha (2002), Murphy (2003), Nussbaum (2000), Shields (2003), Strachan (1999) and Thew (2002) suggests that several broad-ranging constructs predominate, four of which are relevant to the principals in this study - a caring disposition, a commitment to use education as a means of improving life chances, sensitivity to hardships coupled with a belief in the ability to overcome them, and a focus on reducing inequities. The following paragraphs will discuss these constructs in turn.

Firstly, social justice and care are companion concepts (Beck, 1991, 1992; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001; Starratt, 1991). Hence, leaders who embrace social justice ideals tend to be caring and compassionate. As illustrated under the secondary theme ‘care and respect’ in Table 6.2 (p.132), all four principals in this study were concerned about the manner in which people were treated. In addition, they demonstrated an understanding of, compassion for, and commitment to the individuals and groups they served. As a Roman Catholic nun and member of an order whose goal in founding the school was “education of the economically poor” (MR Doc 3 p.2), Sr. Margaret’s sensitivity to social justice issues is understandable. Furthermore, her remark that she would not be tempted to relinquish her post at Holy Spirit High where she works with “poor working-class parents and their children” (MR Ob 1 Oct 9 63) to assume a position in a middle-class school community, underscores her commitment to the poor. Similarly, Mrs. Wilson’s assertion, “If this was a school for rich people’s children, I would have left long ago” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 517) and Mrs. Grant’s remark, “We are here to serve” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 53) make clear their dedication to their students, families and communities. Although Kenton Edwards is quick to tell his students that poverty does not justify poor behaviour or indiscipline, he takes students’ circumstances into account in his interactions and his decisions, on occasion reminding himself and his teachers, “This is
a poor child, living in poor conditions therefore, we need to understand why he or she is behaving like this” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 417-419). Taken together, these four principals subscribed to a belief in the “intrinsic worth and value of all individuals and the communities to which they belong” (Furman & Shields, 2003, p.13).

Secondly, leadership that encompasses social justice ideals, views education as a means of improving peoples’ lives and recognises schools as, “institutions that exist to serve the public good” (Larson & Murtadha, 2002, p.135). The principals in this study believed education was vital to national development and that as school leaders they had a responsibility to redress social and economic disparities. In particular, they described education as key in breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Table 6.2 (p.132) shows that three of the four principals explicitly linked social justice and education: Norma Wilson insisted, “We must educate people in the ghetto from the parents right up” (NW Iv 2 Oct 2 150); Kenton Edwards declared, “You love education because of what it can do for … poor people in your society” (KE Iv 3 Oct 22 34-36) and Audrey Grant asserted, “Education is the answer” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 60). Two of the principals have offered their schools as resource centres not just to enrolled students but also to poor and disadvantaged groups in the community. At Audrey Grant’s school, residents from nearby communities access reduced-cost and free tuition on the evening school programme while Sr. Margaret’s school accommodates teenage mothers from the local Women’s Centre who wish to continue their formal education.

According to a third construct, socially just leaders are sensitive to the hardships that impede individuals’ freedom while remaining convinced that they can be overcome. Without exception, the principals in this study connected with their students’ everyday struggles. They exhibited an understanding of economic disadvantage and how that was impacting on some students’ ability to attend school regularly, obtain textbooks and generally benefit from education. This explains why they all invested substantial effort in developing and sustaining their schools’ feeding and welfare programmes. At the same time they communicated an unwavering belief in their students’ ability to succeed. Norma Wilson expressed her abiding faith in the students’ ability to achieve thus: ‘The girls are poor but they are bright, they have sharp minds and in spite of their circumstances … they can achieve” (NW Iv 1 Oct 2 22-24). Similarly, Audrey Grant, whose school is surrounded by depressed, volatile communities, has celebrated local,
successful past students from a chosen profession each year at a special ceremony thus inspiring and reinforcing confidence. In addition these principals were keenly aware of the impact of domestic and political violence, which together with community and family deprivation, were oppressive and compromised students’ emotional and psychological well-being. Yet, they remained optimistic about their own and their students’ abilities to overcome difficulties. Although Sr. Margaret admitted to sometimes feeling, “a sense of helplessness” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 376), she believes that being “passionate about the vision” (MR Iv 3 Oct 30 45) keeps her positive. Even in the face of an increasing “paralysis” arising from “a pervasive element of hopelessness … that questioned the purpose of achieving” (NW Ex Doc 2 par 4), Norma Wilson is resolute - “We can move forward” (NW Ex Doc 2 par 5). Likewise, Kenton Edwards refuses to accept a culture of despair, impressing on his staff and students the importance of self-belief: “I keep on telling my students that they are as good as … they can do as much as” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 336-337).

Finally, socially just leaders focus on reducing inequities and often “take stances that may be opposed to the mainstream perspective” (Furman & Shields, 2003, p.13). These case studies revealed that the principals felt morally obliged to reduce social and economic disparities, they actively addressed problems that interfered with or undermined students’ potential to succeed and in two cases were sufficiently confident to challenge policies and practices they believed were perpetuating disadvantage. They also integrated social justice as a value into the curriculum. At Mrs. Grant’s school, the value placed on social justice was such that it was formally embedded in the curriculum through a community service programme for Grade 12 students while at the other three schools it was exemplified through various outreach activities in which the students voluntarily participated.

Believing that all students deserve an equal right to stay in school and conscious of the barriers and inequities that limit their capacity to achieve, all four principals in this study supported special measures for poor students. They attached a great deal of importance to and invested resources and energy in their welfare programmes especially breakfast, lunch, transport, textbook, uniform and examination fee assistance, for they recognized that without access to school welfare, many students would be unable to stay in school. They described the financing of comprehensive welfare programmes as an
important part of their job, requiring them to solicit contributions from several sources: past students, donor agencies and the private sector. Their commitment to addressing material inequity is well illustrated by Norma Wilson’s comment that, “I do a tremendous amount of begging” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 145) and Kenton Edward’s observation, “It takes cash to care” (KE Ob 2 Oct 14 51).

Apart from material inequities these principals also recognized academic, social, attitudinal and policy inequities and sought solutions for students with different needs and abilities. For example, Audrey Grant explained the Boys’ Day programme and the pilot project with same sex classes at her co-educational school as special measures introduced in an effort to regain some gender balance in a society where low achievement levels among boys has resulted in growing concern about the marginalisation of Black males and the serious gender imbalance particularly at the tertiary level. Likewise, Norma Wilson introduced special measures to address inequities. Her concept of social justice incorporated providing students with access to resources and social experiences that carry them beyond the limitations imposed by the deprivation and violence in their normal lives. Special measures included provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities, opportunities to travel abroad, to attend local cultural events and visit points of interest; through these means she sought to expose students from deprived backgrounds to experiences that their middle-class counterparts benefit from as a matter of course. Her curriculum initiative - the Preparation for Life Programme (PFL) in conjunction with HEART (the agency responsible for vocational training) – was an attempt to address what she perceived as both a difference in academic interest and ability as well as a political injustice. Through the PFL programme she ensured that students who were neither interested in nor ready to write seven CXC subjects, were still in a position to achieve meaningful outcomes at the end of their schooling through post-secondary training with HEART. In promoting this PFL initiative, Norma Wilson was challenging enduring attitudes and practices that ignore or devalue alternatives to the traditional academic curricula that lead to ‘O’/’A’ level or CXC/CAPE qualifications. Moreover, her confidence was such that she did not delay implementation while awaiting official permission from the Ministry. In this respect, she is the kind of social justice leader that Furman and Shields (2003) describe as, “willing to take stances that may be opposite to the mainstream perspective” (p.13). Margaret Russell and Kenton Edwards also challenged attitudes and responses that devalued students or reinforced disparities between groups. Sr. Margaret’s statement, “I
hate to hear teachers write off children or focus on one because she’s bright.” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 560-561) makes clear her belief in the equality of all students and concern for equal access to knowledge. Mr. Edwards’ focus on building students’ self-esteem and morale was fuelled by a social justice agenda, intent on reducing the impact of negative stereotyping and deficit thinking on non-traditional high school students. Mrs. Grant’s concern about how her school could address the needs of students whose parents or relatives had been incarcerated and those who had lost relatives and friends violently was aimed at addressing social disparities. In these ways the principals in this study attempted to reduce inequities and solve problems that limited their students’ “freedoms and capabilities to achieve” (Larson & Murtadha, 2002, p.152).

Analysis of these four cases has revealed that a social justice perspective permeated these principals’ interactions and influenced their decisions. Their perspective was characterized by a caring approach, a view of education as crucial to human growth and development, a belief in students’ capacity to succeed in spite of obstacles and a commitment to reducing inequities. Working in a context where economic and social inequities abound and in a sharply stratified secondary schooling system, it is hardly surprising that they connect their leadership to social justice issues.

Excellence
Another frequently mentioned value was excellence as illustrated by Mrs. Wilson’s exhortation to her students, “… we have to aim for excellence so you need to do more than the average” (NW Iv 3 Oct 31 193-194) and Sr. Margaret’s comment, “I don’t like mediocrity in anything at all so excellence is a must” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 567-568). The high value placed on academic performance as an aspect of excellence stems from their social justice perspective – the belief that eradication of poverty depends on education and academic success is a passport to social mobility - and to this extent it is an internally determined value. However, there is a sense in which the value placed on academic performance is also externally imposed. Formal examination results (‘A’ levels, ‘O’ levels, CXC and more recently CAPE) have always determined the status and desirability of schools in Jamaica. Furthermore, with the trend in recent years to publicly analyse and debate CXC results by subject and school, the school has become the unit of accountability, thereby increasing the pressure to raise achievement levels as measured through high pass rates in formal examinations and elevating the importance attached to students’ academic performance as measures of principals’ effectiveness and
accountability. That the four principals in this study attached importance to students’ academic achievement, articulated high expectations, encouraged their students to excel and their teachers to improve teaching/learning methods was therefore no surprise.

However, there are subtle differences in how the value attached to academic performance impacts on their leadership. In Kenton Edwards’ case, academic excellence relates to increasing the number of students deemed qualified by their teachers to sit the CXC examinations as well as increasing the number of passes. As a result, he has focused his efforts on setting academic targets as part of the school development plan, using assessment data to inform teaching, acquiring additional learning resources and promoting a reading programme aimed at improving students’ general academic performance. In contrast, Sr. Margaret’s concern is not so much with the number of examination passes, as with improving the levels of those passes. In her first interview she lamented, “… there should be more girls getting Grade 1’s” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 120); later, referring to performance in a specific subject, she repeated the need for higher standards: “With our CXC results we got a high percentage of passes - two Grade Ones and forty Twos - so there is something that just needs an extra …” (MR Iv 2 Oct 30 150-152). She has turned her attention to teachers’ professional development, student-centred teaching practices and the use of technology in classrooms as means of facilitating higher standards.

For Mrs. Wilson as for Mr. Edwards, improved grades are an integral part of the school development plan but like Sr. Margaret, she is concerned about quality of grades: “We embarked on the final year of our three year plan (1999-2002) with a determination to improve performance and the quality of our grades” (NW Ex Doc 2 par 3). Her new management information system facilitates her using assessment data to monitor student progress and compare the performance of classes and individuals in specific subjects, all with a view to improving teaching and ultimately student performance. Her enthusiasm for the school’s Preparation for Life programme is evidence that for her, academic success is measured not only in terms of performance on external examinations leading to post-secondary and tertiary education, but also in terms of success on alternative or internally examined programmes. At Morrow Park, all students are held to high standards irrespective of the nature of the programme they are engaged in.
From Table 6.2 (p.132) it is clear that Mrs. Grant is the only principal who, during interviews, does not explicitly identify examination passes, higher standards or quality of grades as measures of excellence; however, in her annual report to the school community she highlights the importance of academic preparation and examination performance for accessing career and further education opportunities. In addition, awards for academic excellence at both year and subject levels in internal examinations and prizes for the top achievers in ‘A’ level, CAPE and CXC examinations feature prominently at her school’s prize-giving ceremony.

Although these principals valued student academic performance as an important aspect of excellence, other meanings of the concept surfaced. Mrs. Wilson’s desire for the students, “to be the very best they can in everything they do” (NW Iv 3 Oct 31 285-286) suggests that for her, excellence is broader than academic achievement. Indeed, all the principals understood student learning as more than measurable achievement; they promoted development of the whole student, stressing social, psychological, cultural as well as academic aspects of learning as important educational goals. Like the principals in Strachan’s (1999) study into the impact of New Zealand’s neo-liberal education reforms on feminist leadership, the academic as well as social well-being of students was central to their leadership. Sr. Margaret argues that equipping students with academic skills while ignoring emotional and social development is a disservice: “We have misconstrued what is really important in life. There’s no point in turning out girls who have seven subjects at CXC but who get zero for social skills” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 614-616). They incorporated into their understanding of excellence concepts related to the ability of students to live peacefully with others, solve problems and give of their best to society. Audrey Grant’s comment, “We want you to be successful students and successful citizens” (AG Ob 1 Oct 23 8-9), offers insight into the value attached to both academic achievement and citizenship. Gold et al. (2003) also report that while the outstanding school leaders in their case studies were conscious of managerialist perspectives that highlight student outcomes and performance, they were also committed to “the wider educational, social and personal development of all pupils …” (p.136). Such a broad definition of excellence is in keeping with their commitment to the other two dominant values – care and respect and social justice.

The commitment of the principals in this study to the combined values of care, social justice and excellence also had implications for their response to accountability
measures. For them, a social justice or caring perspective and accountability measures aimed at improving student performance were not mutually exclusive. They expressed no concerns about tension between educational accountability and caring or social justice agendas often voiced in the literature (Grace, 1995; Marginson, 1993; Walker & Quong, 1998; Whitaker, 1998). Like the twelve principals in Day et al.’s (2000) study of effective leadership, these principals were “focused upon care and achievement simultaneously” (p.164); implicitly they supported Shields’ (2003) position that, “High standards and social justice must be inseparable” (p.71). Their focus on academic success was filtered through care and social justice values. Although aware of the Ministry’s thrust to introduce teacher and principal accountability and social pressure to improve the numbers passing CXC, their insistence on high standards and their focus on academic success emerged out of care and social justice values. They believed that accountability could serve the interests of social justice because academic success could improve students’ life chances by offering access to employment, further education and training. Their drive to improve students’ academic performance and the number of CXC passes was a pedagogical outcome of a caring and social justice perspective.

Contrary to Walker and Quong’s (1998) position that accountability can lead to conformity as, “school leaders may avoid new solutions because they may fear being ‘marked down’ if they depart from the norm” (p.87), evidence from these studies suggests that these principals did not feel threatened by accountability. Mrs. Wilson did not formally seek Ministry approval before implementing the Preparation for Life Programme and commented that, “They [the Ministry] can always quarrel but it is already done and my Board knows about it” (NW Iv 189-190). Mrs. Grant’s project with same sex classes was indicative of a similar willingness to take risks and seek non-traditional solutions. When Sr. Margaret decided not to introduce classroom observation as part of teacher appraisal until she was satisfied that teachers felt relatively comfortable observing and being observed, she was not conforming to Ministry policy on teacher appraisal. In these instances, the primacy of care, social justice and excellence values overrode any concerns about accountability.

At the same time, the principals were not indifferent to accountability measures; indeed they viewed them in a positive light. Sr. Margaret stated, “I am not one of those who knocks the Ministry because I know that they’re trying to put in place policies that will make schools more accountable, make the system work” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 523-525).
The other principals echoed similar sentiments. Mrs. Grant maintained that accountability had made the community, “more conscious of what a school should be doing. We are more answerable for what is going on in here” (AG Iv 2 Oct 29 66-68). She added that being “more answerable” had prompted her to adopt a more critical approach to her leadership: “I have to make sure that my teachers, me, all of us are doing the right thing by the students” (AG Iv 2 Oct 29 74-76). Her use of the phrase “doing the right thing by the students” in this context, suggests that she saw a link between attention to social justice and accountability policies.

Analysis of these four cases has revealed care, social justice and excellence as dominant values that guided principals’ understanding and practice of leadership. Collectively, the values of the principals in this study interact with their leadership in much the same way as Day et al. (2000) describe in reporting values that underpinned the work of principals in their research. They wrote:

The vision and practices of these heads were organized around a number of core personal values concerning the modeling and promotion of respect (for individuals), fairness and equality, caring for the well-being and whole development of students and staff, integrity and honesty. (p.39)

Care, social justice and excellence acted as a compass for the principals in this study, influencing the direction they took without particularizing decisions, interactions and practices. While all four principals were informed by and respected this set of common values, they applied them in different ways, fashioning their own individual leadership approaches and modifying their emphases in response to their personal circumstances as well as the contextual purposes and special needs of the schools in which they worked. This explains how the three value commitments highlighted in Table 6.2 (p.132) have emerged as the connecting thread between this theme – Leadership as values-driven - and the second theme - Leadership as responding to and acting on context - which will be discussed in the following section.

**Theme 2 – Leadership as responding to and acting on context**

In its *Annual Review of Research 2002-03* the National College for School Leadership (2003) declares, “One of the most robust findings from research into leadership is that context matters” (p.9). A growing interest in the relationship between leadership and cultural, societal and organizational contexts is evident in the work of scholars like
A focus on cultural context is also reflected in the theme of the *Peabody Journal of
Education, 73*(2), 1998 – Leading Schools in a Global Era: A Cultural Perspective
(Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998a) – which explores how the values and norms of society
shape the expectations, beliefs and behaviours of those in educational leadership
positions. Although Bush and Glover (2003) acknowledge that, “the most important
variable may be that of culture, societal and organizational.” (p.29), they also point out
that additional research is needed into the influence of school context on leadership.
Another contextual element that is attracting attention is policy. The extent to which
reform policies informed by managerialist values impact on principal practice,
continues to be the subject of debate (Angus, 1993; Humes, 2000; Southworth, 1999).

In this study, analysis has revealed that the four principals interacted with a range of
overlapping contexts among which the personal, school-community and policy contexts
emerged as the most influential. Interwoven through these contexts were each school’s
individual culture - its history, traditions and rituals - as well as the more widely shared
Jamaican social context. Table 6.3 overleaf, presents the three dominant contexts
together with excerpts from interviews that capture how the principals both respond to
and act on these contexts as they lead their schools. Following the presentation of Table
6.3, the remaining sections of the chapter examine each element of context in turn.
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Personal context</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mother of the Poor</strong></th>
<th><strong>Reculturing Principal</strong></th>
<th><strong>Social Architect</strong></th>
<th><strong>Community Principal</strong></th>
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<td>I try my very best to delegate ... It’s not that I go and interfere. ... But truthfully, nothing happens unless I know about it. I have to know every detail ... I am too much of a perfectionist and I know it. (NW Iv 3 Oct 31 250-277)</td>
<td>I was very young and could have been led in different directions ... So in terms of accepting myself, knowing what my strengths were as a person, knowing what I could manage and couldn’t manage, a lot of that came from my own training, my own formation and my early years as a sister (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 8-15)</td>
<td>One thing that this experience tells me is that I must be closer to my children ... I’ve said it over and over again: I would prefer to suffer for a while in an unhappy marriage than to have my children going between me and my wife largely because of my experience in this post and what I have seen broken homes do to the students (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 499-505)</td>
<td>The former principals ... were all four different persons and I think I am able now to take the best of all four together (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 67-70)</td>
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<th><strong>School-community context</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mother of the Poor</strong></th>
<th><strong>Reculturing Principal</strong></th>
<th><strong>Social Architect</strong></th>
<th><strong>Community Principal</strong></th>
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<td>They [students] are really affected by what’s happening in society—hopelessness, don’t want to do anything. They tell me, some of them, they don’t see the point So I have to steer them out of that mindset (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 315-318)</td>
<td>From the beginning I knew that one of the main things we needed to change was teachers – how they see themselves (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 203-205)</td>
<td>We have effected a change in uniforms ...the first in 22 years ... They [students] look different I realise. I’m hoping it will let them feel much better in themselves and feel a sense of pride. (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 379-386)</td>
<td>Leading is not a one-man show; it cannot work. It could never work in an institution like this. Because of our size, teamwork is very, very important and how you delegate, how you choose the people to lead each sub-team, how you develop teachers as leaders. (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 149-152)</td>
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<th><strong>Policy context</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mother of the Poor</strong></th>
<th><strong>Reculturing Principal</strong></th>
<th><strong>Social Architect</strong></th>
<th><strong>Community Principal</strong></th>
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<td>We were given the ROSE programme but I instructed my HODs that I did not want just a straight ROSE programme ... I thought that the ROSE programme was mediocre ... In my opinion the methodology is good but the content is deficient (NW Iv 3 Oct 31 187-193)</td>
<td>The Ministry has this three-year development plan and I went to the seminar to learn how to write the plan but in the end I put the document down. Somehow I saw it as interrupting our flow – I already had in mind what was priority and we had already decided what needed to be done (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 200-205)</td>
<td>We have strong discussions on that [approach to discipline] ... Although I keep telling her [Dean of Discipline] this is what the Ministry believes in, this is what their policy is and this is what we have to do, she wants to keep it rigid. ... One thing I know, her intentions are good and therefore I will defend her in respect to the Ministry. There are times when things reach down there and I am called. I then have to defend her. (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 221-226)</td>
<td>Curriculum reform has placed pressure on the teachers and the principal too. I like ROSE, I really do; it’s an integrated way of learning and calls for more preparation on the part of the teacher. But the principal is pressurised too in terms of making sure the necessary things are provided because ROSE calls for a lot of resources. To do a good ROSE programme you have to have materials. So that part of it gets to me (AG Iv 2 Oct 29 89-94)</td>
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Personal context

The first major aspect of context identified was the personal. Principals in this study articulated how their personal beliefs and circumstances shaped and were continuing to shape their understanding and practice of school leadership and how at the same time the role of school leader had affected personal context. As Sr. Margaret pointed out, “compartmentalizing your life” is unrealistic; “the professional is not disjoint from the personal” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 229-230). From excerpts presented in Table 6.3 it is clear that these principals acknowledged the interplay between their leadership and aspects of their personal context. They referred to their socialisation, religious upbringing, education, professional training and experiences as acting on their professional beliefs and practice. In addition, they cited critical incidents in their lives as well as personal strengths and weaknesses as influential.

For the most part, the principals saw their personal contexts as influencing their ideologies, their values and visions for their schools, their relationships with school communities and by extension their leadership styles. Mrs. Grant, for example referred to the combination of her Christian values framework and professional experience, firstly as a young teacher in an inner city Kingston school, then as a vice-principal working closely with parents, to account for her community-minded orientation. She attributed her interpersonal emphases to her exposure to four different principals and to her experience as a liaison teacher with the Jamaica Teachers’ Association:

I can rely on those experiences now. I think I really learnt what teachers need and what teachers appreciate. So I capitalize on that kind of knowledge … I wasn’t aware of it at the time but it did pave the way for the relationship that I have with my teachers now. (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 140-146)

In a similar vein, Kenton Edwards’ prior teaching experience in an inner city Kingston school fuelled his social justice imperative and his determination to “make a difference” (KE Iv 3 Oct 25 57). In particular, the school’s failure to address students’ social and developmental needs led him to adopt a leadership approach grounded in caring and focused on adding value to students’ lives through development of their social capital.

Other aspects of personal context that the principals identified as interacting with their leadership were personal strengths and weaknesses. For three of the study’s principals, leadership has entailed negotiating their personal contexts in such a way that they have capitalized on their strengths and addressed, or at least minimized, the impact of their
weaknesses. While Audrey Grant felt that her “people-oriented personality” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 52-53) contributed to her interpersonal, facilitative style of leadership, Norma Wilson was conscious that her “perfectionist” (NW Iv 3 Oct 31 277) tendencies restrained the extent to which she delegated. Sr. Margaret too, admitted that, “There are some difficult things which I had hoped to do and which I have not been able to do and I think that not being able to achieve them is linked to my own limitations as a person” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 97-100). This awareness led her to adopt a team approach, enlisting the help of others whom she perceived as having the strengths that she lacked. Audrey Grant, conscious of the need to improve her administrative skills – “accounts, record keeping, budgeting, correspondence … my weakest area” (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 77-79) - struggles to balance administrative demands with a personal need to build quality relationships with those whom she serves and works; she is determined not to sacrifice her interpersonal emphases which she perceives as a strength.

In addition to providing examples of how their leadership was a response to personal circumstances, the principals alluded to ways in which their interpretation of school leadership in turn, had influenced their personal context, particularly in the areas of personal relationships and growth. In keeping with research findings that draw attention to the stress of leadership on one’s private life (Daresh & Male, 2000; Day et al., 2000), these principals were hard-pressed to balance their leadership and family responsibilities. Grateful that she had no immediate family responsibilities with which to contend, Sr. Margaret, remarked, “I don’t have to go home and cook and deal with my own child … I don’t think I could do it. I don’t see how married principals manage … I mean that’s a burnout system” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 454-457). On a more positive note, Kenton Edwards pointed out that his caring perspective on leadership has pushed him to develop a closer relationship with his children especially his son, than he might otherwise have had. Two of the principals also felt that leadership had contributed to their personal growth. Speaking about her first appointment, Norma Wilson felt that what was expected of her as a principal at Burbank, a girls’ boarding school, had made her a better and stronger person: “I had to go to church with the girls and I had to preach. … I got tremendous development, spiritual development” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 183-185). She maintained that the professional and spiritual growth she experienced while at Burbank in turn influenced the kind of school in which she subsequently chose to work and the kind of principal she had become. Audrey Grant felt that with the shift from vice-principal to principal she began moving her understanding of caring beyond the
boundaries of the school by building a network of external relationships. Speaking about the personal effects of this she said:

It has impacted on my personality … I could have been a little reserved; I think the tendency was there …. Now I think I am more outward looking and more extroverted. I am not contained as it were. I am out there, learning new things about people and about myself too. (AG Iv 1 Oct 24 363-368).

These varied examples illustrate that while the principals view their leadership as a response to personal context they also appreciate how it acts on that context. Moreover, the substance of the principals’ individual contexts varies considerably so that the interplay of personal context and leadership is unique to each principal. Parker’s (2002) observation: “How we work and how we lead depends to a significant extent on who we are which is in turn a product of what we have been” (p.2) relates closely to this finding as does Dimmock and O’Donoghue’s (1997) contention that aspects of personal context such as life history and past experience, “be acknowledged as key filters and lenses through which meanings of best practices and principles are distilled” (p.168).

**School-community context**

A second aspect of context that emerged as important was the school-community context. The school-community context is made up of the background, experiences, commitment and expectations of several groups: those who work or have worked in the school – teachers, administrative and ancillary staff, past principals and board members; those who are served by the school – primarily students and their families but also residents from nearby communities and businesses; and those who support the school - past students, local businesses, other schools, Churches and NGOs. In addition, the history, traditions and structures of each school framed the principal’s interactions and relationships. Together, these constituents influenced the principals’ definitions of and approaches to leadership and at the same time were themselves influenced by the principals’ leadership.

Several examples from the data, some of which are recorded in Table 6.3 (p.145), support the finding that the principals’ leadership priorities were a response to a combination of dynamics related to school-community needs. Margaret Russell’s emphasis on shaping a vision for the school and building commitment among teachers and parents were responses to a school community that had not been encouraged and
was therefore uninterested in participating in school planning and decision making. Her attention to communication and partnership building activities was a direct response to parental ambivalence while her investment in teachers’ professional development was a response to a staff that she perceived as being “accustomed to doing things one way” (MR Iv 2 Oct 30 198), that needed to change habits and practices but did not believe in change because, “They’ve never experienced it. They accept the ways things are, not realizing that things can be different.” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 60-62). School-community conditions triggered a specific leadership response from Kenton Edwards also. On reading the context at Lignum High, he found a student body whose self-worth was being eroded by negative images, low expectations and a social perception of inferiority and whose social and developmental needs were neglected. His response was to become “a social architect” (Beck & Murphy, 1993, p.192) by focusing his leadership on dismantling the barriers that impeded students’ development, providing them with opportunities to develop social capital, improving behaviour and academic performance and thereby rebuilding community confidence in the school.

Other aspects of school-community context such as socio-economic realities and social climate have also had an impact on the participants’ understandings and practice of leadership. The type of work principals are expected to do is often determined by the social characteristics of the community that the school serves (Hausman, Crow & Sperry, 2000). In this study each principal articulated and demonstrated a leadership perspective that took into account how the poverty, social deterioration and violence framing their students’ lives, limited their capacity to achieve and these conditions contributed to the caring and social justice emphases they all adopted. At Lignum High, Kenton Edwards strengthened the school’s Guidance and Counselling Department to ensure that welfare problems were addressed alongside learning and behaviour problems; under Audrey Grant’s leadership, Springfield provided a parenting programme, and at the time of data collection was about to pilot a grief counselling programme and design a programme to assist students whose parents had migrated or were imprisoned; at Holy Spirit High, the increasing incidence of family breakdown prompted Margaret Russell to invest in family therapy sessions for at-risk students and their parents or guardians. Norma Wilson linked the challenging social climate and her leadership responsibilities, declaring that as principal she had to offer hope to students and their families - “They are really affected by what’s happening in society – hopelessness. … So I have to steer them out of that mindset” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 315-318) -
as well as to teachers – “The teaching staff often gets discouraged because so many of the students seem to need so much” (NW Iv 1 Oct 2 40-41). Another common social challenge emerging from the interviews was violence. All of the principals referred to Jamaica’s unacceptable levels of social, political and domestic violence in explaining their commitment to anti-violence. Kenton Edwards described how he arrived at the decision to start “preaching peace and love” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 152) thus:

I can’t remember which school year it was; I was very shocked by the violence. The murder rate had passed over 1000. So January, the first day back at school, I said, ‘This is serious. As principal of a school with so many young people I need to do something and as a Jamaican too’. (KE Iv 1 Oct 138-141)

Whether explicitly declaring a ‘zero tolerance’ policy on violence as Sr. Margaret did, introducing students to the self-discipline and conflict resolution techniques associated with “practical discipline” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 432) as Kenton Edwards did or demonstrating caring leadership as they all did, the principals’ leadership decisions and practices were designed to suppress the culture of violence and promote a climate of discipline. These are just some examples of how socio-economic conditions and social climate coloured how these principals interpreted their responsibilities and how each did so in slightly different ways.

Another national trend that impinged on how two of the principals led their schools was the migration of teachers. As the National College for School Leadership (2003) observed, “Local, national and international events interplay with social, economic and political factors in ways which impact on the equilibrium of the school as a social organization” (p.9). Norma Wilson and Kenton Edwards related how at the end of academic year 2001/02, they had lost 15 and 12 teachers respectively (more than 20 per cent of their teaching staff) primarily to the New York City Board of Education (NYCBE) but also to agencies from the United Kingdom recruiting English-speaking Caribbean teachers to satisfy their countries’ teacher shortages. Although both principals shared a similar concern about the impact of the migration on the profession, they differed in the ways they responded to the pressure it put on their individual schools. Mrs. Wilson described the staff turnover as “stressful” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 301) saying, “It had more an impact on me as a principal than even the girls for I’ve tried to shelter the girls from it” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 297). She related how she “brought in a lot of resource persons to help the girls” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 298), how she stressed professional development, and generally spent more time practising instructional leadership than in
previous years because the new staff were young and “many of them didn't have any experience, some of them were not even trained” (NW Iv 2 Oct 301-302). Although not unaffected, Kenton Edwards, in contrast, did not respond in such a deliberate, overt manner perhaps because staff stability and retention issues were not an altogether new experience for him. He recounted how two new teachers who had agreed to join Lignum staff for September, who “looked energetic and promising” and had “even done the paperwork” (KE Ob 1 Oct 11 61), reneged just days before school reopened. Convinced that, “they went to schools with a perceived higher status” (KE Ob 1 Oct 11 63), he reiterated the importance of changing the public perception of non-traditional high schools as inferior. From his perspective, the unfavourable social meaning attached to the school was a greater threat to staff stability than competition from developing countries.

Except for Audrey Grant, school size did not emerge as a significant contextual factor affecting leadership. With a combined student staff population of approximately 2,600, she believed that cultivating cohesion among students, teachers and community members would diminish the risk of developing an impersonal, fragmented environment. As Table 6.3 (p.145) indicates, school size also influenced her decision to share leadership responsibilities. She linked them thus: “Because of our size, teamwork is very, very important, how you delegate, … how you develop teachers as leaders” (AG Iv 3 Nov 11 151-152).

To a large extent, Audrey Grant’s leadership was also conceived in relation to the school’s physical location and to a lesser extent Norma Wilson too, responded to her school’s physical location. Surrounded by several depressed, volatile communities and with historic ties to those communities, Mrs. Grant acknowledged the impact of these conditions on her leadership at Springfield: “The thing that has had the greatest impact on me as a principal here is the community itself, the depressed community” (AG Iv 2 Oct 29 10-11). Her focus on service and social responsibility through broadening relationships and working with the external community was to a great extent a response to community development needs. In contrast, Norma Wilson’s initial response to the physical location of her school, situated on the fringes of several Kingston ghetto communities, was to tighten security and at the same time build rapport with ancillary staff, some of whom lived locally. Furthermore, the volatility of the area combined with previous experience of violent incidents on the school grounds has increased her
awareness of the need to protect students. During the weeks leading up to elections in October 2002, several public, open-air political meetings in the vicinity of the school necessitated early closure. On one particularly tense afternoon she organised with the public transport authorities to adjust their service times and routes, and transport not only Morrow Park students but also students from a neighbouring school out of the area. Of all the principals, she was the most vigilant concerning student safety and protection.

Yet another aspect of school-community context concerns the degree to which a school enjoys access to financial resources and social influence. One of the strongest contextual differences that emerged from the cross-case analysis was the extent to which availability of resources and support impinged on the principals’ leadership. The insufficiency and unreliability of government funds in conjunction with the level of poverty among students in their schools made access to a resource base a paramount issue for these principals. All of them talked about the challenges and frustrations associated with operating on thin budgets and implemented strategies to augment government funding. This finding concurs with Evans (1997). From her review of research on secondary education in Jamaica, she identified the negative impact of financial constraints on principals’ administration as an emerging trend. However, cross-case analysis of data in this study reveals that the interplay of several dimensions within the school-community context meant that even though all the principals worked in public schools, they did not experience under-resourcing to the same degree; the three traditional high schools had access to non-government sources of money and social influence that the non-traditional high school did not have. Evans (2001) argues that the “ecology” (p.13) of traditional high schools in Jamaica differentiates it from other secondary type institutions and that the historical circumstances under which traditional high schools were established, their social status and the type of student for which they cater, explain their accessibility to resources relative to other school types. Evans’ position mirrors the differences in how the principals in this study experienced resource acquisition. Norma Wilson’s track record of more that twenty years as a principal and her reputation as an educator have earned her the trust and respect of parents, past students, the Board, Ministry officials and the private sector. This, coupled with the school’s history, its reputation as one of Jamaica’s finest high schools, a school Trust fund and a strong past students’ association, provided her with access to a resource base and powerful people in Jamaican society in a way that Kenton Edwards
did not have as principal of a government-owned high school without the social meaning and currency of a traditional high school. Although neither Springfield High nor Holy Spirit High could boast the same level of established tradition and reputation as Morrow Park, and their principals were less experienced, they each retained strong links with the Church that founded them and this affiliation supplemented their resource base and provided opportunities that the principals optimised. Conscious that Lignum High School’s ability to raise funds was limited by negative social perception, Kenton Edwards set out to change students’ perceptions of themselves, improving behaviour and academic performance in an effort to establish partnerships with community groups, win sponsorships and ultimately alter public perception of the school. Another aspect of context which he sought to create and which the other principals through a focus on school loyalty, worked hard to retain, was the relationship with past students as they recognized that in their past students’ associations they had access to middle-class, professional communities willing to serve and support their former schools.

There is evidence too, that these principals continually adapted their leadership to school-community contextual conditions such as teacher background and attitudes. Norma Wilson described the boarding school culture of her previous school where her staff had worked hard because they were all “genuine friends” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 218) as “totally different” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 223) to what she found at Morrow Park. On assuming the post as principal at Morrow Park, she adopted an approach that took into account a staff that did not know her and was, for the most part, older and more experienced than she was. Mindful too that, “the V.P. at the time, the only V.P. had expected to get the job” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 266-267), she recalled, “I tried my best not to come with an authoritarian attitude” (NW Iv 2 274 Oct 3). Yet, when she found a teacher culture that was “not accustomed to doing things by the book” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 279) and took a casual approach to deadlines and Ministry regulations, she had to adapt her leadership to incorporate a rules and regulations approach. She relates: “There was some resistance. So I said, ‘This is the code; this is what you need to follow and to do.’” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 280-281). In order to obtain compliance, the context demanded that she draw on her “bureaucratic authority” (Sergiovanni, 1999, p.48). Sr. Margaret too, modified her thinking in response to her teachers’ level of discomfort with the proposed appraisal process. On discovering that their thinking about themselves as professionals was still shrouded in “fear” and a perception of appraisal as “something used to get at them” rather than a process designed “to help or to improve” (MR Iv 1
Oct 21 103-105), she “backed off for a while” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 144). Unlike Mrs. Wilson, Sr. Margaret relied on “moral authority” (Sergiovanni, 1999, p.53); her response was not to mandate but to postpone the introduction of teacher appraisal and work further towards having teachers believe in the process.

While all of these examples illustrate how the principals conceived of and shaped their leadership in response to school-community needs, they also call attention to ways in which the principals themselves were interacting with the very contexts that were influencing them; their visions, emphases and actions affected the interactions, relationships and practices within their individual schools and communities. When Kenton Edwards advocated a more caring approach among teachers he was challenging teacher culture; when he moved to introduce “practical discipline” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 432), he was resisting a tradition that relied on punitive forms of discipline; and when he insisted that Lignum students should be permitted to sit as many as eight subjects at the CXC level, he was confronting a school structure and a social bias that perceived Lignum students as inferior. In searching for ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning at Morrow Park, Norma Wilson introduced a culture of teacher accountability. Sr. Margaret acted on context in a very different way, negotiating a shared vision with school-community members, encouraging teachers to examine and reflect on their habits and practices, and gradually replacing hierarchical decision-making structures with more collaborative ones. Similarly, Audrey Grant redefined the meaning of community for her school by inspiring collective commitment and social responsibility, empowering teachers, and adopting a leadership style that supported internal and external relationships. In these ways each principal created a new context in keeping with their individual values and school visions.

However, the extent to which these principals were convinced that their leadership influenced student values and attitudes varied. Both Sr. Margaret and Mrs. Grant were confident that they had made some strides in building the character of their schools and imparting positive values to students. Although the importance of transmitting values was embedded in Norma Wilson’s concept of polishing “raw diamonds” (NW Iv 1 Oct 2 25), she worried about “putting them back into the same environment”, acknowledging that, “you have to be constantly saying the same thing to them” (NW Iv 2 Oct 3 486-487). Kenton Edwards was even less sure. He questioned how much of an influence his Peace and Love campaign could have when, “out there, the ‘donmanship’
and dancehall mentality glorify the gun” (KE Iv 1 Oct 14 157-158). His uncertainty and the juxtaposition he describes reflect Cheung’s (2000) assertion about principal leadership in a Hong Kong school: “We can never be sure how much of our message our students incorporate into their value systems when the entire social and cultural environment is not conducive to our efforts” (p.229)

Evidence from this cross-case analysis supports Bolman and Deal’s (1997) conclusion that, “Leaders make things happen, but things also make leaders happen. Context influences both what leaders must do and what leaders can do …. Leaders are not independent actors. They both shape and are shaped by their constituents” (p.296). These case studies suggest that there exists a reciprocal relationship between leadership and school-community context; while the principals’ conceptualizations of leadership were clearly influenced by their school-community contexts, they each contributed to shaping their school environments in different ways.

Policy context

The final contextual element to be explored under the theme Leadership as responding to and acting on context relates to policy. Several writers have argued that policy is a critical aspect of context to the extent that it can create an enabling or restraining environment for leadership practice (Angus, 1993; Crow, Hausman & Scribner, 2002; Hausman et al., 2000; Southworth, 1999; Strachan, 1999). In this study, cross-case analysis revealed that although the policy context was less explicitly influential than school-community context, it nevertheless entered into the principals’ understandings of leadership.

In the course of their interviews, none of the principals singled out policy as a defining influence on their leadership; however, they did refer to curriculum reform, the government’s White Paper (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001) and other policy issues. Although the language of external policy tends to privilege the managerial dimensions of leadership, the White Paper’s invitation to “build Jamaica through education, with efficiency, with effectiveness but also with heart and spirit” (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001, p.30) at least recognizes that the moral and social dimensions have a role to play. In this respect, it is different from British educational policy in which “ethical dimensions of leadership …are, at best taken for granted, or, at worst, ignored” Southworth (1999, p.54). This analysis considers that the principals’
reading of policy documents and the values that policy encourages are likely to have influenced their school visions and aspects of their leadership practice.

For example, the school documents provided by the principals as part of the data for this study reflected several of the expectations embodied in the White Paper (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001). The White Paper links the purpose of schooling to economic growth, social peace and the development of human and social capital and espouses the importance of “partnership” and “functional caring communities” (p.1); this rhetoric is replicated not only in the schools’ individual mission statements and aims but also in the principals’ shared emphasis on developing students’ social capital and caring leadership. Where the White Paper mandates a performance-driven, results-oriented system, using phrases such as “annual targets”, “performance-related contracts” (p.6), “national standards” and “incentive fund” (p.7), school documents incorporate similar language. Sr. Margaret initiated a Mission Effectiveness Team, Mr. Edwards established a Standards committee and in discussing their leadership, all the principals included concepts related to school development planning, academic standards and internal accountability. There is little doubt that the policy context encouraged a concern for accountability and the use of management rhetoric.

However, these particular features of the policy context can be thought of as having enabled rather than thwarted the principals’ leadership. The managerial emphases of the policy context did not shift their attention away from instructional and social justice concerns as some writers maintain (Angus, 1993; Grace, 1995; Walker & Quong, 1998). Indeed, as the individual case studies demonstrated, they viewed accountability as a useful strategy for promoting instructional excellence and subscribed to the idea that accountability practices complemented their commitment to caring and social justice. Norma Wilson saw the rhetoric of management as supporting her goal to create a culture of excellence. She welcomed the Ministry requirement for school development plans, convinced that plans presented in a language and a format that the private sector recognized and understood won their confidence and support and ultimately their sponsorship. Kenton Edwards also perceived school development planning as a means of pursuing improvement and used his plan to request funds from donor agencies. Although each of the principals in this study attended to goal setting, accountability and resource management issues, this was not driven by policy mandates or bureaucratic
expectations, rather it emanated from an internal assumption about the facilitative role that such management practices can play in the quest to improve teaching and learning.

The way in which the principals responded to the policy context as presented in Table 6.3 (p.145), makes it clear that they do not view policy or the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture as limiting or controlling their leadership. They are confident that the context can tolerate their interpretation of policy and the changes they implement. Thus, while Norma Wilson applauds the methodology associated with ROSE, the national curriculum for Grades 7-9, she questions the quality of the content. Her response has been to integrate ROSE with the school’s existing curriculum, thereby extending the content and developing what she refers to as a “hybrid ROSE” (NW Iv 3 Oct 31 188). She adheres to policy but does not allow the school to be confined by it and risk sacrificing the school vision focused on creating a culture of excellence.

Similarly, Sr. Margaret carried out those policy initiatives she considered important for her school but mediated others, balancing the needs of the school-community context with Ministry demands. She responded to the Ministry’s mandate to cut staff by reducing her staff cohort by two but according to the Ministry’s formula the school was still overstaffed. However, she made her school’s needs clear to the Ministry explaining that cutting staff would result in limiting the range of subjects offered. Like Norma Wilson, she adapted policy to her school needs. Although she believed in and had embarked on a planning approach to school development and improvement and had attended the Ministry seminars on writing a three-year development plan, she put aside the Ministry guidelines because she, “… saw it as interrupting our flow – I already had in mind what was priority and we had already decided what needed to be done” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 202-205). She postponed full implementation of teacher appraisal because she believed her teachers were not ready to benefit from the process. Moreover, she was not uncomfortable about her response to these mandates. Like Norma Wilson and Audrey Grant, she believed that because she generally met Ministry expectations and executed her duties as principal in a timely and efficient manner, they had developed a relationship of “trust” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 629), although she admitted that, “The conflict is there sometimes but for the most part, on both sides, I think we are saying the same thing and that is to produce quality education” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 630-632). In relating an incident in which adherence to the policy and legalities surrounding dismissal of a teacher would have compromised her values, she made it clear that she was prepared to
resist policy. She recalled: “It wasn’t a dilemma at all. That was a clear case where what they [the Ministry] suggested, on principle, I couldn’t agree to that” (MR Iv 1 Oct 21 544-545).

Kenton Edwards provided another example of how these principals filtered their interpretation of policy through their value perspectives and in this case, through care and respect. He described how his habit of reflection led him to understand certain policy features related to cost sharing, the textbook rental scheme and student re-admissions as insensitive to student needs. In particular, he identified defects that excluded needy students and discovered that some students who qualified, did not access financial assistance because the adults who were responsible for them were neglectful, uninformed or too ashamed to seek assistance. As a result, he used the power of his office to adapt policy in its application to the school so that it was congruent with his social justice perspective.

Cross-case analysis revealed that within the broad policy context of curriculum reform and academic, professional and financial accountability, they were confident and comfortable with reinterpreting policy to suit their local conditions. Unlike the Barbadian principals in Newton’s (1993) study, they did not experience “feelings of powerlessness and ambiguity as a result of being controlled by policies and rules from a central body” (p.22). In every instance these principals cited, their values combined with student, teacher and school-community needs, superseded policy demands. It was clear that in comparison to school-community context, policy context was less intrusive in the way it entered into and affected the principals’ understandings and definitions of leadership. The principals in this study appeared to be more strongly influenced by the school-community context than the external policy context and in this respect the findings do not support Southworth’s (1999) argument that the practice of headship is being shaped by policy.

Before concluding the discussion on how principal leadership in this study interacted with personal, school-community and policy contexts, it is important to note that although these contexts have been discussed individually, they combined and overlapped in complex ways to influence how the principals understood and practised leadership. As the examples included in the discussion and the quotations in Table 6.3 (p.145) demonstrate, a response in one context influenced another. All the principals
were sensitive to context, particularly to how aspects of school-community context combined, and they attempted to find solutions to or at least minimize the challenges that this presented. In this respect, the contexts were filters through which the principals refined their leadership decisions but at the same time they were products of the filtering process. This finding is close to Gronn and Ribbins’ position that, “the relationship between the individual and the context is both implicative and reciprocal” (1996, p.453). The theme Leadership as responding to and acting on context supports the idea that the contextual layers that these principals negotiated did not function merely as a backdrop to their interpretation of leadership; they were an integral and dynamic element.

Finally, in examining how these principals interacted with personal, school-community and policy contexts, the cross case analysis revealed that although the four principals worked in similar policy and social contexts, their personal and immediate school and community contexts differed. It was these differences and how they interacted that accounted, to a large extent, for the variation in their leadership emphases.

Concluding Remarks

Through cross-case analysis, this chapter has examined critical aspects of the principals’ conceptualisation of school leadership and organized the findings around two themes: Leadership as values-driven and Leadership as responding to and acting on context. As Table 6.1 (p.129) illustrated, the principals in this study shared an understanding of leadership as a commitment to growth and improvement and they all drew on concepts such as vision, relationships, teaching and learning, management and reflection to describe their quest for school improvement. The first of the major themes emerging from cross-case analysis - Leadership as values driven - identified care and respect, social justice and excellence as the shared values that defined their leadership, permeating their interactions and informing their decisions. The second theme – Leadership as responding to and acting on context – revealed that the dynamics of personal, school-community and policy contexts, also entered into and interacted with their leadership. Both values and context emerged as powerful influences on how these principals defined, interpreted and enacted school leadership.

While all four principals were governed by a set of relatively stable common values, they applied them to their leadership in individual ways, modifying their approaches
and emphases in response to a combination of contexts that were both dynamic and unique. Their personal and professional values informed their leadership emphases; the changes they embarked on arose out of their values; however, context determined how they translated these values into action. As a result, they differed in the degree to which they practised visionary, human relations, instructional or transformational leadership. Fundamentally, their leadership was about aligning their practices with their values and at the same time balancing them in response to the contexts in which they were working.

Building on the two major themes discussed in this chapter, the study’s final chapter will begin by reviewing what the within- and cross-case analyses have revealed about how Jamaican high school principals conceptualise leadership and how context interacts with their understandings and practices. This will be followed by a discussion of some theoretical and practical implications that arise from the study.
Chapter 7

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The primary purpose of this study as stated in Chapter 1 was to describe and analyse how selected high school principals in Jamaica understand and practise school leadership by exploring how they view their circumstances, and how their meanings of leadership are modified by the contexts of their work. Insight into how Jamaican principals with a reputation for success, conceptualise and experience leadership within their own unique contexts was considered pertinent for three main reasons: the increasing complexity and challenges surrounding the principal’s role as evidenced in international research (Marsh, 1997; Fullan, 2000b; Wildly & Louden, 2000) as well as in national policy (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001); the recognition that concepts describing effective leadership that have been generated from British, North American and Australian research may be inappropriate in other contexts and cultures (Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Foskett & Lumby, 2003; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000; Moos & Dempster, 1998); and the continued paucity of research into Jamaican principals’ realities in spite of Miller’s call almost twenty years ago for a specifically Caribbean knowledge base to help “understand the content and context of educational administration in the Caribbean” (1985, p.42).

The study began with the central research question: How do selected Jamaican high school principals define and interpret school leadership within the context of their work and experiences, and what are the consequences of these meanings for their leadership practice? Arising from this central concern were three guiding questions

1. What meanings do Jamaican principals attach to leadership and why?
2. How are these meanings related to the ways in which they engage in leadership?
3. To what extent do their definitions of and approaches to leadership practice interact with the contexts within which they live and work?

Underpinning this research was symbolic interaction theory (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 1998; Forte, 2001) which influenced the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data. In discussing the methodological implications of symbolic interaction Woods (1991) has remarked, “The most important premise is that inquiry must be grounded in the empirical world under study” (p.348). Guided by the symbolic interaction premise that meaning is found in the interaction of individuals with their world, the study sought to investigate the concept of school leadership by unpacking the inherent complexities of its meanings in context. It adopted a collective case-study design (Merriam, 1998;
Stake, 1995) using semi-structured interviews, concept mapping and non-participant observation of four selected high school principals as well as document analysis of school and policy documentation. Data were then analysed using grounded theory modes of analysis, specifically the systematic processes referred to as open and axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Mindful of Merriam’s (1998) position that collective case study research demands analysis at two levels, the study engaged in both within- and cross-case analyses.

This analytic process led to findings being presented at two levels: description and interpretation of individual cases followed by abstraction and interpretation across cases. In the first instance, data were presented as four individual cases: Mother of the Poor, The Reculturing Principal, The Principal as Social Architect and The Community Principal. Each case provided a portrait of the principal’s understanding and practice of leadership and was organised around the major categories and concepts that were generated from data analysis. Drawing on the cases, data were then abstracted and organised around two themes - Leadership as values-driven and Leadership as responding to and acting on context - that summarised critical aspects of the principals’ combined conceptualisations of leadership. Throughout the within- and cross-case analyses, concepts and themes were discussed in relation to issues raised in the literature on educational leadership.

This final chapter begins with a review of the main findings already presented and discussed in the two previous chapters. Following this, several implications for theory and practice that arise from the findings are discussed in relation to existing theoretical perspectives and empirical literature on educational leadership. The final part of the chapter identifies limitations to this study and suggests further research questions that warrant investigation.

**Summary of Major Findings**

By drawing together the main ideas presented in Chapters 5 and 6 this section highlights four insights into how the principals in this study conceptualise leadership. These insights are as follows: the principals’ understandings of leadership are primarily moral; their leadership practices are organised around a set of common values that embody moral purpose; their leadership is sensitive to and interacts with a range of overlapping contexts; and differences in personal and school community contexts account for
variations in their leadership emphases and practices. Each of these insights will be reviewed briefly.

The principals’ understandings of leadership are primarily moral.
Evidence presented throughout the cases and themes in Chapters 5 and 6 suggests that the meanings the principals attach to leadership are morally grounded. Three discernible features of their conceptualisation lead to this conclusion. Firstly, their drive to lead proceeds from a conviction that as educational leaders they are committed to serving and making a difference to their school communities; secondly, they consistently describe and explain leadership in terms of moral purpose and thirdly, their constructions of leadership are defined by values. These features of the principals’ conceptualisation of leadership are now examined individually.

They are committed to serving and making a difference to their school communities
When Audrey Grant declared, “We are here to serve” (AG Iv 3 Nov 1 53), she was expressing a view of leadership as service held by all of the participants in this study. In different ways, all four principals communicated and demonstrated a moral commitment to serve Jamaica’s children and their school communities. Such a conviction provides them with a stable perspective from which to justify decisions and actions and resembles what West-Burnham (1997) refers to as “moral confidence” (p.231). In addition, they all understood that their role as school leaders required them to generate, safeguard and promote a shared vision for their schools. Their sense of obligation to serve their communities and protect a set of moral ideals lends support to the concept of “Principal as Servant” (Beck & Murphy, 1993, p.191) and the perspective of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Sergiovanni, 1992, 1999).

They describe and explain leadership in terms of moral purpose
Although the titles attached to the cases point to a range of leadership purposes, each purpose has a moral focus. As Mother of the Poor, Norma Wilson works to alleviate the conditions that impede student growth and academic achievement; as The Reculturing Principal, Margaret Russell seeks to develop people through transforming her school’s culture; Kenton Edwards, The Principal as Social Architect, takes responsibility for addressing moral and social issues and developing students’ social and academic capital; and The Community Principal, Audrey Grant, is concerned with building community in order to create a socially well-adjusted society. In addition, the
leadership concepts that the principals considered to be important listed in Table 6.1 (p.129), connote a shared commitment to student growth, school improvement and community development - ends that are predominantly moral – through caring relationships, dialogue and collaboration - means that are predominantly moral. As Sergiovanni (1999) has pointed out, “The embodiment of purpose and the development of followership are inescapably moral” (p.24).

Their constructions of leadership are defined and driven by values

Embedded in the moral purposes they attached to leadership and the visions they held for their schools were a set of common values. As Table 6.1 (p.129) demonstrates, for the principals in this study, individual conceptualisations of leadership sprung from a blend of personal and professional values that informed the purpose, emphases and key concepts associated with their leadership. The view that values play a crucial role in how principals conceptualise and interpret school leadership is not new (Day et al., 2000; Gold et al., 2003; Law, Walker & Dimmock, 2003; Moos & Dempster, 1998). Table 6.2 (p.132) encapsulates the nature of these principals’ values, presenting care and respect, social justice and excellence as the dominant values that gave meaning and order to their leadership.

Their leadership practices are organised around values that embody moral purpose

The second insight into how principals conceptualise school leadership focuses on the role of values. Recognising the moral issues and consequences inherent in leadership, the principals in this study anchor their behaviour, interactions and decisions in the dominant values of care, social justice and excellence. For example, engaging in dialogue to develop a shared vision with the school community, encouraging collaboration and shared decision-making, attending to student safety and welfare, and promoting practices that preserve relationships, clearly articulate with care and respect; practices that focus on building students’ social and academic capital, and reducing inequities spring from a commitment to social justice; while focusing on teachers’ professional development, monitoring student progress and communicating high expectations are practices that embody a commitment to excellence.

Because their practices are organised around values and not externally imposed mandates they reject practices that they consider to be incongruent with their value
commitments. In this way, their values act as standards for guiding decisions especially when faced with competing demands. For example, when Sr. Margaret decides to delay formal implementation of teacher appraisal, care and respect supersede efficiency and accountability. Similarly, she resisted staff cuts because as an economically driven directive, it contradicted her commitment to care and excellence. In this respect, the relationship between the values and leadership of principals’ in this study reflects Law et al.’s (2003) proposition that “values act as powerful motivators or filters that predispose principals towards seeing situations in certain ways and taking certain courses of action” (p.505).

**Their leadership is sensitive to and interacts with a range of overlapping contexts.**
The third insight calls attention to the relationship between leadership and a range of contextual dynamics. This study found that the interaction of personal, school community and policy contexts influenced how the four principals defined and executed leadership. Their personal responses to past experience predisposed them to think about leadership in certain ways; they orchestrated their leadership in response to the people with whom they worked, school-community needs, social climate, and to a lesser extent MOEY&C expectations. At the same time, they negotiated with and influenced these contexts, often moving them in new directions. The view that context is significant, that the relationship between leadership and context is reciprocal and that the situation is complicated for principals by overlays of cultural norms and expectations from a variety of internal and external sources has been acknowledged in other studies (Conger, 1999; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000; Moos & Dempster, 1998; Simkins, Sisum & Memon, 2003).

However, while the contexts in and through which the principals work are dynamic and fluid, their values are stable. Layered onto these principals’ interactions with context was an abiding commitment to the values of care, social justice and excellence. The policy context, for example, entered into their understanding and was implicated in their practices but did not compromise their value commitments. Their leadership practices were not unduly constrained by external policy as some scholars have observed (Newton, 1993; Southworth, 1999; Wright, 2001); nor did the managerial emphases of the policy context shift their attention away from instructional or social justice issues as others have suggested (Angus, 1993; Grace, 1995; Walker & Quong, 1998). The principals’ willingness to step outside bureaucratic arrangements and their flexible
interpretation of policy are manifestations of a capacity to uphold their value commitments. Strachan (1999) observed a similar disposition among principals in New Zealand who preserved their value systems by remaining student-focused and resisting the pressure to adopt the managerial imperatives favoured by neo-liberal reforms.

Differences in personal and school community contexts account for variation in their leadership emphases.

The fourth and final insight into how the principals in this study conceptualise leadership reinforces the significance of context. One of the more interesting findings was that although the four principals shared similar values that set the direction for their leadership and suggested certain kinds of practices, these values did not particularise practices. Because the principals’ leadership was sensitive to and continually interacting with overlapping contextual influences, they moulded and refined their practices in individualised ways, adapting general approaches to their specific circumstances. This supports the concept of leadership artistry (Bolman & Deal 1997; Deal & Peterson 2000). Even when contexts such as external policy and social climate are common, the experience of leadership can never be the same for any two principals because the interplay of issues related to personal context, needs of the community, local politics and fixed features such as core values and a school’s history, complicate events and interactions, making each relationship unique.

Notwithstanding these differences, there is a sense in which the diversity of emphases and practices are more a matter of degree or extent than substance. The principals present a number of shared practices and integrate several orientations; within each portrayal are aspects of the others. What is a dominant strategy for one principal is a supportive strategy for another. Although no one principal emerges as an instructional leader, they all practise instructional leadership – each stresses professional development, is concerned about curriculum and monitors student achievement. Neither do any of them emerge with a predominantly managerial orientation, yet they are all concerned about managerial issues especially finance, acquisition of resources and academic accountability.

The finding that all four principals subscribed to similar values, yet selected various leadership emphases and integrated a range of approaches in response to and as a result of the interplay of internal and external contexts, suggests that there is much credibility
in the argument that universalistic, off-the-shelf prescriptions are short-sighted and models of successful leadership will not necessarily be appropriate outside of the context for which they were originally designed (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Fidler, 2000; Simkins et al., 2003). Models that support contingent practices (Day et al., 2000; Fidler, 2000; Leithwood, 1994) and Dimmock and Walker’s (2000) warning about the dangers attached to the “cultural borrowing of educational policies and practices” (p.147) are especially relevant. As Foskett and Lumby (2003) observe, “There can be no universal pattern. Context matters. Culture matters” (p.193).

Limitations of the Study

The four insights outlined in the previous section and the implications discussed in the next section should be considered in the light of three limitations surrounding the study. The first limitation stems from the study’s use of “purposive” sampling (Merriam, 1998, p.61). The principals who participated in this study do not represent the general population of Jamaican high school principals. The study did not include principals of the former secondary schools recently upgraded to high schools and commonly referred to as reclassified high schools. It is also important to remember that the study was confined to principals of urban high schools. Furthermore, it will be recalled that the participants were selected based on their reputation as effective principals – they were deemed to be exemplary principals by the Ministry of Education regional directors and this marks them as an exclusive group.

The second limitation concerns the size of the sample and the extent to which the findings can be generalised beyond the four cases studied. It could be argued that findings based on four selected principals from a population of approximately 150 are limited; however, this study is concerned primarily with reader generalizability (Merriam, 1998, p.211) and not with generalizability of results. Reader generalizability refers to the extent to which the study facilitates readers’ applying or transferring the findings to their own circumstances. It will be recalled that in Chapter 3 the concept of reader or user generalizability was presented as more appropriate for qualitative case study research designed to understand the meaning and experience of school leadership, than the traditional views of external validity associated with quantitative research. In this study, the use of detailed, “thick” description in the within-case analysis together with cross-case analysis that highlights similarities and differences among cases, increases the likelihood of the findings being applicable to other situations.
Implications of the Research Findings

Despite these limitations, findings from this study could prove relevant for policy makers, educators planning and designing educational leadership programmes as well as practising principals. In addition, several interesting issues emerged during the course of this study that highlight the need for future avenues of research. The study’s theoretical, practical and research implications will be briefly discussed in turn.

Implications of the research findings for the theoretical literature

Virginia Olesen (1990) has described theory as, “a way of recognising and understanding untidiness, or resolving it as the case may be” (p.227). The within- and cross-case analyses presented in Chapters 5 and 6 are punctuated with references to moral (Sergiovanni, 1992), post-transformational (Leithwood et al., 1999) and values-led (Day et al., 2000) leadership theories and concepts.

One strand of research that appears to have been especially relevant and helpful for making sense of the ‘untidiness’ surrounding the conceptualisation and practice of leadership revealed by the principals in this study, both individually and collectively, is leadership for social justice. Leadership for social justice focuses on reducing social inequities and academic disadvantage; it assumes a commitment to the values of caring and excellence; it constructs moral purpose through relationships; and it is sensitive to context. Although components of moral, transformational and values-led models converge with a social justice perspective, leadership for social justice attaches importance to three specific emphases that the other models do not. Firstly, it focuses on developing students’ social capital and proactively enhancing their capability to achieve as the moral purpose of education; secondly, it nominates caring as a critical value; and thirdly, it pays special attention to the challenges associated with deprived communities and under-resourced environments and how these limit students’ freedoms to achieve.

Even while acknowledging the rise in prominence of research about social justice in education, Furman and Shields (2003) lament that the relationship between social justice and educational leadership has been, “relatively neglected in the mainstream research literature in the field” (p.3). However, empirical studies are beginning to report the extent to which social justice is espoused and practised amongst school principals (Strachan, 1999; Thew, 2001) and this study’s conclusion that principals’
understandings of leadership include an appreciation of social justice confirms the importance of connecting leadership that is conceived as moral to issues of social justice.

Findings from this study also highlight the possibility of exploring accountability and managerial issues as supportive of a social justice approach. There is mounting concern among those who advocate educational leadership for social justice that with the global tendency to view education as a business, school leaders suppress the social justice agenda in favour of management and bureaucracy (Larson, 1997; Larson & Murtadha, 2002). Likewise, Blackmore (2000) maintains that a corporate culture that focuses on “academic performativity, aggressive leadership and good surface appearance… discourages schools from addressing problems or nonmarketable issues such as social justice” (p.477). Murphy (2003) reports a similar problem: the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) identified social justice as a powerful guiding principle in its quest to develop standards for school leaders, but it was criticized on the grounds that it was, “dismissive of conventional management theory” (p.22 cited in Hess, 2003, p.13). Clearly, professional opinion regarding the extent to which the advancement of social justice can be and should be a core value among school principals is contentious. However, evidence from the study reported in this dissertation suggests that in the Jamaican environment, social justice is embedded within a moral understanding of school leadership that interprets managerial practices as supportive rather than restrictive.

Implications of the research findings for practice

Findings from this study have implications for those charged with the preparation and professional development of school principals as well as for principals themselves as practitioners.

In view of the centrality of moral purpose and values to principals’ conceptualisation of leadership, professional education and training should encourage principals and prospective principals to examine their personal and professional values and how these relate to their personal constructions of leadership. In Jamaica’s most recent White Paper on education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2001) the valued ends of schooling are expressed generally: “Education and training … must seek to create a literate, skilled, democratic and patriotic society. It must also create a productive
workforce and functional and caring communities” (p.1). Such a statement is open to various interpretations by individual principals and their school boards. In the absence of an explicit policy statement on the goals of secondary schooling, it would seem important that principals and aspiring principals articulate and reflect on the nature of their personal and professional values. If principals are to translate their values into practice and resolve competing tensions with “moral confidence” (West-Burnham, 1997, p. 231) they must be given opportunities to examine their values in relation to policy and be encouraged to predict how they will resolve competing values that emerge in the course of their work. Currently, the induction programme offered by the Ministry in Jamaica for new principals and vice-principals concentrates on personnel, financial, and records management only. The findings of this study and previous studies (for example, Daresh & Male, 2000; Daresh & Playko, 1992; Law et al., 2003; Norris et al., 2002) suggest that values clarification and application should play an integral part in leadership preparation and development programmes and such programmes should integrate discussion of issues related to moral purpose, educational values and ethical ramifications alongside technical and managerial realities (Cascadden, 1998). As Beck and Murphy (1993) urge: “Persons and programs concerned with equipping principals must discover and implement strategies that enable school leaders to function comfortably and effectively in both worlds” (p.199-200).

In view of the strength of the finding that principals understand leadership as a service and adopt a social justice perspective, consideration should be given to infusing social justice concerns into the programme content of principal preparation and training programmes. The individual cases described in this study demonstrate that successful leadership of school communities that are marginalized by poverty and violence requires compassion, a social justice perspective and a caring approach. Writing from a North American standpoint, Marshall (2004) calls on the field “to embed social justice perspectives into the professional culture of educational administration” (p.9) while K. Brown (2004), drawing on adult learning theory, transformative learning theory and critical social theory, proposes a process-oriented model designed to assist in the preparation of school leaders committed to social justice.

The finding that aspects of context interact with principals’ leadership also has implications for leadership training and education as well as the way in which principals engage in leadership. It is important that principals are aware of how the interplay of
personal, school-community and policy contexts influences their decision-making, relationships and actions; it is also important that they can read the contexts, and that they can adjust their leadership practices in ways that respond to contextual dynamics, while not compromising their underlying values and moral purposes. This requires them to be sufficiently versatile that they can draw on a range of leadership approaches and select those that suit the contextual conditions and are most appropriate for moving the school towards its goals. Through professional development and in other forums, principals can benefit from examining the contexts in which they experience leadership and the extent to which contextual demands, restraints and opportunities shape and impinge on what they do and how they do it.

The findings also draw attention to the need for principals to be aware of the social dimension of leadership and be adept at managing interpersonal dynamics. The principals in this study constructed moral purpose through relationships for they recognised that through relationships and multiple partnerships they could successfully create conditions for school improvement and student achievement. Principals need to develop strong communication and human relations skills and know how to structure their environment to encourage collaboration, team building, delegation and shared leadership.

**Implications of the research findings for future research**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, a review of dissertations completed between 1974 and 2000 that focus on Jamaican principals, indicates that studies have tended to focus on principals’ behaviour (Buckley-Jones, 1988; Gunter, 1988; Reid, 1976; Simmonds, 1994) or on one key variable such as budgetary constraints (Aiken, 1989) or school board/principal conflicts (Richards, 1988) and that among the handful of qualitative studies that exist, none focuses specifically on high school principals. There is, therefore, considerable scope for research on the nature of school leadership and understanding of the principal’s role in the Jamaican context. In view of the relationship between leadership and school effectiveness (Hallinger & Heck, 1996) further qualitative research to expand knowledge about how leadership is understood in Jamaica would be valuable. Several suggestions based on the findings of this study follow.
The findings in this study highlight the moral texture of leadership and in particular present values as the compass that guides the selected principals’ decisions and actions. There is a need therefore, to investigate the moral purposes Jamaican principals attach to school leadership, the values they hold and the extent to which care and respect, social justice and excellence are dominant. In view of the powerful influence of context on principals’ conceptualisation of leadership, it is likely that there are other legitimate moral purposes associated with high schooling in Jamaica. Linked to this observation are questions about the appropriateness and relevance of social justice theory for understanding how principals practising in Jamaica conceptualise school leadership.

The finding that principals’ leadership is affected and shaped by context brings to the fore personal, social and cultural issues that have been sidelined in the local literature on school leadership. The notion of context requires further exploration and expansion. Future studies of leadership could focus more deliberately on how contextual elements influence how the meaning and purpose of leadership emerge. They could also extend contextual elements to include gender, school level, career stage, number of years as principal, number of principal posts held, and geographic location of school. In this study for example, all principals were from urban schools and only one principal, Norma Wilson, was not in her first principalship. A longitudinal study that explored the extent to which leadership is modified by different contexts would be valuable.

Future research that offers a comparison between the current study’s population and other populations may unveil a different kind of conceptualization of leadership. One wonders about the extent to which other high school principals in Jamaica undertake leadership in ways that are similar to or different from the four principals in this study. In order to determine whether Norma Wilson, Margaret Russell, Kenton Edwards and Audrey Grant are unique or similar to other principals, the understandings and experiences of leadership held by other principals will need to be explored. Follow-up studies that look at a more varied sample of successful principals and include those from the recently upgraded high schools would complement this research. Gathering more evidence concerning common ways of thinking and practising leadership and contextual factors that explain individual variation is likely to yield a more comprehensive understanding of leadership. Another area concerns principals who are not necessarily considered exemplary as the participants in this study were deemed to
be. Do best practice principals hold different constructions of leadership from others? A study dedicated to exploring this question would be useful.

Another realm of future enquiry concerns the degree to which the region’s researchers can develop a Caribbean perspective on school leadership. This study has focused on Jamaican high school principals. Together, the cases portray how four principals conceptualise and engage in leadership and highlight the impact of contextual conditions on their work. It would be enlightening to undertake similar studies with high school principals in other Caribbean territories, to explore similarities and differences with a view to generating a Caribbean perspective. Just as scholars such as Bajunid (1996), Cheng (1998), Hallinger and Kantamara (2000), Walker and Dimmock (2000b) and Wong (1998) in the East Asian and Pacific developing countries are developing local knowledge about school leadership for their environments, scholars are beginning to explore school leadership among Caribbean principals (Brown, 2004; Joseph, 2000; Morris, 2000). These studies together with this study of Jamaican principals, provide a basis for contemporary analysis of school leadership in the Caribbean by providing insights into the perspectives of principals practising outside the standard North American, European or developed world research setting, whose circumstances and experiences are Caribbean.

A final area for future research could deal with understandings of school leadership among other constituents. In this study the principals were the primary source of data for eliciting what leadership means. Future empirical studies could include other sources of data such as Board members, vice-principals, teachers, non-teaching staff, parents and students to compare their perspectives and expectations with those of the principal. Investigating leadership from multiple perspectives can yield useful data about “both the ‘production’ and the ‘consumption’ of leadership in schools” (Day et al., 2000, p.29).

Conclusion

Arising from the within- and cross-case analyses presented in Chapters 5 and 6, there emerged several insights that have been synthesised in this chapter. In addition, the chapter has identified implications for leadership theory and principals’ professional development and has recommended possible directions for future research. In closing, the issue of school leadership development in Jamaica deserves comment.
Since Independence the Jamaican Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture has channelled funds and energy into increasing access to secondary education. In recent years, attention has shifted to improving the quality of education offered, with a view to providing students who do not attend a traditional high school with access to the same quality secondary education as those who do. In order to reduce the achievement gap between students from traditional high schools and those from other school types, the government has embarked on projects and initiatives designed to improve curriculum, increase resources and develop teacher training and professional expertise. Traditionally, very little attention has been paid to leadership issues within the schools nor to the processes through which school improvement is accomplished. However, the recent introduction of training in school management for 800 primary school principals as part of the joint Government of Jamaica/ Inter-American Development Bank Primary Education Support Programme is indicative of an awareness that school leadership matters – at least at the primary level. Secondary school leadership in Jamaica is poised for development.

Development of school leadership involves leadership education, training and professional development within a framework of shared, locally developed standards and expectations. Foskett and Lumby (2003) warn against “establishing standards that people cannot meet or feel to be a poor match to their own situations” (p.195). School leadership development therefore, should take account of how principals themselves conceptualise school leadership. It is clear from the case studies reported in this study that the principals understood leadership to be more than an array of technical functions centred on curriculum and resource management – they understood it as a moral commitment to build the social and academic capital of their students and school communities. What is not altogether clear however, is the extent to which the moral texture of their understandings, and values such as social justice and care, will continue to be powerful influences if policy and reforms relegate as insignificant those issues that are not directly linked to accountability, achievement and management processes. Gold et al. (2003) raise a similar question regarding the survival of educational values in the British education system under conditions that reify performance and school outcomes.
The four principals in this study conceptualized leadership as a moral undertaking. Values and context emerged as powerful influences on how they defined, interpreted and enacted school leadership and both were important for informing school vision and goals. In particular, leadership for social justice emerged as a basis for working towards the values and moral purposes they espoused. These principals sought to generate shared vision and goals that were in keeping with their values and relevant to the contexts in which they worked. They were sensitive to the contextual restraints that influenced their schools’ capacities to improve and they adjusted their leadership practices to suit the contextual conditions and help their schools move towards their goals. They valued relationships with teachers, parents, students and other constituents as they recognized that through relationships and interactions they could influence individuals and groups to work towards the school vision. In general, they aligned their leadership concepts and practices with their values and at the same time balanced them in response to the contexts in which they were working. Perhaps the following quotation from Foskett and Lumby (2003) best summarises their conceptualisation of school leadership: “At the most fundamental level, leadership is the individual’s moral energy. Beyond this each is free to mould leadership practice with the people whom they encounter in their working lives in relation to the local pressing realities” (p.195).
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APPENDIX A

Letter Inviting Principals to Participate

Dear (name of principal)

Research on Principals’ Leadership
I am a senior lecturer from the University of Technology, Jamaica currently pursuing doctoral studies in Education at Griffith University in Queensland, Australia. I recently asked (name of Regional Director) Ministry of Education Director for Region (region number), to nominate principals whom (he/she) considered to be exemplars of effective school leadership. (He/She) submitted your name and I am now writing to seek your participation in my research.

My dissertation, entitled "Practitioners' meanings of school leadership: case studies of Jamaican principals", will focus on how principals in urban high schools define and interpret school leadership within the context of their work and experiences. I expect to be in Jamaica for about six weeks from mid-September until the end of October and hope to collect data from high school principals located in different parts of the Island. During this time I would appreciate the opportunity to speak with you about your thoughts and experience on this topic. Ideally I would like to visit your school, conduct a series of interviews with you, and, over the course of several days, observe the range of activities in which you are engaged in your capacity as school principal - school assemblies, staff meetings, PTA conferences, routine everyday interactions and other functions and events that may arise. The interviews are likely to take approximately three hours in total and my observations would take place on several occasions throughout the school week at times agreed to by you.

This research will form the basis for my doctoral dissertation and I would be happy to share the findings with you after the research is completed. I would also like to report aspects of it in academic journals and particularly to Jamaican educators who are seeking to improve training preparation for principals. However, all information you provide would be considered confidential and neither you nor your school would be identified by name in any part of the publication.
I must emphasise that your involvement in this research would be entirely voluntary and you would be free to withdraw at any point. However, your participation would provide useful information about the complexities of the school principal’s role and would extend understanding of the contemporary challenges and issues surrounding high school principalship. Furthermore, by participating in this research you would be contributing to local knowledge about school leadership that might well serve as a guide for future decisions about leadership training.

If you are willing and available to participate in this research I will provide you with an information sheet detailing the nature of the research, the procedures involved and the areas we might cover in the interviews. In the meantime, if you have any questions or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a preliminary decision about participation, do not hesitate to email me at (researcher’s email address) or contact my supervisor (name and contact details of principal supervisor).

Thank you for your attention

Sincerely yours

(name of researcher)
APPENDIX B

Information Sheet and Consent Form for Participants

INFORMATION SHEET

PRACTITIONERS’ MEANINGS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP:
CASE STUDIES OF FIVE JAMAICAN PRINCIPALS

Chief Investigator: (Name and contact details)

Researcher: (Name and contact details)

Thank you for considering my request to participate in this research study. This information sheet describes the nature and conduct of the study and should assist you in making an informed decision about your involvement.

The study seeks to describe and analyse how five exemplary high school principals in Jamaica understand and practise school leadership by exploring how they view their circumstances and how their meanings of leadership are modified by the contexts of their work. It is being conducted in partial fulfilment for the researcher’s doctorate in educational leadership at Griffith University in Queensland, Australia.

As a participant you will be asked to take part in a series of three interviews, approximately one hour each, to be conducted over the course of a week. Broadly speaking, these interviews will explore your understanding of school leadership, your experiences as a high school principal, your role, and anything else you want to share about the principalship. If you agree, I would like to audiotape the interviews to be accurate. A written transcript will be prepared for you to read, amend and approve. I would also like the opportunity to observe you over the course of the week as you interact with staff, students, parents and other members of the school community and carry out both routine and non-routine duties as principal. In addition, I would
appreciate access to any school or Ministry documents that you feel would contribute to an understanding of what it means to be a high school principal in Jamaica.

Data from the interviews, observation and document analysis will be presented as a case or portrayal that will describe your thoughts on the meaning of school leadership, the salient features of your work as a principal and the context in which you work. Once a draft of your case has been prepared I will ask you to read and comment on it.

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this study. The primary benefit is in contributing to academic and practical knowledge about effective school leadership. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and you may terminate your involvement at any time without penalty. Furthermore, although the questions are quite general, you may decline discussing any issues with which you are not comfortable. All information you provide will be treated confidentially and neither you nor the school will be identified by name in the thesis or any other publication resulting from this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of the study, you may contact the chief investigator or the researcher at the contact addresses provided. In addition, Griffith University requires that I inform all participants that if they have any complaints concerning the manner in which a research project is conducted they can contact either The Research Ethics Officer, Office for Research, Bray Centre, Griffith University, Kessels Rd, Nathan, Q’ld 4111, Tel: 61 07 3875 6618 or The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Administration), Bray Centre, Griffith University, Kessels Rd, Nathan, Q’ld 4111, Tel: 61 07 3875 7343.

Thank you for your interest in and assistance with this research study. As soon as the thesis is complete I will provide you with a summary of the findings or a copy of the abstract.

……………………………….                                    …………………….
(Name of researcher)                                                              Date
APPENDIX C

Table Detailing Principal Data

Table C: Principal Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of principal</th>
<th># of principal posts held</th>
<th># of years as principal</th>
<th># of years as V.P.</th>
<th>Total years in teaching</th>
<th>Years at current school</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Norma Wilson</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>B.Sc.; Dip. Ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sr Margaret Russell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>M.Ed.; B.Sc.; Dip. Ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Kenton Edwards</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>B.Soc. Sc.; Dip. Ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Audrey Grant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>B. Ed; M.Ed. (pending)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

Aide-Memoire for Interviews with Principals

Research questions:
What meanings do they attach do school leadership and why?
How are these meanings of related to the ways in which they engage in leadership?
To what extent do their definitions of and approaches to leadership practice interact with the contexts within which they live and work?

Date of interview:                                            Start:                  End:
Participant’s name:                                         School:
Interview location:

Introduction
• Purpose of interview - to explore aspects of topics /themes identified in letter and previous conversations. No requirement to cover all the topics or to discuss them in the order presented – direction will be determined largely by responses.
• Assurance re confidentiality and anonymity; request to audiotape in order to have an accurate account of what is said.

Background information
Can you say something about the circumstances that led up to your becoming a principal? When? How? Why?
• V.P. experiences? Previous principalships? Types of schools?
• Career plan? Influences? Motivation?
• Preparation for the job? Training & education since assuming the post? Opportunities to develop? Aspirations?
• To what extent have your experiences as principal been what you expected?
The experience of leadership: principal’s role, work, practices
The MOEC Director for your region (insert name) nominated you as an exemplary principal. Tell me about the practices that have contributed to your successes as a principal?

- How would you describe your approach to leadership? What sort of a principal do you see yourself as?
- How do you go about the business of being an effective principal?
- How do you think others see you?

Can you say a little about your day-to-day experiences as a principal.

- What aspects of the principalship do you enjoy most?
- ………………………………………………………least?/ What issues do you face as principal? How do you handle/ respond to these?

I’d like to hear about what the job does for you and to you?

- Survival techniques? Formal and informal support systems?
- Impact on professional life? On personal life?

Personal values, beliefs, ideology
Let’s talk a bit about your overarching principles and key values. Which values and beliefs would you be least willing to give up and why?

- If you had the resources to enable anything you wanted for this school community what would it be and why?
- In what ways do you/ are you able to share your vision/personal philosophy/goals with the school community?
Role of school, community and system values and expectations

What do others expect of you as principal and how are these expectations related to your what you expect of yourself?

- Teachers, students, administrative staff, ancillary staff, parents, past students, wider community, Board members, MOEC officials, other principals.
- Policy issues: conflicts, compromises? How will the proposal to abandon cost-sharing and reintroduce “free education” impact on you?
- How do you serve or balance conflicting expectations? What do you prioritise? Why and how?

Effects of context on leadership

Looking back over your years as a principal, can you point to specific ways in which the context(s) of your work have influenced the way you think about your job and the way you do your job.

- In what ways has your approach to leadership changed over the years? For what reasons?
- What aspects of this school’s culture have had the greatest impact on you? – (SES, school size, location, staff expectations, community norms).
- Is it harder to be an effective principal today that it used to be? If so, why? – (social, economic, political, professional, educational changes).
Thoughts about training
If you were asked to share ideas about training for new and aspiring principals what would you recommend and why?

Closing remarks
- Is there anything you would like to add before we close off? Anything I should have asked and didn’t?
- Reminder about transcripts being made available so content can be added or amended
- Reconfirm time and place for next interview/observation session.

Interviewer comments

Principal’s disposition:
Attitude to research(er):
Evasions:
Sensitive areas:
Any other salient point:
Themes to follow up/areas to probe in next interview: