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**The Role of Private Primary School Education in Barbados: A  
Case Study of Vale Preparatory School**

**YVONNE R. SMALL**

**A THESIS**

**IN**

**THE DEPARTMENT**

**OF**

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## ABSTRACT

### The Role of Private Primary Schools in Barbados: A Case Study of Vale Preparatory School

Yvonne Rovine Small

This is a case study exploring the role of private primary education in Barbados in maintaining social inequality by offering better employment opportunities, higher income, social status and social mobility to some but not all people.

The development of an equitable and effective system of education in Barbados is constrained by a number of factors, some imposed by former colonial powers and now perpetuated, by the current government and some generated by economic, political and socio-cultural factors. Societies like Barbados, undergoing change and development, are often characterized by an interplay between the formerly dominant cultural patterns and emerging new ones, by shifting traditions as well as by change in the power relationships between different social classes.

Black leadership and independence became the active mechanism in promoting a sense of national harmony among the black population and promised expectations for a quality of life that was unheard of by their forefathers. However, continued control of private enterprise by the white minority guarantees its dominance in many prestigious occupations even within the confines of a black government. This control and ownership of capital by the white minority effectively guarantees inequality in the social structure which is subsequently nurtured in the education system, mirroring the class structure of the larger society.

Today, although the division is not based on racial lines, there is still a divide in the population based on class lines. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, conclusions are formulated in terms of further work to be accomplished in order to verify the effectiveness of the changes that are taking place.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The islands of the Caribbean region reflect the colonial and linguistic heritage of four nationalities: the English, the French, the Spanish and the Dutch. Barbados is included in the Anglophone Caribbean group which is comprised of sixteen countries and is the largest group of the four nationalities (Davies, 1997). According to the 1990 population census data, Blacks account for 92.5 percent of the population of Barbados. The remainder of the population is distributed racially and in percentage terms as follows: Whites 3.2, Mixed (Caucasian and Negro /Black) 2.4, East Indian 0.8, Others 0.1, and Not Stated 1.0. The population is overwhelmingly Christian, and Anglicans are the single largest religious group. English is the official language and is the language of instruction in the schools (Layne & Atherley, 1995).

Barbados, the easternmost island of the West Indies, was settled by the English in 1627 and remained a British crown colony until it achieved independent dominion status in 1966. The history of its education until independence reflected its colonial status. Focus was placed on educating the ruling class (white), in relation to European standards, at the expense of national development. Today, the philosophy underlying the Barbados education system is that the potential of every citizen should be developed to the fullest extent, so as to enable him or her to live harmoniously in the

environment and to contribute effectively to society and to the economy. To this end, a wide and varied range of educational opportunities are made available to every student at every stage, from nursery to university level (Knowles, 1977).

During the 1960s and particularly after the election of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) in 1961, the masses exerted a new wave of political involvement. This was partly due to the reduction of the voting age from 21 to 18 during the first term of office of the DLP, consequently giving impetus to public political meetings. Added to this, politics became the topic of many conversations between youths in school yards, bus terminals and community gatherings. Involvement, however, did not stop at casting the vote. Youths, looking for more opportunities, began to question the validity of the stratification of the society along racial lines.

This problem was addressed by the DLP in 1962 when it made free secondary education available to all. Free secondary education, which came in 1962, allowed more students to have meaningful goals and occupational aspirations. Students had the option of attending any secondary school based on their ability. Yet the system needed restructuring. It continued in its role as a subsystem of the larger system, reflecting the class structure developed by the plantation economy.

This has been the problem with many ex-colonies as observed by Amadou-Mahar M'Bow, the Director-General of UNESCO, when he stated that,

The colonial system itself designed what could well be called an elitist system of education, that is to say where the best students were always creamed off (The Courier, No. 73, 1982).

Even when better opportunities became available, the structure and limits of the public secondary school system provided the upper strata of society with opportunities that were denied the lower classes.

### **Pre-Independence Development**

Britain, of which Barbados was a colony until the 1960s, had already started to restructure the Barbadian educational system to meet the demands of society with the introduction of the secondary modern schools in the mid-1940s. Prior to the 1960s, when secondary educational institutions were very highly selective, primary education had been the extent to which the majority of the population was schooled. As was previously stated, in Barbados there was a system of inequality which seemed to be based on the wealth of the family. Also, there was a 'class system' of lower, middle, and upper class. The class structure protected each class from the easy penetration of the other classes.

### **Post-Independence Development**

On November 30, 1966, Barbados became an independent nation under the direction of the Honourable Errol Walton Barrow, Premier of the

Democratic Labour Party. By this time, noticeable changes had started to take place in the school system, though at a very slow pace. Private primary schools were the domain of the more affluent students, giving children from socially advantaged groups a better chance to gain admission to the more prestigious secondary schools. These students benefited from a private school education, and were also catered to by the public 'grammar' schools, the highest ranking schools on the island. The students from lower socio-economic backgrounds attended the comprehensive or newer secondary schools. Today, the lower classes are reaping the benefits of equality of education. Working class parents who in the past would not have been able to send their children to a private primary school are now able to do so. Some students who have been very successful in the Common Entrance Examination (CEE), however, are still opting for some of the newer secondary schools because of the academic pressure involved in attending the older prestigious schools.

Free education for all, implemented by the DLP in 1962, meant a better opportunity for a better education. In recognizing that the contest is open to all, one has to also recognize that not everyone has an equal chance of success. However, it should not be overlooked that prior to this, many students had been excluded from the grammar school because of socio-economic factors. Today, there still remains certain socio-economic factors, the presence of which, on the one hand, would increase the chances of success, and the absence of which, on the other hand, could

directly intercept and greatly reduce chances of success to some 'lower class' students.

In Barbados, students who perform well at primary school are channeled into the older prestigious secondary schools. The school system nurtures the idea of equality of educational opportunity. Students who attend private primary schools have better opportunities than those in the other primary schools. Those students from a higher socio-economic background have an advantage over those of a lower socio-economic background, because of their level of socialization, and their cultural capital. For example, some of the students educated at Vale, one of the private schools, have the option of either staying in Barbados after their education or traveling overseas to find employment or to study. As well, because of their social standing they may more easily continue their education or find jobs in Barbados than those students from a lower socio-economic background. Some of the Vale students returned to Barbados directly after their studies, but the majority of these ex-Vale students remained overseas, and many of them returned to Barbados after having worked overseas for a few years (interview with Mrs. Excel, August, 1999).

The availability of education to the masses should have altered the image of society, but a class structure based on socio-economic background still exists. In addition to this, one may observe that the socio-economic hierarchy still favours those at the top over those at the bottom. It is easy to assert, then, that the function of the reform system of

education in Barbados is to 'safeguard' the changing capitalist class structure (Figueroa, 1991).

The most important factors shaping the role of education in Barbadian society are its political structures and the type of government in power. Barbados has a democratic (free) system of education in the government-run secondary and primary schools. In the private primary schools education depends on the ability of the parents or guardians to pay the required fees. There are several advantages to attending private primary schools. These fees enable smaller classes and a more restricted curriculum to prepare children for their entrance exams to enter a 'grammar' school.

Students whose parents can afford special tuition at the primary school age enjoy 'the best of both worlds'. They may opt out of the government system of primary education to pursue their preparatory education in institutions with smaller numbers, where more individual attention can be given, and where, with a few notable exceptions, they appear to follow a narrow and more restricted curriculum that is geared specifically to securing "passes" at the Common Entrance Examination (CEE). "This situation accelerates the scholastic development of the privileged children and enhances the advantages they already possess in language development and so on..." (Layne, 1976; 72). This preparation gives these students a greater chance of scoring above the 'cut-off point'

and secures them admission to a 'grammar' school, at which point they can then opt back into the free public system of education.

The more educated Barbadians will be more likely to take an interest in the affairs that affect their lives, to organize and promote their own interests, and to think critically so as to make informed decisions (Secada, 1989). Teachers and school administrators feel that children from more affluent families receive more intense preparation for the subsequent success in the Secondary Schools Entrance Examination (SSEE) before they return to the public school system.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Unlike many of its Caribbean neighbours, Barbados has been a colony of Britain for all of its colonial past, since 1625. The British laid claim in the name of James, King of England, and transferred many values and customs onto the island and its inhabitants, including the British education system. This ultimately proved to a large extent to be irrelevant, to the needs and aspirations of the colonized people of Barbados.

Subsequently, when demand for educational reforms came in the late 1950s, one of the major changes was the revised transfer from primary to secondary school. Prior to the implementation of the revised transfer, students were transferred on an individual basis, by the guidelines that were developed by the school involved. The revised

transfer called for a Common Entrance Examination for primary graduates. It is a system for deciding which secondary school the students will have access to - either the newer secondary schools, or the older, prestigious secondary grammar schools. The reforms implemented were more in line with the needs of society, and the changes have been well received. Prior to 1976, most of the students completed their primary school education at age fourteen and about 60 percent went on to secondary school. Today, universal access to secondary education has been achieved in Barbados (Figueroa, 1981).

Despite many reforms, the inadequacy of the secondary system still necessitates a selection process in transferring youths from primary to secondary school. In the Report on Transfer from Primary to Secondary Education in Barbados, 1974, prepared by the Committee appointed by the Minister of Education to review the operations and effects of the Common Entrance Examination in Barbados, it was found that this examination did not offer equality of opportunity to all students. It still gave an advantage to those students who were in the high socio-economic bracket over those who were socially and economically deprived.

One obvious question that comes to mind therefore is: Why has the structure not been changed? The writer proposes that it has not changed because the prevailing socio-economic class system has reproduced and legitimized the rule of the elite. As development takes place, it is necessary to reform the system to adequately cope with the demands of

this development. But these reforms as noted still have two functions to play. In the first instance, they must, in a political context (even if not in practice), promote the equality that protects the majority from any undue pressures from a minority. Likewise, they must protect the minority from the prejudices of the majority. Second, the reforms must function to limit the involvement of the majority (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). Therefore, changes take place within the confines of a political democratic system that protects the norms of the existing social order.

### **Context of the Situation**

In Barbados, there are 117 primary schools (93 public and 24 private), and there are over 37,500 students enrolled in these schools today. With regard to the flow of students throughout the system, the following facts should be borne in mind: (a) the net enrollment ratio for primary education is 98 percent, (b) the completion rate for primary education is 100 percent, and (c) about 96 percent of the children aged 11 years enter secondary school with the remaining 4 percent entering post primary institutions. A virtual policy of automatic promotion is in place in the primary schools, and the flow of students through the secondary school system is regular up to age 16 (fifth form). Approximately 7 percent of pupils at the primary level, and 18 percent at the secondary level are enrolled in private institutions (Layne & Atherley, 1995).

The school day begins at 8:30 a. m. and ends at 3:00 p. m. The school year comprises three terms of 13-14 weeks and runs from September to July. The student teacher ratio is about 18:1, both in the primary and secondary schools.

Primary education is directed at children between the ages of 5-11 years and in some cases may involve a nursery department for children between 3-5 years old. In addition to the public primary schools, primary education is available in a number of private institutions (Browne, 1986). Vale, my school of interest, is one such private school.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study explores the role the private primary schools in Barbados have in perpetuating inequality. The purpose of this study is to understand and learn what the current educational status is. To do so, a case study was carried out on one private primary school located in Pine Hill, Barbados. The purposes are to explore the place that such a school has within the larger primary system, and to examine its function in producing and reproducing an elite status group.

The case study examined some of the significant changes that have taken place in Vale private primary school during the last forty years. I wanted to see if there were any difficulties encountered by the school in implementing the changes and how effective the strategies used were. The image of this school reflects the changes that have taken place in

Barbados in the last forty years. In particular, I examined the question of “change” and “innovation” as described and discussed in chapter six, at the primary school level. I attempted to study and understand how people belonging to different role groups in a school setting recognize and describe change. Specifically, my focus was on the educational changes that have taken place in the last twenty five years. Finally, in light of today’s discourse regarding the rights of minorities and giving the lower classes full access to educational opportunities, I explored the measures that this school has taken towards this end.

The purpose of the study will help to determine what is the current educational status of the private primary school in Barbados. What are the goals and objectives of these schools? What are the criteria that determine success of private primary school education in Barbados? What accounts for the longevity of private primary schools in Barbados? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of private primary school education in Barbados? What is the actual rate of transfer from primary to secondary education in Barbados? How does the transfer from public primary schools to secondary education compare with transfer from private primary schools to secondary education in Barbados? I will compare the selection criteria and outcomes.

### **Expected Practical and Theoretical Benefits**

Teachers and school administrators in Barbados are faced with the task of educating a diverse population. The data collected will provide a systematic analysis of one school to 'locate' it in the larger context of education in Barbadian society. By doing so I will highlight some of the shortcomings of the regular system and suggest ways that the regular system might emulate the private school.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

Chapter 1 outlines the main features of the society as the background against which change on the educational scene is to be viewed. It highlights dimensions of plantocratic control and locates education within that context. Chapter 2 focuses on a review of the changes that have taken place in the Barbadian situation, indicates how access to education was provided, examining especially the process of transfer from primary to secondary level. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used, identifies the sources of data and outlines the procedure and ethics involved in the study and illuminates possibilities for change in the context outlined in the first chapter. Chapter 4 utilizes Vale Preparatory, a private primary school as a case study, describes the history of Vale, its aims and objectives and the roles of private school leaders. Chapter 5 samples educational thought as it seeks to explore the continuity of the goals set for education and the system reforms to effect these aims. Chapter 6 presents the findings in

three sections: interview responses, Vale's school's activities based on researched data and nonparticipant observations of two classes. Chapter 7 critically analyzes, the social inequality, high fees, and elitism. The chapter also describes the benefits of private education. It illustrates absolute and proportionate spending on education. The concluding chapter summarizes the research findings with some suggestions for future study.

## **- Chapter 2 -**

### **REVIEW OF THE BARBADIAN SITUATION AND RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **Early Private Schools**

Barbados has a long educational tradition. Throughout the years, private education has been developed and nurtured. Private primary education developed gradually and became very significant in the lives of students. In some rural areas in Barbados, a one-teacher private tutor had existed in some form for several years. Private education in Barbados also consisted of a one-teacher private school in urban areas. These schools varied in terms of size and quality. In its simplest form, because parents wanted their child to get the best education, the school's reputation was passed on by word of mouth, parent to parent, and friend to friend. This tradition is still in existence today.

Why do some parents prefer private school? The chief factor behind the popularity of private schools is the belief that they can offer a better education than that available in the public schools. Griggs (1985) explains that high on the list of specific reasons are: the educational standards, the more easily manageable size of the classes, the standards of discipline, the standards of manner and morals, and the opportunities for the development of character (p.170). In addition, most private schools have a relatively smaller class size than that of public schools, and children are treated more as individuals. A survey entitled "How the public views non-

public schools" reported that, "the reason cited most often, by those who believe the quality of education is best in the private schools, is that the student receives more personal attention... There is a strong tendency to judge quality by the way students are dealt with as individuals" (Gallup International, 1969. p. 31). In order to understand this, and to discover what has been lacking, it is necessary to survey the history of the public school system in Barbados.

### **Historical Survey**

Educational development on a global basis gained momentum particularly after the Second World War. Great Britain, the representative model country at that time for most of the West Indian Islands, implemented several changes in its educational policies. Many of these changes in Britain were reflected in the British Education Act of 1944 and thereafter. Prior to this Act however, the 1943 White Paper on Educational Reconstruction recommended a tripartite system of secondary education known as grammar, modern and technical schools, all of which were to be governed by a common set of regulations (Evans, 1975: 97-98). In addition, the White Paper recommended compulsory part-time education for persons in the 15-18 age group, and as well, provided for the development of technical and adult education to serve young Barbadians (Evans, 1975; Cross, 1965). Other changes in the system resulting from the introduction of the White Paper encompassed the establishment of a

statutory Board for those responsible for the school meals and milk program, and a school medical service for the provision of "free instruction and treatment of all those attending primary and secondary schools and the new county colleges" (Evans, 1975, 96). The White Paper however, was merely a precursor to the Education Act of 1944 which had a smooth passage through Parliament, gaining royal assent in August 1944.

Major changes in the British system of education subsequently filtered into the British colonial holdings. The 1944 Act in Britain called for the establishment of the Ministry Education to replace the superintendence of Education. The West India Royal Commission Report, published in June, 1945, could easily be viewed as an instrument which was used to align the system of education in each colony with that of the colonial power. This investigation, which was commissioned by the Secretary of State for the colonies, recognized many unsuitable practices in the system, among which it stated that,

Curricula are on the whole ill-adapted to the needs  
of the large mass of the population and adhere far  
too closely to models which have become out of date  
in British practice from which they were blindly copied  
(p.15).

At this time, the education in Barbados was being reviewed and through an amendment to the local Education Act of 1944, teachers in all

elementary schools were to be appointed through the Governor, thereby giving them the status of civil servants (Ministry of Education, 1945). Emanating from this status was the power vested in the Governor to appoint, transfer, suspend or dismiss all teachers of the public elementary schools (Ministry of Education, 1945). Of some significance in this period also was the establishment of the first secondary modern school in Barbados in 1952. It was noted earlier that the White Paper of 1943 in Britain classified that system of education into a tripartite system. It was not long before this pattern of education was established in the colony, for in 1948 the Barbados Evening Institute was formed which was followed by the technical Institute (Ministry of Education, 1957).

The diversified system of education can be viewed as the basis for many of the reforms made to the system over the years, as the grammar schools have always been perceived by many as more selective than the two other types of institutions: the secondary modern school and the evening institutes. It was generally believed that criteria used for selection for the three types of institutions were closely related to social class and background. In this respect, the grammar school was designed to prepare young elites for the system, whereas the secondary modern school and the institutes were to train the masses to meet the needs of the economy, which even after the Second World War reflected the features of an agrarian pre-industrial society. Levin (1978) observed the same practice in Western Europe and claimed that children from well-to-do and educated

families were selected for academic training, whereas some of those from modest backgrounds were directed into vocational and commercial schools.

Issues arising from this situation in Barbados resulted in the 1976 revision of the classification of the school so that all grammar and secondary modern schools fall under the umbrella of secondary schools and selection is made at the primary level examinations are held for all students graduating from primary school. This recommendation, made in a Committee's Report on Transfer from Primary to Secondary Education in Barbados, was one effort to make equality of opportunity open to all students. Implementation of the provisions of the British Education Act of 1944 called for more emphasis to be placed on training teachers, and the responsibility for this was imposed on the Ministry of Education. Barbados followed suit in 1948, when the importance of the trained teacher was also gaining recognition. To this end, the Rawle Training Institute which was closed in 1945 was replaced by Erdiston Teachers' Training College in 1948 (Ministry of Education, 1957).

As previously outlined, the passage of the 1944 Act resulted in the displacement of the Board of Education in Britain and created a Ministry of Education. A decade later in 1954, education in Barbados had gained the same prominence in society as reflected in the establishment of a Ministry of Education, the portfolio of which had previously been held by the Premier. Nevertheless, any power vested in the Minister was confined to

the framework of a colonial policy effected through the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

To a large extent the curricula pursued was still irrelevant. In a basically agricultural society, much emphasis was given to studies in the classics, English history and geography. The secondary level of education was completed by means of British-prepared overseas examinations, which were duly returned to England for marking (Williams 1968). In his report submitted in 1945, Howard Hayden, the then Director of Education prepared A Policy for Education in which he cited some of the major mal-practices in the system which called for immediate corrective action. He pointed out that,

with the exception of Science at Harrison College, Secondary Education in Barbados affords an outstanding example of an education system completely dominated by external examinations. The curricula of the schools, and the teaching in them, appear to be almost completely controlled by the requirements of examiners 3,000 miles away, and the tradition of the eighteenth century classical curriculum. (Hayden, 1945. p.25).

Despite these eloquent observations and those articulated by the West India Royal Commission, the system remained significantly intact for the next thirty-four years, because the system of education was responding to the dictates of a capitalist economy controlled in a

backward manner. Therefore, there was no real need to reform the curricula to reflect the needs of the agriculture that was in operation in the economy. Instead what the education system promoted was a steady outflow of migrants looking for opportunities that did not exist at home. When diversification was introduced to the economy in the late 1950s, the school curricula also underwent some change.

This was subsequently seen in the establishment of three Caribbean Examinations Council in 1979 set up to satisfy the needs of the Caribbean region and simultaneously de-emphasize the need for British external examinations which had become anachronistic.

### **Goals for the Development Plan**

As stated in the 1993-2000 Development Plan (Government of Barbados 1994a), the government has four broad goals which it expects to achieve through the planning process. These broad goals are: the maintenance and enhancement of the practice of parliamentary democracy as an inherent aspect of the Barbadian way of life, and as the framework within which major decisions affecting the people of Barbados will be made by them and on their behalf; the resumption and acceleration of economic growth and development; attainment of a standard of living where all citizens, particularly the disadvantaged and the vulnerable, are able to satisfy their basic needs for food, clothing and shelter; and the

development and maintenance of a climate conducive to intellectual and artistic creativity and the promotion of a positive national identity.

The government of Barbados is of the view that the development of the country is dependent on the excellence of its educational system, and has stated its commitment to "the development of an educational system, which enables all persons to realize their talents to the fullest possible extent" (Government of Barbados 1988 p.63). It expects the educational system to help prepare the people of Barbados to meet the economic and social challenges of the modern world and of the twenty-first century. To that end, it has included in its development plans for education strategies and programs that would prepare them for the future.

### **Present Day: Major Reforms in the 1980s and 1990s**

Several major educational reforms were completed in this period or are ongoing in Barbados, and mention should be made of at least three of them. A new Education Act (The Education Act of 1981) was proclaimed in 1983. The Education Act of 1981 repealed the Education Act of 1890, which was, with amendments, the law of the land for almost a century. The main objective of the new Act was the democratization of education and the regulating of the management and operation of all secondary schools. Under this Act, all teachers in government schools became members of the civil service. The Act is comprehensive and covers all aspects of education, from school attendance registration of private

institutions, and duties of teachers, to management of primary and composite schools and provision of special education. It was amended in 1984 and again in 1990, with the following principle aims: (a) to cement the process of bringing the former grammar schools under the control of the Ministry of Education; (b) to clarify the legal rights of teachers who were on the staff of the former government grammar schools prior to the proclamation of the Act but who chose to become public servants after the proclamation; (c) to provide clear definitions of education at the various levels; and (d) to spell out procedures for the handling of disciplinary problems, emergencies and so forth (Layne & Atherley, 1989).

A second reform was the “restructuring” of the University of the West Indies (UWI). The UWI is a regional institution with three campuses: one at Mona in Jamaica, another at St. Augustine in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and a third at Cave Hill in Barbados. In October 1984, the university’s original Charter, Statutes and Ordinances were amended. The original charter made it clear that the University was a regional institution, which though funded by the regional governments was not answerable to any particular government. The restructuring which took effect in October 1984 involved: (a) the transfer of considerable functions and powers from the central organs of the university to newer organs at each Campus, (b) the erosion of the unitary concept which earlier prevailed, and (c) the effective placing of control of the campuses in the hands of the governments of the three campus countries (see Layne 1989).

The third area of reform was that of coeducation. With the assistance of the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, the government has been involved in a school building program to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of primary and secondary education. In the process of amalgamating some of the primary schools and expanding some of the secondary, the government took the opportunity to move away from the old system of single sex-schools and toward the promotion of coeducation as a matter of policy.

### **The School Curricula**

Today, the curricula of the primary and secondary schools in Barbados are wide-ranging and are prescribed by the Ministry of Education. At both the primary and secondary levels the curriculum is uniform nationwide. The National Curriculum Development Council (NCDC) is the body, which advises the Ministry of Education on policy and other matters related to the curriculum. It was set up by the Minister of Education, and comprises persons with a cross-section of interests. The NCDC collaborates with the Curriculum Section of the Ministry of Education with regard to the evaluation, revision and implementation of school curricula (see Appendix 12), (Layne & Atherley, 1989).

### **The Stratified Secondary School System**

Another major contributing factor to an irrelevant system can be identified by the dichotomized pattern of a secondary education offered in the public system. The rise of the secondary modern school further entrenched the class system that the colonial system of education had developed, even though they catered specifically to children of poor economic backgrounds. These less academically oriented schools were more vocationally bent and to a substantial degree provided a skilled and semi-skilled working class to meet the demands of the labour market. The grammar school, on the other hand, was perceived as generally providing recruits for the upper echelons of the labour market. When viewed from the perspective of a capitalist class structure, the system can be assessed as successful because it allowed for a minority group to extract the maximum out of its labour force for the lowest minimum price. When viewed from a social democratic perspective, however, it can be assessed as a failure for the same reason.

Against this background, reforms have taken place. The school entrance examination prepared by the grammar schools on an individual school basis and complemented by an interview with the parent(s), was replaced by the Common Entrance Examination written in two parts. Under the previous system, the candidates suffered much pressure in having to write more than one examination in one day at different locations (Ministry of Education, 1968-69:3; 1974). This type of examination allowed

students to be judged more on scholastic ability than on economic background because the interview system was discontinued. This system refers to the 1959 reformed method of transferring students from primary to secondary school. In this system, instead of an exam, the child's transfer from primary to secondary school was based on an interview with the child and his/her parents.

Further improvements to reforms have been made. Before 1984 there was the two-part Common Entrance Examination in English and Mathematics. Then after 1984 it was reduced to a single examination, all of which must be written in one day in surroundings familiar to the student. In most cases, it would be written in the school the student normally attends.

It must not be overlooked, however, that the transfer from primary to secondary school in Barbados has been perceived as being a very competitive event in the young child's life and a very stressful one in that of the parent (s) (Augier, 1988). Two of the factors responsible for this perception can be identified as (a) the class structure of the public secondary school system, and (b) the shortage of places in the public school, that is, the former grammar or older secondary school. Addressing these problems has resulted in an effort to equalize the system by redefining both the old grammar and newer secondary schools as public secondary schools, admission to which, is determined on the basis in the Secondary Schools Entrance Examination. This means, therefore, that the

candidate who would have been automatically transferred to the newer secondary schools in his/her district, upon failing the Common Entrance Examination, could easily be allocated to a school, which is farther away based on marks obtained. Based on their preferred schools identified prior to the exam, and in some instances, these schools may exist in residence and school zones.

The complexity of the process even as it is today, is rooted in the Mitchison Report of 1867, which at that time, specified a need for a system of education with first and second rate schools. It subsequently suggested that the second rate school was not designed for the lower classes, but to benefit more pupils than those who could afford the first rate school. The first rate schools were the grammar schools, and the second rate schools were the other secondary schools (or comprehensive schools). Second rate school life was to terminate at age 16, when the student would be adequately prepared for the labour market. First rate school life, on the other hand, would continue for two more years and would be designed at this point to “educate the boy’s taste, to inform his mind, and to create a desire for further information and to impart to him that indescribable something which we call ‘culture’” (Gordon, 1968,103).

More than one hundred years later, the structure of these schools is still intact and consequently in most cases, they become the first and second choices respectively, selected by parents for their children. The inability of the secondary schools system to meet the demands of the

volume of students graduating from the primary school has contributed to the absence of the 'automatic transfer.' Expansion and construction of schools from the 1960s onwards reduced this problem, but more specifically, related to the demands of the economy in its efforts to modernize, in harmony, with international markets. In view of this, both the Democratic Labour Party government and the Barbados Labour party have approached the school system as it relates to the economy and development, so that specialization in certain subject areas, at specific schools, is being focused upon.

One needs only to examine the conflict created through the introduction of first and second rate schools in 1876, and their lasting impact on the school system in Barbados, to conclude that the modelling of a system on that of another society can be extremely problematic, incongruous and retrogressive. But Britain cannot be fully blamed for the situation as it is today. When the system was designed by Britain during the colonial period it suited, the mother country's needs. Indeed, the elites in Barbados at the time were either British born or descendants of the British, and the subsystems of the structure were controlled by the British colonial policy. But in the post-colonial era, everything has remained virtually the same. The dictates of neocolonialism have only replaced those of colonialism. Educational policies in most British colonies revolved around the same pattern. Clayworthy (1971) substantiates the incongruity of the British Colonial Education devised for Africa with the needs of the

African society. It was his suggestion that if the community is to benefit from education designed for it, then it is necessary to pay some attention to the needs of that community, of which the school is only a part.

In the West Indies, and specifically in Barbados, the education imposed through the practice of overseas examinations became an issue of great societal concern, particularly after the 1950s when development on a global basis was trickling into the West Indies. Therefore, the demands of development implied a revision of the school curricula to produce the required skills. Perhaps it was because the new curricula of English History, and British Constitution could not respond to the regulations of overseas examinations that the idea of the Caribbean Examinations Council was promoted. Emphasis on coherent and relevant curricula continues to command high priority in educational policy in Barbados, as the country moves away from an agricultural economy to a more diversified economy (Barbados Development Plans, 1979-1983; 1983-1988). As this synchronization takes place, it is anticipated that in the long run, schools will be turning out graduates who can adequately satisfy the demands of the labour market.

In his speech at the opening of Parliament on July 21, 1981, the Governor General cited a government program which sought to deal with the issues of inequality of educational opportunity. To support this further, a reference was made to planned improvement of facilities and additional accommodation for some schools in the public system, as an attempt to

deliver “a uniform quality of education.” This effort is to provide for a rational allocation of students on the basis of ability and aptitudes, and the introduction of a phased system of ‘zoning’ (Parliamentary Speech, July 21, 1981:10-11).

### **Private Education in Developed Countries**

Here are other ideas of the literature review that relate to Vale Preparatory. The goal of Barbadian Educational reform is to address all educational issues in an ongoing research basis, in order to keep up with the developed countries. It is, therefore, necessary to look at the roles private education plays in those countries, and how they relate to Barbados. The predictors of enrollment, growth, and the percentage of private education in the whole educational domain are examined below. Hopefully, the trends and models of private education in developed countries can help to explain the ongoing development of private education in Barbados.

In the East, Japan has very little in common with Barbados, in terms of culture and tradition. In Japan, for example, the public school system’s educational financing and planning are centralized. Due to rapid scientific and technological progress, Japanese parents have much higher expectations for education than in the past. Despite the fact that Japan has the highest level of literacy in the world, the Japanese public school

system has been deeply criticized for its rigid structure, and there is discontent among highly capable students (Shiba, 1986).

Some Japanese parents are turning their hopes to various forms of private education, which can provide higher educational quality for students with different needs and abilities. In Japan, 1% of primary students and 13 % of secondary students attend formal private schools (Anderson, 1992). In addition to formal education, private schools play a key role in non-formal education by providing a great variety of subjects to enhance and reinforce the knowledge students learn in formal schools. Many students attend this type of school (Jūkū), after their formal school, or during their holidays. For example, the Kumon method, the largest private institution in Japan, offers after-school tutoring, which has attracted 7.5 percent of the total number of primary students, reaching an enrollment of 11 million (Shiba, 1986).

In the West, in Canada, a report on private schools (Leighton, 1989) claimed that there were 222,179 students enrolled in private or independent schools during the 1986-1987 school year, which represents five percent of the school population in Canada. In fact, from 1974 to 1986, independent schools grew by almost fifty percent, while public schools declined fifteen percent (Leighton, 1989). In the same vein, American private schools appear to be a vital and growing reality. In 1986, 11% of the total primary and 8% of the total secondary population were in private schools (Anderson, 1992). In Australia, one of the most developed

countries in the world in terms of private education, 28% of the total 3 million students are attending private schools (Anderson, 1992). Private education is growing in these developed countries for several reasons including academic standards, religion and special needs.

Regarding academic standards, Coleman (1982) finds that in comparing American students in reading, vocabulary, and mathematics, private school students scored about two grade-levels higher than did all students in the public sector. Similar differences can be found in countries such as Australia and Britain (Graets, 1990; Halsey, Heath, & Ridge, 1980), and it would seem by statistics that they are right. Many people in developed countries believe that public schools cannot provide quality education or a good learning environment. Many public schools have deteriorated to such a degree that private action is required. Lack of moral tone, discipline, and academic rigour are the complaints often heard from disenchanted parents and citizens (Cooper, Mclaughlin, & Manno, 1984). Hence, parents who can afford it are willing to pay private tuition fees to keep their children out of what they consider poor quality schools.

Many religious parents also want to keep their children in a 'pure' environment, where they can receive religious education along with other subjects. In this regard, the curriculum, methods of instruction, and even the general atmosphere in public schools may conflict with parents' religious beliefs (Kwari, 1992). The private school, therefore, serves as an

escape from the public school system, for both religious and academic reasons.

Moreover, private schools often respond to special needs that public schools in many localities are not equipped to meet. Examples include boarding schools, schools for mentally, emotionally or physically handicapped children, and schools designed to meet the special needs of minority groups (Kraushaar, 1972, p.8).

It is also important to note that government aid makes a considerable contribution to the prosperity of Western private education. Anderson (1992) observed that federal and state aid led to rapid growth in private education in the late 1970s and 1980s. To encourage parents to invest in their children's education, the government gives those parents tax credits on the private school tuition fee and other educational expenses.

That private education is expanding in Western countries does not necessarily mean that it brings only positive effects to the society. On the contrary, many people are arguing that private schools only increase educational and career opportunities for those groups who are already advantaged. Furthermore, it leads to more racial and ethnic segregation and social stratification (Kwari, 1992). By the same token, public support of private schools has been attacked. Griggs (1985) points out that some private schools are profit making organizations, and there is no reason for them to enjoy charity status by not paying income and property taxes, or by receiving funding from the government.

In Barbados, the national government, like others, accepts responsibility for ensuring that the education provided at all levels, whether in government or in non-government institutions, is of satisfactory quality and is suited to the maturity level and needs of the children concerned.

As we compare Barbados with the developed countries, there are both similarities and differences in private education. In Japan, as in Barbados, people are pursuing alternatives to public education for academic purposes, rather than religious ones. Also, only the assisted private secondary schools receive financial and other assistance from the government, through bursaries, subventions and supervisions. Private primary schools in Barbados do not receive financial support from the government, so they charge students a variety of high fees to maintain the school establishment (Layne & Atherley, 1995). Therefore, as in the West, private education raises the issue of educational equality in Barbados, for only about 7% of parents can afford these high fees to send their children to these schools.

### **Economic Factors Affecting the Education System**

It has been shown how the structure of the education system in Barbados developed and where the dichotomies lie. If we were to examine the social structure of society (see Appendix 1), it would be observed that the school system only mirrors the structure of the macrocosm itself, even though it has been designed to appear differently. The school produces

people to fit into specific slots in the labour market. This is precisely why there are dichotomies within the school system which conform to the requirements of a capitalist society. Sarup (1988) stated that the major economic function of schooling is to facilitate the stratification of the labour market. Through the present system of education, students, before completion of their schooling, have psychologically assigned themselves to their place in the labour market and subsequently, society. In the case where "their place" is in the lower income bracket they have been schooled to accept that they are not capable of anything more. Therefore their acceptance legitimizes inequality in the market place and in the social system. Lauglo (1985) purports that schooling functions as an oppressive tool both within and among countries and satisfies the exploitative needs of the capitalist class and reproduces inequality in the social system. He bases his theory on the assertion that the state controls education and is subservient to the exploitative economic needs of the owners of the physical capital. Educational reforms therefore must promote radical political change if they are to respond to the true needs of the people. A correspondence exists between Lauglo's argument and the Cuban Revolution, for one of the primary objectives of the Revolution was to strive to attain an egalitarian society.

Bowles (1971) states that all social and economic objectives desired through the Cuban Revolution had a corresponding link in the school system. This implies that the education system in Capitalist Cuba would

have been radically reformed to meet the objectives of a Socialist Cuba. This points to the observation made in 1982 by the Director General of UNESCO Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, when he stated that the colonial system was equivalent to an elitist system of education and that reforms were within the context of that existing system. He stated furthermore that relevant reforms were within the context of that existing system and that relevant reforms might indicate changing the system itself.

The system is no different in Barbados. Because the state and the people own very little, the state has to conform to the needs of the owners of capital. In this respect, the state must also see that the people perform this role as well, and it is in the school that they are taught this behaviour. The significance of the role of private enterprise in the economy of Barbados is seen when statistics are compared for employers in private enterprise with the state. In 1980, where the state employed 17.35 percent of the economically active population (82,487), private enterprise employed 73.85 percent. Although there was an overall increase in employment by the state and a decrease in figures for private enterprise in the 1990 statistics, it is still revealed that private enterprise remains the dominant employer over the state. Where the state in 1990 employed 24.25%, private enterprise employed 60.6% of the economically active population (97,133) (Commonwealth Caribbean Population Census Report 1990-1991, Vol.3).

Educational development, then, must conform to the needs of the major employer if society is not to produce unnecessarily an uneducated unemployable population. Since the system of schooling as prescribed by the state must turn out students for the major labour market, it is in effect catering to the needs of capitalism. Extracting the maximum labour from its workers for the minimum salary is the goal of the capitalists, and because the system of schooling bends to the dictates of the capitalist society, it therefore promotes inequality through exploitation.

The system of education, and even the curricula although controlled by the state, must conform to the forces of the capitalist economy. As Bowles and Gintis (1976) point out, the school system is only one of the microcosms which serve to reflect the structure of the privileged.

When Barbados was a full agricultural society, the school system was designed to meet the needs of the civil service, the private sector and migration. The main issue arising from these functions stemmed from the fact that education had no relationship with the agricultural economy and therefore, it served only the private sector in white collar jobs which were limited. The manual aspects of agriculture were backward and were performed by the uneducated masses. The capacity of the civil service failed to absorb those looking for work and resulted in a steady departure of migrants in search of a livelihood. But now with a more diversified economy, the system is able to absorb more of its graduates and reduce the rate of migration which is consistent with new immigration policies of

such countries as England, Canada, and the U.S.A, the major recipient of Barbadian immigrants.

It becomes clear that educational development in Barbados has been given much priority by the government and the general population. In the absence of major industrial development in the country, the state has been able to direct much attention to the expansion of its educational system, making education up to and including the university level free. This, however, is apparently geared specifically to satisfy the needs of private enterprise. As the economy modernizes through industry and technology, the school system will reflect a different concentration. As Bowles (1971) contends, the Cuban system reflects the objectives of the Revolution. Similarly, a school in a capitalist society reflects the needs of capitalist exploitation. Several areas of concern have emerged directly and/or indirectly from the widespread education in this society: with the availability of free education in Barbados the demands in the job market for qualified personnel have increased; academic qualifications are now required in job situations that did not demand them previously; unless the labour market can fully absorb high school, college and university graduates at the rate at which they are being turned out from these institutions, an educated unemployed section of the population will develop and become frustrated, possibly resorting to revolutionary outbursts. Investment in education that eventually leads to external migration results in a negative return on that investment and on opportunity costs as well.

Migration allows the recipient country to benefit from the educational investment which the donor country has made and therefore facilitates the retention of its superior position and perhaps provides better opportunities to exploit the periphery.

### **Summary**

Private schools have played, and will continue to play, an important role in Barbadian education. They served almost one tenth of the population in secondary schools, and 7 percent of that in primary schools. Nobody can change the tendency of history of private education in Barbados as it is part of the continuation of educational history. Since passing the Common Entrance Examination came to be perceived as one of the paths to personal success and wealth, education has become so important that private teaching and study have taken on a more critical role than before (Galt, 1951, 321). Because parents do not have full confidence in the efficiency and the effectiveness of state-owned school systems, they favour better schools. However, the development of private education in Barbados is largely attributable to the economic reforms which have brought considerable changes in people's economic status, and has introduced much Western educational thought in Barbados.

Private schools have a great deal of funds, academic freedom, and autonomy. They can offer a high standard of teaching quality, which is the major factor attracting many students and parents to private primary

education. In Barbados, in addition to the moral, academic, athletic, aesthetic and labour related values which are stressed in public schools, almost every private primary school puts emphasis on all aspects of learning. Some of these schools offer computer courses in primary school. Independence and autonomy give private schools the freedom to use new teaching materials as well as the unified curriculum, which is developed by the Ministry of Education for public and private schools (Hawkins & Stites, 1992). Private schools can revise the curriculum and select alternative teaching materials in order to improve student's learning efficiency.

Private education is inevitable in Barbados. In the developed countries, governments do not exercise full control over education. However, the Barbadian government invests much money in education, (estimated expenditure by the Ministry of Education for 1992-1993 was a total of 215,056,353 Barbadian dollars on various programs) and offers equal access to education for all students until age 16 years. Private schools can serve as a very good complement to public education.

However, private education also poses potential problems including inequality. First, private education results in increased educational opportunities for those who are already advantaged. Similarly, private schools result in further social stratification. For example, private education may provide the well-to-do people's children opportunity to form special social networks and foster a group of "elitist snobs". Finally, some people in other countries may use private school as a tool to make excessive

profits, a possibility that needs to be restricted by legislation. However, this is not the case in Barbados. While the problems posed by private education are cause for concern, they can bring about a variety of educational benefits such as social development and the fostering of well adjusted children. Although the present public primary schools are providing a good, free education for all students, many Barbadian parents are willing to pay the exorbitant fees to have their children educated in the primary private schools, thereby perpetuating inequality.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Education and occupational opportunities have been issues in many societies where social change continues shaping the society as the needs demand. Education responds to meet the demands of a society whose occupational opportunities are always changing. Occupational opportunities in most circumstances are contingent upon educational opportunities and performance. In view of the many issues arising from the relationship between educational opportunities and occupational opportunities, several theorists have approached the subject from social, economic and political viewpoints. One such approach came from the Technical Functional theorists whose argument not only supports inequality in society but maintains that it is a necessary condition to ensure the existing normative order (Paulston, 1977). Davis (1949) for instance, believes that social inequality is a device which unconsciously evolves and

is utilized by societies as a means of guaranteeing that the most qualified persons are consciously chosen to occupy the most important positions in society. Similarly, Turner (1964) supports the view of the technical-functional theory and, from a more micro perspective, analyzes occupational opportunities with his concept of upward mobility. Turner claims that upward mobility in the United States is achieved through a contest system, while in England it is achieved through the sponsorship notion. But Turner's contest mobility concept clearly substantiates the technical-functional theory.

The "contest mobility" model, according to Turner, dictates that the contest is open to all, the prize of which is determined solely on the individual's own efforts. Even though the contest is controlled by rules, much scope is given the participants to allow them varied strategies and efforts which they may want to employ. This concept therefore supports the view that those most qualified will occupy the most important positions. This is a model obviously designed to legitimize inequality by impressing upon the larger society that the system is fair and that everyone has the same opportunities. On the other hand, Turner's concept of upward mobility as observed in England supports a sponsorship model and compares it to a private club where membership is reserved for recruits sponsored by one or more of the club's existing members, once the necessary criteria are met. Upward mobility in this model is not open to all but, is limited to a select few. In both models, there is some inter-

relationship. Success in upward mobility as defined by the contest model however still depends largely on one's economic background and social standing, as specified by the sponsorship model.

The technical-functional theory approach legitimizes inequality in society in order to preserve the existing normative order. Coleman's (1973) views on educational opportunities in the United States substantiate inequality in the system. He argues from the premise that though such opportunities are available to all, they cannot be fully taken advantage of because these opportunities do not eliminate "economic sources" of inequality of opportunity. He further purports that a common educational experience implies that the effect of such an experience does increase the range of opportunity, but it does not take into account the effect it has in excluding opportunity. To further substantiate his argument, Coleman states that once the educational opportunity prevents a child from pursuing specific occupational paths, then the opportunity is not an equal one. He explains this in terms of an academic program and a vocational program. An academic program according to Coleman, not only prolongs opportunities through continued education, but simultaneously closes off opportunities which a vocational program keeps open.

The model developed by the Technical-Functional theorists and supported by Turner is justifiably applicable to the social structure of Barbados. The public system of education in Barbados is an open one but because it is only a microcosm of the larger social order, it inherently

nurtures inequality. For example the transfer from primary to secondary school appears to be an open contest. This process therefore stipulates that those persons most qualified will be selected for those school most academically bent. This method of selection is one designed to maintain the existing order. The system however, cannot be coherently analyzed if approached from the point of transfer. Writing the school entrance examination is compulsory for all pupils in the public primary school who have attained the age of 11 years, but are under 12, by September 1 in the year of the examination. This regulation reflects an open system removing any doubt as to the system's fairness, at least academically. However, the fact remains that there are certain social and economic factors involved that could easily be identified as limiting the chance of success for those students from poor economic backgrounds. Because these students, after having failed the examination for entrance to a grammar school are exposed to a vocational curriculum, they are further disadvantaged as their life's chances are restricted once more, and are therefore excluded from certain educational opportunities. This is the perspective from which Coleman addresses the problem of inequality of educational opportunity, and it can be applied to discuss the support of the academically trained or the vocationally trained student.

## - Chapter 3 -

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

#### Research Questions

To what extent do private primary schools in Barbados foster social inequality? Does the transfer from Vale private primary preparatory to secondary school offer equal or better opportunities than public schools to children with regard to the secondary Schools Entrance Examination?

Does the private primary system work well in providing steps to prestigious schools? What standards does it provide? How is success measured in Barbados? Is it by the students' aptitude level in certain subjects? How does the school bring this about?

What perception do people hold of educational opportunities in society? What will be unavailable if there is no private education? It is my contention that private primary schools are also beneficial to the Barbadian society.

#### METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in its orientation, employing the case study approach. Yin (1984) points out that case studies should be conducted when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not evident. According to Merriam (1988) a qualitative approach is most suitable when studying "a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring" (p.17). This study of private primary schools fits these definitions, as it is inextricably rooted in the context in

which it occurs, and requires interpretation in order to find its social significance. This study was conducted through: 1) participant observation, and 2) interviews with parents, students, school head, and teachers. Because the researcher is from Barbados, she has a very strong background in that country's culture and context. This is a definite asset in doing good qualitative research there.

By investigating the perceptions and viewpoints of students, teachers, parents, administrators and the Ministry of Education currently involved with Vale and students who have previously graduated, I developed a better understanding of the current education situation in this private primary school. Participants were individually interviewed because it was more advantageous than sending mailed questionnaires, as mailed questionnaires tend to have only a 40 % response rate. Moreover, personal contact increases the likelihood that the individual will participate and provide information (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 1990). Interviews also enabled me to ask for explanations when needed, as well as to note verbal cues from individuals.

I traveled to Barbados in July 1999 for an initial 6 week visit. During this time, I visited with family and friends. I had an opportunity to use my time there to review historical and current documents. I met with the Director of Vale on three different occasions. An interview was conducted on one of those occasions, and I also met and interviewed parents of three former students on one occasion. Telephone interviews were conducted

with teachers, parents, and students. Simultaneous tape recordings of my interviews with the participants were done as I repeated what they said into the tape recorder. I revisited the school in December 1999 for several weeks, at that time I got the opportunity to play the role of observer by spending approximately 3 hours in each form during their English, mathematics, social studies, social science, play and other subjects.

On a micro level, I interviewed individual administrators, teachers and students to get first hand information about their school in a neutral environment and to obtain a clear unbiased opinion of the school activities. Greenstein (1965) explains that on a micro level of analysis the general process of communication is namely (1) who (2) learns what (3) from whom (4) under what circumstances (5) with what effect.

On a macro level, I also interviewed the parents of the students to obtain their views on the child's performance at the school, because of the importance of the family in the socialization process of the child. The student's academic standing may be based on the family's socio-economic status and intellectual ability. There seems to be a differential effect of the role of the family in the child's educational outcome and achievement. What is more important is that this effect follows the student throughout secondary school and remains a significant variable in explaining an adolescent's perception of his role in the political system as he approaches adulthood.

Because of the influence of the community in the child's education on a societal level, I interviewed the teachers and the administrative staff to get their perspective. According to Persell (1977), they influence educational structures and ideologies and as a result of this influence, the educational structure serves the ideological functions of the dominant structure. Hence, the educational structures have presupposed meanings for different individuals from different classes.

On my second visit, I utilized interviews, questionnaires, and observation to carry out this study. Slavin (1992) argues that recording interviews helps prevent interviewer bias that might occur when analyzing the data. He further states that taking notes during the interview ensures accuracy of the data because if there is any discrepancy in the voices on the tape the interviewer can refer to his or her notes.

I had a sample size of at least 20 persons, five staff members, five students and their parents. Five of the parents have children who are currently attending the school and five have children who are either in secondary school or are now gainfully employed. Although this sample size may be considered small, this particular sample was chosen because I believed that they would be able to make a meaningful contribution to my research.

I chose this type of semi-structured interview to gain a clear understanding of the difference between this private primary school and other primary schools; and because I wanted to have a combination of

closed and open ended questions. I used words such as "can", "could", "would", "how", "what", to introduce the open ended questions. The advantage of having open ended questions is that it allowed the respondent to openly answer questions without any restriction (Ary et al. 1990). Further, they elicited a wide range of responses. However, there was a disadvantage to open ended questions, specifically that the questions required more time for both the interviewer and the respondent.

I also introduced closed-ended questions in order to get the most accurate results from the participants. Closed-ended questions have the advantage in that all the participants had the same frame of reference when responding. This is important for factual information. I used some of the following words: "are", "do", "will", "did", and "is" to introduce the questions. The disadvantage to closed-ended questions is that they do not allow for insight and personal opinion about particular issues. Individual responses were transcribed verbatim from the tape recorder. Analysis of the qualitative data was systematic and tested carefully.

Prior to interviewing the participants, a preliminary interview was conducted with one of the participants. Tuckman (1994) states that, an interviewer must have the opportunity to conduct practice interviews before conducting the actual interviews. Further, subjects in this practice interview were from the sample under study. This interview was conducted to give me some experience with interviewing and to ensure that my questions for the real interview would be clear. Slavin (1992) argues that

practice interviews will help the researcher identify any interview protocol. The practice interview will therefore help me with my interview style, tone of voice in asking questions, note taking and tape recording skills.

I had the opportunity to conduct interviews in a 'neutral environment' away from the school. Although I was not able to control the environment where the interviews were conducted, there was control for internal reliability because the conditions for the interview were the same for each participant. Participants in each group were asked the same questions in the same order to also control for internal reliability. Wiersma (1995) maintains that regarding external reliability, it is a matter of degree that the researcher must try to be as concise and clear as possible when describing the methodology. I feel that in regards to the validity I was very clear in the methodology in order for another researcher to replicate this study.

Subjects were given a consent form (see Appendix 2) to sign prior to the commencement of the interview. Also, at this time, subjects were informed that I was not only taking notes but also recording the interviews to ensure accuracy of the results and prevent interviewer bias during analysis of the data. Also, if there is any discrepancy with the voices on the tape recorder, the interviewer can refer to his or her notes. As well to ensure that the written records were accurate the interviewer can listen to the tape recorded message.

I followed the basic principles of interviewing outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1992): Establish rapport with participants, prior to beginning the interview, through small talk; (b) inform participants of the purpose of the interview; (c) assure participants that their responses will be reported anonymously; (d) communicate personal interest in what participants have to say by being attentive and using appropriate facial expressions; (e) ask for clarification when a response is not clear; (f) listen carefully.

Seale (1998) argues that interviews like this may be done as part of a wider involvement in the field, perhaps as part of a participant observation. An attempt to observe things as they happen, listen to what people say and question people in the setting under investigation. I also used school records, reports and minutes of staff meetings.

### **Sources of Data**

Three sources of data were employed. The first was documentation, including books, and journals, to provide a general background, governmental documents, theses, the private school's records, and data concerning the private school and interviews. The second were informants who are school heads, teachers, students and parents. Formal and informal interviews were conducted with teachers in order to elicit their personal views on issues that had emerged as important, on change-related matters and on the social events of the school. The third was by direct observation, in which the researcher gained much first-hand

information of the learning environment and the situation as suggested by other data sources. These data were noted and later transcribed.

All collected data was classified and analyzed as soon as possible as the study proceeded. This helped to guide further observation according to the framework of the research question.

### **Procedure**

The data was collected at Vale Preparatory Private Primary School in Barbados. Because the researcher grew up in Barbados and understands the social context well, she was able to attain access to various sources of data. The researcher stayed in Barbados for thirteen weeks and made 12 visits to Vale in order to observe the school's activities and interview people.

Individual responses were transcribed verbatim from the tape recorder. Analysis of the qualitative data, as described by Miles and Huberman (1984), was systematic and tested carefully. In qualitative research, Wiersma (1995) states that qualitative data requires characterizing information. The primary analysis of the data is coding. I constructed a category system for the examination of the different variables of the study. It is important to note that the categories were formed after thorough examination of that data. The findings were shared with the respondents for their verification.

### **Instruments**

Interview protocols were designed before the researcher received permission from Vale School. After arriving at the school, the researcher did a pilot test of her interview protocols on the school head, teachers, parents, and students. She discovered that some of her questions were not applicable to the interviewees. Therefore, she developed another series of interview questions for the interviewees according to their comments and suggestions (see appendix 5, 6, 7, and 8). Upon obtaining consent, interviews were arranged at the school, on the telephone, and at suitable locations accessible to participants and the interviewer.

The observation schedule was arranged by the researcher through negotiation with the school principal. The researcher observed classroom teaching, as well as before and after class activities for at least six hours. This was.

### **Ethics**

In order to obtain a Certificate of Ethical Acceptability for Research Involving Human Subjects, a study proposal was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee for Concordia Faculty of Education before starting the research. To avoid a breach of ethics, all the subjects were informed of their rights, and were reminded that participation was voluntary and that they could decline to participate at any stage of the research if they wished. In fact, when the rules were explained, the subjects were

pleased to assist me in this educational venture. The researcher was able to use her experience in the Barbadian context to gain their trust and ensure successful interviews.

## **- Chapter 4 -**

### **Introductory Profile of Vale Preparatory School**

#### **Introduction**

The researcher chose Vale preparatory school as the target of her research study. Vale was chosen for several reasons. First, it seemed that there might be more material to investigate based on its relatively long history. Second, this school has a good reputation for its unique school philosophy. Third, the school's fees and size are average among private schools in Barbados, hence the researcher believed that this school would be representative. Fourth, there is a lack of researched based information on primary education in Barbados in general, and private primary education in particular. Fifth, the author, being Barbadian, and having attended a private school there, wishes to add to the existing research on the Barbadian educational system.

A school's organizational climate is how the school works and interacts as a community, including the roles and relationships between administrators, teachers, students, parents, and government bodies regulating the school. At Vale, a good relationship has formed between the administration, the staff, the parents and the students. Also the relationship of private elite schools and the Ministry of Education has proved to be workable. These roles and relationships will be described and analyzed in this section.

### **History of Vale Preparatory School**

(based on interviews and observations)

Although Vale has drawbacks as many other schools do, on the whole, Vale school has a family atmosphere, and is a joyful, pleasant place for parents, teachers and students. However, as was expressed by one of the parents, the introduction of more attractive and enjoyable activities, programs and buildings or material changes to facilitate greater modernization and humanization of the equipment and teaching methods of the school would be greatly appreciated.

Alterations were made to the building in 1967, when two new school houses were completed and opened to students to accommodate the growing student population. The original building is not for the exclusive use of the family but is sometimes used by students who may need extra help to prepare for their Common Entrance Examinations to high school, or if a student feels unwell and needs to rest quietly.

The newer buildings are rectangular in shape, and are located behind the family home (original school). There are two storey conventional school buildings consisting of five forms (grades). To the left of the school is the library, which is well utilized by all students and staff. It was established in 1993. Books were donated by well-wishers and friends. They have up-to-date books, periodicals and journals covering all subjects in the curriculum. The classrooms are sometimes used as music rooms. Other special teaching stations include the Playground, Gym, (surrounding the house)

the creative arts shop and a cafeteria, (snack machines) as well as a staff lounge and an office for the caretaker and support staff.

In 1959, the school began as a play group with six children aged 4 years, where children learned as they played and had a "happy time." In 1960, kindergarten to five forms were permanently installed. A steady increase in numbers necessitated recruitment of staff and changes in the curriculum to meet the Common Entrance Examination requirements. As classes advanced and expanded, the focus of the school was on English language and mathematics to prepare children for the Common Entrance Examinations.

It was no longer a play group, but became known as Vale Preparatory school. In 1967, the first five students successfully wrote the Common Entrance Examination. In successive years Vale has placed students in all of the secondary schools throughout the island. Classes are organized according to age but talented students are promoted according to their ability. Organization of classes has played a major role in the outstanding results of the Common Entrance Examinations.

The Ministry of Education does not retain responsibility for the building or its capital equipment. By and large the Ministry gives the Principal autonomy in operating the school. She is under no obligation to the Ministry, although she receives the same correspondence as the government schools. The Ministry of Education facilitates her role by

letting her know what is going on. The buildings are kept in good repair and very few alterations to the building have been necessary.

### **Administrator**

Mrs. Excel, a Barbadian, is the founder of the school and the primary shaper of policy. The administrator plays an extremely important role in the school, and a complete understanding of the school requires a careful look at her motivation for the handling of the school's founding, leadership roles that she occupies, and the basic style that she employs in carrying them out.

### **Founding of the School**

To give parents who work in government service the opportunity to have an alternative type of education for their children was one of the first priorities of the school's founder. Mrs. Excel established Vale in 1959 and remains the school's Principal to this present day. Mrs. Excel was able to recognize the needs of Barbadian parents because she, herself, had had to make a decision of how best to combine her role as a teacher with her responsibility as a mother. She decided to use her experience and expertise to respond to the need by starting Vale.

To understand more specifically the motivation behind Vale, the researcher talked to the principal and founder of the school. When asked about her reasons for wanting to start a new school, the principal

responded by relating a heart rending story concerning her younger son Yane. On the day that her entire life was to become changed, she was hurrying to St. Miles, the local boys school where she had taught for several years. Her four year old son started crying and asking her to stay at home with him. She pointed out as she had done on previous occasions, "Yane, Lizzie is here", his favourite maid, "She will take care of you until Mommy comes home." Her son would not to be consoled; he replied, "Mommy, today, Lizzie is not enough." She left for school but those words were ringing in her head all day. She realized she had to make a change and decided to stay home and with her son until he was old enough to start school. She passed the word on to a few of her friends and in September 1959 a play group was started with seven children including her son Yane. Forty years later what was intended to be a short-term venture is still in existence. Over these years many students have successfully graduated and hold many prestigious positions nationally and internationally.

### **Aims and Objectives of Vale Preparatory School**

1. To strive for scholastic excellence and to assist students in realizing their full potential.
2. To promote physical fitness and good health habits.
3. To encourage the moral and spiritual development of the student, within the context of the Christian religion. The teachers realize their

responsibility in moulding the life and character of each of their students. The administration and staff of the school demonstrate a loving concern for each of their students. Vale Preparatory School does not operate for profit.

### **Discipline**

1. Corporal correction may be administered as is deemed necessary by the teachers.
2. Should the parent\guardian of any pupil refuse to allow that student to submit to any disciplinary measure or obey any rules of the school, that pupil maybe suspended or the parent\guardian may be required to withdraw them.
3. Should a student's attitude continue to be inconsistent with the principles and policies of the school, his\her guardian may be asked to withdraw them or the student may be expelled.

### **Prefect and House system**

There is an active Prefect and House System. The prefects are given specific duties which help to assist each class teacher.

There are four houses: Red, Yellow, Blue and Green. The houses are always in competition during the year through spelling and general knowledge quizzes, class tests competitions, punctuality and sports.

### **Homework**

Believing that homework is an integral part of the school's curriculum, each teacher is at liberty to give home work to aid the students to advance in their studies. Therefore, each student is required to complete his/her homework assignments on time. Home work is given for several reasons:

1. Reinforcement:       Vale believes that most students require  
adequate review to master the material  
essential to their educational process.
  
2. Practice:             Following classroom explanation, illustration and  
review of new work, homework is given so that  
the material will be mastered.
  
3. Remedial Activity:    As instruction progresses, various weak points  
need to be remedied.
  
4. Special Projects:     Book reports, compositions, special research  
and projects.

Vale request parents' full cooperation in seeing that the assignments are completed. Failure to complete homework will affect the student's progress.

Some of the most important subjects taught at Vale are the following: English Language Arts which includes instruction in the skills of speaking, reading, listening, spelling, handwriting and composition, as well as knowledge and appreciation for literature and oral expression.

Mathematic courses give instruction in concepts, computational skills and problem solving. The study is taken from the point of view that the Creator is a God of order, system and logic. The child is taught to think logically and to develop skills and methods of practical application of mathematics through the process of discovery and creative thinking.

Social studies is approached from the point of view that the human family is being directed by God and God is directing the affairs and destiny of the human race. An awareness is established as to the individual's place in the setting of time, place, and responsibility in terms of God's purposes and plans for His church and the world.

Physical education is designed to promote participation in large muscle activities which promote desirable physical development, motor skills, attitudes and habits of conduct. Some organized physical activity compatible with the child's age, sex and physical development is arranged each day. Some of the noon hour is used to provide organized physical activity as well as regular P. E. classes and vocational art classes.

Patriotic activity involves learning the national anthem and other patriotic songs, and recognizing national holidays and their significance.

### **Role of Private School Leaders**

In Barbados, the role of the private school leaders is much broader and more challenging than that of the public school leaders. At Vale Preparatory Primary Private School, the leadership role is performed mainly by the principal. Primary issues are obtaining financial and human resources necessary for the operation of the school, maintaining a stable teaching team of high quality, ensuring a continued atmosphere of innovation and reform, and getting support from society and specifically the Ministry of Education.

Another very important element of the administration of Vale is the leadership style that is cultivated there by the principal. She likes to be trusted and also trusts her subordinates, and she firmly believes that in the field of education, people's initiative and creativity cannot grow healthy without corrective discipline. She therefore makes a point of giving her subordinates as much autonomy and responsibility as possible. However, if one of the students seem troubled, and the teachers cannot find out what is causing him\her concern they report the situation to the principal who always gets to the bottom of the problem and together with the teachers they initiate a plan of action to deal with the problem. In addition, at the end of every semester the principal has the responsibility of evaluating the teachers. Those who perform well receive an award.

The school is situated in Belleville, a highly residential area facing a very busy street in close proximity to the Girls Industrial Union, where

young women are taught the rudiments of house craft, a kind of finishing school and a day-care centre. There are many buildings, most of them residential buildings surrounding the school. This school is a very impressive white bungalow with two sets of steps on either side of the house leading up to the front door. There are extensive grounds and beautiful, well manicured gardens, with fruit trees to the right of the house. Originally a family home, Vale is currently celebrating its fortieth anniversary. It was established with Christian principles such as kindness, truthfulness, honesty, and perseverance, and is registered with the Barbados Ministry of Education. All students are expected to wear a uniform: girls wear blue and white dresses and boys wear khaki pants and shirts. The playground, leased from the Government, is limited in size and though virtually barren of anything of interest to children, is used at set times for each grade.

## **- Chapter 5 -**

### **CURRENT EDUCATIONAL REFORMS**

#### **Introduction**

The importance attached to private primary education in Barbados is the avenue towards social mobility (Woodroffe, 1979). Visitors to Barbados often remark about the sight of school children: their orderliness and their air of happiness, but above all, their neatness of dress. On early mornings during term time one frequently encounters groups of boys and girls immaculately dressed in uniform being dropped off by their parents and guardians to their respective schools. The khaki short pants and shirts, together with the pinafores, have all been meticulously washed and pressed the night before by dutiful parents and housekeepers, who look upon education of the offspring with a measure of pride. For both guardian and child, education represents opportunity. Therefore, the best that can be provided is provided. Moreover, education is something which is viewed as a privilege rather than a right. Education represents the optimal means of advancement. They believe that dress should reflect the importance of the educational situation.

Importance may also be gauged in monetary terms. Each year at least one sixth of the total national budget is allocated to education, thus placing it in the foremost position of policy priorities. One can easily see that funds allocated to education have more or less kept pace with percentage increases in overall expenditure. Per capita expenditure on

education in Barbados is approximately 1 dollar per person per day. This outstrips that of most developing countries and even some industrialized nations including the former Soviet Union. However, twenty five per cent of parents opt for private primary education and pay the exorbitant fees that are required for this education. These children are being groomed not only for academic success but also for social success and for positions of leadership.

Another indicator of the salience of education is the much vaunted though less well documented 99.4% literacy rate. Browne (1981) reckons that between 15 and 20 per cent of the island's children need remedial teaching. In some of the government-run primary schools there is a growing phenomenon of juvenile delinquency and its demonstrable association with a deterioration in basic linguistic skills. Cossy (1990) quotes a former Minister of Education, as expressing alarm at the truancy rate and its foreseeable outcome in producing a generation of adults who can neither read nor write.

In Vale private primary school because of the smaller class sizes children with learning disabilities receive individual attention and the policy of the school is to "push" them until they catch up with their brighter classmates. The delinquency and truancy rate is almost nil because of the close relationship between the principal, teachers, and parents. As an example of a teacher concurring with the above, a teacher at Vale stated that, "A few of Vale's children do stray, but because of the groundwork that

has been laid at the private primary education level, they eventually get back on track and may do relatively well". One of Vale's former teachers who believes in the effectiveness of private primary education says concerning her former students: "One or two may go astray, but they listen to my advice willingly, ultimately it is their decision." According to Mrs. Excel rarely do any of these children fail the Common Entrance Exam and a great percentage of them succeed the second time. On the other hand, in the public schools there was a 45 per cent failure rate in the Common Entrance Exam (1989). This raises certain questions about the level and quality of primary education in government run schools.

At this time, the education system in Barbados is constantly being reviewed and different reforms are being implemented. The White Paper on Education reform: Preparing for the Twenty-First Century, (1995) states that "each one [student] matters... Quality Education for all." This reflects the determination of the *Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs & Culture, Barbados*, to foster and cherish the uniqueness of each child and to keep his/her needs at the forefront of all reforms and to be up-to-date on all that might occur in the twenty-first century.

The Ministry holds the view that change should not be gratuitous, whimsical or in relation to ten year cycles. Reform is a continuous process.

We are therefore not constrained to address only those issues in the future that are included or to

ignore those excluded in *This White Paper*  
 but will be influenced by ongoing research in each  
 particular matter and by continued consultations.  
 (White Paper, 1995).

The outcome of this reform will hopefully be a reawakening of the cultural qualities of the Barbadian character that treasures excellence in all aspects of moral, religious, educational, cultural, economic, and aesthetic pursuits. This programme arose initially out of a contract between the government and the people that sought to shape a better Barbados. It will also give the young people a sense of hope in a system that has failed too many of them over the years. For whether a child will be a mason, a software programmer, or a doctor, he or she should be able to read, write, count, reason, deal with all types of situations and to be proud of him or herself. (The White Paper, 1995). The principal explained that the students' intelligence, knowledge, and creativity has been aroused and encouraged because of the new programme. Each student is now encouraged to be the best that he\ she can be. The work of some of the students is now exhibited in the school, including model compositions, calligraphy and art assignments, which raises the level of the students' self-esteem.

Even though there have been reforms the educational system there is still the extremely heavy study burden associated with traditional Barbadian schooling. Because of the Secondary entrance examination

system in Barbados, student scores on the common entrance examination have always been an important criteria in judging the success of the school. Therefore the study schedule is very rigorous. In general, Vale's students are expected to get up early so that they can read and study in preparation for the exam. They are also encouraged to study during lunch break and after school, and they may be kept in school even later during exam preparation periods. Homework is normally assigned everyday, and it takes students several hours a day to complete it. It is not uncommon for a student to study until late into the evening, getting only five or six hours of sleep a night. Hawkins and Sites (1991), argue that this overload schedule can lead to a series of problems: poor health condition, terrible eyesight, and depression. However, there is no evidence of these problems at Vale Preparatory Private School.

### **CHALLENGES**

Here are three challenges in the Barbadian Educational system: the Common Entrance Examination, Elitism in schools, and zoning.

#### **The Common Entrance Examination\ Eleven-Plus Examination**

Reference has been made to the transfer examination. Many have criticized the procedure, either for failure to promote equality of educational opportunity, or on the grounds that the exam needs to be restructured in a way less terrifying to children, and broadened to include additional subject areas, school records, and an evaluation input from independent experts.

Others consider the age of eleven to be too tender for such an experience and recommend postponement for three years in order to take late developers into account. Still others believe the Common Entrance Examination should be abolished. The debate is seemingly endless. However the eleven plus examination still exists unmodified.

More than one reference has been made to the distinction between the older grammar and newer comprehensive type schools in Barbados, and the socio-historical superiority of the former on the grounds of class or race.

Further asymmetry in the two types of secondary education can be found with respect to qualification of staff, composition of boards of governors and the level of educational attainment. Awareness of such differences by parents and guardians, who naturally desire the optimum for their children, has always resulted in an excess of demand over supply for places at Harrison College, Queen's College Combermere and Lodge, the most prestigious secondary schools. As there are only a limited number of places available in any given year, intake at these establishment is consequently restricted to those achieving the highest grades in the Common Entrance Examination. In such a manner the older secondary schools also attract quality material from which they can later extract good results in advanced level examinations.

### **Elitism in Schools**

Critics of the plantocratic system charge that the circle becomes vicious to the extent that race and class differences are reinforced by the selection procedure itself, which tends to favour those who can afford private education and tuition, and whose family backgrounds place them more directly in contact with educational material - books, toys, games, discussions, etc. They further maintain that, unless attempts are made to rectify the situation in the direction of equal educational opportunity, elitism will always persist in Barbados.

Moreover the critics argue that, without satisfactory indications to the contrary, elitism can be seen as thriving on the twin pillars of private primary and older (government run) secondary education. Access to the latter is predicated on entry to the former, itself based on considerations other than educational. Those rejecting the charge of elitism emphasize the competitive nature of the eleven-plus examination, and maintain that attempts to provide greater educational equality simply downgrade establishments to a common denominator.

### **Zoning**

A partial remedy to counteract the above situation, and consonant with the recommendations of the National Commission on the Status of women that 'the provision of new school places should be guided by the

principle of equal access to secondary education" (Forde, 1980), the government has decided to introduce a scheme of zoning (Government Information Service, 1982). In so doing, it hopes to tackle the associated problem of public transportation. The zoning proposals have met with varied reactions. The Ministry of Education points to the advantages of greater accessibility and punctuality, less travel and expense, more opportunities for extra-curricular activities, specialization, and attendance of PTA's.

Since the implementation of partial zoning began, parents have the option to send their children to any primary school, but for the transfer to the secondary school parents can choose among ten different schools. The first two are free choices, if the student achieves the appropriate mark for that school. However, if they get a lower mark than is required, they may be sent by the government to a school in their own zoning area, that is, the school nearest to their place of residence. A third placement option is the bursary, in which education is not totally free to the student. This option applies if the student's personal choice and the government assigned place in the student's zoning area has also been filled. Parents are then expected to pay a percentage of the child's educational cost.

The decision of where students should attend school is based on three factors: parents, students and grades. Education offered throughout schooling is too important an issue to be left to the immature judgments of pupils alone, particularly those in primary school. They do not have the

experience that is necessary to make such crucial decisions and the time that they spend in any level of the school system is limited. Therefore, it is important that they learn what is of educational importance during that limited period. By educational importance, I mean that which is significant for the development of those skills which are necessary to pass the exam and later function as responsible citizens.

The Vale school has been chosen as one of the eight primary schools for the implementation of EduTech 2000. The Government wants all children on the island to be technologically literate.

### **EduTech 2000**

Two main theories guide EduTech 2000: (1) The theory of constructivism which proposes that students act more often as pilots, rather than passengers, on the journey of learning. (2) The philosophy of child-centred learning which assumes that children are at the centre of the education process and that teachers function as facilitators of student learning (EduTech 2000, 1997).

EduTech 2000 has decided to change the traditional Barbadian educational style. Its theme is "Building on a sound foundation for a brighter tomorrow." EduTech 2000 is a five year education sector enhancement programme which will help the Ministry of Education continue to implement some of the reform initiatives which were outlined in The White Paper on Education Reform. Its primary goal is to effect an

increase in the number of students contributing to sustainable social and economic development of Barbados (EduTech 2000, 1998).

The specific objectives of EduTech 2000 are: (1) to increase the efficacy of the teaching/learning process by encouraging teachers to utilize the available technologies in their classrooms; and (2) to prepare students for life in a technologically-advanced society by ensuring that all students who leave school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have good knowledge of, adequate skills in, and favourable attitudes towards, the use of information technology. The Ministry of Education has outlined in the White Paper (1995) strategies to improve their way of thinking and the status quo. However, it takes time to implement changes in a society where the dominant group has had the upper hand for many years (White Paper, 1995).

### **The Child-Centred Approach to Learning**

The rationale of the child-centred approach to learning is that human knowledge and the criteria and methods used in our enquiries are all socially constructed. Individuals do not come into this world with their cognitive data banks already pre-stocked with knowledge nor is the knowledge acquired ready-formed by some sort of direct perception or absorption. It is imperative, therefore, that the learning environment provide opportunities through which students can construct their own learning. By this means they act more often as pilots, rather than

passengers, on the journey of learning. Vale is developing a child-centred approach, one which will facilitate such learning, to bridge the gap towards greater educational equality.

Research on how students learn indicates that a constructivist approach, based on the development of active learning in a child-centred environment, provides the best atmosphere for effective learning. The author believes that it is possible, with the correct use of the technology available, through the use of the computer, that such an environment can be easily created for some children.

The child-centred approach is more a process of modelling and leading, than one of telling. It requires building a classroom, and ideally a school, that is a community of learners. This community of learners includes: teachers, parents, principals and all others involved with the school (including the business community). The teacher is in essence the head learner in each classroom, demonstrating an active curiosity, exhibiting a love of learning, and modelling appropriate learning strategies. The learner plays an active part in a learning process which is consistent with his/her developing stage (Cutting Edge, 1998).

The child is encouraged to become the main agent in his/her learning with checks and balances provided by the teachers. The school community will be educated to cope with change, to see change as an opportunity rather than a threat, to believe that learning is a lifelong activity - a source of pleasure in itself rather than just a means to an end.

Constant training, retraining, job-hopping and even career-hopping will become the norm. New technologies - especially computers and telecommunications - have already created intense worldwide competition for business. Research has shown that the type of jobs and length of time workers spend on a particular job will change significantly in the next century (EduTech 2000,1998).

Students at Vale are empowered to bring their own creativity to their learning experiences. Teachers must become facilitators and the curricula must become more flexible. Teaching-learning tools must provide quality experiences, inter-activity and adequate rewards. This proactive approach requires a major paradigm shift for students, parents, teachers and administrators.

While reform is definitely a primary aspect of Vale's philosophy, the school is not completely abandoning traditional methods. Instead, it tries to combine the best part of Barbadian traditional approach with elements from developed countries. In this way, the strengths of basic education from Barbados, and the relaxed school atmosphere from America, will produce a unique and effective approach for teaching and learning.

Another underlying element of Vale's approach is a belief that the school has a role to play in helping Barbados enter the modern global society. With the growth of Barbados's economic position in the international market, parents realize that Barbados is taking on an important global role. Today as in the past, Barbados needs people who

can represent it abroad, for which a wider knowledge of the world outside Barbados is necessary. Vale hopes to foster well rounded graduates who will be capable of taking on important diplomatic roles to help Barbados deal with the changing society, the rest of the world, and the challenges of the future.

Vale is about to use computer technology to see if the level of all children's education could be improved. At Vale the emphasis is on the curriculum. Success is based both on the curriculum and values held by the school, such as good manners and appropriate social behaviour. This includes involvement in all school activities. Children are encouraged to succeed because their success at school is the next step to being successful in society.

As the Barbadian society has undergone different changes over the past several years, the school has been keeping up to date by implementing related innovations. Vale has maintained its original goals: to be the kind of school that will invoke pride and dignity in the hearts of all its past and present students. Today Vale is a thriving, reputable school that boasts several outstanding scholars who received their primary education there in the past. Today, there are 125 students and six teachers including the principal. From the data that is available during the period of 1963 -1968, 75% of its former students are employed in Barbados and 25% overseas. They hold positions in medicine, law, education, banking, accountancy, actuarial science, tourism, surveying,

hotel management, government analysts and are involved in the decision making processes of large companies as administrators (personal communication, Interview with Mrs. Excel, August, 1999).

## **- Chapter 6 -**

### **THE FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

The findings are divided into three sections: background interviews, including interviews on the changes that occurred at Vale over the last twenty five years with students, parents, teachers and the principal; school activities based on research and observations; and participant observations of the third and fourth forms of Vale school.

In the first section, I have described the interviews with the three main populations.

The responses to the interviews were based on the questions in appendices 5, 6,7, and 8. Eight students (four boys and four girls) were selected. Two were in grade three, four were in grade four, two in grade four A. Three of the parents selected seldom visited the school; three mothers belonged to the PTA. Only two of the eight parents were male.

The students and parents were paired with the objective to determine the extent to which the students' selection of significant changes might be their parents' and vice versa. I also wanted to find out how the parents felt about their child's performance at Vale, whether they themselves had received the benefits of a private education, and why they had opted for a private education when education was free throughout the island. I also

wanted to get the students “take” on the school’s atmosphere and how they were prepared for the Common Entrance Examination.

Some of the interviews were conducted at school and others by telephone. I had received permission from the parents since the mother or father was also being interviewed. I interviewed the parent before the child or vice versa to prevent any discussion of the answers prior to an interview. The students and teachers (those interviewed during my second visit) I questioned outside the class on the verandah of the school.

### **Students and Parents Interviews Responses**

These students and their parents are all Barbadian. As was stated, many changes were made to Vale. Among the questions asked of the students’ and teachers was; Which change was most significant?

Student One is an above average grade four A student and her eager outlook on learning contributes greatly to her achievement. Her work is always done neatly and on time; she is determined to succeed. She enjoys reading, writing, and swimming. Student One is rather quiet but has very close friends. She has been attending Vale for five years and is enrolled in all classes offered at the school. Currently she is being prepared for the Common Entrance Examination and hopes to graduate in May 2000. When asked about her teachers, she replied that they were nice. Her class consists of eleven students.

Student One identified the games and the formation of “sports Houses” as the most significant changes. When I asked her to choose her favourite, she selected the competitive games. I was struck by the spontaneity of her responses in reference to the games. I believe she was more familiar with the school’s activities because her mother had been an active volunteer and member of the PTA of the school for two years. Her mother had been one of the parents concerned about the future of the school. When asked why the games was a significant change, she replied, “it gives you a chance to exercise, keep fit and relax a little.”

To the question of how people reacted to the change, Student One responded that most students liked it because they were given a chance to win awards. She gave credit to the current and former teachers and the PTA for being involved in its implementation. Student One could not think of any changes she would like to see in the school (Appendices 6 and 8).

Parent One was one of the original parents concerned about the games and competition with other schools. She learned about the school from relatives who had attended the school, and is satisfied with her child’s performance at the school. She is a very well educated, intelligent and active parent in the school. She was impressed with what the teachers had accomplished. Obviously Parent One was impressed with the introduction of the different colours and “sports Houses” in the school. However, she would like to see changes in the physical facilities of the school.

Parent One believed that the ideas originated with the teachers who were central “actors” in the implementation. These attitudes spread to the principal and then the students as they learned more about the benefits of competitive sports for raising the level of the students’ morale and self esteem. She had no reservations about the sports ideas. She wholeheartedly accepted the plans and different phases and they proved successful. She felt the teachers’ enthusiasm about competitive sports and their self sacrifice was picked up by the entire student body (Appendices 5 and 7). The other changes desired by Parent One included playground facilities, and drama.

Student Two is also an above average grade four A pupil. He has been a student at Vale for seven years. He is in the school choir. While well liked, he occasionally appears to exhibit a superior attitude to everyone including adults. He is bright but tends to do just enough work to get by. He enjoys sports and states that school is “cool” and some teachers are “spunky” but the principal is the best. He is being prepared for the Common Entrance Examination and is practicing some of the exam questions from previous years.

Student Two quickly identified the playground as the most significant innovation. He chose the playground because “it takes a lot of students to one place where they can have fun.” I asked him to guess who thought of the idea. He guessed the idea came from the principal. He gave credit to

parents for wanting more activities on the playground and competitive sports. He listed football and cricket as other changes. Student Two could think of no changes he wished to see.

Parent Two heard about the school and its convenient location from some of her work colleagues who had attended the school. She is happy with her child's adjustment and performance at school. When asked why she had chosen a private school, she replied that a private school provides a better foundation for her son to pass the Common Entrance Examination. She and her husband are part of a musical family. Both are members of the local church choir and play an active part in their children's lives. Parent Two is a cheerful dependable worker who also participates in the PTA. When asked which change was most significant Parent Two did not identify any innovation as the most significant. She believed in the old type of class discipline and methodology of teaching. She liked the new formal sports idea and suggested that it filtered from the teachers' love of sports. She saw the school community accepting the change very well.

When asked how the innovation was implemented, Parent Two expressed that she did not know enough about the day-to-day working of the school to explain how the innovation was implemented except that the atmosphere had changed. As to other changes that might be termed significant, Parent Two listed the decline in the school population (200-125). The one change that Parent Two wished to see was more sports and

competitions with other schools, but she also mentioned that an after-school care centre where students could be monitored and receive help with their homework while they are waiting to be picked up by a parent or other responsible adult would be beneficial.

Student Three is an average grade four student. He is very interested in sports, playing most games that are common to Barbadians. He is well behaved and a "typical" boy. He loves school and states that his teacher is fair in dealing with all the students.

However, Student Three appeared somewhat shy when asked to select the most significant change. He eventually chose the "Mufti day" drive because "it was lots of fun to do." This student had great difficulty determining if there was a method of change. After vacillating, he decided the method centred on different attitudes. He listed football, and track and field as significant innovations. The only change Student Three could think of was that he wanted to have the time of the football game changed as it interfered with his other activities.

Parent Three runs his own businesses from his home. He has two children attending Vale Preparatory school. He is often in the school when he comes to pick up his children. He appeared to me to be a very friendly, cheerful man, and very happy with the school. The father is very interested

in doing the right thing for his children and has borrowed books from the staff and principal on some of the new educational approaches.

There was a lengthy pause when I asked Parent Three to identify a change significant to him. At first he said "I haven't noticed any." He eventually selected the increased freedom children now had to work on their own as being significant. This parent applauded the granting of freedom relative to the child's maturity and ability to cope with it. He was not sure how the change got started, but eventually thought that the idea may have stemmed from child psychologists, naming as an example, Dr. Spock. The most important people in the implementation, he figured, were the principal and the teachers on staff, both who had loaned him books. He had difficulty with the question of the change coming from within or outside the school. He felt there must have been some outside influence such as the literature, but when asked to choose he decided the change must have originated more from within the school.

On the question of acceptance, Parent Three seemed to betray some of his own reservations. He felt the teachers had gone along with the change "letting the students be free" but there were mixed feelings (among parents) on this. On the question of diffusion, he said "it was not enough to try to get involved, read etc.." But some parents who have kids are "trying to get with it." He said he would recommend the books (loaned him by the principal and staff) to other parents. He guessed the change was started

by making people feel they wanted it and that many were involved in putting it into practice.

As other changes, this parent listed the class meetings, the problem solving method of handling fights, the noon hour recreation activities such as football and preparation for school concerts. I believe he knew so much about the class meetings and problem solving of fights due to the discussions and literature shared with him by the principal. His own interest in sports is quite apparent. The only change Parent Three could think of was that he wanted more parental involvement.

Student four is an above average, hard working, form four student . She has been a close friend of a classmate since the age of five. Together they are writing a mystery novel (so far sixteen type written pages). This student loves reading and all sports. She spends many hours playing school at home. She loves school and the teachers and will graduate in 2001.

Student four selected as significant changes the outdoor recreation games (tennis, rounders, volley ball, netball, etc.), "because they keep the children from being bored, getting into trouble." She felt the implementation strategy was democratic as "one person could not have done it all." She then stated she was not sure about this because the changes did come one at a time. The other innovations listed were the metric system, drama presentations, and assemblies.

Student four paused for a very long time when I asked her to name any change she would like to see in the school. After repeating this two times and receiving no response, I jokingly said "this must mean every thing is perfect here." She replied "yuh!" This surprised me as I felt she would be influenced by her mother, who seemed somewhat critical and negative during the interview.

Parent Four graduated from Vale in 1966. She had enjoyed her time there very much. She had been a PTA volunteer for at least three years. During this period she acquired the reputation of being a "grouch" and quite hard to get along with. She was perceived as being unhappy around children and I wondered why she worked in the PTA. She was also critical of the staff. On one occasion, she expressed to me how disappointed she was that the girls' basket ball team was no longer practicing. She also complained that the school needed better qualified teachers.

As Parent Four could not think of a change, finally she identified having to send her daughter for extra lessons in preparation for the eleven plus exam because she was not getting this instruction at Vale school. Such things, she claimed, angered her. This was clearly in her opinion, a negative change originating from the pressure of the exam and the competition with other schools.

This parent reported that sending her daughter to another school for extra lessons was a personal decision. "I was reluctant to do this but I had no choice."

In terms of other changes, Parent Four felt that the school had been paying more attention in the last few years to spelling and writing. This surprised me based on her earlier statement that the school needed better trained teachers. It seemed contradictory. Her statement that teachers were paying more attention to spelling and writing is probably closer to the truth in my opinion, at least in the case of writing. This is a good example of an individual selecting something close to her heart.

When asked if there were any other changes she would like to see, at first, Parent Four stated she was happy with everything at school. As an afterthought, she expressed her concern about the lack of responsibility shown by students and parents for students' belongings, and lack of adequate preparation for exams.

Student Five is a hard working, grade four girl. She is a quiet girl. Her best friend, a popular classmate, seems to help her socialize. Student five enjoys sports, soap operas and playing school. She enjoys mathematics and states that the teachers are great.

Student Five quickly selected the recreation games such as volley ball, and rounders as being significant changes since, previously, lunch time "had been a bore." When I asked her to list other changes, she

seemed stumped. I explained what is usually meant by school innovation or change whereupon she selected the formal school sports, and the trophies and awards that were won, as well as the new carpeting on the first classroom floor. At first, Student Five could think of no changes she personally wished to see. Later in the interview she said computers would be a welcomed addition to the school.

Parent Five is a well educated, pleasant, unassuming lady. Parent Five saw as significant the general slipping of standards in academics and attitude toward work. She saw this affecting the whole fabric of the Barbadian society. She stated "the change came with the idea that education was not a privilege but a right." She saw teachers as the most important force in the implementation process when given the scope to do what they wanted. She did not see this as a change originating within the school.

Parent five felt the change was accepted initially and with a great deal of participation. She saw this happening everywhere and saw the church taking the same route. It had once been elitist and was now making accommodations for everybody. She claimed that some people are having second thoughts about this process. The method involved included making people want the change and the parent participation strategy. Parents are not as hesitant in approaching administration, she claimed.

Parent Five saw the change occurring quickly without a lot of publicity but qualified this by saying that perhaps the general public was not aware of it. Parent Five lists as other changes during this period the playground facilities. The change Parent Five wished to see was a return to more structure and discipline for the good of society in the future, also changes in the physical structure of the classroom, ventilation, upkeep and better parking. She did not, however, wish the discipline to be overdone.

I was impressed by the speed and lack of hesitation in Parent Five's responses.

Student Six is a sweet, tiny, grade four girl of above average ability. She is well liked. The only change she personally wished to see was more games for girls. She appreciates the library and the new carpeting at the entrance to the classroom. There are twenty students in her class. Her hobbies are Taekwondo, watching television and listening to music. She loves her teacher because she is fun. She hopes to graduate in 2001.

Parent Six is very intelligent. She appears more concerned about her children's social adjustment than academic acceleration although both her children are above average. The administration had to convince the parents before moving Student Six's sister up a grade level during the year. When asked to identify a significant change, Parent Six responded, "Have there been changes?" She learned about the school through her

sister who sent two daughters to Vale. Eventually, she selected split or combined level classes as the significant change. She had thought it was not a good idea because she had never heard of it before. She conceded though, that her daughter's situation in a combined class has not turned out bad. She saw the Ministry of Education as originating the idea but the teachers as most important in its implementation. In fact, the origin was from inside the school. Parent Six said the change was accepted because the school had no choice. Some parents saw this as an opportunity for their child to skip a grade, others were worried she said. Parent Six felt this innovation could be used in other schools with the same staff shortage problems.

In response to the question on the method of implementation, this parent was not sure how the children for the combined class\split class were chosen. She saw both attitude and power in the teachers unity as they tried to improve to make the split class work. Parent Six listed the ribbon awards on sports day, the circular and group seating arrangements as other changes over the last ten years. There was nothing Parent Six wished to see changed, as everything was fine.

Student Seven is an average ability grade three student. He has attended the school for five years. He enjoys all of his subjects but loves art. Student Seven selected the netball recently installed on the playground as significant as it kept students occupied and prevented

fight. This student saw the ideas as originating from the principal. He felt the changes occurred democratically, but when I asked how students helped bring about the changes, he was stumped. Surprisingly, (to me), he thought that the games had come quietly and gradually with little publicity. He could think of nothing he wanted changed himself.

Parent Seven is pleasant and cooperative even though her son is not doing well academically and sometimes used to be in trouble. Parent Seven has an older son in one of the older prestigious secondary schools. At first Parent Seven was not aware of any changes, but, eventually, selected the academic independence and increased self esteem of students. She felt the teachers were the most important "actors" in originating and implementing the changes, but felt they originated at home as well as within the school. She thought this had come about gradually and quietly. Parent Seven could not list any other changes. When asked what changes she might wish to see, she selected a stronger athletic program for boys.

Student Eight is an above average grade three student. He is a normal little boy. He enjoys school and loves sports. A few years ago he won a trophy. He stated that the teachers are "ok". He will graduate in 2002. Student Eight seemed puzzled when I asked him to zero in on a significant change. After I explained what is usually meant by an educational change or innovation, he selected the growing popularity of the

school fair. He saw this as significant because it was fun and was a source of revenue to purchase enjoyable things. He saw this change as starting slowly and quietly. This surprised me as the whole idea of a short term drive was to "blitz" the customers with publicity and enthusiasm. However, this child seemed unaware that the growth of popularity may have been due to the advertisements by one of the parents who worked at CBC. This student could not list any other changes, perhaps because he was so young. He also had no thoughts about things he wished to see changed.

Parent Eight is very helpful. She is concerned with her children in the school but is not a "pusher." When she found out her family would be moving, she sought advice from the staff concerning the implication of her son transferring to another school. This parent is a member of her local church choir and has a lot of friends.

Parent Eight identified the smaller class sizes at Vale as the most significant change. She was pleased that students would be given more individualized attention. She saw the change originating due to a new awareness of learning difficulties, but guessed the principal to be the originator and implementer in this school. She saw the change as originating from inside the school. Parent Eight felt the change was well received.

A change she would like to see implemented in Vale is the introduction of Special Education classes. She felt students with problems should be given attention and treatment rather than being left, at times, to

stumble along in the midst of others, which fortunately does not happen at Vale. This parent had to pause for a long time before coming up with other changes that would please her. She selected team teaching, and formal games. In terms of possible future changes, she wished to see more field trips and extracurricular activities, a better cafeteria system offering hot meals and a paid librarian.

## **Summaries**

### **Students**

Recreational related innovations were chosen by most of the students interviewed as the most significant change occurring at Vale over the past years. Almost all of them felt the one significant change originated within the school and that the changes were appropriate. The principal was seen to be the most important in originating the change and the one responsible for its implementation. They all felt the method of getting the different changes started centred around making people feel they wanted the change. They felt that many had been involved in putting the change into practice. Half the students felt the changes occurred suddenly but quietly. All felt they would endure. Most of the other changes listed (as occurring during the five to seven years period under study) also related to games and sports. Most children wished to see no further changes; almost all of those who did selected the game related change. One student chose the introduction of computer technology.

## **Parents**

Three parents chose the change in the atmosphere as the most significant change occurring at Vale over the past years. Not all changes were considered positive by all parents however. Another parent believed the greater freedom of students resulted in a decline in standards - a negative change. There was no pattern or consensus in the items selected beyond this.

The source of change in the school was seen by parents to come from every possible quarter: principal, teacher, government, Ministry of Education and writers. Half the parents believed the principal to be the most important in presenting and implementing the changes. Again half felt the changes originated outside the school. Almost all felt that most had accepted and (where possible) had participated in the innovations. Almost all believed the implementation method centred around getting people to want to change. More than half of the parents felt many people had been involved in getting the changes started. Two parents, who felt a single person or group had "called all the shots," chose negative changes as most significant. Parents felt more changes ought to occur as well. These included improving the general education, the school, the school community, the teachers and pupils, and government norms. More than half felt the change was a consequence of all "actors" in the group. Almost all parents saw the innovations occurring gradually and quietly with little publicity. All felt the changes would endure.

### **Teacher Interview Responses**

All of the teachers responses are based on questions in Appendices 3 and 6. All of the teachers are female and Barbadian.

Teacher One, a grade one teacher, began her career as a kindergarten teacher twenty-five years ago. During this time the curriculum has changed in keeping with the Ministry of Education regulations and the goals of the school. She does not complain about her work load. She is an extremely competent and dynamic teacher. She has had lots of experience because she has taught all of the forms during her years at the school as a floating teacher. She cannot see herself working anywhere else. A typical day for Teacher One is according to the chart (see Appendix 14). She has contributed to the educational experience by seeing some of her students lead productive lives. She selected the change to formal sports as the most significant change since 1976.

She described the principal-teacher relations, teacher-student relations and parent-school relations, as relaxed and at ease. She believed that all concerned felt this way. She stated that "sometimes parents can become critical of teacher's competence and say "If she can't teach what is she doing there? However, their bark may be worse than their bite." Teacher One gave credit to the teachers for originating and implementing

the change, but felt all parties had cooperated. In short, she perceived the change to be from within the school but some of the ideas may have come from the social context. She felt the changes were favourably accepted. As far as changes she would like to see, Teacher One talked about all teachers being treated as professionals, and private school teachers having the same opportunities as government school teachers to improve their education. Teacher One has an extremely good rapport with her class, giving her students good lessons in responsibility.

Teacher Two is one of the original Grade One teachers working in the school for over twenty-eight years. She is an older teacher, perhaps in her late fifties. She has taught some of the other classes during this time but has recently been teaching grade three. Teacher Two is very solid and dependable teacher, and she is flexible enough to have created a warm and delightful learning atmosphere in her classroom. She loves teaching. On a typical day she may begin with English language, or she may check the students' homework. The second period may be mathematics according to the time table for the day. Vale is like a second home to her. She felt her contribution to the educational environment in Barbados would be based on the success of her current and former students.

Teacher Two selected as the most significant change occurring at Vale a new spirit and morale. She felt that it was important for people to work better together for she felt if relations were tense it would be difficult to function. This change in atmosphere had come from the principal, she

felt. On how the change was accepted, Teacher Two stated that at first she was not sure "what we had to do". She felt the staff relations had improved. They were gradually led to feel comfortable with the change. This was done as teachers were shown new ways to work and deal with children through films and seminars. The change was eventually well received by teachers and students, but she did not know about the parents. An aspect still needing to be changed, according to Teacher Two, was the attitude of the teachers who would, in turn, affect the children and school spirit. Teacher Two listed happy teachers, increased teaching materials, outside activities and games as other changes that have occurred. There were no changes that Teacher Two could think of that she desired at the school. This interview proceeded very quickly with almost no pauses.

Teacher Three started at Vale in 1975. She is strict with children. On two occasions students complained of having received lashes from her. She seems to delight in enforcing rules for the benefit of the children. She is happy when her students succeed and feels it is well worth the effort. She would like to upgrade her teaching skills by taking some additional courses at the teachers' training college. She seems to be empathic towards children with learning problems, never assigning tasks beyond their ability or interest. Teacher Three listed as the most significant changes at Vale, discipline and enthusiasm, a better attitude, motivation

and self discipline among the students, as well as changes in the Creative Arts program such as more drama, art, and dance. On changes she would like to see in the future, she listed a reduction in the noise level in the school and the students using their talents more before graduation.

Teacher Four started at Vale in 1972. She was one of the original teachers at the school. By nature a very warm, sensitive and hard working teacher, she welcomes the opportunity to be personable with children and feels encouraged by the responses she has received. This teacher takes the initiative in organizing singing sessions or showing interesting films. She has been a cheerful influence in the staff room. She enjoys the family atmosphere at Vaie. Teacher Four selected as the most significant innovation, the new program (Language experience). She explained that it "is based on the children's own vocabulary and hence, it is interesting to them". She felt this program complemented the old method. Later in the interview this teacher told me she did not know whether to select humanization of the school or the reading program as the most significant. The changes were seen to originate from within the school as no other school as far as she knew was implementing similar programs and activities. Teacher Four stated that the changes were well received by the students but she just did not know about the parents. As far as diffusion of the change was concerned, she did not know since she seldom visited other schools.

Teacher four believed the method of getting the change started involved making people want to change but that one group of people, the teachers, acted alone. The change did not receive much publicity, but was implemented rather quickly. It was planned at the end of one year and implemented the next. She saw changes in atmosphere, that is, in relations between teachers, teachers and administration, and teachers and students as very significant. She saw the more motivated students as easier to discipline. When asked to select additional changes she desired, this teacher suggested bulletin boards in the corridor outside the classrooms in order to display more of the students' art work.

Teacher five joined the staff in the 1987-88 school year as a grade one teacher. At first, she seemed rather intimidated by the new responsibilities. She was greatly influenced by the enthusiastic grade two teacher. She never complains, and is a dependable and reliable worker, but is perhaps more creative than other teachers. She felt her contribution to the school and to the educational environment was through the implementation of formal sports and art for the children. This teacher identified the opening of the library as most significant because, "the students would have frequent access to borrow books."

She saw the principal as originating and implementing the idea. She did not see the changes coming from outside the school, but stated that the teachers did not ask for the change even though it was a good idea.

She felt the ideas would spread to other schools. Getting the changes started was handled by making the teachers want the changes and involved other people. She saw the changes occurring quietly, but it was not an imposition; teachers responded gradually. She felt it would last and be used even more. Teacher Five listed the addition of books to the library as other significant changes. She could not think, at first, of other changes she wanted, as teachers have a lot of materials and resources. She added that perhaps the staff could work on better use of what they have.

### **Summary of Teachers' Interviews**

All of the teachers at Vale are female and are from Barbados. A change in atmosphere was chosen by almost half of the teachers as the most significant change during the past twenty-five years. One rated this as a strong second choice. Two teachers felt the principal originated the ideas, and two felt it was the teachers. Slightly over half of the teachers saw the principal as most important in presenting and implementing the change. Most saw the changes as originating within the school and not resulting from outside pressure. All teachers felt the changes had been accepted and where possible participated in by most. Most teachers felt the method of getting the changes started centred around making people feel they wanted the changes and that many people were involved in putting it into practice.

Teachers were equally divided in discerning individuals or groups as affected by the change; most selected both. Two of the teachers felt the innovations occurred suddenly without fanfare or publicity, but all felt they would endure. The teachers who identified the change in atmosphere described it as occurring gradually, with little publicity. Almost half desired no changes -those that did, desired mainly material things.

Based on the researcher's observations, although the teachers described typical days and had classes assigned they were used to fill in a multipurpose way if the need arose. For example, a grade two teacher if she happened to be teaching reception, she would settle the children down, as some of them cried when they were left by their parents. She would hug them, and read them a story. The younger children would have a bathroom break at 10:00. Then they might colour, and learn to identify numbers and colours by using flash cards. However, for her own class the typical day would be based on the chart (see Appendix 14).

### **The Principal**

When the principal got married over fifty years ago she continued to work combining family and career. This was unusual in those days for persons from a middle class background. She enjoys her job because it brings a sense of fulfillment. This is borne out by the following statement, "when a child is a complete beginner to see the results after seven years at the school is very rewarding." In response to the question of what she

would do if she had to start over today, she replied that she would focus more on remedial teaching to help those with a learning disability because research has shown that a learning disability may lead to frustration in school because the learning disabled cannot express themselves. They feel worthless and it culminates into antisocial behavior and crime. She continued with the following, "However backward a child may be, if you can get the child to achieve so he/she can feel good about themselves, for instance, if the teacher would allow them to write about themselves. It would increase their self esteem" (Interview, August, 1999).

The principal saw the significant changes as being the leasing the play ground from the government, painting and repairs of the buildings and the addition of the staff toilets. She saw the changes as originating within the school and being accepted by everyone. She spoke of the changes which she felt came gradually and quietly as the need arose. There was cooperation among all. The staff, the students, the house keeper, and the gardener, who planted the flower beds around the school, all participated. The principal felt they were all there for the benefit of the students.

### **Interpretation of the Data on Change**

In this case study, most students selected recreational type changes as most important. Apart from the three parents selecting the change in the atmosphere, a wide range of innovations were selected, Beside the

atmosphere change selected by three teachers, teachers selected as important a variety of changes. Two directly pertained to the curriculum.

Most role groups, except the parents, discerned the principal as having originated the idea of change. For some reason, the parents felt the original idea of the change came from a variety of sources. This might be explained by the fact that parents are in a better position to have more general knowledge of which groups could be influential.

All role groups saw the principal as most important in implementing the changes, but only half of the parents gave credit for implementation to the principal. Relatively, the parents have a poorer conception of the principal as innovator and agent of change than do all the other role groups.

Most respondents from all role groups believed the changes to have originated within the school. The change was reported by most respondents in all role groups as having been accepted. Diffusion of the change was not apparent.

Except in the case of selected negative changes, almost all respondents saw the method of implementation to centre around attitudes and the strategy of implementation to be the participation of the group.

Most respondents believed the target of the change to be the group, not the individual although many selected both. It could be that this attribute is less useful in discussing change in a school. Almost all parents saw the changes as being implemented gradually with little publicity.

Slightly over half of the students saw the changes coming quickly and without fanfare. The teachers were unanimous on the issue of implementation of the change. All respondents felt the changes would endure.

The changes that individual parents desired were of a wide variety, from the curriculum, to discipline and other mundane peripheral functions. Three changes were desired by students; two pertained to games and the other to technology. The changes desired by teachers covered a great variety although there was a greater concentration on the curriculum than with the other role groups

The greatest significance appears to be the high number of respondents who could think of no changes they wanted. Either they were happy, (mostly students) or they were people who tended to only talk about wishing for change.

Almost all other changes listed by students were sports and games. A wider variety of selections occurred among the parents. One chose special education, and one selected lunch hour sports activities. The teachers also selected a wide variety with more frequent mention of discipline and teaching resources.

Based on the comparison of the selection of changes by the paired students and parents, there appears to be very little evidence of parents influence on students' choice or students' influence on the parents' selection of what was considered significant.

## **School Activities Based on Research and Observations**

### **The Staff**

Vale has one principal, Mrs. Excel, who loves teaching. She is clearly a woman of vision, faith and perseverance, with a commitment to the education of young people. She is an exciting, very dignified teacher of great strength and support to all her teachers and staff which she displayed by establishing and nurturing the school. She is able to instill enthusiasm for teaching and high academic achievement in those who work with her. Her school's motto "Something Attempted - Something Done" inspires the students to try their best in order to accomplish the task that is before them as they take the next step in pursuing their academic goals. She successfully completed her Cambridge School certificate, is a graduate of Erdiston Teachers Training College holding a diploma in Education, and a mother of three. She comes from a family of great and well known teachers. The school is currently celebrating its fortieth anniversary and Mrs. Excel has been honoured with the Silver Crown of Merit by the government of Barbados for her contribution to education.

As Principal, Mrs. Excel believes in the open door management style. She encourages staff to discuss the problems and needs of the students. She won the trust of the students who freely seek her out at home for quiet discussions and she encourages parents to give their full support to the school. This support is clearly demonstrated during fund raisers and school fairs where parents can be depended upon for their participation.

Vale has been the instrument in providing a well-rounded education to all of its graduates. It was very important for Mrs. Excel to create opportunities to develop the talents of the pupils. Through drama, the students rehearse and have successfully performed dances, plays, recitals, poetry reading and pantomime for the end of term Christmas concert.

Unlike other private schools which receive bursaries and subventions from the government and large donations from their management committee, Vale pays all its teachers and staff salary from the students' tuition fees alone. Vale has been recognized as an approved private school and is providing a good education in a most cost-effective manner. It has witnessed a growth in the number of students from 6 students at its inception to a maximum of 200 in 1985 (see Appendix 12).

The combined effect of free education in the Government schools and Vale's efforts to recruit and retain trained teachers has created a financial challenge. To maintain a professional staff it was necessary to raise the school fees. Parents and former students have been good at raising funds but these fundraising efforts are not enough to maintain the school in good repair. It is clear that some of the facilities need upgrading as certain parents have commented.

The faculty includes five full-time teachers, a principal and one support staff member. In addition to the actual teaching the principal has many other responsibilities. These include secretarial duties, such as

keeping records and accounts, (since the death of her husband) collecting school fees, purchasing of text books, school supplies and school maintenance. She is also administrator and fulfills the role of nurse by taking care of the students' scrapes and bruises. Private Primary school teachers are mandated by the government to have at least three general certificate of education (G.C.E) 'O' levels. The cleaning staff consists of only a caretaker. In addition to the regular classes, the five teachers are also involved in the extracurricular activities of the school, such as Physical Education, recess and lunch time supervision. The school is assigned a Public health nurse yearly to inoculate the five year olds against various diseases, such as tuberculosis, poliomyelitis, measles and mumps. It has specialized help available which is on call from the Ministry of Education in some subject fields - psychological testing services and family problems.

### **Teachers**

Traditionally, teachers in Barbados occupy a respected position, however teachers in private primary schools express dissatisfaction with financial rewards and non-material rewards such as professional support, self-satisfaction and respect. Several teachers of long-standing are looking for employment elsewhere. Some would like to improve their teaching level, to gain experience in remedial teaching, to attend seminars, lectures and courses to update their teaching skills. Some would like to take

computer courses, and have the same opportunities as teachers from the government run primary schools. These activities would provide excellent opportunities for career advancement by letting teachers update their knowledge of the world, their technological skills, improve their teaching quality and exchange their first-hand experiences.

However, at Vale Mrs. Excel's approach to improving the standing and satisfaction of teachers is to establish an atmosphere of trust and autonomy. This is done by giving her full support to teachers' authority and responsibility in their classes. The principal firmly believes that this is an essential element in effective educational leadership, and that giving teachers autonomy and letting them feel comfortable about their teaching is crucial.

In such an atmosphere, teachers do not have the feeling of being under pressure, and they have the authority to innovate and be creative in their teaching. This is specifically encouraged by the principal who allows the teachers freedom to design a variety of interesting teaching plans. They can take students out of the classroom, for a day trip which the students greatly enjoy. When teachers are given the freedom and the means to be creative, they naturally feel motivated to do a better teaching job. Current and former teachers have had very positive comments about some of the steps taken by Mrs. Excel to support their efforts. This is borne out by the following comment from one of Vale's former teachers:

“I really spread my wings at this school, it was a learning experience. I was allowed to implement my own educational thought based on the syllabus. I always had the support of the principal. We worked together to get formal sports and houses started. We would roster ourselves to make ribbons for the awards. The children were excited about all the changes that were taking place.”

When I interviewed Mrs. Excel she described a unified and harmonious staff and school. A major observation was that the school required some modernization from the point of view of equipment and teaching methods.

### **Teaching Methods**

Based on the participant observation, the teaching methods relied on whole class teaching as well as small groups and individualized instruction and there appeared to be an emphasis on rote drill (memorization) and an adherence to the texts. These methods have been proven to be effective in getting children through the Common Entrance Examination.

According to a wide range of reports, the school has an excellent reputation and has built a great image in the eyes of the public over the years. The staff was dominated by effective, old fashioned teaching approaches and it was well known in the community that the Vale Preparatory was a place in which Mrs. Excel's own type of effective methods were to be found. Although the staff adhere to the traditional

methods they are open to more progressive ways. The staff introduced and taught the metric system in practical ways such as to measure the students' height in centimetres, and their weight in kilograms.

Students at Vale profit from a combination of the traditional method of education, and a more non-traditional method. They are expected to listen and take notes but they are also encouraged to ask questions, participate and respond to teachers and other students.

Some Barbadians believe that the rigidity of traditional Barbadian teaching has impaired students' creativity and self-esteem. In order to change this situation, the school encourages its students to think critically, and to challenge traditional limitations.

### **School Functions**

Students are empowered to bring their own creativity to their learning experiences. The graduating ceremony is a high point in the lives of the graduands and their parents. The graduating students, parents, teachers, friends, well-wishers and former students of the school come together to congratulate and encourage the students to fulfill their goals. A motivational speaker, usually a successful former student of the school and others applaud lustily as the graduands dressed in cap and gown receive their diplomas. On this special day they celebrate the graduands' success.

In 1999 the school celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1959-1999) with a church service at St. Servers Church and a buffet supper held at the Sherbrooke Centre. An elaborate meal was prepared with several local Barbadian dishes. This ceremony was very well attended by former students, staff and well-wishers. Slides were shown highlighting the daily happenings both in an academic setting as well as in a more informal setting - students at play- during four decades. A skit was performed: "go inside and bring that strap." Many students believe that those lashes made them better and prompted them to excel to where they are today. The keynote address was given by the Minister of Education, a former student of the school. There were presentations made to the principal and staff from former students. A poem was written to aid in celebrating the occasion. Some of the former students from a government school where the principal began her teaching career also participated in the event. It was a great occasion. Several presentations were made to Mrs. Excel and some of the staff to honour them for their faithful and dedicated service.

### **Students**

While the roles of and relationships between administrators and teachers are important elements of the organizational climate of the school, everything they carry out actually centres around the students. This section will describe the students and their schedule, and then present some student reactions to their school environment.

Since the inception of the school all students have had the option of attending all five grades (form one to five). At Vale preparatory school the students' standing is according to their ability. Students come from several parishes all over the island and the majority of the children come from the parish of St. Michael where the school is located. In 1959 the school's tuition was \$25.00 per semester. Today it is \$420.00 per semester.

Although there are no Special Education classes per se students do receive special help when the teachers and Principal deem it necessary, for example, if a student is slow or is having difficulty keeping up with his/her classmates. The student is allowed to sit close to the teacher to receive additional help.

Students attending Vale Preparatory are organized on an age-graded basis. Children who have reached the age of four by December 31<sup>st</sup> may attend a Reception day class. After attending school for seven years, the average student transfers to one of the twenty-four secondary schools.

### **Description and Schedule**

Vale is a multigraded, multicultural school. The school population comes from many of the other Caribbean islands. About 95 per cent are from a middle class negro\ black background. Vale has 125 students who are divided into eight classes and five forms. There are two classes in reception, one in transition, one class in grade one, two, and three, and two classes in form four: four and four A. The number of students in each

class varies. Some have about twenty some have more and some have less. These numbers are considered the optimal size for maintaining a high teaching quality.

The daily school life starts at 09:00 in the morning but children gather early because they may be dropped off by parents who are on their way to work. The bell is rung to indicate to the students when assembly is about to begin, and to indicate the beginning and end of the school day.

Devotional periods: At Vale preparatory each school day begins with assembly. Students sing a hymn, and recite the Lord's prayer; this is followed by a motivational talk by the principal. Students who are not from a Christian background are not obliged to participate in the service but they join the group for the talk. During the morning, students have five periods of 35 minutes each. The more important courses are arranged in these five periods. Students and teachers go from one period to the next until lunch time. During the afternoon, students have three shorter periods of thirty minutes each, in which less important courses are arranged.

One thing that stood out in this researcher's mind was the relatively quiet atmosphere of the school in spite of eight grade levels that attended the school. The students were always very diligent. It was great to see an older child help a younger child and peers helping one another. One of the advantages of having the classes close together is that on occasion the younger children found themselves repeating the lessons of the children in the higher grades, poetry, mathematical definitions, definitions of parts of

speech in grammar without realizing it. This researcher believes this was one of the reasons why many children who passed through the lower grades were able to master some subjects with which they might otherwise have had some difficulty. Since certain facts were not entirely “new” to them even though they knew them a lot only by rote; just by hearing it constantly repeated.

According to the teachers’ reports each child strives for excellence or improvement each week. The children learn to develop very good work study habits which are not often seen so much today. Some of them were allowed to work on their own and sought help when it was absolutely necessary. It was surprising how well they learned and were able to grasp the information rather quickly. The length of time each child attended Vale school varied from one year to seven or eight years.

### **Reactions**

Based on the interview data, Vale’s students certainly seem to be in a happy environment. They enjoy being with friends, their teachers and especially the principal whom they all say without exception is “very nice, is the best.” From the students’ comments about home work, it seems that Vale, because of the pressure to pass the Common Entrance Examination has to give home work that will enable the students to give their best performance in the examination.

## **Parents**

Although parents are obviously not participants in the school to the same extent as administrators, teachers and students, their attitudes and input have a very important impact on what happens in Vale, especially considering that the school is very clearly responding to educational demands from middle class parents in a market economy. This section will attempt to describe their employment and income situation, examine their reasons for choosing private education, and illustrate how they became involved in the operation of the school.

## **Employment and Income Situation**

Vale Preparatory's parents, as individuals, are mostly middle class and include many professional and highly successful business men and women. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to get accurate employment information about these parents. Based on the interview data, a survey was obtained showing that at Vale, 28% of the parents are executive members of non-governmental capital enterprises, 20% of them are lawyers, teachers, contractors, or parents working overseas, 14% of them are managers of government businesses and 11% of them are owners of small businesses, including taxi drivers, restaurant workers, and mechanics. It is reasonable to conclude that some of these parents must have accumulated the income for their child's education over time. This situation makes it impossible to report truly accurate income figures.

Today, a number of Barbadian parents have accumulated a sizable sum of money. Some parents will spend their entire life savings to have their children educated in a superior fashion. Parents are always busy with their child's education, escorting them to tutoring classes, piano classes, and even inviting a tutor into the home to enhance the child's learning. Some of these parents hire a servant, and allow the grand parents or other suitable adults to care for their child to ensure that the child gets loving attention when they are not available. This respect for education, and the commitment to high quality education, is illustrated by the fact that several of these parents had their educational beginnings at Vale. They wanted their children to have a similar foundation and the advantages that private education provides.

### **Why Private Education?**

There are two reasons why parents send their children to a private school. First, they want their children to enjoy the advantages that they themselves enjoyed at Vale and other private schools, and second they like the prestige that is connected with private education. Parents who decide to send their child to Vale are dissatisfied with the existing public school system, which they say produces children who are undisciplined and uncultured. Instead, these parents want their children to enjoy their studies, learn a wide variety of useful knowledge and skills, acquire the social graces and develop a healthy outlook on life. They are willing to pay

the tuition to offer their children what they believe to be outstanding education. One of the parent's interviewed had this to say in support of the school:

I am very happy to send my child to this school -our school. I can participate, and my input is really appreciated and the children are happy here. So I don't mind paying to get the kind of education I want for my children.

In the past, fewer children would have been able to attend a private school. However, because most parents have had a higher level of education resulting in better paying jobs, more parents are able to afford the high fees required.

Vale's parents come from both upper and lower socio-economic standing. Most of them teach their children correct behaviour at home and this behaviour, based on Christian principles, is reinforced by the teacher in the schools. Both the written and the spoken English of all children is corrected by the teachers. Inappropriate and antisocial behaviour is not tolerated at school. At Vale preparatory school, one of the teachers is assigned to come to school about half an hour early before school starts, to prevent the children from fighting, and from misbehaving. Teachers encourage appropriate behaviour by example. Also, a teacher is present during recess and lunch time to supervise the children and help the younger children with their lunches. Children are taught the rules of fair

play, sharing, good manners and proper behaviour. This includes first generation Barbadian children who speak patois, as well as the other students. The school encourages students to speak and to study standard English while they are at school.

### **Parental Involvement**

Parents are more apt to support a school when they have an impact on the education it provides to their children. Many parents who have chosen Vale are delighted to find that they are encouraged by teachers and the administrator to become involved in shaping the school's policies. The school's administrator contacts parents to discuss the school's goals, mission and approach together.

The Parent-Teachers' Association (PTA) at Vale is a collaborative body whose aim is to improve the quality of life in school. The purpose of the PTA is to encourage and promote participation in school life and provide a means to co-ordinate and to foster the parents' collaboration in school activities. It is the channel through which parents can convey to the school administrator, their reactions, needs and hopes by way of suggestions recommendations, opinions, and advice. The PTA meetings are scheduled during every term, about six times per year. They provide financial help to the school through fundraising activities. They may raise funds by having a barbecue, a Christmas concert, a sports day event, or a School fair. They also sell lunch to government offices and do a Valentines

day fund raiser. On Mufti day students do not wear uniforms. Instead, they play, buy drinks, hamburgers and ice cream to raise funds for different school projects.

Vale's parents are noted for being very demanding and very active in the school. The PTA is very representative of the type of parent in the school community; four of the eight members of this committee have degrees ranging from BA's to Ph.D's. This school PTA is notoriously aggressive, often criticizing administration and teachers. However, during this study, the PTA was supportive. Parents commented on the liveliness and motivation in the students which they believe was achieved by the close- knit family atmosphere, loyalty and hard work of the staff.

### **Factors Pertaining to Discipline**

Based on the interview data, some former and current students, reportedly, were dealt with in traditional ways by the teachers. Certain teachers were infamous for speaking sharply to the students and spanking them. According to the principal and parents, "children are not abused in any way at this school, because children who are spanked know deep in their own mind that they deserve it, later they are eager to learn." "As in any school there must be discipline or the children may become unmanageable." According to Mrs. Excel the ways and means of punishment used at Vale is as follows:

the student's lunch hour is curtailed and their

privileges are taken away. They may eat lunch but they are not allowed to play. A teacher is assigned to ensure that they are occupied during luncheon hour or games period

(Interview, January, 2000).

Based on the interview data, at least two former students did not agree with the corporal punishment administered at the school. One of these students who graduated over thirty-five years ago still remembers being "corrected." He states that his "correction was not given with love and that it was from an Edwardian era" (August, 1999). However, he spoke very highly of his basic education at the school, and believes his academic success should be attributed to his early beginnings at Vale.

### **Participant Observations**

There were a variety of procedures observed. At Vale preparatory two classes were selected to be observed within this case study: one class each from third form and fourth form. The fourth form class was composed of high attaining English and mathematics students and the third form was composed of mixed ability students. Some of these students were promoted from second and third form in the same group. Almost all the teachers used teacher made tests, informal quizzes, and students' written work.

Parents of children in the third and fourth forms at Vale school were mainly employed in professional and managerial occupations although they were some from other skilled and unskilled jobs. The researcher found out that most of the children lived with both parents. The fourth form high achievers were a very homogenous group of students. These children were really keen. They were very competitive among themselves. They seemed to have a high level of commitment and were willing to study independently. The teachers agree that these students are highly motivated to do well academically.

### **Physical Arrangements**

There was no particular seating pattern in either form for English and mathematics. The students selected their seating places on the first day of each term and they remained in the same location for the remainder of the term. Each fourth form student was seated in a chair and wrote on the arm of the chair which was used as a desk. The third form students had chairs and desks. These chairs were simply arranged in rows and columns, with boys and girls sitting together as a group. In the classes observed the teachers organized group work, so observation of student performance took place in formal and informal settings in English and mathematics. During two of these observations, the students remained in their seats while the teacher performed her function didactically.

Class attendance was excellent in all the classes observed. There were very few absences from school in either the fourth form or the third form, approximately 90% of students in form three and 95% in form four. In fact, they seem to have an almost perfect attendance record (never absent or late). In all the cases of absence, a letter of excuse was brought by the student.

### **Teaching Style**

It appeared that all teachers involved in the observation taught in a didactic style; they generally utilized the “talk and chalk” method of instruction. The teachers either lectured to the students and outlined the points made on the blackboard or used questioning techniques and recorded a cross section of the answers on the blackboard. Occasionally, the lessons took the form of class discussion and student responses were recorded on the blackboard.

### **The English and Mathematics Classes**

In mathematics classes, the teacher worked examples of problems on the board and explained the methodology to the students. Explanations were given on a one-to-one basis, especially with students who had problems with the concept being taught. Different teaching methods were observed, the students appeared to perform at a very high level.

In the observations of the fourth form, the teacher skillfully utilized questioning techniques and all the students in the class operated at a high level of analysis. Both male and female students appeared to be highly motivated and the atmosphere was a very competitive one. All English classes observed with this fourth form group involved some element of discussion; these discussions were highly structured and focused toward the teacher. A question would be asked by the teacher and the students would raise their hands if they felt they could respond. The teacher would then call on a student to answer a question asked by herself or another student. The students were not allowed to speak unless they were called on to respond. Some of the shyer, less confident boys and girls appeared to be intimidated by the teacher. However, most students did participate.

All students seemed to be well prepared for the classes. Textbooks and other study material were always ready, and homework was usually done. At the end of each class the teacher would give a passage to prepare or questions to answer. Because of the structure of this fourth form class, it was not easy to observe friendships. The teacher was strict and the students were not allowed to interact with one another on an informal level during class time. The students seemed to enjoy and understand what was being taught. Their oral and written participation reflected this enjoyment. The students were self-disciplined and exhibited a very high level of maturity. The students even proceeded with their work if a teacher was absent from class.

In the form three English class, there was a greater degree of flexibility than in the form four class. The students seemed to feel more comfortable with their teacher. It was obvious that they respected and liked her. There was a great deal of “chalk and talk” as the teacher made considerable use of the black board. In the English class, the teacher dictated notes; they were told to exchange their notes and correct each other’s work. In this class there was a great deal of teacher-student and student-student interaction. In the note giving lesson, for example, it was not uncommon for students to ask each other to repeat something that the teacher had said. Occasionally, the students raised their hands, but generally their questions and comments were of a spontaneous nature. Only one class discussion was observed in this form. It was a friendly, slightly noisy session, with a great deal of student-student interaction as the students supported or rebutted each other’s points. This is not to deny that a lot of learning did not take place, since some insightful comments were made about the text being studied. Both male and female students were articulate and uninhibited in their contribution to the class discussion, and the teacher encouraged this. The observer attributed the noise level to:

- (1) the youthful exuberance of these 8-9 year olds;
- (2) there was more informality in the third form English classes than  
there was in fourth form;
- (3) these students were not being prepared for an external examination-

there was less pressure to complete the syllabus.

In her instruction, the teacher tended to lecture and write on the blackboard a great deal. Students either responded to questions orally or they wrote the answers in their exercise books. The teacher gave a lot of positive reinforcement to students, congratulating them when they were correct and encouraging them to do better next time if they were incorrect. A few (not more than three) of the students in this form exhibited some disorganization in the form of homework not done, a forgotten textbook, or a request to borrow a ruler and pencil. This only occurred on one occasion per student (two girls and one boy). In each case, the teacher remonstrated with the offender and elicited an apology and a promise to be better prepared in future. No punishment was given by the teacher. The teacher informed me that her approach was developmental rather than punitive. She wanted to inculcate self-discipline and organization into the children. She threatened that she would probably give a detention if the offense was repeated in the near future. The students all seemed to enjoy their English class and it appeared that both male and female students were performing well.

### **Summary**

This school presents a culture and history of high attainment. All of the teachers had G.C.E 'O' levels and were trained for teaching. Several children attending had parents who were former students of Vale, and the

students were aware of the high level of expectation from both parents and staff. Within this culture of high attainment, all students appeared to be self-disciplined and participated fully in school and homework. There were very few differences between males and females, and between children from different social classes.

The teaching was didactic and strongly controlled by the teacher. The teachers showed their commitment to the school and students by their encouragement of all students. All students were active participants; there was no evidence of teacher preference for particular students by attainment or sex. Their school work and behaviour showed high levels of motivation including full submission of homework and virtually no incidents of misbehaviour, bullying or teasing. While there were some differences in the behaviour of boys and girls, there were many instances where they worked together. Boys and girls shared and discussed information cooperatively. The informality of the third form English class brought out the only performance difference between boys and girls; girls were more responsive in class and attained higher scores on the examination.

## **- Chapter 7 -**

### **CRITICAL ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

The remaining portion of this report will seek to build on the information presented in the approach and organizational climate of Vale by offering some critical comments and suggestions which could be applied to private elite schools in general. First, the issue of social inequality which has been raised with regards to these schools will be examined, taking Vale as an example, and arguments from several different perspectives will be evaluated. Following this, several ways in which private elite schools are beneficial for Barbadian society will be pointed out, and finally, areas for improvement will be identified.

#### **Social Inequality**

In order to investigate the charge that private elite schools foster social inequalities in Barbados, this section will first look at the fees which are charged by these schools, particularly Vale, and how the fees fit into the budget of the school. Then the argument about “elitist snobs” will be presented from several different points of view. Finally, some reactions on this issue from parents of students at Vale will be reported.

### **High Fees**

As mentioned in the first portion of this report, private elite schools are famous for their characteristic “three highs.” Of the three, high tuition is the one that first comes to many people’s minds when private elite schools are mentioned, and it is one of the most sensitive issues surrounding these schools.

Based on the interview findings the principal felt comfortable with her fee structure because it was right in the middle of the fee range charged by private elite schools. The fees in other private schools ranged from a low of \$ 389.00 to a high of \$935.00 (for nationals), and \$1,010.00 (for non-nationals) Barbadian dollars per semester at one of the prestigious private schools. Vale asks \$420.00 Barbadian dollars for tuition per semester. Materials, food and other living expenses are provided by the parents. The total cost for 5 years of preparatory school at Vale is close to \$ 6, 800 dollars, approximately \$ 5, 000 Canadian dollars. This represents, less than the \$18, 500 Barbadian dollars, that an average Barbadian worker earns in a year. This represents 20% of the parents income allotted to their child’s education. Although the conditions offered by private elite schools are extremely attractive for all Barbadian parents, entry into these schools is simply impossible for the vast majority.

The administrator of Vale recognizes the fact that their tuition could be a source of controversy. However, she contends that these fees are reasonable if compared to other private schools, and if looked at in the

context of their overall fiscal plan and operating budget, which is not open to the public, but which is briefly summarized below.

There is one major funding source in this school: tuition fees make up 100% of revenue; fund raisers make up what is required for the graduation ceremony, and end of term concerts. They also lease a sizable piece of land from the government as a playground. In the first school year of 1959-1960, Vale had an income of 150 dollars. It spent \$250.00 on its property, including equipment and books for the library. For example, \$75.00 dollars went to administrative fees, and telephone, hydro, gas, water, property taxes and so on. In this first 1959-1960 school year, Vale was in deficit 300 dollars. Vale had an income of 1,715.00 dollars (close to 1,300. 00 Canadian dollars) for the 1960-1961 school year, given the income it would seem that the school does not make a profit. When questioned about this issue, the administrator of Vale made no apologies for what she insists is a well justified fee, and she emphasizes the fact that none of Vale's money comes from the government. She felt justified in charging these fees because the staff are contributing their own knowledge, good will, and energy to the student. They want to foster first class students, and this takes money. They collect money from those who will directly benefit from their school.

**“Elitist Snobs”**

Nevertheless, these high tuition rates have raised accusations that private elite schools are fostering a new class of snobs, or at the very least, extremely spoiled children who will be unwilling to integrate with the rest of society. Because private elite school students come from families who are able to pay the tuition fees, it seems that they are in fact buying a special privilege, namely, superior learning conditions and facilities which are higher than those available to everyone else, which will clearly give them advantages in the future. Vale's leaders take the position that all types of education are needed, including basic mass education which is free for “general” people, as well as high quality education, which can promote superior talent and advanced skills for the development of the country.

The administrator at Vale also maintain that it is the public school system which tends to give children from middle class families a kind of “snobbish feeling”, because in public school there is a clear contrast between the children from middle class families and poor families. When middle class children are in public school, they are only about 25% of the whole school population and there are many things that make them feel different. For one thing, the more affluent children can have all kinds of fancy material things. They wear, use, and eat many brand name products, which some of the less affluent children may have never even heard of, and they can even use money to buy friendships and other advantages.

For instance, from an interview with a public school teacher, the researcher was told of one public school student who uses his money to hire classmates to do his homework for him; another habitually makes friends by inviting them to go for ice cream, another bought cigarettes for some guys who helped him get revenge on a classmate. Children are competitive by nature, and children who are in a position to buy such advantages may think: "I am different from others, I am in a higher class".

In private schools on the other hand, all students are from similar backgrounds, therefore no one feels inferior or superior to anyone else. Students are able to compare material things with each other and they may even tend to forget about the importance of money, at least temporarily, because they have a regulated allowance and can easily get money when they need it.

These children are taught the social graces. In this atmosphere a student who wants to show off his beautiful pen, or other gift will be looked down upon. However, they may present their favourite books and cassettes to the class, to be enjoyed by everyone together.

Although the teaching staff claim that a special atmosphere of cooperation, equality and family reigns within the school (something which has deeply impressed the researcher,) one cannot ignore the question of whether these naturally competitive private school students do not compare themselves instead to public school children. It is hard to believe that, even now, they are not aware of their advantaged position in society,

and certainly when they leave the private school environment they will become aware that the education they received at Vale was in a different class from what everyone else received.

The administrator of Vale contends that graduates of her school have in the past been more independent, capable and mature than public school students because they learn to do things for themselves and are encouraged to help others.

Educational experts, however, continue to worry that elite schools will reproduce educational and social inequality, and they point out that by separating the school and students from the outside, private elite schools may produce graduates who are completely unaware of social realities, and will be unable to function when they have to face society.

The administrator made comments maintaining that the school does not seek to isolate students from society, but rather takes measures to increase their social awareness and collective spirit.

### **Parent Reactions**

In addition to the attitudes of the administrators on the question of social inequality, the researcher was also curious to know what the parents had to say. They generally defended their decision to send their children to private school. This is borne out by the following statement from one of the parents of a former Vale's student:

The reason that I worked so hard to provide a good living

and learning condition for my child is to give him a better chance of success in life. The relationship between the teachers, parents and children is more personal, everyone knows everyone else. In private primary education as opposed to government education, the children speak better and the socio-economic status is higher. The children get along well together: Race and colour do not matter. The children who attend private primary schools learn to pick up after themselves because there is more order at these schools. The students acquire and increase academic independence and self-esteem. The fees at this school are not as high as other schools, and we are willing to make the sacrifice.

(Former graduated parent of Vale School, August, 1999 and January 2000).

### **BENEFITS**

As mentioned above the possibility that private elite schools may add to problems of social inequality in Barbados cannot be ignored. However, these schools also bring many benefits to the society. This section will mention some of the ways in which private primary schools are helping in the social development of Barbados.

### **Keeping Pace with Social Development**

One way in which these schools are beneficial is that they are responding to a social climate that is in process. For many years, Barbados' free public education system has provided only one form of schooling using the same textbooks, and the same teaching method. This system has worked very well with the private school system, because Barbados has a social stratum of upper, middle and lower classes. The demands from these classes are different, including the demands for their children.

Many people would agree that various kinds of reforms are necessary in Barbados to keep pace with social development, and private elite schools are providing a forum in which educational innovation can take place. The Ministry of Education issues a curriculum and teachers in the whole country have to do the same thing, namely, prepare all primary students for the Common Entrance Examination. Towards this goal all parents and students have little choice. The public educational system is extremely rigid, and it prevents teachers from being innovative and creative.

However, the private primary schools have greater autonomy and freedom to allow teachers to design innovative activities to stimulate children's creativity and problem solving abilities. This means access to these reforms is now limited to the 25% who can afford private school tuition. The fact that the reforms are taking place at all is a very healthy

sign, and hopefully in the future students from the public schools will be able to take advantage of the new educational ideas that are being generated.

Another way in which private schools are helping social development is by encouraging wider participation in education. In the past, people believed that education was the government's business and many could not, and did not really want to offer any input into education. In Barbados the PTA has brought about a new involvement of the parents in education and an important element in this is financial. Private schools in Barbados have greatly increased the total investment in education. Some of these schools do not receive any government funds. Everyone agrees that Barbados needs highly qualified and talented people to help the country assume its place in the global society; for this reason, the Barbados government offers a wide range of educational opportunities. The private schools offer a more individualized educational experience which is perceived to be of higher quality than the public schools.

### **Fostering Good Children**

Private schools are also doing a great service to society at a more individual level simply by using their resources to foster mature, well adjusted children. One way in which private schools do this is by maintaining high staff to student ratios, which allows individual attention for children, something which is particularly important for slower students or

those who tend to misbehave. In some public schools there are more than 40 students in one class, and the teacher is not able to give these students individual attention. As a result, the problem increases, until teachers may eventually have to give up on certain students, and expel others in order to maintain a high level of expectation and keep good class order. The foundation for a none-too-bright future for many such children is being laid in public school.

A benefit of sending one's child to a private school is to avoid admission to The Edna Holls Centre for Suspended Students located in Boscel, St. Peter, Barbados, which has been operational since the 1998/1999 academic year. Students who run afoul of the school laws and are suspended from school have to attend an out of school programme during the time that they are away from school. At the Edna Holls Centre students receive the counselling necessary to bring about behavioural change while receiving tutoring so they can keep up-to-date with their academic studies (Cutting Edge, 1998). Students at Vale never need to be sent to Boscel because they receive individualized attention and abide by the law.

The programme caters to those students who exhibit perpetual violent behaviour, who show an indifference to school rules and who are repeatedly rude to school officials. Some of the specific behaviours which result in suspension are, the use of illegal substances, the use of tobacco and alcohol, fighting with or without weapons on or off the premises, and

damage to school property. The program is rehabilitative in nature and is expected to improve each student's behaviour and enhance his/her personal and social development. This should lead in turn to improved self esteem, better interpersonal skills, a positive attitude towards school and better academic performance. This programme is expected to result in a reduction in the number of repeat offenders, as well as a reduction in the number of expulsions (Cutting Edge, 1998).

A relationship between the Centre and the student's homes is established and maintained. This is to provide the necessary support and cooperation needed to successfully deal with the students' problems. A seven member committee has been set up to advise the Ministry of Education on the functioning of the Centre. The Centre is headed by a program Co-ordinator. A Social Worker and two Special Needs Educators are also part of the staff. Later in the year, staff underwent training in the relevant skills needed at the Centre (Cutting Edge, 1998).

Contrary to the detractors' opinions, private elite schools have saved many children from such a future. Because private schools generally have small classes, teachers are able to spend time with individuals, giving extra help and guidance when needed. In this way, the number of children who would be labelled as "slow" or "problematic" is reduced. Thus, the self-fulfilling prophecy of labelling children as "slow" or "problematic" can be avoided.

A second way in which private elite schools are helping to produce good individuals who will be a benefit to society is by providing a peer group. Nowadays, many parents on the planet do not let their children go out to play with other children for safety reasons. Instead, these parent will allow their children to make friends with their classmates, or with other adults at home. This may result in children becoming selfish, dependent, and delicate if they are always with the same people all the time. On the other hand, children will learn to socialize much better if they are able to, spend time with peer groups from both lower and higher socio-economic backgrounds as well. The private schools provide plenty of time for students to be in contact with each other in formal and informal settings. They may be invited as guests to the same luncheon, and may also attend the same drama group, Brownies, and scout groups where they meet children from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Based on my own historical relationship to Barbados as a former teacher, I can see that Barbadian children have lots of fun socializing with their classmates, they may become more open, cooperative and considerate.

## **Controls**

### **Self-regulation**

New schools in the private sector should be encouraged to seek the input of and approval of the older prestigious institutions with respect to their educational plan. The principal's qualifications, the number of full-time

teachers, and the basic facilities to run the school could also be inspected by the prestigious school before the school begins operation. At the present time there is nothing to force private schools to do this, but by accepting to undergo such a review, newer individual private schools would increase their own academic image, and that of private schools in general. However, the only intervention that the Ministry of Education requires is a request for copies of the transfer, withdrawal, and suspension of all students that attend private schools on a monthly basis.

Another step that these schools within the private sector could take to improve the quality of supervision is to form parents' committees, and submit certain aspects of the school's operation to their approval. At most private schools, the principal has complete autonomy over every aspect of the school, and she\he has the power to manipulate personnel and other school policies. For example, teachers can be dismissed if some parent or student accuses him\her of inappropriate behaviour. Usually elite schools deal with substantial amounts of money, and the lack of democracy in school management may cause certain problems. Private schools correctly view themselves as part of the market economy, and as such they recognize that they are ultimately controlled by the demands and desires of parents. This is illustrated by the case at Vale, where parents have been actively encouraged to become involved in school policy and some decision making, and a Parent-Teachers' Association has been formed to facilitate this relationship. It would be useful if all schools did the same.

### **Coordination**

Achieving smooth coordination between parents and private schools, among different private schools, and between private schools and the public system is another area that needs attention. Cooperation between parents and the school in realizing educational goals is particularly important. Home is a very important place for children's socialization and the parents' influence is still very powerful. The ties of blood and family connection naturally make children trust and follow the example of their parents to a great extent. For instance, Vale may have difficulty instilling the notion that people are equal after the children see their parents take a very superior attitude with waiters during a dinner party. In order to help parents to provide home education in line with school efforts, private elite schools should provide more information for parents about what is being taught in school, and the rationale behind it.

Coordination would also be very useful among different schools in the private system, to address the lack of communication between the primary private schools. Because these elite schools are in competition, they seldom exchange their information and experience. However, it would be better if these elite schools could learn to communicate with and help each other in order to develop the ability to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For instance, it would be useful for them to establish a professional journal and form an alumni. Such organizations could serve a

multi-functional bridge among private schools both in Barbados and internationally.

Another problem that needs to be addressed is how to coordinate the private and public school systems. Vale offers only primary education, so many of its graduates have to return to the public system for high school. However, private school graduates and public school graduates are on a different level after primary school, mainly because they emphasize different aspects of the curriculum. For example private school starts social studies from form one, while public school starts from form three. They may result in difficulties when these students are brought together in secondary school social studies classes. In addition, the greater emphasis given in private schools to homework, social graces, and extra-curricular skills, and the de-emphasis on political study may also cause difficulties for private primary students when they enter public secondary school. Although some private schools do offer secondary education and others aim to do so in the future, private school graduates who want to continue on to community college and university have to be integrated with students educated in the public system. Usually public school students come from a lower socio-economic bracket, do not speak as well and do not have behaviour as appropriate as the private school children. Private schools and parents should take this into account in their educational planning.

There are certain public relations measures that private elite schools can take in order to improve their public image. Effective use of

publicity would be one way to let more people know what private elite schools are doing, and to get people's understanding and support. For example, private elite schools could invite reporters to come to campus on a regular basis, and encourage them to write articles to introduce the newer schools to the public. In addition, these schools can hold seminars once in awhile for the public, in order to inform people about the school and answer their questions. Also in order to convince people that private schools are essentially non-profit organizations, and should therefore be exempt from tax regulations governing commercial market activities, they should provide more detailed information about their budget expenses to the public. This will make them seem more legitimate in the eyes of the public, because a hidden budget equals corruption in the mind of the public. They should also clarify the promises that they make to parents, and bring some of their overly ambitious claims in line with the current reality.

### **Major Challenges for the Year 2000**

The cleavages within the public secondary school system are reinforced by status distinctions between the public and private sector, all of which makes for a divided secondary school system which is acting as a brake on national development. There is also the continuing problem of education and employment. Barbados has a large population of 259, 000, few natural resources, and high unemployment. To exacerbate matters,

opportunity for emigration has been reduced. Education policy will therefore have to deal with the question of the type of education and training which is necessary to meet this situation (Shorey, 1977).

As for the sensitive issue of whether or not private education will reinforce social inequality in Barbados, it is clear from this report that private elite schools do provide superior education to advantaged students. While some may consider this unfortunate, it must be pointed out that social inequality can only be reduced, not eliminated in any society. This author believes that it is great that Barbadians have the option of private or public schools. It is natural for demands for different levels of education to appear. Due to the Barbadian principles of free education for all, it is unlikely that the Barbadian government will invest in elite education, although investment in elite schools by the private sector provides the government and society with a welcome alternative to the public school system. The innovative climate and high educational quality fostered by these private schools have proven beneficial to the society by providing competent and effective leaders.

The pattern found indicates that working class students in their heterogeneous socio-economic status (SES) schools appear to be re-socialized in the direction of higher class political norms.

### **Gender Issues and Disadvantaged Students**

Entry to secondary schools is extremely competitive. The Ministry of Education expects girls to score higher than boys to get into the older secondary schools because there is a shortage of places for girls in these prestigious institutions. Entry to these schools is based on the highest results from the Common Entrance Examination. While there is no specific minimum score that must be gained for entry, research showed a minimum of 84%, a maximum 97.5% and an average 91%. Girls attained a slightly higher CEE score than boys - the study showed an average of 90.34 for boys and 91.79 for girls (Davies, 1997).

The White Paper on Education reform states clearly that the Government is committed to provide "equitable access to quality education for all persons, thereby ensuring that all children will receive educational instruction that is appropriate to their needs" (p.15). On the road to accomplishing this objective, workshops aimed at sensitizing primary school teachers and parents to the needs of children requiring special education have been continuing since 1996.

The government recognizes that teacher training is one component in accomplishing a successful integration programme and the ministry of education will continue its special needs teacher training programmes in order to enhance the quality of instruction delivered to the children.

## **- Chapter 8-**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

In conclusion, the following section will discuss some of the limitations of the research, indicate possible questions for further research, and give a general outlook for the future.

#### **Limitations of the Research**

There are several factors in the Barbadian context which affect the reliability of the interview technique. First, due to the unavailability of parents, teachers, and students during the holiday period, many of the interviews were conducted by telephone, recorded and later transcribed. The risk of gathering incomplete and biased data was high because of a lack of opportunity to check observations and interpretations against the views of the participants. Barbadian interviewees are sometimes unwilling to respond honestly to certain topics. For example, parents did not want to reveal their real income, and Vale either would not or was not able to provide this information.

Also, the data collected for the study was limited for several reasons. First, although the length of the researcher's stay in Barbados was long, because it was mostly during the vacation period many participants were unavailable. For this reason, I chose to concentrate on one school, but had

the opportunity for short visits to a few other schools. The researcher chose to collect data from one school, rather than from several.

Because the researcher did not collect data from any public school, she was unable to report perceptions of private schools held by those involved with the public system. In fact there are very few data on relations between Vale Preparatory and public schools, or between Vale and its peer competitors. A lot of the data was not written down; it was oral. The data was also limited by the failure of the school to make many of the school's original records available to the researcher.

Another limitation is related to the fact that private schools are not a recent phenomenon in Barbados. There are many graduates from these schools, yet it was impossible to compare the output between private schools because some private schools had no written data available. The data received was therefore unreliable.

## **Further Research**

### **Links to the Past**

For future research, there should be a follow up of students who have left Vale's Preparatory school, to find out if there is a link between the kind of education these students received and where they are today. I would also like to find out what the similarities and differences are between this primary private school and primary public schools in Barbados. In order to enhance future changes, alterations, or additions to the school's programs,

I would like to find out what the school and its staff did correctly. I would also like to investigate the characteristics or elements which hindered students' advancement.

### **Questions for the Future**

This research was exploratory, in nature, and for this reason the researcher did not consider it appropriate to follow the interview protocols rigidly during the interviews, nor in analyzing and presenting the data. Therefore the information presented does not constitute an exhaustive, systematic investigation of private elite schools in Barbados. Much research remains to be done to complete the picture. Below are several suggestions for questions to focus on in further research on this topic:

- 1) How does the performance of private elite school students differ from public school students?
- 2) Are private school graduates more successful than others, as expected?
- 3) Should the Barbadian Government support some approved private schools, and how can they do this?

### **General Outlook**

Private elite schools will undoubtedly continue to play an important role in Barbados. This much seems inevitable because the upper middle

class is growing, and because Barbadian parents are strongly influenced by the tradition to invest in their children's education.

As for the sensitive issue of whether or not private education reinforces inequality in Barbados, it is clear from this report that private elite schools do provide superior education to advantaged students. While some may consider this unfortunate, it must be repeated here that social inequality can be diminished but not eliminated in any society. As well, because the economy of Barbados is in a state of progressive transition, it is natural for demands for different levels of education to appear.

Due to democratic principles, it is not likely that the Barbadian government will invest in elite education. Investment in elite schools by the private sector provides an alternative to the public school system. The innovative climate and high educational quality fostered by these private schools may prove to be beneficial over the years for the society at large.

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Appendix 1

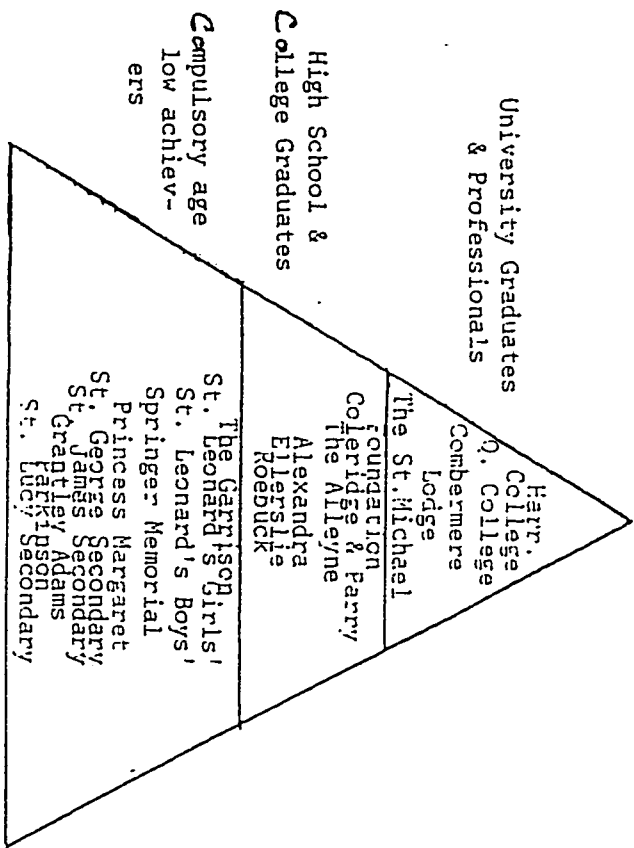


Figure A: Structure of the Secondary School System

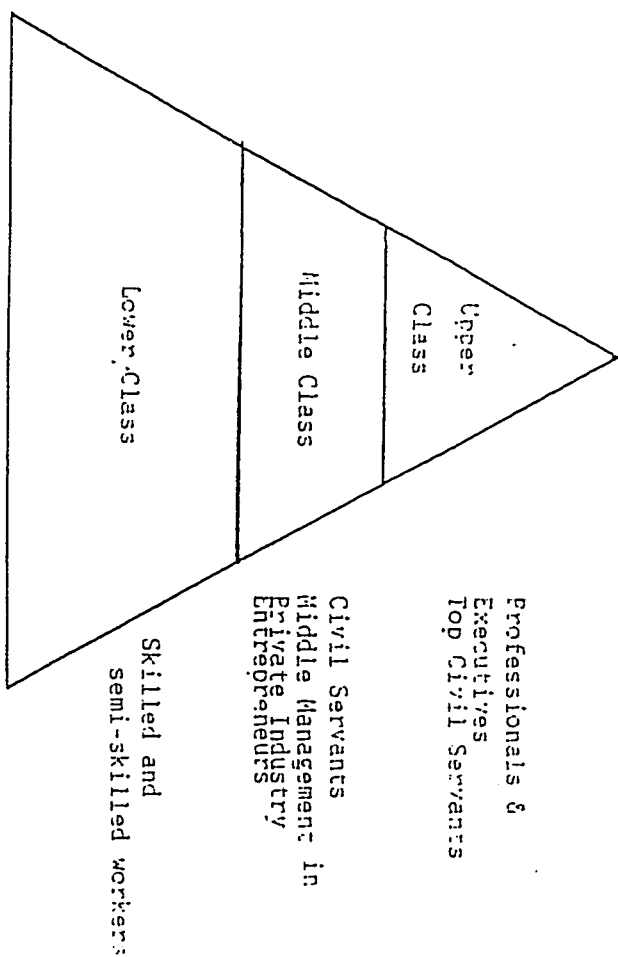


Figure B: Social Structure

**Appendix 2**

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Montreal, Quebec  
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**Respondent Consent Form**

Dear participant,

I am working towards my Master of Arts in Educational Studies at Concordia University. My area of interest for my thesis is on Private Primary Schools in Barbados. I would very much appreciate if you could participate with an interview in my research for my thesis. The results will be published and also communicated back to the principal, teachers, parents and others. I would be needing about two hours of your time for this interview.

**Consent**

- 1). I have been informed about the nature and purpose of the interview.
- 2). I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and anonymous, each participant will be referred to by a pseudonym or code.
- 3). I understand that I can refrain from answering any question and can withdraw my participation at any time, and there shall be no consequences to this.
- 4). I understand that the researched information I provide will



### **Appendix 3**

#### **The Interview Protocol for the School head\ Founder\Director**

1. What provoked you to start a private school? Tell me about your dream for the school.
2. Has it come up to your expectations?
3. What are the characteristics of your school?
4. If you were starting today, what would you have done differently?

## **Appendix 4**

### **The Interview Protocol for Teachers**

1. How long have you been a teacher?
2. How long have you been teaching at Vale?
3. How has the curriculum changed with the times?
4. Have you always taught the same subject?
5. What's a typical day for you?
6. How have you contributed to the educational environment in Barbados?
7. Are you from Barbados?
8. What makes you stay at Vale?
9. How do you think your educational experience could be improved?

## **Appendix 5**

### **The Interview Protocol for Parents**

1. Are you a former student of Vale?
2. How did you learn about the school?
3. Why do you send your child to a private school?
4. Are you satisfied with your child's adjustment to the school environment /performance at the school?
5. What changes would you like to see at the school?
6. What are your goals in sending your children to private school?

## **Appendix 6**

### **The Interview Protocol for Students**

1. What is your name?
2. Are you from Barbados?
3. How long have you been a student here?
4. What classes are you enrolled in?
5. Can you tell me about your classes?
6. Which class do you enjoy the most? The least?
7. Can you tell me about your teachers?
8. How many students are there in each class?
9. What is your classroom environment like?
10. When will you finish this school?
11. How well have you mastered the material you have learned?
12. Why do you believe that you have been prepared to take the entrance examinations?
13. When will you take the entrance examination to enter secondary school ?

## **Appendix 7**

### **Additional Interview Items**

1. Looking back, I would like you to consider some educational changes or innovations that occurred.
  - (a) Try to zero in on one particular change or innovation at Vale Preparatory that you consider the most significant. What was it?
  - (b) Why was this significant?
  
2. Let's talk about how the change got started.
  - (a) Do you know who thought of the ideas first?
  - (b) Who was most important in presenting and implementing the change?
  - (c) Did the change originate outside the school as the result of community pressure or some government program?
  - (d) Did it originate within the school itself quite apart from what was going on in the community or government?
  
3. How would you say the change was accepted?
  - (a) Did most accept, or where possible, participate in this school innovation? (Discuss)
  - (b) To what extent was this picked up and tried by others?
  
4. How was the innovation implemented?
  - (a) Did the implementation method (bringing it about) center around

attitudes—seeking some new relationships?

- (b) Did the method of implementation center around power and the seeking of concessions (someone giving up something)?

5. Which strategy was used to implement (bring about) the change - participative democratic or elitist authoritarian? In other words, was one person or group “calling all the shots” or were at least some of the involved parties participating?

- (a) Who or what was the target of this innovation?
- (b) Was a change in the individual or the group expected?

6. Did the change occur suddenly with fanfare and publicity?

- (a) Did it come about gradually, somewhat quietly with relatively little publicity?
- (b) Did the innovation last? How long will it last?

7. Would you like to list some of the other changes you thought were important?

8. Are there any changes you would like to see?

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## Appendix 8

### Interview Items (simplified for students)

1. Looking back over the past to five years, that is since you were in form -----, I would like you to think about the changes, or “new things” that happened.
  - (a) Try to pick one new thing during the past five years in the school that you think was important; what was it?
  - (b) Why was this important?
  
2. Lets talk about how the change got started.
  - (a) Do you know who thought of the idea first?
  - (b) Who was the most important in starting the change
  - (c) Did the change start outside the school as a result of community pressure, or some government program?
  - (d) Did the new thing start in the school itself separate from what was going on in the community or government?
  
3. How was the change greeted?
  - (a) Did most accept (agree with) or where possible take part in this change or new thing?
  - (b) Did anyone else do the same thing because this was done here first?

4. How was the new thing or change brought about?

Did everyone think that the new thing came to be because the people wanted the change or because they were told to change by someone above them (e. g. their boss)?

5. Was one person telling every one how to do the new thing or did some of the people involved help decide how to bring it about?

(a) Whom did the new thing affect the most?

(b) Did the new thing affect one person or a lot of people?

6. Did the new thing happen suddenly with everyone hearing about it?

(a) Did it happen slowly and quietly with not too many people hearing about it.

(c) Did the new thing last? How long will it last?

7. Could you list some of the other new things or changes happening during the past five years you think were important?

8. Can you think of any change or changes that you would wish to see?

Mailing Address:

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Appendix 9

**Summary Protocol Form**

Yvonne R. Small  
M.A. thesis in Educational Studies  
Dept. of Education  
Concordia University

**Title: The Role of Private Primary School Education in Barbados.**

**Mailing address:**  
4610 Walkley Ave. Apt. 7  
Montreal, Que  
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**Tel: (h) (514) 483 3777**

**CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY**

**SUMMARY PROTOCOL FORM**

**RESEARCH WITH HUMAN SUBJECTS**

**1. TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT:**

M. A. thesis - Educational Studies

**Title:** The Role of Private Primary School Education in Barbados

**2. SAMPLE OF PERSONS TO BE STUDIED:**

20 persons , ten staff members, five students and their parents.

**3. METHOD OF RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS:**

The participants will be contacted by telephone, they will be asked whether they would like to take part in a case study on private primary school education in Barbados.

**4. TREATMENT OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE COURSE OF THE RESEARCH:**

During this case study, I shall attempt to understand and learn what the current educational status of private primary education in Barbados is. To do so, a case study will be carried out using the following means: 1) individual tape recorded interviews with students and their parents, and staff members; 2) goal statements from each individual participant, as well as goal statements from the school administrators; 3) reflections from each participant at the end of the process, collected via audio recording of the interview. The feasibility of these data sources is dependent on the rapport that I am able to establish with participants.

**5. INDICATE BRIEFLY HOW THE RESEARCH PLAN DEALS WITH THE FOLLOWING POTENTIAL ETHICAL CONCERNS:**

(a) **Informed Consent** I drafted a written consent form which was required to be signed must be attached. Include what is expected of subjects as well as duration of involvement. (SEE SAMPLE ATTACHED).

(b) **Deception** (Includes: Deliberate presentation of false information; Suppression of material information designed to mislead ; Selected Disclosure): In order to avoid ethical concerns in regard to deception, notes of the interview will be taken and the tape recorded interviews will be transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and full disclosure.

- (c) Freedom to discontinue:** Participants are free to discontinue at any time -they will be informed of this in writing at the beginning of the interview. They will also be informed verbally during the initial meeting.
- (d) Risks to Subjects' Physical and Psychological Welfare** (Including low-level risk or any form of discomfort raised by the experimental procedure and how it will be dealt with): This is a case study research, and as such, will investigate the perceptions and viewpoints of some of students their parents, and staff members of the school. It will also compare the selection criteria and outcomes of the school. Those staff members who express discomfort due to the time requirements of the interview, will not undergo one.
- (e) Post-Research Explanation and /or Debriefing:** I will make available to individual participants transcripts of their interviews, prior to data analysis.
- I will distribute a written summary of the findings and make a copy of any papers available to the participants.
- (f) Confidentiality of Results:**
- Participants' names or the name of the school in which they work will not be divulged in any formal publication.

**(g) Protecting and/or Addressing Participant “at Risk” Situations:**

DNA

**(6) BEARING IN MIND THE ETHICAL GUIDELINES OF YOUR ACADEMIC AND/OR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION, PLEASE COMMENT ON ANY OTHER ETHICAL CONCERNS WHICH MAY ARISE IN THE**

**COURSE OF THE RESEARCH:** (e.g., Responsibility to subjects beyond the purpose of this study) It is important that participants get the most that they can get out of this project. If at any point the evaluation inquiry conflicts with the professional development needs of the participants, it is the evaluation inquiry that will take a back seat to these concerns.

**7. PLEASE COMMENT ON EXPECTED BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED:**

This inquiry will provide a systematic analysis of Vale Preparatory school to ‘locate’ it in the larger context of education in Barbadian society. By highlighting some of the short comings of the regular system and suggesting ways that the regular system might emulate the private school. Hopefully, this inquiry and the results will add to the existing research on the Barbadian educational system.

**Appendix 10**

**Name of Project Director (please print): YVONNE R. SMALL**

**Signature of Project Director**

**Department: M. A. Educational Studies, Dept. of Education.**

Date: October 24, 1999

To: Joanne Locke

From: Yvonne R. Small

Re: The Role of Private Primary School Education in Barbados.

Following my visit to Barbados last summer I have made some slight adjustments to the protocol.

In response to point No. (1) The sample size of at least twenty persons will include six teachers, five students who are currently attending Vale and their parents, as well as four former students.

2. Students were selected by the principal based on her experience and knowledge of them. Of the five or more students selected for the study two will come from grade 3, four from grade 4, and two from grade 4 A.

3. All of the participants will be current students and their parents as well as former students from Vale school.

4a. Barbados has free education for *all* students until they are sixteen years old. My intention was to compare the selection criteria for the public primary school children to Vale's but that is no longer necessary. Vale

preparatory school's selection criteria is based on the parents' socio-economic status.

4b. I do not foresee any risk to the subjects' physical and psychological welfare based on this study because the interviews will be conducted anonymously and on a voluntary basis only. Subjects will be given a consent form and a debriefing form to sign prior to the interview. Also, at this time, subjects will be informed that I will not only be taking notes but also recording the interviews to ensure accuracy of the results and prevent interviewer bias during analysis of the data. Also, if there is any discrepancy with the voices on the tape recorder, I can refer to my notes. Individual responses will be transcribed verbatim from the tape recorder.

5. As was mentioned in point No. 4, the participants will be audio-taped and I will also take notes during the interview.

6. If the participants choose to discontinue the study, the tapes will be erased and there will be no repercussions to this.

Sincerely,

Yvonne R. Small.

**APPENDIX 11****Vale Preparatory School****(Founded in 1959)****Curriculum**

Roll: 125

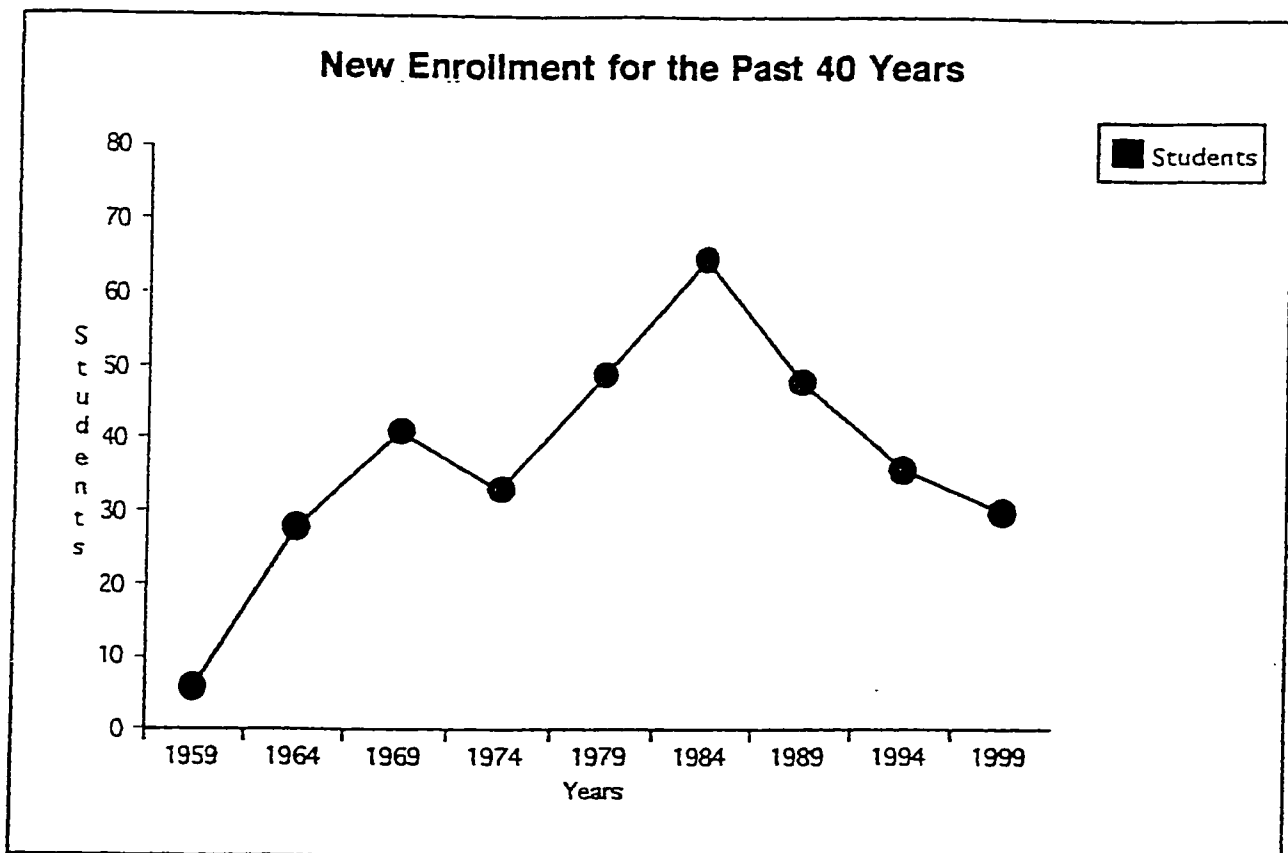
Staff: 6

The Vale Pre-School curriculum is devoted to building a firm foundation. The Pre-School curriculum includes Numbers, Letters, Health Science, Drama, Art, Singing, Story Time, Play Time and other muscle-building activities. It prepares the child for a smooth entry to the Primary School.

The primary school curriculum includes Religious Knowledge, Mathematics, Grammar, Composition, Comprehension, Spelling and Vocabulary, Health Science, Art and Craft, Drama, Physical Education, Music, and Computer Science.

Source: 1995 Primary School's Syllabuses, Ministry of Education

## Appendix 12



**Total Enrollment Over  
Each 10 Year Period**

1959-1969	375
1969-1979	464
1979-1989	515
1989-1998	330

The table also shows that there has been a total of 1,684 students, or about a 100% increase in enrollment since its inception.

Appendix 13. A Comparison of Examination Results between Vale Private School and a Neighbouring Public School.

Subject	English ( Pupils)		Mathematics (Pupils)	
Score	Private (24)   Public (42)		Private (24)   Public (42)	
100 %	17 % (4)	2.4 % (1)	4.24 % (1)	2.4 % (1)e
99 - 90	58 % (14)	43 % (18)	46 % (11)	21.4 % (9)
89 - 80	25 % (6)	50 % (21)	29 % (7)	24 % (10)
79 - 70	0 (0)	2.4 % (1)	12.5 % (3)	29 % (12)
69 - 60	0 (0)	2.4 % (1)	8.2 % (2 )	21.4% (9)
Failed	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2.4 % (1)
Average	95 %	86 %	87 %	85 %

Appendix 14. Students Daily time Table Schedule at Vale Preparatory School.

Monday

Period\ Grade	One	Two	Three	Four	Four A
First	Story time	English	Tables	English	Mathematics
Second	Religious Knowledge	Mathematics	Reading	Spelling	Mathematics
Third	Music	Mathematics	Spelling	Mathematics	English
Fourth	Art and Craft	Reading	Grammar	Mathematics	English
Fifth	Mathematics	Art and Craft	Mathematics	Social studies	Tests
Sixth	Grammar	Phonics	Mathematics	Science	Tests
Seventh	Composition	Games	Religious Knowledge	Tables	Computer Science
Eighth	Comprehension	Drama	Composition	Games	Computer Science

Tuesday

Period\ Grade	One	Two	Three	Four	Four A
First	Art and Craft	Reading	Tables	English	English
Second	Spelling	Spelling	Reading	English	Mathematics
Third	Vocabulary	Writing	Spelling	Mathematics	Physical Education
Fourth	Health Science	Drama	Mathematics	Mathematics	Social Studies
Fifth	General Science	Science	Health Ed	Physical Ed	Science
Sixth	Social Studies	Dictation	Grammar	Geography	Arts and Craft
Seventh	Music	Arithmetic	Grammar	Music	Music
Eighth	Drama	Arithmetic	Music	Library	Drama

Wednesday

Period/ Grade	One	Two	Three	Four	Four A
First	Physical Education	Religious Knowledge	Tables	English	Mathematics
Second	Social studies	Games	Reading	Punctuation	Mathematics
Third	English	Games	Spelling	Grammar	History
Fourth	Arithmetic	English	Compre- hension	Reading	Religious K
Fifth	Tests	English	Social studies	Mathematics	Composition
Sixth	Art and Craft	General science	Mathematics	Mathematics	Compre- hension
Seventh	General science	Mathematics	Mathematics	Library	Spelling
Eighth	Music	Mathematics	Vocabulary	Religious K	Library

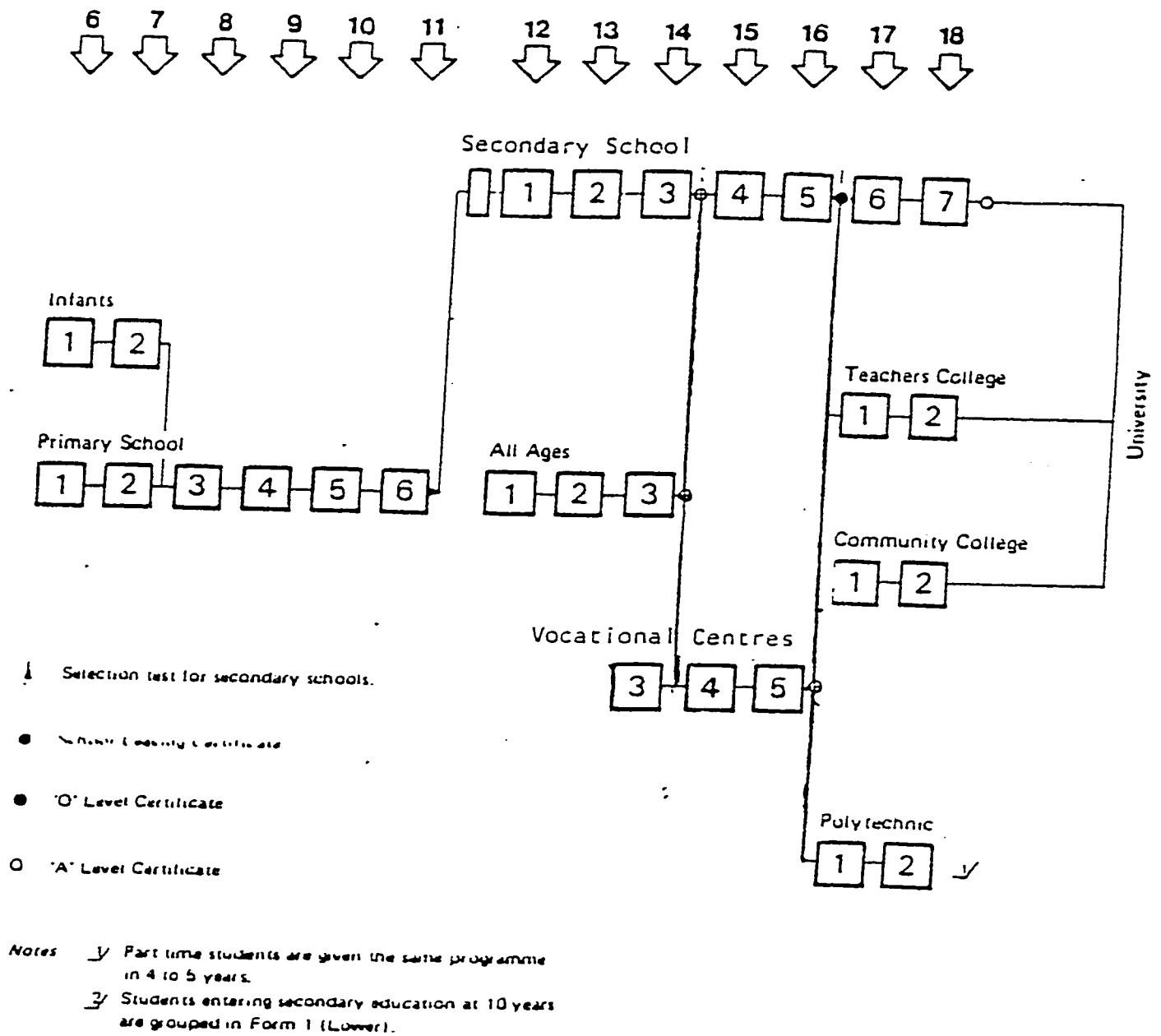
Thursday

Period\ Grade	One	Two	Three	Four	Four A
First	Spelling	English	Test	English	English
Second	Addition	Arithmetic	Test	Spelling	Computers
Third	Subtraction	Social studies	Test	Grammar	Computers
Fourth	Multiplication	Religious Ed	General Science	Mathematics	Games
Fifth	Drawing	Geography	General science	Mathematics	Games
Sixth	Painting	Health Ed	Library	Music	Mathematics
Seventh	Coloring	Health Ed	Grammar	Games	Pop Quizzes
Eighth	Games	Library	Mathematics	Games	Pop Quizzes

Friday

Period\ Grade	One	Two	Three	Four	Four A
First	Social studies	Religious K	Games	Mathematics	Mathematics
Second	Grammar	Science	Games	English	Mathematics
Third	Reading	Creative Craft	Games	Grammar	General Science
Fourth	Spelling	Writing	Religious K	Compre-hension	Art
Fifth	Writing	Spelling	Art	Multipli-cation	Geography
Sixth	Singing	Reading	Craft	Division	History
Seventh	Games	Arithmetic	Workbook	Tests	English
Eighth	Games	Music	Workbook	Drawing	Tests

## STRUCTURE OF THE FORMAL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION



SOURCE: Digest of Education Statistics, Barbados 1983-1984

