

The School Alone is Not at Fault

A Closer Look at the Report *Education and Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates in Jamaica*

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Abstract

*This discussion uses the report *Education and crime: Evidence from prison inmates in Jamaica* (“The Prison Study”) as an entrée into an examination of social equity in education, which negatively affects student outcomes, in Jamaica. Using secondary research, it bridges the gaps in the report to flesh out the role of learner characteristics and school practice in student underachievement at secondary level to show that focus on the school is not sufficient. Using the findings of other reports such as the CaPRI Report card on education, this discussion, nevertheless, finds corroboration for the profile of the ‘typical’ prison inmate – a Jamaican-born male, less than 34 years old, from a single-parent home in either Kingston and St. Andrew or St Catherine. It concludes by presenting recommendations for improving secondary level learning outcomes in Jamaica.*

Introduction

The school does not act as a countervailing and liberating force in altering societal stereotypes. These stereotypes restrict students’ and teachers’ thinking and narrow the vision of what is educationally and socially possible for boys and girls. (Evans 1999, 79)

The education system, by its deliberate design in Jamaica has perpetuated a social and economic structure which excludes the poor and their children, relegating them to low status menial occupations, low wages and sub-standard living conditions. The poor quality of schools to which those living in poverty have access, has served to reproduce, over generations, the social inequities, which education itself is intended to counter. This in-built bias in the education system has far reaching implications for the ability of families to move out of conditions of marginalization. (Watson Williams 2008, n. p.)

Unless the matter of underperforming boys is addressed urgently, the education system will be a channel of inequality which disenfranchises young men. (CaPRI 2012, 18)

In early 2014, Jamaica's Minister of Education brought to Parliament a 2012 report of a study undertaken by the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) entitled *Education and crime: Evidence from prison inmates in Jamaica* ("The Prison Study"). One of the research questions the study attempted to answer was: Are the names of some [secondary] schools featured more frequently than others within the sample [of inmates in the study]? To that end, the report listed 18 schools that it found were most often associated with the prison inmates in the study. The Minister named these schools and this created a firestorm in both the schools identified and in the public domain. The Principal of XYS High School, which ranked second in the "top" five in the study, told the *Daily Gleaner* newspaper:

The students are most distraught and unhappy about the report of their school. For the past 10 years, as the principal, I have seen so much growth. I have seen how the community has respected the school, the hard work of our teachers, and the effort to mould them into respectable adults. We have become a school of choice within this community, and it is wrong to say that we are producing criminals. The school is a reflection of the society, and every day when the society comes into our schools, we have to be correcting the society and some of the children. *Are you trying to say the school is at fault?* [Emphasis added] (Boyd 2014).

The case of this school was particularly poignant as the 2013 Rhodes Scholar was one of its graduates. This was not the first time that a Jamaica Minister of

Education had caused an uproar with regard to school performance. In 2011, the then Minister of Education also created significant offence by calling four schools ‘failing’ and directly intervening in their operations (Hunter 2011). Indeed, in comparison to other schools, such ‘failing’ schools are often more under-resourced, considered less desirable by students and parents (Jennings 2014), and attended by the children of the working poor. The prevalence of graduates or former students of non-traditional high schools among the incarcerated in the *Education and Crime Report (ECR)* may point to an intersection between social disadvantage arising from poverty and social inequity of achievement. Social inequity deals with the inequity of opportunity available to students of certain groups to perform well by attaining the benefits of education (Gillborn and Youdell 1999). In 2011, as in 2014, in the midst of that public outcry and distress, the question of social equity in education, which negatively affects student outcomes, may have been muted.

Aim of the Discussion

In order to address the problem of social inequity in education and develop appropriate interventions, it is necessary to understand the nature and extent of the problem. This paper begins an exploration of the nature of social inequity in secondary education in Jamaica by using the ECR as an entrée into the discussion. It interrogates the profile of the typical inmate presented in the report in light of salient factors related to achievement in Jamaica as identified in the literature (Evans 1999; Carlson 2002; Clarke 2004–2005; Watson Williams 2011; CaPRI 2012). In so doing, it uses the Evans study, supported by other research such as the CaPRI 2012 *Report card on education in Jamaica*, to provide an explanatory construct for this typical inmate that highlights the role of the school (educational processes) as well as learner characteristics in student achievement – “the school [alone] is not at fault”.

Evans’s investigation of gender and differences in achievement in secondary education, which is the foundational research for the others listed, provides some support for the profile of the typical inmate presented in the *ECR*, and points to the need for actions to reduce low quality educational opportunities.

The discussion begins with an examination of some of the issues raised by the shortcomings identified in the *ECR*. Using the best practices in research methodology identified by Caribbean researchers Leacock, Warrican, and Rose (2009), the discussion critiques the *ECR*, and presents ways in which shortcomings in such areas as research design can be addressed; it then shows how these gaps, when addressed, further develop the picture of social inequality in education in Jamaica. This is followed by an examination of the socioeconomic and educational characteristics of the typical inmate in light of the 2010 *Jamaica survey of living conditions*. This examination answers the question: How can the typical inmate be explained by the data available on the socioeconomic conditions of Jamaican life?

Defining Quality and Achievement in Education

A central global concern in education is how to increase equality of learning outcomes, access, and retention (UNICEF 2005). The UK Secretary of State for Education, in a recent White Paper on Teaching, captured the sense of schooling as a means of increasing social equity, when he declared, in a passage worth quoting in full:

Our schools should be engines of social mobility, helping children to overcome the accidents of birth and background to achieve much more than they may ever have imagined. But, at the moment, our school system does not close gaps, it widens them. Children from poorer homes start behind their wealthier contemporaries when they arrive at school and during their educational journey they fall further and further back. The achievement gap between rich and poor widens at the beginning of primary school, gets worse by GCSE and is a yawning gulf by the time (far too few) sit A levels and apply to university. (Gove 2010, 6–7)

The focus on improving equity of outcomes reflects a belief that all students, regardless of socioeconomic background, can achieve certain basic outcomes, given the right learning environment. So, when students fail to develop the requisite skills and expected outcomes this can be seen to be partially due to a deficiency in educational quality in the school. Educational outcomes are often used to rate the quality of educational institutions, that is, the extent to which

their graduates are meeting absolute criteria such as achievement in external examinations. In the case of Jamaica, for example, achievement at secondary level is measured by success in external CSEC examinations (Carlson 2002) with the expectation of students gaining at least five subjects, including mathematics and English. Indeed, achievement in these subjects opens up opportunities for entering the labour market as well as continuing to tertiary education.

There are, however, a number of variables that can affect educational outcomes, so a straightforward relationship between the conditions of education and its products is not easy to determine. Learner characteristics (capacities and experience) such as socioeconomic background, health, place of residence, and the amount and nature of prior learning all influence learning (UNICEF 2005). These characteristics have the potential to impact inequality of achievement among learners and must be recognized and responded to specifically so that outcomes can be improved.

Different researchers give prominence to the role of different factors in educational achievement. Indeed, Carlson (2002), based on her work in Jamaica, argues that the most important factor in student achievement is not the level of resources in school, but rather how students use the resources provided. At the same time, Carlson finds that students' ability to use school resources is more directly related to their social, cultural, and economic status than any school variable. "Less advantaged students do not tend to use school resources as regularly as students of higher socioeconomic status do" (Carlson 2002, 4). The lesser use of school resources by less advantaged students is linked to lower levels of attendance and higher dropout rates. This does not, of course, rule out the importance of adequate resources in school.

Watson Williams (2011), on the other hand, identifies parenting as one of the most critical factors in adolescent outcomes in education; the power dynamics at play in the school setting in the Jamaican context influence the parenting practice of poor families in particular and shape the nature of their participation in their children's education. Watson Williams finds that poorer parents face both internal and external barriers to participating in the education of their children, therefore leading to lower outcomes.

Evans (1999) identifies three factors as critical to achievement that encompass both learner characteristics and educational quality — access, opportunity

to learn, and decision to participate in learning. In so doing, she too moves the focus away from inputs in the education system (teacher qualifications, numbers of schools and places, etc.) to the processes of schooling (the quality of school life, nature of teacher-student interactions, the quality of teaching and learning). Evans focused on achievement between male and female students and found that girls generally outperformed boys and are proceeding to tertiary education at a higher rate. School practices such as being beaten or insulted, or the practice of streaming demean students, especially boys. Student academic identity, particularly of boys, showed that boys did not have an image of themselves as interested in academic work, and therefore were more likely to be less engaged in the classroom. These and other school-related practices were found to be robust in offering explanations for boys' underachievement. At the same time, social practices such as differential socialization of boys and girls, for example, the need for boys to be involved in work activities, also impact negatively on achievement although these were not examined as variables in the study.

The Prison and Education Study

The JCF's Research, Planning and Legal Services Branch (RPLSB) prepared the brief 16-page *Education and Crime Report* in March 2012. The title, "Education and Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates in Jamaica," purports that the study provides evidence on the link between crime and education in light of data obtained from prison inmates. The stated purpose of the quantitative study is "to examine the educational background of prison inmates currently serving time in the adult correctional institutions in Jamaica and to describe the characteristic features of the typical inmate amongst the prison population" (p. 5). The four research questions addressed by the study were:

1. What is the personal profile of the 'typical' inmate amongst the prison population in Jamaica?
2. What are the criminal and educational profiles of the 'typical' inmate amongst the prison population in Jamaica?
3. Are the names of some schools featured more frequently than others within the sample?

4. Are some types of school featured more frequently than others within the sample?

The sample population was 894 inmates from the six adult correctional institutions in Jamaica – 851 males and 43 females. [The Correctional Services website lists seven adult institutions, however.] The report claimed that the sample was representative, based on institution and gender. The sample was selected randomly based on a list of inmates compiled by the Department of Correctional Services and the survey was conducted over a seven week period in 2011–12: “From that list [compiled by the Department of Corrections] a representative sample of the total prison population based on the institution and gender was chosen using random sampling” (p. 6). Inmates selected gave verbal consent to the trained police personnel from the RPLSB, who conducted the interviews, each of which lasted an average of five minutes, according to the Report. The researchers claimed, however, that the findings were limited by the self-reporting format. In addition, the researchers were unable to access the files of inmates to verify the information supplied by inmates: “This means that the accuracy of the information, to a large extent is dependent on how well the interviewees recollected the relevant facts” (p. 6). The Report, nonetheless, claimed that the sample produced a margin of error of ± 3 at the 95 per cent confidence level without detailing how this was the case. The data was obtained using a structured 16-item survey instrument that was first piloted among the members of the JCF unit undertaking the study.

FINDINGS OF THE PRISON STUDY

The study claimed that, based on the sample size, it is possible to describe the typical inmate. The personal profile of this inmate is a Jamaican-born male, who is under 34 years old and hails from either Kingston and St Andrew or St Catherine, parishes noted as among the ones “that account for most of the crime and violence in the country” (p. 7). The typical inmate was brought up in “a single-parent home” (which in Jamaica usually means single mother). He has an educational profile that shows that he has had some access to education via a non-traditional high school. He is likely to have dropped out before reach-

ing Grade 11 without any CSEC subjects, however. The typical reason for him dropping out was financial difficulties. His criminal profile is such that he would have had his first arrest before 24, for some form of breach of the Firearms Act.

At the same time, “The study also uncovered evidence which shows that within the different types of school, the names of some schools featured far more frequently than others” (p. 14). Among the top 18 schools featured in the study, frequency of association with inmates ranged from 8–20. Upgraded high schools accounted for 14 (77.7 per cent); only one traditional high school featured in the top 18; one technical high school, one all-age and two primary schools rounded out the list. The disproportionately large number of non-traditional high schools represented in the sample is identified as having significant implications for targeted programmes and interventions in the schools. The authors conclude by recommending further research on socioeconomic variables such as employment, marital status, and reasons for involvement in crime. Twelve specific recommendations, covering such areas as improved resourcing for early childhood education and non-traditional high schools, parenting, and a restructured Safe School’s Programme are detailed; these, however, have little bearing on the findings of the study.

A Closer Look at the Education and Crime Report

On closer examination, the ECR can be seen to exhibit a number of weaknesses, which if addressed, can help to address the negative response to the Report and more clearly indicate social inequality in Jamaica and the Jamaican education system specifically.

Vague and unsubstantiated claims are present throughout the *ECR*; for example, “At the same time, we have seen where more and more youths are turning to a life of crime and criminality. And so it is widely felt that a significant contributing factor to the high involvement of youths in criminal activities in Jamaica is the worrying state of the country’s education system” (p. 5). No data is presented to back up the assertion of increased youth involvement in crime or that the state of Jamaica’s educational system can be considered to be “wor-

rying”. Even more important, that this worrying state of schools is a contributing factor to youth crime is not established either.

Taking account of research in the field on the state of education in Jamaica, as well as on youth involvement in crime in Jamaica, would help to bridge this gap. Carlson (2002), in her social assessment of the Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE) Programme, sheds light on the matter of youth and crime. She noted that over half of all major crimes in Jamaica are committed by youth (mostly male), and that 30 per cent of inmates sentenced to adult correctional facilities are between the ages of 17 and 25. This appears to bear out the *ECR* findings concerning the age and gender of the typical inmate. Similarly, the more recent 2012 UNDP Caribbean Human Development Report (CHDR), the first of its kind, identifies youth crime in the region as increasing and costly for the region. The UNDP Report uses the standard definition for youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24. With the exception of Barbados and Suriname, the CHDR identifies increases in homicide as a trend in the region over the last 12 years; this is significant as homicide rates are said to be falling substantially in other parts of the world. Jamaica is noted to have the highest number of incarcerated youth in the region. Among the various interrelated risks and vulnerabilities that may increase the likelihood of youth involvement in violence, the Caribbean Human Development Report listed unemployment, disconnection from or poor attitudes towards school, and low educational attainment (which in the findings of the *ECR* can be seen to be leaving school without subjects or not finishing school at all). Poor attitudes to school and the link with low achievement are also borne out by the Evans study.

WORRYING STATE OF EDUCATION

To illustrate the worrying state of education in Jamaica, it is possible to draw on the reports of the National Education Inspectorate (NEI) and the CaPRI report card on education (2012). (More information on the NEI reports is given below). The CaPRI report card is a unique accountability tool that tracks changes in student learning (usually by performance in standardized tests) along with changes in educational inputs such as teacher qualifications and enrolment

in order to better understand how structures affect education in the country. It offers the best information available on key aspects of education – access, quality and equity – which are considered important for improving learning.

CaPRI reports that the problem in Jamaica's education sector is not solely about money. Indeed, between 2005 and 2010, Jamaica invested increasing amounts in education – moving from 5.3 to 6.1 per cent of GDP. Such levels of investment are higher than the average for developed countries. In terms of enrolment, most Jamaican children attend school up to the lower secondary level (Grades 7–9); moreover, there is a robust assessment system incorporating both national and school-based forms of assessment. However, the test scores at all levels of the educational system point to gaps in learning outcomes for many students, especially children of the poor. Up to 90 per cent of the poorest Jamaicans lack secondary or post-secondary certification compared with 56 per cent of the wealthiest. Varying resources among schools continue to be a problem. Better performing schools with resources such as computer labs and wi-fi coexist with schools having the barest minimum number of computers in a context of severe overcrowding (*see also* Carlson 2002).

In the nine critical areas on which education in Jamaica is judged, the CaPRI report card gives three Bs (expenditure, assessment system, enrolment), four Cs (staying in school, standards, management and accountability, teaching profession) and two Ds (equity, test score). All critical areas are judged to be improving, except for staying in school and assessment system, which are judged as having no observable change. Equity is the sole area in which the report card judges Jamaica as declining. This judgment is based on the lack of a discernible path to address the underachievement of boys and the wide disparities in educational outcomes for different socioeconomic groups. Although the report card does not provide an average for Jamaica's performance in education, it is possible to see that the nine variables average out to a C grade, which means that the system is average with more indicators heading in an upward direction. But perhaps if the equity question is weighted more heavily than the other areas, then it is possible to see that as a worrying trend, especially when it is correlated to a profile of an inmate that is a male from straitened socioeconomic circumstances.

THE REPORT'S THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Further, the *ECR* is weakly grounded in the literature in the field and lacks a developed theoretical framework to help make sense of the data acquired. There is a wealth of research on the education and crime question, yet only one source is listed in the bibliography and used only once in the entire study – Lochner and Moretti (2001). It appears that this study, which is mentioned in the opening lines of the *ECR*, may also have been the basis for the title of the JCF Report. The Lochner and Moretti study was actually published in 2003 (not 2001 as noted in the Prison and Education Study) and is entitled, “The effects of education on crime: Evidence from prison inmates, arrests and self-reports”. (The JCF Report’s title is “Education and crime: Evidence from prison inmates in Jamaica”).

A reading of the Lochner and Moretti study raises questions about the relevance of the information from that study to the Jamaican situation. Lochner and Moretti are interested in the external benefits of education, such as its effect on crime, in the USA. Unlike the JCF study methodology, these researchers employed multiple data sources and focused only on men, distinguishing, at times, between Black and White inmates; the sources employed by Lochner and Moretti were “individual-level data from the [United States] Census on incarceration, state-level data on arrests from the Uniform Crime Reports, and self-report data on crime and incarceration from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth” (27). Lochner and Moretti (2003) report that “All three of these data sources produce similar conclusions: schooling significantly reduces criminal activity” (27). Lochner and Moretti’s emphasis on the social impact question is clear:

We further argue that the impact of education on crime implies that there are benefits to education not taken into account by individuals themselves, so the social return to schooling is larger than the private return. The estimated social externalities from reduced crime are sizeable. A 1% increase in the high school completion rate of all men ages 20–60 would save the United States as much as \$1.4 billion per year in reduced costs from crime incurred by victims and society at large. Such externalities from education amount to \$1,170–2,100 per additional high school graduate or 14–26% of the private return to schooling. It is difficult

to imagine a better reason to develop policies that prevent high school drop out.
(p. 27)

The JCF study does not attain this level of sophistication or rigour. No attempt was made at triangulating and cross-referencing data, and it is certainly not enough to note the lack of verification of the information provided as a limitation.

Among the various research approaches to be used in social settings as identified by Leacock, Warrican, and Rose (2009) is a correlational study, which seeks to investigate relationships between variables without making claims of cause and effect (p. 56). Such correlational studies are useful for pointing to areas of further research and take the researcher one step closer to establishing cause-effect relationships. If the nature of the kind of study being undertaken by the RPLSB had been clearer, this might have prevented much of the misunderstanding that resulted.

SAMPLE SELECTION AND SURVEY ADMINISTRATION

There is no basis for arguing for the representative nature of the study as the overall Jamaican prison population ($N=x$) is never established. The process of arriving at the sample size (n) is not clear either, especially as a percentage of the prison population. The description of a random sampling method is not borne out, as no indication is given of the preparation of a random number table or sampling frame and the process of undertaking the random selection. It could be inferred that some kind of stratified sampling was undertaken, since the random sampling is described as being representative of institution and gender, and the percentage for each facility is provided.

The description of the data collection method is also unclear. At one point, the *ECR* indicates that data collection method was “self reporting”; at other points, however, it speaks of “interviews”. But, as Appendix A demonstrates, the instrument was a 16-item questionnaire, which means the research approach was quantitative; therefore, interviewing was not a method used, in spite of the respondents being constantly referred to as interviewees (*see also* p. 6 of the Report where interviews were said to have been “administered”). The question-

naire was administered by the police personnel to the inmates rather than having the respondents fill the questionnaire out themselves. No justification was given for this approach. Yet, self-completed questionnaires that are done anonymously are good data collection tools. Research participants are believed to be more truthful if they cannot be identified.

The Pilot Questionnaire and Protection of Subjects

The piloting of the questionnaire among the officers, who were later tasked with administering the questionnaire, raises ethical questions. Piloting means identifying a sample of respondents, who are similar to the ones included in the survey, but will not be involved in the research, and then administering the instrument to them (Leacock, Warrican, and Rose 2009). Therefore, members of the prison population, and not the police force should have been involved in the pilot. At the same time, prisoners may be considered among the vulnerable groups that researchers have to deal with; the power and control that law enforcement officers have over that population should be taken account of and planned for. It might have been difficult for inmates to refuse to participate, and the presence of police personnel may have led to responses that were believed to have been expected. Self-completed questionnaires may have served as a means of protecting the inmate respondents as well as providing better information. Undertaking a proper piloting of the questionnaire might have contributed to improving the instrument to ensure that it was both valid and reliable. Taking account of the ethical issues involved in both surveying a prison population and reporting data so as to protect other vulnerable populations like students would have enhanced the *ECR*. Yet no ethical considerations were discussed.

The relevance of identifying particular schools rather than school types remains unclear (Research question 3). The distress caused by the naming of particular schools was predictable and could certainly have been avoided as the study was not able to nor intended to link schools and crime. The question of harm to participants in this study may have resulted from the way the findings were reported (Leacock, Warrican, and Rose 2009). The students and teachers

of the schools named were exposed to emotional and reputational harm. Perhaps a better and carefully articulated research design would have eliminated that problem. At the same time, although the study investigated institutions, the reporting of the findings had a negative impact on another vulnerable population, students. More care should have been taken in this regard also.

THE SCHOOLS

Jamaican secondary schools fall into two main categories: (1) those with three years to completion (grades 7–9 of all-age schools and primary & junior-high schools); and (2) those with five years to completion (grades 7–11 of traditional and upgraded secondary, technical and vocational/agricultural high schools). Among the top 18 schools listed in the ECR were one rural all-age and two inner city Kingston primary schools, one rural technical high school, one Kingston-based traditional high school; the rest were upgraded secondary schools; three of the upgraded high schools were from the rural area. Four of the schools featured most frequently in the top 18 were Kingston-based upgraded high schools.

Only one of the top 18 schools listed in the ECR was among the schools featured in the 2013 NEI Report – PQY High School (formerly PQY Secondary School); in fact, that non-traditional inner city co-educational high school is listed among those schools that the NEI judged as “unsatisfactory,” that is, in need of immediate assistance. (It is of note that this school has now been assigned a principal of the highest calibre). This new secondary high school was also one of the four schools called “failing” in 2011 by a former Minister of Education, based on an index of performance using such variables as public perception and performance in the CSEC examinations over a ten-year period (Hunter 2011). In defending his definition and actions, the then Minister stated:

We know that such an index will no doubt spark national debate. It will raise issues of equity, of lack of resources, but it will also raise issues of leadership, of deep-seated cultural attitudes to education that Jamaica must confront if we are going to be truly a developed country by 2030. (Hunter 2013, n. p.)

The former Minister's comments highlight the issue of social inequity in resourcing schools so as to bring about desired outcomes. The Minister also noted the impact of school practices such as leadership acting in concert with "deep-seated cultural attitudes to education" – clearly similar to those identified by Evans (1999). Three other schools from the top 18 featured in the previous NEI Report (2011) – two upgraded high schools (ABC High and DEF High) and one traditional high school (GHI High School). In that Report, GHI, the Kingston-based all-boys traditional high school, was rated as good and its leadership and management rated as exceptionally high; teaching was satisfactory and supportive of student learning. This is one of the schools with a strong alumni body, which "contributes resources in cash and kind to both capital investments and recurrent expenditures. These have never been quantified, but are substantial" (Miller and Munroe 2014, 240). Yet, this school was associated with eight inmates in the study – a similar frequency to five non-traditional high schools, the two primary schools and the technical high school that were also in the top 18. So, in that instance, the quality of the school belies the assumed correspondence between low quality resources and poor school practices and underperformance. Clearly, it cannot be the school alone that is at fault. No explanation is presented for this anomaly in the *ECR*, however. One Kingston and St Andrew-based upgraded high school (ABC) was rated overall satisfactory and the other, another co-educational St Andrew-based upgraded school (DEF), unsatisfactory. The 2011 NEI Report noted that in schools considered unsatisfactory, lessons were often dull and did not cater to students' differing learning styles and abilities. Teacher understanding of how students learn, as well as progress in mathematics and English, was below the national average in such schools. Again, the question of school practices and the impact on performance is clear.

The concerns with school performance have been a long-standing issue. While the *ECR* did not attempt to draw a causal link between education and crime (indeed such a link could not be made or proven), as was detailed in the Introduction, many persons did. Given all the concerns with the research itself, it is difficult to say how reliable or representative the findings and conclusions are. The most useful part of the study was the attempt at creating a profile of the typical inmate, about whom there has always been some speculation.

Furthermore, the recommendations appear to have little direct bearing on the findings of the study; they almost appear to have been culled from other sources and put into this study. For example, how is the recommendation to discontinue the policy of automatic promotion of students to secondary school, irrespective of academic performance, a recommendation arising from this study when the existence of such a policy and its impact on the prison inmates was not studied? Other recommendations, such as increasing the quality and access to remedial education to inmates, again appear to be disconnected from a study dealing with “education and crime”.

The Typical Inmate as an Indicator of Social Inequity

The *ECR*, though weak in several respects, produced a profile of the ‘typical’ inmate, who was a Jamaican-born male, less than 34 years old, from a single-parent home in either Kingston and St. Andrew or St Catherine. Educationally, this inmate has had some association with secondary education via an upgraded secondary school from which he probably departed prematurely without any subjects. The profile of the typical inmate can be seen to be at the intersection of several kinds of socioeconomic disadvantage, which culminated in risky behaviour that led to crime and repeat incarceration (more than 60 per cent of the sample had been incarcerated at least twice). As the 2010 *Survey of Living Conditions in Jamaica* reveals, the socioeconomic disadvantages begin early, in the early childhood cohort (0–8 years), which represents a critical developmental period. Birth (biological) mothers were present in the household for the majority of children, but birth fathers were largely absent. While overall readiness scores for both the cognitive and socioemotional domains were high, poor children were worse off in both areas than wealthier ones.

SINGLE-PARENT HOMES

The single-parent home that the typical inmate is from is more than likely to be female-headed. As the 2009 *Survey of living conditions in Jamaica* reveals, 45.5 per cent of households are female-headed (by 2010, this had grown to

47.1 per cent). In 2010, female-headed households with children and no man resident accounted for 55.3 per cent of female-headed households. These female-headed households had more children, with a mean of 1.2 children, while male-headed households had a mean of 0.7 children. The largest households in terms of number of members, and the largest proportions of children were found in the poorest quintiles, in female-headed households and in the rural parts. Male-headed households had mean per capita consumption that was 17 per cent higher than that for female-headed households. Yet, while female-headed households had lower consumption levels than households headed by men, they recorded higher consumption in three commodity groups: fuel and household supplies, education, and personal care. This may be a result of female-headed households having more children and women spending more time pursuing education than men. With respect to poverty, female-headed households are among the most vulnerable groups.

A larger percentage of female-headed households applied for assistance through the Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH) and more households in quintiles 1 and 2 applied than wealthier households. These quintiles accounted for 67.1 per cent of PATH beneficiaries. Females were 53.2 per cent of that number. Indeed, 14 per cent of female-headed households were poor compared with 11 per cent of male-headed households. A higher proportion of poor households were female-headed, a trend which has been evident in Jamaica over the last 10 years.

Enrolment and Persistence

Disparities in education are marked by differences in enrolment between three-year secondary schools (all-age schools) and five-year secondary schools (traditional and upgraded high schools). Enrolment in three-year schools showed higher proportions of males, students from poorer households and those from the rural area. Poorer students, especially males, start school at a disadvantage and are unable to catch up, as is demonstrated by their low achievement. Although enrolment in secondary education is roughly the same for both sexes, girls are more likely to have met the minimum requirement for enrolment in

tertiary education, that is, four CSEC subjects, including mathematics and English (CaPRI 2012). In 2010, only 37 per cent of the students with qualifications to matriculate to tertiary education were males. However, Clarke (2004) reminds us that the picture of underachievement is not a homogeneous one; while girls as a group are doing better than boys as a group, not all boys are underachieving and not all girls are doing better than all boys. In fact, middle-class boys are doing better than other boys and lower-class girls. Working-class girls are doing better than the working-class boys. So working-class boys are the group that is underachieving and, as is suggested by the *ECR*, ending up incarcerated.

According to the 2010 *Survey of Living Conditions*, primary and secondary level students were each sent to school an average of 19 of the 20 days covered (18.9 and 18.7, respectively). The Survey measures attendance based on a fixed reference period of 20 school days (April 26–May 21, 2010); this differs from the measurement used by the Ministry of Education (MOE), which is based on students' attendance for the entire 190 days in the school year. The 2010 figure is an increase from 17 for both primary and secondary attendance in 2006. The average daily rate was 94.5 per cent at the primary level and 93.5 per cent at the secondary level. Rural area students continued to record rates below the national average at 68.5 per cent, and students from quintile 1, which represents the poorest 20 per cent of the Jamaican population, were also below with 59.6 per cent. The wealthiest segment of the society attended school 92.8 per cent of the time and females attended more regularly with 77.1 per cent compared to 75.1 per cent for males.

Money problems, illness, and rain remained the top three reasons for students not being sent to school. (The CaPRI Report Card also corroborated this.) Violence was the fourth most prevalent reason for non-attendance (8%) in 2010. Interestingly, unlike previous years, when 'Money problems' was the major constraint, in 2010, 'Illness' became the major constraining factor. Indeed, it was the most prevalent reason given by the wealthiest for not attending school. Nonetheless, financial constraints remained the top reason for non-attendance among the poorest quintiles at 41.0 per cent compared with 9.2 per cent for the wealthiest quintile (*JSLC* 2010). 'Money problems' was the main militating factor for students in rural areas but was less likely to be the constraint for stu-

dents in the KMA. With respect to the inmates in the *ECR*, the three main reasons reported for leaving school in particular grades were: (1) having completed school at that level (31.3 per cent), (2) financial difficulties (24.8 per cent), and, (3) just stopped attending/uncontrollable behaviour (14.7 per cent). The centrality of financial problems in leading inmates to drop out of school is understandable given the socioeconomic background of many of them.

Towards a Conclusion

The *ECR* (2012) was a rather weakly researched report that nevertheless pointed to concerns with inequity within secondary education in Jamaica. In the sample, it was shown that the mostly male inmates had had some association with a non-traditional high school but left without completing and hence no certification. Involvement in criminal activity is negatively correlated to more years of schooling and successful completion. The non-traditional or upgraded high schools that were prominently associated with the inmates in the *ECR* can be seen to be the poor siblings of the high school family in terms of resources, reputation, and student performance. These schools tend to receive the students from the poorest economic strata of Jamaica, who are already disadvantaged; at high or all-age schools, they in turn tend to have poor attendance and to drop out more often without the expected certification, especially in the core subjects of mathematics and English. Certainly, improving student outcomes will require the provision of direct resources to these schools, especially to non-traditional high schools. The latter require more resources but are given the same provision as better resourced schools with established alumni associations and status.

Similarly, policy and programmes to support universal access at secondary level will be necessary. To truly bring about universal access, issues of retention must be dealt with by improved and increased socioeconomic assistance to ensure that financial difficulties do not prevent students from attending school regularly and achieving success. Of course, the question of relevance and attitudes towards education need to be addressed. Indeed, as Jennings (2014) comments concerning the ROSE programme: “The achievement of goals such

as equity and social justice requires not only new skills and behaviours, but also changes in belief, attitudes and values. As long as powerful users are able to manipulate initiatives designed to achieve those goals in order to maintain the status quo, the changes desired will remain elusive ideals” (p. 257). Male underachievement can be seen to be impacted by socialization, which takes place prior to entry into formal education, but is reinforced by the teacher-student relationship in the classroom and other practices in the educational space. So, while the school is not functioning well generally as a force for liberation, we certainly cannot say the school alone is at fault.

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