Corruption as Redemption? Affiliation as a mark for leadership progression among primary school teachers in Jamaica

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Abstract

Perceptions among Jamaica's primary schools teachers about their progression should force the education ministry to consider the integrity and transparency of current recruitment, promotions and appointment processes. Are teachers' perceptions of discrimination, cronyism and favouritism accurate? How did these perceptions come about and what can national leaders and those in positions of authority do to 'manage' if not resolve these perceptions? Either way, there is a more fundamental question: Do teachers have to be tainted by the brush of corruption in order to progress in their careers? The answers to these questions are not easy, but one hopes that a teacher can progress to an available position on the basis of merit manifested in terms of appropriate skills, experience and qualifications. The aim of the small scale qualitative exploratory study from which this paper is derived was to identify and understand the perceptions of primary school teachers in Jamaica as regards their progression to the rank of Vice Principal and Principal. The findings identify four marks of affiliation, believed to severely disadvantage those teachers without at least one of these in their quest for a leadership appointment. These are: religious affiliation, political affiliation, regional education ministry and school level interference and social connections.

Key words: Jamaica, corruption, principal, primary, school, leadership

1. Background & Introduction

Gaining an appointment as a school Principal is not an easy feat. And nor should it be. From legal requirements to school factors, to professional experience, to personality 'fit'; to other factors, an appointment to the rank of Principal is not likely to be straightforward.   There are approximately 25,000 teachers in Jamaica's public education system, including approximately 1,000 Principals operating at the secondary and primary levels. Given the amount of teachers compared with the number of posts available for Principals, there is bound to be a gap between what is aspirational and what is realistic in terms of gaining an appointment as a school Principal.

In 2010 the government of Jamaica launched 'Vision 2030: National Development Plan Jamaica', an ambitious multifaceted programme of activities and initiatives aimed at bolstering Jamaica's ambitious goal of achieving "developed" country status by the year 2030. For its part, the Education Sector Plan articulates that an excellent cadre of teachers and principals is crucial to delivering quality education for the nation's children and young people and to securing many of the overall objectives of the National Plan (PIOJ, 2010).

To build this excellent cadre of teachers and principals the Jamaican government envisions that the country needs deep and far reaching transformation that extends well beyond items currently being enacted under the latest wave of educational reforms being undertaken through the Education System Transformation Programme (ESTP) launched in 2004. For example, teachers need adequate, up- to- date and better teaching resources. Teachers need smaller classes sizes. Teachers need better work facilities. Teachers need more and better opportunities for professional development. But teachers also need to feel confident in the integrity of the education system, as regards their career aspirations; and also to feel that opportunities for progression are genuine and are available to all, and not only to some.

In a recent edited volume, *School Leadership in the Caribbean*, Miller (2013a) reported that there are more female teachers in Jamaica at every level compared with males. That is, there are more female: teachers, senior teachers, vice principals and principals at the primary and secondary levels. Citing examples in Trinidad and Guyana as regards the perceived role a teacher's ethnicity can have in their progression, Miller also challenged Caribbean societies, including Jamaica, through the education system, to promote inclusive practices for all who study and work therein, built on democratic and social justices principles whilst simultaneously debating and overhauling existing pedagogic, employment and other practices that may be construed as discriminatory and anti-democratic. This paper presents select findings from a small scale qualitative exploratory study completed in May 2013 and published in a Report entitled, *"The Politics of Progression: Primary teachers' perceived barriers to gaining a Principalship in Jamaica"* (Miller, 2013b). Appointments based on four perceived

characteristics: religious affiliation, political affiliations, school and regional education ministry interference, and social connections are spotlighted. These characteristics highlight a typology of an in-group and an out-group (Tajfel, 1978) prompting consideration of a theory proposed in this paper that to be 'in' you have to be tainted by the brush of corruption and cronyism. The main research question was: What are the perceived barriers among primary school teachers in Jamaica, to being promoted to the post of Vice-Principal and/or being appointed to the rank of a Principal?

1.1 Profile of the Jamaican education system

Education in Jamaica is administered primarily by the Ministry of Education (MoE), through its head office and six regional offices. Formal education is provided mainly by the government, solely or in partnerships with churches and trusts. Formal education also is provided by private schools. As stipulated in the 1980 Education Act (Government of Jamaica, 1981), the education system consists of four levels:

- Early Childhood
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary

The education system caters to circa 800,000 students in public institutions at the early childhood, primary and secondary (MoE, 2012). As set out in the Education Sector Plan: Vision 2030 (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2010), Jamaica's education system is pursuing the following seven strategic objectives to:

1. devise and support initiatives that are directed towards literacy for all, and in this way, extend personal opportunities and contribute to national development;
2. secure teaching and learning opportunities that will optimise access, equity and relevance throughout the education system;
3. support student achievement and improve institutional performance in order to ensure that national targets are met;
4. maximize opportunities within the Ministry's purview that promote cultural development, awareness and self-esteem for individuals, communities and the nation as a whole;
5. devise and implement systems of accountability and performance management to improve performance and win public confidence and trust;
6. optimize the effectiveness and efficiency of staff in all aspects of the service to ensure continuous improvement in performance;
7. enhance student learning by increasing the use of information and communication technology in preparation for life in the national and global communities.

Funding for education is provided primarily by the Government of Jamaica through allocations from the National budget. In 2006, the Government began implementation of the recommendations of the National Education Task Force (Government of Jamaica, 2004) as well as introducing a number of programmes and projects towards improving quality, equity and access in the education system. These reforms are expected to improve Jamaica's human capital and produce the skills necessary for Jamaican citizens to compete in the global economy.

1.1.1 The process and criteria for appointing a Principal

The process and criteria for appointing a Principal in a public school in Jamaica is set out below. Regulation 43 (Schedule B) of the Education Act (1980) sets out the following process:

Paragraph 1:
   (a) The Board of Management of the public educational institution shall inform the Minister of the vacancy, which shall be advertised in the press,
   (b) Applicants shall complete the prescribed application form and shall forward such form with any necessary or other specified requirements to the Board,
   (c) The Board shall, subject to paragraph 2 (see below), and having regard to the criteria for the appointment of principals laid down by the Minister, submit to the Commission a list of all applicants together with details of their academic and professional qualification, teaching and other work experience and other particulars and stating the name of the applicant whom they consider to be

acceptable for appointment; so, however, that if they consider each of a number of applicants to be acceptable, they shall set out the names of the first two or three in order of preference;

(d) After receiving such advice from the Commission may, if it thinks necessary, consult with the chairman of the Board of Management or with the Board of Management and make a recommendation to the Minister,

(e) The Minister shall notify the Board of his decision

Paragraph 2:

When the Board of Management of any public educational institution owned or administered by a religious denomination proposes to make a submission under sub-paragraph C of paragraph 1, they shall consult with the head or the proper authority of that denomination in Jamaica and shall indicate the name or names in order of preferences as required by that sub-paragraph and as approved by such head or proper authority.

The criteria

The Education Act (1980) Regulation 43 (schedule B) provides:

Paragraph 3:

For appointment as a principal, a teacher is required to be a registered trained teacher with at least three years of approved service as a trained teacher unless the requirements are varied in any particular case.

2. Theory /Literature Review

The theoretical framework and literature review below draws upon appropriate material to conceptualises corruption whilst simultaneously reviewing the wider literature on the causes of corruption, the types of corruption and corruption and education.

2.1 Conceptualising Corruption

Many definitions of corruption have been advanced, although none fully satisfactory and comprehensive (Bannon, 1999). The World Bank (1997) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1999) have settled on a straightforward definition of corruption as the misuse or the abuse of public office for private gain. Corruption comes in different forms exhibited through an array of behaviours such as: bribery, extortion, fraud, nepotism, patronage, graft, speed money, pilferage, theft, embezzlement, falsification of records, kickbacks, influence peddling and campaign contributions (Klitgaard, 1998). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID, 2005) suggests corruption is a common feature in the public sector of several countries, although it can also be found among political parties, private businesses and non-governmental organisations.

The UNDP (2004) distinguishes between spontaneous and institutionalised (or systemic) corruption. Spontaneous corruption is commonly found in societies that profess strong ethics and morals in public service. Institutionalised corruption, however, is usually found in societies where corrupt behaviours are extensive or pervasive. In these societies, corruption can be considered an outlook for public office and the norm (Balboa & Medalla, 2006).

2.1.1 Corruption in Society

Corruption in the public sector involves three broad tiers. First is corruption within the broader political system which includes the demands of electoral politics such as the extensive use of patronage in political appointments. Second is corruption in the public sector, usually focused on (a) spotty performance of mechanisms for identifying and sanctioning employees engaged in corrupt and illicit behavior; (b) considerations of pay and employment; (c) and government procurement (Primer on Corruption, 2005). Third is corruption within specific agencies, which involves grand corruption (such as widespread syndicates and millions of dollars); and petty corruption (such as the use of smaller amounts of money, such as grease money) to facilitate the delivery of goods and services (Walter, 1990).

Certain types of corruption may not necessarily involve money but may involve gift-giving or influence-peddling. It can also come in the form of future benefits. With this type of corruption, the boundary between a corrupt and a non-corrupt behaviour becomes blurred. Corruption can have a far reaching negative effect on the national psyche which eventually goes back to undermine the entire system (Chapman, 2002). Institutionalised (or systemic) corruption breeds a culture of corruption and skews the people's perception of what is right and wrong. For a number of countries where it has been effectively institutionalised, where wealth and power have

become the measure of success, corruption has become socially acceptable, sometimes even aspired to where energies of a large number of people are channeled towards occupying certain positions in certain organisations to partake of the fruits of a corrupt system (Transparency International, 2000).

Common types of corruption include:

- Cronyism, connections, family members and relatives
- Political corruption through donations to political campaigns, etc
- Kickbacks on government contracts (and subcontracting consultancies), and
- Fraud of all kinds (Primer on Corruption, 2005)

Typical features of a system prone to corruption are:

- Concentration of powers in the executive and weak or non-existent checks and balances
- Poor transparency surrounding executive decision combined with restricted access to information
- Elaborate regulatory systems allowing for discretionary decision making
- Weak systems of oversight and enforcement
- Soft social control systems/high tolerance for corrupt activities (UNDP, 2004)

2.1.2 Causes of Corruption

Corruption appears to take place when it satisfies a certain formula. According to Klitgaard (1998), monopoly of power, when combined with discretion and absence of accountability, will result in corruption. Thus, the formula: C=M+D-A, where C is corruption, M is monopoly, D is discretion and A is accountability (Klitgaard, 1998, p3).

The UNDP modified Klitgaard's formula by adding two new dimensions: integrity and transparency. The resulting formula is: C=(M+D)-(A+I+T), where C is corruption, M is monopoly, D is discretion, A is accountability, I is integrity and T is transparency. This suggests that the absence of AIT (primarily as a consequence of a weak accountability framework) in addition to monopoly and discretion, leads to corruption (UNDP, 2004).

Hutchcroft (1997) regards corruption as the end result of the politics of privilege, rent seeking and clientelism. Describing this phenomenon in Jamaica, Smith (2010) labels the practice of politicians giving favors to members of the public as a form of patron-clientelism where corruption is nurtured by politicians who coddle supporters and followers, who in turn pressure them to engage in corruption to spread the benefits of a corrupt regime, resulting in a cycle that concentrates the benefits on a few. Smith's position was echoed in a recent speech by Jamaica's former Contractor General, Greg Christie (2012). Corruption can also be explained in terms of the principal-agent theory of Jensen & Meckling (1976). The agents (in this case, a person in a position of authority such as Members of Parliament and Chairs of School Boards) abuse the advantages offered by discretionary power due to the incoherent interest of the principal (in this case, teachers). In Jamaica, this incoherence is partly the result of social divisions (e.g. party political factions, religious and social class and economic divisions).

2.1.3 Corruption in Education

People involved in education systems – from the uppermost echelons right down to the school level – are confronted by corrupt practices at some stage (Poisson, 2010). This is not a new occurrence although until just over 15 years ago, there was only very little research on it. Different explanations for this are likely. First, corruption emerged only recently as an issue on the international stage with the adoption of the OECD's 1999 Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions and the adoption of the 2003 United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC). Second, those involved in the education sector have been reluctant to tackle the issue of corruption – perhaps due to fear that tackling it could harm the reputation of the sector and as a result, reduce donor and other resources allocated to it (Kaufman et al, 2006).

Within the last decade however, much research has been undertaken on corruption in education by the World Bank (Kaufman et al, 2006), the International Institute for Educational Planning (Hallak & Poisson, 2001),

Transparency International (2007), the Soros Foundation (2007), and many other agencies. Some of this research has examined large-scale corruption involving top-ranking decision-makers and large amounts of money – through the misappropriation of funds intended for major public works, such as the construction of schools. Some of this research has also dealt with petty corruption involving public officials at all levels of education systems, as well as small sums of money that are sometimes misappropriated as a matter of course, such as the imposition of illegal enrolment fees by schools (Poisson, 2010).

The focus on corruption in education is somewhat due to new challenges facing the education sector including:

- the rapid growth in resources allocated to education in particular under the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI),
- the redefinition of aid modalities with the adoption of sector-wide approaches (SWAP), the decentralisation of education system funding and management,
- the growth of gruelling competition among both students and schools,
- the boom in new technologies,
- the spread of new education delivery systems (especially distance education), and
- the development of cross-border instruction (Poisson, 2010, p10).

These challenges present important opportunities for the transformation and renewal of education systems through transparency and accountability. However, simultaneously they create risks for potential large-scale corruption and fraud (Transparency International, 2007).

3. Design and Methodology

This qualitative exploratory study was conducted over a period of nine months, between September 2012 and May 2013. Thirteen participants were included in the overall sample of 11 females and two males. Eleven teachers having appointments at various levels of the Jamaican education system were interviewed. This included nine females and two males. Teachers were drawn from across seven of Jamaica's 14 parishes based on their willingness to participate in the study. Five teachers were interviewed via telephone; three were interviewed face to face and three completed and returned the interview questionnaire by email. One Education Officer from Region 6 was interviewed via telephone and the Chief Executive Officer of the Jamaica Teaching Council (JTC) participated in an hour long face to face interview. All participants were interviewed using the semi-structured interview approach.

Four sampling approaches were used. Deterministic sampling was used to include the Chief Executive Officer of the Jamaica teaching Council. Snowballing sampling was used to include five teachers and the Education Officer. Convenience sampling was used to include three teachers who were easily accessible to the researcher. Purposive sampling was used to include the remaining three teacher participants.

4. Findings

The main research question was: What are the perceived barriers among primary school teachers in Jamaica, to being promoted to a Vice-Principal and/or being appointed a Principal? Religious affiliation, political affiliation, school and ministry level interference and social connections were the main reasons put forward by teachers for their non-promotion and non-appointment. These are discussed in turn below.

4.1 Religious Affiliation

Several teachers felt not being affiliated to a particular church a particular challenge to their appointment at the level of Vice-Principal and/or Principal.

It's simple really; I am not Catholic and it's a Catholic school (Teacher 11).
Religion was a big factor. It was a Catholic school and many questions were asked about my role and involvement in the local church community (Teacher 1).
I think religious groups prefer school leaders to be of their faith (Teacher 7).

Religious affiliation however was not a clear cut issue and it was sometimes linked to other perceived factors.

I think the main reasons for my non-appointment are my age and my denomination. I am not a member of any faith group and Church schools will not want to appoint a school Principal who is not a member of their faith (Teacher 6).

> In the same way you have to be a member of a certain political party you also have to be a member of a certain church. That gives you a head start. I have been to an interview and I knew I was never going to be appointed. . The person who was appointed, her husband was the Chairman of the school Board. He resigned just before the interview was held, but I believe the outcome was fixed before the chairman's resignation. The chairman was Rector of the local church and the chairman of the board for many years and as such, he had much influence His wife got the job. The two principals before her were also members of that same church group (Teacher 8).

Although pointing to changing times and shifts in practice and attitudes, the teachers' views were well supported by the Chief Executive Officer of the Jamaica Teaching Council:

> Church schools prefer to have principals who share their values. If teachers can't adhere to these values then they should find work elsewhere- why not? If it's a Faith School the Church usually will have to endorse the person. They will want to know that the person's values are in sync with the particular religious community. Times are changing however and if someone not belonging to the said faith group is deemed to be highly skilled and has good references, the faith groups may take such a person. However, if another person from the faith group applies and is equally skilled then the person from the church group will usually get the edge from the School Board (CEO, Jamaica Teaching Council).

The Education Officer however suggested religious affiliation has very little bearing on recent appointments:

> There are no longer any appointments based on religious affiliation. . However, all Catholic Schools have a representative at each interview. Whilst not asking any key question, they may ask a question such as "do you have a problem with Catholic faith" because they want their doctrine to remain intact (Education Officer).

Continuing:

> The Catholics choose quality all the time, even if the quality is not Catholic. They are keen to maintain a certain standard and they will not choose anyone who is not likely to maintain that standard (Education Officer).

4.2 Political Affiliation

One's actual or perceived national political affiliation was thought to be a critical factor in the appointment of a school Principal. Where candidates for posts were not directly linked to a political party, the influence of a political representative was considered no less poignant.

> The School Board does the selection of candidate. The Board Chairperson is usually a nominee of the sitting Member of Parliament (MP). That person [the Board Chair] can however be a recommendation from the principal but the MP would still have the last word. Political parties usually select political apologists. The Education Act does not specify that the MP must select the Chair of the Board but, over time, this has become the accepted practice..... (Education Officer).

Perceived political interference cuts deep and can lead to mistrust and disillusionment among teachers.

> I have some friends who are kind of connected to politics. They keep telling me you can't keep saying you are qualified. That alone won't get you appointed as Principal. You have to join a [political] party. I tell them no because I believe in the integrity of system because I am qualified. But this has not worked for me. The Board Chair has the most important vote and he/she can find reasons not to give you the job. The outcome is usually set before the actual interview. Majority of points you earn, you do so before you get to the interview stage. If they want to weed you out they can weed you out and then put you against people who will outshine you. The entire process is a farce.   You have to show your loyalty to a political party. You have to know the MP personally and you have to know his number (Teacher 8).

Continuing,

> You know...even without doing interviews, some people are given jobs. For five years I haven't submitted any new applications because I know I am not going to get appointed. The two main political parties are equally guilty of cronyism. The MPs are the ones who decide who sits on a school Board and this is not right. Only 2 persons- the Parent Teacher's Association (PTA) representative and the Teacher Representative are usually not chosen by politicians, although in many cases the Teacher Representative is a member of the ruling party (Teacher 8).

Someone was appointed just over two years ago and it was widely rumoured that the "Minster sent the person" (Teacher 3).

The appointment of some individuals to the rank of a Principal, believed to be politically motivated, not only fuels mistrust and apathy towards the 'system' but also points to a probable lack of technical skills and experience needed to effectively lead a school.

[P]olitics is taking over everything. The sad thing is, sometimes the persons that are appointed as Principals do not know much about education. They are the ones breaking the system down and destroying our schools (Teacher 7).

The Chief Executive Officer of the Jamaica Teaching Council, whilst not denying that there can be political influence at some levels of the appointment process, considers this to be a long shot, and not something that happens across the board.

It is a long stretch for party politics to influence the outcomes of the appointment process. Politicians would have to influence every member of the School Board. However, the Board Chair is usually appointed by the sitting MP, who is usually a recommendee of the Principal (CEO, Jamaica Teaching Council).

Continuing,

The process for appointing a principal is rigorous so very little opportunity exists for cronyism to creep in. Subjective recruitment practice is more and more giving way to merit. Subjective recruitment is not the barrier it appears to be. People go through a process of short listing, interviews, selection, etc. It's not a walk over. There is a set process that is overseen by an Education Officer (CEO, Jamaica Teaching Council).

Continuing further still, she notes:

[B]ut only 1000 principals can be appointed out of 25,000 teachers at any one time and so persons who do not get the job "perceive" other factors to be at play (CEO, Jamaica Teaching Council)

The Education Officer was more direct in her characterisation of the influence politicians can have on the appointment process of a school Principal.

Politics does have a hand in the appointment process. But this is not as prevalent as it used to be. The Teacher Representative on the School Board in some cases may be a nominee of the MP and this can influence the outcome of a job interview. It does happen and this is the truth, although this is not as often these days (Education Officer).

4.3 School and Ministry Level Interference

National party political affiliation was not the only political influence believed to have a hand in deciding who gets the job as Principal. Some teachers felt strong that they were passed over for appointment due to some degree of interference that goes on at the school level at and regional offices of the Education Ministry.

I know I didn't get the job because the Education Officer (EO) and I have a challenging relationship. I have been at this school for 29 years and have been Vice-Principal now for 15 years. I speak my mind and don't hold back and so I am not liked by many persons at the Regional Office. This, I believe, is responsible for me not getting the post of Principal (Teacher 3).

Politics at the Regional Office is definitely something that influences the outcome of the appointment process for a Principal. I know people who have been appointed because they have friends and family on the inside (Teacher 4).

Turning to school level politics:

A friend of mine got the job because she was a friend of the outgoing Principal. She was ''groomed' before. And this happens a lot with posts below the Principal- if you are friendly with the Principal you stand a chance (Teacher 4).

I didn't get the job because, as far as I am concerned, the outcome was already decided before interview. The people who interviewed me and I were at logger heads and that, in my view, affected the outcome. That's not transparent (Teacher 3).

4.4 Social Connections

Social connection is seen as particularly problematic and was linked to social affluence outside the work environment. Social connections could include a church group, a political party or any other group or

individual in a position to influence the outcome of the appointment process whether directly or indirectly. The main thrust here is: it's not about what a person knows, rather, but who knew them and vice versa.

> It's not about what you know it's about who know you, especially if you have connection at the Ministry of Education or with an MP (Teacher 10).

> Only 1 in 500 principal gets the job fairly and squarely; usually only if someone dies or falls ill. You are usually a distant third and interviews are used to legitimise an already 'rigged' process. It's rare that a person gets appointed without some inside connection (Teacher 8).

> It's not the best person most that gets the job- it's who you know, sometimes who you are close to. With connections you don't even have to go to interviews. That happened to me for the job I am currently in (Teacher 7).

> The person who got the job didn't have my years of experience. In addition, I was grade co-ordinator and she wasn't. But she was '*well connected*' so I think it's about connections (Teacher 2).

Citing an endemic problem at her school, one teacher opined:

> Succession at my school is about connections. It's a close knit school and you have to know people in influential positions (Teacher 1).

Whilst not dismissing the view expressed by the teachers, the Chief Executive Officer of the Jamaica Teaching Council reasons:

> Connections are implicitly there. And you know they are there. Candidates come highly recommended, sometimes by persons connected to persons on the Board. However, if the person doesn't fit the bill, they will not be appointed. Connections alone in most cases can no longer guarantee a job (CEO, Jamaica Teaching Council).

The Education Officer also reasons:

> When we know schools are faltering due to cronyism we have to try hard to find suitably qualified leaders. When the school has an excellent leader, it usually succeeds, even if it is in the heart of the inner city where gunshots disturb lessons. But when the leader is weak, there will be challenges all round. So, we are trying to move away from cronyism and guide School Boards to better decision making so equity is maintained. Education Officers have been sitting in at interviews for Principals since about 2007, although we don't participate directly in the interview and appointment process. Through our presence, the Ministry of Education tries to bring transparency, objectivity and integrity to the process. We are still not there as yet and there is still much to be improved but we have come a far way from what the system used to be. We have been trying to clean up the system (Education Officer).

5. Discussion

The findings presented in this paper present a number of issues which have a direct causal impact on educational leadership development, school effectiveness and educational policy. This paper considers, in turn below, issues around: institutionalised corruption, patron clientelism and discretion versus merit in the appointments process of school Principals in Jamaica and ends with a proposed theory of corruption as redemption.

5.1 Institutionalised Corruption

The situation presented by this study is consistent with Chapman's (2002) construction of institutionalised (systemic) corruption. The issues involved are not of a monetary nature and nor do they involve gift giving to the person in the position of power. However, what is strongly believed is the peddling of influence by Members of Parliament and Chairs of School Board. In both cases, the MP and the Chair of the School Board can directly influence the appointment of a Principal. First, the person appointed to chair a School Board is usually the nominee of the MP; and second, the Chair of the School Board has the casting vote in the appointment of a Principal.

It should also be noted that where a vacancy exists for a chair of a School Board, the MP may receive a recommendation from the Principal for possible appointment to that vacancy, perpetuating his or her 'hold' on the process and outcome of an appointment process through the two most important roles and functions in the school's leadership hierarchy (the Principal and Board Chair). Influence peddling however extends and exists beyond an MP. For example, participants felt that micro-politics at the school level and meso-politics at regional

offices of the Ministry of Education influenced the appointment process and outcomes, and that if you '*curry favour*' to the school's administration and local education ministry officials, you are more likely to be 'groomed' for a leadership post and to be appointed as Principal. This grooming in and of itself is problematic and should not be confused with a planned approach to Succession Planning. Instead, this grooming connotes a looseness that has no set criteria for who gets groomed, with those *closest* to the power base (in school and/or at the local education ministry) more likely to be groomed. For any education system, if corruption becomes routinised and is deemed socially acceptable, then the line between what counts as corruption and what's not becomes indistinct, with several individuals possibly resulting channeling their energies into partaking of the fruits of such a corrupt system (Transparency International, 2000; Balboa & Medalla, 2006).

5.1.1 Patron-clientelism

Further research is needed to establish (if this is feasible) the extent to which the appointment of, for example, exiting Principals, is connected to a political party or is in relation to their political party affiliation. Smith (2010) and Hutchcroft's (1997) view of patron-clientelism is corruption is nurtured by politicians who coddle supporters and followers, who in turn pressure them to engage in corruption to spread the benefits of a corrupt regime, resulting in a cycle that concentrates the benefits on a few. There is no evidence from this study that clients (in this case Principals who are political party supporters and/or sympathisers) pressured politicians to be rewarded with an appointment vis-à-vis, *political spoils*.

There is a strong perception among teachers, supported by officials from the local and central education ministry that the hand (and influence) of politicians in the process and outcome of a Principal appointment is becoming more and more invisible, although at this stage, things are not where officials hope they should be. To be clear, being associated with persons in positions of power is not inherently bad. But when this association is used to advantage ones' self, such associations flouts meritocracy (Miller, 2013b). In 21st century Jamaica, these issues should not be ignored. Political, religious and all forms of cronyism undermines *true* meritocracy that values hard work, skills, experience and qualifications,   not a *bastardised* view of meritocracy hinged on predetermined outcomes and favouritism.

5.1.2 Discretion versus Merit

Corruption occurs where there is monopoly of power, the use of discretion in decision-making and where the accountability framework is weak or non-existent (Klitgaard, 1998). The practice of a Member of Parliament nominating the Chair of a School Board is a discretionary one that has evolved over time and is not to be found in the education regulations (Miller, 2013b). Nevertheless, this practice has dominated the educational leadership landscape in Jamaica for decades, sometimes to the chagrin of a school where its Chair of School Board may have as his or her most significant claim to fame their political affiliation, when what is needed from them are strategic leadership, networking opportunities, vision and robust [educational] decision-making.

The discretionary power afforded to the MP to choose a Chair of School Board is indicative of a tribalised Jamaican society. Jensen & Meckling's (1976) view of the agent-principal theory would treat with consternation the MP's (or agent) abuse of positional authority, by preferring party faithful for certain roles. Similarly, Chairs of School Boards who interfere with the appointment process and outcome to secure opportunities for party faithful and/ or religious sympathisers, abuse their power whilst simultaneously taking advantage of social divisions in society manifested along the lines of party political factions, religious and social class and economic variables.

Discretion in a recruitment and appointment process undermines transparency (UNDP, 2004) and meritocracy. A person's non-alignment to a political and/or religion should not disadvantage them in any sphere of their life. Similarly, alignment to a political party should not advantage an individual in any sphere of their life. And where this practice exists it can only be regarded as discriminatory and anti-democratic. Interference in a promotion or appointment process, unless in cases involving maters of child protection and/or fraud, at whatever level, be it school, regional education ministry or central threatens both natural and social justice.

5.2 Corruption as Redemption?

Member of Parliament and Jamaica's current Finance Minister, Dr Peter Phillips, has been quoted ad nauseam as saying, "[I]n Jamaica, the man who plays by the rules is the man who gets shafted (sic)". Underpinned by Phillips' views, the foregoing narrative forces many questions about fairness, justice, trust and meritocracy in the

educational leadership landscape in Jamaica. Whilst this paper cannot sanction any form or discrimination, nepotism, cronyism and/or favouritism, the findings challenge us to consider a new reality. That is, in Jamaica, if an individual is serious about progressing to a school leadership position, he/she must possess at least one of the following four characteristics:

- is a member of a political party,
- belongs to an established (Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, United) church community,
- engages in micro and/or meso level politicking, or
- is socially affluent, being able to leverage the influence out of individuals above their usual social group or groups.

These characteristics typify Tajfel's (1978) notion of an in-group and an out-group in his theory of relative deprivation. Nevertheless, not all teachers possessing the characteristics above are guaranteed being advantaged or rewarded with an appointment as Principal. As was reminded by the Chief Executive Officer of the Jamaica Teaching Council reasoned, there are only approximately 1000 posts available for principals in the public system of compulsory education. This therefore presents a dilemma for the agent (school board chair and/or MP) requiring a new, slightly more crude and biased criteria to determine who gets 'rewarded'. Resolving this dilemma however is not beyond current policy and practice. For example, In the case of a denominational school, Schedule B, Regulation 43 of the Education Act (1980), empowers the head of the denomination operating a church school to make the final decision concerning who gets appointed as Principal. And in the case of non-denominational schools, one teacher puts it bluntly: "You have to know the MP personally; and you have to know his number (sic)".

This teacher's revelation is simultaneously problematic and cathartic, pointing to something most important. That is, affiliation is a mark for upward mobility in Jamaica. Narrowly applied, being affiliated to a political party is important, but more can be achieved when the person affiliated to the political party has a direct link with the person at the top. More widely applied, religious affiliation in terms of the established churches is important in being appointed as Principal since the deciding vote does not rest on the teacher's capacity to effectively perform the job as Principal, but rather if they subscribe to the values, beliefs and practices of the faith group that operates the school. Similarly, being socially affluent (being affiliated to persons outside the work environment who can wield some degree of influence on the application process and/or interview outcome) and being affiliated to individuals at the micro (school) and/or meso (regional education offices) levels in themselves do not guarantee jobs, but are definitively clear advantages.

6. Conclusions

Corruption of any kind weakens the democratic framework of any institution whether it is a publicly run school or a denominational run school and whether the corrupt practices are spontaneous or institutionalised (UNDP, 2004). At a time when Jamaica is committing resources to achieving the goal of *developed country status* by calendar year 2030, perceived corrupt practices that have become endemic in the nation's recruitment culture threaten to thwart the achievement of such goals. The best talents, skills and talents are needed to push and scaffold the country's thrust for international development. With corruption so prevalent in Jamaican society (Christie, 2012) and with perceptions of corruption so well developed within and about the national education system (Miller, 2013b), an urgent reconceptualisation of social justice, equity and fair play are all needed in order to rebuild confidence in an educational system that has found itself smeared by perceptions of corruption, favouritism, discrimination and cronyism.

 The country as a whole can no longer afford to turn a blind eye to the perceptions and practices that bedevil its education system. Nor can political leaders and leaders of the nation's education system, from the policy to the operation levels, walk with their heads aloft as if the perceptions of participants in this study are unfounded. For corrective measure to be implemented it cannot be business as usual.

The teaching profession needs to harness the best and brightest minds, possessing the finest skills and talents available to it to lead schools and become Principals. But this can only be done where one's quality mark is not defined by one's affiliations in the form of: religious affiliation, political affiliation, school and ministry level interference and social connections, but rather by merit.

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