`SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' AND STAKEHOLDERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD, AND PERSPECTIVES ON, SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the attitudes and perspectives of school administrators and other stakeholders on the school improvement planning process. A convenience sampling technique was employed with a sample of 15 schools and 91 respondents. The findings of the study indicated four principal factors, involvement, accountability, plan implementation and efficacy, defined the perspectives of the respondents. These factors were also responsible for 68.83% of the variation in the data. The factor 'involvement' accounted for 47.82% of the variation and suggests that the most critical issue affecting how the school improvement planning process is seen is the degree of stakeholder involvement.

INTRODUCTION

Huber and Conway (2015) indicated that under the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) Act of 2001, schools which had been assessed as not making adequate progress, particularly in relation to student achievement, were required to submit a school improvement plan (SIP) to the relevant State body. Huber and Conway cited White (2009) who also explained that SIPs were designed to close achievement gaps and raise levels of student achievement.

Huber and Conway (2015) called people's attention to the fact that school improvement efforts have been documented since the 1970s, but they lamented that despite over four decades of discussion and documentation there is still no clear agreement on exactly how to carry out the improvement efforts. They found the absence of a clear blue print for school improvement puzzling based on their review of the literature which shows that there are a number of key areas in which school improvement efforts must focus. These key areas include: frequent monitoring of student data, identification of persons responsible for implementation of each strategy, leadership strategies, and an evaluation of a school's readiness to change, among others (Beach & Lindahl, 2004).

The seeming puzzlement of how to act on school improvement is not only confined to the United States of America. Many countries around the world, including the United Kingdom, and those in the Caribbean, have been struggling with this issue. In the United Kingdom, the issue of school improvement planning is a termly priority and the importance of the contribution of all stakeholders is emphasized (Arnold, 2017). Jamaica and other Caribbean countries have been grappling with poor school performance for decades (Parry, 2004; Thwaites, 2015). This study examines the situation in Jamaica.

Following the re-organization of the Ministry of Education in the early 2000's, the National Education Inspectorate (NEI) was established and since 2010 it has conducted inspection of schools.

Every inspection has resulted in about 55% of schools found to be performing unsatisfactorily. The inspection of the 953 public secondary and primary schools was completed in 2015 and the findings produced by the NEI showed that 55% of schools were performing unsatisfactorily when measured against the eight (8) indicators used by the NEI.

The NEI has reported that one of the recurring features in its inspections is the absence of, or poorly written, School Improvement Plans. Given the unsatisfactory performance of most schools, on the one hand, and the reported weaknesses on the planning processes and products of many schools, this research seeks to ascertain the attitudes of school administrators in selected Jamaican schools, toward the school improvement planning process.

While the data on the attitudes of school administrators, used in this study, are from Jamaica, the findings resonate with some of the concerns of that have been documented from other jurisdictions including the United States. One of the key issues in the attitudes of school administrators in Jamaica to school improvement is accountability. This issue also appears to be central to that of both policy makers and administrators in the United States of America according to Phelps and Addonizio (2006), who contended that a central element in school improvement was accountability. They argued that the ultimate measure of a school's performance is its contribution to student learning. They further suggested that in assessing a school's performance one must account for the relative contributions of families, communities, peers, and the school's resources.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The value of planning as a path to improved educational outcomes remains undisputed yet there is no definitive evidence that school leaders across the Caribbean are generally committed to the task of rigorous school improvement planning. Baldacchino and Farrugia (2002) and Forde (2006) have both lamented on the state of educational planning in the Caribbean and suggested that unsatisfactory performance of the education sector is because of the absence of a culture of planning. An even greater concern is that many school leaders have had no formal training in planning and their attitudes to this important task remains somewhat a mystery.

There are emerging signs that schools and governments across the Caribbean Region are becoming more aware of the fact that educational planning is vital to transforming the quality of educational outcomes. However, there is yet no scientific evidence to confirm the degree to which planning recognition is translated to efforts of support. The provision of support for the planning process both politically and financially is vital to the realization of the planning outcomes. Additionally, no support is offered at the macro level. There are also no available data on the degree of moral and organizational support for institutional educational planning. This paper seeks to explore the attitudes of school administrators and teachers regarding the significant values of school improvement planning.

OBJECTIVES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to ascertain the degree to which school administrators and other staff members show their concerns for educational planning. It also is designed to examine the extent to which school administrators and staff members are committed to, and capable of undertaking the task. The study therefore seeks to sketch a profile of the mindset of school leaders toward

educational planning, and thus will provide a framework within which the "educational planning establishment" can generate the appropriate strategies for supporting educational planning at the micro level.

This study is significant for at least three reasons. First, it provides a description of the perspectives and attitudes of school administrators and other stakeholders on the practice of school improvement planning. Second, it has implications for national educational policies in Jamaica as its findings inform the parameters, protocols, and requirements that the Ministry of Education may consider establishing for the school improvement planning process. Finally, the study provides a framework for undertaking similar studies in other countries of the Caribbean.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research seeks to answer four questions, as follows:

(1) How extensively are staff members in school and other stakeholders involved in the planning process?

(2) What are the factors associated with effective school improvement planning?

(3) How are the associated factors related to each other?

(4) Is there a relationship between perspectives of staff regarding the planning process and institution type (publicly or privately owned)?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining School Improvement Planning

School improvement planning is a strategic planning process by which members of the school community conduct a thorough evaluation of their school's educational programme and performance in the previous school years and develop a written plan that establishes the starting point for ongoing evaluation of efforts to achieve improvements in student outcomes in succeeding years. In essence, a school improvement plan is a road map that sets out the changes a school needs to make to improve the level of student achievement.

Beach and Lindahl (2004) lamented the fact that with the removal of the planning from the training of principals and the repeated failures of planning initiatives, the importance of planning as a focal process in schools was lost traction. Many plans which required extensive effort to be developed are often left to gather dust; thus stakeholders are often led to doubt the value of the exercise. But the importance of planning as a part of the principal's work cannot be overemphasized as Beach and Lindahl (2000) have argued.

Judah and Paul (2014) argued that the process of (strategic) planning offers educational institutions the opportunity to identify how they would commit resources over the long term to support the accomplishment of the mission of the school. They built on this foundational observation by arguing that the focus of educational planning at the institutional level is the enrichment of learner experience and improvement in learner outcomes. Judah and Paul suggested that more broadly the institutional strategic planning process may be characterized as a change process which

is intended to transform the organization, build consensus and a common vision. This undertaking they contended must involve all stakeholders.

The Epistemology of School Improvement Planning

School improvement planning emerged as a phenomenon of the "effective school movement" of the 1980's has reflected a realization that school contexts and realities differ. System-wide planning predicated on a "one size fits all" philosophy was not only inadequate but irresponsible. A fundamental element of this shift, from what may be called mass planning to contextual and individualized planning, was collaboration among stakeholders. Barber (1984) contributed to the shift arguing that human beings are products of social interactions and as such how they interpret reality was a function of such interaction. Thus, the realities that informed their worldview had to be taken into account in any planning process. The importance of context as a shaper of collaboration is also argued by Brand and Gaffikin (2007) who contended that planning took place in a political context. According to Innes and Booher (2003), a social and political context produces a reality characterized by fragmentation, uncertainty and complexity. This reality drives the need for collaboration. This concept of collaboration is predicated on, among other things, the recognition that the school is like an organism, as Brand and Gaffikin (2007), Innes and Booher (1999) and Jacobs (1961) posited.

Using Berger and Luckman's (1967) frame of reference which posits that reality is socially constructed, Healey (1997) contended that effective planning required that planners stepped back from the seemingly obvious and the things that were taken for granted. They need to uncover the hidden and potent variables that can impact outcomes. Achieving this requires multiple players and multiple perspectives.

Litman (2013) identified seven principles of effective planning among which are inclusivity and transparency which supported a methodology that is comprehensive and takes account of a broad scope of relevant information. What this means is that school improvement planning must be structured in such a way as to tap into all sources of information and support while drawing on the input of everyone in making decisions about the future direction of the school. The Caribbean Centre for Educational Planning (CCEP), which, among other functions, assists educational institutions in developing strategic plans and takes a broad-stakeholder consultative approach to planning. This process involves students, ancillary and administrative staff, service providers such as vendors, taxi and bus drivers, and parents. In addition, members of the Board of Management of the school and members of the Parent Teachers' Association, and of course members of the academic staff play key roles in the approach to school improvement planning used by the CCEP. This breadth of stakeholder involvement and information gathering increases the probability that the plan will be embraced by all, according the Judah and Paul (2014).

The importance of broad stakeholder involvement in the planning process is also emphasized in a 2014 study on school improvement planning undertaken by Hanover. The Hanover research posits that comprehensive stakeholder involvement is the first fundamental of effective school improvement planning and that it is only through comprehensive stakeholder involvement that a school can undertake a responsive and context-sensitive prioritization of needs. Responsive and context-sensitive prioritization of needs is the second fundamental of effective school improvement planning.

The Ontology and Focus of School Improvement Planning

The whole purpose of school improvement planning is producing better student outcomes and thus closing the gap between high and low achieving schools and students. Carnoy and Rothstein (2013) lamented what they described as over-simplification in the analysis of test scores and called for a more thorough-going analysis of factors that perpetuate students' under-achievement. They noted that social class and social inequity were among the strongest contributors to student underachievement and suggested, therefore, that the purpose and focus of educational planning must be to overcome social inequities.

While not disputing the role and impact of social inequities, Darling-Hamond, Wei, and Andree (2010), citing a body of literature, suggested that effective school improvement planning required the recruitment of the right people to become teachers, developing them into effective instructors, and ensuring that the system was able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child. These three elements involve paying attention to current state of play in many countries, including Jamaica, where the social inequities that result from, and in, the poor funding of some schools impact the quality of people who enter the teaching profession, for example. The upshot of this is that many who enter the teaching profession do so as because they have limited options. The further consequence of this is that development to recruit effective instructors is stymied due to inadequately resourced colleges and students with limited talents, in many cases. The ultimate downstream effect is that students in school are not exposed to the best possible instruction.

Does Planning Make a Difference?

Lockheed, Harris, and Jayasundera (2010) conducted a study on school improvement planning in Jamaica by examining a programme of support provided to poor-performing schools on the basis of needs identified in their school improvement plans. The programme was implemented in 72 government schools in Jamaica between 1998 and 2005. Using propensity score matching to create a control group of schools that were similar to program schools in the baseline year, they found, among other things, that program schools had received more inputs to improve literacy and numeracy than control schools, and that some inputs associated with the program were correlated with improvement school average achievement. However, the final results showed that schools with school improvement plans did not outperform comparable schools that did not have these plans. These findings superficially would tend to suggest that having a plan does not make a difference in the performance of the school.

Arnold (2017) describes what she regards as effective school improvement planning which brings results. Arnold, a school improvement adviser in the United Kingdom, has developed a framework for school improvement planning. This framework links the school self-evaluation process with the improvement targeting process as a first step and elaborates on the key steps and elements of an effective plan.

The 2015 National Education Inspectorate (Jamaica) report found that 55% of the 953 schools in Jamaica were performing unsatisfactorily. Of that number, the majority apparently had School Improvement Plans, as data provided by the Planning Division of the Ministry of Education in 2016 showed that only 152 schools or approximately 16% of all schools had not submitted School Improvement Plans to the Ministry. These facts would tend to corroborate the findings of Lockheed, Harris, and Jayasundera (2010). This corroboration raises a number of questions that

need to be answered, including whether the plans have been properly designed; the methodology used to develop these plans; the level of inclusivity of the process; and the attitudes of school administrators and staff to the process of implementation. Therefore, this research seeks to provide answers to some of these questions.

In addition to the data from the Ministry which suggest that 84% of schools had submitted School Improvement Plans, a google search on "School Improvement Planning in Jamaica" shows that there were several planning templates that the Ministry of Education had made available to schools and frequent reminders about the responsibility of school principals for implementation of plans. These findings suggest that while extensive focus is being given at the policy level to the need for planning and there is a high level of compliance by schools in the submission of plans, school performance remains at unacceptably low levels.

While Jamaica's experience appears to suggest that the practice of school improvement planning has not had system-wide impact, there are of course cases of spectacular turn around in the fortunes of some schools. Thompson, Burke, King and Wong (2017) found that two schools which had been found to be in need of support, when they were first inspected by the NEI in 2010 and 2012, and which had subsequently developed SIPs, experienced spectacular improvements in students' performance. Thompson et al. found, however, that it was the quality of leadership in these schools, particularly the principals' vision, tenacity and risk-taking which accounted for the turnaround.

Caputo and Rastelli (2014) found evidence which supports the findings of Thompson et al. (2017) that the quality of leadership a school receives makes a difference to the prospects of a SIP having an impact on the school's performance. In their examination of an in-service training program which targeted lower secondary school teachers in schools which had developed school SIPs, Caputo and Rastelli found, among other things, that (a) differences in planning strategies affected results, (b) school improvements were associated with the ability to carry out a careful analysis of context, and (c) the ability to prioritize elements in the diagnostic phase of the process were critical to the success of plans. These sentiments are echoed by Montanari (2018) who suggests that School Improvement Planning is not merely a plan but a framework for change, for which the plan, itself, is simply a map that identifies the school's intended destination. Montanari cites comments attributed to Sam Redding, Associate Director of the Center on School Turnaround at WestEd who contends that high-functioning schools continuously do the right things and always look for ways to improve. Schools that fail with comprehensive school reform do so not for lack of resources, other than time, but for solicitation of determination and internal discipline.

The question of how diligently schools undertake improvement planning has been examined by Mekango (2013) who conducted a study in the Metekel Zone. The study was designed to assess the practices and challenges of school improvement program implementation in secondary schools as well as to identify the major achievements and major problems associated with the implementation of school improvement program. Mekango found mixed results, namely that in most cases inadequate attention is given to planning and only in a few areas is high attention given. The study further found that creating awareness among stakeholders on the importance of planning as well as building capacity to develop and implement plans were critical interventions that needed to be made in order to achieve positive results from the implementation of school improvement plans.

Beach and Lindahl (2004), referred to the low levels of confidence that some stakeholders have in the planning process and suggested that this is due in large part to the non-implementation of plans and thus the absence of any real progress arising from the planning process. Thompson (2017) made a similar point based on his findings which showed that the degree to which faculty stakeholders placed value on the strategic planning process was dependent on how much they saw happen from the previous cycle's planning exercise.

Beach and Lindahl (2004) suggested that unless the planning framework of a school embraces the three phases of planning, implementation, and institutionalization the improvement thrust will not be realized. Beach and Lindahl reminded of the need to distinguish between change and improvement, arguing that in any given school that change is always occurring, whether it is a new teacher, a new cohort of students, or a new curriculum. But in order to promote improvement the leadership has to be systematic, organized and deliberate. This deliberate and deliberative process begins with the engagement of all stakeholders as Allison and Kaye (2005), Judah and Paul (2014), and others, posited. Thus, the critical question is not whether school principals have the skills and forbearance to engage in the planning exercise but whether there is the stakeholder support at all levels to make the planning process efficacious as Gosling and Mintzberg (2004) contended. It is for this reason that Cuban (2003) lamented the fact that despite several measures and policies, comprehensive school improvement remains elusive.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Four major works form the theoretical framework of this study. Thompson (2015) advanced the notion of Proposition CJC. Proposition CJC refers to what Thompson found to be the top three factors that explain the variation in the data in a study on teachers' expectations of the leadership behaviours of principals. CJC refer to capacity, justice, and care, and specifically the expectation of teachers that their principals would take account of their capacities to contribute meaningfully to the efforts of the school as it seeks to implement the plans and programmes designed to produce improvements in student performance and other quality of outputs of the school. The J in Proposition CJC refers to justice and points to the notion that exclusion of teachers from participation in both decision-making concerning the school plans and programmes is an act of injustice. The second C refers to care suggesting that caring leadership involves a commitment to inclusive decision-making and this act of caring / inclusion is most vividly expressed in listening. Thus, Proposition CJC's contribution to this theoretical framework is to be understood as demarcating that a certain approach to leadership is necessary in order for a school to successfully implement any course of school-wide action. This is particularly true for a critical undertaking such as a School Improvement Plan, which requires inclusivity as Lockheed, Harris, and Jayasundera (2010) posited.

The second theoretical framework of this study is found in the work of Hutton and Johnson (2017) who found that the personal philosophy of the school principal informed by a passion for excellence and a belief in the capacity of others, is critical to the success of the school. The work of Hutton and Johnson consisted of stories told by nineteen principals about their experiences in transforming their schools. The stories showed that among the key elements of the transforming experiences were attitudes and approaches such as the belief that students can excel, the reliance on data to drive decisions, a collective / inclusive approach to decision-making and holding staff strictly accountable for results.

Thompson (2017) found that the issue of accountability with respect to the successful implementation of the strategic plan was an overwhelmingly important element of success. Thompson came to this conclusion based on a study conducted among faculty members across four tertiary educational institutions. The study found that two factors accounted for 67% of the variation in the data. These two factors were '*use of insights from previous planning activities*' and '*holding faculty members accountable for deliverables*'. These factors contributed 45.8% and 21.3% respectively of the variation of school success. Thompson concluded that the findings of the study suggest that the extent to which leaders of educational institutions can persuade staff to participate in strategic planning activities is, in a large part, dependent on the degree to which they perceive that staff members can and will be held accountable for deliverables. Thompson's findings in relation to the importance of accountability, which is corroborated by the work of Hutton and Johnson (2017), form the third theoretical framework of this study.

The fourth element of the theoretical framework of this study is found in the works of Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004); Spillane and Camburn (2006); and Harris and Spillane (2008). Collectively these works speak to the notion that leadership exists at all levels of organization, a view that Thompson (2013) also articulates. That there are multiple leaders distributed across the school means that effective leadership requires that responsibilities will be distributed among these leaders. But effective leadership does not merely involve distributing tasks and duties, it also means that these leaders must all be brought into the decision-making process and in doing so the organization must take account of their varied interests and capacities of the leaders as well as the various ways in which to engage them, as Proposition CJC (Thompson, 2015), advances.

Thus, the theoretical framework of this study may be captured in CAID (Capacity, Accountability, Inclusivity, and Distributive Leadership) and expressed diagrammatically as shown in *Figure 1.*

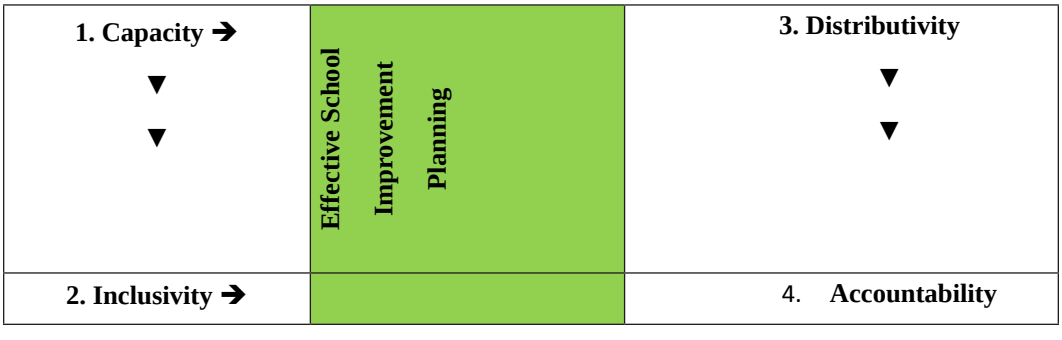

Figure 1. The acronym CAID for **C**apacity, **A**ccountability, **I**nclusivity, and **D**istributive leadership.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research employs a quantitative exploratory design. While there have been a few studies on the use of School Improvement Plans in the education system in Jamaica, not much is known scientifically about the attitudes of school administrators towards this practice. Thus, this study is in effect venturing into a relatively new area of knowledge. According to Cuthill (2002) an exploratory design is used to conduct research about a problem when there are few or no earlier studies to refer, or rely upon, to predict an outcome. This study therefore is seeking to capture a sense of the mood and mindset of stakeholders with respect to this phenomenon. The insights from this study will be used to inform further interventions designed to investigate probable causes, in which contexts other research designs would be appropriate.

Sample

A convenience sampling technique was used to produce the sample for this study. Given that over 80% of schools in Jamaica have been involved in designing and implementing SIPs just about any school chosen would have had the level of exposure that would lead to school administrators and other members of staff developing a positive or negative outlook towards SIPs.

The convenience sampling technique was used based on factors related to cost and ease of access. The researcher did not have funds available to mount an operation across the entire country but had ease of access to a number of schools with close proximity to each team member's operating base and it was therefore convenient to engage those schools. Convenience sampling is a specific type of non-probability sampling method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in the study. According to Creswell (2013), convenience sampling really means using what is available given what is relevant. A total of fifteen schools participated in the research covering both public and private schools at the Primary and Secondary levels, inclusive of schools for students with special needs. A total of ninety-one (91) school administrators and members of staff participated in the survey.

Data Collection Instrument, Reliability, and Validity

The instrument used to collect the data for this study was a self-designed thirty-item, five-point Likert-type survey questionnaire. The points on the scale covered "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". The instrument, which is included in this study as Appendix A, was pilot tested among a population of forty school administrators and staff members. The pilot instrument contained 34 items and after conducting test for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha with the number of items reduced to 30. The C-Alpha test produced a result of .714 confirming the instrument's internal consistency (Tavakol & Diamond, 2011). The reliability level of the actual survey was a C-Alpha of .947 with 24 items. With respect to the issue of validity, the instrument, which seeks to uncover attitudes and perceptions sought to gauge participants' feelings and expectations, both of which are predictors of attitudes. In this regard the instrument has used language from surveys that seek to measure attitudes.

In addition to the C-Alpha test of reliability, the KMO test was performed in order to determine the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The test returned a score of .818 which suggests that the sampling is adequate for factor analysis. According to Kaiser (1970) KMO values between 0.8 and 1 indicate the sampling is adequate.

Data Collection Procedures and Analysis

Data were collected with the assistance of eight (8) research assistants who were conveniently located in close proximity to the schools selected or otherwise has easy access to those schools. The authorization to collect data from these schools was obtained from the Ministry of Education. The research assistants visited the schools, distributed the questionnaires and returned a few days later to retrieve the completed instruments. The data were analyzed using the software SPSS V 21. The analysis focused on descriptive statistics, analyses of variances, correlations, and rotated component matrix.

RESULTS

Answer to Question # 1: Extent of Involvement of Staff and other Stakeholders in the Planning Process

The data show that over one quarter (26.4%) of the respondents disagreed, strongly disagreed or were undecided about whether staff members participated in the school improvement planning process, whereas 73.6% either agreed or strongly agreed as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Perceptions on *Most Members of Staff Participated in the School Improvement Planning Process*

Data		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	4	4.4	4.6	4.6
	Disagree	10	11.0	11.5	16.1
	Undecided	9	9.9	10.3	26.4
	Agree	40	44.0	46.0	72.4
	Strongly Agree	24	26.4	27.6	100.0
	Total	87	95.6	100.0	
Missing	System	4	4.4		
Total		91	100.0		

The study differentiated between academic and non-academic staff members in examining the question of participation in the school improvement planning process and found that whereas almost three-quarters of the respondents felt that staff members were involved. That number fell to about half (54%) when referenced to non-academic staff.

With respect to students, over half of the respondents (53.3%) strongly disagreed, disagreed, or were undecided concerning the question of whether students were invited to participate in planning activities. Of the 47.7% which agreed or strongly agreed, only 10% strongly agreed, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2

Perceptions on *Students are invited to participate in the planning activities*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	6	6.6	6.7	6.7
	Disagree	17	18.7	18.9	25.6
	Undecided	25	27.5	27.8	53.3
	Agree	33	36.3	36.7	90.0
	Strongly Agree	9	9.9	10.0	100.0
	Total	90	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.1		
Total		91	100.0		

The question of the degree of involvement is an important measure of participation, and one way of measuring perceptions of involvement is with respect to how suggestions for improvement are treated. The study found that a substantial number of staff members (just over 75%) stated that their suggestions were taken into account. Another approach to assessing perspectives on the planning process is to examine the degree to which all stakeholders are involved. The findings show that only about half (52%) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that "all stakeholders" were involved, although as many as 23% were undecided.

Answer to Question # 2: Factors Associated with Effective School Improvement Planning

The study found that four key factors are associated with effective school improvement planning, namely: involvement, accountability, plan implementation, and efficacy. These four factors accounted for 68.83% of the variation in the data with *involvement* itself alone accounting for a total of 47.82%, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	11.475	47.815	47.815	11.475	47.815	47.815	5.319	22.163	22.163
2	1.904	7.932	55.746	1.904	7.932	55.746	4.188	17.451	39.614
3	1.616	6.732	62.479	1.616	6.732	62.479	4.067	16.947	56.561
4	1.523	6.346	68.825	1.523	6.346	68.825	2.943	12.264	68.825
5	1.057	4.406	73.231						
6	.908	3.782	77.012						
7	.843	3.514	80.526						
8	.789	3.289	83.815						
9	.562	2.342	86.157						
10	.519	2.163	88.320						
11	.480	1.999	90.319						
12	.368	1.534	91.853						
13	.333	1.389	93.241						
14	.312	1.299	94.540						
15	.240	1.001	95.542						
16	.227	.947	96.489						
17	.180	.749	97.239						
18	.159	.663	97.901						
19	.145	.606	98.507						
20	.114	.477	98.984						
21	.110	.460	99.444						
22	.059	.247	99.692						
23	.039	.163	99.855						
24	.035	.145	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Answer to Question # 3: Relationship among Factors

The factors showed moderate to strong positive relationship among themselves as shown in Table 4. The strongest correlations were between *involvement* and *accountability* and *accountability* and *plan implementation* which showed correlations of .685 and .673 respectively.

Table 4

Correlations among Key Factors

		Involvement	Accountability	Plan Implementation	Efficacy
Involvement	Pearson Correlation	1	.685**	.648**	.424**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	91	91	91	90
Accountability	Pearson Correlation	.685**	1	.673**	.526**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	91	91	91	90
Plan Implementation	Pearson Correlation	.648**	.673**	1	.496**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	91	91	91	90
Efficacy	Pearson Correlation	.424**	.526**	.496**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	90	90	90	90

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Answer to Question # 4: Relationship between Perspectives of Staff and Institution Type

The study found no relationship between the perspectives of staff and the type of school in which they worked (whether publicly or privately owned). The results of this analysis are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Relationship between Perspectives and Institution Type

	The institution is	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Involvement	publicly owned	84	28.6071	6.58223	.71818
	privately owned	2	33.0000	2.82843	2.00000
Accountability	publicly owned	84	26.7738	5.64694	.61613
	privately owned	2	29.5000	7.77817	5.50000
Plan Implementation	publicly owned	84	19.5119	3.92856	.42864
	privately owned	2	18.5000	7.77817	5.50000
Efficacy	publicly owned	83	6.8675	1.77222	.19453
	privately owned	2	9.5000	.70711	.50000
School Improvement Plan	publicly owned	84	86.3095	15.39596	1.67984
	privately owned	2	95.5000	19.09188	13.50000

Discussion

This study has unearthed four major findings and reinforced a number of others. It is to be noted that this is the first of its kind in the Caribbean and for that reason its findings are significant. The first major finding is the fact that different stakeholders have differing perspectives of the extent of their participation in the school improvement planning process. The study reveals that 73% of "Staff and other Stakeholders" either agree or strongly agree that they are involved in the school improvement planning process; but when the category non-academic staff is isolated the number falls to 54% and when students are isolated the number falls further to 47%. The differences in the perceived degree of involvement is critical as it has implications for how well stakeholders will collaborate and, by extension, how deeply they will commit to making the plan for school improvement work. Barber (1984) and more recently Brand and Gaffikin (2007), addressed this issue of the relationship between the capacity and willingness to collaborate and the perceived sense of involvement in a process. Barber (1984) suggested that human beings are products of social interactions and as such how they interpret reality is a function of such interaction. Thus, if stakeholders perceive, by virtue of the social interaction, in this case the degree to which they are consulted, that they are valued more or less, relative to their expectations, then their level of commitment will be affected by that sense of being valued. Brand and Gaffikin (2007) argued that context is a shaper of collaboration, and introduced the notion of politics, understood as power. They suggested that if the power dynamics in the context are not such that they nurture collaboration then it is less likely that people will commit to the larger ideals of the organization and, in the context of planning, this commitment is vital. The importance of the political context is reinforced by Innes and Booher (2003), who spoke of the social and political contexts, and highlighted the fact that these contexts can produce a reality characterized by fragmentation, uncertainty, and complexity, simply because stakeholders have different areas of interests and are focusing on different needs, and come from different perspectives and backgrounds. The success of any planning initiative is then dependent on the degree to which the planning process can create a sense of commonality among stakeholders to produce the collaboration necessary for success. Ensuring that all stakeholders feel that their inputs are equally valued and valid is critical to such an outcome. Thus, the finding that only 54% and 47% of respondents believe that non-academic staff and students, respectively, are involved in the planning process, (compared to 73% of "staff and other stakeholders" - a finding which appears to reflect a focus on academic staff) is an unfortunate depiction of the planning culture. Planning efforts must aim at broad-based inclusion. This finding is consistent with Quadrant 2 of the theoretical framework of this study.

The argument about the importance of collaboration is reinforced by the second major finding of this study, namely the top four factors which explain the variation in the data. These are *involvement, accountability, plan implementation, and efficacy,* which account for 68.83% of the variation. *Involvement* accounts for 47.82%, which suggests that the most critical issue that defines how stakeholders view the school improvement planning process is the degree of their involvement.

The overwhelming importance of involvement, as a key element of school improvement planning, is supported by Litman (2013) who listed seven principles of effective planning highlights inclusivity, and Judah and Paul (2014) who contended that the breadth of stakeholder involvement in the information gathering increased the probability of overall plan embracement. Beach and Lindahl (2004) suggested that the art of inclusive planning is not a natural skill which school administrators possess, and they lamented the fact that training in planning is not sufficiently emphasized in the preparation of school principals.

Another element of this second finding is the issue of accountability. This is the second of the top four factors which explain the variation in data and is identical to Quadrant 3 of the study. This finding suggests that the effectiveness of plans rests, to an important degree, on stakeholders being called upon to deliver on their commitments. These findings are aligned to Thompson (2017) who found that the issue of accountability was an overwhelmingly important element of success. In that study the variable *accountability* accounted for 21.3% of the variation in the data. In the current study *accountability* is closely related to *plan implementation* and *efficacy* with which it correlates as at a strength of positive .673 and .526, respectively. These correlations of relationship suggest that the efficacy of the implementation of the plan is dependent to a large degree on accountability, and this relationship constitutes the third major finding of the study.

The final finding of the study is that there is no difference between how administrators and other stakeholders in public institutions saw the school improvement planning process, compared to their counterparts in private institutions. This finding highlights the importance of planning for both privately and publicly owned and operated schools. This finding, when taken in the context of the previous findings, also suggests that there is consensus between administrators and stakeholders of both public and private schools on the key ingredients of effective school improvement planning, namely involvement and accountability.

CONCLUSION

School improvement planning is a practice that has been discussed and documented for over four decades. Despite the four decades-long practice, supported by the passing of legislation (as in the case of "No Child Left Behind") to mandate school improvement planning, the training of school leaders in school improvement planning, and the provision of resources to support the process, schools in many jurisdictions are still not experiencing desired levels of improvements. It is inarguable as Judah and Paul (2014), Brand and Gaffikin (2007), Phelps and Addonizio (2006), and Barber (1984) have found that stakeholder involvement is critical to the realization of improvement in student achievement. Also central to improvement is student achievement and the school's performance more broadly, which is predicated on planning, is the issue of accountability as Thompson (2017), and Phelps and Addonizio (2006) have posited.

The key finding of this study is that the single most critical variable in effective planning, planning which produces the desired outcomes, is the involvement of stakeholders. The factor *involvement* accounted for 47.82% of the variation in the data on which this study is based. The dominance of this variable suggests that the most critical issue affecting how the school improvement planning process is seen is the degree of stakeholder involvement.

The theoretical model espoused by this study identifies four elements, each of which is in some way connected to the concept and practice of involvement. The four elements are **C**apacity, **A**ccountability, **I**nclusivity, and **D**istributivity. The element 'capacity' suggests that planners take account of and give credence to the capacity of stakeholders to make a difference. This conclusion is supported by Thompson (2015). The element accountability means that those stakeholders who commit to be involved in the planning process must be held accountable (Thompson, 2017; Phelps and Addonizio, 2006). This is further supported by the findings of this study which show that accountability is the second of the top three factors which explain the variation in the data.

Involvement is not for cosmetic purposes, and has, at its core, the practices of inclusive and shared (distributive) leadership as Harris and Spillane (2008) and Barber (1984) argued. Ultimately, however, involvement must lead to the actual implementation of the school improvement plan, the efficacy of which will be seen in improved student achievement.

This unique contribution of this study, and its fundamental assertion, is that efficacious school improvement planning requires the involvement of all stakeholders and the process of involvement is to be pursued with the framework of CAID.

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Appendix

Survey Questionnaire

Attitudes of School Administrators and Staff towards School Improvement Planning

Please use the key below to answer the questions that follow

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; U = Undecided; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

	SA	A	U	D	SD
(1) You are involved in the school improvement planning activities					
(2) In your opinion school improvement planning is vital to the school's performance					
(3) The school improvement planning process is carefully and thoughtfully structured					
(4) Most members of staff participate in the school improvement planning process					
(5) The performance of most students has improved since the school began to undertake school improvement planning					
(6) The overall performance of the school has improved since the school began to undertake school improvement planning					
(7) Suggestions made by staff members about the areas for improvement are taken into account in deciding on the priorities of the school					
(8) Students are invited to participate in the planning activities					
(9) Non-academic members of staff participate in the planning activities					
(10) All stakeholders are represented in the planning process					
(11) The process implementing the initiatives of plan is fulfilling					

(12) The School Improvement Plan (SIP) plan prepared by my school reflects an understanding of the internal challenges facing the institution						
(13) The SIP prepared by my school takes account of the external realities facing the school						
(14) The plan is flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the school						
(15) You are proud to be associated with the SIP of your school						
(16) Your school can count on its stakeholders to provide the required support to ensure the effective implementation of the SIP						
(17) Each staff member has definitive responsibilities and duties in the plan						
(18) You are assigned a share of the responsibilities and duties in the plan						
(19) Staff members are held accountable for the execution of their responsibilities under the plan						
(20) The principal provides leadership in the planning process						
(21) The principal shares responsibilities for the attainment of the objectives of the plan						
(22) The plan inspires confidence in the future of the school						
(23) The principal provides leadership in the pursuit of the objectives of the plan						

Please Answer the Following Questions

(24) Your school has an School Improvement Plan

(a) Yes

(b) No

(c) Not sure

(25) Your age group is:

(a) 20 – 30 [ ]

(b) 31 – 40 [ ]

(c) 41 – 50 [ ]

(d) 51 – 60 [ ]

(e) 60+ [ ]

(26) You have been working in the education system for:

(a) 5 years or less [ ]

(b) 6 – 10 years [ ]

(c) 11 – 15 years [ ]

(d) 16 – 20 years [ ]

(e) Over 20 years [ ]

(27) You have been working at your current school for:

(a) 5 years or less [ ]

(b) 6 – 10 years [ ]

(c) 11 – 15 years [ ]

(d) 16 – 20 years [ ]

(e) Over 20 years [ ]

(28) You are:

(a) Male [ ]

(b) Female [ ]

(29) The institution is:

(a) Publicly owned [ ]

(b) Privately owned [ ]

(30) Your position is classified as:

(a) Non-management [ ]

(b) Lower Management [ ]

(c) Middle Management [ ]

(d) Senior Management [ ]

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