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Secondary Teachers' Perceptions
of the Introduction of Universal Secondary Education in St. Lucia

by

Verneta Lesforis

A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Education

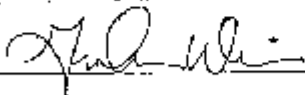
School of Education

Secondary Teachers' Perceptions
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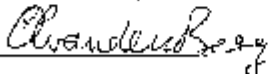
This dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Doctor of Education
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Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Venera Lesforis

Signature: Venera Lesforis Date: 3/25/11

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Abstract

Developing countries are constantly trying to improve their educational systems because research suggests that increased education can have benefits for individuals and countries in terms of better health, higher wages and increased stability. The most recent change in educational policy in some of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) including St. Lucia is the implementation of Universal Secondary Education (USE) to provide secondary school access to all students. There has been little research on the perceptions of teachers from the various islands about the introduction of USE.

This study sought to identify the perceptions of the secondary school teachers in St. Lucia about various aspects of the introduction of USE in 2006. The study sought the teachers' perceptions on their involvement in the planning and implementation process; the availability of professional development opportunities; the availability of resources; curriculum and assessment modifications, the availability of student support services; the effect on school culture, and the effect on the educational system in St. Lucia. A qualitative design was selected utilizing document analysis; a researcher-designed questionnaire; and interviews with teachers, former and current Ministry of Education officials and other key informants.

The results indicated that teachers had generally negative perceptions of almost all of the aspects of the introduction of USE studied, except their ability to teach diverse learners. Analysis of the interviews revealed there were similarities in the perceptions of the teachers, ministry officials and other key informants on some aspects of USE including the lack of preparation of teachers, but that there was disagreement on the level of involvement of teachers in the planning and implementation process. The result of this

study sheds light on the importance of involving teachers in the change process to help ensure the success of the new policy. Recommendations based on the findings in this study are made, for policy implementation in St. Lucia with an emphasis on teacher involvement in the educational process and also on improving USE policy to better achieve its goals.

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Key to Abbreviations

Caricom	Caribbean Community
CCSLC	Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence
CEE	Common Entrance Exam
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CSME	Caribbean Single Market and Economy
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualifications
CXC	Caribbean Examinations Council
ECERP	Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Project
EFA	Education for All
FFF	Foundations for the Future
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MST	Minimum Standard Test
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
OERU	OECS Education Reform Unit
PPP	Pillars for Partnership and Progress
SLP	St. Lucia Labour Party
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USE	Universal Secondary Education
UWP	United Workers Party

Chapter One: Introduction

Overview

I first felt the bitter sting of failure in the sixth grade when I received the results of the Common Entrance Examination (CEE), the examination that would determine which high school I would attend. To my disbelief and dismay, I did not have the required score to attend my first or second choice but only my third. My hopes of wearing the blue and white uniform of St. Joseph's Convent or the red and white of Castries Comprehensive Secondary School were dashed. I had two choices: attend the school I had been assigned to or repeat the sixth grade and write the CEE again. Taking the examination again could mean that I could perform better and make it to the school of my choice but I could also score lower. Scoring lower could mean that I would be assigned to an even less prestigious secondary school or, worse yet, not be assigned to a secondary school at all. I would then be relegated to a senior primary school for three years before I would have another opportunity to attend a secondary school. After senior primary my compulsory education could be over at 16 without attaining a secondary education.

Even at that tender age, the fear of failure had sunk its fangs into me and I had no confidence of doing better on the examination. So, I wore the blue and grey uniform of the Entrepot Secondary School feeling inadequate every time I put it on knowing that everyone could see that I had failed to make it to one of the more prestigious schools. At that time, my youthful ignorance did not permit me to realize that I was one of the lucky ones because I had actually gained access to a secondary school. My experience was not unique. I knew many people who were not as fortunate as I and whose compulsory education ended at 14 or 15 years of age without a secondary education. Many students

in St. Lucia and in other islands across the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) faced that same fate. The situation changed for St. Lucian students in 2006 when their government implemented Universal Secondary Education (USE) or access to a secondary school to all students who wrote the CEE irrespective of their results (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2007). No longer would secondary school entry be restricted based on students' test scores. However, the CEE was still retained as a way to transition students to secondary schools even with the introduction of USE, resulting in many low performing students being assigned to the same low performing schools while the higher performing students were assigned to the prestigious schools.

The use of the CEE to promote students and in some ways to determine their future has been widely criticized by individuals around the Caribbean. The Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Basdeo Panday, in referring to the CEE, stated, "The common entrance exam has distorted and corrupted our education system. The entire primary school experience has been driven by this awful exam, disrupting the joy of learning and in fact, hindering the learning process" (Barnes, n.d., sec. 21). Some Caribbean countries have ended the use of the CEE to promote students to the secondary school and have replaced it with a series of continuous assessments at the primary level to transition students to the secondary school (Barnes, n.d.).

The scarcity of opportunities for students to attain a secondary education and the use of the CEE to select and assign students to secondary schools is an issue that had plagued St. Lucia for many years and had been established and sustained by several

factors. These factors included the island's history, size, people, economy, and politics. From a historical standpoint, the colonization of the island by the British and the French who battled each other for the island for over 100 years left an indelible imprint on the island. The island was ceded to the British in 1814 (Orr, 2004) after switching hands 14 times (Austin, 2010) but still maintains some French influences particularly evident in the Creole language spoken by many St. Lucians. Its educational system was fashioned after the British educational system (Jules, 2008). This system is characterized by the provision of educational opportunities to the elite; the use of selective examinations to stratify students which results in a ranking of schools; and the use of a highly academic curriculum (Jennings, 2001). Even after Independence in 1979, the island still maintained many aspects of the British system.

St. Lucia's small size of 238 square miles, measuring 27 miles in length and 14 miles in width (Austin, 2010) and a population of fewer than 173,000 (Government of St. Lucia, 2009) also contributed to the scarcity of secondary education opportunities. The island's economy that was predominantly based on agriculture was not strong enough to provide the financial resources necessary to provide secondary education opportunities for all students. The decline of the banana industry in the early 1990's led to a shift to tourism, due in large part to its location in the Caribbean, its climate which averages 77 degrees (Government of St. Lucia, 2010a), and natural beauty. Tourism accounted for over 10% of the island's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009 (Government of St. Lucia, 2009) but the tourism industry was unpredictable due to natural disasters such as hurricanes and disruptions around the world such as the September 11th attacks in the United States which discouraged people from travelling. The economic situation in St.

Lucia was tenuous with an estimated 28% of the population considered poor in 2005-2006 (Kairi Consultants Limited, 2006) and an unemployment rate of over 14% in 2007, which was much higher in the rural areas and consisted mainly of young people under 35 years of age (Government of St. Lucia, 2010b). The economic situation was further strained by the downturn in the global economy.

The political system in St. Lucia is fashioned after that of Great Britain and even though the country gained Independence in 1979, the Queen is still recognized as the Head of State. She is represented on the island by the Governor General (Government of St. Lucia, 2010) while the Prime Minister heads the local government. The local political scene has been dominated by two parties, the St. Lucia Labour Party (SLP) and the United Workers Party (UWP). These two parties both espouse the benefits of education and have made efforts in reforming the educational system, but the changing of ruling parties and Ministry of Education (MOE) officials sometimes results in educational policies that were implemented by one party but not being maintained by the other.

St. Lucians place a high value on education and are cognizant of its importance in social promotion and upward mobility. The country's distinction of having two Nobel laureates in Sir Arthur Lewis, who won the Nobel prize in Economics in 1979, and the Honorable Derek Walcott, who won the Noble prize in Literature in 1992, is a source of pride for St. Lucians and many see this as testimony to the limitless possibilities of education and a source of motivation for other St. Lucians. The high value placed on education, ironically, resulted in an inequitable educational system and supported the highly selective nature of the system which left many students without the opportunity to pursue secondary education. This selection and weeding out of supposedly less

academically able students was viewed as necessary to channel the limited resources towards the more academically able students to prepare them to lead the country's development.

Background of the Problem

The global interest in education highlighted by the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established by the United Nations in 2000, all spurred interest in the pursuit of universal education and ultimately USE. The World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien established six education goals designed to meet basic education needs by 2000 (UNESCO, 1990). Those goals were “universal access to learning; a focus on equity; emphasis on learning outcomes; broadening the means and the scope of basic education; enhancing the environment for learning; and strengthening partnerships by 2000” (UNESCO, 2010c para. 2).

Ten years after the World Education Forum in Jomtien, many of these goals had not been achieved so world leaders at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 reaffirmed the goals established by the Jomtien Conference and pushed the achievement date to 2015 (UNESCO, 2000). The EFA goals which were reaffirmed in Dakar included the expansion and improvement of early childhood education, universal primary education for all children, access to life skills programmes, improvements in adult literacy, increased educational access for girls, and improved quality of education (UNESCO, 2000).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) were established in 2000 by the United Nations (UN). Two of the eight Millennium Goals addressed education. Goal

Two addressed the attainment of UPE and Goal Three addressed gender equality at all levels of education (UN, 2010). St. Lucia had already achieved UPE, but in 1990 at the time of the World Conference on Education for All in 1990, only 32% of students were being assigned to secondary schools based on the CEE (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009). Although the number had increased to 54% by 2000 (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009) many students in St. Lucia still did not have the opportunity to pursue a secondary education. The attainment of USE was the next logical step in meeting the educational goals set in Jomtien and Dakar and by the MDGs.

There is debate concerning when the topic of USE first entered the official government conversation in St. Lucia. According to Sir John Compton, in a speech delivered at his swearing in ceremony as Prime Minister, the USE policy was initiated by the UWP party (Compton, 2006). The former Minister of Education in St. Lucia under the SLP administration, Mario Michel, acknowledged that the UWP government had secured a loan to construct secondary schools on the island but nothing had been done until the SLP administration took over the project in 1997 (Michel, 2007). While the debate concerning which political party had first started the conversation about USE will probably continue, there is no debate about which party implemented USE; the SLP did so in September, 2006 when then Minister of Education Mario Michel, in a speech to parliament, officially informed the nation of the introduction of USE. The SLP was subsequently voted out of office in November of 2006, two months after the implementation of USE (Michel, 2007). The introduction of USE during an election year led many to speculate that the decision had been a political ploy by the government in power to muster votes ahead of an election. The new government claimed the

implementation of USE was “hurriedly rushed into operation without adequate preparation” (Compton, 2007 section 14) and set up a task force to assess the policy.

While the term USE was not officially used in St. Lucia until the late 1990’s (in the 2000 Education Sector Development Plan), there had been efforts to increase secondary education enrollment prior to its use. The expansion of secondary education was initiated by the UWP in 1995 after an agreement with the World Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) under the Basic Education Reform Project (BERP). There were, however, no visible signs of work towards the project during the UWP administration and in 1997 the new administration of the SLP took over the implementation of the project (Michel, 2007).

The BERP had three intended outcomes, namely (a) strengthening the educational sector, (b) improving the quality of the educational system, and (c) expanding school access (World Bank, 2001). At the conclusion of the project in 2000 the three outcomes had been realized. The educational sector had been strengthened through the reorganization of the Ministry of Education, and through training of Ministry officials in the areas of data management, project management, and administration of the ministry (World Bank, 2001). In meeting the goal of quality improvement, the project provided training for teachers in core subject areas, the primary school curriculum was revised, materials and equipment were provided to primary and secondary schools, computer labs were established at four secondary schools, an examination of the national assessment procedures was done, and more district education officers were hired to help with school supervision (World Bank, 2001). The access goal of the project was fulfilled by the

construction of three new secondary schools and the relocation of another, resulting in the addition of over 1600 secondary school places (World Bank, 2001).

While the access goal had been achieved, the secondary schools which had been constructed had some design issues. Two of them were too small, not having the required space for technical and vocational subjects, and two did not have any space for future expansion (World Bank, 2001). The World Bank (2001) reported the maintenance of school facilities had been addressed under the access component as this had been seen as an area that was lacking in the system; the Ministry of Education had no clear policy to maintain the facilities, but said it was putting structures in place to address that problem.

At the conclusion of BERP in 2000, there were 18 secondary schools in St. Lucia while the secondary school transition rate had increased from 40% in 1995 to 54% in 2000 (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009). The Ministry of Education set the goal for the implementation of USE by the year 2005 in its Education Sector Development Plan in 2000 (St. Lucia Ministry of Education, 2000). At the completion of BERP in 2000, the SLP administration secured a new loan from the CDB for a second phase of BERP (Government of St. Lucia Information Service, 2000). This second phase of BERP resulted in the construction of two new secondary schools, one of which was a technical school, and the construction of a primary school in 2003 (Michel, 2006). From the first major expansion in 1997 to the end of the second phase of the BERP in 2003, the number of secondary schools in St. Lucia increased from 14 to 18 and the transition rate from primary to secondary school increased from 40% to 60% (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009).

The second major thrust to increase secondary school access and ultimately to achieve USE was facilitated by a loan financed by the World Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank, the Department for International Development, and the Government of St. Lucia in the amount of \$US 19 million, \$EC 50 million, in 2002 (Emmanuel, 2002). This agreement fell under the OECS Education Development Program (OEDP). This program had four components: expand access to secondary education, improve equity in the educational system, improve the management of the educational system to make it more efficient, and improve the quality of education (World Bank, 2009).

The access portion of the plan was achieved with the construction of two new secondary schools, the conversion of one senior primary school to a full secondary school, the expansion of three schools and the renovation of several secondary schools, creating over 2000 secondary school places and allowing the transition rate at the secondary school to increase to 97% in 2006 (World Bank, 2009). The attainment of the access component of the plan also helped to achieve the equity component as the new schools were constructed in a rural and suburban area that did not have secondary schools, thereby helping to increase equity. The management and efficiency component was addressed through the development of an information system to manage information at the schools and Ministry level and the training of district education officers in school management.

Several strategies were used to address the quality component of the plan. First, the lower secondary curriculum was revised and a draft curriculum was distributed to all secondary schools. Teachers were oriented to the new draft curriculum though further training on the curriculum was not provided. Second, training was provided for teachers

in information technology, lab technicians were trained, and teachers were trained to manage the learning resource centers (World Bank, 2009). Third, continuous assessments were introduced in the form of school based assessments at the grade two and four levels. Training in continuous assessments was, however, not provided for teachers at the secondary level (World Bank, 2009). Fourth, learning resource centers were established at all secondary schools; training was provided for IT teachers and schools were provided with IT resources (World Bank, 2009). Finally, a student support services unit was established to provide support to needy students. These student support services included guidance counselors who were deployed in every secondary school. Also, a text book rental program was established at the secondary level (World Bank, 2009). The strategies used to improve the quality of education resulted in an increase in the number of students completing the secondary school cycle, although there was no increase in the number of students attaining a minimum of five CXC subjects including Mathematics and English Language by the 2006 CXC examinations (World Bank, 2009). At the end of the OEDP project in 2009, the number of secondary schools had increased to 23 and USE had been introduced.

The goal of USE was a logical move for the Government of St. Lucia to meet the educational goals established by international organizations because the island had already achieved UPE. The introduction of USE in 2006 was facilitated by a number of projects funded primarily by the World Bank, the CDB, and the Government of St. Lucia starting in 1997 with the BERP. The introduction of USE was initially focused on creating access with the construction of new secondary schools, the expansion of existing schools, and the upgrade of senior primary schools to full secondary schools. The new

secondary schools were staffed primarily by teachers from the disestablished senior primary schools and by teachers brought up from the primary schools.

While the major effort to achieve USE concentrated on access, an attempt was made to address quality issues by revising the lower secondary curriculum, providing training to some teachers and by equipping the schools with learning resource centers. Student support services were also established to meet the needs of a more diverse student population. While the access component of USE had been achieved by the provision of a secondary school place to all eligible students, the quality component had not been fully addressed and that is evidenced by low student achievement at the primary and secondary levels of the system, a result of inadequate training of teachers.

Statement of the Problem

According to St. Lucia's Ministry of Education and Culture (2007) in the year 2000, fewer than 55% of students were promoted to a secondary school based on their performance on the CEE. This number jumped to 61% in 2005, the year before the introduction of USE. Although this latter number was an improvement, there were still many St. Lucian students whose educational experience ended without the opportunity to pursue a secondary education. This situation had dire consequences for St. Lucia's development because the link between education and positive returns to individuals and countries has been established by numerous researchers (Bloom, 2004; Bloom, Cohen & Malin, 2006; Sperling, 2005). Other researchers (Alvarez, 2003; Grover, 2004; Lewin & Cailloids, 2001; Bhoendradatt, 2003,) have also documented the importance of secondary education in improving the lives of individuals and promoting the development of countries.

It is not surprising given the prevailing views about the link between education and development, and because of the educational goals set by international organizations, that the government of St. Lucia embarked on a USE policy to provide a secondary education to all eligible students who wrote the CEE. This decision was also driven by a sense of the need to prepare the country's citizens for global competition and regional integration efforts like the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). The CSME was intended to remove travel restrictions to allow Caribbean citizens to move freely in the Caribbean for employment opportunities. This meant that St. Lucians would have to compete with other Caribbean nationals for local job opportunities.

Many Caribbean islands including St. Lucia, implemented various educational programs such as USE leading up to the year 2000. These educational programs were implemented not only because of the perceived need to improve the educational systems in these countries but also because of pressure from international agencies such as UNESCO and the World Bank. As a result of this pressure, governments from small countries sometimes implement policies that have not been thoroughly researched or may not actually be in the best interests of their citizens. This was well articulated by Miller (2009), who cautioned Caribbean governments about the practice of "adopting and adapting ideas for secondary education developed elsewhere" (p. 13). He advised an approach to educational reform that would involve an analysis of the current situation in the various countries, which would then generate ideas that "will inform continued reform of education particularly the continued implementation of USE" (p. 13). This approach would help developing countries to implement policies that take their country's needs into account thereby helping to facilitate successful and lasting policies.

The seeming lack of planning in the implementation of programs was clearly evident in Blom and Hobbs' (2008) study on the interaction between school and work in the Eastern Caribbean. The study found that in the 2004-2005 academic year, almost 150 individuals in St. Lucia had been enrolled in sewing and garment production classes at a time when that sector was in decline. The report also found that while almost 170 people were trained in cake decorating, few of these individuals would find employment in cake decorating because the field was so narrow. These two examples demonstrate that policy planning and implementation were probably not a well thought out process in St. Lucia and might not always take the country's needs into consideration. Perhaps there was not sufficient involvement from the relevant stakeholders to determine the programs that are needed.

The implementation of USE would help St. Lucia fulfill the goal of Education For All (EFA) by 2015, which had been set by the EFA Conference in 1990 and reiterated again in 2000 (UNESCO, 2000). However, if USE was implemented simply to check a goal off a list without input from relevant stakeholders and without understanding how it would affect the students and the educational system in St. Lucia, then USE in St. Lucia would probably not succeed in providing a secondary education for all students. It would only succeed in providing access to a secondary education. Access to an education is not equivalent to the provision of or attainment of an education.

Rationale for the Study

Many educational programs have been implemented with a view to improving educational outcomes for students often without success. The failures of these educational programs have led researchers to identify factors that are necessary to help

facilitate effective implementation of educational policies and programs. These factors include: (a) input from stakeholders (Fowler, 2004; Sims & Sims, 2004); (b) available resources necessary to implement and maintain the program (Fowler, 2004); (c) training for implementers of the program (Fowler, 2004; Hall & Hord, 2006); and (d) evaluation and monitoring of the program to check for strengths and weaknesses (Fowler, 2004).

Teachers' perceptions of an educational program are critical to its success (Sims & Sims, 2004). For USE in St. Lucia to meet its goal of providing an education to all St. Lucian students, it would help to investigate the perceptions of teachers to this program as teacher support could lead to a successful program. Although research had been conducted on various aspects of USE including the curriculum and assessment (King, 2009; Griffith, 2009), little research had been conducted to investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding the introduction of USE in the region and no research, to my knowledge, had been done on the topic in St. Lucia.

The St. Lucian government introduced USE in 2006 with the expectation that it would provide a secondary education to all students in St. Lucia, make St. Lucia more competitive on the global scale, and help with the country's development. The former Prime Minister of St. Lucia, Dr. Kenny Anthony, made a case for the need for USE in his 2003-2004 budget address, stating "The attainment of USE is a milestone that signals a country has reached a particular threshold in its human resource development and its capacity to develop itself" (Anthony, 2003, section 37). The St. Lucian government viewed education as important to the development of the country. This belief in the importance of education was clearly supported by the government's decision to devote six% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to education (St. Lucia Ministry of Education

and Culture, 2007). Because of the limited resources available in St. Lucia, it was important that implemented projects be successful to justify the money spent that could otherwise be directed toward other projects. Research suggests that policies implemented with input from stakeholders in a collaborative effort are more likely to succeed (Fowler, 2004). It is therefore important to determine the perceptions of secondary teachers regarding USE and their involvement in the planning and implementation process because the perceptions of these teachers could have a major impact on the success of USE in St. Lucia and could provide recommendations for the introduction of future educational policies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine secondary school teachers' perceptions regarding various aspects of the introduction of USE in St. Lucia. The planning and implementation process for any program is critical to meeting expectations of all stakeholders, which can result in a program that can stand the test of time and constitutes the best use of valuable resources.

As a small, developing country, St. Lucia could not afford to waste valuable resources. The perceptions of teachers play an important part in the successful implementation of USE. If the teachers did not feel like they are part of the process or if they feel like the process does not address their needs, then the program is more likely to fail. Successful implementation of USE in St. Lucia could have a major impact on St. Lucia's educational system, economy, and future and might prepare St. Lucians to be competitive in the changing global landscape. Unsuccessful implementation of USE in St. Lucia, on the other hand, could have a major negative impact on St. Lucia's

educational system and on the society as a whole, which could lead to resistance to further educational reform.

If small, developing countries like St. Lucia are to realize the benefits of education they must implement policies and programs that are supported by the teachers and other stakeholders. The policies and programs must provide universal access to a quality education that will develop the individual and the country and help it compete on a global scale. This study is very timely as the program was only initiated in 2006 so this would be an optimal time to make changes to improve it. The future implementation of the CSME, that would allow Caribbean nationals to travel and work more freely in the different islands, would make it important for St. Lucians to be more educated to stave off the competition from the nationals of other islands who will come to St. Lucia to compete for jobs.

Research Questions

1. What was the process followed to implement USE in St. Lucia?
2. What were the perceptions of secondary school teachers in St. Lucia regarding their involvement in the planning and implementation of USE? In particular, what were the perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding:
 - (a) Professional development opportunities for the implementation of USE.
 - (b) The curriculum options, resources, and services provided to students since the implementation of USE.
 - (c) Their students' level of preparedness to pursue a secondary education.
 - (d) The impact of USE on their schools and on the educational system in St. Lucia.

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine secondary teachers' perceptions regarding various aspects of the introduction of USE in St. Lucia. This study had some limitations. It only examined the perceptions of secondary school teachers in the system. The perceptions of other teachers, particularly primary school teachers, were not addressed, though their perceptions of the program might have a major impact on how they prepare their students at the primary level and helped me to better understand the perceptions of the secondary school teachers. To address this limitation, several key informants from different levels of the educational system including at the ministerial level were interviewed in an attempt to get a broader perspective.

Secondly, the results of the study can only be generalized to countries with similar factors to St. Lucia such as population, culture, location, and history. Although the purpose of this study was not generalizability, detailed descriptions are given here of the instruments used and the research procedures for future researchers who might wish to use them comparatively. Time was a limitation in that the data collection was conducted during the busy assessment period on the island. To address this limitation, much of the preliminary work was conducted prior to my arrival on the island, and the interviews with teachers and other informants were scheduled based on the availability of the participants. Lastly, the instrument used in this study was designed by the researcher. To address this limitation, the instrument was designed using information from the review of literature and all the items selected addressed the research questions. The instrument was also reviewed by the dissertation committee and a former secondary school teacher in St. Lucia.

Definition of Terms

Common Entrance Examination (CEE). A national examination written by students at the end of Grade 6 to transition them from the primary to the secondary level of the system (UNESCO, 2000).

Developed country. “High income countries in which most people have a high standard of living. . . . Developed countries contain about 15% of the world’s population” (World Bank, 2004, para. 16).

Developing country. “Countries with low or middle levels of GNP per capita” (World Bank, 2004, para. 17).

Graduate teacher. “A graduate teacher is a teacher with at least a recognized bachelor’s degree” (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2007, p. 1).

Minimum Standard Test. A national examination written by St. Lucian students in Grades 2, 4 and Form Three (Grade 9) (UNESCO, 2010b).

Ministry of Education. The administrative body for the educational system in St. Lucia (UNESCO, 2010b)

Primary Education. Education for students between the ages of five and 11 years (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009).

Public Secondary Education. Public education provided for students between the ages of 12 and 16 (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009).

Universal Primary Education (UPE). Goal 2 of the Education for all (EFA) goals which requires the provision of primary education to all eligible students (UNESCO, 2000).

Universal Secondary Education (USE). “Within the Caribbean context, USE is defined as students obtaining at least five years of secondary education beyond Grade 6, that is, students receiving education up to Grade 11” (Miller, 2009, p. 9).

Tertiary Education. “Any post-secondary level of education” (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2007, p. xxviii).

Trained teacher. “A trained teacher is one who has successfully completed a recognized programme [sic] in teacher education methods and teaching techniques” (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009, p. xxxi).

Researcher’s Reflection on Study Topic

This study came about because of a critical reflection of my passions, which include an interest in teaching, an interest in children and a desire to make a contribution to my home country in some way. I became passionate about this topic because I came from the system when there was not a secondary school place for every student and I wanted to understand my country’s journey from providing secondary education to only the best and the brightest to providing secondary education to all. The fact that USE had recently been implemented in St. Lucia and that there was not much research conducted on that topic helped to seal the selection of my topic. I anticipated several challenges in conducting this study mainly due to the fact that I resided outside of St. Lucia during the study as I had for many years prior.

The purpose of this study was not to determine whether USE should have been implemented in St. Lucia. A study with that purpose would have been more meaningful before the implementation of USE. The program has been implemented, and there is no turning back, so a study investigating the wisdom of USE implementation would serve

little purpose after the implementation. As with any newly implemented program or policy, there are always areas of strength and weakness. The purpose of this study was rather to (a) investigate the perceptions of teachers regarding the introduction of USE, (b) to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program, (c) to highlight those strengths, and (d) to offer recommendations to strengthen the weak areas.

In this chapter, I have attempted to detail the background, purpose, and rationale for the study. The following chapter will explore the literature on the benefits of education; efforts of international organizations to improve the educational systems of developing countries; the educational system of the OECS region, and St. Lucia; and the steps necessary to facilitate effective policy implementation.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine secondary school teachers' perceptions about various aspects of the introduction of USE in St. Lucia. The first part of this literature review looks at the international declarations on education and the efforts of international organizations to improve education globally. The second part looks at the literature dealing with the benefits of education to individuals and countries, particularly developing countries. The third part of this review of the literature briefly examines the literature on education in the Caribbean region, describes education and education reform in the OECS countries, examines the introduction of USE in the OECS countries and St. Lucia, and describes some of the factors to consider when expanding secondary education. The fourth part of the literature will look at some of the steps involved in effective policy implementation.

It is important to look at the benefits of education for the development of individuals and countries because most decisions about increasing education are done because of the expectation of positive returns from increased education. The effort of international organizations in improving the educational systems of developing countries is also an important issue because most developing countries would not be able to improve their educational systems without international aid and support. The involvement of international organizations also adds a voice to the importance of education and holds countries accountable for improving their educational programs. In addition, this review looks at the introduction of USE in the OECS countries to identify similarities and differences in the programs. The introduction of USE was a major shift

in educational policy in St. Lucia and a discussion of the literature on policy implementation will help one understand and compare the process in St. Lucia.

International Statements on the Importance of Education

Article 26 of the (UN) (1948) declares that education is a fundamental human right and that everyone has the right to a free education at least in the early stages. This powerful statement by the UN stresses the importance of education in the development of all human beings. Many other international organizations have made statements about the benefits of education to individuals and society. UNESCO (1960) echoed the sentiments expressed by the UN and advised against “depriving any person or group of persons of access to education of any type at any level” (article 1a) and providing “education of an inferior standard” (article 1b) to any group. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (1989) also recognized the importance of education in article 28 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and stated that primary education should be “compulsory and available free to all” (article 28).

The international pronouncements on the importance of education have been followed by many educational conferences and goals established by international organizations to improve education globally. These include: The *Stockholm Declaration in 1972* that advocated environmental education, the 1977 UNESCO *Tbilisi Declaration on Environmental Education* that promoted education about the environment; the 1990 *World Conference on Education for All* (EFA), whose goal was education for all by 2000 through universal primary education and increased literacy; the 1992 *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* that addressed education for sustainable development; the *United Nations Millennium Development Goals* in 2000 that addressed

UPE around the world by 2015; and the *United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* in 2005 that addressed education to achieve sustainable development (Nhamo & Nhamo, 2006).

These international initiatives have resulted in improvements in many areas of education throughout the world. The UNESCO (2010a) report on the EFA goals found a significant decrease in the number of children who are out of school, an increase in the number of girls who attend school, and an increase in the adult literacy rate. The UN (2010) report on the MDGs also found improvements in education globally, finding that enrollment in primary education had increased, reaching 89% in the developing world, and that there were growing numbers of girls enrolled in primary and secondary schools. Gender equity in secondary education was also an area where progress had been noted, particularly in the regions of Latin America and the Caribbean. The improvements in enrollment in primary education were also noted by Bloom and Cohen (2002), who acknowledged that the improvements in enrollment were not followed by improvements in the quality of education delivered or in the quality of the teaching force.

While these improvements have been encouraging, there is much work left to be done to realize the goals established by the international community as “many of the world’s poorest countries are not on track to meet the 2015 targets” (UNESCO, 2010, p. 1). The UNESCO (2010a) report on the EFA goals revealed that more than 70 million children were not enrolled in school as recently as 2007 and that girls’ enrollment was low in areas of sub-Saharan Africa; millions of adults, particularly women, are still illiterate; a significant number of children do not have basic skills even after completing several years of school; and there are problems with the quality of education which

children receive. The UN (2010) MDG report reported similar findings, noting that though there had been an increase in primary school enrollment, the pace of progress was slow and that it was unlikely that the goal of UPE by 2015 would be achieved.

The need to implement change and the capability to do so in terms of resources are two separate issues. Many developing countries do not have the financial resources to make the changes that they need to develop their educational systems. Funding for developing countries to improve their educational systems has been provided by many different donors (UNESCO, 2009). However, there has been concern that donor funding to education has decreased in recent years due to the global financial crisis. The UNESCO (2010a) EFA Global Monitoring Report stated that there is “a real danger that donors will fall short of their pledges” (p. 219). If the trend of decreasing financial support from donor countries continues, the ability of developing countries to improve their educational systems may be severely hampered and the perceived benefits of education may be missed.

The international interest in developing education globally has been sustained because numerous researchers have linked increased education to positive benefits for individuals and countries in terms of better health, increased wealth, and security. In relationship to health, education has been seen as one of the most important tools in battling the spread of HIV/Aids (Bloom, 2004; Sperling 2005). Educated mothers in Africa were more likely to make positive choices about their health and the health of their children than mothers who were uneducated (Sperling, 2005). Bellew and King (1991) also echoed Sperling in stating that countries with high levels of “educated women have smaller families, fewer of their children die in infancy and the children who survive are

healthier and better educated” (pp. 1-2). Bloom and Cohen (2002) also linked increased education to low fertility and mortality, both indications of development for countries. Bloom (2004) asserted that education was a key factor in inhibiting the transmission of HIV.

The economic value of education was summarized by Bloom (2004) who stated, “Economic development on the global market is easier if a country’s workforce is productive and has the mental agility to retrain for new industries when old ones become defunct and new opportunities arise” (p. 57). Educated people are more likely to be employed; education stimulates economic growth and improves the lives of poor people through lower fertility and improved health care (Van der Berg, 2007). Bloom and Cohen (2002) also touted the economic benefits of education stating, “Education, or investment in people’s capacities raises people’s productivity and provides a foundation for rapid technological change” (p. 88).

The ability of education to promote stability was reported by the Basic Education Coalition (2006) who found that education was instrumental in reducing violence and civil unrest. A World Bank (1993) Country Study on the Caribbean Region found that social problems might be lessened if there were educational opportunities for the youth. Bloom and Cohen (2002) suggested there was a social aspect to education and theorized that education allowed people to make good choices about their lives and the lives of others. They also supported the role of education in promoting peace. Bloom, Cohen and Malin (2006) summarized the value of education in providing better economies, better health, and stability by stating “Education provides economic benefits. Education builds strong communities and polities. Education reduces fertility and improves health.

Education is a widely accepted humanitarian obligation, and an internationally mandated human right” (p. 8). Sperling (2001), echoed these sentiments by stating, “in poor countries as in rich countries education creates a foundation for economic growth, higher standards of living, better health and a more informed citizenry” (p. 13).

While numerous researchers have established a link between education and better health, economies, and stability, other researchers have been less optimistic about the effects of education on these factors. Fuller, Edwards, and Gorman (1986) theorized that increased educational opportunities may follow a country’s economic growth rather than precede it because countries that are more economically viable will have the financial resources to improve their educational systems. They also challenged the human capital theory link to education and economic growth by stating that education was first pursued by religious organizations long before any economic benefit was attached to it.

In the article, “Counting Heads; Economics focus” (2004) the author (s) also challenged the supposed economic benefits derived from education, stating, “Economists have failed to prove that better education and training significantly raises a country’s long-term growth” (para. 1). The article also asserted that the possession of a degree does not signify that an individual has “skills that increase productive capacity” (para. 4). Bloom and Cohen (2002), while acknowledging the possible economic benefits derived from education, acknowledged these benefits are not guaranteed, citing several countries with well-educated populations but weak economies. They also cited countries whose economies have prospered because of factors other than education, stating “Some of the Gulf states, whose growth has been founded on oil rather than education, show that universal education is not even necessary for economic growth” (p. 89). Figueredo and

Anzalone (2003) argued that the economic benefits derived from education are only possible when the education which is provided is a quality education. While the benefits of education have been disputed, the research generally supports the view that an investment in education is in the best interest of all countries, but particularly developing countries, to reduce poverty, increase wealth, promote good health and ensure a stable society.

Education in the Caribbean Countries

For the purposes of this study, the Caribbean will refer to the English-speaking countries in the Caribbean region. The countries of the Caribbean fall into several geographic and political groupings, namely the Caribbean countries, Eastern Caribbean countries, Windward Islands, Leeward Islands, Lesser Antilles, Greater Antilles, West Indies, OECS, the Commonwealth countries and the Caribbean Community (Caricom) countries. These groupings, established because of geographic location or political necessity, were fitting because these countries share many similarities including similar histories of European colonization and in some cases similar small sizes, population demographics, and struggling economies. One of the similarities shared by these Caribbean countries is the emphasis placed on education.

Caribbean countries have a long history of providing educational opportunities to their citizens (Miller, 2009). In colonial times, education in the West Indies was primarily provided for the white plantation owners and later was expanded to include the slaves after emancipation (Bacchus, 1990; Jules, 2008). The education provided to the slaves was initially provided by religious institutions and the curriculum emphasized religious values and maintaining social order (Bacchus, 1990). After gaining

independence, many of the countries expanded their educational systems. Though the educational systems of the Caribbean countries have moved away from their colonial roots, many aspects of the British system still remain, most notably in the stratification of students at various levels of the system and promotion to the secondary level through national assessments which assigns top performing students to prestigious schools and lower performing students to other schools including technical/vocational schools (Jennings, 2001).

The decision to provide education to the citizens of the region was strategic as Caribbean governments recognized the potential benefits that education could have on small countries with limited natural resources and struggling economies. The emphasis placed on education by some of the governments of the Caribbean countries has resulted in these governments spending significantly to develop their educational systems (Blom & Hobbs, 2008). The investments in education have led to several accomplishments for the educational systems of these countries that are comparable to more developed regions of the world. The UNESCO (2009) EFA Global Monitoring Report found that education in the region (Latin America and the Caribbean) stood ahead of other developing regions and that most countries in the region had achieved UPE. The report also found that the percentage of students moving from primary to lower secondary education was high. Miller (1996) noted several achievements in the region including the achievement of UPE, higher enrollments in pre-school and secondary education in most countries, inclusion of students with disabilities into the educational system, the establishment of colleges, and the creation of relevant curriculum.

While the educational systems of Caribbean countries have recorded several accomplishments, concerns have been raised about the quality of the education received by the students in the region. A World Bank (1993) Report on the Caribbean Region that studied access, quality, and efficiency found that the “Overall quality of schooling provided to the majority of primary students and hence levels of achievement are widely perceived as poor” (p. 1). Problems were also noted in the educational systems of the countries of the Eastern Caribbean by Blank (2007) in a study on the Situational Analysis of Children and Women in the Eastern Caribbean, which found that the education outcomes in the region were unsatisfactory despite the relatively high spending on education and that there were “significant quality constraints including untrained and inadequately trained teachers, outdated curriculum and teaching materials, limited access to appropriate learning materials and unclear promotion and retention policies” (p. 39). The study recommended improving the quality of education by taking several measures such as improving teacher quality, changing the curriculum to make it more relevant, and establishing continuous assessment systems and remedial programs for students who are behind.

Blom and Hobbs (2008), in a report on School and Work in the Eastern Caribbean, found that firms in the Eastern Caribbean countries were having problems finding qualified candidates to fill available positions and tended to blame the education system for not preparing young people for new skilled jobs. The report suggested recommendations to improve the educational systems of the Eastern Caribbean to include improving how schools were governed, enhancing accountability, improving the quality of education, nurturing behavioral life skills, and investing in youth training programs.

The report further pointed out the fact that in some countries in the Eastern Caribbean, students had no education credentials even after eight years of school and that there was no mechanism in place to determine how students performed compared to the rest of the world.

The efforts of Caribbean governments to improve their educational systems have resulted in UPE being achieved in most of these countries. The pursuit of USE has received much attention since the year 2000 in many of the smaller islands of the OECS region (World Bank, 2010). The introduction of USE was a logical move for these smaller islands to continue to meet and in some cases surpass the educational goals and objectives set by international organizations.

The OECS Countries

The OECS is made up of nine countries of the Eastern Caribbean and was established in 1981. The organization was established to promote unity and cooperation among the countries of the Eastern Caribbean (OECS, 2010). The member states are Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (OECS, 2010). The countries of the Eastern Caribbean have many things in common that makes cooperation between those countries a smart, strategic, and necessary move. These similarities include their location; their small size, with Dominica being the biggest at 305 square miles and Montserrat the smallest at 39.5 square miles; and their similar histories of European colonization (Forde, n.d.).

The population of the OECS countries has been estimated at 600,000 (World Bank, 2010). The economies of the OECS countries are heavily dependent on tourism

and while they are classified as middle income countries, poverty levels range from 18% to 38% of the population (World Bank, 2010 para. 7). The global economic crisis has resulted in a downturn in the economies of these countries. The fragile economies of many of the OECS countries have led the governments of these countries to collaborate on many areas to reduce costs and share ideas. Educational reform is one area where the governments have collaborated to seek strategies to improve their educational systems, meet international educational goals, and obtain the potential benefits of education.

Education in the OECS

There are the usual four levels of education in the OECS countries, namely early childhood or preschool; primary; secondary; and tertiary (Miller et al., 1991). Early childhood education is primarily offered by private providers with some provision from the government. Primary education is universal and is equally available to and accessed by both genders (Miller et al., 1991). While primary education was universal in many of the countries, secondary education in the region was restricted to students who were successful at entrance examinations which led to less than 50% of students transitioning to secondary schools in many of the islands (Miller et al., 1991). This changed starting in 2000 as many of the islands began to implement USE resulting in an increase in secondary enrollment rates from 78% to 100% in the various islands by 2009 (World Bank, 2010). While access to secondary education was expanding, the same could not be said for tertiary education. Miller et al. (1991) reported that “provision of tertiary education was out of step with the rest of the education system” (p. 5). This finding was echoed almost 10 years later by Miller, Jules, and Thomas (2000) who found that tertiary education in the OECS was not fully developed.

In an effort to address common concerns in the educational systems in the OECS countries, various programs and initiatives have been implemented on a regional level. In 1990, a working group was established by the countries of the OECS, bringing together education professionals from around the OECS. The culmination of this working group was the development of a Publication called Foundations for the Future (FFF): OECS Education Reform Strategy (Miller et al., 1991). This document recommended 65 strategies for improving the educational systems in the regions in nine areas. These strategies addressed every level of the educational system from early childhood to the tertiary level, and addressed administration and management of schools, financing of education, and issues dealing with the teaching profession. Due to the focus of my study, only the objectives and strategies dealing with secondary education will be addressed here. There were three objectives targeted at secondary education. The three objectives were to “Expand the provision of secondary education in the sub-region; to re-conceptualize its nature, form and content; to improve its quality” (Miller et al., 1991, p. 14). Six strategies (strategies 20-26) were recommended to achieve the three secondary education objectives.

Strategy 20 recommended a restructuring of the school system and setting age limits for transitioning to secondary school and also for completing secondary school. Recommendations were also made regarding the skills and competencies that students should acquire before transitioning to secondary school, suggesting that students should transition from the primary to the secondary level “based on satisfying functional standards of literacy and numeracy at the primary level” (Miller et al., 1991, p. 15). Strategy 21 recommended that a core curriculum be established in the lower secondary

and that students at the upper level should be required to focus on specialized subjects with English Language being compulsory. Strategy 22 recommended that changes be made in the school schedule to offer some programs on a semester schedule, the use of different student groupings for instruction and different methods for promoting students. Strategy 23 focused on improving the quality of secondary education, recommending training for school principals and secondary school teachers, the lengthening of the school day, and placing an emphasis on teaching foreign languages (Miller et al., 1991). Strategy 24 recommended strengthening support services. Strategy 25 recommended linking secondary education with other levels of the educational system and strategy 26 recommended the formation of summer enrichment programs and exchanges of students and teachers within the region (Miller et al., 1991).

The publication of the FFF led to renewed interest in and commitment by the governments of the OECS countries to improving their educational systems and also led to several efforts at educational reform in the region. Following the publication of the FFF, the Eastern Caribbean Education Reform Project (ECERP) was established in 1994 through a partnership between the OECS governments and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (OECS, 2007). This project came about as a way to address the strategies outlined in the FFF. The ECERP project had several accomplishments and produced several documents pertaining to education in the OECS region. These accomplishments included the development of several Education Bills, studies conducted on teachers and students in the region, the production of manuals and handbooks for educators in the region, the harmonization of the curriculum at various levels of the educational systems, and consolidating resources dealing with education in

the OECS countries. The ECERP project also established the OECS Education Reform Unit in 1994, which was to manage educational reform in the region (OECS, 2007).

The FFF was revised 10 years after its publication leading to a new document called Pillars for Partnership and Progress (PPP): The OECS Education Reform Strategy: 2010 (Miller, Jules, & Thomas, 2000). This document kept all of the strategies from the FFF, modified some to reflect the changes in education in the region and the world since the FFF had been published, and included two new areas to address information and communications technology in education and societal imperatives. Again, due to the focus of my study, only strategies 32-38 which deal with reforming secondary education will be addressed. The objectives and strategies for reforming secondary education remained unchanged in the PPP but there were minor modifications in the actions to achieve the objectives. These modifications primarily dealt with the addition of the use of technology and an emphasis on subjects that were deemed to be important to be successful in the changing global landscape.

Other educational reforms in the OECS included the OERU strategic plan in 2001. The purpose of this strategic plan was to “address major concerns in primary and secondary education, together with information and communications technology (ICTs) and knowledge management” (OECS, 2007, p. 4). A new strategic plan was developed in 2005 called Facilitating Partnership and Progress and which focused on the sharing of educational ideas and activities between the OECS countries, the introduction of educational ideas and activities from outside the region, soliciting funding from donor countries, and providing support to schools.

Teacher development. Teacher training institutions have been present in the Caribbean as early as the 1800's (Miller, n.d; Jennings, 2001). The University of the West Indies has certified teachers in the Eastern Caribbean (Jennings, 2001) since the 1950's (University of the West Indies at Mona, Jamaica, 2010). Recent reforms in teacher education and development have focused on increasing teacher knowledge, changing the role of the teacher to that of a facilitator of learning, different modes of accessing teacher education opportunities, an increased use of technology, and an effort to offer continuous development (Miller, n.d.). Jennings (2001) conducted a study with eight countries in the Caribbean and examined teacher education programs and their ability to prepare teachers to teach language arts, reading, and foreign languages in the first three forms of the secondary level. She concluded that "few teachers' colleges . . . are equal to the task" (p. 131) of preparing teachers to instruct students in the skills they would need in the globalized world. She found that teaching in the region still followed a teacher-led style though student-centered teaching is often considered a more effective method of teaching. She also found that the teacher training programs were not preparing teachers to teach low achieving students. She added that the working conditions of teachers needed to be improved and there needed to be "radical changes in the curricula and practices of teachers' colleges" (p. 132). The more diverse student population brought on by the introduction of USE, places more importance on effective teaching methodology to reach these students.

Student assessment in the OECS. Student achievement is an area that has proven to be troublesome for the OECS countries. Secondary education assessment was primarily accomplished using the British GCE examination until 1972. In 1972, the

Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) was established to assess students from the region because the governments of the region saw a need to assess the region's students using assessments that were relevant to the Caribbean (Caribbean Community Secretariat, 2009). The CXC offers a choice of 34 subjects to students from Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Turks and Caicos Islands (Caribbean Community Secretariat, 2009). The CXC administers four assessments, three at the secondary level. These are the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC); The Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC); and the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ). The CXC also administers one at the post-secondary level, the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency examination (CAPE).

The CSEC is the traditional assessment offered by the CXC, while the CCSLC and the CVQ were established to respond to the needs of a more diverse student population following the implementation of USE in many of the countries in the region (Griffith, 2009). The CSEC is offered at the end of the secondary education cycle and offers students a choice of 34 different subjects at General and technical proficiencies (CXC, 2010). The General Proficiency is accepted as "the gold standard" (Griffith, 2009, p. 41) while the Basic Proficiency is geared toward students "who may not subsequently pursue further studies in areas related to the subject" (Griffith, 2009, p. 41). The Technical Proficiency is geared towards students who prefer a more practical orientation (Griffith, 2009). Students are assessed using a six point grading scheme (I-VI) with a

grade of I being the highest possible grade; and six profile grades (A-F) with grade of A being the highest possible profile grade (CXC, 2010).

The CCSLC was first offered in 2007, and can be written at different stages of the secondary level as early as form three and assesses students on “knowledge, skills and attitudes that all secondary students should have” (CXC, 2010, para. 2). Students are required to write a minimum of five subjects including Language Arts and Mathematics as part of their program of study and can select the other subjects from the CSEC program or the technical and vocational program. The certificate awarded to students is awarded by the MOE of the respective country and the CXC (CXC, 2010). The CVQ is designed to test students in technical and vocational subjects. Students are assessed by their teachers and by evaluators from CXC. The results of the CXC examinations over the years have shown that student achievement (as measured by the CXC examinations) in the Eastern Caribbean is low, particularly in mathematics, as evidenced by the low pass rates (World Bank, 1993).

Expanding Secondary Education

Many of the OECS countries have introduced USE. St. Kitts and Nevis was at the forefront of USE implementation and introduced it in 1966 (Miller, 2009). Anguilla also has a long history of USE, whereas Dominica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines introduced USE as recently as 2005 (OECS, 2006) and St. Lucia following in 2006 (Michel, 2006). The introduction of USE brings two central issues to education officials: increasing access while maintaining quality (Hinds, 2007). The issue of access takes into account the obvious development of the infrastructure to provide more secondary school places for the new students being introduced into the education system. Providing access

also can involve issues of equity and the equality of opportunity to access the available education. While there is no clear definition for what constitutes a quality education (UNESCO, 2005) several factors have been shown to be good measures of quality as they can have an effect on the learning outcomes of students. These include: (a) relevant curriculum (UNESCO, 2005, UNESCO, 1990); (b) teacher development (UNESCO, 1990); (c) provision of resources and support services (UNESCO, 2005; UNICEF, 2000); and (d) student assessment or evaluation (Hinds, 2007; UNICEF, 2000).

Increasing access. Increasing access involves developing the infrastructure by constructing new schools or expanding existing schools to provide places for the increased number of students introduced into the system as a result of the expansion of the secondary education system. These schools must also be maintained and resourced (Hinds, 2007) and should take into account factors such as space to provide proper instruction (UNICEF, 2000). Modernizing these schools with technology is also a consideration which can involve much cost (Hinds, 2007; Jules, n.d.). There are options to lessen the costs associated with increasing secondary school access. Officials can adopt a double shift system which would allow existing schools to be used for both primary and secondary schooling thus reducing the cost of constructing new schools (Manduvi-Moyo & Lewin, 2001). In the OECS countries, access was primarily provided by the construction of new schools and the expansion of existing schools (Hinds, 2007).

Equity. Access to a secondary education is a progressive move, however, access alone does not guarantee equity. In many countries, even when access has been granted it is not provided equitably to all groups for a variety of reasons including discrimination based on race, socioeconomic status, or geographical location (UNICEF, 2000;

UNESCO, 2010a). In countries where secondary education is not provided to all citizens, selective mechanisms are sometimes used to assign students to the available places (Lewin & Calloids, 2001; UNESCO, 2000). This selection process also determines to which schools students will be assigned. This results in a homogeneous stratification of students by ability where the most academically able students are grouped together in schools that are deemed to be more prestigious and the less academically able students are assigned to schools that are deemed to be less prestigious (Leacock, 2009). This stratification presents problems of equity as sometimes the schools with less status are under resourced (Leacock, 2009). This practice can also lead to the “negative labeling of such schools and the students who are enrolled there” (Hinds, 2007, p. 10). Jules (n.d.) explained the result of stratification of schools in Caribbean countries by stating, “there is growing evidence that stratification of schools is contributing to social inequality through the marginalization or poorer, less performing students” (p. 11). Willms (2006) felt that assigning students of low ability to select schools makes it “difficult to maintain high expectations, establish a positive disciplinary climate, and attract and retain talented teachers” (p. 51).

The OECS countries that have implemented USE have used different strategies to transition students to secondary schools. St. Kitts and Nevis and Dominica placed students based on their area of residence. St. Vincent and the Grenadines offered students six school choices and placed them based on the results of the CEE. St. Lucia offered students seven choices and also used the CEE to place them. The OECS (2006), while acknowledging that there were problems associated with the homogeneous

grouping of students by ability, reported that this process had benefits such as allowing better organization for teaching.

Introduction of USE brings about questions of homogeneous or heterogeneous grouping of students based on ability, and the equity of such groupings. While homogeneous grouping of students may have seemed necessary when access to secondary school was limited, the expansion of access questions the necessity of such groupings particularly as research suggests that homogeneous grouping of students by ability only shows a minor increase in student achievement as compared to heterogeneous groupings (Willms, 2006).

Curriculum. “Most countries have based their education curricular on the needs of their elites as opposed to the needs of their masses” (Holsinger & Cowell, 2000, p. 45). Secondary schools which catered to a select group of students typically followed a more academic curriculum (Leacock, 2009). The more diverse student body introduced into the educational system as a result of the expansion of secondary education will require education officials to revisit the curriculum to make it more relevant to students with diverse academic backgrounds. The curriculum options include a curriculum with a strong academic emphasis, curriculum with a more technical and vocational emphasis, and curriculum with both an academic and technical and vocational emphasis (Holsinger & Cowell, 2000). The diverse academic background of the students introduced into the system as a result of the expansion of the secondary education system may cause officials to stream these students into areas that are sometimes deemed inferior. UNESCO (2005) warned that these approaches,

fail to cater to the needs of late developing students, contribute to the social segregation of the two streams and reinforce the perception that vocational training is the inferior career pathway frequented by students from the more disadvantaged sections of society. (p. 6)

UNESCO (2005) cautioned against early streaming of students into academic or technical and vocational streams and advised a focus on both streams with mechanisms that would allow students to shift from one to the next to prepare students for higher education or the workforce. With the advent of USE, Leacock (2009) advocated a curriculum with less academic focus to meet the needs of students and one which emphasizes “lifelong learning” (p. 33). King (2009) advised that the curriculum should emphasize science and technology curriculum and the use of cooperative learning and alternative curricula. The OECS countries approached curriculum from different angles including developing curriculum for the lower secondary level, emphasizing literacy, numeracy, and technical and vocational education (OECS, 2006).

Professional development. “Educational reforms that do not include teachers and their professional development have not been successful” (Villegas-Reimers, 2003, p. 24). This statement is a resounding endorsement of the importance of teacher development. Research suggests that effective and ongoing professional development has the potential to improve student achievement (UNICEF, 2000; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Another benefit of professional development may be the improvement of teacher self-efficacy, development of high expectations for students, and agreement that all students can learn (UNICEF, 2000). Teachers in countries that traditionally provided secondary education opportunities to the most academically able students are not

accustomed to teaching students with very limited academic competence (Leacock, 2009). The expansion of secondary education opportunities requires that teachers receive professional development to prepare them to work with students with low academic competence. Marks (2009), in examining the introduction of USE in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, found that professional development for teachers was “inadequate and lagged behind policy implementation” (p. 67). As a result, teachers were not prepared for the many challenges posed by the implementation of USE.

Leacock (2009) felt that with the expansion of secondary education to include a more diverse student population, teacher development needed to emphasize “special needs education, educational technology, social and emotional learning issues, as well as a variety of assessment techniques and how to use the outcomes of assessment appropriately” (p. 34). She also stressed the need for teachers to receive support and time to handle their new roles. The more academically diverse student population as a result of expansion of the secondary education system also requires that teachers receive professional development in more student-centered teaching approaches (King, 2009). To have a positive impact on teacher development and student achievement, professional development must be continuous and ongoing (Fowler, 2004; Fullan, 2000; Hall & Hord, 2006). The OECS countries have focused their professional development for teachers on teaching numeracy and literacy skills, differentiated instruction, and the provision of instructional resources (OECS, 2006).

Resources. Expansion of educational opportunities requires that resources be made available to accommodate the increased number of students introduced into the system. The resources required at the secondary level are typically higher than at the

primary school level because of the specialization at secondary schools (Lewin & Calloids, 2001). The construction of schools is one area of focus, however, many other resources need to be provided. These include materials, supplies and other resources to promote approaches to instructional delivery that would help keep students engaged and make learning more student-centered (World Bank, 2005). The resources needed when expanding secondary education opportunities can be quite costly, therefore officials need to make sure these resources are being used efficiently by reducing factors that contribute to inefficiency such as high dropout or high rates of repetition (Lewin & Calloids, 2001).

Support services. The expansion of the educational system will likely bring in students from diverse economic and social backgrounds. Services will need to be provided to meet the needs of those students. These services may include “guidance and counseling services, the provision of extra-curricular activities and the provision of school snacks” (UNICEF, 2000, p. 10). Remedial services may also be necessary to support students who may not be academically proficient (Blom & Hobbs, 2008; Hinds, 2007) and to help avert the issue of dropping out, which can be costly (Wolff & de Moura Castro, 2000). According to the OECS (2006), the OECS countries provided several support services with the advent of USE. Anguilla had special classes and referral systems, Dominica focused on national assessments and an early intervention system, and St. Lucia expanded its student guidance and counseling system. Some of the countries also established programs to provide text books, meals and school uniforms to students.

Student assessment. The diverse academic background of the students introduced into the educational system as a result of the expansion of secondary education implies that alternative assessments may be necessary to help these students

succeed. The traditional written assessments may not be suitable for students who have limited academic proficiency (Leacock, 2009). Alternative assessments should take into account students' diverse learning styles. Assessment should also be ongoing to diagnose and address student deficiencies (Marks, 2009; UNICEF, 2000). Education officials have several options to assess students including: (a) assessments administered within the schools such as teacher made tests; (b) examinations administered at different levels to all students in the system, that are primarily used as a selection mechanism; and (c) international assessments that compare student achievement across countries (UNESCO, 2000). While assessments give education officials information about student performance so they can make adjustments to the curriculum and teaching, UNESCO (2000) questioned the reliance of some assessments because, "The usefulness of such programs can be limited by a shortage of places in secondary schools, poor quality teaching, inadequate supplies, language problems, and other forces beyond the control of assessment authorities" (p. 66). The World Bank (2005) reported that many countries were moving toward multiple forms of assessment at the secondary level and supported that trend because those assessments are "technically sophisticated and socially inclusive" (p. 102). Many of the OECS countries instituted various forms of assessment as they expanded their secondary education systems. Anguilla had special classes and referral systems, Dominica implemented national assessments and an early intervention system, and St. Lucia introduced additional national examinations at the primary and secondary levels (OECS, 2006).

Certifications are also an area of focus as some of these students will move directly into the workforce before or at the conclusion of their secondary schooling, so a

certificate might be required for them to get a job. The CXC has recognized the need for alternative assessments and certifications with the advent of USE and has introduced several options for students (Griffith, 2009). While the factors listed above are important to consider when expanding access to secondary education, other steps that facilitate policy implementation must be taken to help ensure that the expansion policies can be successful.

Universal Secondary Education in St. Lucia

The pursuit of USE by the Government of St. Lucia began in 2000, the goal of USE by 2005 being stated in the 1999/2000 ESDP. The attainment of USE was facilitated by a loan from the World Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), an affiliate organization of UNESCO, and by funding from the Government of St. Lucia in 2003 under the OECS Education Development Plan (OEDP). According to Mario Michel, the former Minister of Education in St. Lucia, the introduction of USE cost EC\$50 million (\$US19 million) (Emmanuel, 2002). The OEDP resulted in the construction of two new schools increasing the secondary school places by over 2,500 (World Bank, 2009). Further school places were added by the expansion of existing schools and the upgrading of the senior primary schools to full secondary schools (World Bank, 2009). These actions prepared the way for the eventual implementation of USE in 2006.

The introduction of USE occurred one year later than the estimated date proposed in the ESDP, causing a delay in the opening of some schools. The World Bank (2009) attributed the delay to several factors including the changing of the locations of the new schools by the government and changes in the staff at the MOE, which sometimes led to

a delayed response on some aspects of the project. The bank also identified several other issues that came up during the project. These included a “lack of engagement and coordination from the Ministry of Education and other ministries” (p. 6) particularly during the early stages of the project; and the exclusion of teacher training due to “slow progress” (p. 7). In addition, the World Bank (2009) found that the implementation of USE negatively impacted the quality of education, and the CCSLC which was introduced by the CXC during the project was not well understood by teachers. The introduction of USE meant that for the first time every student in St. Lucia who completed grade six would have access to a secondary school education.

According to the former Prime Minister of St. Lucia, Kenny Anthony, there were many intended outcomes for USE. These included ensuring that students were only promoted to the secondary level when they had mastered the primary curriculum, which would be determined by continually assessing students; providing services to students; the establishment of programs to aid in math and language; and the creation of development plans for every school. In the 2003-2004 budget address, then Prime Minister of St. Lucia, Kenny Anthony, emphasized the importance of the attainment of USE by stating, “The attainment of USE is a milestone that signals that a country has reached a particular threshold in its human resource development and its capacity to develop itself” (Anthony, 2003, section 37). In the same budget address, he underscored the impact of USE on the educational system by stating to parents that “The common entrance exam will no longer be the sentence of death for their children’s future” (Anthony, 2003, section 37).

Prior to the implementation of USE, promotion from the primary to secondary level had occurred based on a student's school choice and performance on the CEE written at the end of grade six. While the student's choice was supposedly considered in determining school placement, this "choice" was actually dependent on the results of the CEE. If a student indicated a particular school choice but did not have the required CEE scores then no consideration was given to the student's choice. The screening nature of the CEE resulted in the more academically able students being assigned to particular prestigious schools and the less academically able students being assigned to less prestigious schools which were often stigmatized.

Students usually had two attempts at the CEE to obtain a spot in a secondary school. If both attempts at the CEE were unsuccessful, the student then attended a senior primary school and three years later could write a Special Examination to progress to a secondary school. If the student was successful at the Special Examination he or she would go on to attend a secondary school at the third form. Entering the secondary school at the third form meant the student would be with students of similar age and would be on track to complete secondary school at the same time as students of his or her age. This also meant that students might not have had the prerequisites for a secondary education because they missed the first two years of secondary school. If the student was unsuccessful at the Special Examination, then formal public education would end. For some students this occurred at age 15, leaving many students without the benefit of a secondary education.

According to the St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture (2007) Statistical Digest, before the implementation of USE fewer than 62% of students were promoted

from the primary to secondary level of schooling based on their performance on the CEE.

The percentage of students promoted to a secondary school based on the CEE examination from 2000-2009 is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Percentage of Students Assigned to Secondary Schools in Relation to the Number of Students who Sat the Common Entrance Exam from 2000-2009.

Year	Number Sat	Number Assigned	Percentage Assigned
2000	4476	2427	54
2001	4508	2482	55
2002	4532	2520	56
2003	4477	2687	60
2004	4295	2608	61
2005	4146	2519	61
2006	4302	3890	90
2007	3656	3551	97
2008	3223	3145	98
2009	3102	3005	97

Note. From St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2007.

As illustrated in Table 1, six years before the implementation of USE fewer than 55% of students were able to pursue a secondary education while in the year prior to the implementation of USE the number had risen to about 62%. After the implementation of USE the table should show 100% of students being promoted to a secondary school because promotion was automatic, however, parents could still keep their children back

one year if the student had not been promoted to one of the more prestigious schools. This would seem to indicate that USE had not diminished the attractiveness or importance of the more prestigious schools in St. Lucia. After the implementation of USE, the senior primary schools were disestablished allowing students to transition directly from the primary to the secondary level of the system.

Policy Implementation

Education is an area where change is constant. This can be viewed in positive and negative terms. Positively, the changes in education can reflect the diverse and changing nature of schools and the populations they serve, and these changes may enhance the relevance of education. In negative terms, there are so many changes in education that there is little evidence of what works. The myriad changes in policies and programs do not always reflect a failure in the program or policy; sometimes, the failure can be attributed to ineffective planning and implementation (Sims & Sims, 2004). Some researchers have suggested key steps that they think must be taken during the planning and implementation of any program or change effort to increase the chances of success for that program or effort (Fowler 2004; Hall & Hord, 2006). These key steps include the involvement of stakeholders in defining, planning, and implementing policies (Fowler, 2004; Sims & Sims, 2004); the need for monitoring and evaluating the policy to make changes based on feedback (Fowler, 2004); and the need to invest adequate time to allow policies or projects to be fully implemented (Fullan, 1996).

Stakeholder involvement. Stakeholder involvement in policy implementation has been cited as key to successful policy implementation. Miller, Jules, and Thomas (2000) emphasize the role of stakeholders by stating, “If the provisions for education are

excellent but the participation of teachers, students and parents are mediocre and poor, then the impact of the reform will be disappointing in terms of their desired effect” (p. 11). Fowler (2004) emphasized the important role that stakeholders can play in the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of implementation to help make effective policies. She cautioned against adopting policies that are made “by a small group of people who have the authority to impose their ideas on others” (p. 278) and advised that there should be adequate support from stakeholders for the policy which is being implemented and that policymakers should ensure that they communicate effectively with stakeholders throughout the implementation process.

The importance of stakeholder involvement in the process of change was emphasized by Sims and Sims (2004) who argued that “School system change approaches which fail to properly involve stakeholders, prove to be unsustainable” (p. 109). They cited several advantages of involving stakeholders in school system change including longevity of projects due to stakeholder support for projects they feel they had played a part in developing, early identification of potential problems, effective use of time as problems with stakeholders can be addressed and resolved early in the process preventing future delays, effective use of resources as costs incurred while dealing with potential litigation may be avoided, and the possible good relationships that can arise between school systems and stakeholder groups from cooperating and increased understanding of the policy by stakeholders.

While some researchers (Fowler, 2004; Sims & Sims, 2004) have emphasized the benefits of stakeholder involvement in implementing change and some change efforts are arrived at because of mutual agreement by various stakeholders in the educational

system, some change efforts are imposed and the expectation is that all persons involved will simply implement the change. Hall and Hord (2006) addressed these mandated changes acknowledging that though mandated change is usually viewed in a negative light, those change efforts sometimes work because “with a mandate the priority is clear and there is an expectation that the innovation will be implemented” (pp. 11-12). The problem with mandated changes occurs when the “change process is only supported at the initial announcement of the mandate” (p. 12). Fullan (1996) does not support mandated change because he feels they “are likely to achieve only superficial compliance” (p. 2) which would not lead to effective change. Brower (2006) supported Fullan’s position stating “By forcing change on people, many will strike back and fight for their lives to resist change” (p. 44).

Monitoring and evaluation. Support and involvement from stakeholders along with adequate resources can go a long way in helping to ensure that a policy or change is effectively implemented. However, these factors by themselves are not sufficient to result in successful policy implementation. Policies that are implemented need to be monitored and evaluated to help determine whether they are meeting the established outcomes and to help facilitate corrective action if they are not proceeding as expected. Fowler (2004) recommended that policies be monitored and assistance provided on an ongoing basis. She stated that “The only way leaders can know when help is needed and what kind it should be is by monitoring the project and gathering regular feedback” (p. 289). She suggested that monitoring and feedback be achieved by visiting the sites where the implementation is taking place to see firsthand the problems of implementation and to “communicate an important message to the implementers about the seriousness of their

efforts” (p. 289). She argued that assistance is necessary throughout the implementation process as there will be individuals who will need assistance at all stages and that the assistance provided should address the problems being experienced by the implementers. Hall and Hord (2006) theorize that change efforts sometimes fail because of a lack of monitoring. They emphasize the importance of monitoring to “identify needs, clarify questions and solve problems” (p. 192). They also emphasize the need for the use of data in monitoring change efforts.

Another key factor to consider when implementing or introducing a policy is the time needed for the policy to be fully implemented. Fowler (2004) and Hall and Hord (2006) emphasized that policy makers needed to be aware that policies take time to be fully implemented. Fullan (1996) advised that the change process should be seen as a journey. Policy implementers should use the time to monitor and make changes to the policy if the need arises.

The process of implementing change effectively can be a daunting task even when the best methods and procedures are adhered to throughout the change process. There is no guarantee of the success of any change effort. However, research (Fowler, 2004; Fullan, 1996; Hall & Hord, 2006; Sims & Sims, 2004) suggests that paying attention to certain factors such as involving stakeholders in the process, and monitoring and evaluating the change effort, can help to increase the chances of success for the effort.

Summary

The research suggests that the increased provision of education is linked to increased development for individuals and countries. As a result, international organizations have provided support and finances to help developing countries improve

their educational systems. Many developing countries including St. Lucia have embarked on a policy of USE. This decision was a logical step for countries that had achieved UPE and because of the importance of secondary education in preparing individuals for more advanced skills which were becoming necessary to be competitive in the global economy.

Although the goal of USE to provide access to a secondary education to all students is commendable, access alone will have very limited benefits. To be effective, USE must not only provide access to an education but access to a quality education. This requires education officials to pay attention to several factors including instituting relevant curriculum, providing resources and support services, investing in teacher development and using assessments to diagnose and address student deficiencies. While there is no guarantee of success for the implementation of any policy, there are several factors that will highly increase successful implementation. Thorough planning, involvement of stakeholders, and consistent monitoring and evaluation are necessary to help facilitate effective implementation of any policy including USE. If the implementation of USE is not approached in an organized and systematic manner, then the program is likely to fail or at best underachieve, a lot of valuable resources will have been wasted, and the citizens of the country might become resistant to future educational reform.

In this chapter, I explored the literature concerning the benefits of education particularly to individuals and developing countries and the efforts of international organizations to help develop the educational systems of these countries. I described the educational systems in the Caribbean and OECS countries, detailed some of the factors

involved in expanding secondary education, described the implementation of USE in St. Lucia, and reviewed the literature on policy implementation. The following chapter will detail the methods used in this study including the research design, the methods used to select participants, the data collection methods, a description of the research site, and efforts used to help ensure validity of the study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate secondary teachers' perceptions of the introduction of Universal Secondary Education in St. Lucia. The previous chapter reviewed the literature on the importance of education in improving the lives of individuals and in improving the economic, social and political climate of countries. The chapter also reviewed the literature concerning education in the OECS countries, the implementation of USE in those countries, and some of the steps involved in policy implementation. This chapter explains the research design, the instruments used to collect data, the research setting, the methods used to select participants and help ensure validity, and the procedures used to collect data. A reflection on data collection is also given to give context to the study.

Research Design

The selection of a research design is an important part of every research effort. There are many factors that go into which design is chosen by a researcher, but the most important factor involved in choosing a research design is choosing a design which will most fully answer the research question (s) (Morgan 1998). A qualitative research design was chosen for this study. "Qualitative research is useful for describing or answering questions about particular, localized occurrences or contexts and the perspectives of a participant group toward events, beliefs, or practices" (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p. 202). Barbour (2008) described one advantage of using qualitative research by stating that it excels at illuminating process, whether this is organizational change or individual decision-making, since it allows us to examine how changes affect daily

procedures and interactions; this will allow us to uncover unintended as well as intended consequences of new arrangements. (p. 13)

Qualitative studies are characterized by the researcher spending time collecting data in the participants' setting, the researcher as the main source of data collection, the use of primarily text rather than numerical data, an emphasis on a "holistic approach . . . focusing on processes as well as final outcomes" (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p. 204), the use of narrative in describing and reporting the data, the formulation of hypotheses during the course of the study rather than before, the continuous collection and analysis of data during the study, and a focus on understanding from the participants' point of view (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Gay & Airasian, 2000). I collected my data in St. Lucia, the setting for this study. I was the main source of data collection, used text in reporting the findings, focused on understanding from the participants' point of view, and continuously collected and analyzed my data.

While the steps used in qualitative research are influenced by the research topic, qualitative researchers typically determine a research topic and research questions, decide on the setting and participants, gain access to the setting, collect and analyze data and generate conclusions, and write a report (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Gay & Airasian, 2000). The research question in qualitative research typically "asks a question about some process, issue, or phenomenon to be explored" (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 60). Several factors must be taken into consideration when selecting a research question including choosing a topic based on one's interest, the feasibility of doing the study in terms of the time and resources available, and the ethics involved in conducting the study (Delamont, 1992). The research question in my study was chosen because having

experienced secondary education in St. Lucia, I was interested in examining how the secondary teachers perceived the new structure of the secondary education system. It was also feasible to conduct the study, and while the topic did not present any ethical concerns, participants were promised confidentiality.

The setting and participants in a qualitative study are usually selected because “they can provide pertinent information about the specific topic and setting investigated” (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p. 209). The participants are also selected based on other factors such as their availability and the cost which may be involved in their participation. Because qualitative researchers want to get an in-depth understanding of the participants’ perspectives, qualitative studies typically use small, purposive samples (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Johnson & Christensen, 2004). While the number of participants selected for a qualitative study is typically small, other factors such as the resources that are available to the researcher and “data saturation” (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p. 209) will influence the number of participants in the study. The participants were selected for my study because I believed they had the knowledge and experiences to answer the research questions.

Gaining access can be a simple process or it can be quite lengthy and can involve negotiations with various gatekeepers in the research setting (Delamont, 1992; Gay & Airasian, 2000). Once access has been gained, the researcher must also maintain that access (Delamont, 1992). The skills of the researcher in explaining the research study, interacting with the participants, and building trust are important to gaining and maintaining access (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Just as important as gaining access, researchers should also pay attention to how they leave the research site (Delamont, 1992; Eisner, 1998) as this process may have implications for future researchers.

Gaining access was a simple process for me and first involved completing a form to request permission to conduct research in St. Lucia. Following that, I established contact with a gatekeeper who was involved in the education system in St. Lucia. I maintained access by observing the rules and norms of the setting and distributed my questionnaire and conducted my interviews based on the participants' availability.

Data collection in qualitative research is an ongoing process throughout the study and the researcher is the primary source of data collection (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Qualitative researchers employ several strategies to collect data including observing participants, conducting interviews, and analyzing documents (Gay & Airasian, 2000). The experience of the researcher is also important to the data gathering process (Gay & Airasian, 2000; Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The data gathered in qualitative research is often "rich in detail and lengthy" (Gay & Airasian, 2000 p. 211). Analysis of qualitative data requires the researcher to "search for patterns, themes and holistic features" (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 31). Emphasizing the perspectives of the participants is important in qualitative analysis (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). I analyzed documents, distributed a questionnaire, conducted interviews and used personal experience to collect data in St. Lucia, the setting for this study. During the analysis I generated themes based on the perspectives of the participants. I was the main source of data collection, continuously collected and analyzed the data, and primarily used text in reporting the findings.

The researcher is an important component of qualitative research and plays many roles. Strauss and Corbin (1990) emphasized that qualitative researchers should develop several skills including the "ability to maintain analytical distance while at the same time

drawing upon past experience and theoretical knowledge to interpret what is seen, astute powers of observation and, and good interactional skills” (p. 18). They also stressed the importance of having “theoretical sensitivity” (p. 42), which would allow researchers to “have insight . . . give meaning to data, the capacity to understand and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn’t” (p. 42). They explained that this sensitivity can be developed from reading relevant literature on the topic of interest and from personal and professional experience. I played many roles during this study, including being the main source of data collection. My past experiences also allowed me to better understand what my participants were disclosing and helped me determine what was important in the data.

While there are advantages to conducting qualitative research, Delamont (1992) identified “over-identifying with the respondents” (p. 34), becoming bored, and ignoring things that are familiar as some potential problems associated with conducting qualitative research. Gaining and maintaining access to the research site and participants can also be problematic in qualitative research studies. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) cited the inability to generalize the results of qualitative studies as a possible limitation. They acknowledged however, that generalization was possible “by individuals who are in situations similar to the one (s) investigated by the researcher” (p. 432). Having been away from St. Lucia for many years, many things were new to me so the aspect of being bored, ignoring things that were familiar and over-identifying with the participants was not an issue for me. There are many islands in the Caribbean in similar circumstances as St. Lucia, so generalization is not as big a limitation.

There are several qualitative approaches including “case studies, ethnography, phenomenology, historical research, ethology and grounded theory” (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p. 232). I was confident that surveys and interviews were the best method to gather data for this study. A historical approach method was also employed because the study sought to examine perceptions about a program that had already been implemented. Historical research is defined by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) as “the systematic collection and evaluation of data to describe, explain, and thereby understand actions or events that occurred sometime in the past” (p. 534). They identified several reasons researchers conduct historical research, including gaining an awareness of the past to plan for the future, helping to predict how a plan will work based on its performance in the past, determining relationships, and understanding current policies. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1990) viewed the basis for conducting historical research as “an increased understanding of the present and a more rational basis for making choices” (p. 453).

The other forms of qualitative research would not have worked for this study because they either involve studies of single individuals (case studies), extended studies of individuals in their natural settings (ethnography), or investigate individuals’ reactions to a situation (phenomenology) (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). A quantitative approach with its emphasis on numbers (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006) would not have yielded the in-depth information necessary to answer the research questions. The qualitative design utilizing a survey and interview method with a historical approach, were the best methods to fully answer the research questions in this study.

Data Collection

Several approaches can be used to collect data in qualitative studies. These include “interviewing, direct observation, the analysis of documents and cultural records; the use of visual materials; and the use of personal experience” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 34). Mason (1996) advocated the use of data gathering methods which are “flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data are produced” (p. 4). This study utilized four data collection methods including document analysis, use of a questionnaire, interviewing several individuals and my personal experience.

Document analysis. Document analysis is termed “content analysis” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 286) who also refer to it as “nonliving data” (p. 310) and cited an advantage of using content analysis as the ability for researchers to “go beyond the subject perceptions of individuals, which while very important are not the only point of departure for knowledge building” (p. 310). Document analysis allows researchers to get information on subjects that cannot be directly observed, allows researchers to get information on events that took place in the past, and can be economical (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Delamont (1992), while advocating the use of documentary data, advised that they should be “skeptically read and examined in their social context” (p. 105). Thomas (2003) cited the increased time needed to conduct document analysis and the possible inaccuracy of information obtained from the documents as limitations to the use of this method of data gathering. International databases, St. Lucia Government and MOE documents, and newspaper articles, were analyzed to gather data for this study. These documents allowed me to obtain background information on the education system in St. Lucia including the introduction of USE. The use of a questionnaire and

interviewing multiple individuals helped to reduce the possible limitation of document analysis by allowing for corroboration of the information gathered.

Questionnaire. The questionnaire was chosen to gather data for this study because it obtains information from a large number of participants, it takes little time to administer, can be scored relatively easily, can be inexpensive, can keep participants anonymous (Gay & Airasian, 2000), and it was the best way to answer the research question. The close ended format was chosen because it allowed the questions to be the same for all participants. While there are advantages to using questionnaires, there are also some disadvantages including an inability for researchers to clarify items that may be confusing to participants, and the fact that questionnaires do not “offer a convenient way for respondents to elaborate their answers and explain conditions that affect their opinions” (Thomas, 2003, p. 69). Another disadvantage to using questionnaires is the possibility of a low rate of response (Gay & Airasian, 2000). The themes were familiar to the participants and the response rate for the questionnaire was 64%; therefore, a low rate of response was not a limiting factor.

The questionnaire was constructed using guidelines suggested by Johnson and Christenson (2004): (a) it was brief, consisting of 23-items, keeping in mind the teachers’ busy schedules, (b) the language used was familiar to the participants, (c) the items elicited responses on the research objectives and were based on the review of the literature, and (d) no overlapping questions were used. The questionnaire was reviewed by the researcher’s dissertation committee and by a former secondary school teacher in St. Lucia. Each copy of the questionnaire had a cover letter explaining the research study and issues of confidentiality, and contained contact information for the researcher and the

dissertation committee members (see Appendix A). Participants were not required to put any identifying information on the questionnaires to ensure confidentiality. A total of 731 questionnaires were distributed to the schools and 468 were returned to the secretaries at the different schools, a return rate of 64%.

A five-point Likert scale was used because “these are very popular with educational researchers and have been shown to work quite well” (Johnson & Christenson, 2004, p. 171). Johnson and Christenson (2004) also advise that a rating scale with fewer than five points may be less valid while a scale with more than 10 points may be confusing to participants. The choices given for 20 of the items I designed for my survey were Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (DA), and Strongly Disagree (SD). In this study, the neutral option was given to provide a choice particularly for respondents who chose not to use one of the other options given. These respondents would include teachers with less than five years of experience who might not have had an opportunity to be involved in the planning and implementation phase of USE because they were not employed in the educational system at that time. Responses of strongly agree and agree were interpreted to reflect positive perceptions and were grouped together during analysis. Responses of strongly disagree and disagree were interpreted to reflect negative perceptions and were grouped together during analysis. Three demographic questions were related to the participants’ gender, length of teaching experience, and level of qualification. Participants were required to check the appropriate choice in response to the demographic questions. The demographic questions were asked to allow for description of the respondents and to determine whether the respondents were representative of the teaching force in St. Lucia.

The questionnaire items elicited information on secondary teachers' perceptions of various aspects of the USE program (see Appendix B) and were structured around five themes: (a) perceptions of involvement in the planning and implementation process (questions 1-7); (b) the provision of professional development and preparation to teach diverse learners (questions 8-10); (c) the availability of support services, resources, and curriculum modifications (questions 11-14); (d) students' preparedness to pursue a secondary education (questions 15-16); (e) and the impact of USE on school culture and on the educational system in St. Lucia (questions 17-20). These themes were generated based on the review of the literature.

The focus of questions 1-7 was to elicit information on the perceptions of teachers about their involvement in the planning and implementation of USE. These questions were important because research suggests that involvement of stakeholders in the planning and implementation of a new program is an important part of the change process (Fowler, 2004; Miller et al., 2000). If the stakeholders have a positive perception about their involvement in the planning and implementation of a program, this might result in support for the program and could ultimately lead to a successful program.

The focus of questions 8-10 was to elicit teachers' perceptions of the provision of professional development, their skills in teaching diverse learners, and the nature of their workload since the implementation of USE. These questions were important because research suggests that one of the key factors in successful change is the availability of training opportunities for teachers to implement the change (Fowler, 2004; Fullan, 2010). The perceived skills of those charged with implementing the change may help determine the level or success of implementation and whether the change will accomplish the stated

outcomes. The perception of an increased workload may also affect implementation of a program because stakeholders may feel they have too much to accomplish and may not have the time to effectively implement all components of the program.

The focus of questions 11-14 was to elicit teachers' perceptions about the curriculum modifications and academic options available since the implementation of USE, the support services available to students, and the adequacy of resources available since the implementation of USE. Research suggests that lack of appropriate curriculum may be a deterrent to student achievement and could lead to frustration for teachers and students (King, 2009). Research has also suggested that a key component for a successful implementation is the availability of resources (Fowler, 2004; Hall & Hord, 2006). Fullan (2010) agrees that the availability of support services for students is an important consideration in school reform and advocates that school districts establish partnerships with community groups to provide support for teachers and students. In the advent of USE, the more diverse student population would bring a variety of issues into the system that will need to be addressed; the availability of support services might have an impact on the students' educational experience and possibly the work experience of teachers.

The focus of questions 15-16 was to elicit teachers' perceptions of the academic preparedness of their students to pursue a secondary education. The introduction of USE brought students into the educational system that previously had been left out because they did not have the required scores on the CEE and were deemed not to have the necessary academic skills. The review of the literature revealed that students who are automatically promoted from the primary to secondary level of education may not be

prepared for a secondary education. The perceptions of teachers about their students' level of preparedness might determine the approaches the teachers use to instruct these students and might change the nature of the teachers' jobs. These perceptions might also have an impact of the students' success or failure. If the teachers felt the students were not prepared for a secondary education the teaching experience might change for these teachers, which could lead to a more difficult workplace, and lead to resentment and rejection of the change. Conversely, if the teachers felt their students were prepared for a secondary education, this might result in a more positive work experience for teachers and possibly a more positive perception of and support for the USE policy.

The focus of questions 17-20 was to elicit teachers' perceptions about the impact of the implementation of USE on the culture of their school and on the educational system in St. Lucia in general. These questions were important because research suggests that implementation of new programs may change the culture of the organizations which implement the programs (Hall & Hord, 2006). If the impact on the school culture is regarded as positive, then the change may be viewed in a positive light and will more likely be supported and successful long term. However, if the impact on the school culture is regarded as negative, then the change is unlikely to receive support and is unlikely to be successful in accomplishing its goals.

Interviews. Interviews were also used to collect data for this study because they have been described as “one of the best sources of information; perspectives gained through this give and take process represent more than points of view; they offer insights into special knowledge that only participants possess” (Lapan, 2004, p. 241). The interviews I conducted for this study allowed me to gain in-depth responses from

participants, check for clarification of responses, and establish rapport with the participants (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Morgan, 1998) and also helped me to “construct as complete a picture as possible from the words and experiences of the participant” (Marrais, 2004, p. 52). The interviews also allowed me to build on the data from my questionnaire and allowed me to pursue questions that arose from that data. Thomas (2003) identified some disadvantages to using interviews including the time and costs involved. The interviews conducted for this study did not take up a lot of time and each one only lasted between 35 and 60 minutes. Time became a factor when I transcribed the interviews but the activity was well worth the time. Transcribing the interviews allowed me to familiarize myself with the interview data and allowed me to begin analyzing the data during the transcription process. The only cost associated with conducting the interviews in this study was the cost of the audio recorder.

A semi-structured interview approach was used and this has been described as “the most widely used interview format for qualitative research” (DiCocco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). This interview method was selected because it allowed me to modify the interview questions based on the information revealed by the participants (DiCocco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Six teachers and seven persons I considered to be key informants were interviewed for this study. The participants who were interviewed were chosen because I felt they had the necessary information based on their occupations and experiences to answer the research questions.

The questions selected for the interviews were based on the review of the literature, the information sought in the questionnaire, the informal conversations with the principals, and the positions of the participants. The questions elicited information on

the interviewees' perception of their role in the planning and implementation of USE, their perceptions of the availability of professional development opportunities for teachers, the resources available to students and teachers, the students' level of preparedness, and their perceptions of the USE program in general. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and were audio recorded except for one which was conducted over the phone. The interviewees signed a form giving consent to be interviewed and audio-recorded and to have me use the data in my written report.

Research Setting

This study took place in St. Lucia, an island located in the Eastern part of the Caribbean, and involved teachers at the 23 secondary schools on the island. St. Lucia's educational system like the rest of the islands in the OECS is fashioned after the British educational system. The system is controlled by the Ministry of Education and managed by a Permanent Secretary who reports to the Minister of Education, a political appointee. Policy decisions are spearheaded by the Minister of Education (UNESCO, 2010b). There are individuals at various levels of the system who are responsible for various departments and units that include the Chief Education Officer, education officers, curriculum officers, and a Registrar of Examinations (UNESCO, 2010b). School principals report to the education officers who oversee their individual districts. The 2009 Statistical Report revealed that in the 2008-2009 school year there were 75 primary schools serving 19,287 students ranging in age from five to 11 years, 23 secondary schools serving 15,753 students ranging in age from 12 to 16 years, and two public tertiary institutions serving 4118 students. The island's primary and secondary schools were grouped into eight geographic districts with each being overseen by a district

education officer. Several of the schools were run by religious organizations with government assistance.

The teaching force in St. Lucia is dominated by females at all levels of the system (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009). The St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture (2009) Education Statistical Digest reported that in the 2008-2009 school year, 90% of teachers at the primary level were trained, 59% of teachers at the secondary level were trained, and 55% of teachers at the secondary level were graduate teachers. Thirty-four percent of the graduate teachers at the secondary level were untrained. Teachers were classified as trained, untrained, or graduate by the MOE. A trained teacher was described as one who has “completed a recognized programme [sic] in teacher education methods and teaching techniques” (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2007, p. iii). A graduate teacher was described as a teacher “with at least a recognized bachelor’s degree” (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2007, p. 1). A graduate teacher might be untrained if he or she did not have training in teaching methods and techniques. The government of St. Lucia placed an emphasis on increasing the number of trained and graduate teachers in the system. The teacher to student ratio at the secondary level was reported as 1:17 for the 2008-2009 school year (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2009).

Students transition to the secondary schools based on the results of the CEE and to some extent on the students’ choice of school. This method of transition based on the results of the CEE led to a ranking of the secondary schools where the more successful students were typically assigned to higher ranked, higher performing schools and lower performing students were assigned to lower ranked schools. This transition system also

resulted in a higher concentration of male students at the lower performing schools because boys' achievement tended to be below that of girls. The secondary school level of the educational system lasted five years. Students followed a core curriculum at the lower secondary level (forms 1-3, Grades 7-9), then chose a group of subjects to focus on during the last two years of the secondary cycle. The students' chosen program of study had to include at least five subjects of which four had to be English Language, Mathematics, a Science subject and a Foreign Language (UNESCO, 2010b). This curriculum was evaluated by the CXC examination board typically at the end of the fifth year of school but some students might choose to write the examination in the fourth form. With the implementation of USE, the CXC introduced assessments in form three before the end of the secondary cycle.

Participants

The study was open to all the secondary school teachers from St. Lucia's 23 public secondary schools. A total of 468 teachers completed the questionnaire. Private schools were not included in this study because private secondary schools have different admission criteria than the public schools and students often had to pay a fee to attend those schools. The secondary school teachers were selected for this study instead of teachers at other levels of the educational system for two reasons. First, USE was specifically targeted towards providing access to the secondary level of schooling and directly affected these teachers and they were the best population to answer questions about the program. Second, the purpose of the research was to study secondary teachers' perceptions of the program. While the perceptions of teachers from other levels of the

system might be important to fully understand the program and its impact on the educational system, this was an area for further research.

Secondary teachers from all public secondary schools on the island were targeted for this study instead of select teachers from a few schools to make the study fully representative. The inclusion of teachers from all the public secondary schools helped to address the concern that teachers might raise that the results of the study do not represent their perceptions of the USE program. The schools included 21 co-educational schools and two single sex schools (one all-male and one all-female). Two of the schools were opened in 2006 as a result of the introduction of USE. The six teachers who were interviewed had teaching experiences ranging from six to 20 years. The officials and other key informants involved in the interview included two secondary school principals, two current ministry officials, one former ministry official, one parliamentary representative, and the president of the Teachers Union.

Sampling

Purposive samples are often used in qualitative research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). This involves selecting a sample because “they can provide particularly valuable information related to the research question” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 25). The participants in this study were purposely selected because the research question addressed the perceptions of secondary school teachers of the introduction of USE so they were the best population to answer the research question. The criteria for this group were that the participants had to be current secondary school teachers in one of St. Lucia’s 23 public secondary schools. The teachers involved represented a typical sample of secondary

school teachers. The key informants were selected to help validate the findings from the questionnaires and the teacher interviews.

Validity

Maxwell (1996) defined validity as “the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation or other sort of account” (p. 87). Johnson (1997) defined validity as “Research that is plausible, credible, trustworthy and therefore, defensible” (p. 282). Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Johnson & Christensen 2004; Maxwell, 1996 have identified researcher bias and reactivity as two common threats to the validity of a study. While researcher bias has been identified as a threat to the validity of a study, Mason (1996) argued that this might be unavoidable because “a researcher cannot be neutral, or objective, or detached, from the knowledge and evidence they are generating” (p. 6). To deal with the issue of researcher bias, she advised that researchers “should seek to understand their role in that process” (p. 6). Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; and Maxwell, 1996 identified several strategies to increase the validity of a study and reduce researcher bias and reactivity. These strategies included using different methods of gathering data, using different data sources, using the participants’ words in descriptions, getting feedback from participants, reflection on the part of the researcher, and obtaining feedback from peers.

A number of strategies were used to increase the validity of this study. These included the use of (a) different data sources in the form of multiple interviews with teachers and other key informants and analysis of existing data; (b) the use of two different types of data collection in the form of the questionnaire and interviews with teachers and key informants; (c) the dissertation committee and a peer to review the

research design and instruments; (d) a peer to review and verify the questionnaire data collected; and (e) a peer to analyze the interview transcripts and verify the themes and conclusions generated. These measures all helped to increase the validity of the study. Generalizability was not a goal of this study because of the complexity involved in finding a population with similar characteristics as the population used in this study; however, detailed information was given about the methods used. These findings are hopefully relevant to education in all the cognate countries that make up this Caribbean area.

Procedures

After deciding on a research topic, I established contact with an individual in St. Lucia who was a former secondary school teacher and primary school principal at the time of the study. I was concerned about the feasibility of doing the study on my selected topic particularly since I could not be present on the island until the data collection phase of the study. She assured me that it would be possible to conduct the study and agreed to be my contact on the island and serve as a liaison between the MOE and me. I later established two other contacts on the island who referred teachers and other informants for interviews to me. I examined the literature concerning education in developing countries and specifically the Caribbean and OECS countries. I then examined the literature on educational reform in the OECS countries, and focused particularly on the introduction of USE. This review also involved analyzing documents from the MOE in St. Lucia and other Government ministries which had addressed USE including parliamentary addresses and budget reports. I also analyzed newspaper articles that addressed education in St. Lucia and USE in particular. After feeling satisfied that there

was enough accessible information on the topic, I then requested permission from the MOE in St. Lucia to conduct research in the schools. The process involved completing a form explaining my research study. Permission was granted within two weeks after the request was made. After permission was granted, I filed an application with the Institutional Review Board at Lindenwood University requesting permission to conduct research. Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board, I sent e-mails to all district education officers and other individuals in the MOE informing them about my study, requesting interviews from some of these individuals, and requesting help in gaining access to the schools from others. None of my e-mails was returned.

In June of 2010, I travelled to St. Lucia and spent seven weeks there distributing the questionnaire and conducting interviews. I first met with the principals of the secondary schools to explain the study and to request permission to distribute the questionnaires at their schools. Permission was granted by the principals. The majority of the principals revealed that June was a difficult time to request participation from teachers because it was testing time and some of the teachers were away assessing the various examinations. Some of the principals also revealed that another study involving teachers was also being conducted at the same time and they felt some of the teachers might be tired of the requests to participate in research studies. Distributing the surveys at the schools allowed me to have informal conversations with several of the principals about the research topic. I also had two other informal conversations with a primary school principal and a former secondary school principal. These informal conversations were not planned, but allowed me to get a principal's perspective of USE and served as another valuable source of data. I took notes during these conversations after receiving

permission from the individuals. I requested an interview with one of the principals following our informal conversation, which she granted.

I first distributed the questionnaires to the schools in the rural and outer districts because there was considerable distance between some of these schools and I felt I would need more time to reach all of them. My intention was to distribute the questionnaires to all the rural schools in one day and then distribute them to the schools in the capital and surrounding areas on the following day. Distribution to the rural schools took two days, one day longer than I had anticipated. The delay was caused by the time it took to explain my research study to the principals and because the conversations I had with some of the principals took some time but this also provided me with opportunities to gain a fuller understanding of the prevailing educational context especially as I had been away from the island for many years. The extra day was also necessary because some of the principals were not available during my first visit.

After distributing the surveys to the schools in the rural areas, I distributed them to the schools in the capital and surrounding areas. Again, this process took a day longer than I had anticipated partly because some of the principals were not available when I made my first visit but mostly because I had vastly underestimated the time it would take to get to the 23 schools. The principals agreed to have the teachers return the questionnaires to the school secretaries. I encountered problems distributing the surveys to teachers at two of the schools, which resulted in a low rate of return from these two schools. At one school, many of the teachers were absent assessing examinations and at the other school I was unable to schedule a time to distribute the questionnaires to the staff. At the latter school I distributed the questionnaires during the teachers' lunch break

and was only able to meet with a few teachers. The teachers at this school returned their questionnaires as soon as they had completed them.

After the questionnaires had been distributed at the 23 secondary schools, I made a first attempt to collect them one week later. Prior to collecting the surveys, I called the schools to remind the secretaries and principals that I would be collecting the questionnaires and asked them to remind the teachers to turn them in. I first started collecting the questionnaires from the schools in the rural districts. Despite my phone calls announcing that I would be arriving to collect the questionnaires, they had not been returned by all the teachers at several of the schools. I made three return trips within the next two weeks to the schools where the initial response had been low to collect further questionnaires. These return trips resulted in the collection of significantly more questionnaires. The same situation occurred when I began collecting the questionnaires at the schools in the capital Castries and the surrounding areas. The initial response was low at several of the schools so I made three return trips to those schools which resulted in significantly more questionnaires. No more questionnaires were collected a month after the initial distribution. The questionnaires from each school were kept in separate, labeled envelopes throughout the distribution, collection, and analysis. I began tabulating the questionnaires the same day that I collected them.

The teacher interviews were conducted at the same time I was distributing and collecting the questionnaires. Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with six teachers, five female and one male, five of whom were referred by my contacts on the island (none of whom were employed in the secondary level of the educational system) and one was contacted for an interview based on comments and contact information that

was left on a questionnaire. The referral of the interviewees by my contacts was extremely valuable because of the limited time I had to collect data and because I was not present on the island until the data collection stage. The use of contacts to help gain access and refer individuals to the researcher was supported by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) who called these contacts “gatekeepers” (p. 63). Creswell (2002) defined a gatekeeper as an “Individual who has an official or unofficial role at the site, helps researchers locate people and assists in the identification of places to study” (p. 192).

The teachers I interviewed were all from different schools. One was from one of the schools which receive students who scored toward the top range (around 90% and above) on the CEE. Two were from schools that received students who score at the middle range (around 50-60%) on the CEE and three were from schools which received students who scored toward the bottom range (around 30% and below) on the CEE. The cutoff marks to determine school placements vary each year because they are set based on the score received by the top performer on the CEE. The teachers taught a variety of subjects; one teacher taught special education, one teacher was a literacy coach, one taught science, one taught a business subject, another taught math, and one taught a fine arts subject. They all had several years teaching experience and two of them had experience teaching at both the primary and secondary level of the system. The interviews were semi-structured, lasted between 35 minutes and one hour, and were conducted at the teachers’ workplaces. They were all audio-recorded and later transcribed. These teachers were all guaranteed confidentiality during the interview and I felt this allowed them to open up and freely express themselves. A few of the teachers

used the expression “since this is confidential” during the interview, reflecting the importance they placed on confidentiality. Pseudonyms are used in this paper to protect the identity of the teachers.

Seven key informants were interviewed for this study. They comprised of two secondary school principals, two MOE officials (one a district education officer and the other a high level official), a former MOE official, a parliamentary representative, and the president of the Teachers’ Union. I requested and was granted an interview with one of the principals following an informal conversation we had during my distribution of the questionnaires. The other principal’s name came up several times during interviews so I made a telephone request for an interview, which she granted. The district education officer and the former MOE official were referred by my contacts on the island and granted my telephone requests for an interview. I requested and was granted an interview with the other MOE official after meeting him at a secondary school graduation. The parliamentary representative was referred by the district education officer and granted my telephone request for an interview. My request for an interview with the president of the teachers’ union was made in person. One key informant from the MOE did not respond to my request for an interview. I believe this might have been due to the busy time of year. The interviews with the key informants were conducted face-to-face with the exception of one interview that was done over the phone because the interviewee was not present on the island. The interviews were conducted at the interviewees’ place of employment and lasted between 40 minutes and one hour. The interviews were audio recorded with the exception of the telephone interview which was handwritten. I later transcribed the audio recorded interviews.

My initial intention had been to conduct a focus group interview with secondary school teachers on the island to get their perceptions of the USE program. I felt this would be a good method because focus groups have been cited as rich sources of data where individuals give a variety of perspectives about the topic being researched (Kleiber, 2004). The focus group methodology was not carried out because it fell victim to one of the cited disadvantages of using focus groups, “the logistics involved in bringing individuals together in a set place and at a specific time” (Barbour, 2008, p. 133). The busy assessment period resulted in many teachers being unavailable to participate in the proposed focus group interview.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research was described by Mason (1996) as emphasizing “holistic forms of analysis and explanation in this sense, than on charting surface patterns, trends and correlations . . . statistical forms of analysis are not seen as central” (p. 4). One of the approaches proposed by many researchers to analyze qualitative data is the process of coding. Johnson and Christenson (2004) define coding as “the process of marking segments of data [usually text data] with symbols, descriptive words or category names” (p. 502). Creswell (2002) outlines several steps in the coding process. These steps include reading the transcripts, writing the meaning of the text in the margins, identifying segments of text and assigning a word to describe the text, making a list of all codes and removing repeated codes, marking text within the data that support the codes, reducing the list of codes to generate themes, and then producing a narrative description from the list of codes and themes. This process of analysis has been

supported by several researchers including Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), Johnson and Christensen (2004), and Maxwell (1996).

I first analyzed the questionnaire data. I tabulated the questionnaires from each teacher by hand, rechecked them three times, and had them verified by a peer. After the initial tabulations were done, the questionnaires were again tabulated without including the responses from the teachers who had five years or less teaching experience. This was done because there were a high number of participants in this category (28%) and I wanted to determine if the results would be different if this group were excluded. This was necessary because some of the participants in this category would not have the necessary experience with the USE program to answer all the questions. Although the neutral option on the questionnaire was provided for participants who might not have had the necessary information to answer some of the questions, I felt it was important to analyze the results of the questionnaires with and without the responses from this group. I then entered the tabulations into a Microsoft Excel program. Simple descriptive statistics using frequencies were generated using the Microsoft Excel program to calculate the responses for each item.

I listened to the audio recorded interviews the same day the interviews were conducted. This allowed me to check to see if I needed any clarification on the information revealed and also allowed me to pick up on information I may have missed during the actual interview. Using the process of coding advocated by Creswell (2002), I first transcribed the audio recorded interviews, and categorized them into three groups comprised of teachers, principals, and key informants. The key informant group was made up of the two current and one former MOE official, the president of the Teachers'

Union, and the parliamentary representative. Although the principals were also key informants, they were grouped separately from the other key informants because they had similar occupations to each other. I began analyzing the interviews with the teachers first, followed by the principal interviews, and then the interviews with the other key informants. I read each transcript multiple times and identified key words and phrases from each transcript. I then compared the key words and phrases from each interview, assigned codes to them, and placed them in three categories of similarities, differences and other. The other category comprised of items that were not directly related to a question asked in the interview but I felt revealed interesting information. The list of codes was compared, similar codes were grouped together, and the list was reduced. I then generated themes based on those codes. I analyzed the informal conversations by first reading the handwritten notes and then I compared the notes from the different conversations and summarized each one.

Summary

This study took place on the island of St. Lucia and involved secondary school teachers from the 23 secondary schools on the island and other selected individuals who were involved in the educational system. These participants were purposely selected because I believed they had the knowledge and experience to answer the research questions. A qualitative research design using a historical approach was chosen because it was the best method to fully answer the research questions. Three main methods of data collection were used in the form of analysis of existing data, a five-point Likert scale, researcher designed paper questionnaire, and in-depth interviews with teachers and other key informants. These data collection methods were chosen because they allowed

me to get information about the USE program from a large number of participants, and allowed me to get rich information from select individuals. Simple descriptive statistics were used to analyze the questionnaire data. I transcribed the interviews, assigned codes to recurring words and phrases, and generated themes from the codes. The use of multiple data sources and data collection methods helped to bring validity to the study. Detailed information about the procedures was given for researchers who may wish to replicate the study.

Reflection on Data Collection

Although the process of collecting data started in June 2010 when I travelled to St. Lucia to distribute the questionnaire and conduct the interviews, many things had to be set up before the first questionnaire was distributed and the first interview was conducted. I learned many lessons during my data collecting journey but the four things that struck me most were: the importance of having a contact in the home country who could help to co-ordinate things; the ever present time constraints; the scarcity of some resources like technology; and the importance of knowing the hidden rules of a society along with the realization that one can be an outsider who needs to relearn certain norms even in one's home country.

I established a gatekeeper early in the development of this study. This person was an educator who I have a lot of respect for and someone I knew would be reliable. I began asking questions and running things by her to get a sense of where I was headed and if I was on the right course or needed to get on a different path. My contact helped me to refine my research topic, and sometimes served as a liaison between myself and the Ministry of Education by forwarding documents and referring contacts to me. She was

also able to get me up to speed with changes in the educational system since I left the island several years earlier. When I arrived home, she continued helping me to set up contacts, checking my questionnaire, and checking on my progress. Her help was invaluable. When I arrived in St. Lucia, I established other contacts who were also very instrumental in guiding me to individuals they thought might be able to help, sometimes taking me around to the various schools, or just listening to me gripe when things were not going so well. Without establishing these contacts to help me navigate my way at home, this study would have likely ended before it began.

The second lesson I learned about collecting data at home was the importance of time, specifically the constant shortage of time and the need to manage time wisely. My questionnaires were personally delivered to the schools and while that was a very time consuming activity, it was worth every minute. I spent seven weeks in St. Lucia collecting data and the time seemed to fly by. There did not seem to be enough time to do all that I wanted to and though I basically accomplished my objectives, I wish I had more time.

It would not seem that a person would have to learn the norms of a country where she grew up and spent most of her life, but I found that things had changed and it was important to know and understand these changes when collecting data for this study. While my insider status (being St. Lucian) was an advantage, it was not as big an advantage as I had presumed because I had been out of the island for so long. This was very apparent when I was complaining to one of my contacts that I had not received any response to a series of e-mails that I had sent to some individuals. My contact, Sharon, then had to explain to me that “These people don’t answer e-mails, you have to go see

them, you have to go early and try to catch them before they get their day started” (personal communication, June 1, 2010). I took her advice and as a result was able to establish contact with two individuals who had not even seen my e-mail and found out that the e-mail address for another individual had been changed and that change had not been updated on the website. The idea of having to go in person to make an appointment or try to catch someone before they started their day and then to return to have a meeting with them was very frustrating to me, but that was one of the hidden norms to which I was not privy. I learned that e-mails seldom work, phone calls might work, but an in-person visit (and sometimes many in-person visits) had the highest rate of success. I found my insider status to be very helpful particularly during the interviews. My background allowed me to understand what the interviewees were talking about. I also felt that I was able to establish a good rapport with the interviewees because I shared some common characteristics with them.

Delivering the questionnaires in person was very time consuming and involved some cost. I knew this was likely to be the case when I was planning for my data collection, but I thought it was important to reach as many teachers as possible to get a variety of perspectives. If I had to administer a questionnaire to teachers in almost any district in the United States, I could probably do so electronically because of the availability of Internet access, computers for the teachers, and school e-mail accounts. School e-mail addresses were not, however, available for teachers in St. Lucia, and while some schools had computer labs, teachers did not have school issued personal computers. This part of my data collection was laborious but worthwhile as it gave me an opportunity to connect with individuals I had not thought about contacting and allowed

me to visit schools in St. Lucia that I would have never had the need or opportunity to visit. Collecting data at home presented some challenges, but all these challenges allowed me to grow as a researcher and allowed me to gain in-depth knowledge about my research topic.

In this chapter, I detailed the research design and procedures I used in my study. The following chapter will report on the findings from the questionnaire and interviews. Chapter 5 will provide a discussion of the findings.

Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine secondary teachers' perceptions regarding various aspects of the introduction of Universal Secondary Education in St. Lucia. Survey and interview method along with a qualitative historical approach were used because they were the best designs to get in-depth information about the teachers' perceptions. The participants in this study were secondary school teachers in the public schools in St. Lucia and other key informants with knowledge of the educational system. Those participants were purposely selected because they had the knowledge and experiences necessary to answer the research questions.

A close ended, 23-item, researcher-designed Likert scale questionnaire was distributed at the 23 secondary schools in St. Lucia and in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with six secondary school teachers and seven key informants. Seven hundred and thirty-one questionnaires were distributed and 468 were returned. Simple descriptive statistics utilizing frequency distribution and the percentages of responses for each question were used to analyze the questionnaire data. Responses of Strongly Agree (SA) and Agree (A) were interpreted to represent positive perceptions and presented together while responses of Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) were interpreted to represent negative perceptions, and the percentages of these responses are presented together.

This chapter presents the findings from all the questionnaires collected and then the findings from the questionnaires minus the views of the teachers with five years and less teaching experience. This was done to determine whether the perceptions of teachers with more than five years of experience were different than those with less experience.

This step in the data analysis was necessary because 29% of the respondents were teachers with five years or less teaching experience. Those teachers would have different experiences and possibly different views about USE because they had been hired right at its introduction or shortly after its introduction. This was done to ensure that the responses were reflective of individuals who were involved in the teaching profession in St. Lucia and had the relevant experiences and information to answer the questions accurately. When the findings from the questionnaires have been presented, the findings from the interviews with teachers, principals, and other key informants will follow. Finally, I will report on the findings from the informal conversations.

Findings from the Questionnaire

The questionnaire elicited teachers' perceptions on five major aspects of the USE program. The questionnaire consisted of 23 items including three demographic questions. Participants were asked to indicate their gender, their length of teaching experience among five choices (1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years and 20+ years) and also their highest level of qualifications among five choices (unqualified, trained, bachelor's degree, master's degree and master's +). The unqualified category represents a teacher who has no formal training in education. A trained teacher is a teacher who has formal training in education and has a certificate in teaching. Table 2 illustrates demographic question responses.

Table 2

Description of Respondents

Gender	Male	Female	NR	Total			
# of responses	139	320	9	468			
Experience in years	1-5	6-10	11-16	16-20	20+	NR	Total
# of responses	134	78	60	66	120	10	468
Qualifications	Unqualified	Trained	Bachelor's	Masters	Masters +	NR	Total
# of responses	64	118	221	45	7	13	468

Note. NR represents the number of non-responses for the item.

As indicated by Table 2, the great majority of respondents were female. This is representative of the secondary teaching population in St. Lucia (St. Lucia Ministry of Education and Culture, 2007). The majority of respondents was either trained with a certificate in teaching or possessed a bachelor’s degree. This finding is indicative of the St. Lucian government’s efforts to ensure that the teaching staff was qualified (Joseph, 2002).

The focus of questions one through seven was to determine teachers’ perceptions of their involvement in the planning and implementation of USE. The questions elicited teachers’ perceptions of when they had been informed of the plan to implement USE in St. Lucia, the amount of information they had received, opportunities to give feedback

and input, and the level of collaboration involved in the implementation of USE. Table 3 illustrates the teachers' perceptions of their involvement in the planning and implementation of USE. The numbers illustrate the percentages of responses for each item.

Table 3

Teachers' Perceptions of Involvement in the Planning and Implementation of USE

Statement #	Survey Statement	% of responses				
		SA	A	N	DA	SD
1	I was notified about the plan to implement USE in St. Lucia early in the planning process.	7	26	18	23	26
2	I had the opportunity to attend informational meetings on the implementation of USE in St. Lucia.	2	5	11	26	57
3	I had the opportunity to give feedback on the implementation of USE in St. Lucia.		4	9	25	61
4	I had the opportunity to serve on planning committees for the implementation of USE.		1	8	21	71
5	I believe the concerns of teachers were addressed in the implementation of USE.	1	4	19	30	45
6	I was given sufficient information about the implementation of USE in St. Lucia.	1	6	15	39	39
7	I believe the planning and implementation of USE was a collaborative effort involving the Ministry of Education, teachers and other stakeholders.	3	7	25	28	38

Note. From Teacher Survey.

Table 3 illustrates that 49% of teachers did not feel that they had been informed of the decision to implement USE early in the process. This result is inconsistent with the information revealed in the interviews which were conducted, as will be discussed later. In all the interviews, participants revealed that they knew about the plan to implement USE about two to three years before the actual implementation. The issue of USE was also mentioned in the 2000 ESDP, five years before the planned implementation and six years before the actual implementation. The percentages in Table 3 indicate that the teachers did not feel they had been involved in the planning and implementation process of USE. This is most evident in the results for questions three, five, and six where 86% of respondents did not believe they had had an opportunity to give input and feedback into the process, 75% did not believe that the concerns of teachers were addressed in the planning and implementation of USE, and 78% did not feel they had been given sufficient information about the implementation of USE. Given the high percentage of negative perceptions for the preceding questions on the perceptions of involvement in the planning and implementation of USE, it is surprising that only 66% of respondents had a negative response for question 7, which asked if the planning and implementation of USE had been a collaborative effort involving the Ministry of Education, teachers, and other stakeholders.

The purpose of questions eight, nine and 10 was to elicit teachers' perceptions of: the provision of professional development in preparation for USE; of skills required to teach diverse learners; and of teacher workload since the implementation of USE. Table 4 illustrates the results for these questions.

Table 4

Perceptions of Professional Development Opportunities, Teaching Abilities, and Teaching Workload

Statement #	Survey Statement	% of responses				
		SA	A	N	DA	SD
8	I was given additional professional development in preparation for USE in St. Lucia.	1	2	10	25	63
9	I believe I have the necessary skills to teach diverse learners.	8	34	22	23	14
10	My teaching workload has increased since the implementation of USE.	27	23	25	17	8

Note. From Teacher Survey.

The percentages in Table 4 reveal the majority of teachers reported they did not feel they had been given additional professional development in preparation for USE. This was consistent with the information revealed in the interviews with teachers which will be discussed later. Teachers felt, however, that they had the ability to teach diverse learners with 42% responding positively and 37% negatively. This result was somewhat surprising because the majority of teachers responded that they had not received professional development in preparation for USE. However, teacher interviews revealed that some teachers had taken it upon themselves to find the necessary support. The majority of teachers felt that their teaching workload had increased since the implementation of USE. This result was not surprising given the diversity of students introduced into the system because of the implementation of USE.

The purpose of questions 11, 12, 13, and 14 was to elicit information about teachers' perceptions of curriculum modifications and the availability of support services

and other resources for students since the implementation of USE. Table 5 illustrates the responses to these questions.

Table 5

Perceptions of Curriculum and Availability of Support Services and Resources

Statement #	Survey Statement	% of responses				
		SA	A	N	DA	SD
11	The curriculum and assessments in my content area were modified since the implementation of USE.	4	13	19	30	34
12	There are options available at my school to meet the diverse needs of students (e.g., vocational subject offerings).	7	25	15	25	29
13	There are support services (e.g., counseling) available for students at my school.	25	51	11	8	5
14	St. Lucia has adequate resources to provide a secondary education to all eligible students.	4	14	13	30	39

Note. From Teacher Survey.

The results in Table 5 reveal that the majority of teachers did not feel the curriculum in their content area had been modified. They did not feel there were options available at their schools to meet the diverse needs of students or that there were sufficient resources in St. Lucia to provide an adequate secondary education to all eligible students. Conversely, the majority of teachers felt there were support services available such as counseling for students. This finding is supported by the fact that all secondary schools in St. Lucia had a counselor, a direct outcome of USE implementation.

The purpose of questions 15 and 16 was to elicit teachers' perceptions of their students' level of preparedness to pursue a secondary education. Table 6 illustrates the findings for this question.

Table 6

Perceptions of Students' level of Preparedness for a Secondary Education

Statement #	Statement	% of responses				
		SA	A	N	DA	SD
15	The students who have enrolled at my school since the implementation of USE are prepared to pursue a secondary education.	4	14	13	29	39
16	There has been an increase in the number of students at my school who need remedial services since the implementation of USE.	52	19	14	8	7

Note. From Teacher Survey.

The percentages in Table 6 reveal that the majority of respondents did not believe that the students who enrolled in their school since the introduction of USE were adequately prepared to pursue a secondary education. While this was not surprising based on the information gathered from interviews and the literature, the high percentage of negative responses was surprising. While every eligible student was offered a place in a secondary school as a result of USE, the traditional schools and some of the other schools received the same caliber of students they would have before the implementation of USE. Teachers at the schools ranked at the very bottom should have been seeing a difference in the caliber of students they received. The results seem to indicate that even the teachers at schools who were not ranked at the bottom had negative perceptions about their students' ability to pursue a secondary education. An overwhelmingly high percentage of teachers felt that there had been an increase in the number of students at their schools who needed remedial services since the implementation of USE. This finding is consistent with the responses for the previous question where the teachers

indicated they felt their students were not adequately prepared to pursue a secondary education.

The purpose of questions 17-20 was to elicit information on teachers’ perceptions of the impact of USE implementation on their school and on the educational system in St. Lucia in general.

Table 7

Perceptions of the Impact of USE on the Schools and the Educational System in St. Lucia.

Statement #	Survey Statement	% of responses				
17	The number of discipline incidents involving students at my school has increased since the implementation of USE.	28	24	28	10	9
18	The implementation of USE has had a positive impact on the culture at my school.	1	4	35	30	30
19	The implementation of USE has had no effect on my school.	4	7	24	26	39
20	I believe the implementation of USE has had a positive impact on the educational system in St. Lucia.	3	10	25	24	37

Note. From Teacher Survey.

The percentages from Table 7 indicate that the majority of respondents felt that the number of discipline incidents involving students had increased since the implementation of USE. The majority of teachers felt that the implementation of USE had a negative impact on the culture at their school. The question regarding culture had a high percentage of neutral responses, which could be due to a misunderstanding of the question. The majority of respondents felt, however, that the implementation of USE had

affected their schools and while this was not unexpected, the high percentage of responses was surprising to me. The prevailing perception brought up in discussions of USE was that USE had only affected the schools at the bottom. These results contradict that perception. Another surprising finding was the responses to question 20 which showed that 61% of respondents did not feel that the implementation of USE had a positive impact on the educational system in St. Lucia. This finding was inconsistent with the information revealed in the interviews with teachers and other key informants, which will be presented later.

Findings from the questionnaires with teachers who had more than five years of teaching experience. Universal Secondary Education was implemented in the 2006-2007 school year when respondents with five years of teaching experience would have just been entering the profession in St. Lucia, and those with less than five years of teaching experience would not have had an opportunity to participate in the planning and implementation of USE. Therefore, I tabulated the responses excluding the responses from teachers with five years or less teaching experience. In this section the responses from teachers with more than five years teaching experience is presented.

Fifty-two percent of teachers with more than five years teaching experience felt they had not received early notification of the plan to implement USE. This was three percentage points higher than when the findings of the whole sample were calculated. These findings indicate that teachers with more than five years of teaching experience felt more negatively about the time they were informed about the plan to introduce USE in St. Lucia than teachers with five or less years of teaching experience. This finding was surprising because the topic of USE had been officially addressed in the year 2000, which

was at least six years before the actual implementation, and before the less experienced teachers were employed in the educational system.

The responses for questions three, five, and six from the teachers with more than five years of teaching experience revealed that 90% of them felt they were not given an opportunity to give input into the process, 83% felt the concerns of teachers were not addressed in the planning and implementation of USE, and 86% did not feel the introduction of USE was a collaborative effort between the MOE, teachers and other stakeholders. These responses for questions three, five, and six from the teachers with more than five years of teaching experience, increased by four, eight and eight percentage points respectively over the responses from all the respondents. These findings indicate that the teachers with more teaching experience had a more negative perception of their involvement in the planning and implementation process than teachers with five years or less teaching experience. This finding was surprising because it would seem that the more experienced teachers would have been targeted for involvement in the planning process.

The responses from teachers with more than five years of experience for question nine, which asked about additional professional development in preparation for USE, revealed that 93% of teachers felt professional development opportunities had not been available in preparation for USE. This finding was five percentage points higher than the findings from the whole sample. Forty-one percent of teachers with more than five years teaching experience felt they did not have the necessary skills to teach diverse learners. This result was four percentage points higher than when the teachers with five years or less teaching experience were included in the results. Forty percent of those teachers

responded positively to the same question, compared to 42% of teachers when the teachers with five years or less teaching experience were included in the results. Fifty-four percent of teachers with more than five years of teaching experience felt their teaching workload had increased since the implementation of USE compared to 50% of teachers when the responses of teachers with five years or less teaching experience were included in the results. This could be because the less experienced teachers had not taught before the implementation of USE.

These findings indicated that teachers with more teaching experience felt professional development opportunities were not available since the implementation of USE. They did not feel they were skilled in teaching diverse learners and felt there had been an increase in their teaching workload since the implementation of USE than teachers with five years or less teaching experience.

In response to the questions about the curriculum and availability of support services and resources since the introduction of USE, 74% of teachers with more than five years of teaching experience felt the curriculum in their content area had not been modified. This was 10 percentage points higher than the results which included responses from teachers with five years or less teaching experience. Sixty percent of the more experienced teachers felt there were not options available at their school to meet the needs of diverse learners. This result was 10 percentage points higher than the results when the responses from teachers with five years or less teaching experience were included. Thirty percent of teachers with more than five years teaching experience responded positively to the same question, two percentage points lower than the results including teachers with five years or less teaching experience.

The response for question 13 revealed that 80% of teachers with more than five years teaching experience felt there were support services available for students at their school. This was five percentage points higher than the results found when including teachers with five years or less teaching experience. Seventy-one percent of teachers with more than five years teaching experience felt the resources available in St. Lucia were not adequate to provide a secondary education to all students. This number was two percentage points higher than the result when teachers with five years or less teaching experience were included.

The responses from teachers with more than five years teaching experience for questions 11-14 indicated that those teachers felt the curriculum in their content area had not been modified nor were there options at their school to meet the needs of diverse learners. More of them also felt the resources in St. Lucia were not adequate to provide a secondary education to all students than teachers with less than five years teaching experience. These teachers felt there were more support services available for students than was felt by the teachers with less than five years teaching experience.

The responses for questions 15 and 16 from teachers with more than five years teaching experience revealed 70% of them felt their students were not adequately prepared to pursue a secondary education. This result was two percentage points higher than the results which included teachers with five years or less teaching experience. Seventy-two percent of teachers with more than five years teaching experience felt that there had been an increase in the number of students at their school who needed remedial services. This number was one percentage point higher than the results which included teachers with five years or less teaching experience. These findings indicated that more

of the experienced teachers felt their students were not prepared to pursue a secondary education and more of them felt their students needed more remedial services since the introduction of USE. This result was not surprising because the less experienced teachers might not have knowledge of what existed before the introduction of USE.

The responses from the teachers with more than five years teaching experience to question 17 revealed that 53% of them felt that there had been an increase in the number of discipline incidents involving students at their school since the introduction of USE. This number was one percentage point higher than the results which included teachers with five years or less teaching experience. The responses for question 18 revealed that 66% of teachers with more than five years teaching experience felt that USE had a negative impact on the culture at their schools. This number was three percentage points higher than the findings which included teachers with five years or less teaching experience. Sixty-six percent of the teachers with more than five years teaching experience felt that USE had affected their school. This number was two percentage points higher than the results which included teachers with five years or less teaching experience. Sixty-four percent of teachers with more than five years teaching experience felt that USE had a negative impact on the educational system in St. Lucia. This finding was three percentage points higher than the findings which included teachers with five years or less teaching experience.

These findings indicated that the teachers with more than five years teaching experience felt there were more discipline incidents involving students at their school after the introduction of USE, and more of these teachers felt that the introduction of USE had an impact on their school, felt it had a negative impact on the culture at their school,

and a negative impact on the educational system in St. Lucia than teachers with five years or less teaching experience. These findings are not surprising as the less experienced teachers probably did not have the opportunity to observe these factors before the introduction of USE as they were not yet employed as teachers.

Summary of Questionnaire Responses

The findings from the questionnaire were analyzed showing the responses from all respondents and then the responses from teachers with more than five years teaching experience. This was done because teachers with five years or less teaching experience were employed right at the time USE was introduced or after the introduction and might not have had the necessary experiences or information to accurately answer some of the items on the questionnaire. The neutral response was provided primarily for these respondents; however, it was necessary to analyze the results without the teachers with five years or less teaching experience to get more accurate responses.

The findings from the questionnaires indicated that the teachers felt they had not been involved in the planning and introduction of USE. They felt that professional development opportunities had not been provided in preparation for the introduction of USE. They felt many of their students were unprepared to pursue a secondary education. The findings also indicated that the teachers felt there had been an increase in their teaching workload since the introduction of USE, that the students at their school had needed more remedial services after the introduction of USE, that discipline incidents involving students at their school had increased, but that there were support services such as counseling available for students. The teachers also felt that USE had made an impact on their school but felt it had a negative impact on the culture of their school and on the

educational system in St. Lucia. The responses from teachers with more than five years teaching experience indicated more negative perceptions about the factors of USE which were examined than teachers with five years or less teaching experience. This may be because the experienced teachers had prior experiences with other reform efforts that have not gone well and are basing their perceptions of the USE program on these past experiences. The next section of this chapter will report the findings from the interviews conducted with the teachers, principals, and other key informants and the informal conversations I had during the distribution of the questionnaires.

Teacher Interviews

Interviews were conducted with six teachers for this study. One teacher, Mrs. Prescott taught fine arts at one of the schools which receives students who score at the top on the CEE. Two teachers, Ms. Ashford, a math teacher, and Ms. Armstrong, a literacy coach, were from schools that are ranked toward the middle from the schools on the island and consistently receive students who score around the middle range on the CEE. Three of the teachers were from schools which receive students who score toward the lower end on the CEE. Of the three, Ms. Leopold taught special education, Ms. Lopez taught a business subject, and Mr. Lampke taught science. The interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 35 and 60 minutes in length. An interview guide was used to keep the interviews focused on the research questions: the teachers' perceptions of their involvement in the planning and implementation of USE; training and professional development opportunities; resources available; student support services; impact on school culture; students' level of preparedness; and impact of USE on the educational system in St. Lucia. While the interview guide was used, I added questions according to

the information revealed during the interviews. The teachers were all referred by my contacts on the island except Ms. Armstrong who I contacted after she left a note and her contact information on her questionnaire. The interviews were held at the teachers' workplace on June 21st (Mrs. Prescott), June 28th (Ms. Leopold), July 1st (Ms. Lopez), July 8th (Mr. Lampke), July 14th (Ms. Armstrong), and July 20th (Ms. Ashford), and were all audio recorded. The interviews were conducted after the questionnaires had been distributed and some of them had been collected. Pseudonyms are used here to ensure confidentiality.

Teacher interview question # 1: When did you learn about the plan to implement USE in St. Lucia? Five of the six teachers responded they knew of the plan about two to three years before the actual implementation. Ms. Lopez responded that she had only heard about the plan the actual year of its implementation. The teachers revealed that they had heard about the plan from the media, from the teachers' union, from debates in parliament, and from discussions with their peers.

Teacher interview question # 2: Did you have an opportunity to attend any meetings on the implementation of USE? Four of the teachers responded that they did not have an opportunity to attend any meetings on the implementation of USE. Ms. Ashford responded that she knew of teachers who had attended meetings, but there were no meetings at her school. Mrs. Prescott responded that she had attended a meeting on the implementation of USE but that she did not feel it had provided an opportunity to give feedback. She felt the meeting had been simply to inform the teachers of the process and stated, "they said whether we liked it or not, it was going to happen." She felt that

the implementation was already set and the teachers' input would not have changed anything.

Teacher interview question # 3: How would you describe your involvement in the planning and implementation of USE? The six teachers all responded that they had not been involved in the planning and implementation of USE and had not had an opportunity to give input or feedback into the process. They felt that the decision had been made by other people and that they had merely been informed of the decision without any clear guidelines. One of the teachers, Ms. Armstrong, stated,

it's one thing to inform people of the implementation of some new initiative and it's another thing to actually say, hey here is the training teachers are going to receive, this is what's going to be expected of you, here's how to do it, the knowhow, you know to deal with those students, that was what was lacking.

This same teacher described the decision making process involved with USE as a decision made by an "elite group" without enough teacher involvement in the process.

Another teacher, Mrs. Prescott, viewed the decision as having been made by people who were outside of the classroom and did not know what was going on. Ms. Lopez emphasized the role that teachers should play in the planning and implementation process by stating "teachers are in the classroom, they know what they go through, they know what the problems are, they know what to expect, they know, but nobody seems to listen to what the teachers have to say." The teachers all felt that if teachers had been involved in the planning and implementation of USE, some of the problems currently being experienced would have been anticipated and solutions would have been found.

Teacher interview question # 4: Did you receive any training or professional development in preparation for the implementation of USE? The teachers all responded that they had not received additional professional development in preparation for USE. Mr. Lampke stated he had the opportunity to attend the local college to attain a diploma in teaching and he thought that had been suggested as a result of the implementation of USE. He also stated that teachers in some of the schools were being encouraged to go to the local college to get a teaching certificate to help them cope better with the diverse students. Ms. Armstrong responded that she had taken it upon herself to seek knowledge to better equip herself. Ms. Leopold revealed that she had taken it upon herself to provide professional development activities for the staff at her school but that she had met with resistance from the senior members of staff who were content with their teaching methods. As a result, she had concentrated her efforts on the newer teachers who she felt were more open and seemed to need the extra help. She felt that the work with the newer staff members was helping those teachers better meet their students' needs. All the teachers reported that they thought the lack of professional development for teachers was a major flaw in the implementation process, was something that should have been addressed during the planning and implementation of USE, and was something that still remained to be addressed.

All the teachers interviewed felt that the lack of professional development had left the teachers unprepared for the implementation of USE and as a result the teachers were frustrated. Ms. Armstrong stated, "teachers who are placed at these schools (low performing schools) are not trained to deal with students with disabilities. They are normal teachers." Two of the teachers interviewed revealed that they knew of teachers

who had walked out on their classes because they were unable to cope with the behavior the students exhibited. Ms. Lopez explained that the teachers had been overwhelmed, teaching was a challenge, they were not prepared for USE, that not even college had prepared them to deal with USE, and they were getting the impression that the Ministry simply felt they could do better if they tried. This teacher also revealed that some of the teachers at her school would have two to three groups of varying abilities in class and would try to meet their needs but that the task was “sometimes unbearable and overwhelming.” Ms. Ashford revealed that the teachers had to go back to teaching the primary school material before they could even consider teaching the secondary level material, and that could sometimes be challenging. The teachers expressed frustration about the lack of training for them and felt that the first priority in implementing USE should have been to train teachers. They also felt that teachers at schools with a high number of low performing students should have been targeted for this training.

Teacher interview question # 5: In which area or areas do you think professional development should have been provided? The teachers identified areas that focused primarily on different teaching strategies to address the students’ low academic abilities but also extended to coping mechanisms to deal with the challenges posed by students who would not normally have been included in the secondary education system. They viewed these students as having specific needs that were different from the rest of school population and suggested that training was necessary simply to understand those students and their needs. Ms. Armstrong felt that teachers needed to be trained in “designing, implementing and evaluating educational plans” for low achieving students. Mr. Lampke went beyond training in teaching methodology and

classroom management strategies and felt the teachers, particularly the untrained teachers, should have received training so they could “understand the students’ psychology so that they can better be able to cope with them.” Ms. Leopold felt that professional development on effective teaching strategies was important because teachers were not creative and still used the “talk and chalk” method of teaching. She felt that this traditional method of teaching was not appropriate to teach students who were already academically low; the advances in technology also made examples of creative teaching methods more accessible and therefore easier to implement. The teachers overwhelmingly advocated professional development for teachers.

Teacher interview question # 6: Do you think St. Lucia has the resources available to provide universal secondary education? The teachers all responded that they did not think there were sufficient resources available to provide a secondary education to all eligible students in St. Lucia. One teacher, Ms. Ashford, suggested the available resources might not have been allocated equitably. Mrs. Prescott responded that her school did not have all the materials needed but the students and staff did the best they could with the little that they had on hand. Ms. Armstrong gave a detailed description of the deplorable condition of her workspace which included the presence of termites. She also reported that simple things like educational posters to help students and to create a comfortable atmosphere had to be provided by the teachers. The teachers all felt that resources in the form of facilities, materials, and personnel were lacking. They acknowledged the new schools that were built were adequate facilities, however, the older school facilities were not adequate to meet the needs of students, particularly in having the space required to offer a more technical and vocational curriculum. Two of

the teachers felt that the lack of space at their schools to offer technical and vocational subjects was a major obstacle for their students.

Teacher interview question # 7: Are there any new support services available to students since the introduction of USE? The teachers all responded there were support services available for disadvantaged students but that those services were inadequate. One teacher revealed there was a special branch of the Ministry that provided support for economically disadvantaged students. They all reported that their school had a counselor who worked with students and provided support for them. The MOE provided a text book rental program to help students purchase books and also provided bus subsidies to some students to help with transportation. Ms. Lopez acknowledged that a lot of parents at her school still could not afford even the low cost of the text book rental program and, as a result, a lot of her students did not have text books. All of the teachers revealed there was no feeding program for students at their schools. Ms. Lopez felt a feeding program was a necessity at her school because of the low socioeconomic status of the students; some of their students had participated in the school feeding program in primary school and still needed that resource. The teachers reported that the staff at their schools chipped in to provide meals for students in need. Ms. Ashford also reported that the teachers at her school were resourceful and would go to the businesses in the community to ask for things they needed.

Teacher interview question # 8: Do you think your students are prepared to pursue a secondary education? Five of the teachers felt the students who had been introduced into the system as a result of USE were not adequately prepared for a secondary level education. One of the teachers, Mrs. Prescott, acknowledged that the

students at her school were prepared for a secondary level education because her school had received some of the top students based on the CEE, but her conversations with teachers from other schools revealed their students were underprepared for a secondary education and that some of them could not read or write. Another teacher, Ms. Lopez, described the academic abilities of some of the students at her school as follows: “some of them operate at Grade three, Grade four level and some of them, no level at all because they come in and they can’t even identify, can’t make the sound of letters.” Ms. Ashford revealed that some of the students at the lower performing schools could not identify numbers and that it was impossible to teach those students abstract concepts when they did not have basic numeracy skills. Ms. Armstrong confirmed that the students had a low level of literacy which affected every academic area. While acknowledging her students’ low level of literacy, she was hopeful because her efforts as a literacy coordinator in “assessing, diagnosing, creating individual plans, and monitoring” her students’ performance had resulted in drastic improvements by her students. Mr. Lampke responded that “90-95%” of the students at his school had been the weaker students at the primary school level (based on their CEE scores). They were unable to handle the Mathematics and English curriculum at the secondary level. Ms. Leopold felt the students at her school had potential but the teachers did not know how to get the students to perform.

The teachers felt more attention should have been given to the primary level of education during the planning of USE to ensure that more students attained the prerequisite skills before moving on to a secondary school. The teachers also felt that the focus of the primary school teachers was on the high performing students because these

students would bring recognition to their schools if they did well on the CEE. This sentiment was well articulated by Ms. Lopez, who stated, “the teachers concentrate on students who they see will pass the common entrance examination so all their energies are channeled into those students and those left behind are left behind.”

Several of the teachers suggested there was a link between the increase in crime and the low academic abilities of their students. Ms. Armstrong argued this link by stating, “I believe there is a direct link between the level of education that we provide our students, the level of accommodation we provide and the level of crime in society . . . we are actually enabling crime.” This teacher felt the broken family structure and the failure of the educational system were both to blame for the increase in crime. Ms. Lopez also proposed a link between the state of the educational system and the increase in crime by stating,

everybody is talking about the increase in crime and maybe, too, that’s the result of it because we have so many children going out there who are not functional, they cannot do anything, so they go out there and, what you expect, they give trouble.

The teachers also felt the students were getting involved in crime because they were frustrated at school.

Teacher interview question # 9: Has the secondary school curriculum been modified since the introduction of USE? Five of the teachers responded that the curriculum was not meeting the needs of some of their students. These teachers felt that the curriculum was too heavily academic and students were unprepared for the heavy academic emphasis. Ms. Lopez stated, “The curriculum can’t be the same as the top

performing schools, it can't be the same as the normal schools where the top students go." Ms. Ashford concurred and stated the students have "basically the same syllabus that a normal secondary school would have." One teacher, Mrs. Prescott, responded that her students were able to cope with the curriculum because her school got the "cream of the crop" but revealed that conversations with teachers at other schools revealed that the students are "more frustrated than helped." She felt the curriculum was preparing students to write the CXC examination and that expectation was misguided because the students had demonstrated by their results on the CEE that they were not academically oriented. Mr. Lampke acknowledged that there were literacy and numeracy programs available at his school to help students, but felt they were insufficient because of the high number of students who needed that service. Another teacher, Ms. Lopez, also acknowledged that though there was a special education teacher at her school, that teacher was stretched because of the high number of students who needed her services.

All the teachers interviewed felt that more technical and vocational subjects should be offered to students. Mr. Lampke revealed that most of the students at his school were not prepared to cope with the traditional curriculum and adjustments had been made to the curriculum at his school to focus on technical and vocational subjects that the students were more inclined to do. He stated that the technical and vocational subjects were intended to "get them interested, forcing them to stay in school and at least they're gonna get something, get some kind of skill when they leave here." Mrs. Prescott suggested that the curriculum should focus more on technical and vocational subjects and particular schools should specialize in certain areas so students could learn a skill that they could use for future employment. Three teachers, (Ms. Ashford, Ms. Armstrong,

and Mr. Lampke), while advocating the availability of more technical and vocational subjects, felt that the core issue was ensuring that students had acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills because those skills were necessary even for technical and vocational subjects. Ms. Ashford suggested that the curriculum should lay a foundation and should focus on teaching students numeracy and literacy skills and then some vocational subjects where “at least they will be able to read when they leave.” She felt the curriculum should be modified; however, she thought it was also important to have support programs in place for students.

All of the teachers felt the low performing students were frustrated with their inability to cope with the curriculum. Three of the teachers revealed they felt the students’ frustration was being reflected in negative behavior. These teachers reported that the students would misbehave to get out of class. Ms. Armstrong viewed this as a defense mechanism for some of the students because they did not want others to know they were academically low. She described the actions of the students in her school as follows:

they hate the system, the system doesn’t meet their needs, they want to go home you know, so they will challenge you, they will put themselves in positions, compromising positions, where they know they will be called upon, where they know they will get in trouble . . . they will do whatever it takes to get out of the system.

Ms. Lopez also reported that the students were “getting themselves into all sorts of mischief” because of their inability to cope with the academics. The teachers also linked

the students' level of frustration to an increase in the dropout rate and also to an increase in social problems such as gangs, drug use, and crime.

Teacher interview question # 10: Have any alternative assessments or certifications been introduced since the implementation of USE? The teachers acknowledged that some effort was currently being made to introduce alternative assessments in some of the schools and felt this was a good move as many of the low performing students would not be able to handle the traditional CSEC subjects. Ms. Lopez revealed that she thought her school was going to introduce one of the alternative assessments during the next school year but she had not heard anything definite yet. Two of the teachers, while supporting the need for alternative assessments and certifications, advised caution because they felt the use of alternative assessments and certifications could possibly result in teachers having low expectations of students, prematurely labeling them, and giving these alternative assessments to students who could do the regular assessments with the right support. Ms. Armstrong felt that the alternative assessments needed to challenge the students and the certificates needed to be meaningful and should symbolize that students had attained some basic academic skills and should not just emphasize "peripheral stuff." The teachers expressed support for the CCSLC which provided students with a certificate as early as Form Three. The teachers felt that this certificate would help students who performed poorly at the CXC examinations to obtain a job when they left school or if they dropped out of school.

Teacher interview question # 11: Even with the attainment of USE, students are still being transitioned to secondary school based on the results of the common entrance examination, which results in low performing students being sent to the

same schools. What do you think of that process? Four of the teachers felt that the transition process should remain as it was and the CEE should still be used as a screening device to promote students. Mr. Lampke indicated his support for the process by stating, “well, in order for St. Lucia to move forward I think it’s necessary, we have to define our future leaders and so on.” Mrs. Prescott also supported the current transition process and felt it worked because including low performing students in the mainstream would cause more frustration for those students. She detailed the experience of a low performing student who had been assigned to her school from the senior primary school; she explained it was difficult for the student to keep up with the work and she had been unable to write five CXC subjects. She described the student’s experience as being very solitary. She added that if low performing students were grouped together, the teachers would better be able to work at their pace, modify strategies, and therefore, better meet their needs. She explained that the increased class sizes and limited physical space would make it extremely difficult for teachers to give the necessary attention to low performing students if they were grouped with high performing students, and felt that those students might experience teasing from their higher performing classmates.

The current process of transitioning students by performance based on the CEE was also supported by Ms. Lopez, who said that she did not support streaming but she did not think it was a bad thing because having students with the same abilities together would allow teachers to better meet their needs. She also added that she thought the teachers needed to be trained to be able to deal with that issue. This sentiment was also expressed by Ms. Ashford, who also supported the current method of transitioning students and stated,

you can focus on that school and develop certain strategies within that school to bridge the gap, whereas if the students were all in different schools to me there would be a problem addressing their needs and maybe they would drown. If they are in one school and their problems are being addressed, the teachers can better help them with their needs. I see that as an advantage of the common entrance and how it's being used.

This teacher mentioned she heard a zoning approach could be used to transition students but she was opposed to zoning and thought that parental choice was very important in deciding school placement.

Two teachers felt that the current practice of transitioning students should be discontinued. Ms. Armstrong stated, "I think it is unfair that the accommodations have not been provided for these students and that they have to use the same rule of measurement in order to determine their placement." She suggested that the CEE needed to be revised, making the examination more straightforward and that students needed to be specifically prepared for the examination. She advocated the use of continuous assessments during the primary level of school and suggested that not every student should write the examination in the sixth grade and that some students might need an extra year to be ready. This teacher supported a zoning approach but felt that problems would still surface if the lack of teacher training was not addressed. The other teacher who felt that the current transition process was not working, Ms. Leopold, stated that USE had "maintained the status quo" by keeping the same system of transition. This teacher suggested that a zoning approach should be used where students would attend schools in their communities. When asked if she felt the low performing students would

be able to cope with the work if they went to the more prestigious schools, she suggested that special education teachers could be assigned to all the schools and programs be put in place to help the teachers and students. She felt that St. Lucia did not currently have the resources to move to a zonal system and that it was too late to make that change. She felt that the zonal system “would have been an easier transition” if it had been implemented when USE had been introduced. She also felt a zoning approach would remove the stigmatization of schools that currently exists in the system.

Teacher interview question # 12: Do you think that assigning all the low performing students to particular schools might result in these schools being negatively stigmatized? The teachers who felt the current process of transitioning students should be maintained were asked if they thought stigmas would be attached to particular schools if only low performing students were sent to those schools. Two of the teachers responded that they thought the schools could develop strengths in certain areas to remove the stigmatization. Ms. Ashford stated, “I think the teachers make the school. There are some schools even if you may not see them performing at the top academically, nobody wants to go up against them for certain things like sports.” Mrs. Prescott concurred with this sentiment and felt if the schools were able to focus on specific areas of study they could become proficient at these particular areas and that would allow them to look good. She also added that “the stigma is created by the adults, not the students” and felt the MOE could sensitize the public to remove or lessen the stigmatization.

Teacher interview question # 13: What are your impressions of the USE program and its impact on the educational system in St. Lucia? Five of the teachers felt the introduction of USE had been a step in the right direction because it could lead to

a more educated population, while one teacher thought the introduction had been a bad idea. Ms. Armstrong in supporting USE stated the “ministry came up with a great idea; they figured o.k. everybody needs to be educated.” Ms. Lopez stated that she supported USE but she had a problem with the lack of preparation. Ms. Ashford, while acknowledging there were problems, felt that students would be better off just because they had an opportunity to be included in the educational system. Mr. Lampke felt that the former system that had promoted students solely on merit should have been maintained because the students did not work as hard now since they were now guaranteed a place in a secondary school. While indicating support for USE, the five teachers felt that though USE primarily affected low performing students, measures had not been put in place to support those students and as a result they were not receiving the education that USE was supposed to deliver. Ms. Ashford addressed the impact of USE on low performing students as follows:

When we say universal secondary education, we say we want everybody to get the opportunity but the students below are still not getting the opportunity, if they're there and you're teaching them something that they cannot grasp at their level so they're not getting the secondary education, they're going through the institution, not getting the secondary education.

This sentiment was echoed by Ms. Lopez who felt further harm was being done to the students. She argued that, “they spend five years at secondary school and it's almost like a waste . . . those children just go through the system, they leave and they just go out there.” Ms. Armstrong addressed the lack of attention given to low performing students by remarking that, “USE, because of its failure to implement the necessary

accommodations for such students, has drastically failed our students here in St. Lucia.” She also felt USE should mean more than simply the placement of students. Ms. Lopez felt that the lack of attention given to low performing students was driving these students “deeper down into the cracks.” Ms. Ashford viewed the role of the education system as producing children who were “numerate and literate and could function in society” but did not feel the education system was doing it.

Summary of Teacher Interviews

The teacher interviews supported the findings from the questionnaires that had been distributed. These interviewed teachers were dissatisfied with many aspects of the USE program. They were especially dissatisfied with the lack of professional development and teacher preparation for USE. They expressed concern about the students’ low level of academic ability and thought that was as a result of the primary school teachers focusing on high performing students to bring recognition to their schools. The teachers also felt that there was not enough attention given to the primary school level during the implementation of USE and that that was a flaw in the process.

The teachers indicated that the curriculum was not relevant to the needs of the low performing students because it was too highly academic. The highly academic nature of the curriculum presented problems for teachers and students; the teachers were overwhelmed and the students were frustrated. The students’ frustrations were reflected in negative behaviors, increases in the dropout rate, and an increase in the rate of crime. They advocated a curriculum that emphasized more technical and vocational subjects. They also supported the use of alternative certifications but felt that measures needed to be put in place to ensure that these alternative certifications were being given to students

who really needed them. The teachers acknowledged that alternative certifications had been introduced by the CXC which provided certificates to students in Form Three; they supported these certificates and felt they were necessary to allow students to obtain employment when they left school.

The teachers indicated that they supported the USE policy because it promised to give an opportunity to all students; however, the opportunity seemed to be a placement in school rather than an opportunity to attain an education. They felt the accommodations were not in place for the target population for USE, the low performing students. The majority of the teachers supported the current method of transitioning students to the secondary school, which was based on the results of the CEE and placed low performing students in particular schools. The teachers felt it was necessary to place students by ability because it would allow teachers to better meet the needs of students leading to less frustration for students.

Principal Interviews

Two secondary school principals were interviewed for this study. I asked one principal for an interview after having an informal conversation with her during the distribution of the questionnaire. I contacted the other principal for an interview because her school had come up in several of the interviews I had conducted with teachers. The interviews were semi-structured, lasting about 60 minutes. The interview conducted with Mrs. Jones took place on June 29th, 2010 and that with Mrs. Smith on July 13th, 2010. The principals were asked the same general questions as the teachers. I used an interview guide to keep the interviews focused on the research questions, although additional questions were added based on the information the two principals revealed

during the interview. The interviewees are referred to as Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Smith to protect their identity.

Principal interview question # 1: How did you learn about the plan to implement USE in St. Lucia? Both principals responded that they had heard about the plan at least three years before the actual implementation. The principals revealed that there had been a lot of media coverage about the plan to implement USE.

Principal interview question # 2: Did you have an opportunity to attend any meetings on the implementation of USE? Mrs. Smith responded that she had attended meetings on USE with her staff but felt these meetings had been designed to give information about the process rather than to seek input. She stated,

I don't know about input, normally certain things are told to you, as to whether or not you're asked for your input and that is um, reflected in future documents, it's a different story. We were told of the process as to whether or not it was for feedback, I'm not exactly sure.

Mrs. Jones revealed that she had not been involved in the process as she had been out of the education system during the planning of USE.

Principal interview question # 3: Did teachers receive any training or professional development in preparation for the implementation of USE? Mrs. Smith reported that her teachers had received training in teaching numeracy and literacy in preparation for the introduction of USE but that she thought the training might not have been adequate. Mrs. Jones could not comment about the training teachers received before the introduction of USE but she revealed that there had been in- house training during professional development day activities at her school. She said there had not been

any specialized training given to the teachers at her school. She felt that the teachers were being held responsible for training themselves, stating that, “if you’re taking the job, you train yourself to do the job that you’ve been hired to do . . . the specialized training does not often come anymore.” Mrs. Smith indicated she thought that one of the biggest challenges since the introduction of USE had been the need for ongoing training of teachers.

Principal interview question # 4: Do you think St. Lucia has the necessary resources to provide a secondary education to all eligible students? The two principals had two different accounts of resource availability at their schools. Mrs. Smith felt that she had the physical resources available at her school and the space to expand and to offer different activities to her students because her school was well equipped. She had a learning resource center that was well equipped with books at her students’ levels. She felt that the human resource was somewhat inadequate because some of her teachers were not adequately trained to work with the students at her school. She was basically satisfied with the resources available at her school stating, “the situation is not that we do not have the resources available but we need time to work with the students to move them from point A to point B.”

Mrs. Jones painted a dire picture of the resources available at her school. She felt that her school did not have the available resources to meet her students’ needs. Her biggest concern was the lack of space. She described her school as follows:

the grounds are unsafe, there is no playing room, there’s no recreational area, there’s no lunch area, we have just enough classrooms, we have no extra rooms for any activities . . . we have no sporting facilities, no football field, no basketball

court, we don't have any place to play cricket, we have nothing and there's nothing in the vicinity.

She added that the place was not suitable for a school. She acknowledged that she had received two extra teachers to work with the students on numeracy and literacy; those teachers worked with the students in the regular classroom along with all the other students because there was no free classroom space to work with them. She also acknowledged that there was a counselor at her school who was able to help with the students' non-academic problems.

The principals both reported that many of the students in their schools came from high poverty areas and that that presented challenges they did not think the government was addressing. The most pressing issue for these two principals was the unavailability of a feeding program at their schools. Mrs. Jones stated, "I asked for a feeding program and they said that's not allocated for secondary schools so I wonder whether the secondary school students don't get hungry." This sentiment was echoed by Mrs. Smith who stated, "since they are already giving transportation and books, the children can come hungry." She also added that a lot of the children at her school had been recipients of the feeding program at their primary schools and needed that resource at the secondary level as well. Mrs. Jones stated that she felt the government's inability to provide a feeding program at the secondary schools was because their priorities were misplaced. She stated, "we spend money on a whole lot of other things like pumping a million dollars into carnival . . . what matters, we are ignoring, not paying attention to." The two principals both acknowledged that they had established partnerships with area businesses

and organizations to get the help their students needed but Mrs. Jones acknowledged that businesses were not always willing or able to help.

The principals both felt that the limited resources were not being used in an efficient manner. In response to my comment that St. Lucia was spending 6% of its GDP on education, Mrs. Smith replied,

I don't even understand what that means. It's like you as a woman you spend a lot of money on food but your children are malnourished and you don't know what that means. So maybe we need to think how you cook the food maybe you just soak it and then you throw away all the nutrients in the water. What is it you do, do you buy it and then let it spoil on a shelf or in the fridge and you do not cook it?

This principal also indicated that resources were being wasted in the daily operations of the MOE and illustrated her point by giving an example of duplicate memos and circulars sent by the MOE, stating, "somebody doesn't know that A has sent it (a circular) and B sends the same memo which takes in paper and ink and whatever it is."

The principals also indicated their students had other issues that affected their educational experiences which were not being adequately addressed by the MOE. Mrs. Smith reported that indiscipline was an issue at her school and she thought the students' inability to cope with the school work was partly to blame for the indiscipline. She stated, "when we do not try our best to ensure that the children are occupied, they are focused at the level in which they can function, then to me the result is indiscipline." She revealed there were serious situations that could not be overlooked such as students threatening teachers. She reported that students were usually suspended for serious

discipline issues and the parents were required to come to the school before the students were allowed back in the school. Most parents got frustrated because they were always being called to the school and would stop coming; the students would then drop out leading to an increase in the dropout rate. This principal felt there were not many options to deal with students who displayed serious behavioral problems. She indicated that the MOE should have some sort of program where students could be referred to a psychologist or other professional to get help for their behavioral issues. She revealed that the schools were left to deal with delinquent behavior on their own and she was trying to form partnerships with outside agencies to get help for the students but it was very challenging. She also suggested that the MOE should try to model what was being done at the CARE program, which she thought was effective in working with students the schools felt they could no longer help. The Center for Adolescent Renewal and Education (CARE) is a program which works with students who have been expelled from school.

Mrs. Smith revealed that indiscipline had been a major issue at her school but that she had made some changes that had made the situation much better. She stated, “they are boisterous kids, sometimes we have a fracas here but we do not have the major disciplinary problems anymore.” She indicated that she and her staff were very proud of the decrease in disciplinary incidents because her school had been known for being violent. She also revealed that the only options for dealing with students who caused major disciplinary problems were suspension and caning but that she did not use the caning option. She acknowledged the suspensions were not effective because the students used the suspension as a holiday and “come back worse than before” they were

suspended. She also revealed that the MOE was complaining that students were being suspended too often. This principal also revealed that the government did not have a plan to deal with students who caused problems at school and felt,

the government needs to have a program in place to help at risk kids, those who do not get that sort of nurturing at home, when they get in trouble, have a place, don't cast them aside but rehabilitate them to bring them back into the system.

Principal interview question # 5: Do you think the students at your school are prepared to pursue a secondary education? Both principals responded that they had received students from the bottom ranks of the primary schools based on the CEE and that those students were unprepared to pursue a secondary school education. The principals reported that some of those students were unable to read or write and had difficulty processing information, and that some were operating at the kindergarten level. Mrs. Jones stated, “children come to us at 11, 12, 13 and they are unable to read, they are unable to recognize letter sounds.” She also indicated that it was difficult to teach those students as they were teenagers and could not be taught as children. However, they were also not adults and could not be taught as adults. Mrs. Smith revealed that the low academic performance of her students was frustrating to her teachers and though they worked really hard, they were not happy. The principals both reported that the dropout rate at their schools was high which was partly due to the fact that the students did not find meaning in what was going on at school and partly because some students who were suspended never returned to school. Mrs. Smith revealed that she had tried different strategies including restructuring the timetable to ensure that students who needed more

help were grouped together where they could get that help. She also revealed she had a literacy and numeracy coordinator on staff to help her students.

The two principals both felt that more effort should have been focused on the primary level of the education system and that low performing students were being neglected at the primary schools because they were not able to bring recognition to the schools. Mrs. Jones felt the primary school teachers were only focused on the high performing students who could bring recognition to the schools and as a result “a lot of students stay behind, some of these students are barely taught.” She then added that the primary schools have to “tighten their act” because for universal secondary education to be successful the primary school teachers needed to ensure that the students had acquired “basic literacy and numeracy skills to allow them to access education at the secondary school.” She added that the students were assessed at the primary schools through the Minimum Standard Tests in Grades two and four and that the results of these tests should be used to identify and address the students’ deficiencies.

Mrs. Smith echoed these sentiments, adding that “we have to go back and look at what’s happening to our children from the time they are in the primary schools.” She felt a lot of the students’ academic issues should have been identified and addressed before they got to the secondary school. She also indicated there had been talk about looking at the processes at the primary school, but nothing had been done. She revealed she sometimes felt sorry for the MOE because she did not think they knew what to do.

Principal interview question # 6: Has there been any modification to the curriculum or assessments at your school since the implementation of USE? Both principals revealed that they had to follow the curriculum established by the CXC, but

that they tried to offer subjects that they felt their students would be interested in. Mrs. Jones revealed she had eliminated some subject offerings at the CXC level because the students were not interested in those subjects. She had tried to offer more technical and vocational subjects because the students were more interested in those but she did not have the space to offer as many of these subjects as she wanted explaining, “food and nutrition, we have 50, we can only accommodate 20, visual arts, this is our strength, we have 60 students who want to do it, we can only accommodate 20 . . . we don’t have the space to do it.” She indicated that her students were interested in doing the technical and vocational subjects because they saw more meaning in these subjects, saw them as a way to get employment, and because the students liked to engage themselves with hands-on activities.

Mrs. Smith revealed that she had also introduced vocational and technical subjects in her school because those subjects seemed to meet the needs of her students. This principal stated that she had enough space to introduce technical and vocational subjects and while many of the students had shown an interest in the subjects offered, she was surprised that more students had not shown more interest: “I would have thought that more of the students would have come in and found something interesting for them to do. But I think the problem might be deeper than what meets the eyes.” This principal felt strongly that most of the students at her school needed an extra year to master the curriculum and be successful at it. She suggested the extra year could be used as a transitional year for students where they would concentrate on self-esteem and discipline issues and not focus too heavily on the academics. The two principals both

acknowledged the CXC examination board had seen the need to offer different levels of certification and they were supportive of that move.

The principals both expressed concern that the lower performing students were being held to unreasonable academic expectations. They felt that these students were being held to the same standards as the better performing students. Mrs. Jones was quite vocal and upset about this and stated, “you cannot treat everybody with the same yardstick; now that you have different levels of students you have to cater to them.” This principal stated that she believed lower performing students could succeed but at a different level. She made reference to a section of the new Education Sector Development Plan which has a requirement that all secondary school students had to write a minimum of five CSEC subjects including Mathematics and English. This principal felt that the outcome of education should be the development of a well-rounded individual and that the ability to write five CSEC subjects was not necessarily an indication of a well-rounded individual. She felt the goal of secondary education should involve more than having students write five CSEC subjects. This principal supported a requirement which stipulated that all students should write a minimum of five subjects but that students should be able to combine CSEC, CCSLC, and CVQ subjects to make up the five subjects. The two principals indicated that the system was not equitable and that students should be given the tools they needed to succeed. Mrs. Smith articulated this by stating, “equity is not everybody getting the same thing, it’s about getting what you need.”

Principal interview question # 7: Even with the implementation of USE, students are still being assigned to secondary schools based on the results of the

CEE. What do you think about that process? Both principals felt the current method was not working and expressed frustration with it. Mrs. Jones responded that the system was an archaic one and argued,

the way we assign students, the whole system of stratifying schools, the schools are doomed to be at the bottom. They are set up to fail because if you only send students who score below a certain point to a school and you put nothing in place to bring them up, but you judge them by the same criteria and expect them to perform at the end of five years like the schools who get the top students from the CEE. What do you expect?

The principals both acknowledged there was a need to keep the prestigious schools operating as they were because they understood the “best brains had to get to the top schools” (Mrs. Smith) but they advocated the use of the partial zoning system which would maintain parental choice by sending deserving students to the prestigious schools while sending other students to schools in their vicinity. The principals both felt that the partial zoning system would eliminate the bus fees that some students had to pay, would eliminate the need for the government to provide bus subsidies to some students, and would help to reduce tardies, absences, and the dropout rate. They felt the process of bussing students to schools all over the island was a waste of resources that could be better used elsewhere.

The method of transitioning students was a very emotional topic for the two principals who explained in detail the impact it was having on their schools. They felt their schools were stigmatized and were seen as places for dumb students. Mrs. Jones stated the students at her school were “branded.” Mrs. Smith expressed similar feelings

and remarked, “because coming to this school, there’s this whole stigma attached.” The principals revealed that their schools were viewed as a last resort and parents did not want to send their children to them. The principals explained that the stigmatization was having a negative effect on their students, particularly on their confidence. Mrs. Jones revealed that though the school was stigmatized she was “on a campaign to uplift her students” and had made several changes to improve the school’s image and she felt the students were becoming more confident. Mrs. Smith expressed that she felt it was necessary to have activities to raise her students’ self-esteem. She also indicated that the method used to transition students to the secondary school had also changed the demographics at her school in favor of boys because more boys in the system were low performers; she felt this situation exacerbated the discipline issues. Mrs. Jones felt that having all low performing students in the same schools was not motivating to the students and teachers at those schools.

Principal interview question # 8: How would you describe communication between the MOE, teachers, and principals? Both principals felt communication was poor. In referring to communication Mrs. Smith revealed, “communication involves listening as well, internalizing what is being said, listening and seeing how you can change, you can modify so that the situation improves. So if that is not being done, I don’t see there’s good communication.” She also added that the teachers had raised several issues with the MOE about the appropriateness of the textbooks, the need for more counselors, and strategies to deal with indiscipline but she felt “the Ministry doesn’t listen . . . I do not see that the Ministry is listening to anything.”

Mrs. Jones used the phrase “nobody listens to us” five times during the interview, indicating her view that communication between the Ministry and the principals and teachers was poor. She acknowledged that her district education officer, who was a liaison between the MOE and the school, was supportive but she did not think anybody from main office knew where the school was. She also indicated that she had invited officials from the Ministry to various school events, but they never came. She had requested a meeting with an official from the Ministry to discuss school issues but the meeting had not yet been held because the MOE official had cancelled twice. The two principals indicated that they were frustrated. Mrs. Jones remarked, “I am not a happy principal” and Mrs. Smith expressed similar sentiments in stating, “I get fed up.”

Principal interview question # 9: Is there anything else you would like to add about USE in St. Lucia and its impact on the educational system? The two principals both indicated support for USE. Mrs. Jones stated, “I think that to move on as a developed country, we have to educate our population.” She also added that she thought USE was commendable but students should not be stigmatized and all students should be given a chance. Mrs. Smith expressed similar sentiments and stated, “I think Universal Secondary Education is a good thing . . . you see basic education is no longer primary education. Universal secondary education is a good thing. I will never say USE is bad.” The two principals both acknowledged, however, that there were problems with the introduction of USE and that it was not meeting the needs of low performing students. Mrs. Smith expressed,

I just believe that we need to understand the ramifications of USE, understand the children we are bringing in that would normally be on the streets . . . unless we

make an effort to meet their needs, it would have been better just to leave them there because it's not helping them.

She also indicated she did not think USE was being implemented in a holistic manner, commenting "we compartmentalize things, I see that piecemeal sort of attitude reflected in USE, reflected in the schools, we don't see things holistically, we do not see for this thing to work well, everything has to be in order." She predicted that it would be difficult for USE to work because it had not been approached in a holistic manner. Mrs. Jones revealed that she knew a committee had been set up to review the USE program but that almost four years later there had been no official report made about the committee's findings or recommendations. Despite the challenges, Mrs. Smith was optimistic that she could improve the situation for the students at her school, declaring, "we are thrown into the deep end but we will survive, we will swim because I don't see us drowning, trust me on that one." Mrs. Jones was not as optimistic and felt the future looked bleak for her school stating, "I don't see a lot of hope."

The two principals had several suggestions for improving the Universal Secondary Education program in St. Lucia to provide a better secondary education to students. They felt strongly that the educational system at the primary level needed to be looked at to help improve the academic abilities of the students at that level. They advocated the use of a partial zoning system which would maintain parental choice and send high performing students to the two or three high performing schools on the island and the rest of the students to schools in their community. They felt the use of community schools would help to free up resources that were currently being spent on bus subsidies to be used in other areas such as school feeding programs. They felt more

technical and vocational programs in schools were needed to better meet the needs of low performing students. They both advocated the implementation of some sort of rehabilitative program to address the needs of students with major behavioral problems to bring them back into the system. Mrs. Jones indicated the student population at the secondary school was declining because of a decrease in the population growth rate, which she felt would lead to less of a demand for secondary school places and could possibly lead to changes in the secondary school system. She also indicated that some of the primary schools were already enrolling younger students because of the declining student population at that level.

Summary of Principal Interviews

The two principal interviews revealed findings similar to the questionnaire data and the teacher interviews. They both acknowledged that the teachers had been informed of the plan to implement USE about three years before the actual implementation. One of the principals acknowledged she had attended an informational meeting on the implementation of USE but did not think the meeting was designed to solicit input or feedback. One principal acknowledged that some professional development was provided to the teachers at her school to prepare them for USE but it had been inadequate. They both acknowledged that teacher training had not been provided since the implementation of USE. The principals both were of the opinion that the students at their schools did not have the prerequisite academic skills to pursue a secondary education. They felt the primary schools needed to do a better job in identifying and addressing students' deficiencies.

The principals had different accounts of the resources available at their schools. One reported that she had adequate resources while the other reported her students did not even have a lunch area. They both felt available resources could be used more efficiently. Both also thought more attention needed to be paid to students who could not function in the school because of behavioral issues. They felt very strongly about the process of assigning low performing students to particular schools. They hated the process and felt it led to the stigmatization of schools so both supported a partial zoning process. They both acknowledged they were experiencing high dropout rates and thought this was partly due to frustration brought on by an inability to deal with the strong academic emphasis of the curriculum and partly because of frustration brought about by disciplinary actions such as repeat suspensions.

The principals both revealed that they were offering subjects they felt were more relevant to the needs of their students. They both supported the USE policy but felt changes were necessary to meet the needs of the target population: low performing students who were introduced into the system because of the implementation of USE. Their main concerns seemed to be the low level of student abilities, inadequate teacher training, the lack of key support programs for low performing students, particularly for students with behavioral problems, and the stigmatization caused by sending all low performing students to particular schools.

Other Key Informant Interviews

Five interviews were held with five key informants. The first interview was conducted on June 17th, 2010 with Mr. Turner, who was a primary school principal and president of the Teachers' Union at the time of the study. The second interview was

conducted on June 30th, 2010 with Mr. O'Brien, a district education officer responsible for several schools during the time of the study who had been in that position for 10 years. The third interview was conducted on July 1st, 2010 with Mr. DePaul who held a high level position in the MOE and had been in that position for over 10 years. He played a role in planning the introduction of USE in St. Lucia. The fourth interview was conducted on July 7th, 2010 with Mr. Perceval, a former high level employee at the MOE who played a role in the introduction of USE in St. Lucia. His interview was conducted via telephone. The fifth interview was conducted on July 12th, 2010 with Mr. Rupert who was a former secondary school teacher and vice principal, and a parliamentary representative at the time of the study.

The interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. An interview guide was used during the interviews but the questions were modified based on the information provided by the participants. The questions also varied depending on the position of the interviewee, for example more questions on the implementation process were posed of Mr. DePaul than the other informants because he had more knowledge of the process of implementation based on his position at the MOE. The interviews were scheduled based on the availability of the participants.

Other key informant interview question # 1: What was the official reason for implementing Universal Secondary Education in St. Lucia? Mr. DePaul stated that the USE was not just a St. Lucian policy, but that several islands in the Caribbean had committed to and implemented USE. He identified several reasons for the decision to implement USE. First, the education for all goals addressed UPE, however, most of the islands in the Caribbean had already achieved UPE so they redefined the goal to target

USE by 2005. Second, he indicated that Caribbean leaders had determined that basic education would involve both primary and secondary education up to Grade 11, so USE was a logical step. He added that the MOE “recognized that completing the cycle of primary education was not enough for somebody to survive in the present environment.” Third, USE was necessary to observe children’s right to be educated. Mr. Perceval confirmed the information provided by Mr. DePaul and added that research conducted by the World Bank suggested that more educated people earned more.

Other key informant interview question # 2: When was the planning process started? This question was posed to Mr. DePaul and Mr. Perceval while the other key informants were asked when they had heard about the plan to implement USE in St. Lucia. This question was phrased differently for the participants because Mr. DePaul and Mr. Perceval were the only key informants who could have pinpointed the exact start of the planning process. The other informants were asked when they had learned of the plan to implement USE in St. Lucia. Mr. DePaul indicated that the planning process for USE started in 2000 on the heels of the Caribbean Ministers of Education forum in Santo Domingo. He added that the ESDP plan in 2000 had set the goal of USE by the year 2005. This was confirmed by four of the other key informants who revealed that they had heard of the plan to implement USE as early as 2000. Mr. Turner revealed that he had learned of the plan about three years before the actual implementation (about 2003). He revealed that when the construction of the new schools was announced, they knew it was a step towards USE. He added that the construction on the new schools began within a year of the announcement of the move to implement USE and there was surprise at the speed of the implementation.

Mr. DePaul explained the process of implementation revealing that implementation was first approached from an access standpoint as it was important to first get enough secondary school spaces to accommodate all students. To fulfill the access component, the MOE utilized a project approach which started with the OEDP. This project was initiated with the goal of USE in mind. He explained that the MOE increased secondary school spaces by constructing two new secondary schools, extending some of the existing schools, and upgrading the senior primary schools to full secondary schools. He added that the senior primary schools were disestablished because, “they were an odd sort of creature in the system, because it was not primary, it was not secondary and conceptually we were having difficulty with the transition and certification of children at that level.” Mr. Perceval and Mr. Rupert had similar explanations as Mr. DePaul concerning the process involved in the implementation of USE.

Other key informant interview question # 3: Were any stakeholders involved in the planning process? Mr. DePaul responded to this question by stating that the ESDP “was developed in a highly consultative nature and had a very participatory approach” and that several meetings were held to involve parents and other community members. He admitted that the theme of these meetings was not USE but the need to expand the secondary education system. The involvement of stakeholders in the planning process was also confirmed by Mr. Edison, Mr. Rupert, and Mr. Perceval, but they revealed different levels of involvement. Mr. Perceval admitted the emphasis had been placed on principals and the expectation was that they would share information with the teachers. He admitted there was “a lack of adequate communication with principals and teachers.” He also confirmed that the Teachers’ Union had been involved and had had a

representative on the council on secondary education and on the budget committee. Mr. Edison revealed that teachers were not directly involved in the process of implementing USE but that they were represented by the local Teachers' Union and the principals' association. He also revealed he was not aware of the involvement of other stakeholders. Mr. Rupert revealed that there had been meetings to inform teachers and other individuals about the implementation process. Like Mr. DePaul, he felt the involvement of teachers on the planning portion of the ESDP, which had a component that addressed the goal of USE, constituted teacher involvement in the process. Mr. Turner had a very different take on the involvement of teachers in the process and responded that he did not think the teachers had received enough information about the implementation of USE, stating that

They heard it like everybody else, but there was no consultation with the teachers, they were not prepared, particularly those teachers who would be receiving children who did not perform well at the common entrance. These teachers were not seriously consulted.

He then described the decision to implement USE as a "top down decision" and added that the decision had not been made in a collaborative manner. He felt the teachers should have been involved in the process, explaining that "somewhere there you have to go to the teachers to encourage the teachers to buy into the idea because at the end of the day, they are the practitioners, if you want the program to be successful, you have to inform them." He described educational policy implementation as "top down and haphazard" and it "revolves around personalities rather than long term planning." He made reference to the ESDP, stating that in the past there had been input and information

given about those plans, but to date he did not know what was included in the current ESDP and he did not think the teachers knew what was included either.

Other key informant interview question # 4: Are you satisfied that teachers received enough training and professional development in preparation for USE?

The responses to the question of teacher training and development revealed consensus from the informants. They unanimously agreed that there was insufficient training provided to teachers. Mr. DePaul stated, “I would say unreservedly, I don’t think that enough was done.” He acknowledged that as part of the OEDP, while teachers were oriented with the draft curriculum, they had not received any specific training. He made it very clear special needs teachers and counselors had been trained and had been placed at the secondary schools. He also added that principals had received training in school management and leadership training and instructional support. He felt that because of the diversity of the students entering the system, more could have been done to “psychologically prepare teachers for this sort of change.” He felt the psychological preparation had been necessary because the teachers were accustomed to an educational system that catered to the “best children who were sent to the secondary schools while the others remained in primary or graduated with certifications which had little or no value.” He acknowledged that prior to USE, some of the rural districts had been accommodating students with mixed abilities because those students had had few options in their areas; he felt that the MOE could have “taken more of the lessons from these schools and worked with our principals and teachers in terms of how to deal with the students.” He also added that the MOE was addressing the issue of teacher training and

had conducted a reading workshop for teachers from kindergarten to Form One (Grade 7) and they were continuing to address the issue of teacher training.

Mr. Edison acknowledged that individual schools and districts provided professional development and training but that it was inadequate because, “you need an overhaul when it comes to methodology.” He added that an effort was being made to train teachers and made reference to the same workshop that Mr. DePaul had mentioned. He revealed the workshop had been facilitated by a university from the United States and the government had spent “close to 60 to \$80,000” on the workshop. He added that though workshops had been held, teachers still gravitated towards their traditional methods of teaching and they needed to be retrained, evaluated and offered incentives to motivate them to change their teaching styles.

Mr. Perceval revealed that efforts had been made to train teachers and that scholarships had been offered for degrees in educational administration. He added that several teachers had received scholarships to train in Science and Math, but some of the teachers had not returned. He also confirmed that professional development had been provided for principals and education officers in educational administration and management through a diploma program from the University of the West Indies. Mr. Rupert corroborated that training had been provided in partnership with the University of the West Indies to train school administrators and senior teachers.

Mr. Turner reported that he was not aware that any professional development had been provided for the teachers and felt that continued to be a problem. He felt the students at the low performing schools needed, “persons who understand them, how to teach them, how to reach them.” He revealed that some of the low performing students

had problems that were not academic and needed teachers who were trained and could meet their needs. He felt some of the schools might need two counselors. When asked if a request had been made to the MOE to provide professional development, he responded that the Teachers' Union had held meetings with the MOE and "continue to impress upon the ministry the need to give these teachers the skills because we believe the teachers who teach these children require special needs skills." He emphasized the need to equip the teachers with training and the resources to effectively implement USE.

Other key informant interview question # 5: What feedback have you been getting from the teachers about the students' level of preparedness for a secondary education? This question was another area where there was agreement from the key informants. Mr. DePaul acknowledged that some of the students were unprepared for a secondary education and that some of them were "reading significantly below grade level. For example, Form One children are reading at Grade 2 level." He pointed out that this was not because of USE, but highlighted deficiencies in the primary school system where the process of automatic promotion was resulting in students moving on with deficiencies that had been identified but not addressed and that many students were "falling through the cracks." He felt the students' deficiencies were frustrating the teachers at the secondary level and should have been caught and addressed earlier.

Mr. Edison echoed the sentiments revealing that the teachers were reporting that the students "are extremely weak and it's extremely difficult." He also added that the teachers at the secondary level were not accustomed to teaching students with such low academic abilities, nor had they been trained in teaching students with such low levels of

academic achievement. Mr. Turner revealed that the feedback from the teachers was that the students were not ready to pursue a secondary education. He stated,

some schools are receiving children who perform below the mean which means they have not reached anywhere near the requirement, certainly not anywhere mastering the skills that they require, so you find those secondary school teachers are saying that really they must operate as primary school teachers, you know, at a secondary school.

He also noted it was tough for the teachers at the low performing schools because they had to teach basic literacy and numeracy skills while teaching the secondary school curriculum. Mr. Rupert felt that the low academic achievement of students at the secondary level “speaks about our primary schools not our secondary schools” because the primary schools should have identified students who were illiterate or innumerate. Mr. Perceval also attributed the students’ low academic achievement to a weakness at the primary school rather than the secondary school or a consequence of USE.

Other key informant interview question # 6: Do you think more attention should have been focused on the primary schools during the implementation of USE? The informants all felt work needed to be done at the primary school level. Mr. Edison felt the primary school teachers were “trying their utmost especially when it comes to literacy and numeracy.” He identified several programs and activities at the primary level to promote literacy and numeracy skills. Those programs included spelling bees, reading competitions, and bringing in parents to read to the students. Some of those activities were also in place at the secondary schools. Mr. Rupert felt the primary schools should have been given more attention during the implementation of USE. He was very

concerned about the MSTs that were being written at the primary level. He felt that the results of these examinations were not being used to diagnose and address student deficiencies, stating that “We have 12 years of data and we are not able to look at the data and to pick out those students who are deficient and do something about it.” He surmised attention was not being paid to the MSTs because students were being automatically promoted. He felt students with learning deficiencies should have been identified and remedial work should have been done with these students to help ensure they attained a level of literacy and numeracy before moving on to the secondary schools.

Mr. Turner felt that the primary school teachers were working hard, but the syllabus required them to cover a lot of material. He also noted that there was more special needs education being done in the primary schools but he was not sure that he could attribute that to USE. He revealed that the primary schools were also holding students back in the fifth grade if they did not have the academic skills to move up to the sixth grade where they would eventually write the CEE. He acknowledged that practice was in place before USE, but felt that schools were doing it more frequently in an effort to help ensure the students were better prepared when they got to the secondary school.

Other key informant interview question # 7: Are there additional programs in place to help the students at the lower performing schools? The informants all reported that there were programs in place to help the lower performing students. They categorized those support services in terms of academic support and social service supports. Mr. DePaul identified several programs that had been implemented to provide academic support for students who were low performers. These programs included additional teachers at some schools to help with English language and Mathematics

instruction. He also added that during the OEPD project, a draft curriculum for lower secondary had been developed by local persons with help from the CXC and while it had not been formally adopted, certain aspects of it were being used in the schools. He also added that there were alternative forms of certification in the form of the CCSLC and the CVQ, which were being piloted in some schools. He acknowledged that he was not satisfied with the speed in introducing alternative certifications and stated it was,

one of the areas that we have not harmonized sufficiently because we have been talking even from the very inception we have to introduce alternative forms of certification, it has taken us almost 10 years but we are now piloting in our schools, the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications which will be assessed by the CXC but they are not the traditional CSEC subjects.

He also acknowledged that only 10 out of the 24 schools were introducing the alternative certifications. He added that schools were offering a wider range of subject offerings such as Physical Education and while those subjects required students to be able to read and write, they were an attempt to offer subjects that might interest the students. He also added that there were not enough options available for all students because of a lack of resources particularly in the current economic climate. He supported the introduction of technical and vocational options in schools, but cautioned against preparing students for specific job skills that might not be available in the long term.

The efforts made by the CXC in introducing varied assessments were confirmed by the other informants. Mr. Perceval reported that the CXC provided “diverse qualifications for different abilities, for different purposes, and career opportunities.” He also added that the CCSLC provided a diploma to all students and the CVQ “emphasized

skills and competencies.” He emphasized the importance of those new assessments, stating that “The system was an elitist form of education where only the intellectual went to school and a vast majority of the students left without anything.” He then added that the CXC was continuing to introduce programs to benefit the students in the region and to improve the quality of teachers in the region.

Mr. Edison corroborated the information revealed by Mr. DePaul reporting that there were several numeracy and literacy activities at the primary and secondary level which were geared toward supporting students who were not academically inclined. He acknowledged the programs were insufficient because of the high number of students who needed support. He also noted that the USE program was still new and needed to “go through a number of pilot stages” to determine what would work. He also mentioned that some of the secondary schools offered technical and vocational subject offerings, but the offerings were not sufficient. He revealed there were different levels of assessment starting with the MST at the primary level, and that school based assessments (SBA’s) had been introduced at the primary level, which allowed part of the students’ assessment to be based on a project that they worked on at home. He also revealed the syllabus at the secondary level was set by the CXC, but it also allowed school based assessments in some subject areas. He acknowledged the introduction of the CVQ and the CCSLC, which consisted of an academic and a technical and vocational component and provided a certificate on completion of the syllabus. He emphasized the need for businesses to accept those certificates and felt that “what you do should have an implication in society.”

Mr. Turner replied that there had not been any modification of the curriculum since the implementation of USE and felt that students were being exposed to subjects for which they were not prepared. He was very vocal about the lack of modification of the curriculum, stating that “the teachers have to teach the same program that other secondary schools have to carry out.” He acknowledged that the CXC had introduced CCSLC and the CVQ, and while he thought that had been a good move he thought caution should be exercised to avoid targeting only certain students for these examinations. He felt that some of the students might be able to perform at the CXC level if the right measures were put in place at those schools. He advocated the introduction of more technical and vocational subjects at the secondary schools, but felt these would not be effective if students did not have basic competencies. He felt there were stigmas attached to persons doing technical and vocational subjects, the perception being that those students were academically challenged. He also felt the subjects available at the schools were not meeting the needs of the low academic students and were frustrating the students. The students’ frustrations were then being displayed in acts of indiscipline.

Other key informant interview question # 8: I know you mentioned there are counselors in almost every secondary school, what other support services are there for students at the secondary schools? There was consensus on the question about other support services available to students since the introduction of USE. Mr. DePaul identified several programs to support students including a book rental program, bus subsidy program, special needs personnel in the schools, and a school feeding program at the primary level. When asked about a school feeding program at the secondary level,

Mr. DePaul stated, “we had a study of that done about three years ago and it made clear that we had to extend the program to the secondary school level, but we have not been able to.” He added that the absence of a school feeding program at the secondary level was “not a matter of policy but simply a financial constraint.” He pointed out that the teachers and principals at the schools found ways to help needy children get meals.

Mr. Edison confirmed there were supports available to students and mentioned there was a separate unit within the MOE that coordinated the student support services. Mr. Turner confirmed there had been efforts to provide support services to students. He felt that the MOE had done a good job of providing counselors in all secondary schools and that counselors were also available at the district offices. He suggested that some schools might need two counselors to help students who had problems that were non-academic.

Other key informant interview question # 9: Have you noticed an increase in the dropout rate since the implementation of USE? The three informants who were asked this question admitted the dropout rate had increased but attributed this increase to different factors. Mr. DePaul did not think the increase could be attributed to the implementation of USE because most of the dropouts were at the upper levels of the secondary cycle and these students had not been introduced into the system as a result of USE. He added that there were many factors which contributed to the increase in the dropout rate including poor performance and an inability to pay for the CXC examinations but a main contributor to the increase in the dropout rate was the repeated suspension of students because students who were repeatedly suspended stopped coming to school. He added that suspensions had become, “almost the way out so students are

suspended for I suppose the most minor or trivial things and they are repeatedly suspended.” He felt that suspensions were routinely being used because principals and teachers “felt constrained in the means by which they discipline students.”

Mr. Edison agreed that there had been an increase in the dropout rate but did not think it could be attributed to USE. He mentioned that in some schools the dropout rate had been high even before the implementation of USE. He suggested that research needed to be carried out to determine whether the dropout rate had increased because of the implementation of USE. He also suggested that a possible reason for the increase might be “because of teacher style, because the teaching style might not be suitable or might not be conducive to the children.” He noted that there had not been anything done on a national level to address the dropout rate but they were “putting a few things in place.” He revealed that at the district level, they were looking at improving the teaching style because, “the methods are not conducive to meet the students’ needs.” He also noted that the schools in the district were trying to introduce more subjects into the curriculum and also introduce more extra-curricular activities and more clubs in the schools. He added that the schools were introducing student councils to give students a voice because “when you’re empowered and you’re involved in decision making, you tend to take part in what you’re doing.” He revealed the district would continue to focus on these strategies in the coming year.

Mr. Turner also confirmed that there had been an increase in the dropout rate and while acknowledging that an increase in dropouts was not new, he felt the increase was as a result of the implementation of USE and was highest in the new schools that were opened to usher in USE. He attributed the increase in the dropout rate to the frustration

students felt by their inability to cope with the subjects offered at school. He also added that nothing was being done to address the dropout rate: “apart from it being a statistic in the education digest, that’s it. I don’t know that any effort is being made to address it.”

Other key informant interview question # 10: How do you address the concern that the students at the lower performing schools are supposed to write the CXC exams at the end of five years just like more academically able students? Mr. DePaul responded to this question by stating,

USE was not supposed to ensure that every child writes CXCs, it was never supposed to mean CXCs. USE was a program of secondary education which prepares students for the world of work or for higher education, it does not necessarily mean that CXCs had to be the only means of certification.

He again made reference to the CCSLC and the CVQ as alternative forms of certification that could be used instead of the CSEC. He further added that some schools were prohibiting students from writing certain CSEC subjects based on their performance in an end of year test in Form Three. He felt this was a rigid stance as the students had two years after Form Three in which they could improve, but they were not being given the opportunity. He suggested the MOE might have to legislate to curb that practice. He advocated the use of the alternative forms of certification (CVQ, CCSLC) along with the CSEC, stating that students could complete the CVQ and the CCSLC syllabus by Form Three and the CSEC option would allow them to remain in school.

While acknowledging the need for alternative forms of assessment and certification for lower performing students, Mr. DePaul supported the expectation that those students should be expected to write CSEC subjects and felt it was necessary to

have minimum subject requirements for students to avoid the perception that certain schools were not geared toward the CSEC. He stated, "I don't think it is unrealistic to have those expectations of children. I have been around long enough to know that there are children who develop late." He then went on to explain that sometimes simply putting children in a different environment would change the outcomes for those children. He gave an example of some low achieving students who were sent to two secondary schools where they did not have the required scores to attend, because assigning them to the schools where they belonged would have involved a reorganization of the school assignments. He noted that the staff at one of the schools welcomed those students and had high expectations for them and as a result the students performed just as well as the students who attended the school based on merit. The students who had been assigned to the other school were treated like they did not belong and eventually dropped out of school.

Mr. Turner was very vocal about the expectation that lower performing students had to write the same examinations as better performing students. He stated, the children go through the same five year program entering the secondary school without the necessary prerequisites, but they are expected to do the same program as the more advanced secondary schools and at the end of the year given the same examinations. Those schools are then judged based on their performance and compared.

He added that this was unfair to the students, caused them to become frustrated and that frustration was being expressed in negative ways.

Other key informant interview question # 11: The CEE is still used to transition students to the secondary school even after the implementation of USE.

What do you think about that process? The key informants had similar feelings about the process used to transition students from the primary to the secondary school. They all felt that the process was not working but also felt that it had some advantages. They supported a partial zoning approach as an alternative process but felt that process would present a different set of issues. Mr. DePaul revealed that a strict zoning system would be difficult because some of the schools were in close proximity and there would be problems in deciding which schools to assign students. He suggested a partial zoning approach could be used but felt this approach would still result in some schools being more favored than others. He also added that transitioning students based on their school choice and their score on the CEE had helped to keep the students motivated. It had helped to maintain the level of effort from students at the primary schools because the students knew that they still had to work to attend schools that were perceived to be better. He acknowledged that a flaw in the move to USE was the addition of two more school choices for students from five choices to seven. The two additional choices allowed students to move further away from their communities. This eventually led to the bus subsidy program. He felt the current method of transitioning students “even with the evil associated with it is still the best.” He added that a zoning system would be difficult unless minimum standards and resources were provided in every school. He pointed out that because boys were achieving at a lower level than girls, the lower performing schools were mostly populated by boys. This created issues in having

programs at these schools that would appeal to a predominantly male student population and also presented issues of gangs and indiscipline in schools.

Mr. Perceval felt that schools should be brought up to the same standards in terms of staffing and facilities with attention paid to the ratio of graduate and non-graduate teachers and then move to “geographic placement” afterward. He felt if the schools were upgraded and brought to the same standards then the “reputation of the school will be dependent on achievement rather than history.” He then gave an example of a new school which had started at the lower ranks of the secondary education system in terms of status but since certain measures were put in place at the school, teachers were trained, and the curriculum was computerized, the school was doing well. He felt that it was possible for schools “to start off and gain a great reputation.”

Mr. Edison replied that he did not think assigning students by ability was the best method because this method “de-motivates the very low or underachievers.” He cautioned that “on the other hand one has to be careful whereby when you mix the students you are doing that at the disadvantage of the naturally bright child because the naturally bright child must continue to progress.” He supported what was currently being done at some of the secondary schools where special needs teachers were pulling weak students out of class to help them gain numeracy and literacy skills.

Mr. Rupert stated that he believed in “parental choice” and understood why parents wanted to send their children to the more traditional and prestigious schools. He felt that using a zonal approach to assign students would only be successful if all the schools were brought up to the same level and given the same resources and training for teachers. He noted that some of the prestigious schools did not have the resources that

the newer schools did and were doing well, so a lack of resources was not the only problem. He suggested that if a zonal approach was used it would free up money that was currently being used to provide bus subsidies. He felt that money could be put to better use in bringing the schools up to the same level.

Mr. Turner admitted that assigning all low performing students to particular schools “places pressure on the teachers at those schools.” However, he felt that keeping the students grouped by ability would allow the schools to introduce programs that were specific to meet the students’ needs. He added that if the teachers were trained, the resources were provided and there were programs to meet the specific needs of the student population, then the schools would be successful and there would not be any stigmatization of those schools. He then gave examples of three schools that were not considered as choice schools when they were first opened but then “the teachers put their heads together at the school and they worked and worked and people began to see success. I’m saying success is possible for these students too.” He then stated that the goal of USE should be to “make our children understand that they can all be winners; that the system is not meant to keep them down or to fight them and the way to do that is to cater for them.” He felt that if the schools were given the necessary resources and the teachers were educated, the students would want to go to the schools in their area.

Other key informant interview question # 12: Has there been an assessment of USE since its implementation? Two of the key informants revealed there had not been any evaluation of USE since its implementation and suggested that it was too early to evaluate the program. Mr. DePaul acknowledged that there had not been an official evaluation of the USE program. In terms of student achievement, the students who had

entered the system at the implementation of USE had not been evaluated with any standardized test so it was not possible to assess their performance based on a national or standardized examination. In terms of evaluating the program itself, he felt it was too early to evaluate it but acknowledged that they were constantly monitoring the program and the feedback that the MOE had been getting from the teachers was that “not so much that the students shouldn’t be there but that they lack the basic competencies.” He also added that some teachers had suggested the use of a pre-secondary class. He was not supportive of that idea stating, “If you are in pre-form one, you should be at the primary school.” He thought part of the solution should be early diagnosis and treatment of students.

Mr. Edison also revealed that there had not been a formal evaluation of USE since its implementation. He cautioned against “evaluating a program at this early juncture.” He agreed there was a need to monitor the USE program but stated, “you cannot arrive at a conclusion so early whether it’s working or not, it’s too dynamic, too many changes taking place.”

Mr. Turner and Mr. Rupert revealed that the new government had assembled a task force in 2007 to evaluate the USE program and to offer recommendations. Three years later, a report had been written but the report had not yet gone through parliament or made public.

Other key informant interview question # 13: Is there anything you would like to add about USE or education in St. Lucia in general? The informants had similar perceptions of the USE program in St. Lucia. They were unanimous that USE was a positive step for the educational system and acknowledged that it was a work in

progress. Mr. DePaul emphasized that USE had not only been implemented in St. Lucia but that it had been introduced by several of the other islands in the region. He admitted that the USE program in St. Lucia was still a work in progress and that it was necessary to keep the students in school longer “to interact with them to mold and shape them. If not, those children would continue in the primary school for one more grade and that would be it.” He also added that while the first component of achieving USE focused on access, the quality aspect was being addressed. He mentioned that the secondary school student population was decreasing while the number of teachers was increasing; he indicated that the increased number of teachers would lead to the provision of more quality programs for students and that they were finding “creative ways to use the teachers and at the same time enriching the programs at the schools.”

Mr. Perceval felt “USE created opportunities for children.” He admitted that a weakness in the USE policy was a lack of clarity of what it would mean for St. Lucia whether there would be “automatic movement versus having a standard to move in.” He then added that “not every child should be sent to secondary school, but every child should have the opportunity.”

Mr. Edison outlined four pressing problems currently facing education in St. Lucia. These were the lack of technology, an increase in social problems such as crime that inevitably find their way into the schools, a greater dependence on the school to combat social issues, and the lack of financial resources in St. Lucia. He supported the USE program and demonstrated his support by stating “USE was a blessing.” He further stated that “USE is a bold step. I find it is late, we should have started that long, long ago.” He made mention of the fact that other countries that were not as economically

viable as St. Lucia had implemented USE before St. Lucia. Mr. Turner stated he was supportive of USE because the former system had been discriminatory and “determined children’s lives at age 11 and 12” but USE was giving them a chance at a secondary school and was taking into account late developers. He was cautious about USE having a positive impact in its current form adding that USE was “a progressive move but had to be meaningful.” He added,

Right now I’m not too sure that it is meaningful. What are we providing universal secondary education or universal school place? Every child can go to a secondary school, that’s universal schooling but are they being provided with an education? What they’re being exposed to there, is it meaningful to them, is it going to change their lives meaningfully?

He acknowledged that “despite the problems, I’m still hopeful. I think we’re making progress.” Mr. Rupert expressed pride in the educational system in St. Lucia mentioning that St. Lucians who pursued studies overseas often did well and thought that was indicative of a solid foundation in the local educational system. He also felt that USE “is not something you achieve and say you have reached there, it’s a process.” He further added that there were things that could be done better, but he was optimistic about where the educational system was headed.

Mr. Turner and Mr. Rupert both felt there was a political cloud surrounding the USE policy. They both felt the government in office was suspicious of the timing of the USE program and thought it had been hastily implemented. The president of the teachers union described the USE program as a “political football” and added that government in office had “indicated absolutely that we were not ready and it was a political thing.”

They both also felt that the current government had not done much about the USE program since its implementation. Mr. Rupert stated, “in particular in the last three, four years I don’t think the government of St. Lucia has done much in terms of the achievement of universal secondary education, I have not seen enough being said about the plan for USE.” Mr. Turner concurred and stated that USE “was not fully embraced” by the new party and as a result, they were not paying any attention to it.

The informants had several similar recommendations for improving the USE program. These covered everything from modifying the curriculum to establishing the political will to develop and maintain effective policies. Mr. DePaul explained that since the access component of USE had been achieved the next step was to look at the subject offerings in the schools to make sure that they were relevant to the students and could prepare them for employment or for further education. He suggested that maybe students should be allowed to go to different schools that offered subjects relevant to their needs. He argued,

One school will not be able to provide everything but a system of maybe fluidity should be introduced in the system that allows children to be able to take up programs and classes that are offered in other schools and I think more of that kind of restructuring is probably what we need to look at.

He revealed that even with the implementation of USE, the compulsory school age had not been changed and remained at 5-15 years. He stated that the policy had to be changed to support the USE program.

Mr. Perceval viewed the CEE as a sorting device which “did not measure students’ competencies”, and recommended that it should be changed to a “continuous

examination process with the CEE being the final assessment where 40% of the composite score will be used to determine secondary school placement.” Benchmarks needed to be set to facilitate the transition of students to the secondary schools. He also added that a lot of remediation was necessary. He further recommended that schools should be brought up to the same standards and that the quality of the teachers needed to be improved.

Mr. Edison acknowledged that there were “a few sour points” and the teachers needed to be educated, schools needed to be better equipped and students’ social problems needed to be dealt with. He stated that though he strongly supported USE, he felt the concerns needed to be addressed so students could benefit. He felt that when the students benefit, “they become literate and numerate and they understand society. Then the country itself develops and your human resource, you know is expanded.” He also added that the politicized nature of the St. Lucian society prohibited individuals from working together, potentially slowing the progress.

Mr. Rupert suggested that schools needed to be given the same resources and trained staff, to be brought up to the same level. He also suggested that teachers be offered incentives to move to hard-to-staff areas, effective teachers should be identified and given the support to become master teachers in their areas so they could help to train other teachers. He further suggested that teachers who had left the profession through retirement should be encouraged to come back into the system because “we’re not drawing on the expertise that they have, we think that they’ve passed their time . . . we need to draw all the expertise that we can so that we can make sure our system is the

best.” Mr. Rupert also felt that there should be “the political will to do things.” He added,

We’re looking at it fragmentally and we change personnel and think because there’s a change in personnel there’s a change in policy, but we have the same dreams for our country whether it’s party A or party B that comes with policy, let us continue. There can be slight changes but the policy of our country should be used to propel our country.

Mr. Turner felt that the primary school curriculum should be reassessed and that there should be benchmarks set that students had to achieve to move on. He acknowledged that it might mean that some students would have to remain at the primary schools longer to acquire the necessary numeracy and literacy skills. He also added that the age restrictions on writing the common entrance should be less rigid and that students should be allowed to write the common entrance even when they were older than 13 years of age. He felt the age restriction which prohibited students who turned 13 at the beginning of the school year from being in the primary schools was allowing students to go through the system even when they were not ready. He recommended more relevant curriculum should be introduced in the schools, particularly the low performing schools, and that there should be a bigger focus on technology. He stressed the importance of providing training for teachers. He also felt that some of the schools might need an additional year and that the first year of secondary school should be used to teach basic numeracy and literacy skills.

Summary of Other Key Informant Interviews

The information gathered from the key informants confirmed some of the findings from the questionnaires and the information revealed in the teacher and principal interviews and the informal conversations. The key informants all acknowledged that teacher training had not been provided or had been inadequate in preparation for the implementation of USE, and that had been a major missing link in the implementation process. They also acknowledged the low achievement level of the majority of students at the low performing schools and felt that fact was not a result of USE but an indication of problems at the primary level of the system. There was disagreement on the level of teacher involvement in the process, the MOE officials and Mr. Rupert feeling the teachers were informed and participated in the process through the planning of the ESDP and through representation by the Teachers' Union. Mr. Turner, on the other hand, felt the teachers had not been well informed or involved in the process. The informants acknowledged there were support services available to students and that alternative certifications and assessments were available for low achieving students. They all supported the USE program and felt it was a progressive move for the country but acknowledged there was a lot of work to be done for USE to truly provide an education to all students.

Informal Conversations

During my visits to schools to drop off and collect the questionnaires, I had the opportunity to engage in some informal conversations with several individuals, which provided me with further valuable information on USE in St. Lucia. These conversations occurred with four individuals. Two of them were secondary school principals I met

when I distributed the questionnaires at their schools. One was a primary school principal I met when I was visiting a friend at the school and struck up a conversation with her about my research topic, and the other conversation was with a former secondary school principal who was employed by the MOE in an administrative position at the time of my study.

These informal conversations provided valuable data and helped to redirect some of the questions I asked in some of my interviews. An example of this is the question which dealt with the transition of students to the secondary school and the issue of the increase in the dropout rate. It had been my intention to ask the question about the method of transition but the informal conversations gave this question more salience than I had originally assigned to it. One of the informal conversations resulted in an interview so the conversation with that principal is not included in this section but is included in the section which reports the interviews with the principals. Pseudonyms were used to help ensure confidentiality. This section will report on the conversations with four individuals mentioned above.

The first conversation took place with Mr. John, the principal of a secondary school in a rural district on June 17th, 2010. Mr. John lamented the lack of appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of the students at his school. He revealed that there were a large number of low performing students at his school but there were no remedial services available to meet the needs of those students and a lot of these students were not able to write CSEC subjects because they did not have the numeracy and literacy skills. Not much had changed at the primary level and he felt that was “a glaring problem now.” This principal suggested some students should be kept in the primary school longer to

address deficiencies in basic skills and to address life skill issues. He reported that the birth rate had decreased leading to fewer students and too many teachers in the system. He indicated there was a lack of resources available at his school. As example, he said that he had just received a counselor after the first one left a long time ago and that he had “had to fight to get a qualified PE teacher.” Mr. John also indicated that he offered theatre arts as a subject choice but the school had no stage for performances or instruction. He acknowledged that he knew several schools had resource rooms but that the equipment in those resource rooms was expensive to maintain. He felt that truancy was a major problem at his school but there was only one truant officer to monitor all primary and secondary students on the island. Mr. John added that there had been an increase in discipline problems and attributed that to the students’ frustrations at not being able to cope with the academic requirements at school. He stated that “USE only ensures placement not education” and felt there was “not much consultation with the schools.”

The conversation with the second principal, Mrs. Berry occurred on June 18th, 2010. This principal emphasized the lack of space at her facility to introduce technical and vocational subjects, which she thought was a necessity. She indicated that there were a lot of problems at her school, particularly discipline issues, and attributed those problems mostly to a lack of parental support, stemming from young parents and parents who were dropouts. Mrs. Berry indicated that some of the students at her school were not prepared to pursue a secondary school education but that the MOE placed an emphasis on those students passing CSEC subjects and within the same time frame as other higher performing students. She felt that was an unfair expectation. This principal admitted

there had been an increase in the dropout rate at her school. She stated that the teachers were unprepared for the implementation of USE and that no training had been provided in preparation for the implementation. Mrs. Berry acknowledged her school had a counselor who helped students deal with issues that were not academic.

The conversation with the former secondary school principal, Mr. Easter, took place on June 29th, 2010. Mr. Easter's view was that there was no training to prepare teachers for the implementation of USE, and that teachers had no involvement in the process and called it "top down decision making." He felt the curriculum was predominantly academic, but that teachers were using the same standard teaching methods and this was leaving the students behind. This former principal thought assigning students to particular secondary schools based on the results of the common entrance was a sign of an elitist system but he supported the method because he did not think low performing students would be able to cope at the higher performing schools. He gave an example of a group of students who had been assigned to his school without the required scores when he was a secondary school teacher at one of the prestigious schools. He revealed that those students could not cope with the academics and eventually dropped out. He suggested there should be specialist programs to help low performing students and that students needed to be taught basic reading before being allowed to go to the secondary schools. Mr. Easter recommended that innovative teaching strategies be used instead of the same old methods and expressed disappointment that there was "no sharing of best practices and no forum for teachers to meet." He felt the educational system did not have "a bright future if it goes on like this" and indicated that school and staff commitment was necessary for USE to be effective.

The conversation with the primary school principal, Mrs. Halton, took place on June 29th, 2010. This principal stated that she thought the curriculum at some of the secondary schools should be less academic, there should be more technical and vocational subjects offered, that all students should not be expected to write the CSEC subjects and advocated the use of other certifications. She felt that the CEE should not be compulsory for all students at the end of Grade 6 as she felt some students needed to be held back for remediation. Mrs. Halton felt that the senior primary system had been a good system and at least one of these schools should have been kept when USE was implemented. She also felt there was not enough pressure on teachers at the primary school level and suggested there should be a national assessment in the fifth grade because “teachers are laid back at this level.” Mrs. Halton mentioned that she heard the dropout rate had increased and was not surprised because there was only one truant officer responsible for all primary and secondary schools on the island. She stated that she did not feel there was a lot of collaboration with the MOE in the implementation of USE.

Summary

In this chapter, I reported the findings from the questionnaires, the interviews with teachers, principals and other key informants and the informal conversations I had when I distributed and collected the questionnaires. In the following chapter I will report the findings and detail my conclusions, recommendations and implications for future research.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine secondary teachers' perceptions about various aspects of the introduction of USE in St. Lucia. A survey and interview method and a historical research approach were employed to answer the research questions. I administered a 23-item, five-point, Likert scale questionnaire to secondary school teachers from every public secondary school on the island. The return rate for the questionnaires was 64%. Six teachers from different schools and seven key informants including two principals, two current and one former MOE officials, the president of the Teachers' Union, and a parliamentary representative were interviewed. I also engaged in several informal conversations with four individuals during the distribution and collection of the questionnaire.

Answering the Research Questions

The questionnaire data and the interviews with the teachers and key informants revealed both some similar and divergent findings. These findings are being reported in the answers to the research questions.

Research question 1. What was the process used in implementing USE in St. Lucia? The data revealed that USE was implemented in St. Lucia because the Caribbean governments had decided that basic education would involve education up to the secondary level. This decision to implement USE was also based on the fact that St. Lucia had already achieved UPE and USE was the next step in achieving international educational objectives such as EFA. USE was officially mentioned in the 2000-2005 ESDP which outlined the five year goals for the entire education system. The data also suggested that there was extensive consultation with stakeholders in the development of

the 2000-2005 ESDP. To accommodate the students introduced into the system as a result of the implementation of USE, the Government of St. Lucia used a project approach under the OEDP which was funded jointly by loans from the World Bank, the CDB, and the local government. By the end of the project in 2008, two new schools were built, existing schools were expanded, and the senior primary schools were disestablished. This done, USE was introduced in 2006.

Research question 2. What were the perceptions of secondary school teachers in St. Lucia regarding their involvement in the planning and implementation of USE? The data revealed that teachers did not believe they were involved in the planning and implementation of USE. The questionnaire data revealed that teachers overwhelmingly felt they were not involved in the process. The results of the teacher interviews and the interview with Mr. Turner revealed similar findings. Most of the teachers revealed they did not have an opportunity to attend meetings or to give input into the process. The interviewees who had attended meetings on the implementation of USE did not think the purpose of those meetings was to seek input. The MOE officials and the parliamentary representative had a different version of teacher involvement. They felt the teachers had been involved in the implementation process and stated meetings had been held to seek input from the teachers. Those key informants based the teachers' involvement in the process primarily on their participation in developing the 2000-2005 ESDP which set long-range goals for the entire educational system including the goal of USE. They also based the teachers' involvement on the fact that the Teachers' Union had been represented on several committees.

Research question 2a. What were the perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding professional development opportunities for the implementation of USE? The questionnaire data revealed that teachers felt they had not received adequate professional development in preparation for the implementation of USE. This finding was supported by the teacher interviews and the interviews with all but two of the key informants. The two key informants who felt teachers had indeed received training in preparation for USE revealed that teachers and principals had received scholarships to undergo training in several areas.

Research question 2b. What were the perceptions of secondary school teachers in St. Lucia regarding the curriculum options, resources, and services provided to students since the implementation of USE? The questionnaire data revealed that teachers did not feel there were a variety of curriculum options at their school to sufficiently meet the needs of their students, though they did feel there were support services such as counseling to meet the needs of students. They did not feel there were enough resources available to meet the needs of all students. The results from the teacher interviews and the key informant interviews revealed some contradictory findings on this research question. The interviewees all felt changes needed to be made to the curriculum to make it more relevant to the needs of low performing students; there should be a greater focus on technical and vocational skills; and that more alternative assessments should be made available to students. The teachers and key informants also agreed that there were support services to help needy students but that they were inadequate, and that available resources were also inadequate to meet the needs of teachers.

Research question 2c. What were the perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding their students' level of preparedness to pursue a secondary education? The questionnaire data revealed that the teachers felt their students were unprepared to pursue a secondary education. This finding was confirmed by the teacher interviews and the interviews with the key informants who revealed that many of the students had low levels of numeracy and literacy skills. The interviewees attributed the low level of student achievement to problems at the primary level of the system and did not see this as a consequence of USE.

Research question 2d. What were the perceptions of secondary school teachers regarding the impact of USE on their schools and on the educational system in St. Lucia? The questionnaire data also revealed that teachers did not think the USE policy had a positive impact on their school. The teachers perceived there was an increase in discipline problems at their schools since the introduction of USE. Most of the interviewed teachers revealed the USE policy did not have much of an impact on their school because they received the same caliber of students as before USE. The teachers at the low performing schools revealed that teachers were having to do more and were frustrated at the students' low level of competence.

The majority of teachers who completed the questionnaire felt the introduction of USE had a negative impact on the educational system in St. Lucia. This was not supported by the information revealed by the six teachers and the other key informants who were interviewed. All but one of the teachers interviewed felt USE was a step in the right direction and could positively impact the educational system in St. Lucia but only if certain measures were put in place. This was also found with the key informant

interviewees who all felt the USE program was a progressive move for the educational system.

Emerging Themes

There were several themes that emerged during the interviews with teachers and other key informants. These themes all follow.

Lack of readiness. The data revealed the view that there was a lack of readiness for the introduction of USE. The perceived inadequate preparation of teachers, the lack of space at some schools, the absence of relevant curriculum, the lack of information and input sought from teachers, and the late opening of some schools were all factors that were brought up in the interviews which seemed to indicate that there was a lack of readiness for the introduction of USE. The lack of focus placed on the primary level of the system was also a factor that led to the perceived lack of readiness.

Increase in indiscipline. The issue of the increase in indiscipline was a theme that was dominant in the interviews. The teachers felt that the increase in indiscipline had occurred because students were unprepared for secondary education and were frustrated by the highly academic curriculum. They also felt that there were not effective methods to deal with instances of indiscipline. The perceived increase in indiscipline warrants further study as I was unable to find any statistical information to corroborate the claims of increased indiscipline in the schools since the introduction of USE.

Perceived link between crime and inadequate education. Some of the interviewees, while supporting the introduction of USE, ascribed many social problems such as the increase in crime to the introduction of USE. That was surprising to me because it would not seem likely that providing more educational opportunities would

lead to an increase in crime, or that one could claim such a direct link. However, further reflection led me to surmise that the interviewees were not suggesting that the introduction of USE had led to an increase in crime, but that USE had provided inadequate support and therefore an inadequate education for the new generation of secondary school students. The education offered had not changed the circumstances for most low performing students who would have been out of the educational system before the introduction of USE, and that could possibly lead to an increase in criminal behavior. The suggested link between USE and the increase in crime seems to indicate that criminal behavior was not an issue before low performing students were introduced into the system. It is also contrary to the literature which claims that increased education leads to more stable societies (World Bank, 1993).

Choice. Choice was a theme that emerged during the interviews with teachers and key informants. This was very apparent when the participants talked about transitioning students to secondary school based on the results of the CEE. The majority of the interviewees supported the continued use of the CEE in assigning students to secondary schools even after the introduction of USE. Maintaining that process meant that all low performing students could be assigned to the same schools, thus, maintaining the status quo. Almost all the interviewees felt the process should be maintained, even while acknowledging it was flawed. Parental choice in school assignments seemed to be very important in their interview responses, but this finding contradicts teacher and key informant continued support for the CEE. Perhaps the positives of “choice” did not outweigh the negatives of “change” in their minds.

Culture of low expectations. The data revealed a culture of low expectations for students who were introduced into the system as a result of the introduction of USE. Those students were viewed as being different from other students because of their lower academic proficiency. The predominant feeling was that there was an increase in every negative indicator since those students were introduced into the system, claiming such things as—crime has increased, those students should *at least* be taught how to do this and that, those students were frustrated by the curriculum, they would not be able to write the CXC examinations, they should be grouped together, etc. The teachers did not seem to think these students would gain much from the access they had been provided in the educational system. While this was not specifically expressed by all the participants it was the predominant view.

Lack of communication with the MOE. This theme emerged during the interviews with the teachers and principals. The teachers felt there was a disconnect between the teachers and the MOE. They expressed a need to see MOE officials at their schools. They also felt that information from the MOE was often late and unclear and that bad decisions were being made because the education officials did not know what was happening at the schools. The principals also felt that communication between the MOE and the schools was poor. One principal felt that the officials at the MOE did not even know where her school was located. While I felt she was being sarcastic, this was a strong statement about the level of communication between the MOE and schools. The other principal indicated that there was no clear process for the MOE to communicate with the schools, which sometimes created confusion.

Inefficiency of the primary school system. All the teachers and key informants who were interviewed were of the opinion that most of the students introduced into the system as a result of the introduction of USE were not adequately prepared to pursue a secondary education. They felt this was as a result of inadequate preparation of students at the primary school level. They felt the teachers at that level concentrated their efforts on preparing the more academically able students to perform well at the CEE and ignored the struggling students. The participants also felt that for USE to provide an adequate education to students, changes needed to be made at the primary school level of the system.

Politics. Politics came up frequently during the interviews in this study. The predominant feeling by the participants was that the USE policy was politically motivated as an attempt to garner votes during an election season. The perception was also that because the policy had been implemented by the former political administration it had not been embraced by the new party in power. The changing of policies by different political parties and the strong political allegiances in the country were seen as problematic for the policy and for society in general.

Support. The interviews with teachers and key informants revealed almost unanimous support for the policy. These participants acknowledged there was a need for providing access to a secondary education to all students and recognized the benefits of the USE policy in making education more available. Though they had concerns about certain aspects of the introduction of the policy they all felt the policy was a good move for the citizens of the country and some even felt that the policy should have been implemented earlier.

Optimism and pessimism. While acknowledging that the policy was not effective in its current form in providing an adequate education to all students, the key informants who were interviewed were optimistic that things would get better and felt that the problems which had been identified were common for a policy in its early stages. The majority of teachers on the other hand, did not share that optimism and felt that things were not going to change because nobody listened to them.

Sympathy. The teachers expressed sympathy for their colleagues who worked at the schools with the low performing students. They repeatedly mentioned that those teachers were doing their best but that they were faced with many challenges. They also expressed sympathy for the students at these schools and felt the students were being set up to fail because USE had failed to address their needs.

Power. The teachers interviewed in the study felt they had little power to affect change. They did not think they had a voice in the education reform efforts and mentioned several times that nobody listened to them. They grudgingly accepted the current situation and seemed resigned to continue with things as they were until the officials at the Ministry initiated change. Even while supporting the policy, they did not seem to feel very much ownership of it.

Discussion of Findings

After examining the literature on USE and policy implementation, I expected that the secondary school teachers in St. Lucia would have some negative perceptions about certain aspects of the introduction of USE, as this is to be expected with the implementation of most programs, particularly in education. There were, however, several things which surprised me about the study's findings. First, I was very surprised

at the level of dissatisfaction revealed by the teachers. The results from the questionnaire were eye-opening and though the interviews provided some alternative views, overwhelmingly, the teachers interviewed in my study had negative perceptions about most aspects of the introduction of USE.

The teachers felt they had not been involved in the planning and implementation of USE, while the MOE officials and the parliamentary representative felt that the teachers had been involved through their participation in the development of the 2000 ESDP and the representation of the Teachers' Union on several committees. While there was evidence that teachers were involved in the development of the ESDP in 2000, (World Bank 2009), that alone cannot constitute adequate involvement in the planning and implementation process for USE. The 2000 ESDP set plans for the entire educational system, the introduction of USE being just one goal in a five-year plan. The involvement of members of Teachers' Union on planning committees might symbolize teacher involvement because the union represents the interests of teachers, but involvement of the Teachers' Union is not enough to signal teacher involvement. Teacher involvement at a minimum means that teachers are kept abreast of what is happening, they have opportunities to give input and feedback into the process, and that their feedback and input are used to shape the USE policy. This basic level of involvement was not evident in the interviews or other data gathered for this study. This is a serious flaw in the USE policy because research suggests that teacher involvement in developing school policy helps to generate support for that policy, and that policies that are supported by teachers have a higher likelihood of success (Sims & Sims, 2004).

The teachers also felt they had not received adequate professional development in preparation for the introduction of USE. The introduction of a new program requires that teachers develop the skills they would need to successfully implement that program (Fowler, 2004). The introduction of USE was a big departure from the normal course of business in education in St. Lucia. The system was exclusive and set up to serve academically able students, where even the students who did not score very well would have at least demonstrated some proficiency. The introduction of USE clearly brought students into the system that had very little in the way of academic achievement. Secondary school teachers in St. Lucia were not accustomed to working with students such as these. They needed to be educated at least in different instructional practices to meet the needs of those students.

While the MOE seemed to recognize the need for professional development for teachers, the response to this focused on spending thousands of dollars on one-time workshops. A more cost effective and arguably more successful method might have been to send a team of St. Lucian teachers to get professional development possibly in a neighboring island which had previously introduced USE and had already had experience working with an academically diverse student body. The teachers could then return to the island to train others. This would have at least helped to ensure that professional development was continuous and not a one-shot deal. The questionnaire data revealed that teachers felt they had the necessary skills to teach diverse learners. The perception by teachers that they had the skills to teach diverse learners should make professional development a less arduous process and should have been viewed as a positive.

The low levels of student achievement was a concern for the participants in this study but they did not think the introduction of USE contributed to the low levels of achievement displayed by these students. USE exposed a weakness in the educational system. This should be seen as a strength of the policy. Before the introduction of USE, educators in St. Lucia could ignore the reality that students were leaving the system after many years without being literate and numerate. USE forced educators in St. Lucia to admit there was a problem in the system. This admission should not end in a blame game with every person trying to ascertain where the ball was dropped.

The inefficiencies of the system brought to the forefront by the introduction of USE should be seen as a challenge to fix the entire system. Now that the problem is out there for all to see, it is time to take action to help ensure that no St. Lucian child who does not have a disability that prohibits him or her from learning, should ever go through a full course of primary school (K-6) without acquiring basic numeracy and literacy skills. Action is also needed to put measures in place to help ensure that students who enter secondary schools with basic literacy skills have the supports necessary to help them develop those skills. The low levels of student achievement exposed by the introduction of USE, while disconcerting, should spur educators to devise solutions to deal with the problem. The perceived inefficiency of the primary school system did not happen overnight. The teachers at those schools need to embrace the idea that they have an obligation to educate all children, not just the privileged or the academically able.

The teachers in this study felt that indiscipline had increased since the implementation of USE. This is similar to findings found by Thompson (2009) in her study of USE in Barbados. The introduction of USE resulted in a more diverse student

body in the secondary education system in St. Lucia. Many of the new students were from different backgrounds and had different experiences. Some of those students might well display behavior which is contrary to what schools value. While student boredom and frustration might lead to negative behavior, having those students in school gives educators an opportunity to reach them and possibly change their behavior. The alternative would be to have these very same students displaying negative behaviors beyond the reach of the school where the help and support may not be available. The teachers and administrators need to adapt to having a more diverse student body, and not just expect the students to adapt.

The culture of low expectations for the less academically able students which emerged during this study may seriously hamper efforts to improve the policy and the educational experiences for those students. Research suggests that teacher expectations are an important factor for student success (Ansalone, 2009). If the teachers have low expectations for these students then the students might unfortunately meet those expectations. The teachers and administrators at the schools need to believe that the students can succeed. They also need to express that to the students. Without that belief, the students may not see any value in being in school.

The perceived link between crime and inadequate education needs to be addressed. While there has been a marked increase in violent crime in St. Lucia over the last 10 years, that cannot be clearly linked to inadequate education. As late as 2003, 40% of students in St. Lucia did not have the opportunity to pursue a secondary education. Many of those students likely left the system with what could be considered an inadequate education; however, the crime rate was not at the current levels. There are

many other factors that could contribute to crime including the poor economic climate in St. Lucia and the high rate of unemployment particularly among the youth. If someone is poorly educated but has a job that supports him or herself then that person will be less likely to resort to crime. The increase in crime cannot be attributed to the students who have been poorly or inadequately educated. Societal problems may in fact be showing up in the schools and the increase in crime should be viewed as a result of these societal problems and not as a result of inadequate education.

Parental choice was a theme which emerged during this study. Most of the teachers and key informants felt the CEE should be maintained as a way to transition students to the secondary schools. This parental choice only seems to extend to parents of high performing students because it allows them to send their children to the schools that are perceived to be better. Parental choice, however, does not seem to extend to the parents of the students who are considered to be low performers; unless they choose to send their children to schools that are perceived to be of a lower status.

There was a perception that the introduction of USE had been politically motivated particularly because it occurred during an election year. While the policy had been introduced during an election year, the planning had actually started years earlier, as early as the year 2000, so there is not much support for the perceived political motivation for the introduction of USE. There was also a perception that the new political administration had not fully embraced USE because they also felt that it had been politically motivated. At the time of this study, the new political administration had made no changes to the policy. A working group was established to evaluate the policy, but four years later, no report had been made public. This may suggest the new

administration was not supportive of the USE policy. Political interest and support from the ruling administration would go a long way in helping the policy succeed. If the citizens of St. Lucia do not believe their government is supportive of the policy then they can hardly be expected to support it.

The feelings of sympathy for the teachers and students at the low performing schools are noteworthy but they do not do much to change the experiences of those teachers and students. Those teachers and students deserve more than sympathy. They deserve to teach and learn in an environment where they have a chance to be successful. The feelings of sympathy should be followed by concrete actions that would better the educational experiences for those teachers and students.

Education is highly valued in St. Lucian society and therefore, I was astonished to find that most teachers felt giving the opportunity of education to all students has had a negative impact on the educational system. This may pose a problem for the future of USE because lack of teacher support may lead to uneven implementation of the policy. The teachers also did not seem to feel much ownership in the policy and did not think they had power to affect change. This might create problems for the implementation of the policy because teachers may be reluctant to offer suggestions to make the policy better.

The findings from this study indicate that education officials were aware of some of the problems associated with the introduction of USE and had even tried to address some of them. The reading workshop which was held in 2009 was an attempt to provide professional development for teachers. However, there does not appear to be much urgency to address some of the other issues. An example is the increase in the dropout

rate, yet nothing had been done at the national level to address the issue. While a lack of financial resources may be partly to blame for the seeming lack of urgency, there are some strategies that can be employed to address some of the issues, not all of which require significant financial investments.

Implications

Efforts by international agencies to improve the educational systems of developing countries will continue to help those countries attain the perceived benefits. As many developing countries attain UPE, they will logically move to expand their secondary education programs to provide the education that research has suggested is necessary to be competitive in the changing world. As these countries pursue the expansion of their secondary education systems, caution must be exercised to help ensure that these expansion efforts realize the goal of ultimately providing a good education to their populations. This is extremely important for developing countries with limited resources and competing interests for these resources.

While the expansion efforts are laudable, simply providing access to education is not the same as providing an education. Research (Fowler, 2004; Hall & Hord, 2006; Sims & Sims, 2004) suggests that certain steps should be taken to help ensure that programs are effective in meeting their goals. These steps include thorough planning, communication, and collaboration with teachers and other stakeholders before the programs are implemented, and provision of resources and professional development for the people responsible for implementing the change. This study, while not a blueprint for the introduction of USE, highlighted some of the issues that can surface during its introduction.

Education officials and politicians in developing countries who are contemplating implementing USE should answer many questions before committing to such a policy and should proceed with caution. Education officials and politicians in these countries must first determine the right timing for introducing USE; whether they should pursue USE while at the same time strengthening other parts of the educational system; or whether they should wait to implement USE after first strengthening other parts of the system. USE in St. Lucia was introduced without first strengthening the primary level of the system and as a result, low levels of student achievement are surfacing at the secondary schools. This is not a result of USE, but it highlights a weakness in the primary school system that had not been addressed and probably should have been addressed before the introduction of USE. At the same time, waiting to strengthen the primary level of the system could have taken considerable time (with no clear indication of what would constitute a strong primary system), in the process denying many students the opportunity to pursue a secondary education.

This study highlighted the importance of involving teachers in the planning and implementation process. The teachers in this study felt they had not been involved in the process of introducing USE. It is too early to tell what long term effects the perceived lack of teacher involvement in the introduction of USE will have on the success of the implementation of USE in St. Lucia. The teachers involved in this study seemed overwhelmed and underprepared for the changes brought about by USE. It is not a stretch to assume that these feelings will have an impact on their work and ultimately their ability to provide an education to students.

Another critical factor in pursuing USE which was highlighted by this study was the limited availability of resources to support implementation. The necessary resources go beyond the obvious buildings to accommodate students. These resources include the personnel, professional development, equipment and material, and space to provide adequate curricular options. The access component of USE in St. Lucia received considerable attention, leading to a secondary school place for all eligible students; however, the availability of other resources was lacking. Professional development for teachers was provided for counselors and special education teachers while other teachers were not provided the professional development to work with a diverse student population. Other resources were also lacking. For example, some schools did not have adequate space, equipment, or materials. Student support services however, were an area of focus, and the teachers interviewed for this study felt it was well addressed in the introduction of USE. The diverse backgrounds of students introduced into the educational system as a result of USE will make it necessary to provide additional support services to meet these students' non academic needs.

The issue of dealing with students with low achievement is also a factor to consider when implementing USE. USE introduces students who had not previously been accepted into the educational system because of their low levels of achievement; programs need to be put in place to address the educational needs of these students to make the educational process relevant to their needs. Many may assume this would involve a move to create more technical schools for students who are labeled as low performing, however this will not solve the problem as technical and vocational subjects also require that students be numerate and literate. The move to create more technical

and vocational schools can be seen as discriminatory as it assumes that only low performing students should be targeted for this type of education.

This study underscored the need for strategic, visionary planning when introducing USE. The introduction of USE in St. Lucia provided many more secondary school places by constructing new schools, upgrading existing schools, and disestablishing the senior primary schools. Four years after the implementation of USE, many of these schools were operating below capacity because of a declining birth rate. While there are no guarantees in implementing any program, an examination of the population trends in St. Lucia and the other countries in the region, may have predicted the declining birth rate and limited the expansion efforts.

This study also highlighted the problems which can surface during the early implementation of a program. USE had only been in place for four years at the time of this study and it is only normal that there would be growing pains associated with its implementation. Education officials must pay attention to programs during this stage and should not ignore the feedback received from teachers. The decisions made during this stage of program implementation can have a major impact on its effectiveness or on whether it is fully implemented in the first place.

While introducing USE is a progressive step for any country, this study revealed that there are many factors that need attention during its planning and implementation to allow it to achieve its goal of increased educational attainment for students. Education officials in developing countries with limited resources who are contemplating introducing USE have much to learn from the St. Lucian experience.

Recommendations

Approach policy implementation from a research standpoint. This recommendation would require MOE officials to use a research-based approach to policy implementation as advocated by many researchers including Fowler (2004) and Fullan (2000). Problems would be identified by looking at the system as a whole and would only be identified for change if it would have a positive impact on student achievement. The problem would also be identified with consultation from stakeholders. Once that problem has been identified, quantitative and qualitative data would be collected to demonstrate the extent of the problem. After the data gathering process, several solutions should be considered to address the problem. The best solution would then be identified and accepted. The best solution should be the one which would have the greatest impact on student achievement within the resource availability or resource capability. The teachers and other relevant stakeholders would then be informed about the decision made and would be given opportunities to give feedback and input into the decision. The feedback and input would then be used to revise or modify the plan if necessary. Attention would also be paid to other aspects of policy implementation such as monitoring and evaluating the program. These would be done frequently and modifications would be made based on the results of the monitoring and evaluations.

Involve teachers in the process. Policy implementation will likely not be successful if teachers are not involved in the process (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). To fully involve teachers in the process the MOE would need to improve their communication with the teachers. One way to accomplish this would involve establishing an intranet which will provide e-mail addresses to all teachers and other staff in the system.

Establishing the intranet will allow for improved access to and communication with the teachers. This improved access will allow the MOE officials to involve teachers in research based activities such as completing questionnaires or just keeping them abreast of developments in the system. This would also eliminate the resources spent on paper communication which could be used elsewhere. Officials at the MOE already have internal e-mail addresses so it should not be difficult to extend this to the teachers and other staff. Establishing an internal e-mail system does not guarantee that teachers will check their e-mails but it gives them access to the information. The ability to communicate efficiently and effectively with the teachers will go a long way in involving teachers in the policy making process.

Move to a more heterogeneous grouping of students. Every society has its prestigious schools and prestigious schools in St. Lucia will always have their place. These schools are necessary because they cater to a specific group of people, and parents should have the right to send their children to the schools they perceive as being better. However, when the “cream of the crop” students are assigned to the top two or three schools, there is no need for the rigid stratification of the other students. In some instances students are assigned to different schools based on a one-point difference in scores. I fail to see how a one-point difference on an examination that is taken one time during the year can differentiate two students by ability. A partial zoning system would allow students who have the required scores and who wish to go to the prestigious schools to go to these schools and would require other students to attend schools in their community. A more heterogeneous grouping of students would also make the educational system more equitable as research suggests that homogeneous grouping of

students often results in a disproportionate number of students from low socio-economic backgrounds being assigned to the lower groups (Ansalone, 2009).

There are many benefits to requiring students in St. Lucia to attend schools in their community. First, this would reduce the financial burden on students and parents who have to pay transportation to get to school; and it would practically eliminate the bus subsidy program except for needy students attending prestigious schools outside their community. Second, it would facilitate better contact between parents and the schools as parents would be more likely and perhaps more able to visit a school which is 10 minutes or walking distance away from their homes than one which is out of their way and requires them to significantly alter their work schedules. Third, school staff can also better locate students who live in close proximity to the school.

An additional benefit is that many activities in St. Lucia are already being conducted on a community basis. Many communities are built around their own sporting teams or have some factor for which they are known. The rural community schools in particular have traditionally had very strong athletic teams which the communities rally around and are a great source of pride. A move to community schools would most likely engender that same sort of pride, respect, and support.

A move to a partial zoning system would help to remove the stigma attached to some schools because having students of varying abilities would help to ensure that there are no truly bottom schools. The negative stigma attached to schools can have detrimental effects on the teachers and students at those schools (Hinds, 2007). This situation has been accepted and seems to go unnoticed in St. Lucia despite the distressing effects on students and teachers which may last a lifetime. Having students of varying

abilities in the same school would also allow students to better understand and tolerate differences in others, help to develop their interpersonal skills, and allow them to help their classmates ultimately becoming better learners themselves. Other OECS countries have implemented some form of zoning to transfer students to secondary schools (OECS, 2006). Effectively implementing this recommendation would require that all schools are provided with the necessary resources for teachers and students. This is a factor which should already be in place and so the financial costs associated with it should not be a deterrent.

Early diagnosis and treatment of student deficiencies. The low level of student achievement at the secondary level which was brought to the forefront with the introduction of USE is not a result of the new policy. This indicates a deficiency already existing in the system. To address the problem of low student achievement requires early diagnosis of student deficiencies (Miller et al., 2000). While there have been efforts to diagnose students' academic deficiencies particularly with the MSTs, there does not seem to be an effective plan to treat these deficiencies. The staffs at the schools are left on their own to use the results of the MSTs to do whatever they think is best. The staff may not have the knowledge to address students' needs based on the results of the MSTs or they may not have the inclination to address those needs as the students in most cases are automatically promoted to the next grade. The MOE should establish an accountability system to help ensure that the results of the MSTs or other diagnostic tests are being used to address academic deficiencies. This may require the MOE to mandate that every teacher writes an action plan to address the deficiencies revealed by the diagnostic tests and provide regular updates on student progress. Another (and maybe better) solution

would be to increase the number of special needs teachers at the schools to address students with learning deficiencies. In instances where student deficiencies are a result of cognitive problems such as mental retardation, a plan also needs to be developed to meet the needs of these students. It is unacceptable for a student to go through every grade at the primary school, transition to the secondary school, and not be able to write his or her name if that student does not have a cognitive problem which inhibits learning.

Provide continuous professional development for teachers. Research suggests that effective professional development for teachers can have a positive impact on student achievement (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). The low student achievement observed since the introduction of USE can easily be ascribed to the students; however, a less acknowledged reason may be ineffective teaching brought on by lack of knowledge of differentiated teaching practices or lack of motivation to use effective teaching practices. The former reason for ineffective teaching can be addressed by establishing a professional development unit within the MOE. Individuals selected for the unit would include teachers who have demonstrated mastery in instructional practices. These individuals would receive training from a recognized and reputed institution. The unit would consist of at least four individuals for each district, two assigned to the primary schools in the district and the other two assigned to the secondary schools in the district. The four professional development personnel must be able to overlap duties if the need arises but they should have specialty knowledge of a specific level in the system.

The role of these professional development personnel would be to work in collaboration with the principals and teachers from the schools in the district to identify areas of need. When these needs have been identified, the professional development

personnel would design training based on proven research based practices specifically targeted to meet the identified needs. This training would be continuous, would take place at the teachers' schools, teachers would have an opportunity to give feedback into the process and would be required to show evidence that they are using the strategies learned in the workshops. While these personnel will be assigned to the various districts, they would be managed or supervised by a professional development coordinator at the MOE who would monitor the professional development personnel's progress and provide ongoing training for these individuals.

Redesign the CEE. "Expansion of equitable access to secondary education may not be viable unless entry examinations are thoroughly reformed, postponed to the entry point of upper secondary education or altogether eliminated" (World Bank, 2005, p. 94). This statement is a resounding endorsement of the need to redesign secondary school entrance examinations such as the CEE. The use of the CEE to assign students to secondary schools to a large extent determined the future of many students in St. Lucia. Students who were assigned to the prestigious schools typically moved on to tertiary education or to the best available jobs. The other students who were not lucky enough to be assigned to one of the prestigious schools for the most part, followed a less certain path. I deliberately use the term "lucky" to describe the process used to assign students because a one-time examination cannot reliably determine the competence of all students. A certain number of students will get by simply because they were having a good day or they were less nervous than the student sitting next to them. There are countless anecdotal accounts of students who "surprised" their teachers by performing better than they had demonstrated in class and others who did not perform as well as they had

demonstrated in class. Several islands in the Caribbean are already moving away from using the CEE to transition students to the secondary school (Barnes, n.d.). Because the secondary school a student attends can have such an impact on his or her future the test should more accurately assess a student's competence. The current structure of the examination may not accurately test what students know. Therefore, the CEE should be a continuous assessment through the fifth and sixth grades comprising various assessments that would allow students to display proficiency in various ways. At the end of the sixth grade students would write a national examination similar to the current CEE to further evaluate their competence. The combination of scores from the various assessments and the CEE in the sixth grade should then be used to assign students to a secondary school. The use of multiple forms of assessments has been supported by research (World Bank, 2005).

This would require education officials in St. Lucia to design specific criteria to assess the various projects the students will complete. It will also require a specific group of highly trained individuals from outside the individual schools to grade these projects. Since students are currently assessed using school based assessments at the secondary level at the primary level, this recommendation would just extend these school based assessments to the fifth and sixth grade students and would require that these assessments make up part of the students' scores to transition them to the secondary level. Some may argue that the school based assessments will negatively impact students who do not have support at home to help them with the projects; however, teacher support and supervision will help to lessen this problem.

Address the dropout rate. High dropout rates have been viewed as a signal of a poor quality educational system (UNESCO, 2005). There has been a slight increase in the dropout rate in St. Lucia since the introduction of USE. The statistics may be somewhat higher than what is being reported, not because of any attempts at deception, but because some students simply may be getting lost in the system. The troubling issue is that not much is being done to address the problem. If the problem is not addressed urgently, it could lead to more serious problems in the future as the dropouts may have problems finding jobs and may resort to illegal activities. Currently, there is one truant officer responsible for making contact with truant students from all the schools on the island. This is inadequate to deal with the problem of truancy.

Reducing the dropout rate can be hard to achieve if the reasons for dropping out are not known or understood. The first step would be to conduct research involving students, parents, and teachers to get accurate figures and to determine the root cause(s) of dropping out. The prevailing thought in St. Lucia right now is that students are dropping out because they are not able to cope with a highly academic curriculum. If that is the case, then introducing a more skill based curriculum might address the dropout rate. This curriculum, however, should be available to all students and should not be targeted toward only low performing students.

Adopting strategies that promote collaboration between the parents and the schools may also help to reduce the dropout rate as parents will be supportive of school efforts to keep their children in school. Another reason for students dropping out which came up in this study was the parents' inability to pay the CXC examinations for their children. In such a situation, a program can be set up in collaboration with other

ministries and stakeholder groups which will pay for these students' examination fees while requiring them to perform a service in their school or community such as tutoring younger students or helping with other community or school projects. A breakfast or lunch program at the secondary level may also help reduce the dropout rate. Alternatives to suspension should also be explored as repeated suspensions were cited as a reason in this study, for students dropping out.

Address the low levels of student achievement. One measure of the quality of an educational system is the level of achievement of its students (UNICEF, 2000). Although I am listing this as a specific recommendation, the previous recommendations, if adopted, should result in an increase in student achievement. In addition, increased use of technology at the schools should help to raise student achievement as it will give teachers the ability to use a variety of strategies to meet diverse learning styles (World Bank, 2005). At the present time some schools have resource rooms but they are inadequate to meet the needs of all the students at those schools. Improving the technological capabilities in the system will first involve providing sufficient computers at every school, including the primary schools, to meet the needs of students at those schools. This would also involve providing instructional technology such as projectors and smart boards to aid in instruction. This will help teachers make learning more student-centered and would also help them design and teach lessons which will cater to different leaning styles (Miller et al., 2000). Increasing the use of technology in the schools will involve some cost; however, the costs will be minimal compared to the benefit of increasing student achievement and having students who have the skills necessary to function in the world.

Current Status of USE

Since this study was conducted and at the time of this writing, the OECS countries including St. Lucia have decided to introduce a common regional assessment at the end of the primary level of the educational system in the year 2012 (OECS, 2010). This examination is planned to replace the CEE, however, no information was yet available about how this would be accomplished. At the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year several of the secondary schools in St. Lucia were operating way below capacity with some schools having no students in Form One (Cumberbatch, 2010). The decrease in the population growth rate led to fewer students to fill the available school places.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research on USE in St. Lucia should examine the level of student achievement at the end of the secondary school cycle based on the CXC examinations for the students who were introduced into the system because of the implementation of USE. While student achievement was not a primary focus of this study it is one factor that can be used to determine the effectiveness of the USE policy in providing an education to all students. Further research examining the perceptions of primary school teachers about the impact of USE on their level of the system might also be a worthwhile venture as the participants in this study suggested that the introduction of USE exposed a weakness at the primary level of the system. Another area for future study may involve an examination of the teaching practices at some of the rural schools. These schools are typically attended by students from the community resulting in a diverse student population in terms of the students' level of achievement. A study of the rural teachers'

practices in meeting the needs of students with various abilities may serve as a guide for other teachers in the system. A long term study tracking the achievements of students who attended prestigious and less prestigious schools to determine how much of an impact the secondary school one attends has on future careers and other educational pursuits may also be a worthwhile venture. This study may be quite difficult because of problems keeping track of individuals who may migrate from the island.

Summary

The introduction of USE in St. Lucia was a policy which was pursued as a regional initiative because the countries of the Caribbean had attained UPE and USE was the next logical step for educational progress in the region. The introduction of USE came with considerable financial costs to the government and people of St. Lucia as loans were necessary to finance the policy. The access component of USE was well addressed and student support services were also provided; however, teachers expressed dissatisfaction with other aspects of implementing the policy such as their involvement in the planning and introduction of USE, training opportunities for teachers, having relevant curriculum and adequate resources and low levels of student achievement. While the questionnaire data revealed teachers did not feel the introduction of USE had a positive impact on the educational system, all but one of the teachers who were interviewed and all the key informants felt the introduction of USE was a positive step for the educational system. This support bodes well for the future of the policy. USE is still in its infancy in St. Lucia and some of the problems being experienced are typical for programs that bring about major shifts in policy. The successful implementation of USE will depend heavily on the response to the problems which were identified by the teachers.

I began this study by detailing my experience transitioning to secondary school in St. Lucia. At the time, I was concerned about being assigned to a school that was deemed to be less prestigious and did not realize then that I was fortunate to even have the opportunity to attend a secondary school. Fortunately, because of the introduction of USE, students in St. Lucia are no longer faced with the prospect that they may never have the opportunity to attend a secondary school. The issue now is ensuring not only that students have access to a secondary school, but that they have access to a quality secondary education. The future success of USE in St. Lucia depends on the education officials making modifications in the policy such as the recommendations suggested in this study, and on teachers becoming more comfortable teaching diverse groups of students. The concerns expressed by the teachers in this study should also be addressed to strengthen the program. While there may have been missteps in the planning and implementation process for USE, there is still the opportunity to fix those missteps to make the educational system in St. Lucia more equitable and to make USE in St. Lucia more than just a place in a secondary school, and truly universal secondary education.

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Appendix A

Information letter

Lindenwood University
School of Education
209 S Kingshighway
St. Charles Missouri, 63301

Dear Teachers:

My name is Verneta Lesforis. I am a St. Lucian student currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Educational Administration (EdD) at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri. I am inviting you to participate in my dissertation study by completing this survey. The purpose of the study is to investigate the perceptions of secondary school teachers to the implementation of Universal Secondary Education (USE) in St. Lucia, in particular, their involvement in the implementation process. Your participation in this study will help to identify perceived strengths and weaknesses of the program and the results will be used to offer recommendations to improve the program and may provide information to help with the implementation of future educational programs in St. Lucia. A copy of the study will be available at the Ministry of Education upon completion.

Your participation is completely voluntary and there is no penalty if you decide not to participate. There are no risks to you if you decide to complete this survey. You are not required to provide any identifying information on the surveys. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

If you have any questions about completing the survey, please contact my dissertation chairs, Dr. Graham Weir at (636) 949-4315 or Dr. Owen Vandenberg at (636) 949-4553.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

Verneta Lesforis

Appendix B

Teacher Survey

Please place an (X) in the appropriate space

Gender: a) ____ male b) _____ female

Teaching experience in St. Lucia: a) ____ 1-5 years b) ____ 6-10 years c) ____ 11-15 years d) ____ 16-20 years e) ____ 20+ years

Highest level of qualification: a) ____ Unqualified teacher b) ____ Trained teacher
c) ____ Bachelor's degree d) ____ Master's degree e) ____ Master's +

Please answer the following questions by putting an (X) in the appropriate column of choices given for each question. Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Neutral (N) Disagree (DA) Strongly Disagree (SD)

#	Statement	SA	A	N	DA	SD
1	I was notified about the plan to implement USE in St. Lucia early in the planning process.					
2	I had the opportunity to attend informational meetings on the implementation of USE in St. Lucia.					
3	I had the opportunity to give feedback on the implementation of USE in St. Lucia.					
4	I had the opportunity to serve on planning committees for the implementation of USE					
5	I believe the concerns of teachers were addressed in the implementation of USE.					
6	I was given sufficient information about the implementation of USE in St. Lucia.					
7	I believe the planning and implementation of USE was a collaborative effort involving the Ministry of Education, teachers and other stakeholders.					
8	I was given additional professional development in preparation for USE in St. Lucia.					
9	I believe I have the necessary skills to teach diverse learners.					
10	My teaching workload has increased since the implementation of USE.					

Appendix B (Cont.)

11	The curriculum and assessments in my content area were modified since the implementation of USE.					
12	There are options available at my school to meet the diverse needs of students (e.g. vocational subject offerings)					
13	There are support services (e.g. counseling) available for students at my school.					
14	St. Lucia has adequate resources to provide a secondary education to all eligible students.					
15	The students who have enrolled at my school since the implementation of USE are prepared to pursue a secondary education.					
16	There has been an increase in the number of students at my school who need remedial services since the implementation of USE.					
17	The number of discipline incidents involving students at my school has increased since the implementation of USE.					
18	The implementation of USE has had a positive impact on the culture at my school.					
19	The implementation of USE has had no effect on my school.					
20	I believe the implementation of USE has had a positive impact on the educational system in St. Lucia.					

Vitae

Verneta Lesforis was a fourth grade teacher in Castries, St. Lucia. She later taught elementary Physical Education, coached high school track and field in Springfield, Missouri, and served as a graduate assistant in the education department at Lindenwood University.

Education studies have resulted in a Bachelor of Science in Education with an emphasis in Physical Education from Southwest Missouri State University in 2000, a Master of Education in Physical Education from Southwest Missouri State University in 2002, and an Education Specialist in Educational Administration from William Woods University in 2009.