Jamaican secondary students' perspectives of academic performance and academic success: exploring high academic failure and low academic success rates amongst Jamaican secondary students

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Declaration of original authorship

Declaration: I confirm that this is my work, and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged

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Abstract

This thesis explores Jamaican students' understanding of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success and how they have made sense of their knowledge to determine how they believe society should define these concepts. It investigates the rationale behind the high number of secondary students' academic failings and its impact on students.

The study explores students' perceptions of academic performance and academic success using a social constructionism approach underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm. The data was collected from twelve rural Jamaican secondary students from a school in the north-eastern section of the island, male and female, between the ages of 15 and 16 years. The information was collected through photographs from photovoice, audio journals, one-on-one interviews, and focus group discussions. Focused coding was used to analyze the data and identify key themes that reflected participants' perspectives.

Using Social Constructionism theory supported by a compatible interpretivist paradigm, the study concluded that these students' understanding of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic performance success aligns with the socially accepted interpretation. These secondary students have interpreted their understanding of these traditional meanings as stereotyping labels that adversely impact some students' academic performance output and their subsequent academic success. To address this phenomenon, they identified three different alternatives to how society could define the terms. The study contributes to knowledge by demonstrating the usefulness of photo voice and audio journals research media as platforms to access Jamaican secondary students' voice. The research methods used in the study provided students challenged in communicating through written words the opportunity to voice their perspectives on the research questions through

photographs and, interestingly, in Jamaican Creole for those who used audio recordings. Additionally, the study provides a unique opportunity to hear a sample of the cohort of Jamaican secondary students, traditionally considered poor academic performers and to whom low or no expectations of academic success are ascribed, their perspectives as shaped by their lived experiences as formed within their social spaces. These critical perceptions could provide insight into addressing the high levels of poor academic performance and low academic success rates amongst a significant percentage of Jamaican secondary students.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The high number of Jamaican secondary students consistently failing to pass their end-of-school Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examination, evident in the 2011-2021 CSEC results, continues to be of concern in Jamaica (Reid, 2011). The failure remains despite the various strategies the Ministry of Education employs to assist students and schools in improving students' academic outputs and have a better pathway toward post-secondary school academic success. Some of these strategies implemented by the Jamaican Ministry of Education have included, for example, the National Mathematics Programme and the 2016 National Standards Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2017a, 2017b). In addition to the Alternate Pathways to Secondary Education (ASPE). The strategies focused on addressing national literacy and numeracy issues to engender greater levels of secondary academic success based on individual student's aptitudes and interests.

The concerning nature of the situation for stakeholders within and outside education stems from the fact that the result of these failing means these students will leave school without attaining secondary-level certification. An occurrence that has life-defining implications for students hinders their ability to access higher education opportunities or good-paying employment (Di Gropello, 2003). This study seeks to answer why s. such significant numbers of Jamaican secondary students are producing poor academic performance results, placing them on the path to being academically unsuccessful in post-secondary school. Is it that these students have failed to grasp the socially accepted meaning of academic performance and its implications for their post-secondary academic success? Is it that their academic history, which identifies them as poor academic performers and academically unsuccessful students, has already confined them to such a state for their entire education? (Mandel et al., 1995).

Several discussions and writing focusing on the phenomenon's cause have emerged over the years (Kumar et al., 2021). Among them, Trines (2019) posited that the issue is due to the socio-economic spaces that students come from, hindering their ability to access quality education and contributing to their poor academic performance. Another argument is that some secondary students have a poor attitude toward towards engaging with subjects, particularly mathematics, which contributes to poor academic engagement and output (Binns-Thompson et al., 2021). Additionally, students poor attitude towards standards of English and the confusion between its use and Jamaican Creole are seen as the reason for the state of students performance (Cushing & Snell, 2022). It is believed that such poor behaviour attitude causes students to have low self-efficacy and poor communication skills, resulting in poor academic performance in tests requiring them to answer using standard English (Coote, 2019).

In his contribution, Henry (2011, p. 1) opined that the high numbers of poor academic performance are due to 'the closed-door-ownership-of-the-system attitude of administrators and teachers and their trade unions.' Attitudes which he argues, remove the accountability for students' academic performance from school administrators and teachers. However, some contributors contend that the issue goes beyond contemporary factors suggesting that it has a historical antecedent. A forbearing, according to Bourne and Owen-Wright (2018, p. 40), 'that lies in the adoption and continued use of a 'failed post-slavery system of education from Britain that has been unable to meet the educational needs of the modern Jamaican society.' In contrast, authors such as Gentilucci (2004) did not focus on such an idea as the cause of the phenomenon. Instead, they argue that the problem of poor students' academic performance stems from 'the paradigm used to understand students learning focuses on observations, descriptions, and measurement, missing the understanding of why students learn well or poorly, instead of emphasizing an understanding of their perspectives; on learning.' Gentilucci (2004, p. 133)

In looking at the phenomenon of poor academic performance in the Jamaican context Feraria (2016) later voiced a similar viewpoint on the phenomenon amongst Jamaican secondary students, noting that the situation requires a more cooperative agenda that considers the contemporary views of students in the conversations about education. Including students views in education discussions, which underpins this study, is essential as it provides an opportunity to hear and explore their perceptions of and possible solutions to problems in the discipline. The idea of including the concept of student voice is premised on the belief that students who have experienced phenomena, including low academic performance outputs, come to the discussion from a position of understanding that others do not possess. A position that allows them to understand and interrogate the issue differently and have a vested interest in trying to address.

1.1 Aim of the research

The study explores how 12 rural secondary students have understood and made sense of the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success and how they believe these terms should be defined. The study aims to explore these students' perspectives and interpretations of the traditional meanings to understand the high numbers of academic failings and low academic success rates amongst Jamaican secondary students. Ultimately determining whether a possible solution to addressing the phenomenon can be unearthed from their understanding and interpretation of these meanings.

1.2 My interest in the topic

My interest in the high number of Jamaican secondary students failing to achieve academic performance and academic success came from two separate occurrences. The first involved my tenure at an urban upgraded secondary school in Jamaica. The student population in the school could be described as a homogenous set, with all the students having received below-average grade scores in their Primary exit examination, thus gaining placement in the

school. Interestingly, the school was one of the many comprehensive secondary schools reclassified as a high school under the government of Jamaica's Secondary Schools Enhancement Programme (SSEP) in 2001. Among other aims, the program sought to close the education gap between the traditional and comprehensive schools affording all students access to the same resource and programs (Service, 2006). However, the upgrade did not change the type of students placed in the institution, as the school continued to receive students whose academic performance, especially in their Primary exit examination, was deemed below the acceptable academic performance benchmark.

The number of students receiving low academic scores on standard tests across subjects was a consistent feature of the students I engaged with during my tenure. These outputs, I felt, did not reflect the competence I observed in these students during class discussions or project assignments. These students could not communicate their knowledge, which it was evident they knew from discussions, in written standard English. They consistently failed to pass written forms of assessments and displayed disinterest in learning. In their class discussion, these students questioned the practice in the school of making mathematics and English compulsory and not the other subjects they preferred. They expressed concerns about the requirement to write their knowledge and the absence of verbal assessments using Jamaican Creole, which they would be more comfortable using to showcase their knowledge. For many, attending school was an unnecessary waste of energy and time, as comparing them to their traditional high school peers and expecting them to perform and achieve the same standards was unfair and unrealistic, in their opinion. One of the most poignant queries I can recall was from a female student in the discussion asking why they could not be judged for who they were and by themselves.

The second occurrence that led me to do this research was a set of Caribbean Examination [CSEC] results taken by Jamaican grade 11 secondary schools I had come across

in reading the Grade Distribution by Territory as produced by the Overseas Examination Commission, which from the analysis showed a significant number of students not passing any subjects in these matriculating exams. These results, for me, were not only concerning at a personal level of students failing their exams. However, they represented many students who would be unable to enter tertiary institutions, obtain high-paying employment, and contribute to national development. The data led me back to my sojourn at the urban high school and my conversations with the students regarding why they were not passing school tests. I wondered if their arguments could also be used to answer my newest question of why many secondary students, especially from non-traditional high schools, were failing their examinations.

These situations together fuelled my desire to explore, from an academic position, why this phenomenon persisted. Was the issue a matter of how students understood the meaning of academic performance and academic success requirements? Was there a need to create a set of standards mainly aimed at these academically struggling students to engender better results? Did other secondary students share similar views to the other students on the role of traditional assessment systems and attitudes as contributing to the problem?

As a secondary-level teacher in training who had had the opportunity to hear students unfiltered views about an essential matter in education, I was both concerned and intrigued. Concerned that, left unresolved, the phenomenon of high failure rates could prove disastrous on an individual level for these students in post-secondary school. In addition, the phenomenon could prove devastating for Jamaican society, with a high number of individuals incapable of contributing to the development of the society. I was intrigued because I was unaware that students had such views and wanted to say them. These thoughts guided me toward wanting to research the underlying views regarding the situation. I was interested in hearing using a different approach to hear the perspectives of secondary students on the issue and not the approach of hearing from adults.

1.3 The significance of the study

The study is significant as it aims to investigate the phenomenon using a sample of Jamaican secondary students from a school whose cohorts have consistently experienced poor academic performance throughout their secondary educational journey. The focus on hearing from students will help to place their views on the issues of the phenomenon into the discourse not previously done.

The approach is also important from a Jamaican education standpoint as it resonates with one of the core values of the Ministry of Education in Jamaica of, inclusiveness. Additionally, the approach echoes the ethos of the global 1989 United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child, Article 12. The article acknowledges 'children who are capable of forming their views as having the right to express same freely in all matters affecting the child and the opportunity to be heard' (Assembly, 1989, p. 4). This principle reflects the spirit of this study to provide an opportunity to hear students' perspectives on the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success in order to facilitate an appreciation and better understanding of why and how they have engaged with the concepts in their social spaces and possibly influenced their opinions on the phenomenon.

1.4 Context of the study

The study's backdrop is an analysis of the Caribbean Examination Council's (CXC) results from 2011 to 2021. The data outlines the number of secondary students failing to achieve passing grades, particularly in the subjects of Mathematics and English language, considered key subjects to matriculate into tertiary institutions and gain employment. Students failing to achieve these subjects are regarded as academically underperforming and expected to become academically unsuccessful in post-secondary school. The category includes students who register for the examinations yet do not sit them and thus do not receive scores and certification. The ongoing debate involving education and other stakeholders about the phenomenon of high

numbers of secondary students failing to attain academic performance and academic success and the absence of students' voice from the discourse is the basis of this study. Hearing from students by including them in the discourse Cook-Sather et al. (2015) note provides an opportunity to hear their perspectives on learning and, as Gentilucci (2004) asserts, their voice can help to sheds light on the rationale behind their relationship with learning and why some students learn and achieve benchmarks while others do not, to better understand and address the situation. The need to address the issue is dire as it threatens the possibility of creating an educated populace capable of functioning effectively, contributing to national economic development, and being academically successful in life (Jamaica, 2010a). However, to do so requires an appreciation of the importance of including all voice affected in the discourse. The voice, particularly of students, classified as the phenomenon's determinant. A voice that can help to better understand and provide views that have not been aired to stem the phenomenon and future occurrence of the same possibly. As Gentilucci (2004, p. 134) further posits, 'there can be little doubt that students' own interpretation of school practice and processes represents a crucial link in the educational chain to resolve issues within the field.'

The study was conducted with 12 Grade 10 students attending the same rural area secondary school in the western section of Jamaica. All students had received low primary school exit results, a homogeneity suited for the study's sample population. The study's participants had responded to a call for volunteers for the study and made their interest in participating known to the school's Guidance Counselor. The first 12 were selected for the study from the volunteers and sensitized to the process involved (see Chapter 4- 4.8 for detailed information on the general Ethical considerations for the study).

1.5. Research Questions

To unearth the perspectives of the secondary students regarding the phenomenon, an initial set of research questions were created and used in the pilot as follows:

1. How does your school define a student who is performing academically?
2. How do students make sense of the academic performance and academic success definitions?
3. If students had a chance to make a definition for academic performance and academic success, what would it look like?

Following the implementation of the pilot and students' feedback, the questions were refined for the main study as follows

1. How have Jamaican secondary students understood the traditional socially accepted definition terms of academic performance and academic success?
2. How have they made sense of the traditional academic performance and academic success definitions?
3. How do Jamaican secondary students believe the system should define academic performance and academic success

1.6. Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 of the study is the Literature Review; it reviews and analyses the literary perspectives on academic performance, academic success, and the concept of student voice. The chapter explores their definitions and explores how environmental factors influence views and, by extension, the practice of the definitions. In addition, it explores the idea of the affective domain as a platform on which individuals make sense of knowledge and the role that social spaces play in helping them shape their perspectives. The chapter concludes by highlighting the gaps within the literature and using the limitations to shape the research questions for the thesis.

Chapter 3 presents the pilot and its findings concerning the suitability of the research questions and the data collection methods. The pilot study results were used to inform the reshaping of the methodology and research questions for the main study.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodological approaches and the rationale behind the methods used in the study. The chapter presents the ontological and epistemological of knowledge construction explored through a social constructionism theoretical frame with the application of an interpretive sociological framework as an approach combined with constructivist grounded theory and the adopted qualitative research methods, i.e., photo voice, audio journals, one-on-one interviews, and focus group discussion on analyzing and interpreting the data. These methods provide comfort and ease of use for students of all learning abilities. The approaches helped them provide the data that would answer the research questions. The chapter outlines the ethical issues the research considered and their associated limitations.

Chapter 5 explores the findings for the first research question as collected from the data set across data collection methods. The section explores the sample of secondary students responses and how they have created their understanding of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success, as presented using the research methods—the role of social engagements and environmental spaces in this process.

Chapter 6 outlines the responses of the study's participants to the second research question of how the students have made sense of their understanding of the traditional meanings. The chapter then presents the students views, demonstrating how different environmental spaces have aided in shaping their interpretation of the meanings and how they have influenced their characterization of the meanings of academic performance and academic success.

Chapter 7 presents the respondents' views on the final research question of how secondary students think society should define academic performance and academic success. The section describes the three distinct responses provided through the four data collection methods used in the study.

Chapter 8, the discussion chapter, draws from the information from the previous three Findings chapters while using the information in the other chapters to buttress the discussions. The chapter uses the themes identified in the findings to present the outcomes of exploring how secondary students have constructed their knowledge of academic performance and academic success.

Chapter 9 summarizes the key points from the findings, outlines the study's contribution to knowledge, suggests some implications for practice, outlines the study's limitations within the context of its methodology, and provides suggestions for future research.

1.7 Chapter Summary

This study aims to explore the issue from the standpoint of students. Studying the phenomenon of high academic failings and subsequent low academic success rates from the perspectives of secondary students may provide insights that have not yet emerged from the viewpoints of other stakeholders in education. Chapter 2, Literature Review, presents the existing literature illustrating the traditional presentation of academic performance and success concepts. It also explores the role of environmental factors in shaping knowledge while exploring the concept of student voice as an alternate voice to exploring the phenomenon of secondary students' poor academic performance and low success rates, possibly providing an unheard-of perspective to better understand the phenomenon.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the literature on the traditional understanding of the study's key terms, academic performance, and academic success. The chapter outlines the conventional literary interpretations and explores how each term is interpreted in the study. The section explores the role of environments inside and outside the school and the self and how these spaces influence individuals' understanding of the traditional meanings of the terms. It concludes by exploring the student's voice as a social constructivist space shaped by the different perspectives in the socio-cultural environments it occupies to create its knowledge.

The literature reviewed for the chapter was pulled from empirical and government sources, statistical, professional literature, and media-based articles from local and international sources between 1998 – 2021. International sources were used to set a global context to provide a comparative framework for Jamaican information. Sources from the 1990s and early 2000 are reviewed and cited, providing context that either introduced or strengthened other later sources cited.

2.1 Defining the terms academic attainment, academic performance, and academic success

2.1.1 Academic Attainment

An understanding of academic performance requires comprehension of the concept of academic attainment. Early authors positioned the idea of academic attainment as an antecedent of academic performance on the concept of academic attainment, arguing that academic performance occurs through academic attainment, which they defined as the mastery of knowledge or abilities one should have mastered in school, measured using test grades (Entwistle, 1972; McIntyre & Brown, 1978). The idea underpinning academic attainment finds support in later writings, which posited academic attainment as knowledge acquisition measured by school grades ascribed by teachers from the standardized test (DESA, 2017;

Hagger & Hamilton, 2019; Lamas, 2015; Lenka & Kant, 2012). Measured by tests and expressed through school grades, academic attainment demonstrates the extent to which learning occurs. In their contribution to the discourse, Lenka and Kant (2012) are more specific regarding academic knowledge and skills assessed for measurement by school grades focusing particularly on core subjects with an emphasis on mathematics and English.

The study defines academic attainment as mastery of knowledge and skills developed during the process of education in school. However, by its very construct as academic attainment, critics argued that the term's use of the word academic implies mastery of academic activities, distinguishing between academic and other types of knowledge and skills to be assessed in relation to others, creating a sort of judgment or characterizing abilities to others without focusing on what and how learning takes place. Ultimately, these authors argued that academic attainment connotes ideas of academic benchmarks as being pre-determined by others who have decided what is valuable to designated as academic and attainment and what is not. While acknowledging these criticisms of the concept, the study accepts its construct, identifying it as an important facet in operationalizing concepts such as academic performance and success.

Although acknowledging the importance of academic attainment as a precursor of academic performance and academic success, the study does not include academic attainment in exploring the phenomenon. Instead, the study engages the concept of academic attainment within the frame of academic performance, whose definition extols ideas of mastery of content knowledge representing the acquisition of competency, the underpinning idea of academic attainment. Thus, the study uses the perspectives of secondary students to explore the phenomenon of high levels of poor academic performance and high levels of low academic success rates amongst Jamaican secondary students.

2.1.2 Academic performance

This section presents the various definitions of academic performance explained in the literature and concludes with an outline of how the study defines the term. According to York et al. (2015), the term academic performance is not as definitive in its definition as the traditional premise may appear. Indeed the many interpretations of the term can be sorted into categories based on the contextual focus (Kumar et al., 2021). For example, early thinkers, including Timothy (2014), positioned the concept as a product outcome of students exposure to learning. In this regard, academic performance was considered based on how and what students were exposed to in the classroom, including low staff morale, lack or limited resources, and absence of parental support in learning, with the reverse accounting for high academic performance (Mphale & Mhlauli, 2014).

However, others took a much broader view of the term, suggesting that it was not solely a product of knowledge exposure but more knowledge mastery denoted by high-grade scores (Narad & Abdullah, 2016). These scores had to be achieved in a specific context of standard tests or examinations (Cassady & Johnson, 2002). The achievements were even more important in mathematics and science, considered critical in shaping individuals and society (Anderton et al., 2017).

Nonetheless, critics of this interpretation of the terms argue that an emphasis on the definition of the concept as content mastery, high grades, and tests ignore the ideas of learning as being a much broader construct (Thomas, 2016). In addition, Van de Grift and Houtveen (2007) argue that the positioning of the definition as high grades ignores the idea of efforts and progress improvement. For their part, DeVries et al. (2018) contend that the traditional definition disregards the role of social behaviour as an influencing factor in students' academic performance, which impacts benchmark attainment.

In extending the criticism of the traditional contextualization of the definitions, some authors argue that the meanings represent a differentiation system in secondary schools (Kerckhoff, 1977). Creating a sort of valuing of students social identity (Meyer, 1977), a practice Bleazby (2015) noted continues supported by a notion of curriculum hierarchy. This Wijsman et al. (2016) created a system of economic and social parity of status of subjects and students based on the subjects they pursued. Such a practice creates and ascribes an identity to students that Ercole (2009) suggests follows them throughout their lives beyond school. Such a practice, these students believe, as Hejazi et al. (2012, pp. 309-310), 'puts their identities in a disadvantageous position of not being recognized as academic performers and perpetuating the high levels of poor academic performance rates.' Thus, these students become demotivated and disconnected from learning and performing (Ercole, 2009).

2.1.2.1 Reframing the traditional definition of academic performance in the literature

Verešová and Foglová (2018) argue that these traditional perspectives of academic performance are limited and, in turn, limit the term itself. Addressing these limitations, they noted, requires a much broader construct to define academic performance. This is mainly because the terms play a key role in ascribing academic success or failure labels to students, which have implications for their current and future development.

Other researchers suggest that academic performance needs to be defined and interpreted beyond measuring mastery using pen and -paper testing (Mitana et al., 2018). Instead, perhaps the conversation could be guided towards a set of definitions focusing on alternate meanings that emphasize a broader scope of assessment methods to meet the needs of the 21st century (Co-operation & Development, 2018). A feat that Cavilla (2017) noted was achievable by including students' voice, as part of the cadre of stakeholders, in shaping the parameters of the terms and their definitions. This new approach would signal academic performance as more than just learning goals to include non-cognitive learning, providing

significant opportunities for more students considered performers in school and opportunities for academic success among secondary students (OECD, 2013).

While the traditional definitions outlined above represent the general understanding of the terms in society, this study wants to explore whether this is how secondary students also understand the terms. What is their interpretation of the term, and does it align with or differ from the traditional social understanding?

2.1.3 Academic Success

Academic success has been discussed over the last many years within education research (Leman, 1999), resulting in various meanings generated based on the context and who is requested to provide a definition (Weatherton & Schussler, 2021). Underpinning these different perspectives is an attempt to identify a metric to define and measure what 'academic success' within academics ought to look like. Accordingly, York et al. (2015) assert that the diversity of definitions has given it an amorphous nature, which makes it seem to be lacking in clarity and an aura of uncertainty in its operationalization Weatherton and Schussler (2021).

Validation of these arguments is evident in the various meanings identified over the years in the literature, with authors emphasizing different ideas in construing the term. For example, some definitions construe the term as academic performance achievement (Colarelli, 1991) or as emphasizing 'post-graduation achievements, such as graduate school admission test scores, graduate and professional school enrolment' (George D Kuh et al., 2006, p. 5). In the end, resulting in the achievement of educational outcomes (York et al., 2015) and their advancement into occupations within or related to their degree fields (Cachia et al., 2018, p. 437).

Critics of the interpretation and operationalization of academic success argue that these definitions give the impression that areas of learning outside academics, such as vocational and skills training, are not spaces from which success is achievable (Howard et al., 2022) post-

school. Polirstok (2017) argues that such positioning narrows the scope of the term, disregarding the competencies and/or interests of disadvantaged students unable or uninterested in attaining these benchmarks.

Other authors in support of the criticism of the traditional definitions argue that the meanings have a limited opinion of success. In their estimation, success within the school should embody more than just academics; it should also emphasize ideas of students self-concept, social competence, and a sense of purpose as powerful determinants of success (Herrera et al., 2020; Steinmayr et al., 2019). George D. Kuh et al. (2006) support this idea, arguing that success is a much broader construct that should incorporate skills acquisition and general competency development while emphasizing education. For Dunlosky et al. (2020), definitions of success in education should emphasize ideas of effort as an essential explanatory construct for learning gains. Such definitions would provide a platform to include less academically-inclined students, improving their self-efficacy as they can identify themselves with academic success (Usher et al., 2019). In her estimation, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) definitions of academic success should emphasize the contribution of environmental factors and their influence on academic success, which has been absent from the current meanings. These diverse opinions on success in education should be framed to allow more students to feel included in the definition.

However, despite the criticism towards the traditional meaning of success, the socially accepted underpinnings of success as the ability to enter tertiary institutions and obtain high-paying employment, continue to frame the meaning. While these notions have dominated the thinking around what constitutes academic success, this study aims to identify whether this meaning impacts secondary students' current low success rates.

2.1.3.1 Reframing the traditional definition of academic success in the literature

The current traditional definitions of academic success seem narrow, creating a gap between students abilities, skills, interests, and the role of environmental factors that can be addressed by creating a more broad-based definition (OECD, 2012, p. 3). There is a need to create a holistic definition (Strydom & Loots, 2020), one that emphasizes ideas of moral development (York et al., 2015), social and emotional competencies development (Cuseo, 2009), and problem-solving and critical thinking skills (Frost, 2017). Such a broad-based definition would allow more students, regardless of competencies or interests, to identify and align with the definitions and, by extension, the terms (Hurtado et al., 2015). This would also be a definition that accounts for the voice of students that honour their right to be heard, giving them the audience and influence that enables students' voice to be afforded their due weight and inclusion in the process.

In summary, the literature reviewed suggests a need to reframe the current understanding of academic success. The arguments opine on the need to create a definition with a broader frame that looks beyond academic achievement, high-paying jobs, and entry to a tertiary institution as its meaning (York et al., 2015). However, while the study acknowledges the traditional framing of academic success, a much greater appreciation of this construct can be had by exploring the role that environmental spaces played in influencing how students come to understand these traditionally socially accepted meanings.

2.2 Environments and their influence on an interpretation of academic performance and academic success

The preceding section explored the traditional meanings and interpretations behind academic performance and success in the literature. This section explores the idea of different environmental spaces inside and outside school (Chukwuemeka, 2013) and how they have shaped the knowledge of those who occupy them (Oselumese et al., 2016).

One such environment is the school supported by systems within subsystems of curriculum, language, assessment, and student/teacher relationship, which the literature shows have influenced students perceptions of academic performance and academic success. Additionally, the section will look at environmental factors outside of school, including parents interests, family socioeconomic situation, and student's community and their role in shaping students views of these terms.

2.2.1 Exploring the school environment

The school has influenced students perception of various types of knowledge and has become recognized as a space that strongly influences students experiences and how they perceive ideas, including those related to education (Ahmed et al., 2018). This study considered how schools influence students perspectives through curriculum, language and assessment, teacher/student relationships, and peer relationships.

2.2.1.1. Curriculum

The school curriculum is one of the main tools within the school space that has influenced students consideration of academic performance and academic success. Regarded as a sacred document that may not be questioned or changed (Mkandawire et al., 2018), the curriculum arguably serves as a non-neutral system that symbolizes and legitimizes the socially accepted rhetoric of society on educational ideas that students end up adopting as their views and practices (Goodson, 1985).

One such rhetoric is the implicit idea, supported in numerous educational literature, of classifying specific academic subjects, mathematics, science, and language as core (Camera, 2015). The practice of positioning some subjects, and subsequent careers, as being of greater significance than others within the curriculum creates a disconnect and lack of interest in education for students who pursue the less recognized subjects (Aryeetey et al., 2011). While on the other hand, perceiving vocational and practical subjects as none core and classifying

students who pursue these subjects as incapable of achieving benchmark grades to enter university (Aryeetey et al., 2011).

For Ayub (2017), the categorization of subjects is based on socioeconomic levels, where according to Aldossari (2020), only students from poor socio-economic backgrounds pursue vocational and practical subjects for whom there are low to no expectations of post-secondary success. This situation contrasts with the type of students who pursue core subjects who have ascribed a higher social status level of prestige and have higher levels of post-school expectations attributed to them (Chankseliani et al., 2016).

This thesis explains whether this element within the school environment has influenced Jamaican secondary students' perspectives of the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success.

2.2.1.2. Language and assessment

Using the English language as the medium of communication and assessment while excluding local dialects within the school and the wider society contrives to give the impression of only the former as a passport to good academic performance and success (Dobson Stephen, 2020). Within the Jamaican education system, the English language requirement as the medium of communication for assessment and learning acts to set a gold standard for the language while overlooking Jamaican Creole.

Such situations influence how some students view themselves negatively as they are thus unable to communicate their knowledge content, receive low academic performance output scores, and are classified as poor academic performers. Learning and reproducing content is achievable when students express themselves using a language they are comfortable with (Tegegne, 2015).

Additionally, the idea promoted in the school environment by school administrators and teachers, and by extension, traditional society, of English as the formal language of

instruction, communication, and economic success (Lodge, 2020; Nero & Stevens, 2018), is a challenge for students not competent in English to express themselves clearly and coherently (Burris-Melville, 2020). Such situations create a disconnect in the classroom between the language of instruction and teaching and assessment and students (Komba & Bosco, 2015), giving the impression of Jamaican Creole as a language without form or grammar (Burris-Melville, 2020). It is, therefore, important to explore the study's sample of secondary students views on English language proficiency as the formal medium of instruction and assessment and its influence in shaping the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success. In addition to identifying how this understanding has shaped students own interpretation of the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success.

2.2.1.3. Teacher/student relationship

Another platform within the school environment that can influence how students perceive the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success is teacher/student relationships (Halim et al., 2014; Öqvist & Malmström, 2018; Yang et al., 2017). Studies suggest that teachers who can cultivate and show interest, love, and care, not just for the student academic development but for their overall advancement in life (Hubert, 2014), significantly influence their students self-confidence and efficacy, especially among poor academic performers. These types of relationships help students cultivate a positive attitude toward academic performance and academic success and influence them to exert effort to attain good academic performance as a reward to their teachers (Owens & Ennis, 2005).

In a classroom where the teacher creates an aura where students feel unique, appreciated, and recognized for their individual and collective values and beliefs, students are motivated to learn and produce academically (Owens & Ennis, 2005). Students, however, may be prone to adopt contrasting perspectives of the concept if they feel they are being shown less attention or support from their teachers. In such a relationship, compared to the treatment

received by their peers, some students take this to mean that they are not as important as their peers, resulting in an unequal experience in school compared to their peers. Hynds et al. (2017) suggest that teachers whose attitude demonstrates a lack of care toward students may be due to a lack of understanding or sensitivity to their students cultural or social backgrounds.

2.2.1.4. Peer Relationships

Studies have shown a correlation between how students view ideas, such as the importance of doing well and succeeding, and how their friends perceive these ideas (Wang et al., 2018). How friends perceive education and sub-concepts, including academic performance and academic success, often influences how their peers conceive the terms and subsequent modeled behavior, either positively or negatively. Some studies have emphasized the dominance of peer influence in shaping some students thoughts, including Afolabi (2019), which contends that peer influence sometimes trumps parental and family influence and values in the construction of perceptions for students. However, other studies have countered these arguments to advocate a greater level of influence from family, including parental influence, in shaping students thinking (Oymak, 2018). Nonetheless, it is essential to assert the role played by a peer group in the life and learning of students as they contribute, to a higher degree, to some students thinking than others in determining the impact on the motivation of and thought processes of students (Filade et al., 2019).

However, while the literature has provided information on the role that factors within the school environment have shaped students perspectives, other environments outside of school also contribute to influencing students thinking (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013). These other environments, or what Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) classify as out-of-school environments, and the interactions within will be explored in this section to outline their role in shaping students development and thinking.

2.2.2 Factors outside the school environment

Environmental factors outside school also shape students views (Jones, 2012). The following section of the chapter explores some of these factors, including the home and its sub-unit spaces that influence students, such as parents' interests and family socioeconomic status. Finally, the section looks at the students' community as an external environment to the school that impacts perspectives.

2.2.2.1 Home: parents' interests in education

Studies show that parents with a positive attitude toward ideas of academic performance and academic success influence their students views which can reflect similar positive posturing, in contrast to parents with a negative attitude towards traditional views of academic performance and academic success have students cultivating similar negative views of the concepts and its practices (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Naite, 2021). Parents' interests in the ideas that comprise the more extensive terms of academic performance and academic success, schoolwork, grades, and absenteeism guide how students perceive them (OECD, 2012). Regardless of socioeconomic background, parents' involvement can be viewed as having a positive impact as they help students assume their academic identity and perceptions of education concepts and their constructs (Ginsburg-Block et al., 2006). On the other hand, parental involvement can sometimes become overbearing and damaging as parents' interests seek to dominate students (Flutter, 2004), causing students to form negative perceptions of education concepts (Kim & Barrett, 2019).

2.2.2.2. Socio-economic status of the family

A family socioeconomic status is a factor within the home environment that has helped shape how students think about academic performance and academic success. A student from a family with a poor socio-economic situation may feel less inclined to positively perceive the concepts as they see these as unattainable benchmarks. According to Luo et al. (2016), they

can lack the availability of and access to educational support to help them achieve these standards. Additionally, these poor socio-economic conditions may cause these students to develop a mindset that pursuing the benchmarks is futile as they lack the resources, including access to extra tutoring, textbooks, technology, budgets, and knowledgeable content teachers (Reid, 2011; Takashiro, 2017). Furthermore, they may lack the appropriate nutrition, health care, and social and cultural resources (Luo et al., 2016) to help them focus on mastering content and produce high scores on standardized tests. Ultimately, such students may formulate negative perceptions of academic performance and academic success and align themselves with peers who have similar perceptions about the concepts (Abid et al., 2017; Berger & Archer, 2016; Dishion & Tipsord, 2011; Polirstok, 2017). On the other hand, middle-class or higher socioeconomic students may have contrasting perspectives on academic performance and success (Li & Qiu, 2018) due to fewer educational barriers to overcome and more significant support to achieve (Destin et al., 2019).

2.2.2.3. Students' community

A student community is an influential environment that shapes their beliefs about themselves and larger issues, including how they perceive education (Holloway, 2004). Students interactions with individuals in their communities, sharing and exchanging ideas, values, and culture, help shape their experiences and perceptions (Alam, 2015). The influence, however, varies based on factors, including the socioeconomic status of the community (McDool, 2017). A community with unlimited resources, including residents who regard educational achievement and academic success as necessary, can influence their students to adopt a similar mindset (Owens, 2010). On the other hand, in communities with limited resources where students experience social norms of violence and crime, high unemployment rates may make students less inclined toward achieving the traditional ideas of academic performance and academic success, which seems unnecessary (McDool, 2017). Interestingly,

in these disadvantaged communities, students inclined to have a positive mindset regarding academic output and academic success may have to suppress these views to fit into their communities (Polirstok, 2017).

2.2.2.4. Section summary

The literature has highlighted that the formation of perceptions is a process significantly influenced by the environmental spaces individuals, in this case, students, occupy. The data affirms the social constructionism premise that interactions amongst individuals in these spaces, inside and outside school, and the experiences gathered have influenced students perceptions of academic performance and academic success. Having explored the different environments and how they influence the formation of perspectives of education terms, specifically academic performance, and academic success, the thesis then looks at how these interpretations of the terms impact students affective domains.

2.3 Affective domain impact on academic performance and academic success

In outlining the process involved in students understanding of knowledge, the next step is establishing how this knowledge is comprehended. As written years earlier by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), how individuals make sense of knowledge through the affective domains determines the type of feelings or emotions toward particular knowledge. The following section explores how affective domains, specifically self-efficacy, and motivation, influence individuals' comprehension of academic performance and academic success.

2.3.1 Defining the affective domain

The earlier writings of Krathwohl (1964) provide a historical lens to understand what the affective domain means, defining it as a space from which individuals' feelings, tones, and emotions project towards particular areas of knowledge. In other words, the affective domain refers to the emotional areas that define how individuals emotionally respond to the knowledge

they receive. The emotional reaction occurs in a multi-stage internationalization process (Casey & Fernandez-Rio, 2019). According to Wilson (2016), individuals determine the emotional response to the knowledge received through information valuing and organizing to determine the functional characterization of the knowledge. Individuals come to make sense of the knowledge through their feelings, emotions, and attitudes; in other words, their affective domain developed to identify whether it is information they have; in this case, the self-efficacy and motivation to engage with the knowledge (Simorangkir & Rohaeti, 2019).

2.3.1.1.Self Efficacy

The idea of 'I can do it or self-efficacy has been defined by Ineson et al. (2013) as the belief that an individual capability possesses the requisite knowledge that facilitates the appropriate behaviour that enables success (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Establishing self-efficacy requires understanding what is to be accomplished and the ability to respond or react to this knowledge emotionally. Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) argue that the ability to react depends on an individual internal value system that allows them to prioritize, characterize and determine the reaction to what is to be accomplished. Determining the I can or cannot do it response ultimately determines the absence of self-efficacy (Talsma et al., 2018).

The idea of the affective domain and self-efficacy and the comprehension or sense-making of knowledge in the literature provides a platform to understand how individuals may have come to comprehend the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success. How individuals receive and perceive knowledge from observation and practice influences the value ascribed (Wilson, 2016). For example, individuals with a positive perception of the definitions of academic performance and academic success are likely to have positive self-confidence and are driven to consistently attain the standards within the meanings (Hayat et al., 2020; Weber et al., 2013). On the other hand, rejection or negative response to the knowledge can create low or no self-efficacy belief, eliminating or limiting productive

academic performance and the ability to implement corrective measures to achieve set goals (Chemers et al., 2001).

In applying the arguments to academic performance and academic success, Lane et al. (2004) point out that students with academic self-efficacy, that is, a positive affective domain, can achieve academic performance and academic success. Alternately, low self-efficacy and poor affective domain skills can adversely affect the attainment of academic knowledge and hinder academic performance and academic success (Chin et al., 2017). In the end, some students develop adverse emotional behavior due to low affective domain skills (Solomonides & Martin, 2008). The behavioural effect emanates as these students struggle emotionally to understand, master, and align with the knowledge behind educational terms (Askham, 2008). In the end, this causes them to have a negative experience and poor attitude toward the academic terms (Kahu, 2013), as they doubt their ability to engage and achieve the terms' essence (Pekrun et al., 2011). Unfortunately, such individuals either reject or develop a lukewarm attitude toward educational terms that they believe they lack the requisite skills to attain (Schunk, 1991).

While academic self-efficacy plays a positive and significant role in demonstrating an individual's emotional comprehension of academic knowledge, it has also been determined to affect students motivation considerably (Doménech-Betoret et al. (2017). The idea of motivation and its influence on an individual's sense-making of knowledge is explored below.

2.3.1.2. Motivation

According to Trautner and Schwinger (2020), motivation is a self-regulatory trigger, underlining self-efficacy, that spurs individuals to effect positive affective emotions. A strong sense of self-efficacy produces a strong motivational belief in one's capabilities to achieve their goals effectively (Kryshko et al., 2022), regardless of how one characterizes knowledge.

Rowell and Hong (2013) identified motivation as an amorphous, complex psychological term. However, Murayama et al. (2019) disagree, arguing its focus is clear. To drive self-efficacy to determine the value of knowledge to characterize the appropriate emotional response of rejection or acceptance. Loewenstein (1994), in his earlier writing, provides an anchor for this argument, noting that motivation spurs engagement with knowledge to make sense of it. An inability to comprehend knowledge can result in an individual becoming demotivated and disconnected from attaining the knowledge and subsequent learning (Cicekci & Sadik, 2019). On the other hand, individuals identifying the knowledge as aligned to their realities may exert more significant positive emotions and be motivated to identify with and achieve the benchmarks within the knowledge.

While the idea of motivation may seem to function independently, the literature suggests that motivation is grounded in expectancy-value beliefs (Doménech-Betoret et al., 2017). In other words, an individual's motivation toward knowledge attainment is influenced by, among other things, the expected value of attaining the knowledge (Boström & Palm, 2020). The expectancy-value, influenced by their lived experiences and self-efficacy, either positively or negatively determines the attainment and engagement with knowledge (Safavian, 2019). In other words, once individuals can calculate an optimistic forecast in areas including their competence, aspirations, and skills, they are more inclined to work towards demonstrating positive behaviour and feel motivated to exert efforts to achieve the standards.

However, students who struggle to identify what they perceive as positive expectancy value may not find themselves inclined to understand or align with particular knowledge becoming demotivated to exert effort in doing so (Doménech-Betoret et al., 2017). However, such a negative interface between students and educational knowledge is antithetical to the purpose of education and its terms (Fast, 2015). As Kahu and Nelson (2018) posit, the

acquisition of educational knowledge should represent positive expectancy value outcomes for students, enabling them to have a positive affective domain regarding learning and performance

2.3.1.3 Summary

This section has reviewed the literature on the ideas of the affective domain as a demarcation of how individuals value and characterize knowledge to produce an emotional response of self-efficacy and motivation, demonstrating how they have made sense of the information provided. The section also highlighted a paradox associated with students interface with some educational terms. An outcome that contradicts the established purpose of education and its practices causing some students to develop poor affective and emotional responses, including low self-efficacy and motivation, that adversely guides their engagement with educational terms of academic performance and academic success. The ideas around the affective domain provide a platform for the study to explore how a sample of Jamaican secondary students have gained and shaped their knowledge of academic performance and academic success. Based on observation and experience with the practice of the terms, the study investigates the emotions, feelings, and affective domains these students have taken toward understanding and interpreting the terms. How have these emotions influenced the type of expectations from their self-efficacy to their ability to achieve the benchmarks within definitions? The following section delves into data depicting secondary students actual low academic performance outputs, possibly influenced by environmental factors, including affective domains. The sections start the discourse using a global perspective and then zero in on the outputs of Jamaican secondary students.

2.4 Identifying poor academic performance and low academic success rates: unearthing the rationale behind the phenomenon

How students engage and identify with the traditional knowledge of academic performance determines their attitude toward teaching and learning from a behavioural,

emotional, and cognitive perspective (Delfino, 2019), significantly impacting and predicting their academic achievement (Wara et al., 2018). Internationally, the data shows that many secondary students leave school without attaining certification due to their attitude toward academic performance and academic success (OECD, 2013). The global trend shows that one in every four secondary school students finished school without attaining proficiency in at least one core subject area, which translates to about 13 million youth across 64 countries performing below the benchmark (OECD, 2016).

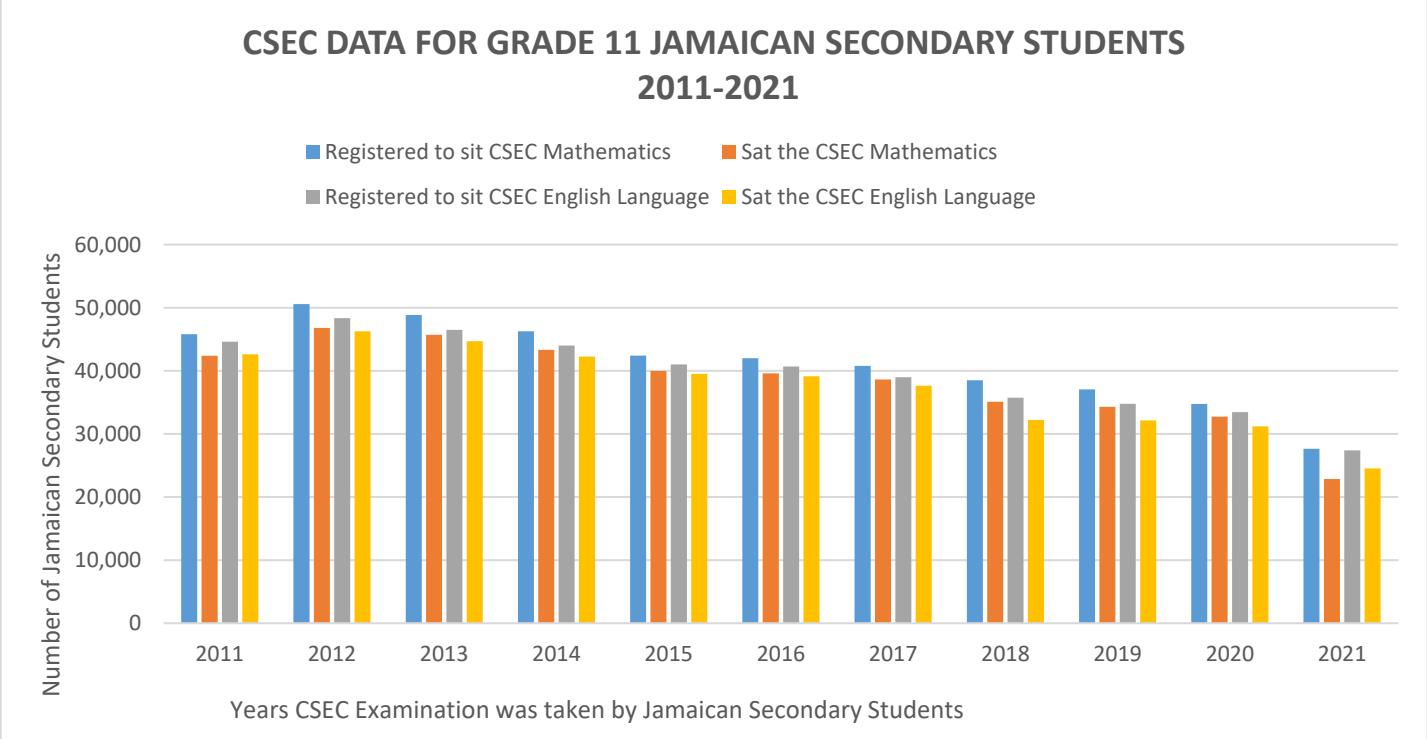
In 2019 the data showed a decline identifying that one in every five across OECD countries had not attained secondary education, and in some countries, 10% of the youth population were classified as being out of school, while a significant share of children left school early (OECD, 2021). These results have negative implications for students due to their failure of not having the requisite skills or accreditation, hindering them from opportunities in the labour market and an inability to enter higher academic institutions (Alexander, 2014; Mphale & Mhlauli, 2014).

Taking the interrogation of secondary students academic performance to the Caribbean region, according to Gordon (2019), within Jamaica, and by extension, the wider English-speaking Caribbean, an examination of the traditional causes of poor academic performance and low academic success rates shows a historical experience dominated by a pre-emancipation education system. Introspecting on the issue, Rush (2011) had earlier posited that one of the ways of remediating the academic performance of Caribbean students was to replace the traditional British colonial General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level [GCE O' Level] with a regional examination body and examination that reflected and catered to the needs and realities of Caribbean students. The outcome was to provide greater equity, representation, and relevance for all students, not just a few capable of passing these examinations, while providing

a new direction in the secondary education system within the English-speaking Caribbean region (Griffith, 2009).

However, despite the extension and modernization of the inherited educational paradigm, the number of secondary students attaining passes in their matriculating examination is troubling. Taking the analysis to a micro country level, the data extracted from the Overseas Examination Council's Grade Distribution by Territory data for 2011-2021 [as shown in Figure 2.1] shows a consistently significant number of Jamaican secondary students failing to attain passes, especially in the core matriculating subjects of English Language and Mathematics.

Figure 2. 1 *CSEC results for Jamaican secondary students 2011-2021*

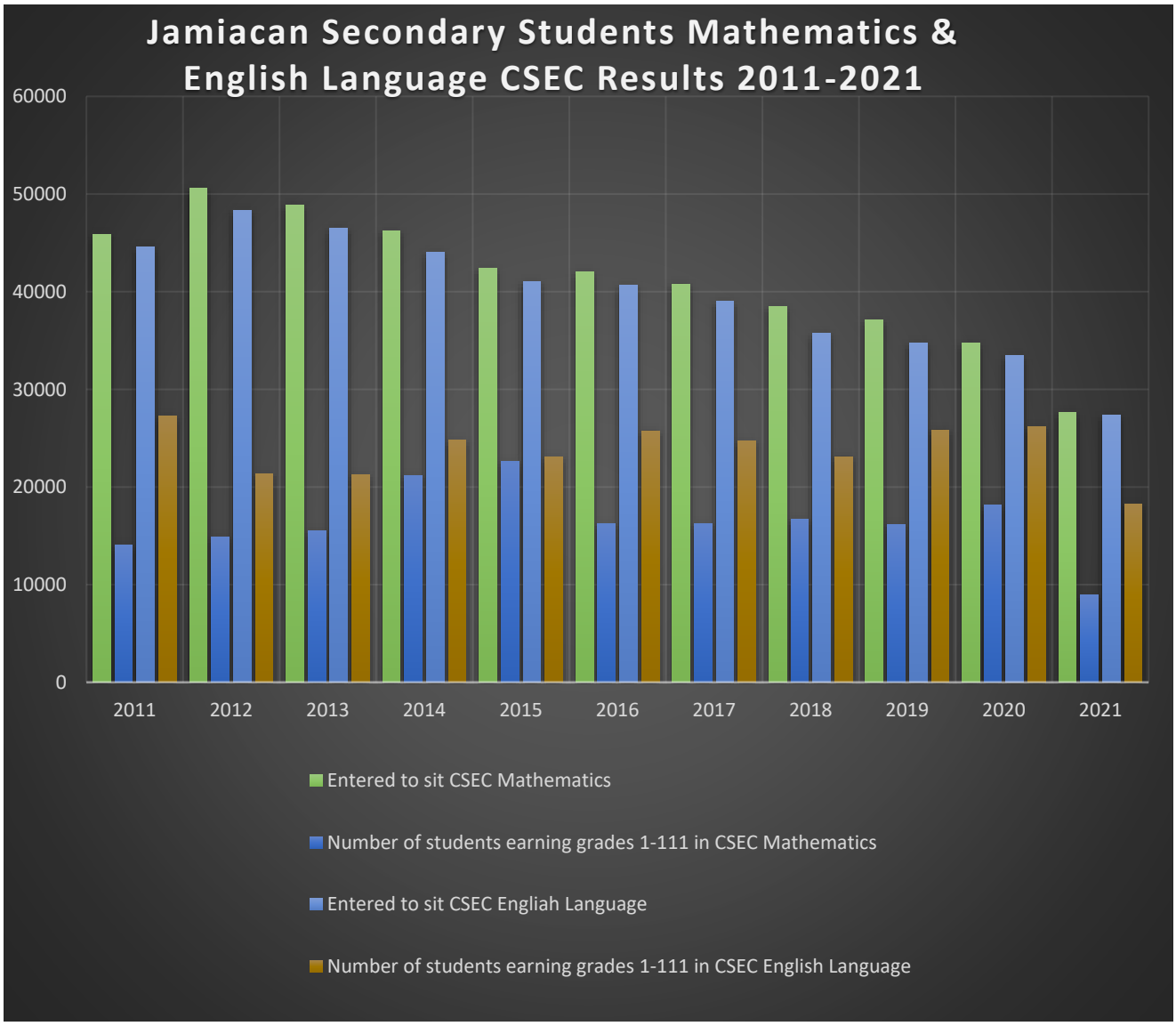


The data shows a trend in the steadily consistent decline in the number of students registered to sit core subject examinations of Mathematics and English Language versus the actual number of students sitting the examinations over the years. The data points to a growing number of secondary students annually not attaining passes in these core subjects and leaving

school without receiving the certification needed to enter tertiary university or gain suitable employment.

The situation of high numbers of students leaving school without certification is further exacerbated as identified in an analysis of data (see Fig. 2.2) and the number of registered students sitting the examination versus the number of students earning the achievement scores of grades 1-111.

Figure 2. 2 *Jamaican secondary students CSEC results in Mathematics and English Language between 2011-2021*



The data shows a consistent trend of high numbers of students being registered to sit the examinations in various subjects and low numbers of those students earning passing grades in these examinations. Although not captured in this table, the data also highlights another key set of numbers adding to the existing cohort of students failing to attain academic performance; those students who, though registered, do not sit the examinations, thus not obtaining any score. All these students represent the significantly high numbers of secondary pupils who fail to attain academic performance benchmarks and subsequently fail to achieve academic success in post-secondary school (Hall, 2010).

Two other significant trends identified within the data are the annual reduction in the number of secondary students registered to sit these examinations and the consistent reduction in the number of students passing the examinations. This situation may have resulted from varied factors, including the restrictive screening policy adopted by some secondary schools to exclude students from being registered to sit the CSEC examinations. The strategy seeks only to register students deemed most likely to attain passing grade scores, especially in Mathematics and English (Gordon, 2019; Ministry of Education, 2014).

Opinions have varied in the literature on the possible reasons behind secondary students poor academic performance and subsequent low post-secondary academic success rates. Authors, including Ajjawi et al. (2020), have argued that the reasons lie in how secondary students have experienced and made sense of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success. In this regard, the poor academic outputs can be interpreted as students comprehending the meanings in a manner that has resulted in them developing a poor attitude and seeing little to no expectancy value in the terms. In other words, these students interpretation of the meanings of the terms has made them feel disinterested and demotivated in attempting to align with or achieve the benchmarks in the terms (Reid, 2011). A situation compounded by their inability to see the terms as meaningful to pursue their aspirations.

For some students, the poor attitude towards the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success stems from seeing the terms as sitting outside their identity. This is perhaps due to the ideas that converge to shape the terms, which have made them seem un-relatable to students (Flutter & Ruddock, 2004). The misalignment creates a disconnect between students and key concepts in education (Segedin, 2012), an exceptionally prevalent phenomenon amongst male students who interpret these meanings as not identifying with their ideas of achievement and academic success (Figueroa, 2004). In the end, they disconnect from such socially accepted meanings, as demonstrated by their performance in the classroom (Watson-Williams, 2011). Ironically, this contrasts with those peers who adopt positive attitudes towards the meanings and strive to achieve the standards; unfortunately, they end up in a similar fate failing to achieve the benchmark.

Other researchers, including Crossfield and Bourne (2018), opine that the situation results from a lack of understanding of mitigating environmental factors, socio-economic conditions of families, among other factors, and their influencing effects on a student's readiness, capacity, academic identity, and experience to perform academically. Alternate suggestions on the rationale put forward also include the issue of the weak language skills of students (Poyser, 2015; Thompson, 2011), which can inhibit them from performing at acceptable academic levels.

Ultimately, the reality is that these students have failed to withstand the various environmental factors to be able to achieve the required grades and certification to enter tertiary institutions or obtain good-paying jobs (Pantin, 1996). Eventually unable to make meaningful self-development (Schleicher, 2018) or positively contribute to the country's development and function effectively in the global economy (Gordon, 2019). Identifying individualistic strategic rhetoric of student traits or behaviour as a source of student failure only marginalizes students

who may be struggling and negatively influences their motivation and self-efficacy, resulting in persistent failing (Tinto, 2017).

In summary, the section explored the data around secondary students academic performance output painting a picture of the global level of high levels of failure. The phenomenon is replicated in the academic performance of Jamaican secondary students, as evident in the CSEC data from 2011-2020, which shows significant numbers of students failing to achieve academic performance and academic success standards. The possible reasons behind the situation were investigated through the literature outlining the different environmental forces, including issues relating to the affective domain and its impact on knowledge perception, that may have contributed to the current academic performance state. The literature shows that adult stakeholders have been the dominant voice contributing to the discourse on high levels of poor students' academic performance and academic success. The ensuing section delves into the student's voice as an alternative source to possibly understand the phenomenon of high numbers of poor secondary students academic performance and low academic success rates.

2.5 The student voice: a platform for hearing students views on academic performance and academic success

There are many reasons why secondary students have negative responses to the terms academic performance and success (Cavilla, 2017; Mphale & Mhlauli, 2014). Although not an exhaustive list of reasons, a few have focused on issues such as lack of learning resources (Livumbaze & Achoka, 2017), poor socioeconomic status (Browman et al., 2022), and the poor interface between individuals and educational knowledge of academic performance and academic success (Kahu & Nelson, 2018). Nevertheless, according to Gentilucci (2004), all these explanations have failed to produce a satisfactory theoretical explanation for the phenomenon. This may be because the discourse on student failure has not focused on the

essential voice of students (Bolshakova et al., 2011) to gain the valuable perspectives it holds (Brasof & Glenside, 2017). Instead, critics contend that adults, through platforms including educational policy, have dominated the discourse, failing to resolve the phenomenon, which has continued to be a concern (Al-Zoubi & Younes, 2015).

For authors such as Cook-Sather et al. (2015), understanding and resolving poor students' academic performance involves hearing from students to ascertain their perspectives. The approach provides a first-hand view of how students emotions assist in comprehending knowledge (Solomonides & Martin, 2008) and identifying solutions to problems they face (Hagay & Baram-Tsabari, 2012). The idea that students possess perspectives on issues within education that directly affects them and, therefore, should be heard (Halliday et al., 2018) is a notion underpinned by the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child 1989, Article 12. The article grants children, capable of forming their own views, the right to express those views freely on all matters affecting the child and be given due consideration according to the child's age and maturity (Assembly, 1989). As supported by the literature and adapted by this thesis, the concept of student voice is viewed as a form of social justice (McMahon et al., 2012) that allows students to express their values and opinions and understand their identities and experiences (Shafer, 2016). Thereby providing for open and inclusive discourse and the opportunity to learn from students (Quaglia, 2014). The acceptance of this idea is an acknowledgment that students are an ideal source to help to broaden our understanding of the concepts through their eyes (Flutter, 2004) and could create new educational terms and processes that students find less challenging to align with and adapt (Logan & Skamp, 2013).

In concluding the section, it is evident that while the literature recognizes and positions the voice of adults in the discourse on academic performance and academic success, it is evident that there is support within the literature for hearing from students. Additionally, within the literature, there is an acknowledgment that students can serve as a source of knowledge

using their perspectives and lived experiences within education to identify solutions that have eluded the discourse on issues, including the study's phenomenon. While accepting the significance of these voice as an origin to retrieve the information, it is also essential to understand how students have gone about framing and creating their perspectives on issues they are engaged around. What factors have influenced how they understand the phenomenon, and how has this influenced their interpretation of these meanings?

2.5.1 Student voice as social constructionism

The position on student voice adopted by this thesis acknowledges that it is grounded in a sociocultural perspective of knowledge construction shaped by different environments (Furman & Barton, 2006). The process allows for knowledge formation from the different interactions through narratives, symbols, and social practices (McLaren, 2015), in students' different social spaces, including school (Paul, 2005 in Laux, 2018). In other words, the knowledge students express is shaped by the social engagements in the various environments that students occupy (Au, 1998). As (McLaren, 2015) asserts, to comprehend the concept of the student's voice properly, it is essential to understand that its constructs originate from a universe of shared meaning in the community or culture within which the dialogue occurs. Within this space, experiences, realities, and the goals of individuals collide and converge to form ideas that give meaning to realities to form the knowledge of the occupant of the space (Polly et al., 2017).

In summary, the section highlighted the idea of student voice as a platform to engage with students' views regarding ideas of academic performance and academic success. The section also investigated student voice as a social construct that operates within different environments to shape an individual's knowledge. The emphasis within the literature to include student voice in the discourse to provide their views on education issues strengthens the rationale of this thesis, which aims to identify Jamaican secondary students perspectives on the

phenomenon of high levels of secondary students failings. While plugging the literary sparsity of students views on the phenomenon, the thesis will explore how social environments may have helped shape these perspectives and subsequent behaviours.

2.6 Chapter Summary

The chapter explored the definitions of the educational terms' academic performance and academic success from the historical and current, socially accepted understandings that have been practiced. The discussions delved into the mixed responses across the literature regarding the benchmarks, high-grade scores, core subjects, mastery of subject content, post-secondary tertiary attendance, and high-paying employment that have shaped these definitions.

It explored key themes from the literature, including the function of the affective domain as a platform through which individuals demonstrate their comprehension and attitude towards knowledge and the impact this has on emotions, specifically attitude of motivation and self-efficacy. In addition, the chapter also explored the role of social environment interactions and their discussions around valuing, organizing, and characterizing the key concepts of mastery of content, high grades, and post-secondary achievement that underpins the terms in shaping these perspectives and behaviour.

Interestingly, although the literature shows the dominance of adult perspectives in shaping the traditional definitions and practice of educational terms, the volume of literary writings highlighting the contribution of secondary students to educational issues is sparse. Not much literary evidence exists of secondary students views to aid in possibly providing an alternate understanding of the phenomenon to rectify the situation. The gap provides an opportunity to explore the phenomenon from students perspectives using a pilot study, using a set of key research questions

2.6.1. Pilot study Research Questions

1. What do students understand of the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success, and how have they made sense of these definitions?
2. How do students make sense of the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success?
3. What are students perspectives of academic performance and academic success?

In exploring the phenomenon through these research questions and the methodological approach set out in the following chapter, the study hopes to make original contributions to practice.

Chapter 3 Pilot Study

3.1 Research questions for the pilot

The literature shows a gap in the voice that have participated in the conversations on understanding the rationale behind the high levels of poor secondary students academic performance outputs and academic success rates. This study aims to contribute to plugging the gap by engaging with secondary students to get their views on the issues and identify possible suggestions to facilitate understanding these outputs. The study recognizes that not much research focuses on student voice as an important construct, hence the need to include this voice as a part of the discourse on pertinent education-related issues. Since the study focuses on hearing from students, it was important to use data collection methods that participants would find easy to use in projecting their voice. It was also important to design research questions that students could easily understand and provide their opinions. A pilot study provided a platform to test these matters ahead of the main study.

The pilot study provided an opportunity to test the research methods with students to ensure that they understood and were comfortable working with them. It also allowed the researcher to engage with photovoice and audio journaling methods that were never previously used. Additionally, the research questions needed to be tested to ensure students could understand what was being asked to answer appropriately. The following were the research questions designed and provided to the sample participants to provide their answers

1. How does your school define a student who is performing academically?
2. How do students feel their school talks about students who are academically successful?
3. If students had a chance to define academic performance and academic success, what would it look like?

3.2 Implementing the Pilot Study

The secondary school selected for the pilot was based on its proximity to the researcher's work area. Its location is in the northeastern section of the island of Jamaica. In addition, it was selected as the entrance examinations results for students entering the school are generally below the academic average. As highlighted in the 2011 National Education Inspectorate School Inspection Report, there had been slight improvements in areas of academic output. In fact, many of the school's population display a range of computational and compositional weaknesses and struggle to reason through simple mathematical calculations and consistent declines in English, resulting in poor academic performances in the matriculating grade 11 examinations (Inspectorate, 2011).

The pilot study and its ethical considerations were reviewed per the University Research Ethics Committee's procedures. All ethical guidelines for the pilot study were presented to the school's Principal, the participants, and their parents/guardians in the respective meetings. In each session, participants were informed of the purpose of the study, its specifically approved rules, processes, and ethical procedures as required by the University Research Ethics committee to be explained (see Appendix 1). Having attained the school's Principal's consent and the agreement of the school's Guidance Counsellor to assist with the process, the participants invited to participate in the pilot were males and females from the grade 10 cohort.

Of the seven students who expressed interest, three students provided completed parental and consented forms and were, therefore, the only ones allowed to provide data. Two students chose audio journaling, while one selected photovoice to present their data over two weeks.

Table 1 *Student participants for the pilot study*

Pseudonym for students participating in the pilot	**Data Collection Method**
Student # 1	Photovoice
Student # 2	Audio Journaling
Student # 3	Audio Journaling

Participants' feedback from the pilot expressed satisfaction with photo voice and audio journal research methods noting that they found the methods to be novel and user-friendly in providing their information. The findings from the pilot study are set out below:

3.2.1 Findings of the suitability of research questions and methodologies

During the one-on-one interviews, the pilot's participants expressed concerns regarding the phrasing and language used in the questions. In their estimation, the questions proved challenging to comprehend and had to be read several times to be understood. Participants contributed to reframing the questions, which were agreed to be easier for students to understand. Regarding the data collection methods, the participants reported the cameras and the audio recorders as easy to use to provide their data. The following section provides evidence of their use of the data collection methods and identifies how they interpreted the pilot questions.

3.2.1.1 Research Question A: What do students understand of the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success, and how have they made sense of these definitions?

Participants' comments about the original research questions reframed the original question. The new question utilized more competency-appropriate language and was succinct.

Reframed Research Question A (part A): "How does your school define a student who is performing academically."

Figure 3. 1 *Image of student leader whose appearance depicts that of an academically performing student*

Photovoice response participant # 1: To explain this image (Figure 3.1), the participant explained that an academically performing student was a student who paid attention, was well-groomed, was not involved in sports, and was always reading their textbooks. These students are primarily found in the top stream of the grade cohort and are commended for good mathematics, English, and science work. These students are part of the student leadership team or are involved in other non-sports activities. These are the students identified as obtaining suitable employment in the future.

Audio Journal response participant # 2: "In school, academically performing students are those who are self-motivated, get good grades, are independent, believe in themselves."

Audio Journal response participant # 3: "Successful students are prepared, organized, have a positive attitude towards learning, they are good at something, not everything they believe in themselves."

Reframed Research Question A (part B): "How do students feel about how their school talks about students who are academically successful"?

Figure 3. 2 *Image of a shrub representing the different impacts of teacher care on students' academic performance and academic success*

Photovoice response participant # 1: During the interview, participant #2 responded with an image of a shrub (Figure 3.2). Like the shrub that has one root, yet one side of it has green leaves, perhaps because it was watered more than the other side or shown much more attention, while the other side of the same shrub, the leaves are dry with brown branches that are withering, which may suggest less watering or other factors on that side of the shrub may be preventing growth. The treatment of the flowers reflects the treatment some students receive in school. Implicit labels ascribed to students categorize them into 'dunce students (not academically proficient) or 'bright students.' The categorization exemplifies how schools define academic performance and success. While some students receive love, care, and appreciation from teachers, this may be because of how the students carry themselves, or they are 'bright already,' so they are shown extra attention and placed at the top, or the 'bright,' stream of the year group by themselves.

Audio Journal response participant # 2: "It is about students being labelled by teachers putting them into categories those who are 'bright' [academically proficient] and those who are 'dunces' [not academically proficient]. Those students who do better and get high grades are better off and show more care, attention, and love, and are in the higher-grade stream by

themselves away from us dunce ones who get low grades, always failing the tests we are not shown as much love and care as those students."

Audio Journal response participant # 3: "Teachers calling some students successful because they are always passing the exams, and not calling those students who get low grades successful even though they did better on the test than the last time all because dem nuh get high grades [they have not received high grades], even when they try their best, all de think bout is grades, grades, grades [all they think about are grades, grades, grades], this can affect their future as they believe that they are good at nothing, good for nothing. They then grow to hate the teacher and feel negatively towards them and the subject they teach, and other subjects are well and start doing badly [poorly] in other subjects and fail."

3.2.1.2 Research Question 2: How do secondary students think the definitions of academic performance and academic success should be phrased?

Reframed research question 2: If students had a chance to define academic performance and academic success, what would it look like?

Figure 3. 3 *Image of a student footballer representing student's perception of who is considered a non-academically performing student*

Photovoice response participant # 1: whose photo voice image in Figure 3.3, noted that students are learning subjects in class at school but also learn things in sports, the practical

areas that are important for entering the work world. Not because someone is a footballer means that they cannot be successful in life; they perform well on the field, and the school wins, and they go on to sign for big clubs and make money and are successful.

Audio Journal response participant # 2: "Treat all students equally, love them the same way, care for their talents even when they fail the subjects; the same student can be excellent in practical subjects like sewing, mechanics, cooking, track, and field. Not only maths and English should be considered important subjects, but students also learn other things".

Audio Journal response participant # 2: "The same mechanic student can leave school and set up a mechanic shop for vehicles and end up hiring the student who was bright in mathematics and so on because him cannot find work and a di mechanic entrepreneur hire him, suh we not to scorn any student and what they do we never know what will happen in the future" (a student who in secondary school is classified as a poor academically performing student can after graduating from secondary school establish an auto mechanic repair store and his employees could be students who were considered high academic performers in school. Perhaps the academically inclined student is unable to find employment and, therefore, must rely on his poor academically performing student, who is now an entrepreneur, for employment. Situations like this show why no student is to be ridiculed for their academic capacities, as there is no certainty in the future).

Those students who selected the audio journal method produced audio recordings of their responses, providing insight into their understanding of the research questions. Their responses showed that they understood the language, tone, and construction of the questions to allow them to formulate relevant responses and give insights into their thoughts on the research phenomenon.

3.2.2 Findings of the pilot: suitability of the research questions

One of the findings of the pilot was that engaging students as co-researchers (Padilla-Petry & Miño Puigcercós, 2022) allowed for doing research with as well as on students as a means of having students use their lived experiences to facilitate an understanding of the phenomenon from students perspective (Kelly et al., 2020). Additionally, using students as co-researchers makes students feel empowered by having their views contribute to the research (Holland et al., 2010). The approach also allowed the framing of the research questions to be cognizant of the students language comprehension abilities to write the questions so that students could understand and interpret the questions. In the end, the pilot was able to assist, through the involvement of students, in contributing to perspectives and lived experiences (Reimer & McLean, 2015) that aided in the framing of research questions and validating the use of data collection methods that were more students oriented as a result of using students as co-researchers (Taylor et al., 2020). The pilot highlighted that:

(a) there were too many questions, which could lead to disinterest and poor or little data, (b) the language used was outside the realm of comprehension of these students, and (c) there was a need to reduce the number of questions to prevent participants from becoming anxious and bored with the research questions. In the end, the research questions, as influenced by the pilot, were reframed as follows:

1. How have Jamaican secondary students understood the traditional socially accepted definitions of the terms academic performance and academic success?
2. How have Jamaican secondary students made sense of their understanding of the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success?
3. How do Jamaican secondary students believe the system should define academic performance and academic success?

3.2.3 Findings of the pilot: suitability of the data collection methods

The pilot was also helpful in determining the suitability of the identified data collection methods; photovoice, audio journaling, and one-on-one interviews for the study. The aim was to ensure that the methods were suitable for students and would enable them to be comfortable providing data to answer the research questions. The pilot participants reported that the data collection methods were user-friendly and comfortable to work with, thus making it easy to provide the data to answer the research questions.

3.2.4 Limitations highlighted by the pilot

There was a limitation identified from the pilot's data collection process, which could be proved helpful to the actual study of the need to allocate another research method of focus group using a storyboard approach would have allowed for sharing and cross-sharing and analysis of responses, without identifying contributors, to deepen the introspection and analysis of the data collected. The inclusion would have possibly facilitated the further refining of the individual and collective perspectives of the research questions.

3.3 Chapter Summary

In summarizing the chapter, the literature pointed to a gap in the discourse of the limited or absent contribution of the concept of student voice on the high numbers of students failing academically. The pilot's sample of secondary students demonstrated through their responses to the questions using the novel data collection methods that they understood the phenomenon and could provide their perspectives. The pilot study identified that the data collection methods were suitable and facilitated the reframing of the research questions, thereby shaping the methodology of the main study.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Overview of the chapter

The study uses the identified research methods, guided by the pilot study, that will allow a sample of rural Jamaican secondary students to provide their views on the study's phenomenon, using the following predominant research questions emanating through the literature and refined by the pilot:

1. How have Jamaican secondary students understood the traditional socially accepted definition terms of academic performance and academic success?
2. How have they made sense of the traditional academic performance and academic success definitions?
3. How do Jamaican secondary students believe the system should define academic performance and academic success?

The expectation is that this will allow for the sampled students views to be heard and possibly unearth an understanding of the rationale behind the phenomenon and possible alternate solutions not yet identified to help understand and address the issue. The study uses a grounded approach in a social constructivist, interpretivist paradigm to understand how these students constructed their knowledge of the phenomenon. As well as identify the role environmental factors and their lived experiences may have played in this process. How do these students know what they know of the knowledge around the phenomenon and its epistemological positioning? Additionally, how have they learned these things about the knowledge and its ontological philosophy? The interest in unpacking these processes has guided the study's exploration of the ideas behind epistemology and ontology of knowledge, the research data collection method, and analytical approaches, as outlined in the chapter.

The chapter continues by setting out the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the study and presenting the research design and associated qualitative research methods of photovoice, audio journals, one-on-one interviews, and focus group discussions while outlaying the research analysis approach and concludes with the study's ethical issues for consideration.

4.2 Understanding epistemology and ontology of academic performance and academic success

Education research involves unearthing and exploring the truth of knowledge. Achieving the aim of such exploration requires understanding the origin of knowledge acquisition. The literature has long debated whether knowledge construction is objective or subjective. Carter (2017) defines epistemology as the truth of knowledge, which requires an understanding of the nature of consciousness, what constitutes it, and its extent; in other words, what we know of knowledge (Steup, 2005).

While acknowledging that it is possible to acquire knowledge that is true to the objects of our knowledge from the standpoint of observation (Scott, 2017), knowledge has an element of social construction; some realities are built independently of the human experience (Galbin, 2014). In contrast, according to objectivist theory, knowledge reflects the nature of the world rather than the process that created them. Thus, knowledge is independent of and not influenced by the researcher's personality, experiences, beliefs, or values (Payne & Payne, 2004). However, subjectivity proponents, including Hofweber (2018), contend that much of the knowledge we have come to know and accept is the environment(s) we occupy and the social interactions between persons in these spaces. These social engagements contribute to creating the knowledge we accept; therefore, understanding this process allows us to appreciate better the reality of how we come to know what we know and take as knowledge (Hofweber, 2018; McLeod, 2019).

Critics have queried the traditional epistemology of academic performance and academic success, arguing that current understanding has excluded students views, competencies, and abilities (Stoltzfus, 2018), with adults' realities shaping the traditional perspectives on these concepts (Green, 2013). This situation has created subjective thoughts projected as objective evaluation at the expense of students creativity and interests (Lahey, 2014), limiting knowledge of the terms (DeFur & Korinek, 2010). In light of this, this study uses a subjective frame, adopting the idea that the construction of knowledge is a process influenced by the perspectives, values, and social experiences of individuals; thus, as Benner (2019) notes, providing a lens through which to explore the possible alternate rationale and approaches to address the social phenomenon

4.2.1 Understanding constructivism and social constructionism theories

The next step in the research process is determining how and where this knowledge construction occurs. Within the literature, the two dominant yet often considered interchangeable viewpoints around the construction of knowledge focus on constructivism and social constructionism (Rob & Rob, 2018). Social constructivism sees knowledge as generated from interactions between persons as they share their experiences and ideas (Shah, 2019) and assumes that learners play an active role in constructing their meaning based on experiences (Brau, 2020).

On the other hand, social constructionism argues that knowledge construction occurs from individuals' interaction with their own world or experiences and involves interactions with other individuals within various social environments (Jha, 2012; Lynch, 2016). In these social interactions, individuals converge and interact to share their experiences, ideas, thoughts, and realities, morphed and sifted to create an agreed epistemology (Gergen, 1992). Social constructionism provides an opportunity to explain how the process of collective social interactions, and the various activities, including the exchange of ideas, views, and values, may

have influenced the creation of perspectives of secondary students on the traditional terms of academic performance and academic success. The ideas of social constructionism, with its premise of knowledge construction as a product of different social environments, provide an opportunity to explore, within the context of this study, how secondary students may have shaped their own perspectives in the different social environments they occupy. The approach offers the opportunity to understand how through their social interactions, students come to make meanings from their lived experiences, influenced by culture, to create their own understanding and perspective, or interpretation, of the world (Andrews, 2012; Van der Walt, 2020).

4.2.1.1. Interpretivism

Understanding the interpretivist paradigm acknowledges how one sees reality (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Interpretivism helps understand how individuals make meaning of their world and socially construct knowledge (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020). Interpretivism emphasizes the idea of knowledge construction as a subjective process involving multiple realities with varying interpretations; it also focuses on how individuals make sense of the world and how their behaviour can be understood (Pulla & Carter, 2018). Inherent in interpretivism is a reflexive nature that allows participants' perspectives, not the researcher's subjective views, to emanate from the research (Charmaz, 2017b). Thus the social phenomenon studied is explored through the eyes of the research participants within the context they operate (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The aim is to provide authenticity to the research process and surety that the study will understand what the participants seek to convey via the data analysis (Palaganas et al., 2017; Patnaik, 2013).

This study applies an interpretivism paradigm to its social constructionism frame to explore how a sample of 12 rural Jamaican secondary students have made sense of their understanding of the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success.

How these understandings have influenced their behaviour guides the analysis and interpretation of the different responses provided to ascertain their perspectives of the definitions.

4.3 Rationale for methodology and the research approach

Providing a platform that would enable a sample of Jamaican secondary students to voice their perspectives of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success to understand the study's phenomenon guided the chosen research methodology. Having explored the epistemological and ontological process that informs knowledge creation, the study's next phase is to determine the philosophical principles guiding the investigation of the trend (Machlup, 2014). The process aids in influencing the appropriate research design to guide the thoughts about the development of knowledge (Al-Ababneh, 2020). The ideas purported within grounded theory of knowledge as a social construct grounded in individual experience determined by their social environments (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021) fit within the study's social constructionism and interpretivism paradigm.

4.3.1 Grounded theory

Grounded theory lends much to a study utilizing a social constructionism interpretivism paradigm with its qualitative research approach that aims to uncover the meanings behind individuals' perspectives grounded in people's social actions, interactions, and experiences. According to Chun Tie et al. (2019), grounded theory aims to generate theory grounded in data gathered and analyzed through the research process (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Grounded theory provides explicit, sequential guidelines which use a rigorous inductive research process to collect data (Charmaz, 2009; Chun Tie et al., 2019; Corbin, 2017). The theory offers an opportunity to analyze data to unearth the findings that accurately represent the real world of individuals. However, while grounded theory provides for the research participants' data

collection process, its offshoot, constructivist grounded theory (Gardner et al., 2012), provides an even better design for student-centered qualitative research.

4.3.1.1 Constructivist grounded theory design

While labelled as a misnomer (Glaser & Strauss, 2017), constructivist grounded theory has been a helpful extension of grounded theory (Goldkuhl & Cronholm, 2010). According to Charmaz (2017b, p. 34), 'the constructivist version locates the research process and product in historical, social, and situational conditions, adopting methodological strategies such as coding, memo-writing, and theoretical sampling; while .. integrating methodological innovations in qualitative inquiry.' The move has created a research theory that embraces participants' engagement in research beyond data generation to interrogate accepted ontology and epistemologies (Mills et al., 2006). Such probing is especially relevant in a theory that sees reality and truth as not singular but multiple constructs, thus asserting the multiplicity of ontological positions within knowledge and, by extension, knowledge itself (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

Diversity in knowledge fits into the aims of constructivist grounded theory, therefore not excluding but including all perspectives in the knowledge construction's epistemological process (Charmaz, 2017a, 2017b). As Cohen and Crabtree (2006) note, constructivist grounded theory aims to create knowledge that gives equal opportunity to reflect the diversity of realities within social environments. The arguments within constructivist grounded theory are ideal for this thesis. The theory provides the platform to hear secondary students' views on the phenomenon, which has been missing from the discourse.

4.3.1.2 Interpretivism and Constructivist Grounded theory

Accepting that truth and reality occur in multiple ways suggests that gathering and evaluating information comes from multiple perspectives. The idea that knowledge is

numerous and should be collected and evaluated from multiple perspectives requires an appropriate process in which to do so. An interpretive paradigm offers such an opportunity. The model allows for an accurate understanding and interpretation of participants' multiple information, language, and experiences (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Applying an interpretive approach to constructivist grounded theory allows for an understanding of the lived realities gained in diverse social spaces (Pulla & Carter, 2018). Ultimately providing clarity to individuals' social realities and perspectives (Schulz, 2016) and their influence on their attitude toward knowledge.

The application of a critical inquiry to the constructivist grounded theory underpinned by a social constructionism interpretivist paradigm affords a chance to investigate the social phenomenon (Flick, 2017a; Roof et al., 2017). The approach also helps determine the research methods, shapes the research questions, data collection, and the analytical approaches for the study. Understanding the research paradigm sets the stage for the research methodology to be selected to examine the particular area of research interest (Polit & Beck, 2008). As Lynette (2018) states, the nature of the research paradigm determines the research design, which influences the data collection and research methodology. In this regard, the research design caters to the research participants' needs while ensuring rigor and adherence to the research's ethical principles (Patnaik, 2013).

4.3.2 Research design

Accepting the methodological rationale that provides a critical inquiry framework requires research methods capable of unearthing authentic and rational perspectives of individuals (Kuntz & Pickup, 2016). Research methods should allow for discovering authentic participants' arguments without inhibition, preferably using small population samples and applying in-depth qualitative methods.

4.3.2.1 Convenience Sampling

The study used a convenience sampling technique to identify the study's population from the larger school population. In this instance, the study identified the school as an institution whose students entrance examinations are below the academic average. This type of non-probability sampling to identify the study participants relies on using persons who are 'convenient' as a source for data collection (Lavrakas, 2008). However, convenience sampling was applied to the larger school population to determine the study's population. The approach was adopted due to the Covid19 restrictions that saw only limited numbers of students on the school's compound at any given time. The study, therefore, had to rely on students who were at hand and interested in participating in the research at specific times of the school day.

The sample selected was based on the participant's experience, which enabled them to answer the research questions (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). The understanding also guided students willingness to participate in studies (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Although having an inherent bias due to Covid19 restrictions on engaging with students, the sampling technique suited the study. In other words, it suited the aim of understanding the phenomenon from the perspectives of the under-researched population of secondary students (Shorten & Moorley, 2014).

4.3.2.2 The secondary school sampled

The study's focus on exploring the phenomenon from the students makes a plausible case for using a case study approach using one rural secondary school. The secondary institution used in the actual study was not the same as the one used in the pilot study. The rural government-operated secondary school was chosen based on the low academic average entrance scores of students entering the institution (Inspectorate, 2011, 2017a). The study did not aim to emphasize rural versus urban secondary school students' understanding and interpretation of academic performance and academic success. Such a comparative approach

was also not taken to collect or analyze the data retrieved; the study's findings offer no comment in this regard. While appreciating, based on the official data, the phenomenon was prevalent across different schools in Jamaica; only one rural secondary school whose population met the criteria was sampled for this study.

4.3.2.2.1 Background on students entry into secondary school

In Jamaica, all Primary level students sit an exit examination formerly known as Grade Six Achievement Tests (GSAT), which focuses on testing students in Mathematics, English, Science, Social Studies, and Communication Tasks (Trines, 2019). In 2019 the examination was replaced by the Primary Exit Profile (PEP), which emphasizes assessing critical thinking and communication (Youth, 2015). Among other variables, placement in secondary school is determined by the student's academic performance as demarcated by composite scores earned on the tests (Youth, 2015). Students earning high-grade scores are placed in high academic achieving schools, and average to low academic performances are filtered throughout the remaining high schools (Youth, 2015).

The secondary school selected for the study comprises students whose academic performance in the Primary exit examinations is generally below the academic benchmark standards. The school's overall effectiveness has been ranked as barely satisfactory (Inspectorate, 2017a). Many of its student population fail to improve academic performance as they progress in school, and only a tiny percentage matriculate to CSEC (exit secondary school examination) standards (Inspectorate, 2017b). All these factors pointed to a population having experienced poor academic performance and expectations of low academic success in post-secondary school. Additionally, the school was selected based on a prior relationship with the

institution's Dean of Discipline[1]. The relationship made establishing contact with the school's leadership and obtaining approval to conduct the study more accessible.

4.3.2.3 Sampling of students

Due to restrictions imposed because of the Covid19 pandemic, students were not at school full-time; they only attended the school on a phased basis for internal examinations. This situation resulted in significant alteration of the original plans for the study, including the selection process, the distribution of equipment to facilitate data collection, the approach to sensitization, and the process of conducting one-on-one interviews. The initial approach was to extend a general invitation to the entire Grade 10 [ages 15 -16 years] cohort from the office of the Dean of Discipline.

It is important to note that the study did not emphasize age and gender in determining the sample of students. The study did not use an age-specific criterion; instead, emphasis was placed on a grade-specific criterion, as students could be of different ages yet be in the same year group. Pulling the sample from a specific grade meant that all the participants would have completed three prior secondary education years of experiencing low academic performance and would have been exposed to feelings of academic failure from their low Primary level examination results.

The study did not emphasize gender as the data on the high numbers of academic failings and high numbers of low success rates were not gender specific. Instead, the data projects

[1] Deans of Discipline are mandated to, among other things, provide intervention for students disciplinary issues; develop appropriate programmes to promote positive behaviour; monitor, develop and implement student behavioural contracts; keep a log of students attendance and truancy issues; communicate disciplinary concerns to parents and staff; and to ensure the overall safety of the school premises Youth, M. o. E. a. (2015). *High School Deans of Discipline Upgrade Skills*.

academic failure across genders. Although the official highlighted the difference in performance between genders, this study did not adopt a gender approach in ascertaining students' perspectives on the phenomenon. Instead, the data was collected across gender, providing an opportunity to hear from all genders.

While not establishing gender or age specifications, the study did establish a criterion for participation that emphasized students' current educational performance. The issue of students' current academic performance was considered a basis for extending an invitation to participate in the study. Students were invited once it was established that they were producing below-average academic performance results. Participants who volunteered to participate in the study were students who consistently scored below the school's academic average in standardized tests.

. In getting participants for the study, the initial approach of extending invitations to the grade 10 student cohort had to be discarded due to the Covid19 pandemic affecting the island of Jamaica. A novel approach had to be used as the school was moved from a face-to-face operation to a mixed teaching-learning modality. The switch to online school meant that only small batches of students were allowed on campus simultaneously. Many students did not show up for school when they were required. The situation resulted in the research having a smaller population of grade 10 students from the lower tier of the cohort to extend invitations to participate. In the end, the school's Guidance Counsellor identified some students from the specific group to extend invitations to participate.

The Covid19 restrictions created additional criteria for participants' selection as students desirous of participating in the study had to have a personal mobile Android cellular phone that would enable them to take photographs or do voice recording can send the images or recordings to the researcher and be used to conduct the one-on-one interview post the

submission of photographs or audio recordings. The requirement was implemented due to the prohibition placed by the school's administrator and the Covid19 restrictions that limited person-to-person contact. Thus, the equipment, camera, and audio recorders previously sourced for distribution to the students were impossible.

4.4 Research Methods

The study's interpretivist paradigm and social constructivist approach facilitated the selection of user-friendly research methods. The pilot study –described in detail in Section 3.9 – showed the suitability of the methods. Participants indicated that they had found them to be engaging and made them interested in providing the information requested. The researcher aimed to ensure that the participants would consider the research tools as exciting apparatus to generate their interest. The connection with the methods would help them to provide their understanding of the truth regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Bhattacherjee, 2012). The aim was to use methods that would provide ingenuity and incisiveness to allow participants to give their views on a particular phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006). The methods' significance emanated from the study's constructivist grounded nature. It provided a platform for participants to tell their stories on the phenomenon as perceived from their lived experiences (Charmaz, 2006; Sutton & Austin, 2015).

The multiplicity of participants creates multiple realities (Creswell, 2016), which call for applying multiple methods to generate data. Figure 4.1 shows that the study used photo voice, audio journals, one-on-one interviews, and focus group discussion as data collection methods. These were identified as suitable methods to generate data directly from research participants.

Figure 4. 1 *Research methods used in the study*

4.4.1 Photovoice

According to Budig et al. (2018), photo voice is a visual research methodology that puts cameras into the participants' hands to help them to document, reflect upon, and communicate issues of concern while stimulating social change. Woodgate et al. (2016) describe it as a visual participatory action approach used in qualitative research. Call-Cummings et al. (2019) see photovoice as a research method to honour the knowledge, voice, and research participants' experiences. The approach captures participants' thoughts on social issues through images captured in photographs (Budig et al., 2018), representing their own authentic experiences and realities, making for grounded data (Liebenberg, 2018).

In further adding to the discourse Liebenberg (2018) posits that the photovoice method captures the interpretations of reality constructed by participants to create knowledge grounded in the diversity of realities in the social space. Photovoice puts a powerful tool into the hands of research participants, i.e., the camera, transforming them from passive to active contributors in the data collection process (Warne et al., 2012; Woodgate et al., 2016). The images represent narratives that allow the photograph to speak for the photographer (Simmonds et al., 2015). A voice that otherwise may not have emanated from participants' spoken words, bringing viewers to their perspectives and lived experiences through their spatial representation (Gubrium &

Harper, 2016; Liebenberg, 2018). All this while empowering the photographer to become socially conscious of their environment (Budig et al., 2018).

The idea of the method as an emancipatory tool in providing an opportunity for voice to be heard through photographs is an exciting approach (Ting, 2020). A helpful platform for this thesis that aims to engage secondary students in projecting their voice on an important education issue. These arguments are supported by Call-Cummings et al. (2019), who, in their article, refer to photovoice as an engaging and relatable method for students that offers an ideal platform for them to reflect and give their perspectives on a critical issue that affects them. These factors allow the 'method an opportunity to reset the balances of power relations, shifting the dynamic of knowledge as being resident only in adults to an understanding of its presence across age, language, and social barriers' (Derr & Simons, 2020, p. 359).

Nevertheless, although identified as an appropriate research method, photo voice has been identified as having limitations. One such is the novelty of the method, and not many, especially students, would have previously engaged with or seen themselves as capable of using the method (Woodgate et al., 2016). Additionally, he notes that the method can be seen as pressuring as users struggle to find appropriate, explicit images to answer research questions while expressing creativity. Another limitation involves the ethical dilemma of photography, including attaining consent from those photographed, privacy, and fair representation. One approach to mitigating the ethical dilemma is to adequately educate research participants on the ethics involved in participating (Given et al., 2011). (See Section 4-4.8 for further details on this Ethical issue and how it has been addressed within this study).

Despite these limitations, the study adopted photo voice as a research method to collect participants' data. Constricted by the Covid19 in-person meeting restrictions, the researcher engaged the study's participants to conduct initial sensitization on the methods. Participants

selecting the method, having submitted a completed research consent form, were engaged in an online telephone workshop. The session focused on taking photographs using cellular phones and how to submit images taken. Participants then sought to photograph images within their homes and school compound on the days they were on the premises. Having the participants decide on the images of relevance was an essential step in getting their authentic voices represented through their photographs. These images reflected their interpretations and determination of the phenomenon, a central element of the study.

4.4.2 Audio Journals

One of the fastest-growing research methods in the social sciences as a research tool (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 2014; Hyers, 2018), audio journals like photo voice provide research participants with equipment, such as audio recorders. These enable participants to control the data provided, capturing private sensitive experiences that may have been difficult to obtain (Crozier & Cassell, 2016). Unlike interviews and focus groups, which can be intrusive and interrogative (Liamputtong, 2011), audio journals allow research participants to feel at ease as they record (Meth, 2003). Audio journals are a self-reporting tool (Turner, 2016), providing insight into people's lived experiences (Meth, 2003). These journals provide unfiltered recordings of authentic ideas and experiences, in their raw states, that embody the emotions and attitudes of participants (Jones & Woolley, 2015).

In this study, audio journals were utilized as a research method. Participants used their personal mobile phones to record their answers over two weeks. Requiring participants to use their devices was due to Covid19 restrictions preventing the direct interactions between the researcher and participants and equipment distribution. Like photo voice, participants had the autonomy to determine the pace and frequency of their recordings over the period. The method enabled participants to communicate their responses using the most comfortable language: Jamaican Creole or standard English. The approach made participants feel unencumbered in

expressing their views. Limitations identified in this method included ethical issues. For example, background voices while recordings are included in the data collection without the individual's knowledge or consent (Cottingham & Erickson, 2020). (See Section 4-4.8 for further discussion on this Ethical issue and how it is handled.

The study adopted the audio journal method as a data collection tool for participants to provide their recorded opinions. In the end, the study's participants present their own genuine realities and experiences that reflect their interpretations and determination of their perspectives on the research questions.

4.4.3 Semi-structured one-on-one interviews

The third method used by the study was the semi-structured one-on-one qualitative interviews. The approach provides an opportunity to delve into and explore the participants' thoughts as reflected in their images and recordings (Flick, 2017b). The semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with each participant to explore their answers as provided using either photovoice or audio journals. The aim was to ensure the clarity of interpretation behind their photographs or audio recordings to answer the research questions. It allowed for capturing the unspoken and spoken expressions in their responses to the research questions.

4.4.4 Focus Group discussion

The fourth research method used in the study was a focus group discussion, described as the best method for exploring perceptions and getting ideas from individuals (Khan & Schofield, 2020). According to Mishra (2016, p. 2), this 'is a type of in-depth group interview that uses a homogenous set of participants.' Individuals who can provide similar views on the phenomenon due to their connection with the issue (Gundumogula, 2020). Cornwall and Jewkes (1995, p. 1671) assert, 'the method allows the researcher to appreciate that participants

are worthy of being engaged having the capacity and knowledge to discuss specific topics based on their own experiences and indigenous conceptualization.' The 'focus group discussion method has four main stages: design of the research objective to identify the participants and location; data collection; data analysis, which involves the identification of themes; and a report of the results(O. Nyumba et al., 2018, p. 2).

The focus group discussion research method is not without limitations. One such is the power dynamics relationship between the researcher and participants. In settings where participants feel dominated, this impacts the conversational norms of the discussion, hindering participants' willingness to speak (Scheelbeek et al., 2020). Ethical dilemmas are also part of the challenges associated with focus group discussions. Some of these include issues relating to consent and confidentiality are central to the research (Sim & Waterfield, 2019). The issue of consent threatens confidentiality and privacy as participants disclose personal information in front of peers in an open space. These concerns are, however, managed through measures including the use of pseudonyms or the absence of video or recording to protect participants' identity and voice. (See Section 4-4.8 for further discussion on this Ethical issue and how it is handled).

4.5 Data analysis

Analyzing the data collected through multiple methods requires a data analysis framework that suits the purpose of authentically representing and exploring the particular phenomenon through the voice of participants (Grbich, 2012; Taylor & Gibbs, 2010). According to Kawulich (2004), Charmaz's data analysis approach enables the reduction of large-sized data into a manageable story frame to make sense of the information. This is achieved using a coding frame. Here the initial codes are identified, applying a subsequent process of identifying, distinguishing, and comparing within and across the data to identify focused codes (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). The organization and synthesis of the codes into manageable frames allow for

the discernment of the patterns and themes in the data used to explore the research phenomenon (Gale et al., 2013). (See Appendix 3 for Codes identified from the data).

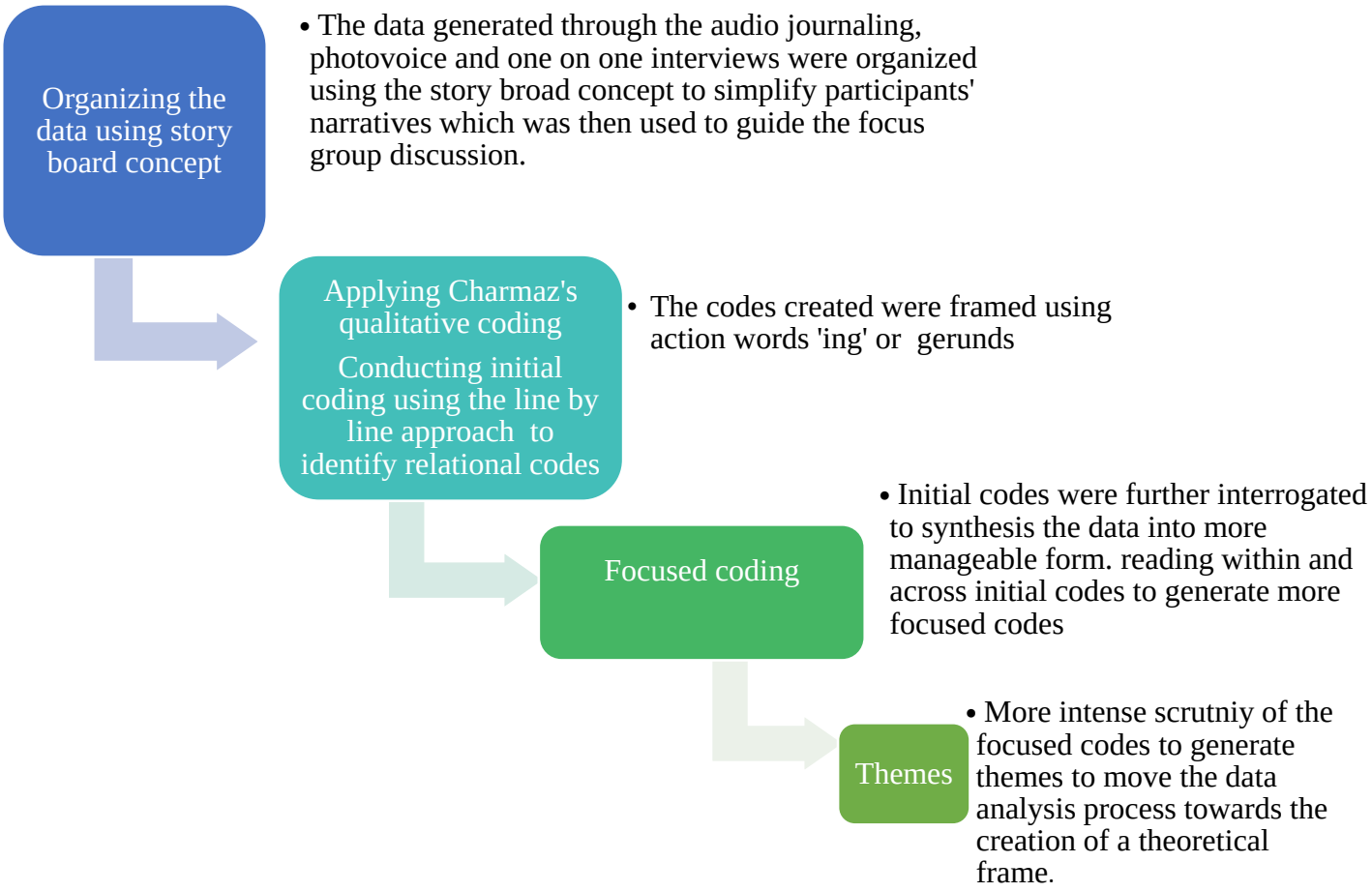
The approach provides an opportunity to interrogate the participants' data, break them into categories and concepts, and link them to create a story (Farragher & Coogan, 2020). A crucial feature of interrogative data analysis emphasizes the participants' actual spoken words in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2015). Coding is essential as it provides an opportunity to honour students' voice, making them the centerpiece of the data analysis (Manning, 2017). The process was applied to the study's transcribed data from each research method, where labels were applied to chunks of data to shorten and demarcate the ideas represented. The approach was used across all the research methods resulting in the labels used to form the focus codes.

The process allowed a better representation of the data set that had emerged across the research methods while remaining faithful to the participants' language and voice (Charmaz, 2006). In this regard, the data transcription across the research methods was verbatim across the two languages (Jamaican Creole and English) identified in the data. The English-translated sentences were written to convey the same message as the original text from Jamaican Creole. The aim being to make the dialect understandable while preserving the meaning of the dialect construct. The transcription of the data across languages centered on representing the student's voice across all the research methods of audio journal, photovoice, one-on-one interviews, and the focus group.

4.5.1 Analyzing data using Charmaz's approach

The study enhanced its constructivist grounded nature by implementing an inductive logic (Chun Tie et al., 2019), further augmented using the Charmaz (2006) coding method. The approach provided a data analysis process grounded in the views of participants. The following chart shows how the data analysis retained a student voice-focused, constructivist positioning.

Figure 4. 2 *Summary of data analysis approach used in the study*



The prospective participants' profiles assumed many responses would be made in the local Creole dialect, not standard English. The study applied a manual approach to analyzing the data since no standard data analysis platform exists to interpret Jamaican Creole to represent the participants' views accurately.

4.5.1.1 Applying constructivist grounded theory to the research data analysis

After receiving their recorded responses, the information was transcribed, capturing interjections, expressions of doubt, or hesitations to account for students views. The transcription also recorded the responses provided in Creole. A one-on-one interview with each

participant followed the process. The emphasis was on identifying the participants' perspectives on the research questions anchored on their opinions.

4.5.1.2 Applying Charmaz's initial and focus coding principles to the data analysis

The thesis applied a similar process using the qualitative coding principles, which guide the data analysis (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). It began with an initial coding, using a line-by-line reading of the information within individual responses across the data set. The process produced a series of synthesized, reduced data and identified categories and concepts to create codes. The data analysis applied gerund or action-oriented '-ing' words to ensure that the codes closely represented participants' original ideas (Charmaz, 2006). From the initial codes, the data analysis process moved on to synthesizing and exploring the initial codes to categorize the data further and ensure the codes' adequacy and analytical relevance. Focused coding resulted in iteration and re-iteration of the initial codes; this lent itself to the emergent nature of the process of continuously interrogating the data. The process enabled constant preconceptions while developing the focus codes facilitated by constant comparisons of participants' experiences, actions, and interpretations. Table 3 represents a sample of the application of qualitative coding to this study's data and the identification of themes identified in the data for academic performance.

Table 3 *Themes from data analysis for research question 1*

Maize	Performing well Gaining average of 55 Writing tests	High grades Writing Test	
Ingrid	Getting higher grades Focusing academically Self-driven	High grades Self- driven	
Kay	Mastering subjects Knowing the information	Knowledge mastery	
Sally	Being placed on honor roll	Reward	• High grades [9]
Sue	Getting good grades Improving Behaving	Good Grades Behaviour	
John	Getting awards	Reward	• Reward [3]
Emma	Gaining average and above	High grades	
Marc	Gaining highest grades Writing test-end of term	High grades Writing Tests	• Written tests [3]
Diana	Gaining averages Receiving awards Test	Reward Grades Written tests	• Knowledge /mastery [2]
Felecia	Getting high grades 80%	High Grades	
Opal	Retaining knowledge Gaining high grades Getting rewards	High grades Knowledge	
Paul	Getting high grades Getting the average of 70% on subjects	High grades	

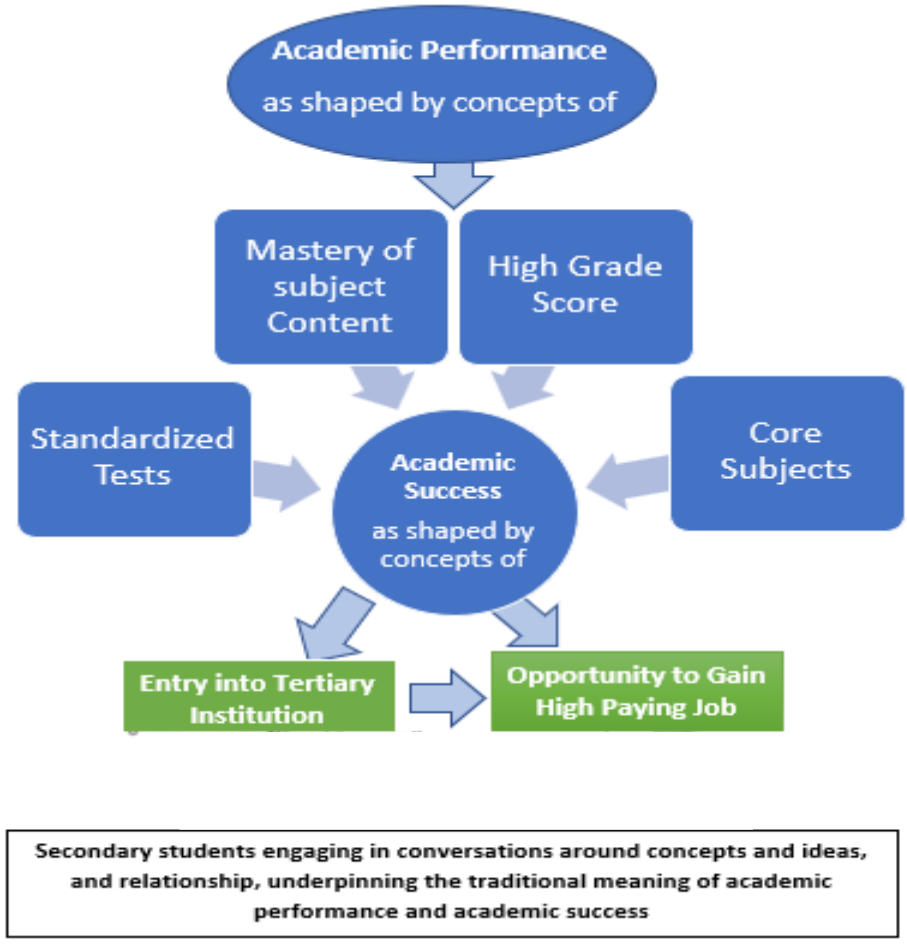
According to Vollstedt and Rezat (2019), coding is the application of memo writing, which supports active engagement with the data and analysis of the focused codes. Coding allows for playful data navigation; it requires an open disposition to stumble upon discoveries and gain in-depth insight into participants' views on the research phenomenon from either previously ignored or unchecked data. Conceptual categorization of the codes, defined by explicit characteristics, proceeded with the memo-writing process.

4.6 The conceptual framework underpinning the research

This study used a social constructionism approach within an interpretivism paradigm to explore the key concepts that have shaped the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success. Adopting such a paradigm provides an opportunity to explore the processes of knowledge construction using the conceptual building blocks that underpin the terms, as explained in Figure 4.3. In other words, the study's conceptual

framework allows for an understanding of how the conversations amongst individuals, in this instance, secondary students, have been shaped through social engagements around critical concepts. Students observations, experiences, and conversations of ideas, including high-grade scores, core subjects, written standardized tests, attendance to tertiary institutions, and obtaining a high-paying job, while helping them understand the traditional concepts, have also shaped students' independent views on the terms as well.

Figure 4. 3 *Conceptual Framework of the study*



4.7 The theoretical framework underpinning the study

The theoretical framework is a structure that summarizes the concepts and theories used to analyze and interpret the data collected from the research participants. For this study, Social Constructionism theory is used to aid in exploring how this sample of secondary students has shaped their understanding and interpretations of the traditional meanings of academic

performance and academic success based on their social interactions in different environments they occupy. The theory helps to determine how through these social experiences, where they exchange, modify, and share their ideas and lived experiences; students come to formulate their knowledge that influences their attitudes toward concepts. The study adopted translating the Jamaican Creole data into standard English to facilitate understanding of the data for non-Jamaican Creole readers.

4.7.1 Social Constructionism theory

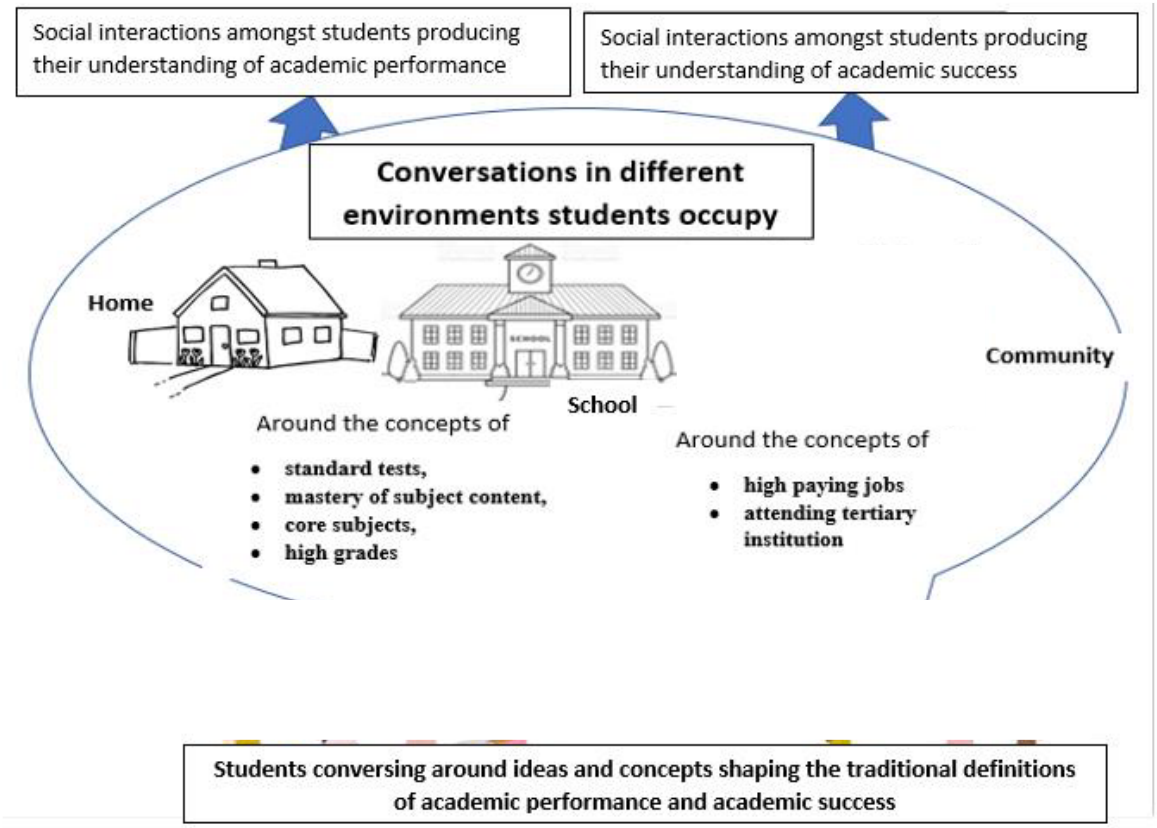
This study uses Social Constructionism theory and its notion that the meaning around knowledge is a product of the interaction and negotiation between individuals in their social spaces. The social interactions occur around ideas and concepts not in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understanding, practices, and language (Schwandt, 2000), which provides a means of structuring the way the world is experienced and facilitates the development of knowledge (Burr, 2015).

The theory allows an appreciation of the multiple perspectives of reality, influenced by how individuals interpret their lived experiences, and not one universally valid truth (Galbin, 2014). The theory also helps to understand not only how individuals form knowledge and make sense of the world but also the process helps to shape their behaviour towards knowledge and phenomenon (Schmidt, 2001). Within the context of this study, the theory, therefore, offers the opportunity to be introduced to and explore the diverse perspectives a sample of Jamaican secondary students may have on the phenomenon as constructed through their social engagement around the ideas and concepts regarding academic performance and academic success.

As depicted in the literature, these social engagements occur in different environments that individuals come to occupy, including home, school, communities, and social peer groups

(Galbin, 2014; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013). See Figure 4.4 below, depicting the different social environments individuals occupy. Individuals occupy these different spaces at different times, engaging in social interactions sharing ideas and symbols representing their perspectives which are morphed to create knowledge (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015; Rüschenpöhler & Markic, 2020). Participating individuals gain new perspectives (McLeod, 2019), attitudes, and perceptions of knowledge (Little, 2014).

Figure 4. 4 *Theoretical framework of the study using Social Constructionism theory*



The theoretical framework provides a platform for the study to explain the role social interactions, through their facilitation of the exchanging of ideas, lived experiences, and engagement around a common language and culture, in the environments people occupy, helps in framing meanings around concepts to create an understanding and interpretation of knowledge and the world.

Applying this theoretical framework to the study's phenomenon provides an opportunity to understand the meanings Jamaican secondary students have created around the concepts of academic performance and academic success. An understanding will be used to explore and better understand the rationale behind the high rates of poor academic performance and low academic success rates amongst the secondary student cohort.

The idea of social engagements framing individual perspectives through an interpretivist paradigm allows for interpreting these interactions while understanding the emerging authentic views (Barrett, 2009). The combination allows for identifying the hidden meanings behind the different voices in the space to represent their views accurately (Van der Walt, 2020). The theoretical framework allows for an appreciation within the study of knowledge building as occurring not in a single space but within and across different occupied environments. In these spaces, individuals operate in a cyclical and interchangeable process that involves working in and going between environments, ultimately shaping their attitude and perception of knowledge.

. The section outlines the traditional epistemological and ontological positioning of academic performance and academic success framed within a social constructionism interpretivist frame. Additionally, it provided an outline of the constructivist grounded theory as the mold for the data analysis for the study. The section concluded with an outlay of the study's theoretical framework, social constructionism, that will be used to investigate the students' construction of knowledge of academic performance and academic success to understand the study's phenomenon.

The following section delves into the ethical considerations underpinning the study. The segment concludes with an outlay of the study's theoretical framework, social constructionism, that will be used to investigate the students' construction of knowledge of academic

performance and academic success to understand the study's phenomenon. This forms the basis of ensuring that the data collection process to explore students views of the phenomenon adheres to the correct research principles and standards.

4.8 General Ethical considerations

Following ethical protocols in research builds confidence in the research process and helps ensure the integrity of the procedural rigor, credibility, and validity of research findings (Leung, 2015). The need to adhere to ethical protocols is more pronounced within the literature, considering the acceptance of children in research as primary research participants (Abrar & Sidik, 2019). According to Birtchnell (2005), engaging children as primary research participants came from appreciating their unique perception, interpretation, and world experience. For Koch (2021), young people bring to research a usefulness that can help generate an understanding of social issues in ways adults may be unable to. In engaging children as research participants, protocols must safeguard their protection while advancing their rights (Kirby, 2020). Rights as provided by the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child (Dogan, 2012) to ensure the scientific integrity of the research (Kretser et al., 2019).

The following areas were given ethical considerations for the study to ensure that student participants' rights were protected and the validity and integrity of the research were sound (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). These included:

a. recruitment of participants to ensure that all volunteers met the requirement of being grade 10 students who have and continue to experience low academic performance output.
b. informed consent to participate and the right to withdraw to ensure that participants were aware of and felt comfortable entering the study and withdrawing from same without repercussions.

c. confidentiality, knowing that their identity and views would be protected using a pseudonym, and destruction of data upon final analysis without sharing the same
d. ensuring the use of digital research methods to collect data to ensure their autonomy in selecting and presenting the data they believed best represented and reflected their perspective of the research question.
e. ethical issues around the sensitive topic, such as academic underperformance and poor academic success, the focus of the study.

This study and its ethical considerations were reviewed per the University Research Ethics Committee's procedures and approved application in the initial pilot and subsequent main study. Outlined below are the various ethical considerations for the study.

4.8.1 Recruitment of participants

Recruiting adolescents as research participants requires ensuring that the individuals have experience with the study topic, are of the appropriate age required by the study, or have similar psychosocial characteristics (Adler et al., 2019). These similarities in characteristics provide a sense of homogeneity amongst the participants. It also allows a greater inclination to participate in a study involving their peers (McGarry, 2016).

The recruitment process focused on a rural secondary school in Jamaica whose student cohort had experienced the phenomenon of low academic performance and academic success, male and female students from grade 10 cohort between the ages of 15- 16 years of age who were willing to participate in the workshop, at school, about the research. The study adopted a similar set of homogenous characteristics first through the pilot and then the main study. The aim was to ensure that the study targeted participants who shared similarities and would therefore feel comfortable consenting to participate in the study involving their peers. In the

end, having students of similar characteristics participating in the study provided a sense of comfort and willingness to consent to participate (Association, 2011).

4.8.2 Informed consent

Post the recruitment of research participants, an essential step in research involves gaining participants' informed, voluntary consent, obtained once individuals are aware of the nature, obligations, and risks associated with the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). According to Tisdall et al. (2008), informed consent can be either verbal or written. For this study, informed consent to participate in the study had to be obtained at two levels; the first was from the school's administrator to gain approval to engage with the school and the identified population. The second level of consent obtained was from the students volunteering to participate, in addition to the consent of their parents or guardians (Association, 2011).

The researcher met with the school's administration on the ethical issues relating to the research and the requirement of having the Principal's Consent Form (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) signed off as evidence of informed consent to conduct the study at the institution. Additionally, it was noted that students and parents/guardians' depiction of informed consent was demonstrated through their signing and submitting the Students Consent Form (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) and the Parents' Consent Form (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

4.8.3 Confidentiality

According to Fouka (2011), maintaining confidentiality during research protects participants from harm. She suggests these include negative labelling, identity harm, physical harm or discomfort, invasion of privacy, or a threat to dignity. Ensuring the confidentiality of the identity of the study's participants, who were minors, resulted in the studying assigning pseudonyms following the receipt of the signed consent forms by recruited individuals.

Participants were also informed of their rights, without intimidation, to report any violation in the first instance to the researcher, the school's Guidance Counsellor, or the Principal.

According to Heaton (2022, p. 123), 'researchers generally disguise or remove information that might directly or indirectly identify the participants and any other people, organizations, and places described.' The study sought to apply pseudonyms in all data collection methods to protect the participants' identities. Additionally, the focus group discussion nor the one-on-one interviews were not videoed, photographed, or audio recorded to protect the images and voice of the participants. The school's Dean of Discipline was identified as the point confidential person to alleviate students concerns regarding whether their identity or protection was not in jeopardy or could be breached.

4.8.4 Ethics in handling sensitive topics

There has been steady growth in adolescents as active research participants as a medium of generating knowledge and understanding the issues and concerns that shape their lives (Alderson & Morrow, 2020). The increase has, however, heightened concerns regarding how to protect vulnerable children participating in research investigating sensitive topics (Carter, 2009). Some areas of focus identified as sensitive research topics include research on sexual behaviour, racism, and academic performance.

However, while acknowledging that topics can cause stress, emotional harm, and stigmatization resulting in physical and/or psychological harm to children (Cowles, 1988), there is contention as to what constitutes a sensitive topic (Powell et al., 2018). For some authors, the idea of sensitive topics has been too sensitive and thus over-sensitized (Richards et al., 2015). In contrast, while authors such as McCosker et al. (2001) emphasize the cultural contextualization of sensitive topics, others, including Sieber and Stanley (1988), focus on the social context of sensitive topics.

Regardless of the lens assessing the idea of sensitive topics, this study affirms that there is still a need to ensure that research engaging adolescents in exploring sensitive topics implements mitigating strategies to eliminate harm. These approaches could include, as adopted by this study, establishing clear research protocols to identify how to mitigate risk using socially accepted terms and concepts in the framing of the study. Additionally, measures may include having pre-research entry workshops to educate participants about the nature of the research, establishing the right to withdraw policy, and obtaining participants' informed consent.

4.8.5 The right to withdraw

The study affirms that as research participants have the right to confidentiality, they also have the right to decide if and when they may want to withdraw from research even after giving their informed consent (Association, 2011). The study provided information to participants at the point of the sensitization on the study and upon receipt of the Student Consent Form of the protocols regarding students ability to withdraw should they not wish to continue at any point without fear of retribution from the researcher.

The study's ethical guidelines were introduced to the participants and the school's administration in separate workshops at the beginning of the study. Among the issues discussed was the purpose of the study, its specifically approved rules, processes, and ethical procedures as required by the University Research Ethics committee to be explained (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). As part of the ethics process, consent forms were provided to participants (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). These outlined the issues and processes relating to data and identity confidentiality and research exit options. The organization responsible for protecting personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Participants were educated about the study’s withdrawal process, which could occur at any time during their

participation. They were informed that the data they provided would be rescinded and destroyed, without any issues to themselves, if they withdrew from the study.

4.8.6 Use of digital research to collect and store research data

The use of digital research methods, such as photovoice and audio journaling, as a child-friendly method of engaging children in participatory research is expanding (Rosemberg & Evans-Agnew, 2020). However, as the use of the methods grows, the need to focus on and account for ethical issues increases (Cychosz et al., 2020; Rosemberg & Evans-Agnew, 2020). Such issues the authors conveyed included adolescents' acknowledgment of individual privacy and obtaining permission before taking a photo. Also, emphasis has been placed on obtaining permission to record and adolescents' autonomy to self-determination, controlling what represents their voice.

Participants were guided to inform individuals from whom they wished to collect data, if at all, of the nature of the research, the rationale behind recording their responses, and ensuring that they obtained the consent of individuals before taking photos if individuals needed to be a part of their photovoice. Similarly, participants using audio journals were guided to inform individuals of the nature of the research, the rationale behind recording their responses, and getting verbal permission from individuals ahead of recording their responses to questions they may ask. During the pre-data collection workshop, participants were engaged around these and reminded of equipment distribution and use for the pilot and the main study.

During the workshops, participants were guided on the ethical issue of controlling photos and audio. Guidance was also provided on issues of self-determination regarding images and audio selection to represent their voice in the study. During the one-on-one interviews, all pilot and the main study participants were allowed to decide on the data they wanted to include in the study's findings.

No one except the researcher would have access to the data. Data transcribed from audio to written sources would be discarded by shredding six months following the conclusion of the research process. Data would be stored only on one password-protected computer to reduce exposure to multiple sources. A copy of the final research report would be made available to participants upon their written request to the researcher.

4.9 Timeline

The study's timeframe provided an excellent blueprint for keeping the research process on track to finish in the approved time. (See Appendix 5 for a detailed outline).

4.10 Summary

This chapter has outlined the research philosophy of interpretivist/constructivist and the adopted qualitative research methodology of grounded theory used to inform the data collection. The outlined analytical process was expected to aid in identifying students perspectives on the issues under study. In addition to recognizing possible alternate ideas to grasp what is happening in secondary students academic performance and academic success. The chapter also explored some key ethical issues considered by the study. The investigations into these are to aid in protecting the adolescent research participants and establish the study's validity and authenticity. The chapter concludes with an overview of the timelines. The next three chapters will outline the findings of the reframed research questions from the data collection methods used by participants.

Chapter 5 Findings Research Question # 1

5.1 Overview

This chapter, consistent with the study's methodological approach, reflects on the perspectives emanating from the voice of 12 Grade 10 secondary school participants, ten females and two males. The chapter begins with an overview of the participant's perceptions of the data collection method. It then explores the findings of research question number 1 as generated from the data collection methods provided by the study's participants, identifying the main themes that emanated from the data. The chapter withholds any commentary on the academic literature and the input and interpretations of the researcher at bay.

Table 2 lists the participants (identified using pseudonyms) and each student's data collection method for the main study. The following two chapters present the participant's responses to the remaining two research questions.

Table 2 *Pseudonym of research participants and the data collection method*

Participants	**Research Method Engaged**
Maize	Audio Journal, One-on-one interview, Focus Group
Ingrid	Audio Journal, One-on-one interview, Focus Group
Kay	Audio Journal, One-on-one interview, Focus Group
Sally	Audio Journal, One-on-one interview, Focus Group
Sue	Audio Journal, One-on-one interview, Focus Group
John	Photovoice, One-on-one interview, Focus Group
Emma	Photovoice, One-on-one interview, Focus Group
Marc	Audio Journal, One-on-one interview, Focus Group
Diana	Audio Journal, One-on-one interview, Focus Group
Felicia	Audio Journal, One-on-one interview, Focus Group

Participants	Research Method Engaged
Opal	Audio Journal, One-on-one interview, Focus Group
Paul	Audio Journal, One-on-one interview, Focus Group

5.2 The outcomes of the data collection using the research methods

The following information outlines the process the study's 12 participants were engaged in using the respective data collection methods of photovoice, audio journaling, one-on-one interviews, and focus group discussions, to produce information for the study.

5.2.1 Using photovoice and one-on-one interviews to collect and represent the data in the chapter

The data collection process produced a gamut of information from participants using the three research methods outlined in the methodology section [See Chapter 4-4.4]. In assessing participants' initial engagement with the research methods, it was interesting to note that both had fewer participants opting to use the photovoice method. In the pilot study, only 1 of the 3 participants used photovoice, and only 2 of the 12 participants in the main study used the method. At the end of the assigned two weeks, participants submitted their data; photovoice respondents selected what represented their best two photographs per response to the research questions for analysis.

In the main study, the photovoice research method did not yield as many images per participant as the pilot. This meant that participants did not have as many options in deciding what images to include or exclude, resulting in many of the images they took being submitted for use. Additionally, the sparsity of images meant that there were few options to reflect on per research question. Nonetheless, from the images the participants presented, a perspective per the research question was discernable. After submitting their photographs at the end of the 14

days and providing ethical consent for their use in the research, participants were engaged in one-on-one interviews via telephone.

The interviews allowed the researcher to clarify and interpret each photograph's relevance in response to the research question. The process was crucial to the study, which aimed to follow an interpretive approach, capturing participants' voice directly to the question posed without any researcher interpreting the images. In presenting the photovoice images, the captioned information on the photograph shows that the image is from the photovoice method. In representing the photovoice data in the chapter, each photograph caption reflects that the image is from the photovoice research method collection.

5.2.2 Using audio journals and one-on-one interviews to collect and present the data in the chapter

Of the ten study participants, 12 opted to use audio journals as their preferred data collection method. Participants used their mobile phones to record their responses to the research questions over 14 days; these were submitted to the researcher and transcribed. Each student then participated in a one-on-one interview via telephone to review the recordings to clarify or expand on the narrations to clarify meanings.

5.2.3 Focus Group conversation and representing the data in the chapter

Participants were gathered in a single space to view and share their thoughts from the photovoice and audio journals; they discussed the ideas retrieved from the various data and depicted on the storyboard.

Figure 5. 1 *Image of participants' narratives from photovoice, audio journaling, and one-on-one interviews used in the Focus Group discussions*

There is no audio recording of the focus group discussion; however, note-taking captured participants' perspectives. Using a storyboard facilitated the representation of the data in a storytelling narrative style, allowing for better visual representation and understanding of different chunks of information that emerged from the different collection tools (Redman-MacLaren et al., 2014; Walker et al., 2015). However, this approach has limitations, including, but not limited to, the researcher's bias in transcribing. Nonetheless, the researcher opted not to record the discussion to allow participants to freely discuss and express their ideas on the research questions without feeling hesitant or confined by a recording device to offer their views. The researcher transcribed the information from the papers used to record the participants' information during the focus group discussions. The data presented throughout the chapter denote information retrieved from the focus group discussions.

Using Charmaz (2006) qualitative coding approach across the data, the data analysis process sought to identify the codes, delving deeper into the data to identify the focus codes to unearth the themes within the participants' responses to grasp their overall response to the respective research questions as outlined in this and the preceding two chapters. Importantly throughout the three Findings chapters, a translation of Jamaican Creole into English is provided wherever it appears; perspectives reported in broken English are not translated.

5.3 Research Question #1: How have Jamaican secondary students understood the traditional socially accepted definition terms of academic performance and academic success?

The chapter presents the findings of the participating students as provided through the different research methods. It identifies the emerging themes of high-grade scores, rewards, and written tests as representing their understanding of the meaning of academic performance. Conversely, identifying themes of content mastery, consistent performance, core subjects, and good behaviour as their perception of academic success. The chapter is divided into two sections; the first segment explores the responses of the study's 12 participants to identify how they have understood the traditional definitions and practices of academic performance and academic success. The second segment explores their perceptions of poor academic performance and academically unsuccessful students.

5.3.1 Exploring secondary students understanding of the definition of academic performance

In exploring students understanding of the definition of academic performance, some salient codes emerged across the data collection methods that represented these students understanding. For example, from the data, the students seem to all be in agreement that they understood academic performance using the following keywords (see Appendix 3); high- grade scores, core subjects, and written tests, while they understood the traditional meaning of academic success as entry into a tertiary institution and getting high-paying job post-secondary school. These keywords were further refined into one theme, Standards, the word that underpins how these secondary students have come to understand the traditional meaning of academic performance.

In her contribution to the question, Maize, in her audio journal, expressed a popularly shared view that, from her observation of practice,

academic performance at my school is someone who performs well, getting the school's average.

Emma reiterates the same in her photo voice image, noting that from her experience and observation of how teachers and the school operate,

Figure 5. 2 *Student awarded for academic performance in school*

a student who performs academically well gets an average, the school's average of over 70% - 80%.

For Ingrid, in her audio journal, she noted that from her reflections on what occurred in school

we will always see some students exhibit higher grades than their peers, being called performers, while those who do not achieve high grades are something else.

Kay, in her analysis of the practice as referenced by Ingrid and others, argued that the idea of academic performance as high grades is unfair; she noted that

the conversation should not be on who an academic performer is; we should not start at scores of high grades; instead, we should talk about how well students have learned the information from the teacher to make sure that they have learned and not just swat to pass still do not know anything.

It is evident from the data across the research methods that these students have, from their experience of the practice and observation of their peers concerning the terms in school, identified what they believe constitutes the meaning of academic performance. The information also shows that students have been active observers and contributors in different spaces in the school, enabling them to study occurrences and make determinations regarding knowledge, thus validating the study's conceptual and theoretical positioning.

5.3.1.1. Written tests, end-of-term tests

Another focus code identified from the data that three of the study's 12 participants have identified as furthering their understanding of academic performance is the idea of written standardized tests at the end of each school term on which students must achieve high-grade scores. The idea points to an exact time frame for achievement. Maize expressed the sentiment in her audio journal and confirmed the same in her one-on-one interview, where she pointed out that

> *so, you have three terms; at the end of each term, you will get a written examination that everyone does at the same time, and on each of those exams, you will have to score an average*.

In Kay's estimation, what has helped her frame her understanding is that academic performance is about being judged on written tests, noting

> *a measure of how well that student has performed in various written tests*. She does not emphasize the idea of time.

In her audio journal, Opal combines both ideas suggesting that, from her viewpoint, the importance of

> *written tests as space for which averages are gained for each subject*.

Some participants take an emotional understanding of written tests as a facet of academic performance. The feelings resonate; for example, in John's explanation of the term using photovoice, he asserts a grasp of the meaning as an emotional rollercoaster, a pile of sand, some parts being high and some sections of the sand low. He argues, using Figure 5.3 that

Figure 5. 3 *Pile of sand depicting students fluctuating emotions towards written tests*

written exams are on paper are ups and downs for some students; this is represented by the low and high sections of the dirt and stone. Some students are better at physical/practical tests as they may have reading disabilities or other challenges, which is represented by the lower part of the dirt, while the higher part of the dirt and stone heap would be the students who are perfect in reading and therefore may find it easier to do the written examinations.

Emma argues that she understands the meaning behind written tests as

Figure 5. 4 *Student being sad about written test*

It makes me sad just to think of writing in a test. I do not like written exams, even though my school allows students to prep before the exams because you just write back what you have read.

The data clearly showed that these respondents have recognized and have combined these ideas of high-grade scores and written standardized tests at the end of term, which they have observed as underpinning the definitions to shape their understanding of academic performance. The information is pertinent as it provides an essential picture of how students have grasped the meanings of the term using what they have observed in practice and from their experience.

5.3.1.2 Reward

Four of the 12 study participants proposed rewards, including receiving medals, honor roll placement, or trophies for outstanding academic grade attainment, as another element that has aided their understanding of academic performance. These awards, presented at general devotions (assemblies), represent students who have excelled academically based on the end-of-term test grades. Opal noted in her audio journal that…

these students receive awards and trophies to perform academically.

Mary put forward a similar view in her audio journal, contending that…

how you know, academic performers is that they get placed on the honor roll.

John added in his journal that…

> *these are students who always get awards for performing …they will get awards, as depicted in the image below, or merit.*

Figure 5. 5 *Award given in school for academic performance.*

Participants' reference to rewards adds to the list of components they have observed over their years of attending the school and which have contributed to helping them establish an appreciation of the traditional definition and practice of academic performance. The point solidifies the notion that participants' perspectives have been influenced by their realities as witnessed, which is essential to the study to identify whether students have established any opinions for themselves on the concept of academic performance.

5.3.1.3 Summary

In analyzing the data, it is interesting to identify how all 12 participants across the data collection methods have coalesced their answers around key focus codes of high-grade scores, written standard tests, core subjects, and rewards (see Figure 5.6) that they have considered as aiding in their understanding of the traditional definition of academic performance. The discovery suggests that these students have been very observant in their school environment,

discerning specific terms that have helped shape their understanding of the traditional meanings of academic performance. However, this understanding is important because these students have understood the traditional knowledge around academic performance to the extent that they have framed an understanding that reflects the same concepts and meaning. In other words, the data suggest that these students do not have a lack of understanding of the traditional meaning of academic performance; they have a clear understanding of the composition of the knowledge of academic performance.

Figure 5. 6 *Focus codes from the data for academic performance*

- High Grade score
- Written standard tests
- Reward

The following section examines the study's participants' understanding of the traditional definitions of academic success.

5.3.2 Exploring secondary students understanding of academic success

The data show the study's participants expressing ideas throughout, representing their understanding of academic success. These ideas include academic success as achieving academic performance and good behaviour. These notions are explored below.

5.3.2.1 Academic performance and mastery of subject content knowledge as academic success

Across the data set, the participants demonstrated their understanding of the traditional definition of academic success across the data collection methods. It was evident that some participants construed academic performance as an antecedent to academic success supported

by an ability to master subject content knowledge. The ideas emerge from the various perspectives of participants; for example, in her audio journal, Ingrid asserted that

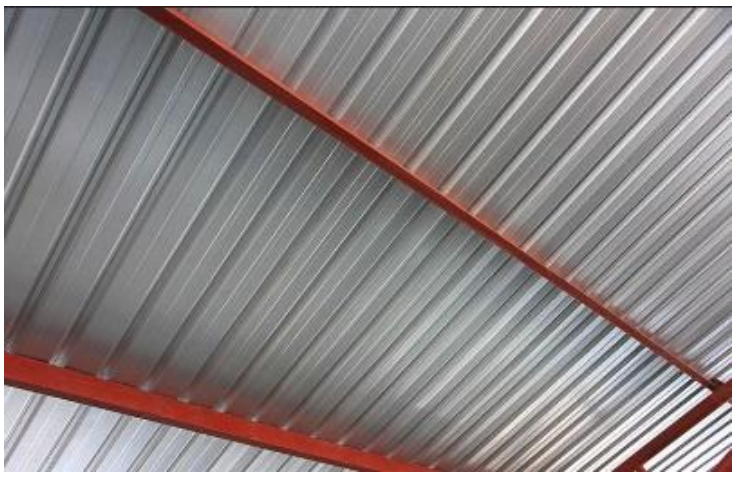
A successful student is described by their academic performance.

For Maize, who agrees with Ingrid, such a student is one who

achieves the average and is rewarded.

John added to the idea depicted by his photograph (Figure 5.7) and affirmed it in his one-on-one interview.

Figure 5. 7 *New aluminium zinc roofing depicting student's reflection of an academically performing student*



In his annotation of the image, he opined that

academic success is similar to a new roofing sheet, which is like a student who learns and keeps what they learn inside to perform well academically. The new zinc behaves in a good way to achieve its goal of keeping water out, so too the student who can maintain good behavior helps them not forget subject content, keeping out elements that will distract them, making them fail to achieve their goal. These are students who put their knowledge on paper in tests and receive grades from standardized exams. The difference between the academic performer (A/P) and the successful student is

that the A/P remembers the subject content information taught, while the successful student is one who is able to put the knowledge retained on paper on tests and receive outstanding grades for the knowledge displayed.

Eight out of 12 respondents sought to add clarity to the argument about the relationship between academic performance and academic success. In their estimation, the association was not based on mastery and attaining a singular high-grade score. Instead, it centered around an idea of consistency and the ability to consistently master and retain subject content knowledge to do well in standardized tests to attain high-grade scores consistently. The idea is evident, for example, in Sally's audio journal, where she asserted that a

a successful student in my institution is a student who constantly demonstrates their ability to perform, achieve and excel.

According to Diana in her audio journal, a successful student is one who

always putting effort into their work is very diligent.

Unwittingly these participants have established a direct correlation between academic performance and academic success. This is evident in how they have linked achievement to success as underpinned by attaining academic performance. The relationship is further established in their argument that students who are inconsistent in attaining academic performance will not gain academic success. The idea resonated in Sally's audio journals, where she argued that she has come to understand an academically successful student as one

who always a do work like or always a perform.

In summary, these students have studied the practice and the actions of school administrators, peers, and teachers to appreciate the significance of specific keywords and phrases. It is interesting to note how they have appreciated the interconnection between

academic performance and academic success and how they have used all these observations to form their perception of the term academic success from these practices.

5.3.2.2 Core subjects

Interestingly, six of the 12 participants referenced the term subject but expressed that they sensed an air of differentiation when persons referred to specific subjects as opposed to others. In other words, there is a higher currency value associated with some subjects than others. The idea was also replicated in how students viewed the careers associated with the subjects. The perspectives were present, for example, in Sue's audio journal, in which she expressed the idea that

> *certain subjects like science and mathematics get high recognition, while practical subjects get average or no recognition.*

Kay's views supported this point when she posited in her audio journal that

> *studying practical subjects is not worthwhile; these are not the subjects that will get students into university. You will need to have been doing mathematics and science subjects to get there. Studying practical subjects is not good; these are not lifelong subjects.*

These participants continued to demonstrate their views of the demarcation between subjects with Maize in her audio journal, noting that

> *no matter how well you do in areas like sports, you are not a successful student if you do not have the academic average.*

The view is also supported by Ingrid's audio journal notes, where she opined that

> *success as it excluded sports-oriented students; this was worse if these students did not have good behavior, regardless of how well they did in sports.*

Emanating from the conversation is also an idea of segmentation of students. The idea is reflected in how students are viewed based on the subjects they pursue. Emma expresses the idea in her journal, noting that

> *students who do practical subjects have more time to waste than students who do core subjects.*

The section presented what these participants have distinguished as a specific practice of subject polarity, core versus non-core subjects in school, concerning academic succes. The distinction presents practical subjects, including sports, and those pursuing them as not academic enough, in contrast to the significant contribution other subjects make towards ideas of academic success represented as tertiary entry and good jobs.

5.3.2.3 Good Behaviour

From the data set, four of the 12 participants in the study included the idea of good behaviour on the part of students as underpinning their understanding of academic success. In expressing the idea, Ingrid, for example, noted that

> *good behaviour and the ability to be responsible are also important in being called a successful student; academically, doing well lies in the ability to exhibit good behaviour.*

The hallmarks, she further intimates, manifests

> *in attitudes of being self-motivated, responsible, disciplined, respectful, and hardworking, which translates into achieving the goals that students want.*

Emma, for her part, in her photovoice, describes using her photograph (see Figure 5.8) who, in her experience in school, is

> *a successful student is one who is academically doing well and exhibits good behaviour.*

Figure 5. 8 *Badges awarded at school representing a good behaving student*

In the focus group discussions, participants also explored the idea of good behavior as a facet of their understanding of academic performance, which subsequently leads to academic success. However, Sue countered this opinion of good behaviour as a precursor to academic success. For her, a

> *bad behaving student can be successful; most jobs do not look at behaviour; once you can do your job, the employers are ok.*

However, this solitary alternate opinion did not find support in the focus group discussion, where most respondents supported the idea of good behaviour as a criterion for academic performance and academic success.

5.3.2.4 Summary

In summary, the section demonstrates that these students have formulated an understanding of academic success. The awareness that they have developed emphasizes the term within academic ideas of subject content mastery, consistent academic performance, and core subjects (See Figure 5.9). Additionally, they have contrived to include good behaviour as a key facet of their sense of the word. In the end, the perspectives presented by these students

reflect a similar understanding to the generally socially accepted view of the term. The alignment, therefore, implies that these students have not only been keen observers of practice but have also understood the knowledge around the term academic success within the context of education.

Figure 5. 9 *Codes from the data representing students' views of determinants of academic success*

- Consistent achievement of academic performance
- Good behaviour
- Subject content mastery
- Core subjects

5.4 Exploring secondary students perceptions of poor academic performance and academically unsuccessful student

The second part of the first research question explores students' perceptions of poor academic performance and what constitutes being academically unsuccessful. To appreciate secondary students perceptions of the traditional meanings, the study sought to explore how these students had understood the opposite concepts of poor academic performance and academically unsuccessful students. The exploration was deemed necessary because the traditional definitions did not explicitly state but inferred what constituted a poor academic performer or an academically unsuccessful student. In this regard, it was necessary to gauge how these students considered the implied meanings and explore what they believed they meant. Evidence from the findings (See Chapter 5) indicates that these students had notions about the terms and had formulated an understanding using key concepts from the existing definitions of academic performance and academic success to create their knowledge.

The following section discusses the students responses in the study and is presented using the focus codes as unearthed from the responses across the data collection methods.

5.4.1 Defining who is a poor academically performing and unsuccessful student

In analyzing the study's 12 participants' responses to the research question, all the respondents had formed their understanding based on their observations, inside and outside school, of practice of the prevailing definitions. For the respondents, the current definitions had only focused on defining academic performance and academic success; they felt that it was implied that the opposite would apply to students who did not meet the criteria within the definitions. The view is captured across various responses, including those of seven of the 12 participants whose responses were positioned as a comparative analysis, using Ingrid's response as a sample in which she reasoned that

> *a student that does not get amm... above the school's pass mark does not get the average is a poor-performing student.*

Using a photovoice image (see Figure 5.10) of a dilapidated aluminum roof, John presented the argument of his understanding of how *the other students,* as he refers to them, *are defined*. He explained:

> *a non-academic student who, although they conserve some information, some fall through. They remember some but not all information taught in class; these students tend to forget important information and cannot do well in exams; hence, they receive low scores below the school's average and are classified as underperforming students*.

Figure 5. 10 *Representation of the definition of a poor academically performing student*

Contributing to the question, Opal, in her audio journal, outlines the level of their academic performance and tries to situate them within the context of school, noting that these

> *students with an average below the school's average, who are mostly found in the lower tier of the grade level.*

Participants during the focus group noted that students are categorized into two groups in their estimation. The first group consists of students seen as academically performing and academically successful students, and the other group as poor, academically performing, and academically unsuccessful students. These differentiations created by the definitions in school are also accepted and used outside of school. The idea is extracted from transcribed notes from m the focus group discussion:

> *even inna di community people nuh rate you if you nuh have subjects and a special subjects too science, or you good inna maths or English. Students who are good inna welding or suh dem nuh really interested inna dem a mussi only students who duh sports dem pre to but you haffi good inna di particular sports if you naw win den you nuh get consideration. So a nuh only inna school but sports and even you family too dem kinda*

have a likkle bias fi di pickney dem weh bright. Laughter: stay deh all you friend dem too likkle separation gwan deh so to. You haffi just ignore dem and duh your ting. Whole heap a people who have money out deh nuh have nuh maths or science so dat just show she you can mek it without dem things deh too.

*[*Translated by the researcher*: Even in the community, people do not recognize students as being bright or high performing unless they perform in specific subjects such as mathematics, science, or English. Students excelling in vocational subjects are not necessarily considered academic performers. Perhaps only students who excel in sports are considered not academic performers but sports performers, which is seen as good. However, this practice is not only in the communities but also in families and friends who tend to view students with good academic performances, especially in the earlier-mentioned subjects. Nonetheless, one has to ignore these definitions as there are persons who have not achieved these standards but have done well financially. It simply means that achievement can be attained outside of these standards].*

For three of the 12 respondents, while their understanding of what constituted a poor academic performance aligned with the views of their peers, they had a slightly different perception of what constituted an academically unsuccessful student. In the opinion of Ingrid, Kay, Diana, and Opal, in their audio journals, all expressed a belief that

the student with a lack of behaviour, bad work ethics [Ingrid], students that don't have respect nor control over their book work or themselves [Diana], they end up studying practical subjects not seen as really worthwhile as these are not the subjects that will help a student to get into the top college, university or get a top-earning job, you have to be doing like mathematics, science [Kay], and end up leaving school without any

qualification and are unable to obtain a good-paying job and maybe or maybe nor involved illegal activities [Opal].

These delineations from observation of practice in their secondary school served to help students determine and create their definitions of academically and non-academically successful students. A clear understanding of academic performance and academic success appears to have fueled these participants' views of poor academic performance and what it means to be an academically unsuccessful student. They have managed to construct an understanding grasped through the theme of standards demarcated as non-achievement of academic performance, certificates, entry into tertiary institutions, and high-paying jobs.

5.4.2 Behavior as a factor in defining poor academic performance and academically unsuccessful students

Participants stated that poor behaviour was a critical characteristic of poor academic performers and academically unsuccessful students. Marc noted in his audio journal that

dem deh a di student who come to a school and like dem come a school late every day, and dem come a class and do not duh nuh work all dem duh a sit-down and talk talk inna di class an do not pay attention.

[Translated by the researcher: t*hose are the students who come to school late every day, and all they do upon entering the classroom is to talk and not attend to their schoolwork; instead, they sit and talk incessantly, not paying attention*].

Poor work ethics was another common element that these students felt influenced and how they had contrived an understanding of academic performance and academic success. As Sue succinctly put in her audio journal:

non-academically performing students would be known as the time-wasters. They take part in no activities, have in-completed work, and do not have homework, which is disrespectful.

Paul adds, in his audio journal, that these students

have not put in the required work to get to the goal.

Ingrid puts forward that, based on her experience in school, an unsuccessful student was

one that lacked good behavior and a bad work ethic. Poor work ethics leads to not doing schoolwork.

For these students, their experience based on observations in their environment has led them to conclude that students poor behavior is a key factor in determining a poor academic performing student. Additionally, they noted that such character contributed to students becoming academically unsuccessful. The observation of these students is important as it suggests that behaviour plays a role in influencing how students are classified.

5.4.3 Summary of poor academic performance and academically unsuccessful students

In summary, the participants have provided their perception of what is meant by poor academic performance and academically unsuccessful students. Their experiences and observations of happenings inside and outside school have shaped their opinions. From the data, it can be concluded that their perception o. poor academically performing and unsuccessful are those students who fail to achieve the benchmarks used to characterize an academically performing and successful student. Whereas high grades, subject content mastery and retention, good behaviour, core subjects, and high expectations are the hallmarks of academic performance and academic success, the opposite denotes these students. In contrast, these students are characterized by an inability to master and retain subject content, thus

attaining low-grade scores in lower class and grade levels, having poor behaviour, and mainly pursuing practical subjects.

5.5 Chapter Summary

The data revealed that these students understood the traditional meanings behind the word academic performance and academic success. The claim is because there is a similarity between the student's perception and the generally socially accepted understanding. The students have constructed a perception of the term as underpinned by the key codes, high-grade scores, written tests, and rewards. Additionally, their interpretation of academic success is underpinned by ideas of subject content mastery and retention, consistency in academic performance, core subjects, and good behaviour resulting in the ultimate academic success in entry to tertiary institutions. In the end, the data has answered the research question: that these secondary students understand what is traditionally meant by academic performance and academic success.

The conclusion is reinforced by evidence of the perception of what constitutes a poor academically performing and an academically unsuccessful student. Interestingly, the respondents shared an understanding of the opposite type of student as a poor, academically performing, and academically unsuccessful student. In their opinion, poor academic performers and academically unsuccessful students are those who fail to achieve the understood academic performance benchmarks. Due to their lack of academic performance attainment and poor behaviour, these students lack the requisite standards to achieve the benchmark of academic success, one yardstick of entering a tertiary institution.

Having established these understandings, the study aims to identify what sources or spaces have assisted these secondary students in formulating these views and determine how these

influences have helped them make sense of their traditional meanings. These questions are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Findings Research Question # 2

6.1 Overview

This chapter explores the findings of the research question of how they have made sense of the study participants' traditional academic performance and academic success definition through the various data collection methods. It identifies the primary and sub-themes of environment factors (environments in and outside of school and micro-level environments within these spaces) and stereotyping labels (sub-themes of impact, hope, missed opportunities) that have emanated from the data. The research question aimed to identify through the responses of the study's 12 participants, across the data collection methods, how secondary students have made sense of their understanding of academic performance and academic success. The question also explores what factor (s) might have assisted them in interpreting this knowledge.

6.2 How have they made sense of the traditional academic performance and academic success definitions?

The responses of all 12 participating students showed that their interpretations of the traditional knowledge of the terms were influenced by the different environments they occupied. These environments and subspaces include their homes, communities, schools, and other social spaces. In these environments, participants engaged in interactions, observed, and gained experiences around the knowledge underpinning academic performance and academic success that helped shape their interpretations.

The chapter is separated into two sections. The first section of the chapter is organized around these ideas of environmental factors and outlays the various ideas of respondents. The second section explores how these spaces have contributed to shaping these students perspectives of their understanding of the traditional meanings.

6.2.1 School as an influencing environment

The data showed that participants considered their school as playing a significant role in shaping how they came to explain what they understood of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success. Their interpretations came to be based on observations and experiences at individual and collective levels of the behaviour, utterances, and attitudes of teachers, peers, and school administrators. The data reveals that participants believed there were levels of inequality in how teachers, peers, and school administrators, for example, configured and demonstrated care and concern. The disparity they noted was evident in how teachers and school administrators referenced subjects and used these as guiding points to characterize students. Five of the 12 participants expressed this idea across the research data collection methods. For example, in her audio journal and reaffirmed in the one-on-one interview, Sally spoke of the teachers' attitudes and how this influenced how she interprets academic performance and academic success.

> *academic performance means you have to be bright because if you are not bright, then the teachers … they have no confidence in those students who they see as not being bright. So they have no time to waste on them, so these students do not get enough attention from teachers, and they are afraid to ask for help in class and lose confidence in themselves; some feel worthless, and so they do not learn and fail their exams then they do not get recommended to do CXC and leave school without certificates to get into university.*

In her contribution to the discourse, Felecia notes in her audio journal that

> *ignoring students in class mek dem feel like nobady nuh waan have nutin fi dun wid dem which mek dem duh bad inna dem school work, and dat badda some a dem still.*

[Translated by the researcher: *ignoring students in class can make them feel as if no one wants anything to do with them, which makes them do poorly in their school work, which, however, bothers some students]*.

Diana broadens her interpretation of the terms as creating two types of students based on what she has observed of the attitudes of teachers, community, and families and how the terms are projected onto students, noting that

> *well, students receiving positive remarks from their teachers will see themselves as achievers and constantly aim high because they feel positively influenced by their teachers and can have a bright future. On the other hand, students who are told by teachers, persons in their communities, and families that they will not come out to anything of worth because of their failings academically will see themselves as dunce and failures and not aim high and can end up in a life of criminality.'*

Diana inserts that

> *these students, because of lack of care and poor feedback about their abilities from their teachers, end up becoming involved in harmful activities*

Kay also expresses the sentiment in her audio journal and interview. She argued that

> *many of these students, whose self-confidence is low because they feel demotivated by how teachers and even families treat them, see themselves as unworthy of achieving academically because they are told they cannot and will not do so and believe them. So they turn to illegal activities like smoking in school, which makes them sick in the brain*

In her audio journal and reaffirmed in her one-on-one interview, Maize slightly shifts the conversation about teachers' attitudes and their influence on students perspectives, noting

that the disparity in how teachers and school administrators view subjects like sports, for example,

> *as if the subject and students who do sports are not important. Sports is seen as a distracting activity,*
>
> and she believes most teachers think that
>
> *it prevents some students who do it from doing well in their academics, as they do not think most students will reach the top in sports.*

In her opinion, the practice observed inside and outside the school gives the impression that subjects like sports are not considered academic enough and, therefore, not seen as a part of the academic subject group. She expresses this by stating that

> *while being important to some students and an avenue for success, sports is not seen as an important core subject. Both inside and outside school, it is considered a distraction for students who want to pursue this option from achieving in the core subject area…* [Whereas to students] *sports is an important subject that can help those students who pursue it in being successful after leaving school.*

From observations in school and influenced by spaces outside of school, these students have developed an interpretation of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success. Their analysis sees the terms as creating a disparity in how care and expectation are apportioned by school administrators and staff amongst students. Additionally, the terms serve to categorize students and their abilities into two distinct groups, dunce and bright, while defining their levels of self-confidence. In the end, these elements emerging from the practice of the term experienced by some students have two distinct outcomes contributing to students academic performance and academic success. Interestingly, participants do not see

the school as the only space influencing their explanation of the meanings. Other environments outside school have contributed, which are explored below.

6.2.2 The family socioeconomic status as an influencing environmental factor

All 12 participants were keen to talk about the family and socioeconomic conditions. They deliberated across the various data collection methods, their analysis of these factors, their impact on students academic performance and academic success, and how this influenced their interpretation of the term. For example, Sally and Sue, in their audio journals and further supported by other participants in the focus group discussions, noted their reference to family issues as contributing to students poor academic performance and subsequent low academic success rates. Sue, in her journal, expressed that

> *when I say family issues, when your family is poor and has no money, this stops you from having the resources to do well in school.*

Diana, in her contribution to supporting the conversation, noted that

> *especially when your parents are dead, and you live with relatives who have no money to spend on you and your studies, so you don't go to school often, you have no books, and so teachers pick on you, making you feel bad like you cannot do anything but if you don't have the resources how can you do the school work? Negative family issues can cause depression and stress and lead to poor performance in school.*

Marc, also supported by John, in his audio journal, affirms the point noting that

> *some student family have issues at home, like dem nuh have nuh money so parents nuh too have di money fi send dem a school like dem wi come a school like one time per week it can affect dem badly and like dem come school dis week and learn one topic and miss next week do dem do not know weh fi duh fi dah class deh. Suh fi dem is like education nuting cause dem cwan get the grades much less learn di bright subject dem*

suh dem just nuh do well inna school, and dem dem cwan get nuh good work after dem leave school cause dem nuh have nuh nuh subject an even if dem have subject an nouh di right one like maths and English.

[Translated by the researcher: as some *students have families have money issues, they have no money, so the parents do not often have the money to send the children to school may be the student can only attend school once weekly, this affects the student terribly, and they miss the lessons being taught. These students see education as unimportant as they cannot get the grades or even learn the bright subjects; they do poorly in school and end up unable to get a good job when they leave school as they do not have the suitable mathematics subjects or English*].

The negative impact of the correlation emerges among economically poor students who are academically inclined. In the focus group discussions, participants pointed out that these

suh, most students just nuh badda focus pon school but focus pon hustling and meking it cause dem see people who mek it an nuh have nuh subject, so all a dat bout getting A's weh teacha a talk bout look like foolishness.

*[*Translated by the researcher: *most students, therefore, seek to focus not on school but on other non-academic-related activities such as earning a living. They choose this option in their community environment; they have examples of persons with significant earnings and no certificates; therefore, teachers argue that certification and academic performance are necessary to achieve our redundant academic success is not the only form of success.]*

In conclusion, the section provides unambiguous evidence that these participants had crafted an interpretation of academic performance and academic success influenced by the family socioeconomic situations of peers. In their opinion, they had come to explain that

academic performance and academic success were based on a family's socioeconomic condition. In their response, it was seen that how they had connoted academic performance and success was very much influenced by family environment and socioeconomic condition. This space was deemed one of the ultimate determinants of achieving the benchmarks and defined whether they could produce high academic performance and succeed.

6.2.3 Society as an influencing environmental factor

In the focus group discussion, the participants introduced society as an environmental space that influenced their perceptions of what they had understood of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic. The idea was overwhelmingly endorsed and debated. Participants collectively noted that

> *based on how me see the term academic performance and success, is like the school dem a follow some sort a pattern cause de same thing dem a seh dat wi affi get A and B fi dem she wi bright a di same ting if you guh look one job dem a seh if you nuh have A or B grades dem naw tek you nuh matta how you well behave. Suh is like a everyone a follows di same script. We as students cawn change nuh nuh, we just haffi work wid di system.*
>
> [Translated by the researcher*: based on how I see the term academic performance and success, it is as if the school is following a pattern because the school practice is similar to the demands in the job market; those students who will be successful in getting suitable employment are those who have A's or B's. It is as if both schools and the other institutions outside of schools are following a similar policy. As students, we cannot change anything; we just have to work with the system.]*

Students in the focus group discussions also argued that

as student can talk and mek dem know she it nuh right, a foolishness cause you have students who naw get A's but dem good inna mechanics, or electrical or can bake good and can come setup dem owna business. Dem can even hiya some a di bright pickney dem weh nuh mek it. Dem bright inna dem own way and can guh someweh eh dem want anno everybady mek fi guh university and work inna office behind a desk. Sportspeople mek money, even more, dan students who did a get A's inna school suh di system just need fi acknowledge dat and change how demma practice it inna school and stop label people who naw get A's as a dunce and naw guh nuh weh inna life.

[Translated by the researcher: *society needs all types of abilities to succeed; everyone is important. Even students who do not achieve the traditional academic performance definition can become successful. We, as students, can still put our voices forward and show our views.]*

The participants concluded that society has also contributed to framing how they see academic performance and academic success. These students have identified the terms as representing a set unit of benchmarks required to enter post-secondary school's economic and educational spaces. Interestingly, however, participants seem inclined to present an interpretation that contradicts the socially accepted perception suggesting that the traditional understanding of academic performance and academic success standards are not the only standard bearers of what connotes performance and success.

In summary, this sample of students recognizes that diverse environments have influenced how they interpret the meanings of academic performance and academic success. The connotations they have formed around the terms explored below are products of different spaces, observations, experiences, and interactions around the terms and the practices that occurred within. The following section explores how the influences of these spaces have

manifested in how students have come to make sense of their understood meanings and practices.

6.3 Exploring how secondary students have made sense of their understanding of the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success

Having explored how the respondents believe different environments may have influenced their views of the traditional meanings, this section of the chapter explores the interpretations influenced by the different environments these students have generated of the meanings. The section is organized around the central interpretation of the meanings provided by the students, a stereotyping label, and its impact that categorizes students based on their abilities to achieve the standards in the meanings. All of these are discussed below.

6.3.1 Academic performance and academic success interpreted as stereotyping labels

Within the focus group discussions, participants provided their interpretations of the meanings noting that they represented stereotypical labels applied to students to differentiate their academic competence. A sample of the participants' discussion on the issue is presented below.

> *You know weh mi come fi understand and interpret di words dem weh teacha use bout academic performance and success? To how mi see dem, dem is like a tag round pickney neck weh teacha put deh and everybody fallow; di tag can stay wid you fi life if you nuh have help or strong enough fi get rid a it and a nuh everybady strong or have support suh it just like stay like a leash around dem neck fi life, dat wicked star*.
>
> (Taken from participants' conversations in the Focus Group discussion)
>
> [Translated by the researcher*: do you know what I have come to understand and interpret the words teachers use; academic performance and success? Based on how I see it, these words are like a tag around the necks of children/students that teachers*

have put there, and everyone else follows and considers students in this way. The tags/words follow you for life; if you have help or you are strong enough, you can remove the tag placed there by teachers; however, not everyone has supported or is strong enough, so the tags stay with these persons throughout their lives, that is unfortunate.]

Establishing a perception of the traditional meanings as tags, participants went further to talk about their assessment of the impact labeling and its subsequent categorization of academic performer/academically successful and poor academic performer/academically unsuccessful have on the respective students. The idea of impact is presented by Sally in her audio journal, in which she argued that

children can feel some stereotype caused by the label …. Those labeled as underperformers and unsuccessful will feel unworthy, not favored, and they feel demotivated. A sense of down and no motivation. Those labeled as performers will feel motivated and perform well and even better. S*tudents absorb the labels and internalize them, making them real.*

In her audio journal, Ingrid, while advocating a similar position of the meanings as labels that result in differentiating students abilities and causing contrasting emotions amongst students, referenced its role in further distinguishing student placement in school. The distinction in placement manifests in

those who are labeled as academic performers are placed at a higher level and will always continue at that high level because it is said that they are already unsuccessful, so they are grouped, and those classified as non-academic performers feel that they have been placed in classes where there is no expectation of them succeeding in life. Still, some of them try to continue to do their best, although as mi seh is like we nuh

important … like dem students deh weh inna di bright class or top class. It even show inna how di teacha dem treat wi, some don't even badda fi come a class an teach, nobady naw motivate most a wi who need motivation.

For Maize, the differentiation and distinguishing nature of the labels serve to

mark a student as either bright or dunce; they practically can determine if a student will not come to anything or that they will make it in life.

For Sue, in her audio journal,

the labels can deter students initial goals that they had coming into the school.

The idea of deterrence from achieving individual goals was voiced by Maize, who noted

that some students know they are going to feel like they probably want to give up on their career or on that dream because they are not going to feel that smart enough to become like a doctor.

Interestingly, Ingrid sees some students as fighting against the labels, especially those classified as poor academic performers and academically unsuccessful. They interpret the labels as tags to be

ignore the labels and instead focus on what they can do and want to do, not what is expected, like academics; some students are focused on skills… students focus on their preferred areas and try to excel in these in their own space and time.

From the data, it can be asserted that these sample participants' has made sense of the meaning, shaped by their environmental interactions, as emotionally impacting stereotyping labels that create classification levels amongst students that extend to a categorization of their abilities and aspirations. As noted, participants' perception of the meanings has focused on the emotional impact they have had on students, which has helped them. Labels that put serve to

place some students outside the frame of academic performer and academically successful while firmly positioning others inside the frame. These are discussed below.

6.3.1.1 Academic performance and academic success as stereotyping labeling and their impact on some secondary students

A generalized agreement among participants was the impact of labeling on those who received them, whether a student is labeled as an academic performer and an academically successful or as a poor academic performer and an academically unsuccessful student. Paul alluded to this idea in his audio journal, noting that …. ‘

> *because when you classify them as academically performing, they are impacted positively, so they get confident and do their work; when you classify them as non-academically performing, the label negatively impacts them... so they just give up and do accordingly*.

Identification with this viewpoint emanated throughout the data, as explained below.

6.3.1.1.1 The different faces of the impact of these stereotyping labels

Participants were keen to respond to the mixed feelings they experienced due to the particular label of academic performance and academic success ascribed to them. Sue supports the argument in her audio journal, noting that some students…

> *respond to the information and make it a part of them by pushing themselves to the next level, while others would take it as criticism and stop trying and give up.*

In her audio journal, Ingrid offered an alternative view, noting that some students labeled as poor academic performers and academically unsuccessful have ...’

> *have no concern about passing or failing; they want to know that they are doing the work. Some of these students have no plans for their future; they just go to school.*

Ingrid intimated that this response might result from

> *students having different goals which reflect their skills, requiring a different response to the labels*.

Emma aptly depicted the characterization using photovoice and the image of a partly flowering shrub (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6. 1 *A flowering shrub an interpretation of academic performance*

Emma's explanation of the photograph noted that the flower represents the three interpretations that she saw secondary students had created as their interpretation of the definition of academic performance. In her reasoning, she noted:

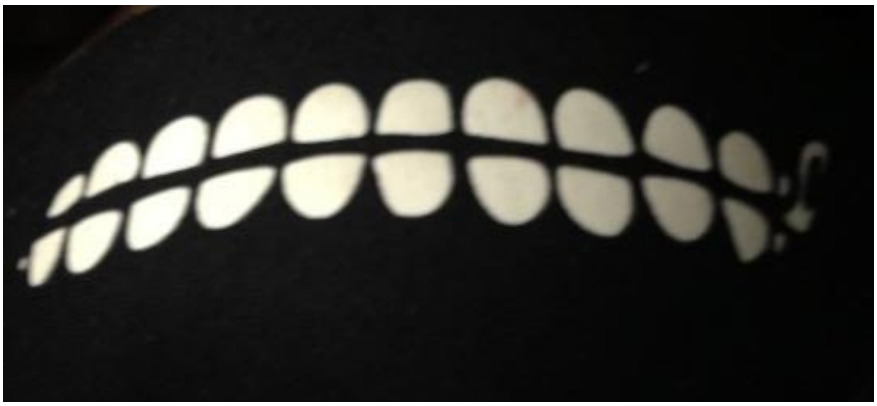
> *some students see the words as a stereotyping label and decide to be laid-back; they tell themselves that they cannot get high scores and do not like maths or many of the other subjects they find hard to pass, and they don't care how teachers see them. They see the labels as saying they are dunce and behave negatively; some hide themselves and their abilities. Because of these labels, these students continued to do badly in school. Some of these students were hurt and feel useless and not interested in trying to achieve high grades or anything. Another set of students see the words and feel bad but*

try to push above the labels and make something of themselves. Sadly, many of these students were never successful and would lose hope and pull back; some would continue trying.

6.3.1.1.2 Impact and missed opportunities

Using photo voice, John expressed that the impact of labelling was the missed opportunities. Using the image of a mask with a closed zipper (see Figure 6.2), he postulated that it…

Figure 6. 2 *A zipper about to be closed representing an interpretation of the impact of the concepts interpreted as stereotyping labels on students opportunities*



represents students labelled academic performers. Some students planned to become lawyers and teachers, and the mask has a zipper. Its opening means that students had a vast array of opportunities to become what they possibly wanted; however, labelled… this student loses an opportunity to achieve… the student's future is impacted negatively from the lost opportunities, so they may end up not achieving their goals.

6.3.1.1.3 Students emotional struggles: an impact of labelling

Another impact some participants were keen to express is described by Maize; she noted in her audio journal that there is…

> *the emotional loss of being labeled like they are underperforming*.

Kay epitomized the feeling in her audio journal, saying that…

> *these students feel left out… a sense of feeling down and demotivated. The teachers do not care about these students… like nobody cares about them; they feel as they are not favoured even if they are not trying, and they still feel demotivated*.

Felecia supported the sentiment, using her audio journal to report that…

> *students with negative labels of underperformers end up lacking self-esteem and feeling embarrassed and stressed out.*

Sally did not share their feelings; instead, she suggested that…

> *those labeled as performers will feel motivated and perform well and even better.*

Nonetheless, the idea of labels as a harmful force to secondary students, leading to poor academic performance and low academic success, is very prominent across the data set. Participants, including Ingrid, argue that

> *others [students] may be impacted negatively, damaging their self-esteem and demotivating them; this is bad for their future.'*

Using his camera to contribute to the photovoice, John adds to the discussion using a pictorial representation of a cocoa plant (see Figure 6.3).

Figure 6. 3 *Image of wilted and dying cocoa plants representing the impact of the interpretation of the concepts as stereotyping labels on students' academic success*

the plant grew from a small seed and grew into something big; then, the leaves started to shed. When the plant was small, it always felt that it would grow into a big, successful plant. While growing, it met other trees, like bananas and plantain, who criticized the cocoa and started to get demotivated and not believe in what it was told before. So, his leaves start to wither. Demotivation in school is bad; it stops some student's from succeeding. This demotivation in school shows in how other students may 'grudge' a student who enters school as a high-performing student; other students in the higher grade see this bright student and start to bully this student, which causes the student to lose motivation, start to do poorly in school academically. Older students tended not to support the younger students to encourage them to do well.

In her contribution to the conversation, Maize provided a unique perspective on the feelings of labeling and subsequent categorization in her audio journal. She noted that these students

feel as if they are underperforming…if they are not doing well in academics, maths, and English, they are failing in general maybe that student may not be book smart, you know, but smart in other areas, but they are not unsuccessful.

Ingrid, in her audio journal, further suggested that this…

hurts students who are not viewed as successful because everyone's skill varies. Some may be successful in maths and English while others may be skillful with their hands, like cooking.

As Opal suggested in her audio journal, the solution is for students to…

not look at others; they should look at their own goals and motivate themselves.

According to students, the negative psychological impact of being classified as a non-academically performing student only serves to cause low self-esteem in these students, resulting in them not achieving academic success. However, the students counter such ideas, pointing out that students should focus on their goals and seek to define their measures of academic success to overcome the negative result of labeling.

6.3.1.1.4 Hope

While those participants interpreted the definitions as stereotyping labels and identified the negative impacts that the labels have on students thus ascribed, they also noted that they should not deter from their goals. Instead, they should rely on the support and the hope inspired by persons in their environment to offset the negativity. The argument is very prominent in the response of Kay, who offered an alternate perspective in their audio journals, suggesting that

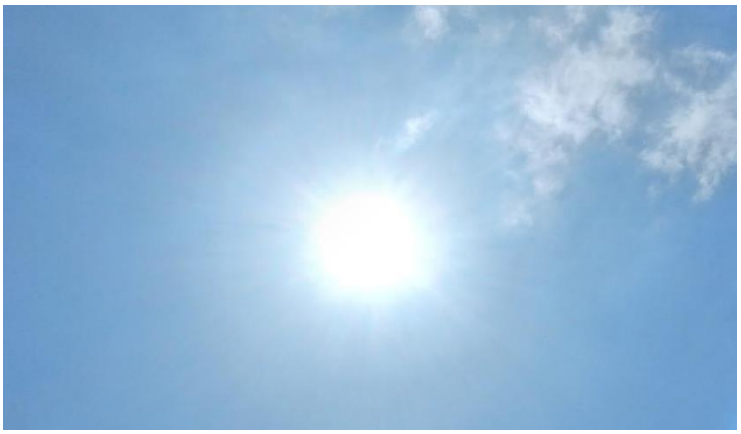
ignoring the negative labels shows that they can become successful. This can be because of your parents giving you positive vibes, building your self-esteem, even strangers

Emma, using photovoice, further opined the idea through her image of the sun shining in the sky (see Figure 6.4), suggesting that

motivation can come from anywhere.

Regardless of the negative impact of the labels, students felt there was hope if only students could identify positives from the diverse factors within their environment.

Figure 6. 4 *Image representing sunshine and the possible impact of labels on students hopes and aspirations*



6.4 Moving beyond seeing the traditional definitions as a stereotyping label

The data showed that most of the study's respondents have come to make sense, based on their experiences and observations in different spaces, of the definitions and, by extension, the terms academic performance and academic success as stereotyping labels. In the views of the study's participants, those students unable to attain the standards within the definitions, thereby attaining the labels of poor academic performers and academically unsuccessful students, these classifications adversely impact their self-identity and emotions.

Interestingly four of the 12 respondents had a contrasting perspective on how they had come to make sense of a particular aspect of the traditional definitions from their peers. For these students, they perceived the idea of written tests not as stereotyping labels aimed at causing literacy embarrassment but as

terms that are present to push students from their comfort zones to the next level as they learn the necessary skills needed to do well in society (Focus Group discussion).

The point was previously expressed in different ways; for example, Sally, in her audio journal, noted that

written examinations are a good way to test knowledge of information taught over a period.

Diana, in her contribution to this alternate perspective, in her audio journal, adds that

w*ritten examination requires these things: memorize, comprehension, knowledge, and critical thinking. I feel good about this.*

While Diana broadens the idea of the relevance of the definitions and the elements that make them up, suggesting that

the idea of written tests is fundamental and not stereotyping as when getting a job, an employer may ask you to do a written examination in the interview. Most job interviews have a writing test, so students must learn how to do these in school.

6.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter highlighted that participants' have discerned a role played by different environments in contributing to interpreting the meanings of academic performance and academic success. In their estimation, these environmental factors define students' perceptions of academic performance and success outcomes and their ideas of the terms as forms of characterizing and categorizing students. In the end, these representations framed within the context of the terms come to represent stereotyping labels that have had an emotional impact of demotivating and reducing self-confidence and hope, particularly of those students labelled poor academic performers and academically unsuccessful. Despite these adverse impacts,

respondents have voiced optimism that these students can find hope and re-establish themselves.

Chapter 7 Findings Research Question # 3

7.1 Overview

The chapter explores the responses to the research question of how Jamaican secondary students believe the system should define the academic performance and academic success of the study's 12 participants and how participants believe society should define academic performance and success. The data revealed two views of how respondents felt the terms should be defined. On the one hand, some students advocated reframing the traditional meanings, while others contended that labels should remain traditionally framed despite the stereotyping. The data collection methods provided valuable findings, demonstrating that participants had views on the research phenomenon as displayed in their responses to the research questions.

7.2 How do Jamaican secondary students believe the system should define academic performance and academic success

Across the data, the responses of the 12 participants reflected three distinct perspectives that form the themes of this chapter. The first theme of reframing was advocated by participants who believe there should be a change in the construction of the meanings. The second theme reflects the participants' views, who perceived that the current structure encouraged all students. The third theme of expansion proposes retaining the original definition and including other previously excluded areas. These contrasting viewpoints are discussed.

The chapter is arranged around these three themes, which shows the strength of participants' opinions on this significant phenomenon. The chapter ends with an overview of the participants' perspectives, further discussed in the next chapter.

7.2.1 Retaining the traditional definition of academic performance

For seven of the 12 of the study's participants (Maize, Ingrid, Marc, Diana, Felecia, Opal, and Paul), their views of how the traditional definitions should be shaped reflected the

current construct. In other words, they perceived the definitions as retaining their current form. Their arguments are reflected in the discourses below where for example, Marc, in his audio journal, noted that:

> *how me woulda describe a student who is performing well in school is the student who like always getting those grades, on top, they are always on time, getting higher grades naw drop.*
>
> **[**Translated by the researcher*: how I would describe a student who is performing well in school, I would say are the students who are always getting those grades, being on top, getting higher grades, never falling below the average.]*

Opal opined in her audio journal that it is about…

> *the constant averages of 70% and above*.

This is a point supported by Maize and Paul, expressed by Maize:

> *student who scores the average or above gets the highest grade and is always maintaining a high grade*.

These participants' perspectives collectively expressed that academic performance and academic success do not include sports or behavior; instead, it refers strictly to academic subjects. This idea is captured in Maize's audio journal, where she opined that

> *no matter how well you do in areas like sports if you don't have academic average, you are not considered an academic performer.*

Diana, in reflecting on the correlation between being called an academic performer and an academically successful student and their behaviour, argued that

students who are described as non-academic performers and unsuccessful don't have respect or control.

The discussion in the audio journals shows that some participants have resolved to retain the current definitions of the terms. Delving further into the rationale behind the thought in the focus group discussion, a few participants contended that

the meanings, although hard and embarrassing for some students, really just want to push students who are failing and motivate them to do better. It can work.

In the end, the justification for their positioning was anchored around the reverse psychology approach to motivate students to achieve, thus addressing the issue of the high level of poor performance and low academic success rates. However, while these students held this position, others felt that a different approach had to be taken to address the phenomenon being studied.

7.2.2 Expanding the traditional definition of academic performance

While supporting the traditional definition and practice, the other view adopted by some students inserted the idea of an appreciation of students efforts. Six of the study's 12 respondents (Ingrid, Kay, Sally, Sue, John, and Emma) advocated this principle across the different data collection tools. According to Kay's audio journal, underpinning the group's perspective is a view that asserts:

academic performance makes everyone learn, but is not the bright ones alone, those getting the average or above. Everyone learns. Academic performance is not just the ones who are performing well. A student who is trying is an academic performer.

Sustaining the perspective is a principle, as John explained in his photovoice one-on-one interview:

everyone passes, no one fails, and everyone performs to the best of their abilities, which may not be on par with the standard benchmark, but the student has tried, putting their best effort forward.

For these participants, a definition and practice of academic performance, while crediting to the value of high average achievement, also recognizes and celebrates all students efforts as academic performance, giving no greater or lesser value to any output. Two key phrases are prominent in their views – 'trying' and 'putting their best effort' Using an image of a faceless student sitting at a desk, Emma annotated her photograph (see Figure 7.1):

Figure 7. 1 *Image of how participants believe the society should define academic performance and academic success*

A performing student is willing to do their best. trying and putting their best effort in all they do is the best of many students abilities in school, which they know may not put their performance at the level, but their efforts should be recognized and appreciated as good academic performance. If only we could just see students for their abilities, maybe we could appreciate their efforts more instead of celebrating one set and belittling another. The students labeled as poor performers are willing to showcase their talent, which is not necessarily at the highest level, but these students are willing to contribute to a team's achievements.

These participants contend that another area for inclusion is a definition and practice that explicitly includes soft learning areas. Five of the six participants (Ingrid, Emma, John, Sally, and Sue), who support the idea of expansion, advocated for this idea. For example, in her audio journal, Ingrid suggested that…

> *a student who does well in school does not only excel academically but also does well in extracurricular activities. They socialize and engage with their peers with a common interest.*

In his photovoice and one-on-one interview, John noted that an academically performing student is…

> *a student who has something to show that they are doing well in school, a certificate, a badge, a medal that, for me, is a student who has done well. Having good behavior and participate. Doing something useful based on the student's ability is a performing student. Therefore, performance is not limited to academics but involves various areas.*

Meanwhile, Sally pointed out in her audio journal and affirmed in her one-on-one interview an idea of

> *everyone is performing; students, in my estimation, once you are making progress in school and are involved in extracurricular activities.*

7.2.3 Reframing the definition of academic performance

First introduced into the study by Maize in her audio journal as her response to the question, the idea of adopting a reframing approach gained momentum in the focus group discussion through its introduction to the other participants through the storyboard. Maize's idea found acceptance amongst the six participants advocating an expansion of the traditional definition (Ingrid, Kay, Sally, Sue, John, and Emma).

For proponents of the reframe agenda, correcting the phenomenon resulting from the stereotyping label was not about trying to fit the affected students into an existing definition. Instead, these students argued for a more drastic approach positing separating the word academic from the term academic performance. Using the word performance on its own would create a more inclusive concept that looks beyond scholastic achievement. In her audio journal, Maize presents the idea that…

> *performer is a better word as a performer could be anybody; the academic performer is only about school subjects*.

Her idea is supported, but in another context by Kay in her audio journal, who opines that not all subjects are of equal value; she noted that

> *studying practical subjects is not worthwhile as these are not the subjects that will help a student get into the top college, university, or get a top-earning job; you must be doing like mathematics, science, and so on. So, it is better for students to try focusing on those; if not, they are just wasting their time as they cannot really get much success; even if they get rich, they are still not seen as academically successful. Studying practical subjects is not lifelong learning.*

Although not expressed in other students' photovoice, audio journals, or one-on-one interviews, subject valuing and categorization became a focal point of discussion in the focus group. Several participants aligned themselves with Maize's idea, which in their opinion, stereotyped the subjects and the students who did practical subjects. In the end, in summarizing the views of the participants in the focus group discussion, it could be paraphrased as

> *removing the word academic from performance to have performance as a word by itself would give for a much broader understanding which would now include all areas of learning, including extra-curricular activities, sports, and other areas in school*.

The supporters in the focus group discussions who favoured the viewpoint further contended that this was important for students such as…

> *the sports students who prefer this way and therefore do very well in sports feel compelled to prove themselves all over in a different way in an area that they are weaker in; this is unfair to these students. Adding academic to performance stops some students from pursuing their careers or practical areas or seen as performing, doing well simply because the school gives more value to maths, reading, and writing than other talents.*

However, the focus group discussion also endorsed the perspective of the centrality and dominance of subject averages as the foundation of academic performance. The arguments supporting the viewpoint contended by

> *even sports students need to be able to read, write, and do maths, so they must do well in these areas, and in all areas of life outside of school, these are important skills to have. Even sports athletes need to learn to read and sign contracts in the future and do mathematics to count their earnings from sports. Not having academic qualifications puts the students who do not have them at a disadvantage to bounce back or have a good life if their sports careers fail.*'

Within the focus group discussions, some students opposed the view noting that

> *such students do not necessarily need academic* (subjects) *as they can have backup plans if their careers in sports or other areas that have lesser academic qualifications need to fail*.

The conversation culminated with merging the perspectives that sought to appreciate all the viewpoints. In the end, contriving a perspective that held that while academic subjects come into play, there had to be a removal of the achievement of school averages as the measure

of performance to ensure that the concept represented all students abilities and talents. Thus as the focus group discussion concluded with this comment,

> *allowing us to see a performing student as one who tries their best is also a performer. The level of the academic requirement being about 'high' grades as described by A's and B's ignores and removes the non-academic abilities students from the space, punishes them what they can do; it is not their fault, it is what they can do, they can still become something great and live a good life despite teachers trying to belittle their abilities. Instead, they suggest 'removing the idea of As and Bs as the only way to classify as an academic performer and successful student. This allows every student to be recognized regardless of their abilities and valued.*

Students responses point to them establishing two distinct perspectives on how they believe academic performance should be defined and practiced. On the one hand, some students hold a very traditional viewpoint adhering to the tenets of the conventional belief of academic performance. In contrast, others contend that separating the term 'academic' from 'performance' would enable a broader concept that allows students of diverse abilities and goals to identify and align with the concept.

7.3 How the participants think the system should define academic success

The data showed that the 12 participants of the study had mixed views on the research question. The respondents were divided in their opinions on how the traditional terms of academic performance should be framed. What this means for identifying alternate solutions to addressing the phenomenon is explored in the Discussion chapter. The following section explores their views on academic success and how it should be constructed.

7.3.1 Retaining the traditional definition of academic success

Five participants, Sally, Marc, Felecia, Paul, and Opal, explored the first perspective. These respondents opined a traditional concept perspective focusing on high academic average grades. Retention of the conventional definition is evident in Sally's remark on whom she believes qualifies as an academically successful student. She opined that…

> *an academically successful student who gets good academic grades can leave school and get a job. A student who does not have any subject but can achieve their goal can be called successful.*

The idea is similarly shared by Paul, who posits that academic success refers to…

> *a student who focuses on his work and gets high grades as well.*

His point is supported by Felecia, who argues:

> *a student's academic performance and CXC results define the student.*

In her contribution to the discourse Opal in her audio journal and one-on-one interview, noted that….

> *Academically successful persons [now] in a stable job, lawyers, doctors, police, soldiers.*

Similar to the discussion on the rationale for retaining the traditional framing of academic performance, in the focus group discussion, proponents of the idea also positioned the notion of

> *the meanings representing a push force to encourage all students to succeed.*

There was an undercurrent notion that

the meanings have existed for a long time, and many students have tried and succeeded, so others should try and similarly not give up no matter how many times they fail, they could achieve in the end.

7.3.2 Creating a more inclusive definition of academic success

Three (Kay, Ingrid, and John) of the remaining six participants posited an alternate position in their audio journals. Across their responses, the participants noted arguments, including

…trying. Success is all about trying

[Kay, audio journal]

…the student tries hard and can apply the knowledge gained in the classroom to everyday life to solve problems. Does not have to gain a tertiary education. It is about making your career successful.

(Ingrid, audio journal)

…all students are successful; it is just that some students may do a bit more to get to the top. All students start as successful based on their abilities; some students abilities may put them at a higher level of achievement than others. (John, photovoice)

The focus group discussion supports this argument, with Ingrid noting that…

every student is successful in their own right; it is about their abilities and what that ability allows them to do, then that is their success. Your best could be 40% based on your ability; you should be seen as achieving academic success.

Eight of the 12 participants, Maize, Ingrid, Sue, Emma, Marc, Diana, and Paul, [none of these participants had commented on effort as an element of academic success, and John shared a perspective of academic success as having the right attitude. For these participants, an

essential aspect of academic success was the ability to have the right attitude. In the focus group discussions, these participants noted that

> *academic success is about having the right attitude, including being a responsible [opined by Ingrid and Diana in their audio journal], self-motivated, and a lifelong learner [posited by Diana and Marc in their audio journals], establishing a good relationship with peers and having the right behavior [Sue in her audio journal], and being focused. These characteristics drive the students to success.*

Emma offered her contribution through photovoice as depicted in Figure 7.2; she annotated that…

Figure 7. 2 *Images of how participants believe society should define the terms academic performance and academic success beyond academics*

> *successful students go beyond to help; they can represent the school anywhere because of their behavior and ability to score their average. Although the scoring average is not the ultimate, it is really about behavior, the right behavior.*

Maize, in her audio journal, offered:

> *a successful student can be described as being responsible.*

Sue adds to the notion of the importance of 'character,' suggesting that…

> *a successful student basically has a trend-right, has a trend of where he knows where he is going, sets a plan for a future plan right, and he has a mindset toward that plan.*

Diana asserts a series of personal characteristics that underpin academic success in her view, including…

responsible, self-motivated, and believe in lifelong learning.

The same point emerged from Ingrid's audio journal in which she argued that…

success is more than just grades; it is about the student's ability to participate in extracurricular activities and talk with peers, showing that they can take what they learn in the classroom to what they do outside the classroom… a person does not need to go to university to be successful in their chosen career path.

The data highlighted that the secondary school participants had definite perspectives on the concept of academic success. The diversity of viewpoints showed that the traditional definition and practice of academic success had been interpreted differently. This led to different opinions on how the traditional meaning of success should be framed.

7.4 Chapter Summary

In reviewing the data for the chapter, the data analysis unearthed three key themes, emphasizing alternate perspectives indicating that respondents were inclined towards a change from the traditional ethos and messaging of the meanings of the terms. The change for some respondents represents hope in altering how students, more so academically challenged, see the traditional meanings not as negative stereotypes but as positive attributes pushing them beyond their ordinary selves into students capable of excelling. While for others, the change symbolizes new thinking that could either expand or erase the traditional philosophies

Chapter 8 Discussion

8.1 Overview

The consistently high numbers of secondary school students failing to achieve academic performance and academic success post-secondary school continue to be of concern within Jamaican society. Resolving the issue, as the plethora of literature on student voice in recent years has shown, cannot lie only in the ideas of the educational experts, practitioners, and theorists whose ideas have seemingly failed to produce a satisfactory theoretical or otherwise explanation for the learning and achievement problems facing students in school. The data retrieved from the research methods show that these participants have created an understanding and interpretation of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success. The chapter draws on findings positioning them within Social Constructionism theory, as outlined in the methodology [Chapter 4]. It uses the theory to explore the role different environments students occupy have played in shaping their perspectives of academic performance and academic success to understand the phenomenon better.

. The Social Constructionism theory sees knowledge as a product of the social interactions among individuals in which ideas and experiences, and observation of practice around particular issues are exchanged, refined, and adopted to form knowledge (Rüschenpöhler & Markic, 2020). Throughout the data collected, participants continuously refer to different environments, including school, community, peers, and the observed practices used to shape their own views of concepts

The responses show that environments have influenced knowledge construction, and these students have opinions regarding the phenomenon, affirming the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the study. Their perspectives also demonstrate how their social interaction discussing observations of practice and engagement with specific terms in different

environments have helped them understand, interpret, and appreciate the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success have made to the situation. Moreover, how they believe the meanings should be constructed.

The data showed that from their discussions around the terms inside and outside school, these students understand the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success. Their understanding is underpinned by the same terms and aligns with the socially accepted perspective. Additionally, the data showed that students influenced by their experiences had made sense of their understood meanings. Interestingly, their environment-shaped interpretation, fashioned by their unique experiences (Rose et al., 2013), and their perceptions of the impact of these meanings on students contrast with the socially accepted perspective. The result of their understanding and interpretation is a series of mixed emotions from these students regarding framing these meanings.

These views, discerned from the data analysis, support a point earlier articulated by Gentilucci (2004) that students, as determiners and the source of the phenomenon, can provide help in providing perspectives of their learning and performance that creates an alternate theoretical explanation for their learning problems. An understanding predicated on their different environmental encounters and reflections around the meanings of academic performance and academic success that allows them to produce ideas not considered. These student participants' ideas represent alternate perspectives that can help better understand the phenomenon and identify solutions (Ajjawi et al., 2020).

The chapter discusses these findings framed within the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that underpin the study as presented by the participants using their responses to the following research questions

1. How have Jamaican secondary students understood the traditional socially accepted definitions of the terms academic performance and academic success?
2. How have Jamaican secondary students made sense of their understanding of the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success?
3. How do Jamaican secondary students believe the system should define academic performance and academic success?

The chapter will discuss the findings outlined in the preceding three chapters, framed within the context of the literature and the methodological processes, exploring each research question separately.

8.2 Understanding of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success.

This section explores how these secondary students understood the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success. The findings show that participants, in their interactions in the different spaces, have identified some key standards that frame the practice relating to the traditional meanings. The standards identified by these students [for academic performance are high-grade scores in written standardized tests, good behaviour, and mastery of subject content in core subjects. While for academic success in post-secondary school, their standards of attending a tertiary institution and having high-paying jobs align with the socially accepted benchmarks.

8.2.1 Students' understanding of academic performance and academic success as specific standards

The literature points to an understanding of academic performance as high grades on standardized tests, particularly in core subjects, while academic success is epitomized as attending a tertiary institution and gaining high-paying employment after leaving school (Gentilucci, 2004; Lamas, 2015). In analyzing the data, it is evident that these students have similarly been influenced by practice, particularly their school, into interpreting these factors

as underpinning their understanding of the meanings of academic performance and academic success. Influenced by the emphasis they observed and experienced, in referencing academic performance in their school as high-grade scores (Narad & Abdullah, 2016) in written standard tests (Cassady & Johnson, 2002) and mastery of content knowledge in specific subjects of English, mathematics, and science (Anderton et al., 2017) these students have come to develop their knowledge in defining the concepts. Additionally, they have also accepted a similar framing around academic success as also influenced by practice in their school with its emphasis on specific standards of students must be able to achieve academic performance (Colarelli, 1991) and gain entry into a tertiary institution, thereby attaining a high-paying job (Cachia et al., 2018).

The students understanding of the meanings was strictly based on an individual student's ability to achieve these specific standards with no deviation. As the data showed, the participants validated their belief in these standards, arguing that students who scored below the school's average grade score on standard written tests because they had both failed to grasp contents in mathematics, science, and English and struggled with literacy were in their opinion not considered academic performers. Similarly, students who post-secondary school were unable to matriculate into a tertiary institution and gain high-paying jobs were deemed not academically successful.

These understandings reflected recognition and acceptance of how society, through school, had framed the knowledge around these two concepts. These acknowledgments subsequently guided their adoption of these standards to influence the framing of their understanding. Such thinking showed that these students understood the conceptual practice underpinning the concepts as they occurred in their environments to influence their own perceptions aligning them to the socially accepted understanding.

Interestingly, however, the participants understood the meanings of academic performance and academic success beyond the specific standards underpinning the socially accepted definitions. Based on lived experiences, academic performance, and academic success were also characterized by good behaviour (Mir et al., 2018). They perceived good behaviour as respect, diligence to tasks, and discipline, underpinning the attainment of the other standard, thus making this quality the panacea for academic performance and academic success. Therefore, students who fail to demonstrate good behaviour will not achieve academic performance or academic success. The understanding from observation in school, particularly of good behaviour as a facet of defining academic performance and academic success, not only underscored the influenced happenings in the environments on students views but also offered an opportunity for students to contribute to knowledge by their extension of the conceptual framework of the study. Including this additional standard in their understanding broadens the concepts that make up the socially accepted perceptions of the meanings.

Interestingly, from their experiences, these students have perceived that academic standards have not only anchored the definitions of academic achievement and academic success. Additionally, they affirm, buoyed by their environmental experiences, that the psychological component relating to individual students' personality factors is also contributory (Mateus et al., 2021; Mihaela, 2015). The consistent reference throughout the data by the students to the role of practices in their school and their subsequent discussions around these happenings in helping secondary students frame their understanding of academic performance and success around specific standards resonate with the conceptual and theoretical frameworks adopted by the study to explore the phenomenon. The data suggests that students have created an aligned understanding of the meanings to that of the traditional perspectives. Using their observations and experiences in their social interactions to construct their own, yet similar, perceptions, as posited by Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2020).

The findings highlight that these students have understood the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success. This is evident in the similarity in their interpretation of the specific standards as emphasized in the traditional definitions of high-grade scores and not effort or low grades, mastery of subject content knowledge specifically in mathematics, science, and English, and not an emphasis on practical or vocational subjects. Similarly, their distinction in the meaning of academic success as representing tertiary attendance and not vocational school or apprenticeship, and high-paying job versus minimum wage earnings.

These views suggest that the notion of students not understanding the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success can dispel the reason for their high academic failure and poor academic success rates. While the response to the first research question closes the questioning of understanding, the answer to the rationale behind the phenomenon remains. Perhaps the answer to the question could be found in the second research question, which explores how the students made sense of their understanding. Could how they interpret their understanding shed any light on the rationale behind high levels of academic performance failings and low levels of academic success amongst secondary students?

8.3 Making sense of students understanding

As the evidence points out that these students have understood the traditional meanings of performance and academic success, one question has been answered: it has been affirmed that these students know what is socially meant by and accepted as academic performance and academic success. Analyzing the data on the second research question, how have they made sense of the traditional academic performance and academic success definitions, it is evident that from their interactions in the different environments around the concepts underpinning the terms, they have formulated somewhat contrasting interpretations of these meanings that perhaps can offer some insight into the phenomenon.

8.3.1 Environmental factors that influence sense-making

Like the responses to the first research question, the participants were keen to talk about the role environment; specifically, their school, played in helping them form their knowledge around the concepts. In answering the second question of greater significance was the level of emphasis participants placed on the role of the environment, going beyond school, in shaping the sense they made of understanding the meanings. The role of family, school, peers, home community, and society figured prominently as contributors to how they interpreted the perceived meanings.

The prevalence of the role of environments in shaping these students knowledge around the meanings of academic performance and academic success resonated from the responses of eight of the study's 12 participants from the data set. Their responses reflected a significant influence from these spaces in shaping how they experienced their understanding of the meanings and how they came to shape their interpretations of the meanings. However, while participants were able to project their understanding and perspectives of academic performance and academic success as being influenced by social engagements and the discourse within, they were not necessarily focused on ascribing any parity of importance to any of these social interactions over the other. Instead, the participants positioned each type of social interaction as integral to how they came to understand and make sense of the traditional meanings and establish their meanings (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013).

In the end, they emerge from these spaces with socially shaped perceptions that reflect the sense they have made of the knowledge. It is evident from their responses that based on their observations and experiences in their environments, particularly their school, they formed a perspective about the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success. From the data, students continuously referred to how they observed the terms being practiced in their school and the impact these observations have had on them as students, thereby

influencing their views and feelings about the terms. Students reflected on how the difference in favourable treatment towards students classified as academic performers and academically successful versus the not-so-favourable treatment towards those deemed as not achieving academic performance and being academically unsuccessful guided their perception of the meanings.

Another space occupied by students that influenced their opinion of the terms is their family and socio-economic conditions. Students ability, or lack thereof, to access necessary resources has influenced how they think about and engage with the ideas of academic performance and success (Takashiro, 2017). In the end, students feel that their lack of resources limits their ability to learn, thus resulting in their poor academic performance. This causes these students to become characterized in school as academic underperformers to whom little to no expectations of academic success are attributed.

Another environment that students identified as contributing to how they interpret the meanings was their communities. A determinant of the family's socioeconomic situation, the community a student, resided in played a significant role in how they came to construe academic performance and success ideas. In their opinion, communities where students reside influence whether ideas of academic performance and academic success are encouraged or discouraged, the prominence or scarcity of role models, and residents' experiences shape how individuals think about what they know of the terms (McDool, 2017). Additionally, friends' roles, attitudes, and opinions towards the term are contributing factors that help shape students interpretation and influence their mindset (Dweck, 2007). The data showed that most participants feel that students who come from low socioeconomic communities where academic performance and academic success were seen as not crucial and alternate definitions exist for the traditional ideas of academic success, students in these spaces often formed opinions aligned to their communities' views, especially if these views were replicated in their

homes. Whereas they also felt that communities in the higher socioeconomic income bracket view the traditional attainment of academic performance and academic success as necessary, and students in these communities tend to have similar aligned views.

The arguments presented by the students highlight the role different environments they occupy played in helping to shape how they came to interpret the understood meanings as discerned through the specified standards. Their arguments have validated the literature presented in the Literature Review Chapter 2 of the salient role the family and its sub-factor, school and the community, play in influencing what these students have come to think about the knowledge gained regarding academic performance and academic success.

However, having appreciated students' support of the role of social engagements in influencing their understanding of the traditional ideas that symbolize and objectify the meanings (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015), it was interesting to see how participants made sense of their interpretation of these traditional meanings. While the students have formulated aligned understandings of the traditional meanings, interestingly, they made sense of these understandings in a manner that differed from the traditional interpretations. How had these students' understanding of the traditional meanings aligned with the socially accepted positioning of the concepts, yet their interpretations of these understandings differed so significantly?

8.3.2 Stereotyping labels

One of the more profound findings of the study was how students had come to perceive the understood meanings as stereotyping labels that discriminate and create a sense of valuing amongst students based on their ability to attain the standards underpinning the meanings. Interestingly, this idea was not identified in the literature and extends how these students have characterized these critical concepts: academic performance and academic success.

In the opinion of these students, shaped by their lived experiences and observation of how the meanings played out in students' lives, the established standards used to frame the meanings of academic performance and academic success [see Chapter 5-5.3.1. and 5.3.2], serve to create distinctive categorization and treatment of students. Interestingly, these students' interpretation of the meanings, and subsequently the concepts, as stereotyping labels is not an interpretation identified in the literature. Their perspective makes an exciting contribution to knowledge in affirming the appropriateness of photovoice and audio journals as research methods to access students' voice in a meaningful and creative way, as they allow students who are challenged in expressing themselves in standard English and prefer oral communication to express themselves through photographs and Jamaican Creole audio recordings. Thereby providing an opportunity to experience the realities concerning the phenomenon. Perhaps the nearest consideration of stereotyping, without the idea of labels, can be identified in Kerckhoff (1977) argument on education, where he posited the idea of education as a differentiating tool for sorting students into categories based on proficiencies.

Characterizing the meanings as stereotyping labels is a rather profound interpretation that sets these students perspectives apart from the socially accepted views. The students have translated these meanings from observations as boxing students into two categories whose values are based solely on their ability to attain the standards within the meaning. Thus, in their opinion, students deemed capable of achieving the standards were treated as 'smart' students with high expectations of continued academic performance and academic success, thereby improving their self-efficacy. At the same time, students who failed to meet standards were treated as 'dunce' and had little to no expectations for academic improvement or academic success, damaging their self-efficacy.

Respondents felt the negative stereotyping label of poor academic performers and academically unsuccessful are more associated with students from lower socioeconomic

backgrounds. Their socioeconomic positions adversely impacted their ability to attain the standards as they were disadvantaged from accessing the necessary resources and support needed to learn and perform in school. A perspective earlier predicted by (Ercole, 2009), respondents noted that, in their estimation, it causes these students to become demotivated and lose academic interest resulting in them gaining the negative label, further contributing to and perpetuating their poor academic output throughout their school lives resulting in them experiencing low levels of or no academic success post-secondary school. This picture participants contend contrasts with their peers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds with greater access to educational resources and support needed to facilitate their academic goals. These students are often successful in gaining academic performance standards, gaining the classification of high academic performers, and academically successful or bright students.

From their observations of these students and the impact of the labels, the participants believe students develop associated emotions based on their labels. While students positively labeled develop positive self-identity and thrive to maintain their characterization. Those negatively labeled see themselves as not worthy and insignificant and strive to accept themselves in other spaces.

From their lived experiences and social interactions around the concepts, again, participants validated the importance of the environment in contributing to knowledge construction; the students felt that much more could be explored and understood regarding their interpretation by exploring their impact on students. One of the more profound impacts they felt was the sense of valuing that the labels came to represent. These ideas are explored in the next section of the chapter.

8.3.2.1. Valuing; a further interpretation of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success

The idea of valuing resonated in categorizing and projecting students able to attain the specific standards as academically superior as academic performers and academically successful. In contrast, students who could not attain the standards were propositioned as having lesser academic competency and seen as poor academic performers and academically unsuccessful. The sense of interpreting the stereotyping labels as a form of valuing students abilities and aspirations was supported by 10 of the study's 12 respondents.

These respondents argued that the idea was also present in the outshoot phrases academic performers/academically successful and poor academic performers/academically unsuccessful students as demarcated by the stereotyping labels. They noted that these phrases denoted a sense of greater and lesser importance amongst those labeled. Based on their experiences, the labels academic performer/academically successful students connote a sense of greater importance; being 'bright,' going places, and becoming something in life. On the other hand, poor-performing/academically unsuccessful signified a sense of being less valued, 'a dunce' student, unable to attain acceptable academic success in post-secondary life. For respondents, these differentiated values determined students self-efficacy and feelings of achievement. As forecasted in the literature (Ercole, 2009), differentiation created by valuing left students with distinctly different feelings of connectivity and motivation toward attaining the standards within the concepts. While the academically performing and academically successful students felt connected to the concepts and motivated to achieve them, the latter students felt disconnected and alienated from the concepts and often not inclined to pursue them.

For respondents, the feelings of valuing were present not only in the broader concepts of academic performance and academic success but also in the terms used to frame these

concepts. Terms such as mastery, high grade, written tests, high-paying, and tertiary institutions as the criteria for good academic performance and academic success inherently gave the impression that the opposing terms effort, average or low-grade score, oral tests, minimum paying, vocational or apprenticeship training were of lesser value. Ultimately, these students felt that the terms and their meanings created a dichotomy in how students were valued. Implying that the value of students was based not on their own merits and abilities, thus accepting their average or low scores and literacy challenges but on superiority in other mediums of communication or their vocational or practical subject preferences. Instead, they are judged against standards above their competencies which they cannot attain. Additionally, these terms they felt extended the idea of valuing as they felt the inclusion of specific terms associated with bright students represented a sense of importance. In contrast, the exclusion of standards that would align with challenged students created an aura of inferiority to the extent that they were not important enough to be a part of the framing of these important educational concepts.

In the participants' estimation, the standards that underpin the definitions represent valuing students abilities and aspirations, creating an imbalance between students with levels of disparity that alienated some students while aligning others to the concepts of academic performance and academic success. For two of the 12 participants, the implied outcome of valuing as a facet of the stereotyping labels is not something secondary students can change. Although the situation has resulted in some poor-performing students feeling less valued, alienated, and disengaged from learning and later experiencing academic failure and low success rates (OECD, 2012), the idea, as supported by Goodson (1985), is not to oppose the position, but instead to pursue valued subjects to be classified as successful post-secondary school students.

In summary, these participants, based on their observation and experience of how the standards they had used to form their understanding of the traditional meanings had played out and impacted students, had come to interpret them in a contrasting manner as stereotyping labels. These concepts they perceived as differentiating students abilities, aspirations, and competencies, creating a sense of value parity, more important/less important, bright/dunce, and classification among students. There were feelings that the labels, through the specific standards, valued not only academic capabilities but also cast a similar sense over students' language, Jamaican Creole versus standard English, ultimately creating a value parity amongst students themselves. The idea is discussed in the next section.

8.3.2.2. Valuing language through written tests

Another aspect of valuing those respondents pointed to is the standard of written tests as the measure of subject content knowledge. The requirement of written tests created another challenge of requiring students to be literate in English to communicate their knowledge on standardized tests effectively.

Students noted that, in their opinion, such a prerequisite served to stereotype and undervalue their Jamaican Creole as a medium of communication. These opinions are formed from social interactions, and observations of practice inside and outside the school around the traditional ideas of the language are discussed to validate the arguments of the Social Constructionism theory and the influence of engagements in social spaces in shaping meanings providing perspectives on knowledge. Based on shared experiences and thoughts, the English language requirement participants felt perpetuated the continued poor academic performance outputs of literary challenged students and subsequent academic success. The requirement they noted deprived these students of alternate mediums of assessment, including oral presentations or projects.

Ten of the 12 respondents felt, based on their experience, that the requirement of a written test went further than preventing students from using Jamaican Creole as a means of communicating but was also a form of determining students literacy competency. For them, this practice was damaging, especially to students classified as poor academic performers with literacy challenges. Their limitations hindered them from mastering and communicating in standard English, thus resulting in them consistently receiving low or poor grade scores on written tests. The unfair nature of the standard was poignant, primarily because the literacy limitations of these students existed throughout the student's academic journey. It was, therefore, in their opinion, unfair to maintain a requirement within such an important term that students would fail to attain. Maintaining the standards they felt was an unwillingness within education to acknowledge these students literacy challenges causing academic and personal embarrassment (Au, 1998). These respondents noted that alternative assessment options should be available instead of denying these students the right to have alternate mediums outside written tests to assess their knowledge. Students should be able to use various mediums in standardized tests, including their native Jamaican Creole, in an oral format with which they are comfortable.

However, while acknowledging the literacy challenges of low-performing students and the challenges they faced with the English language requirement, three of the 12 respondents countered the views of their peers. These participants argued that communication in English was an essential skill that students needed to develop to function effectively in post-secondary life. The significance of being literate in English aligns with the previously described views of former Jamaican Minister of Education Ronald Thwaites, who noted that "there was a critical need for Jamaican students to be fluent in the English Language, as this was critical for the progress of individuals as well as the country… English is the language of professionalism,

scientific discovery, and commerce, and the Ministry promotes literacy in the language" (2012, p. 1).

Nonetheless, while agreeing with the importance of English literacy for post-secondary academic success, participants who opposed the central role written tests play in assessing students argue that the practice does not create a level playing field in education assessment. In contrast, written tests as measures of assessments exist at the expense of the dignity of literary challenged students. Such conditionalities only perpetuate the inequities in education, a space where all students should feel respected and valued regardless of their abilities.

In concluding the section, the data showed that participants were cognizant of and willing to explore the impact of the standard. In their opinion, written tests limit students communication and the format of assessments while continuing the disparities in academic performance outputs of students and consequent stereotyping and valuing of their characters.

8.3.2.3. Stereotyping Identities

From their experiences, the study's 12 participating students noted that their interpretations of the traditional meanings had impacted how they saw themselves as academic performers and academically successful students. In their opinion, as predicted in the literature (Ercole, 2009), students identification with the concepts depended on the labels they were ascribed. Thus, students interpreted the meanings as creating identities of either academic performer/academically successful student or poor academic performer/academically unsuccessful student for persons.

Interestingly, from the data set, despite their identification of these two distinct categorizations of students, the study's participants never referenced their own identities using these labels. Instead, they only sought to acknowledge their existence as students without any precursor as performers or poor performers, academically successful or academically

unsuccessful; they only referred to themselves as students. The data suggest that respondents felt that the categorizations created by the meanings served to cause students negatively labelled to relinquish their identities. These students were embarrassed by their competencies that did not measure up and were locked into reaching to attain identities they could not align with or attain of high-grade scorers, mastering content, English language literates, tertiary attendees, and prospective high-income earners.

The shifting of identities was even more challenging for those students seeking to regain their identity from being poor performers and academically unsuccessful back to being seen as trying students (Kerckhoff, 2001). In addition, being identified as a poor academic performer left these students feeling closed out of opportunities, entrapped in a perpetual state of being characterized as an underachiever and unsuccessful individuals (Hejazi et al., 2012). Ultimately such students become embarrassed about their own identities (Nyström et al., 2019), as they consistently produce poor or below-average academic performance and have limited opportunities for academic success. In conquering these types of identity debacle, participants felt it was important that these students either ignore the stereotyping labels and continue trying or allow themselves to be affected by the labels and have their identities adversely affected.

8.3.2.4. Summary

From the data analysis, it can be concluded that the study's participants have made sense of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success, albeit in a manner that offers a perspective not identified in the literature. Based on their observations, experiences, and social interactions around the concepts, their underpinning terms, and how these have played out in students' lives, they have interpreted academic performance and academic success concepts as stereotyping labels. These meanings place students into 'boxes' or categories that differentiate students through a value-centric lens ascribing parity based on students abilities, language, and aspirations. These labels serve to perpetuate their poor

academic engagement and performance output. Ultimately, it ostracizes those students who struggle to attain the standards and find themselves on the negative side of the label to be classified as poor academic performers and academically unsuccessful students. Additionally, participants have come to see the labels as influencing students emotions towards academics and their identities as students in an adverse manner, creating a continuous cycle of low self-esteem resulting in consistent academic failings and poor academic success.

The information here is beneficial to this study as it points not only to the fact that students have made sense of the traditional meanings but also to a possible rationale behind the high numbers of poor academic performance output and low academic success rates among students among some secondary students. It hints at an idea that perhaps those students failure may be a result of students interpretation of the meanings as negatively stereotyping them, which, as posited by the students and predicted by Ercole (2009), causes these students to become unable to identify and align with these meanings, creating a sense of alienation that perpetuates them seeing themselves as academic failure and academically unsuccessful students.

The arguments purported by these students in their sense-making journey of the traditional meanings have validated the ideas within the literature as discussed in the Literature Review [Chapter 2-2.3] regarding the role of environments in influencing emotions. Additionally, like the points raised in section 8.2.1, these findings substantiate the ideas of the social construction of knowledge as a product of interactions and discussions in social environments. In the social spaces they occupy inside and outside school, these students have engaged in discussions, sharing their individual and collective experiences, ideas, observations, and opinions of what they have seen and lived concerning the practice of the meaning. Using these interactions and the knowledge discerned, they have provided their own interpretations of these meanings, enabling this study to contribute to the knowledge and explanation not

evident in the literature. These students perceptions have added dimensions to the discourse on the phenomenon, first affirming the idea that secondary students have opinions on critical issues affecting their lives, as discussed in the Literature Review [see Chapter 2-2.5]. Second, their views do not necessarily align with the socially accepted understandings as the experiences and realities they encounter can differ from those of adult stakeholders, thereby giving contrasting yet relevant understanding and interpretation of knowledge. The data showed that while their engagements around the knowledge of the traditional meanings have helped these students form their interpretations, it has also contributed to their exploration of other topics, such as the purpose of education and its own role in students' academic performance output and academic success which are discussed below

8.4 The purpose of education

One question that emerged in the focus group discussions, often through frustration with practice, was the question of the purpose of education. Respondents felt there was an absence of willingness to acknowledge and make space for the capacities and competencies of all students in the traditional meanings. They questioned the rationale of having socially accepted meanings that reflected a sense of differentiation in their construct, appearing to celebrate some competencies and, subsequently, students over others. Thereby making those excluded feel hopeless and undervalued while celebrating students whose competencies align with the meanings.

Was the purpose of education not to make all students feel empowered and driven to go beyond their capabilities? Was its function not to create environments that made all students feel inclusive, especially in the meanings that framed the discipline? Three of the study's 12 participants countered this traditional premise from the focus group discussions. These participants argued that from the construct of these traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success, it appeared that education's purpose was to make some

students feel bad about themselves and have less belief in their potential. Making them feel their abilities, interests, and aspirations were of less value than others, even though they could be positive contributors to the development of society. Ultimately, the purpose seemed more focused on sorting and separating students based on intellect. Was this approach the basis of a much bigger process? Was it a method of identifying students considered better-skilled workers (Fast, 2015)?

The data from the focus group discussion suggest that most of the study's participants believed that education's purpose seemed more focused on maintaining what existed. In place of consideration and change, addressing the high number of students failing. These ideas differed from what participants felt should be the purpose of education. In their opinion, education's purpose is to create systems that recognize and value all students abilities, interests, and aspirations. Thereby enabling everyone to feel a sense of connection and capability to achieve the established standards. These students ideas in the study align with the government of Jamaica's broader national development goal to provide "quality education for all Jamaicans to maximize their potential, contribute to national development and compete effectively in the global economy" (Jamaica, 2010b).

The students perspectives of the purpose of education also align with the guiding principles of the Jamaican Ministry of Education, which does not reference any ideas of differentiation or stereotyping of students abilities, skills, or interests as contributing to individual or national development. On the contrary, these principles are based on standards that value all aspects of students competencies and potential. Nevertheless, while this ethos projects an inclusive, equitable framing of education, this differs from the stereotyping, differentiating interpretations in the opinion of these participants that have shaped the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success. Eventually contributes to a significant percentage of students, usually the disenfranchised, not being able to identify

and align their abilities and interests, thus resulting in high numbers of students academically failing.

8.4.1 Students view of the purpose of education

For their part, the focus group discussions allowed participants to provide an overview of what they believed the purpose of being, which they collectively framed as the purpose of education is not to force students into what they are not but to accept abilities encouraging them to reach as far as their limitations can take them to be the best they can be.

The participants perceived that the role of education was not to push students towards developing as a uniform whole. In other words, it was not about all students achieving the same grades or pursuing the same subjects and careers. Such uniformity would not facilitate the development of a dynamic and diverse society. Instead, the purpose of education is to represent and celebrate the variety of students abilities, experiences, competencies, and motivations Tomlinson et al. (2003). Such an approach would allow students to situate themselves within an inclusive concept frame with balanced meanings that speaks to all students.

8.4.1.1. Summary

In deliberating the sense of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success, the participants raised the question of the purpose of education. The question stems from their view of the disconnect between an accepted understanding of education juxtaposed the manifestation of the practice of education through concepts underpinning the discipline, particularly in school. Addressing this seeming misalignment which has harmed some students' academic engagement, can result in an improved sense of attachment by disaffection students towards education and its terms, as well as possibly improve academic outputs and academic success.

However, although a product of the focus group discussions, this question of education's purpose and how participants arrived at the query and subsequent perspectives again validate the theoretical underpinnings of this study of the place of environmental factors in shaping knowledge and solidify the arguments of the social construction of knowledge and sense-making of the ideas within the knowledge to form opinions.

Having explored their interpretations and identified the contrasting perceptions of these meanings and the harmful impact they felt these were having on some students, participants wanted to explore their beliefs about how these meanings should be framed. Their views on this are explored in the next section.

8.5 Structuring academic performance and academic success

In addressing the third research question, the aim was to ascertain the participating students views based on their interpretation of the meanings of how they believe these should be framed. These participants understood, as expected, the traditional meanings and formulated an interpretation of them based on their experiences that stood in contrast to the socially accepted interpretation. The next step was identifying how the students felt this interpretation could be managed to create greater levels of equity in ideas around educational performance and academic success. Based on the observation in the different environments inside and outside school of the practice around the concepts and their impact on students, the respondents arrived at three perspectives in response to the question with no identified consensus. Their views on how these traditional meanings could be framed are explored below.

8.5.1 Retaining the traditional definitions

The first perspective takes a traditional approach, with five of the 12 respondents arguing for retaining the traditional construct of the meanings of academic performance and academic success. For these traditional proponents, the current construct of the meanings

represents a set of standards necessary for students development and future functioning in society post-secondary school. They contend that within these standards that comprise the meanings are character-building elements that aim to push students to achieve while building their character of being responsible, focused, and hardworking. They noted that these characteristics are essential to academic success inside and outside school. Seeking to expand or reframe these meanings would only make students who need to build these qualities early in school not in a position to do so. Ultimately, these students could leave school without developing these essential traits and may be unable to develop these qualities outside of school. Thereby, for example, these students may find themselves unable to find or retain suitable employment as they lack these important qualities needed to function in the workplace. In addition, these students may never be able to gain these characteristics outside of school much more challenging to develop after leaving school. Retaining these meanings provides a semblance of stability for students as they work with standards they are used to but may need to work harder at achieving as others have done. Introducing new meanings to these terms in school would disturb the established structure and cause students struggling to master subject content to have to learn these new standards.

Based on their observations and experiences of their peers' behaviour towards the ideas of academic performance and academic success, they have formed the perception that the high number of secondary failings is not because of a lack of understanding of what is meant by and required by the terms academic performance and academic success. Instead, the focus should be on the attitude of students and how they have decided to engage with the terms. In their opinion, their peers need to change their attitudes to become more responsible for their learning, stop wasting time and focus on their own goals, and be motivated by their failing to continue striving. Such attitudes would encourage them to engage better with the ideas around

academic performance and academic success to produce better academic outputs and propel them toward success.

The argument of retention, however, was countered by other participants who advocated a reframing approach to address the issues of some students interpretation of the traditional meanings to reduce the high number of secondary students failing.

8.5.2 Reframing the traditional definitions

In the opinion of seven of the study's 12 participants, these traditional meanings should be reframed. The idea of reframing would remove the word 'academic' as a part of the construct of performance and success. In the end, retaining what they contrive as the more inclusive words of performance and success without being constrained by the word 'academic,' which connotes a focus on mathematics, science, and English. Removing the word 'academic' would extend the idea of performance beyond core subjects to include non-core subjects. Such an approach would focus on soft and social skills as part of learning (Naqvi, 2006), improving how these areas of learning are valued (Morris, 2011).

The result could be eliminating the traditional emphasis on effort as being equated to only performances that yield high-grade scores attained in core subjects on written tests as obtained in the current meanings. Using the word performance on its own would give credence to ideas of students efforts and incremental progress as facets of performance output and success. Additionally, it would open an appreciation of success as much more than a scholastic achievement in a specific educational space of tertiary institutions. In this dispensation, we would place greater value on post-secondary areas of development, including apprenticeship, attendance at vocational institutes, and all areas of employment. Ultimately this could create an inclusive meaning of the term that recognizes all students as achievers.

Removing the word ‘academic’ from current academic performance and success concepts represents and provides freedom from its emotional and psychological limitations. In their opinion, a word that has contributed to the stereotyping, categorizing, and confinement of students abilities and aspirations, resulting in them disengaging from the learning process. A consequence of many students finding themselves consistently producing low or poor academic performances damaging their chances of success.

Creating an opportunity for students to have a renewed social engagement around and make sense of a new and more dynamic set of meanings would help them create alternate knowledge and attitude that accepts, identifies, and aligns with the reformed concepts.

8.5.3 Expanding the traditional definitions

The final perspective presented was an idea advocated by six of the 12 participants to expand the existing meanings of academic performance and academic success. The idea could be considered a hybrid between the first two proposals in that it would retain elements of the traditional meanings while adding new components to create a much broader construct. The arguments around this idea opined that while the aspects of the current meanings were necessary for students development, there was a need to include areas excluded from the traditional construct. The expansion would create a more holistic definition that reflected alongside the existing standards ideas of students effort in tasks, social and soft skills areas of learning, broadening the language and format of testing. An inclusive construct would remove the interpretations of the meanings as stereotyping labels and establish an equitable currency of value across all abilities, grades, areas of learning, measures of testing, post-secondary areas of advancement, and employment [see explanation on valuing in section 8.3.2.1.].

8.5.4 Summary

The discussion in this section showed three perspectives from students on how they believed academic performance and academic success, from their observation and experience with the traditional meanings, ought to be defined. In the end, participants did not coalesce around any perspective but instead sought to position all three ideas as separate yet important views. While answering the research question, these perspectives also provide insight into how each group of participants feels about the phenomenon of the high number of secondary students failing should be addressed.

8.6 Response to the research questions and conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings of a mixed-gender group of rural grade 10 Jamaican secondary school students on the phenomenon studied through the research questions. They answered the research questions using four data collection methods: photovoice, audio journals, one-on-one interviews, and focus group discussions.

In response to research question one, these students responses demonstrate that they have understood the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success as specific sets of standards [see Chapter 5-5.3 for a detailed explanation of these standards]. These standards have been framed, similar to the socially accepted meanings, around particular academic ideas that students must attain to be considered academic performers and academically successful students. From this understanding, it may be deduced that a lack of knowledge of what is traditionally meant by performance and academic success is not a possible cause of high numbers of poor academic performance and low academic success rates amongst secondary students in Jamaica.

From the data, the participants have made sense of the traditional meanings, interpreting them as stereotyping labels that categorize students into two differentiating groups:

academically performing and successful and poor, academically performing and unsuccessful students. These labels have positively and negatively impacted the denoted students determining the quality of their engagement with the traditional ideas of academic performance and academic success. From the responses, it could be reasoned that the labels of academic performer and successful students have led to positive engagements by these students influencing them to produce high-quality outputs geared towards post-secondary academic success. On the contrary, students labelled as poor academic performers and are projected to be academically unsuccessful in post-secondary school continue throughout their education journey to have a negative relationship with learning, thereby perpetuating the expectations derived from these labels.

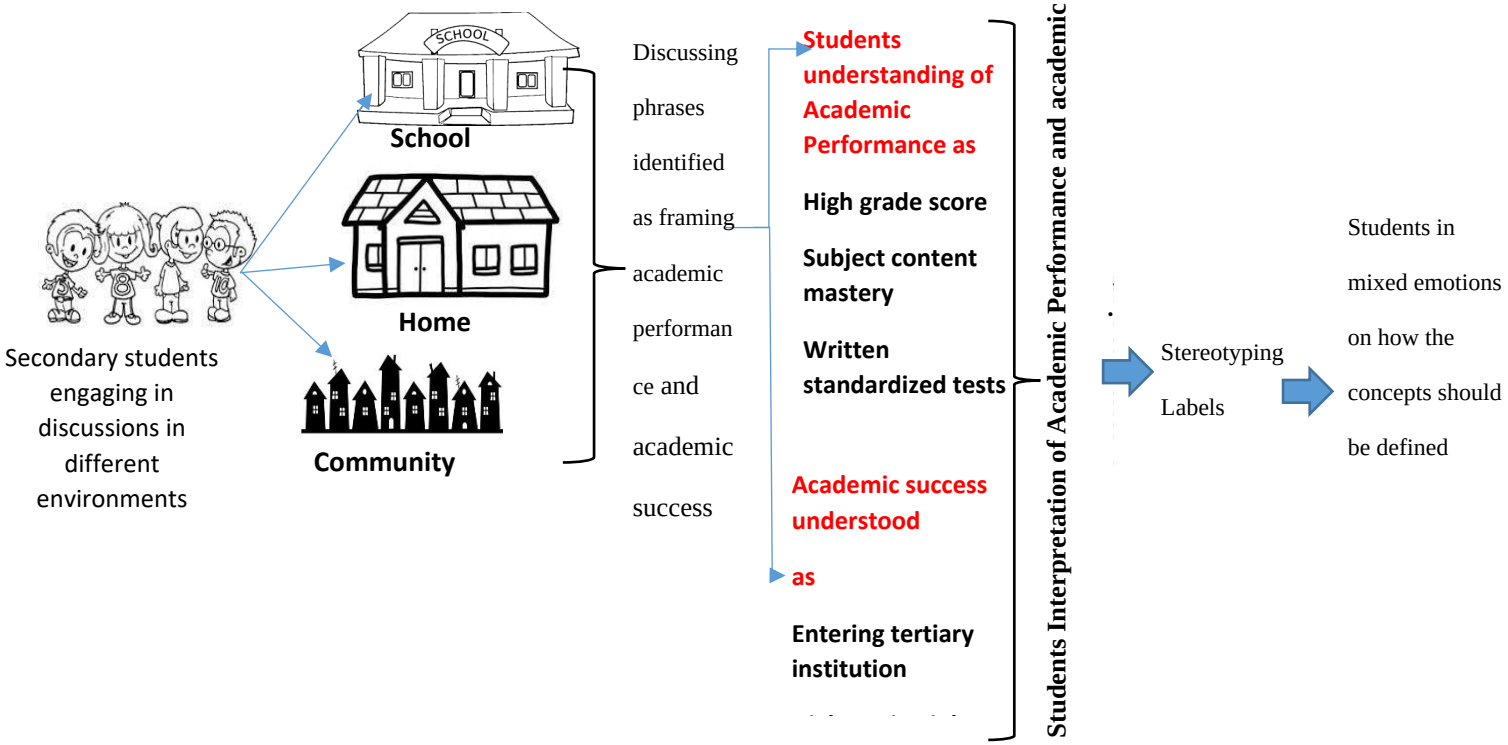
Students have perceived the meanings and the terms as stereotyping labels that are not out of their competency and aspirations that have ascribed a negative classification to their identities, denoting them as incapable of reaching the more valued levels of performance and success. The inability to attain these benchmarks leaves many such students to disconnect from the traditional ideas of performance and success. Many become discouraged and lose interest in attempting to achieve the benchmarks as they feel incompetent and unable to attain the standards. In the end, these students revert to producing their level of academic performance and reach for academic success. For others, their attempts, representing their best efforts, fail to achieve the elusive standards. Ultimately, all these students find themselves in the realm of the cohort of students who consistently produce poor academic performance and low academic success rates. Nevertheless, although formulating such a negative interpretation of the concepts' meanings, these students have identified and offered three views on how they think the system should define academic performance and academic success.

On the one hand, while some advocated for retaining the traditional construct of the meanings as framed by specific standards, others supported rethinking the meanings by

removing the word 'academic' from the words performance and success. At the same time, another perspective projected an amalgamated view of expanding the traditional meanings while including previously excluded ideas [see Chapter 8-8.5 for a detailed explanation of these excluded ideas]. The difference in views suggests that despite the existence of an interpretation created from a set of meanings that have had a discouraging impact on some students causing unfavourable performance results, there is no agreement on identifying a unified definition that could possibly address the stereotyping label interpretations ascribed by these participating students.

In summary, these students responses showed that they understood the research questions and could respond. Their answers equivocated between aligning with the socially accepted knowledge or rejecting the established views to position their own contrasting ideas. When reasoned, their perceptions provide useful indicators in understanding and identifying possible approaches to the study's phenomenon.

Figure 8. 1 *Summary of the theoretical framework contributes to the study*



8.7 Chapter Summary

The chapter has explored through the themes from the data the participants' responses to the three research questions presented in the Findings chapters. The sample of secondary students have demonstrated that the social interactions and observations with their peers and others they have had in the different social environments they have occupied inside and outside have shaped their understanding of the traditional meanings and their interpretations of these understandings and helped them formulate ideas on how they believe these concepts should be defined.

These students have identified traditional ideas underpinning the terms while formulating and positioning their own perspectives. Their viewpoints have either added to existing understanding, created dissimilar interpretations to the existing explanations, or presented multiple perspectives that denote disagreements in thoughts without causing dissent amongst the participants. Such perspectives present them as bold thinkers unafraid of putting their own views while challenging the social normative ideas of society to represent their thoughts on this important phenomenon in education.

Such abilities in young student researchers are important as they allow them to voice their opinions without fear and take advantage of those unexpected moments within the research process that may provide the answers the study seeks. This is important as it recognizes these young individuals as researchers and contributors to knowledge. The concluding chapter of the study pulls all the ideas in the preceding chapters and provides a summary while focusing on the aim of the study, looking at research contribution to knowledge, implications for practice, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

9.1 Conclusion

. The Literature review provided an opportunity to explore the writings' underpinning the traditional meanings and interpretations around the concepts of academic performance and academic success to understand better why significant numbers of students cannot attain their benchmarks. Some authors, including Al-Zoubi and Younes (2015), have posited students' voice as a possible source, shaped by their experience, to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon. Hearing from students could provide insight into how they understand these traditional meanings and the impact they believe they may have on their performance and post-secondary success.

The study used the social constructionism interpretivism paradigm; it engaged 12 rural grade 10 Jamaican secondary students to unearth students' perspectives on the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success and their interpretations of these understandings to project their views of how they believe the concepts should be defined. The socially constructed perspectives were collected using photovoice, audio journaling, one-on-one interviews, and focus group discussions. The results are summarized below.

9.2 Summary of Findings

The study found that the phenomenon of high-secondary students failing and poor academic success has been explored in the literature. However, much of this investigation was from the perspective of adult stakeholders inside and outside education. Within Jamaica, a similar pattern of adults views dominance obtains. Interestingly, however, there is a recognition within the literature of the need to include students' voice recognizing the inalienable rights that students ought to be heard. Additionally, considering and including students provided an alternate perspective uniquely shaped by environments and social interactions to which adults' views would not have been privy.

In the end, these assumptions proved correct as the exploration of the sample of students has shown that they understand the traditional meanings grasping them as specific standards that students must achieve. This understanding corresponds to the general social explanations of the terms, affirming that the students have understood as expected. From this reasoning, it can be implied that an absence of understanding of the traditional meanings is not the reason for the phenomenon. The assertion carries through by the addition into their understanding of the terms, based on their lived experiences, of good behaviour as a facet of good academic performance and academic success.

The findings showed that having understood the meanings, these students have gone on to make sense of the knowledge. They have interpreted the meanings, similar to their peers they believe based on their observations and social interactions, as stereotyping labels. These labels categorize students into value-centric groups of academic performers/academically successful and poor academic performers/academically unsuccessful students. This creates a sense amongst students of some being more valued because they can achieve the standards in the meanings than their less valued peers who are consistently unable to attain the same. These interpretations have defined how students have reacted and engaged, and the outcomes, the ideas of academic performance, and academic success. The study, therefore, infers that the interpretation ascribed to the traditional meanings as stereotyping labels and the resulting attribution of these on a specific set of students could be determined as the possible cause of the phenomenon.

In proposing that the interpretations of the traditional meanings and their impact may be the reason for the continued high failure and low academic success amongst some students, three contrasting perspectives were presented on addressing the phenomenon. However, participants could not agree on which approach society should use to define the terms. A summary of the findings shows the achievement of the study's aim. The participating students

perspectives demonstrate that they have understood the traditional meanings, formed their interpretations of the knowledge, and possibly identified a rationale for the phenomenon while identifying alternate solutions to address the phenomenon created by the interpretations.

9.3 Research contribution to knowledge

The study contributes to knowledge through its affirmation of photovoice and audio journaling as practical research methods, conscious of the social context of disenfranchised voice, enabling them to project their voice. Students' voice provided an understanding and interpretation of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success while offering solutions not seen in the literature. The contribution is depicted in the participants' reference of the tools as fun, engaging, not intimidating, and user-friendly [see Chapter 3-3.2.2 for an explanation of the student's view of using the methods]. In addition, the participants noted the difference in the methods from other research methods as allowing them to use their Patios [Creole] voice which they were more comfortable within their own space. They felt the tools allowed them to be themselves, and they did not have to worry about grammar and English, which they found challenging to project their ideas around the research questions.

Through these engaging and socially conscious research methods, these Jamaican secondary students have been able to project an interpretation of the traditional meanings of academic performance and academic success, not identified in any prior research within the context of Jamaican education in the literature, as stereotyping labels. This novel interpretation is not necessarily associated with how society understands education (Ercole, 2009) and its concepts. The explanations presented present an opportunity to reflect on these traditional constructs and practices and explore how these students' socially influenced perceptions have impacted their engagements with academic performance and success. Such explorations could provide an alternate lens to investigate and form a better understanding of the low academic outputs and success rates amongst the cohort.

This study's second contribution to knowledge is its extension of the Social Constructionism theory of the role of social spaces in shaping knowledge. The study has shown how participants' knowledge and interpretations of these traditional meanings and their opinions of how they should be framed reflect an influence of the social spaces these have occupied.

Interestingly, the study contributes to knowledge on the phenomenon by introducing the idea of the traditional concepts as stereotyping labels, a novel perspective not identified in the literature, and an idea that, although present in education, is not one associated with education (Ercole, 2009). The interpretation offered by these participants on the phenomenon conducted by this research has not been identified in the literature focusing on poor academic performance and low academic success within the Jamaican education discourse. In this regard, their views can be seen as a contribution offering alternate and novel perspectives to the conversation and literature on the subject.

Finally, these students arguments present an opportunity to reflect on the construction meanings of key education terms, especially if many are framing alternate antagonist interpretations. Whether the perspectives of these students regarding the terms are deemed worthy of consideration, the reality is that many have moved away from the socially accepted explanations to create their own understanding to rationalize their failings. Essentially, laying the blame at the feet of education and its terms and meanings.

9.4 Implications for practice

The study aimed to gain perspectives from Jamaican secondary students on the phenomenon to aid teachers and school administrators in their academic performance approach and add to the established knowledge on the subject within the literature. The findings provide

some focus areas worthy of consideration in other studies that explore the phenomenon relating to secondary students academic performance and success.

9.4.1 Involving and listening to students on matters of education

One of the focal points raised from the study's findings, and a vital theme of the paper, is that it provides evidence of the value of using student voice to discuss and frame ideas concerning education. The study suggests that students are not merely receivers of instructions; they are critical stakeholders in education, and their ideas are shaped by their experiences, observations, and discussions with persons inside and outside the school. These elements help them form knowledge that could become part of the discourse and decision-making around their education (Laux, 2018; Policy, 2019).

In the focus group discussions, many of the study's participants referenced the meanings of academic performance and academic success as representing 'those' people, i.e., teachers, school administrators, and the education system itself. The participants noted that they were not included or involved in creating these meanings and could not take ownership of them or the practices they influence. The students perspectives of not owning the meanings indicated a sense of detachment from both the formation and application of the meaning of performance and success.

One of the consequences of the findings for practice is that students need to understand how these educational concepts are created and the broader societal purposes that they, and their definitions, serve. In the classroom, teachers can establish greater collaboration with students to listen to their ideas about the parameters and standards for performance and success within the classroom, ensuring the representation of voice in the discourse and any decisions made.

A collective approach to determining academic performance and academic success criteria, and practice between students, teachers, and school administrators, can generate more significant levels of identification and buy-in from all students. Ultimately, this can result in a better understanding of how students perceive the terms; thus, secondary students views must be incorporated when crafting standards that represent and motivate all students to achieve.

9.4.2 School as a space to empower students

Another implication for practice that arises from the findings is the need to create an environment in classrooms and schools that encourages empowering spaces that reflect and value all students cultural practices (Owens & Ennis, 2005). Respondents spoke consistently of low-performing students needing to feel a sense of equal treatment, especially from teachers (Hubert, 2014). In addition, students need to feel competent and valued in something rather than treated like individuals incapable of performing or succeeding (Mijs, 2016). In their opinions, the traditional meanings of concepts of academic performance and academic success, as evident from practice, were not designed to meet all students abilities, interests, and aspirations in education, certainly not those classified as poor academic performers. The aim was seemingly not to provide opportunities for empowerment and build the self-confidence and motivation to meet the standards across the student population. Instead, the inability of some students to identify their abilities and aspirations in the meanings gave the impression of an emphasis on creating levels of differentiation to stereotype students into categories to affect self-esteem and motivation toward achieving.

The arguments represented here present opportunities to address: (a) the meanings of the terms academic performance and academic success, thereby impacting the interpretation of the meanings, and (b) ideas around the purpose of education. The first point noted may enable class teachers and schools, by extension, to work with Guidance Counsellors and students to design and develop practices that encourage and facilitate students talking about their feelings

on education-related matters. Such an approach could empower challenged students by providing spaces where they may voice their concerns and emotions around the meanings. The expectation is that such an approach can help create a culture of positive confrontation and a willingness to change and improve practices and processes at the levels of the school, homes, and communities to support students.

9.4.3 Enabling students to see themselves as performers and successful students

The participants in this study have projected themselves as students with views on critical topics within education. Embedded within these views are thoughts regarding a desire to retain their self-identities as individuals with challenges, yet capable of contributing to society's development in their own way, not as individuals defined against others and their standards, which they cannot achieve. The participants believe that schools can create and make students see and feel the positive relationship possible between the terms, their meanings, and their self-image and self-efficacy (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). However, the process depends on teachers' ability to support, care for, and maintain interest in these students skills and aspirations to help them affirm their identity. Ultimately, such an approach can enable all students to see themselves as performers and future successful students and contributors to society's advancement, defined within their capacities.

9.4.4 Confusing parameters of success

One of the points raised in the focus group discussion was the confusion between the parameters of success established in the school and those set outside of school. While school projects a standard of academics as integral to success thus, success is reliant on academic performance; for these participants, evidence from their communities indicates that success is not necessarily dependent upon academic performance. For participants, the traditional interpretation of success needing academics raises the question of whether academics is that important to success. The difference in thinking of whether success is a theoretical construct

raises the question of whether success without academics can be classified as a success. For example, consider an athlete who earns a high income and does not attend a tertiary institution yet cannot be considered as are some spaces as an acceptable form of success because of the absence of academic qualifications. Such considerations make the idea of academic success in its traditional definition somewhat confusing to students (Alam, 2015). The consequence of practice in clarifying such ambiguities stemming from the meaning is to work with students to provide clear guidelines for what constitutes the meaning, thereby removing the mixed messages created.

9.5 Limitations

Using a convenience sampling technique limits the study, including biased results. In addition, participants' perspectives may not provide an accurate picture of how secondary students understand and interpret the traditional definitions of academic performance and academic success, reflecting the reality of the sample population. Another limitation of the study was using only one school to sample participants. Using participants from one rural secondary school means their perspectives only reflect a few students views within this singular space. Although there may be concerns regarding bias and vulnerability to errors in judgment based on the sampling technique, the research methods provided a platform to address these issues. Accepting that the nature of truth is multifaceted and identifiable through different routes, not necessarily dependent on numbers (Ajibade, 2019), the study emphasized getting large numbers of volunteering students. Instead, the aim was to identify a core group of students willing to volunteer their perspectives on the phenomenon to arrive at their truth using the diverse research methods within the study.

The data provided information directly from a sample of students projecting their truth about the phenomenon. The establishment of the research principles as outlined in the study's

ethical considerations (Chapter 4-4.8 on the Ethical Considerations) provides the data validity as the views of a sample of students and not that of the entire secondary students population.

The final limitation identified was the limited number of students, two from 12, who selected photo voice as their choice of research method. This meant that the study had fewer photos to choose from. The fact that photo voice was new to these students perhaps reflects the timidity of more students in choosing the method they felt uncomfortable using to project their voice. Since the study emphasized ensuring that participants felt comfortable with the research method option selected, there was no approach to encourage more students to use the method. The photos presented were therefore represented in the study as they reflected the voice of the two students, which is a central idea of the study to hear students' voice. Perhaps more studies with children using the method will encourage students to engage in photo voice to represent their views on research questions.

9.6 Suggestions for future research

While respondents provided valuable answers that have shed light on their perspectives on the phenomenon, the study has also raised a question on the purpose of education that was never part of the original inquiry but would be helpful to investigate. A study aimed at answering this question from the students perspectives could also broaden and improve perspectives on the phenomenon of high numbers of secondary failures and academically unsuccessful students, e.g., what role education's purpose plays in the situation.

Additionally, while this study focused on one rural area secondary school, it would be helpful to conduct a study into the perspectives of urban secondary school students to compare their responses for similarities. Since these students have heterogeneous characteristics as pupils who have had experiences with poor academic performance and academic success, it would be helpful to explore the views of students who have not had such experiences, thereby

adding to the existing knowledge. From a comparative perspective, how have these other students experiences and realities allowed them to understand and interpret the traditional meanings?

It would be interesting to reengage with a similar set of students from the same secondary school to hear their views and the traditional terms and identify if these differ from their early schoolmates. Explore the state of academic performance and academic success, then investigate the meanings.

One interesting highlight of the study was the various data collection tools. All participants found the audio journals and photo voice useful and user-friendly in the pilot and the main study. These were new ways of presenting their thoughts, giving them the power and confidence to capture and present the perceptions they generated without influence alongside their ascribed interpretations. It would be refreshing and interesting to see how other research could utilize these methods and the quality, power, and depth of the conveyed perspectives behind the emerging data type. Such research would also enable a more accurate capture of students' voice without the interference of their thoughts and opinions from other voices. Another area of study that could add to the knowledge within the literature would be to explore how their views – how they look at and engage with the concepts of academic performance and academic success – may have changed since the data collection. Has it negatively or positively impacted their opinion of themselves as students and others and their engagement with the concepts?

9.7. Impact on professional practice

Exploring the phenomenon of high secondary academic performance failure and low academic success rates amongst Jamaican secondary students was chosen as my area of study because, as a secondary school teacher, I was saddened by the state of students' academic

performance manifested in the dire results seen in their CSEC examinations. I also wanted to expand my research skills and have an opportunity to improve my academic writing while improving my knowledge of this topic of academic performance, academic success, and the rationale behind the current status quo. Undertaking this study has started my journey and contributed significantly to all these aspirations.

As someone who works with children, I am more appreciative, through this study, that they have a voice and unique perspectives that offer a wonderful opportunity to explore educational issues and identify new ideas for solutions. I can better appreciate their struggles as learners and feel driven to advocate for their voice in academic and policy spaces to be engaged, heard, and included in the discourse on educational matters that affect them directly. Through this study, I have developed new insights into the ideas of academic performance and academic success. I am inspired to share these with teachers and other educational practitioners to enable others to better understand the phenomenon from another perspective through the voice of students who have experienced it.

9.8. Concluding thoughts

This study was conceptualized from my frustrations as a trainee secondary-level teacher in a grade 10 classroom at an urban secondary school in Jamaica and their struggles to produce passing academic results. The disappointment doubled when I later came across a set of CSEC data, which showed consistent failings by several Jamaican secondary students to pass any subject in their Caribbean Secondary Examinations. I then reflected on what this meant: many students were leaving school without requisite qualifications and would be unable to make a meaningful contribution to their and society's development. I reflect on the initial inspiration that led me to this research, strengthened by the data on CXC results for Jamaican secondary students that I had uncovered, and felt that it is too important a phenomenon not to explore. However, to get to the root of the issue, it was vital to analyze the traditional meanings behind

the concepts of academic performance and academic success and explore how students understood and made sense of these to shed an alternate perspective on the matter.

Why was this happening? I wanted to explore the issues through the perspective of these affected students, what their thoughts were, and how, if at all, they saw the situation being addressed. A review of the literature showed no previous attempts within the Jamaican context to engage students around this issue; I wanted to plug this gap and add what I considered the views of a set of individuals who had experienced the phenomenon. Through the voice and eyes of 12 rural Jamaican secondary students, this study showed that this sample of secondary students, from their observations and experiences of what has occurred in the different environmental spaces, especially their school, had formed opinions concerning the traditional terms of academic performance and academic success. The study findings show that these students have understood and made sense of the conventional meanings of the terms. They have demonstrated this knowledge by identifying the same key standards used in framing the traditional meanings. However, their interpretations of the meanings contradict the socially accepted perception viewing them as stereotyping labels of academic performers/academically successful and poor performing/academically unsuccessful. The categorization impacts students self-efficacy and confidence, negatively influencing students categorized as poor performers and academically unsuccessful, resulting in poor academic performance and low academic success rates post-secondary school. In addressing the resulting impact, three approaches were identified, including retaining the traditional meanings or reframing them, or creating a hybrid between retaining or reframing, thus leaving the solution to the phenomenon hanging.

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Appendices
Appendix 1 Pilot Study Ethics Forms

University of Reading
Institute of Education
Ethical Approval Form A (version May 2019)

University of Reading

Tick one:
EdD √

Name of applicant (s): Khummit Keshinro

Title of project: Hearing secondary students' voice: developing an understanding of students' academic success.

Name of supervisor (for student projects): Dr Catherine Foley / Professor Cathy Tissot

Please complete the form below including relevant sections overleaf.

	YES	NO	
Have you prepared an Information Sheet for participants and/or their parents/carers that:			
a) explains the purpose(s) of the project	√		
b) explains how they have been selected as potential participants	√		
c) gives a full, fair and clear account of what will be asked of them and how the information that they provide will be used	√		
d) makes clear that participation in the project is voluntary	√		
e) explains the arrangements to allow participants to withdraw at any stage if they wish	√		
f) explains the arrangements to ensure the confidentiality of any material collected during the project, including secure arrangements for its storage, retention and disposal	√		
g) explains the arrangements for publishing the research results and, if confidentiality might be affected, for obtaining written consent for this	√		
h) explains the arrangements for providing participants with the research results if they wish to have them	√		
i) gives the name and designation of the member of staff with responsibility for the project together with contact details, including email . If any of the project investigators are students at the IoE, then this information must be included and their name provided	√		
k) explains, where applicable, the arrangements for expenses and other payments to be made to the participants	n/a		
j) includes a standard statement indicating the process of ethical review at the University undergone by the project, as follows: 'This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct'.	√		
k)includes a standard statement regarding insurance: "The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request".	√		
Please answer the following questions			
1) Will you provide participants involved in your research with all the information necessary to ensure that they are fully informed and not in any way deceived or misled as to the purpose(s) and nature of the research? (Please use the subheadings used in the example information sheets on blackboard to ensure this).	√		
2) Will you seek written or other formal consent from all participants, if they are able to provide it, in addition to (1)?	√		
3) Is there any risk that participants may experience physical or psychological distress in taking part in your research?		√	
4) Staff Only - have you taken the online training modules in data protection and information security (which can be found here: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/PeopleDevelopment/newstaff/humres-MandatoryOnlineCourses.aspx Please note: students complete a Data Protection Declaration form and submit it with this application to the ethics committee.			
5) Have you read the Health and Safety booklet (available on Blackboard) and completed a Risk Assessment Form to be included with this ethics application?	√		
6) Does your research comply with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research?	√		
	YES	NO	N.A.
7) If your research is taking place in a school, have you prepared an information sheet and consent	√		

form to gain the permission in writing of the head teacher or other relevant supervisory professional?			
8) Has the data collector obtained satisfactory DBS clearance?			√
9) If your research involves working with children under the age of 16 (or those whose special educational needs mean they are unable to give informed consent), have you prepared an information sheet and consent form for parents/carers to seek permission in writing, or to give parents/carers the opportunity to decline consent?	√		
10) If your research involves processing sensitive personal data[1], or if it involves audio/video recordings, have you obtained the explicit consent of participants/parents?	√		
11) If you are using a data processor to subcontract any part of your research, have you got a written contract with that contractor which (a) specifies that the contractor is required to act only on your instructions, and (b) provides for appropriate technical and organisational security measures to protect the data?			√
12a) Does your research involve data collection outside the UK?	√		
12b) If the answer to question 12a is "yes", does your research comply with the legal and ethical requirements for doing research in that country?	√		
13a) Does your research involve collecting data in a language other than English?		√	
13b) If the answer to question 13a is "yes", please confirm that information sheets, consent forms, and research instruments, where appropriate, have been directly translated from the English versions submitted with this application.			√
14a. Does the proposed research involve children under the age of 5?		√	
14b. If the answer to question 14a is "yes": My Head of School (or authorised Head of Department) has given details of the proposed research to the University's insurance officer, and the research will not proceed until I have confirmation that insurance cover is in place.			√
If you have answered YES to Question 3, please complete Section B below			

- Complete **either** Section A **or** Section B below with details of your research project.
- Complete a risk assessment.
- Sign the form in Section C.
- Append at the end of this form all relevant documents: information sheets, consent forms, tests, questionnaires, interview schedules, evidence that you have completed information security training (e.g. screen shot/copy of certificate).
- Email the completed form to the Institute's Ethics Committee for consideration.

Any missing information will result in the form being returned to you.

A: My research goes beyond the 'accepted custom and practice of teaching' but I consider that this project has **no significant ethical implications.** (Please tick the box.)	√

Please state the total number of participants that will be involved in the project and give a breakdown of how many there are in each category e.g. teachers, parents, pupils etc.

Total number of participants will be twelve years 12 students from a rural area secondary school.

Give a brief description of the aims and the methods (participants, instruments and procedures) of the project in up to 200 words noting:

1. **title of project**

Hearing secondary students' voice: developing an understanding of students' academic success.

2. **purpose of project and its academic rationale**

To hear students' voice perspective on students' academic success, to add knowledge to education discourse on students' academic success from the often-excluded voices of students (Cook-Sather, 2006)

3. **brief description of methods and measurements**

Sensitive personal data consists of information relating to the racial or ethnic origin of a data subject, their political opinions, ligious beliefs, trade union membership, sexual life, physical or mental health or condition, or criminal offences or record.

C: SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

Note: a signature is required. Typed names are not acceptable.

I have declared all relevant information regarding my proposed project and confirm that ethical good practice will be followed within the project.

Signed: . Print Name: ..... Date: 4/2/2020

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE ETHICS COMMITTEE

This project h agreed Institute procedures and is now approved.

Signed: ..... Print Name:.. Date: 6/2/20
(IoE Research Ethics Committee representative)*

* A decision to allow a project to proceed is not an expert assessment of its content or of the possible risks involved in the investigation, nor does it detract in any way from the ultimate responsibility which students/investigators must themselves have for these matters. Approval is granted on the basis of the information declared by the applicant.

Information Management and Policy Services

University of Reading

DATA PROTECTION DECLARATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

This document can be used to provide assurances to your ethics committee where confirmation of data protection training and awareness is required for ethical approval.

By signing this declaration, I confirm that:

- I have read and understood the requirements for data protection within the *Data Protection for Researchers* document located here:

  http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/imps/Data_Protection_for_Researchers__Aug_18.v1.pdf

- I have asked for advice on any elements that I am *unclear on* prior to submitting my ethics approval request, either from my supervisor, or the data protection team at: imps@reading.ac.uk

- I understand that I am responsible for the secure handling, and protection of, my research data

- I know who to contact in the event of an information security incident, a data protection complaint or a request made under data subject access rights

Researcher to complete

Project/Study Title Hearing secondary students' voice: developing an understanding of students' academic success

NAME	STUDENT ID NUMBER	DATE
Khummit Keshinro		November 29, 2019

Supervisor signature

Note for supervisors: Please verify that your student has completed the above actions

NAME	STAFF ID NUMBER	DATE
Dr Catherine Foley		11th December 2019
Professor Catherine Tissot		

Submit your completed signed copy to your ethical approval committee.

Copies to be retained by ethics committee.

VERSION	KEEPER	REVIEWED	APPROVED BY	APPROVAL DATE
1.0	IMPS	Annually	IMPS	

University of Reading
Institute of Education
Risk Assessment Form for Research Activities February 2014

University of Reading

Select one:
Staff project: ☐ PGR project: ☑ MA/UG project: ☐

Name of applicant (s): Khummit Keshinro

Title of project: Secondary students' perception of the concept students' academic performance, how they understand and make sense of it.

Name of supervisor (for student projects): Dr Catherine Foley / Professor Cathy Tissot

A: Please complete the form below

Brief outline of Work/activity:	Students focused research aimed at obtaining their perspective on academic performance, how they interpret and make sense of it. We will use disposable cameras, audio recorders to document their perspective inside and outside the school's premises. A focus group to triangulate the data from the first two methods is to be implemented.
Where will data be collected?	One rural secondary school
Significant hazards:	Student participants may be verbally or physically threatened while taking photos or recording inside and or outside the school's premises. This may arise from students seeking to take photos of other students without prior approval
Who might be exposed to hazards?	Research participants
Existing control measures:	The school's administration inclusive of the school's Guidance Councillor will be sensitized towards the significant hazards identified as a means of alerting the student body towards the activities associated with the study. Participants will be engaged in sensitization sessions to alert them of the rules and principles guiding taking of photos or recordings inside and outside the school premises to mitigate this risk. In addition, participants will be guided on the importance of not taking photos of children, especially facial images, without prior consent from identified persons. Participants will be asked to sign the participant consent form which is aligned to the participant information sheet which provides guidelines. Daily communication with student participants to determine their comfort levels and progress.
Are risks adequately controlled:	Yes ☑ No ☐

If NO, list additional controls and actions required:	Additional controls	Action by:
	Inform parents of the identify hazard and the steps taken to mitigate against these to include daily communication with student participants in the pilot.	Researcher

B: SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

I have read the Heath and Safety booklet posted on Blackboard, and the guidelines overleaf.
I have declared all relevant information regarding my proposed project and confirm risks have been adequately assessed and will be minimized as far as possible during the course of the project.

Sign..... Print Name..... Date: December 16 2015

STATEMENT OF APPROVAL TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISOR (FOR UG AND MA STUDENTS) **OR** BY IOE ETHICS COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE (FOR PGR AND STAFF RESEARCH).

C: SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

Note: a signature is required. Typed names are not acceptable.

I have declared all relevant information regarding my proposed project and confirm that ethical good practice will be followed within the project.

Signed: ..... Print Name: ..... Date: 4/2/2020

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE ETHICS COMMITTEE

This project ..... agreed low-risk procedures and is now approved.

Signed: ..... Print Name: ..... Dt: 6/2/20
(Full Name ..... representative)*

* A decision to allow a project to proceed is not an expert assessment of its content or of the possible risks involved in the investigation, nor does it restrict in any way from the ultimate responsibility which students/investigators must themselves have for these matters. Approval is granted on the basis of the information declared by the applicant.

University of Reading

Researcher:
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Tel:
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K.A.K.Keshinro@pgr.reading.ac.uk

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HEAD TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

Research Project. Hearing secondary students' voice: developing an understanding of students' academic success.

Project Team Members: Mrs Khummit Keshinro

Dear Head Teacher

I am writing to invite your school to take part in a research study on how students interpret and make sense of the concept students' success with a view to facilitating appreciation of their perspective. I hope this will lead to a more representative understanding and practice of the concept in academia.

What is the study?
The study is being conducted at the University of Reading as part of my Ed. D dissertation. The study seeks to engage twelve grade 10 students from your institution who will be asked to provide their perspective on the research question. These participants will be asked to use either the research method of photo voice or diarying to collect data for the research question. Those participants who select photo voice will be provided with a disposable camera which will be used to take photos that depict their response (s) to the research question, while those participants opting for diarying will be provided with disposable voice recorders which will be used to record their responses to the research questions. Participants will be given the equipment to use over a two weeks period. Each participant will then be required to participate in one -on-one interviews (which are to last no more than 15 minutes per participant) the aim of which is to ascertain the interpretations of their individual photos and voice recordings submitted. The outcome desired of the study is twofold:

(a) to hear students' perspective on the traditional premise of students' academic success and their own views of what the concept should look like,
(b) to contribute to academic knowledge of students' voice on students' academic success.

Why has this school been chosen to take part?
The school was chosen

- based on an analysis of data retrieved from the Caribbean Examination Council website on students' performance in key subject areas of Mathematics and English Language over the last 5 years. The results demonstrate a below national average performance of students in these subject areas,
- the proximity of the school which provides for ease of access.

Does the school have to take part?
Yes, the school will have to consent to taking part in the study however the involvement is specific to include the following:

University of Reading

Researcher:
Mrs. Khummit Keshinro
Tel:
Email:
K.A.K.Keshinro@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Supervisors:
Dr Catherine Foley & Cathy Tissot
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Email: c.m.foley@reading.ac.uk
c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

- as a conduit between the researcher, parents, and students to allow for easier entry of the researcher to the students and their parents/guardians,
- to receive consent forms from students and parents once they have read and signed same,
- to inform the school's population of the processes associated with the study including taking photos, with consent, to mitigate the hazard identified with participants use of camera to take photos of students as they seek to collect data for the research, following the sensitization of the Principal about the study.

What will happen if the school takes part?

If consent is given the school's involvement in the study, a sensitization program will be done to the Principal to sensitize around the significant hazard identified, in relation to participants taking photos of students without prior approval, to mitigate any possible materialization of this hazard. The school is also being asked to extend invitation to the grade 10 cohort with a view to identifying 12 students indicating an interest in participating in the data collection. Staff members will not be asked to participate in the data collection or analysis process. The school will also be asked to act as in intermediary between the researcher, parents, and students to allow for a smooth introduction to and contact between the parties in the initial stages of the study.

In addition, the school is being asked to receive signed consent forms, that will be issued to parents and students at the sensitization /introductory session, once they have read and sign if they agree to participate. Upon approval a student may withdraw from the research. The school's Guidance Councillor will also be asked to act as a point of contact to the participants to take their queries which will then be sent to the researcher by the Guidance Councillor via email for direct responses to the participants by the researcher either using face to face or telephone communication. These processes will be explained at a debriefing session prior to the distribution of the consent forms to the participants selected t participate. The process of withdrawal by the student or if the schools' administration desires to withdraw may be done by contacting me at K.A.K.Keshinro@pgr.reading.ac.uk. A copy of the research findings will be provided to the institution, students will be provided copy upon request.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?
No risk has been identified for the school in participating in the study as steps have been taken to ensure that all ethical areas for consideration have been addressed. Students can take pride in the knowledge that they would have helped to shape a study on how students interpret and make sense of the concept students' success with a view to facilitating appreciation of their perspective. It is hoped that the study will lead to a more representative understanding and practice of the concept in academia.

What will happen to the data?
The data collected in the study will be protected and held in the strictest confidence. All information gathered will be accessible only by the researcher and will be stored on a personal computer which is accessible only by the researcher. The data will be discarded by shredding immediately following the completion of the study. No real names will appear in the study, all participants will be identified using pseudonyms. The results of the study may be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles.

Who has reviewed the study?
This study has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct.

What happens if I change my mind?
You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, we will discard the data.

University of Reading

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Email: c.m.foley@reading.ac.uk
c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

What happens if something goes wrong?
In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact Dr Catherine Foley at University of Reading, UK at +44 (0)118 378 2661 or email her at c.m.foley@reading.ac.uk or Dr Cathy Tissot University of Reading, UK at +44(0)118 378 2674 or email her at c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?
Additional information regarding the proposed study can be obtained by contacting Khummit Keshinro telephone or via email K.A.K.Keshinro@pgr.reading.ac.uk

What do I do next?

I hope that consent will be given to allow for students from the school to participate in the study. If this is grant, please fill out the attached consent form and return it to me, sealed, in the envelope provided.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Khummit Keshinro

University of Reading

Researcher:
Mrs. Khummit Keshinro
Tel: (
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Head Teacher Consent Form

Please fill in your name and that of your institution ***if you agree*** *with the statement below.*

I have read the Information Sheet about the project and received a copy of it. I understand what the purpose of the project is and what is required of me. All my questions have been answered.

Name of Head Teacher: _____

Name of Secondary school: _____

Please tick as appropriate

1. I **consent** to the involvement of students from the school in the research as outlined in the Information Sheet provided ☐
2. I **do not consent** to the involvement of students from the school in the research as outlined in the Information Sheet provided ☐

Signed:_____

Date: _____

University of Reading

Researcher:
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Email:
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Supervisors:

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c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

Parent/guardian information sheet

Research Project: Hearing secondary students' voice: developing an understanding of students' academic success.

Project Team Members: Mrs Khummit Keshinro

We would like to invite your child to take part in a research project looking at students' academic success from the perspective of students. Many secondary school students are having a challenge to obtain passing grades in standard tests. This prevents them from being able to attend higher education institution or get employment. The study aims to hear from secondary students to get an understanding of how they see this idea of academic success as practised by teachers and school administration, how it impacts them, and whether they have their own views of how academic success should be defined

What is the study?
The study is being conducted at the University of Reading as part of my Ed. D dissertation. The study will involve twelve grade 10 students from the Secondary school your child currently attends who will be asked to provide their perspective on the research questions. Students will be asked to choose to use one of the following research methods of photo voice or diarying. For those students choosing to use photo voice they will be provided with a disposable camera for two weeks, this will be used to photos that depict the students answers to the research question. For those students opting to choose diarying they will be provided with a miniature voice recorder which the student will use to record their responses to the research questions.

Following the two weeks use of the equipment each student will then participate in a one-on-one interview session, which will last for 15 minutes per student. The aim of the session is to allow students to provide interpretations of the images and recordings provided to the researcher. The outcome desired of the study is twofold:

a) To hear from students how they understand, interpret and make sense of the concept students' success with a view to facilitating appreciation of their perspective.
b) Facilitate a more representative understanding and practice of the concept in academia.

Why has my child been chosen to take part?
Your child has been invited to take part in the study as he/she attends the identified secondary school and has was randomly selected from the population of students that are currently in grade 10.

Does my child have to take part?
It is entirely up to you and your child whether they participate in the study. You may also withdraw your consent to participation at any time during the study, without any repercussions to you or your child, by contacting the Principal Researcher Ms. Khummit Keshinro on telephone (876) 330-5117 or via email K.A.K.Keshinro@pgr.reading.ac.uk

What will happen if my child takes part?

University of Reading

Researcher:
Mrs. Khummit Keshinro
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Email:
K.A.K.Keshinro@pgr.reading.ac.uk

Supervisors:

Dr Catherine Foley & Cathy Tissot
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+44(0)118 378 2674
Email: c.m.foley@reading.ac.uk
c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

If you approve of your child participating, then your child will be a part of a research seeking to understand academic success explain through students' voice; how they see and make sense of the concept and their own perspective of the concept. In participating your child will be asked to provide data using the methods of photo voice, diarying, and one-on-one interview to provide their interpretation of the images and audio recordings produced in response to the research question.

Participants will be asked to select between either using a camera or voice recorder

- camera- which I will provide will be used, by those participants who chose this method, to take pictures by the participants as the option of collecting data to answer the research question,
- voice recorder- which I will provide will be used, by those participants who chose this method, to record their responses to the research questions,
- one-on-one interviews- will be done with each student individually and lasting for no more than 15 minutes per student to discuss their thoughts behind the images captured using the camera and the audios from the voice recorders.

Strict guidelines regarding the use of the camera and the use of the photos taken will be provided to the students upon issuance of the camera. The photos and recording done will form part of the research findings and will be included in the final document. No actual names will be assigned to the photos and recordings only the pseudonym (alias) provided at the start of the study will be used to identify the child. The child will also take part in the discussion session following the submission of the photos and recordings taken by all students. This final discussion will seek to get students' opinions on the photos and recordings taken to ensure proper representation of their ideas in the final study findings.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?
No risk has been identified for participants in this study. However, areas for ethical consideration have been recognized, in particular to make sure they use the camera safely, and the steps taken are outlined in the consent form. I hope that students will enjoy taking part in the research process, and this will help to build their confidence in their own performance. Participants can be proud of having contributed to knowledge.

What will happen to the data?
The data collected will be protected and held in the strictest confidence. All information gathered will be accessible only by the researcher and will be stored on a personal computer which is accessible only by the researcher. The data will be discarded by shredding immediately following the completion of the study. No real names will appear in the study, all participants will be identified using pseudonyms. The results of the study may be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles.

Who has reviewed the study?
This study's data collection process has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

What happens if I change my mind?
You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. During the study, your child can stop participating in any of the activities at any time. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, please contact me using the contact details above and I will discard your child's data.

What happens if something goes wrong?

University of Reading

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Supervisors:

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In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact Dr Catherine Foley at University of Reading, UK at +44 (0)118 378 2661 or email her at c.m.foley@reading.ac.uk or Dr Cathy Tissot University of Reading, UK at +44(0)118 378 2674 or email her at c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?
Additional information regarding the proposed study can be obtained by contacting Khummit Keshinro telephone (876) 330-5117 or via email K.A.K.Keshinro@pgr.reading.ac.uk

What do I do next?
I do hope that you will agree to your child's participation in the study. Please see attached consent form asking to indicate whether you are willing to or not willing to have your child participate in the study. Please complete this as soon as possible and submit to your school's Principal. Your child will also be given an information sheet to read and asked to complete a consent form to let me know if they are happy to take part.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Khummit Keshinro

University of Reading

Researcher:
Mrs. Khummit Keshinro
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Parent/Carer Consent Form

Research Project: Secondary students' perception of students' performance; how they understand and make sense of students' success

Please read and complete by filling in the appropriate space. Upon completion please submit to your child's school Principal's Office.

1. I _____ hereby **GIVE CONSENT** for my child
   Name of parent/guardian

   _____ of the _____ to take part in the research.
   Name of child Name of Child's Secondary School

.....

2. I _____ hereby **DO NOT give consent** for my child
   Name of parent/guardian

   _____ of the _____ to take part in the research.
   Name of child Name of Child's Secondary School

Signed: _____

Date: _____

University of Reading

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Pupil information sheet

Research Project: Hearing secondary students' voice: developing an understanding of students' academic success.

Project Team Members: Mrs. Khummit Keshinro

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project looking at students' academic success from the perspective of students. Many secondary school students are having a challenge to obtain passing grades in standard tests. This prevents them from being able to attend higher education institution or get employment. The study aims to hear from secondary students to get an understanding of how they see this idea of academic success as practised by teachers and school administration, how it impacts them, and whether they have their own views of how academic success should be defined

What is the study?
The study is being conducted at the University of Reading as part of my Ed. D dissertation. The study will involve twelve grade 10 students from your school who will be asked to provide their perspective on the research questions. You will be asked to choose between one of two research methods; photo voice or diarying. If you choose to use the photo voice method, you will be provided with a disposable camera which you are being asked to use to take photos of images that depict your response to the research questions, if you select the diarying method you will be provided with a miniature voice recorder which you will use to record your responses to the research questions. You will use the equipment of your choice for two –weeks to collect data. Following the use of the equipment each student will be asked to participate in a 15 minutes' one-on-one interview session to discuss their interpretation of the images or recordings submitted to the researcher. The outcome desired of the study is twofold:

a) To hear from students how they understand, interpret and make sense of the concept students' success with a view to facilitating appreciation of their perspective.
b) Facilitate a more representative understanding and practice of the concept in academia.

Why have I been chosen to take part?
You have been chosen to take part in the study as you attend an identified rural area secondary school and was randomly selected from the population of students that are currently in grade 10.

Do I have to take part?
Participating in the study is totally your decision. If you agree initially to participate and then decide to withdraw from the study without providing any reason for doing so, you can do that. You can let me know in person or via email at K.A.K.Keshinro@pgr.reading.ac.uk. Alternatively, you may choose to inform your school's Principal.

What will happen if I take part?
If you and the Principal agrees for you to take a part in the study, you will participate in a sensitization session for the study, during which time consent forms will be issued for reading and signing by your parents/guardians and yourself. You are then being asked to submitted the signed forms from yourself and your parents/guardians to your school's Guidance Councillor. Participants will then be issued with their choice of either camera or voice recorder to collect data for the study. Participants will have 2 weeks to use

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c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

their equipment and supply on a weekly basis to the researcher the photos or recordings taken/done during the week for safe keeping. Following the use of the equipment, participants will individually take part in one-on-one interview to facilitate the authentic interpretation, an analysis of their images and recordings provided. The following outlines the information that will be provided in the sensitization session on the research method and use of equipment ahead of the issuing of equipment and data collection process.

1. **Photo voice** – participants choosing the cameras as the means of documenting their responses to the research questions will be asked to participate in an initial meeting to be made aware of the purpose and process of the photo voice in the research. Participants will then be taken through a sensitization session in which they will be guided on
    a. the principles, rules, ethics, process governing the method,
    b. use the camera and the principles of taking photographs before being issued the camera. The issue of privacy of the audience being photographed, being respectful, fair, capturing no image of child(ren) or adults, and confidentiality of photos taken. No actual names will be assigned to the photos and recordings only the pseudonym (alias) provided at the start of the research will be used to identify you. All photos taken will be discarded following the sharing of the research findings sessions with identified stakeholders.
    c. types of photos that should be taken only those images that reflect their response to the research question excluding photos of children under the age of consent,
    d. how to identification of the themes of focus for photo voice from the research question.
    e. Participants will also be taken through the ethics, principles of one –on-one interview method which is to take place following the conclusion of the photo voice session.

Following the sensitization session participants will be issued with disposable cameras to take photos over a two-weeks period, with weekly selection and submission of relevant and representative images based on themes from the research questions, for safe keeping by the researcher. based on the agreed themes of focus, submit for development and safekeeping. These photos will form the basis of the one –on-one interview session to be had.

2. **Verbal diarying** – participants who choose to use the voice recorders will be asked to participate in an initial meeting to discuss the purpose, process, principles, and the rules of diarying verbally. Participants will be engaged around the principles governing voice recording prior to being issued the disposable tape recorders. No actual names will be used in the transcript. The audio recordings are the words of the participants and their privacy and right to confidentiality of their recordings will be honoured. All recordings will be discarded following the completion of the research. Participants will also be sensitized on the one –on-one interview method which is to take place following the conclusion of the diarying session. Each participant will be issued with disposable voice recorders to record your perspectives based on the agreed themes of focus over a two-day period. Recordings will be submitted and used as a focus in a one-on-one interview with each participant, which will be recorded and transcribed.

3. **One-on-one interview** – following the completion of the photo voice and diarying all participants will be asked to participate in individual interviews. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym (alias) to protect your identity. All information gathered in the session will be held in the strictest confidence. Participants' thoughts and ideas will be taken as important and all participants will be urged to respect and treat fairly their fellow participants. The session will be audiotaped and all

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c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

tapes will be shredded following the completion of the research. Each participant will be provided with their assigned time, duration, venue, and format for their interview. The interviews will focus on the images and audio as provided by each student to enable them to provide clarity of meaning and relevance of data to the research question. The interview will be conducted at a safe, private and comfortable location on the school's compound. The process will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Will anyone know about my answers?
No one outside of the researcher will be able to link your responses to yourself.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?
No risk has been identified for participants in this study. However, areas for ethical consideration have been recognised and addressed through the steps outlined above. Participants can be proud of having helped in shaping research methods and questions to be used in the actual research process, knowing that they would have contributed to knowledge. Any safety issue that arises during the study will be referred to the school's guidance counsellor. Your agreement to participate in this study will not affect any present or future grades.

The benefits to be gained in taking part in the study will not only affect yourself, but also the wider school population. The findings of the study are to be shared with key stakeholders at the community and school level, with a view to identifying and implementing ideas to facilitate the improvement of students' performance at the secondary level. An electronic summary of the findings of the study will be made available to the school and yourself by the Researcher.

What will happen to the data?
The data collected will be protected and held in the strictest confidence. All information gathered will be accessible only by the researcher and will be stored on a personal computer which is accessible only by the researcher. The data will be discarded by shredding immediately following the completion of the research. No real names will appear in the research, all participants will be identified using pseudonyms. The results of the study may be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles.

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at imps@reading.ac.uk, or in writing to: Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data.

If we have included any additional requests for use of your data, for example adding you to a registration list for the purposes of inviting you to take part in future studies, this will be done only with your consent where you have provided it to us and should you wish to be removed from the register at a later date, you should contact Dr Catherine Foley at University of Reading, UK at +44 (0)118 378 2661 or email her at

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c.m.foley@reading.ac.uk **or** Dr Cathy Tissot University of Reading, UK at +44(0)118 378 2674 or email her at c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

You have certain rights under data protection law which are:

- Withdraw your consent, for example if you opted in to be added to a participant register
- Access your personal data or ask for a copy
- Rectify inaccuracies in personal data that we hold about you
- Be forgotten, that is your details to be removed from systems that we use to process your personal data
- Restrict uses of your data
- Object to uses of your data, for example retention after you have withdrawn from a study

Some restrictions apply to the above rights where data is collected and used for research purposes. You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) on their website at https://ico.org.uk

You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

Who has reviewed the study?
This study has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

What happens if I change my mind?
You can change your mind at any time you like. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, I will not use your data.

What happens if something goes wrong?
In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact Dr Catherine Foley at University of Reading, UK at +44 (0)118 378 2661 or email her at c.m.foley@reading.ac.uk **or** Dr Cathy Tissot University of Reading, UK at +44(0)118 378 2674 or email her at c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?

Additional information regarding the proposed study can be obtained by contacting Khummit Keshinro telephone (876) 330-5117 or via email K.A.K.Keshinro@pgr.reading.ac.uk

What do I do next?
I do hope that you will agree to participate in the study. Please see attached consent form asking you to indicate whether you are willing to or not willing to participate in the study. Please complete it as soon as possible and submit to your school's Guidance Councillor as soon as possible.

University of Reading

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Mrs. Khummit Keshinro
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c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Khummit Keshinro

University of Reading

Researcher:
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c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

Student Consent Form

Research Project: Hearing secondary students' voice: developing an understanding of students' academic success.

Please tick the appropriate box

	Yes	No
I have read the Information Sheet about the study project.	☐	☐
I understand the purpose of the study project and what you want me to do. All my questions have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.	☐	☐
I understand that it is my choice to help with this study project and that I can stop at any time, without giving a reason and that it will not have any effect on my grades.	☐	☐
I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the Information Sheet.	☐	☐

Please tick as appropriate:

I am **WILLING** to take part in the study project ☐
I am **NOT WILLING** to take part in the study project ☐

Student's Name: _____

Student's Signature: _____

University of Reading

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Research Question: Hearing secondary students' voice: developing an understanding of students' academic success.

Indicative questions to be asked of study participants who will collect data using photo voice and diarying.

Students' view of academic performance 1. Since you have been at this school how would you say your school defines a successful student? 2. Are you aware of what is used to determine if a student is successful by your school? What is your opinion of it? 3. What do you think influences students' to be successful?
Students' view of academic performance 1. What is your opinion of those students who do not get labelled as successful? a. Can they be called successful? If yes, how? If no, why not b. What would you call them? 2. Do you think being labelled as not successful affects those students? How so?
3. How would you describe a successful student?
Making sense of academic performance? 1. Is being successful in school important to your life? 2. How can students make adults listen to their views on how students feel academic success should be defined

Appendix 2 Main Study Ethics Forms

University of Reading
Institute of Education
Ethical Approval Form A (version May 2019)

University of Reading

Tick one:
EdD √

Name of applicant (s): Khummit Keshinro

Title of project: Hearing secondary students' voice: developing an understanding of students' academic performance and success.

Name of supervisor (for student projects): Dr Catherine Foley / Professor Cathy Tissot

Please complete the form below including relevant sections overleaf.

	YES	NO
Have you prepared an Information Sheet for participants and/or their parents/carers that:		
a) explains the purpose(s) of the project	√	
b) explains how they have been selected as potential participants	√	
c) gives a full, fair and clear account of what will be asked of them and how the information that they provide will be used	√	
d) makes clear that participation in the project is voluntary	√	
e) explains the arrangements to allow participants to withdraw at any stage if they wish	√	
f) explains the arrangements to ensure the confidentiality of any material collected during the project, including secure arrangements for its storage, retention and disposal	√	
g) explains the arrangements for publishing the research results and, if confidentiality might be affected, for obtaining written consent for this	√	
h) explains the arrangements for providing participants with the research results if they wish to have them	√	
i) gives the name and designation of the member of staff with responsibility for the project together with contact details, including email . If any of the project investigators are students at the IoE, then this information must be included and their name provided	√	
k) explains, where applicable, the arrangements for expenses and other payments to be made to the participants	n/a	
j) includes a standard statement indicating the process of ethical review at the University undergone by the project, as follows: 'This project has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct'.	√	
k)includes a standard statement regarding insurance: "The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request".	√	
Please answer the following questions		
1) Will you provide participants involved in your research with all the information necessary to ensure that they are fully informed and not in any way deceived or misled as to the purpose(s) and nature of the research? (Please use the subheadings used in the example information sheets on blackboard to ensure this).	√	
2) Will you seek written or other formal consent from all participants, if they are able to provide it, in addition to (1)?	√	
3) Is there any risk that participants may experience physical or psychological distress in taking part in your research?		√
4) Staff Only - have you taken the online training modules in data protection and information security (which can be found here: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/humanresources/PeopleDevelopment/newstaff/humres-MandatoryOnlineCourses.aspx Please note: students complete a Data Protection Declaration form and submit it with this application to the ethics committee.		
5) Have you read the Health and Safety booklet (available on Blackboard) and completed a Risk Assessment Form to be included with this ethics application?	√	
6) Does your research comply with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research?	√	

	YES	NO	N.A.
7) If your research is taking place in a school, have you prepared an information sheet and consent form to gain the permission in writing of the head teacher or other relevant supervisory professional?	√		
8) Has the data collector obtained satisfactory DBS clearance?			√

9) If your research involves working with children under the age of 16 (or those whose special educational needs mean they are unable to give informed consent), have you prepared an information sheet and consent form for parents/carers to seek permission in writing, or to give parents/carers the opportunity to decline consent?	√		
10) If your research involves processing sensitive personal data[1], or if it involves audio/video recordings, have you obtained the explicit consent of participants/parents?	√		
11) If you are using a data processor to subcontract any part of your research, have you got a written contract with that contractor which (a) specifies that the contractor is required to act only on your instructions, and (b) provides for appropriate technical and organisational security measures to protect the data?			√
12a) Does your research involve data collection outside the UK?	√		
12b) If the answer to question 12a is "yes", does your research comply with the legal and ethical requirements for doing research in that country?	√		
13a) Does your research involve collecting data in a language other than English?		√	
13b) If the answer to question 13a is "yes", please confirm that information sheets, consent forms, and research instruments, where appropriate, have been directly translated from the English versions submitted with this application.			√
14a. Does the proposed research involve children under the age of 5?		√	
14b. If the answer to question 14a is "yes": My Head of School (or authorised Head of Department) has given details of the proposed research to the University's insurance officer, and the research will not proceed until I have confirmation that insurance cover is in place.			√
If you have answered YES to Question 3, please complete Section B below			

- Complete **either** Section A **or** Section B below with details of your research project.
- Complete a risk assessment.
- Sign the form in Section C.
- Append at the end of this form all relevant documents: information sheets, consent forms, tests, questionnaires, interview schedules, evidence that you have completed information security training (e.g. screen shot/copy of certificate).
- Email the completed form to the Institute's Ethics Committee for consideration.

Any missing information will result in the form being returned to you.

A: My research goes beyond the 'accepted custom and practice of teaching' but I consider that this project has **no** significant ethical implications. (Please tick the box.)	√

Please state the total number of participants that will be involved in the project and give a breakdown of how many there are in each category e.g. teachers, parents, pupils etc.

Total number of participants will be twelve years 10 students from a rural area secondary school.

Give a brief description of the aims and the methods (participants, instruments and procedures) of the project in up to 200 words noting:

1. **title of project**

Hearing secondary students' voice: developing an understanding of students' academic success.

2. **purpose of project and its academic rationale**

To hear students' voice perspective on students' academic performance and success, to add knowledge to education discourse on students' academic success from the often-excluded voices of students (Cook-Sather, 2006)

3. **brief description of methods and measurements**

- Photo voice – photographic images to answer the research question.
- Audio Journaling - audio recorders to record responses to the research question,
- One -on-one interviews – students to interpret the images and recordings provided.

4. **participants: recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria**

[1] Sensitive personal data consists of information relating to the racial or ethnic origin of a data subject, their political opinions, religious beliefs, trade union membership, sexual life, physical or mental health or condition, or criminal offences or record.

12 grade 10 students ages 15-16 male and female who have accepted the invitation to participate in the study. Accepted participants will be expected to either own a mobile phone or have access to one. Excluded urban area school and rural area school whose students' scores are categorized as mastery and average.

5. **consent and participant information arrangements, debriefing (attach forms where necessary)**
School's administrator, participants and parents/guardians to be provided with information sheet and consent forms for signing and submission, as well as participate in debriefing sessions ahead of data collection
See forms attached.

6. **a clear and concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with them**

Ethical considerations of the study include

- participants being asked to use their personal mobile devise to collect data, which could then be uploaded onto other online platforms. Participants will be sensitized about the rules in relation to the handling of photographs and that no one outside of the researcher is authorized to use the images,
- use of researcher's personal mobile phone number which will be used to make contact with participants which is to be used only to communicate with the researcher and to upload photographs and audio recordings,
- receiving permission from persons who are over the age of consent whose photographs they are desirous of taking and how to take the photos to ensure no identifying features are captured, taking of person's photographs. Participants will be guided towards understanding that no child under the age of consent is to be photographed.
- Taking of photographs should only be done on the school compound, for those students permitted to attend school, and for those students not permitted to attend school, due to Covid19 guidelines, photographs should only capture images in their homes or yards and not their community.

7. **estimated start date and duration of project**

January 2020 and end March 2020

B: I consider that this project **may** have ethical implications that should be brought before the Institute's Ethics Committee.	

RISK ASSESSMENT: Please complete the form below (see separate form)

Brief outline of Work/activity:	See completed risk assessment form
Where will data be collected?	See completed risk assessment form
Significant hazards:	See completed risk assessment form
Who might be exposed to hazards?	See completed risk assessment form
Existing control measures:	See completed risk assessment form

Are risks adequately controlled:	See completed risk assessment form

If NO, list additional controls and actions required:	Additional controls	Action by:

C: SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

Note: a signature is required. Typed names are not acceptable.

I have declared all relevant information regarding my proposed project and confirm that ethical good practice will be followed within the project.

Signed: . Print Name Date August 25 2020

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL FOR PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE ETHICS COMMITTEE

This project has been considered using agreed Institute procedures and is now approved.

Signed: … ..... Print Name…Catherine Foley..... Date…18th August 2020….
(IoE Research Ethics Committee representative)*

* A decision to allow a project to proceed is not an expert assessment of its content or of the possible risks involved in the investigation, nor does it detract in any way from the ultimate responsibility which students/investigators must themselves have for these matters. Approval is granted on the basis of the information declared by the applicant.

University of Reading

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c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

HEAD TEACHER INFORMATION SHEET

Research Project. Hearing secondary students' voice: developing an understanding of students' academic success.

Project Team Members: Mrs Khummit Keshinro

Dear Head Teacher

I am writing to invite your school to take part in a research study on how students interpret and make sense of the concept students' academic success, with a view to facilitating appreciation of their perspective. I hope this will lead to a more representative understanding and practice of the concepts in academia.

What is the study?
The study is being conducted by Khummit Keshinro as part of my Doctorate in Education (Ed.D) study at the University of Reading in the UK. I am doing this study as part of my professional development as an educator to better understand what students think about the traditional way in which schools have defined and practiced the ideas of academic performance and success, and what might be their own personal opinion (s) of what these definitions and understanding ought to be. The study will involve grade 10 students, from your institution, to whom invitation to participate will be extended. From the accepted group of students, twelve students who have either a personal mobile phone or access to a mobile phone, who will be asked to provide their perspective on the research questions. Participants will have a choice of selecting between photo voice and audio journaling research methods.

Those participants who select photo voice will be asked to use their personal mobile devise or one that is accessible, to take photos that depict their response (s) to the research question. This is a change from the initial plan of the researcher providing disposable cameras to participants, which is due to a decision by the consenting Head Teacher of the secondary school mandating that there be no direct contact between the researcher and the participants due to Covid19 guidelines. Students will be guided towards understanding their responsibility in relation to taking and handling of photographs. In this regard all participants will be sensitized on ensuring that they received permission from those persons whose photographs they are intent on taking, as well as ensuring that the photographs do not show any identifying features of these persons. Participants will also be asked not to use the photographs for other than the stated purposes of the research. All photographs taken are to be sent via WhatsApp, to the researcher and thereafter deleted from

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participant's mobile phones. This to protect the research participants as well as the persons whose photograph they would have taken.

Participants opting to use the audio journaling method will also be asked to use their personal mobile phone, or one that is accessible to them, to record their response(s) to the research question. This is a change from the initial plan of the researcher providing disposable audio recorders to participants. The change is due to the requirements outlined by the consenting Head Teacher of the secondary school mandating that there be no direct contact between the researcher and the participants due to Covid19 guidelines. Participants are to submit their audio recordings, via WhatsApp, to the researcher every other day for safe keeping. All recordings thereafter are to be deleted from the participant's personal mobile phone.

Participants will be asked to use the equipment over a two-weeks period. Each participant will then be required to participate in one-on-one interviews (which are to last no more than 15 minutes per participant) the aim of which is to ascertain the interpretation of their individual photos and voice recordings submitted.

Following the one on one interviews, all participants will be asked to participate in small group sessions where they will engage in coding and analysing of the data provided. Each group will comprise of no more than 4 participants in keeping with Covid 19 guidelines as well as to ensure that voice of each participant is heard and represented in the data analysis process.

The outcome desired of the study is twofold:

a) to hear students' perspective on the traditional premise of students' academic success and their own views on what the concept should look like,
b) to contribute to academic knowledge of students' voice on students' academic success.

Why has this school been chosen to take part?
The school was chosen

- based on an analysis of data retrieved from the Caribbean Examination Council website on students' performance in key subject areas of Mathematics and English language over the last 5 years. The results demonstrate a below average performance of a significant number of students in these subject areas, the poor academic performance of grade 11 students in their secondary exit examination over a period of recent years,
- the students matriculating from Primary school into this secondary institution would not have been from the highest performing batch of students on the Primary standardized exit level test.
- the proximity of the school which provides for ease of access.

Does the school have to take part?

No. Taking part is voluntary and the school can remove permission at any time. Involvement is specific to include the following:

- as conduit between the researcher, parents, and students to allow for easier entry of the researcher to the students and their parents/guardians,

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- to receive consent forms from students and parents once they have read and signed same,
- to inform the school's population of the processes associated with the study including taking photos, with consent, to mitigate the hazard identified with participants use of camera to take photos of persons (for those participants taking photographs on the school's compound of students, and those participants who are not at school and confined to their homes due to Covid19 and therefore will have to take photos in their home environment) as they seek to collect data for the research, following the sensitization of the Principal about the study.

What will happen if the school takes part?

If consent is given the school's involvement in the study a sensitization program, conducted via telephone due to Covid19 face to face meeting restrictions, will be done to the Principal to explain the significant hazards identified, in relation to participants using their personal mobile phones to take photos of students without prior approval, or posting same images online and the steps established to mitigate any possible materialization of these hazards. The school is also being asked to extend invitation to the grade 10 cohort with a view to identifying 12 students indicating an interest in participating in the data collection. Staff members will not be asked to participate in the data collection or analysis process. The school will also be asked to act as intermediary between the researcher, parents, and participants to allow for a smooth introduction to and contact between the parties in the initial stages of the study.

In addition, the school is being asked to receive signed consent forms, that will be issued to parents and participants, via WhatsApp due to Covid19 restrictions on face to face engagement, instead of being directly handed to participants by the researcher. Once the student and their parents or guardian have read these they are then being asked to sign if they agree to participate and return to the school's Guidance Councillor. Upon approval a student may withdraw from the research. The school's Guidance Councillor will also be asked to act as a point of contact to the participants to take their queries which will then be relayed to the researcher via WhatsApp or email, responses will be provided to participants by the researcher using direct telephone conversations. The process will be explained at a debriefing session, which will take place using one on one telephone conversations rather than face to face approach, prior to the distribution of the consent forms to the participants who have expressed an interest and have been selected to participate. The process of withdrawal by the student or if the school's administration desires to withdraw may be done by contacting me at K.A.K.Keshinro@pgr.reading.ac.uk. A copy of the research findings will be provided to the institution, participants will be provided copy upon request.

What will happen to the data?
No risk has been identified for the school in participating in the study as steps have been taken to ensure that all ethical areas of consideration have been addressed. Participants can take pride in the knowledge that they would have helped to shape a study on how students interpret and make sense of the concept of students' success with a view to facilitating appreciation of their perspective. It is hoped that the study will lead to a more representative understanding and practice of the concept in academia.

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Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Khummit Keshinro

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Head Teacher Consent Form

*Please fill in your name and that of your institution **if you agree** with the statement below.*

I have read the Information Sheet about the project and received a copy of it. I understand what the purpose of the project is and what is required of me. All my questions have been answered.

Name of Head Teacher: _____

Name of Secondary school: _____

Please tick as appropriate

1. **I consent** to the involvement of students from the school in the research as outlined in the Information Sheet provided ☐
2. **I do not consent** to the involvement of students from the school in the research as outlined in the Information Sheet provided ☐

Signed:_____

Date: _____

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Parent/guardian information sheet

Research Project: Hearing secondary students' voice: developing an understanding of students' academic success.

Project Team Members: Mrs Khummit Keshinro

We would like to invite your child to take part in a research project looking at students' academic success from the perspective of students' voice. Many secondary school students are having a challenge to obtain passing grades in standardized tests. This prevents them from being able to attend higher education institution or get employment. The study aims to hear from secondary students to get an understanding of how they see this idea of academic success as practised by teachers and school administration, how it impacts then and whether they have their own views of how academic success should be defined.

What is the study?
The study is being conducted by Khummit Keshinro as part of my Doctorate in Education (Ed.D) study at the University of Reading in the UK. I am doing this study as part of my professional development as an educator to better understand what students think first about the traditional way in which schools have defined and practiced the ideas of academic performance and success. Secondly, what might be their own personal opinion (s) of what these definitions and understanding ought to be. The study will involve grade 10 students, from your child's institution, to whom invitation to participate will be extended. From the accepted group of students, fifteen students who either have a personal mobile phone or access to a mobile phone, who will be asked to provide their perspective on the research questions. Participants will have a choice of selecting between photo voice and audio journaling research methods.

Those participants who select photo voice will be asked to use their personal mobile devise or one that is accessible, to take photos that depict their response (s) to the research question. This is a change from the initial plan of the researcher providing disposable cameras to participants, due a decision by the consenting Head Teacher of the secondary school mandating that there be no direct contact between the researcher and the participants due to Covid19 guidelines. Students will be guided towards understanding their responsibility in relation to taking and handling of photographs. In this regard all participants will be sensitized on ensuring that they received permission from those persons whose photographs they are intent on taking, as well as ensuring that the photographs do not show any identifying features of these persons. Participants will also be asked not to use the photographs for other than the stated purposes of the research. All photographs taken are to be sent via WhatsApp, to the researcher and thereafter deleted from participant's mobile phone. This to protect the research participants as well as the persons whose photograph they would have taken.

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Participants opting to use the audio journaling method will also be asked to use their personal mobile phones, or one that is accessible to them, to record their response (s) to the research question. This is a change from the initial plan of the researcher providing disposable audio recorders to participants. The change is due to the requirements outlined by the consenting Head Teacher of the secondary school mandating that there be no direct contact between the researcher and the participants due to Covid19 guidelines. Participants are to submit their audio recordings, via WhatsApp, to the researcher every other day for safekeeping. All recordings thereafter are to be deleted from the participant's personal mobile phone.

Participants will be asked to use the equipment over a two-week period. Each participant will then be required to participate in one-on-one interviews (which are to last no more than 15 minutes per participant) the aim of which is to ascertain the interpretation of their individual photos and voice recordings submitted.

Participants will be asked to participate in small group sessions where they will engage in coding and analysing the data provided by participants. Each group will comprise of no more than 4 participants in keeping with Covid 19 guidelines as well as to ensure that voice of each participant is heard and represented in the data analysis process.

The outcome desired of the study is twofold:

a) to hear students' perspective on the traditional premise of students' academic success and their own views on what the concept should look like,
b) to contribute to academic knowledge of students' voice on students' academic success

Why has my child been chosen to take part?
Your child has been invited to take part in the study as he/she attends the identified secondary school and was randomly selected from the population of students that are currently in grade 10. In addition, your child has indicated that he or she has either a mobile phone or access to a mobile phone, which the child is being asked to use to take photos or audio record their responses to the research questions.

Does my child have to take part?
It is entirely up to you and your child whether they participate in the study. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time during the study, without any repercussions to you or your child, by contacting the Principal Researcher Ms. Khummit Keshinro on telephone (876) 330-5117 or via email K.A.K.Keshinro@pgr.reading.ac.uk

What will happen if my child takes part?

If you approve of your child participating, your child will be a part of a research seeking to understand academic performance and success from their perspective. S(he) will be asked to select one of the two research methods of photo voice or audio journaling to answer the research questions using their personal mobile phone, or one they have access to, as the equipment with which to do so.

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Your child will be educated on and ask to abide by the strict guidelines regarding the use of the mobile phones to take photographs as outlined in the section above (What is the study?). The photographs and recordings done will form part of the research findings and will be included in the final document. No actual names will be assigned to the photos and the recordings only the pseudonyms (alias) provided at the start of the study will be used to identify the child. The child will also take part the discussion session following the submission of the photos and recordings taken by all participants. The final discussion will seek to get participants opinion on the photos and recordings taken to ensure proper representation of their ideas in the final study findings.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?
No risk has been identified for participants in this study. However, areas for ethical consideration have been recognized, these include participants using their personal mobile phones and the possibility of photographs taken being uploaded to other platforms, taking photographs without consent and of children under the age of consent, abuse of the mobile number provided for participants to upload and communicate with the researcher, taking of photographs outside of the school compound or in their communities. Participants will be sensitized about the ethical guidelines which are outlined in the consent form. I hope that participants will enjoy taking part in the research process, and this will help to build their confidence in their own performance. Participants can be proud of having contributed to knowledge.

What will happen to the data?
The data collected will be protected and held in the strictest confidence. All information gathered will be accessible only by the researcher and will be stored on a password protected computer which is accessible only by the researcher. The data will be discarded by shredding immediately following the completion of the study. No real names will appear in the study, all participants will be identified using pseudonyms. The results of the study may be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles.

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at imps@reading.ac.uk, or in writing to: Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data.

Some restrictions apply to the above rights where data is collected and used for research purposes.

University of Reading

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c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) on their website at https://ico.org.uk. You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

Who has reviewed the study?
This study's data collection process has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

What happens if I change my mind?
You can change your mind at any time without any repercussions. During the study, your child can stop participating in any of the activities at any time. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, please contact me using the contact details above and I will discard your child's data.

What happens if something goes wrong?
In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact Dr Catherine Foley at University of Reading, UK at +44 (0)118 378 2661 or email her at c.m.foley@reading.ac.uk or Dr Cathy Tissot University of Reading, UK at +44(0)118 378 2674 or email her at c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?
Additional information regarding the proposed study can be obtained by contacting Khummit Keshinro telephone (876) 330-5117 or via email K.A.K.Keshinro@pgr.reading.ac.uk

What do I do next?
I do hope that you will agree to your child's participation in the study. Please see attached consent form asking to indicate whether you are willing to or not willing to have your child participate in the study. Please complete this as soon as possible and submit to your school's Principal. Your child will also be given an information sheet to read and asked to complete a consent form to let me know if they are happy to take part.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Khummit Keshinro

University of Reading

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Parent/Carer Consent Form

Research Project: Hearing secondary students' voice: developing a better understanding of students' academic performance and success.

Please read and complete by filling in the appropriate space. Upon completion please submit to your child's school Principal's Office.

1. I _____ (Name of parent/guardian) hereby **GIVE CONSENT** for my child _____ (Name of child) of the _____ (Name of Child's Secondary School) to take part in the research.

.....

2. I _____ (Name of parent/guardian) hereby **DO NOT give consent** for my child _____ (Name of child) of the _____ (Name of Child's Secondary School) to take part in the research.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

University of Reading

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Pupil information sheet

Research Project: Hearing secondary students' voice: developing an understanding of students' academic success.

Project Team Members: Mrs. Khummit Keshinro

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project looking at students' academic success from the perspective of students. Many secondary school students are having a challenge to obtain passing grades in standardized tests. This prevents them from being able to attend higher education institution or get employment. The study aims to hear from secondary students to get an understanding of how the see this idea of academic success as practised by teachers and school administration, how it affects them, and whether they have their own views of how academic success should be defined.

What is the study?
The study is being conducted by Khummit Keshinro as part of my Doctorate in Education (Ed.D) study at the University of Reading in the UK. I am doing this study as part of my professional development as an educator to better understand what students think first about the traditional way in which schools have defined and practiced the ideas of academic performance and success. Secondly, what might be their own personal opinion (s) of what these definitions and understanding ought to be. The study will involve grade 10 students, from your institution, to whom invitation to participate will be extended. From the accepted group of students, fifteen students who have either a personal mobile phone or access to a mobile phone, to provide their perspective on the research questions. Participants will have a choice of selecting between photo voice and audio journaling research methods.

Those participants who select photo voice will use their personal mobile devise or one that is accessible, to take photos that depict their response (s) to the research question. This is a change from the initial plan of the researcher providing disposable cameras to participants, this is due to a decision by the consenting Head Teacher of the secondary school mandating that there be no direct contact between the researcher and the participants due to Covid19 guidelines. Students will be guided towards understanding their responsibility in relation to taking and handling of photographs. In this regard all participants will be sensitized on ensuring that they received permission from those persons whose photographs they are intent on taking, as well as ensuring that the photographs do not show any identifying features of these persons. Participants will be asked not to use the photographs for other than the stated purposes of the research. All photographs taken are to be sent, via WhatsApp, to the researcher and thereafter deleted from participant's mobile phones. This to protect the research participants was well as the persons whose photograph they would have taken.

Participants opting to use the audio journaling method will also be asked to use their personal mobile phones, or one that is accessible to them, to record their response (s) to the research

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question. This is a change from the initial plan of the researcher providing disposable audio recorders to participants. The change is due to the requirements outlined by the consenting Head Teacher of the secondary school mandating that there be no direct contact between the researcher and the participants due to Covid19 guidelines. Participants are to submit their audio recordings, via WhatsApp, to the researcher every other day for safekeeping. All recordings thereafter are to be deleted from the participant's personal mobile phone.

Participants will be asked to use the equipment over a two-week period. Each participant will then be required to participate in one-on-one interviews (which are to last no more than 15 minutes per participant) the aim of which is to ascertain the interpretation of their individual photos and voice recordings submitted.

Participants will be asked to participate in small group sessions where they will engage in analysing the data provided by participants. Each group will comprise of no more than 4 participants in keeping with Covid 19 guidelines as well as to ensure that voice of each participant is heard and represented in the data analysis process.

The outcome desired of the study is twofold:

a) to hear students' perspective on the traditional premise of students' academic success and their own views on what the concept should look like,
b) to contribute to academic knowledge of students' voice on students' academic success.

Why have I been chosen to take part?
You have been chosen to take part in the study as you attend an identified rural area secondary school and were randomly selected from the population of students that are currently in grade 10. In addition, you have indicated that you have either a mobile phone or access to a mobile phone.

Do I have to take part?
Participating in the study is totally your decision. If you agree initially to participate and then decide to withdraw from the study without providing any reason for doing so, you can do that. You can let me know in person or via email at K.A.K.Keshinro@pgr.reading.ac.uk. Alternatively, you may choose to inform your school's Principal.

What will happen if I take part?
If you and the Principal agrees for you to take part in the study, you and your parent(s) or guardians will participate in a telephone sensitization session, following which you will be provided with the consent form for reading and signing by your parents/ guardians and yourself. You are then being asked to submit the signed forms to the school's Guidance Councillor. Participants will be asked to use their personal mobile phones, or one available to them, for two weeks to take the photos or audio record their answers to the research questions, rather than be provided with a disposable camera by the researcher. This is because of requirements of the consenting Head Teacher that there be no direct contact between the researcher and the participants due to Covid19 guidelines

Participants will be asked to submit their photographs or recordings to the researcher weekly for safekeeping. Following which all photographs are to be deleted from the personal devises. Each

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participants will engage in one on-one telephone interviews, due to Covid19 guidelines, to provide their interpretation of the images and audio recordings produced in response to the research questions.

The following outlines the information for the research methods:

1. **Photo voice** – participants choosing the personal mobile phone to take photos to document their responses to the research questions will participate in an initial meeting outlining the purpose and process of the photo voice method. Participants will also be guided on
    a. the principles, rules, ethics, process governing the method,
    b. rules governing the use of personal mobile phones for those students opting to use the photo voice method:
        i. the need to receive permission from persons before taking their photograph,
        ii. how to take photographs to ensure that no identifying features of the person(s) being photographed are captured,
        iii. not using the photographs taken for the research outside of the research space, such as not uploading to online platforms or sharing with others. All images are to be deleted from the participant's mobile phone after they have been submitted to the researcher,
        iv. privacy of the audience being photographed, being respectful, fair, capturing no image of child(ren) or adults, and confidentiality of photos taken. No actual names will be assigned to the photos and recordings only the pseudonym (alias) provided at the start of the research will be used to identify you. All photos taken will be discarded following the sharing of the research findings sessions with identified stakeholders.
    c. types of photos that should be taken only those images that reflect their response to the research question excluding photos of children under the age of consent,
    d. participants will also be taken through the ethics, principles of one –on-one interview, to be done via telephone, method that is to take place following the conclusion of the photo voice session, and
    e. rules governing group analysis of data to ensure the participation of each person in the analysing process.

Thereafter the research questions will be given to participants who will have two-week to answer. Participants will be asked to submit images or recordings weekly for safekeeping by the researcher. These photos and recordings will form the basis of the one on one interview session to with each participants.

2. **Audio Journaling** – participants who choose to use this method to submit their responses to the research questions, will be asked to use their personal mobile phone, or a phone available to them, to record their responses to the questions. The decision to ask students to use their personal devise stems from a request of the consenting Head Teacher that there be no direct contact between the researcher and the participants due to Covid19 guidelines. Participants and their parents(s) or guardians will participate in an initial telephone meeting to discuss the purpose, process, principles, and the rules of audio

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journaling. Participants will use the device over a two-week period to record their responses. Recordings are to be submitted via WhatsApp, to the researcher every other day to ensure safekeeping of the data, and deleted. Participants will learn the principles governing voice recording. No actual names will appear in the transcript. The audio recordings are the words of the participants and their privacy and right to confidentiality of their recordings will be honoured. All recordings will be discarded following the completion of the research.

3. **One-on-one interview** – following the completion of the photo voice and diarying all participants will be asked to participate in individual interviews, to be done via telephone and not using the face to face method due to Covid19 engagement guidelines, which are to last for approximately 15 minutes. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym (alias) to protect your identity. All information gathered in the session will be held in the strictest confidence. The session will be audio recorded after which these will be shredded following the completion of the research. Each participant will be provided with their assigned time, duration, venue, and format for their interview. The interviews will focus on the images or audio as provided by each participant to provide clarity of meaning and relevance of data to the research question.
4. Participants will be asked to participate in small group sessions where they will engage in analysing the data provided by participants. Each group will comprise of no more than 4 participants in keeping with Covid 19 guidelines. In this method, participants will be reminded to respect, listen to and allow for the participation of all persons, and that there should be no disparaging remarks made about any person's opinion.

Will anyone know about my answers?
No one outside of the researcher will be able to link your responses to yourself.

What are the risks and benefits of taking part?
No risk has been identified for participants in this study. However, areas for ethical consideration have been recognized, to make sure the participants use their mobile phones safely, and handle the images taken following ethical guidelines as outlined in the consent form. I hope that participants will enjoy taking part in the research process, and this will help to build their confidence in their own performance. Participants can be proud of having contributed to knowledge.

What will happen to the data?
The data collected will be protected and held in the strictest confidence. All information gathered will be accessible only by the researcher and will be stored on a password protected computer accessible only by the researcher. The data will be discarded by shredding immediately following the completion of the research. No real names will appear in the research, all participants will be identified using pseudonyms. The results of the study may be presented at national and international conferences, and in written reports and articles.

The organisation responsible for protection of your personal information is the University of Reading (the Data Controller). Queries regarding data protection and your rights should be directed to the University Data Protection Officer at imps@reading.ac.uk, or in writing to:

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Information Management & Policy Services, University of Reading, Whiteknights, P O Box 217, Reading, RG6 6AH.

The University of Reading collects, analyses, uses, shares and retains personal data for the purposes of research in the public interest. Under data protection law we are required to inform you that this use of the personal data we may hold about you is on the lawful basis of being a public task in the public interest and where it is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes. If you withdraw from a research study, which processes your personal data, dependant on the stage of withdrawal, we may still rely on this lawful basis to continue using your data if your withdrawal would be of significant detriment to the research study aims. We will always have in place appropriate safeguards to protect your personal data.

Some restrictions apply to the above rights where data is collected and used for research purposes.

You can find out more about your rights on the website of the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) on their website at https://ico.org.uk. You also have a right to complain the ICO if you are unhappy with how your data has been handled. Please contact the University Data Protection Officer in the first instance.

Who has reviewed the study?
This study has been reviewed following the procedures of the University Research Ethics Committee and has been given a favourable ethical opinion for conduct. The University has the appropriate insurances in place. Full details are available on request.

What happens if I change my mind?
You can change your mind at any time you like. If you change your mind after data collection has ended, I will not use your data.

What happens if something goes wrong?
In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, you can contact Dr Catherine Foley at University of Reading, UK at +44 (0)118 378 2661 or email her at c.m.foley@reading.ac.uk **or** Dr Cathy Tissot University of Reading, UK at +44(0)118 378 2674 or email her at c.tissot@reading.ac.uk

Where can I get more information?

Additional information regarding the proposed study can be obtained by contacting Khummit Keshinro telephone (876) 330-5117 or via email K.A.K.Keshinro@pgr.reading.ac.uk

What do I do next?
I do hope that you will agree to participate in the study. Please see attached consent form asking you to indicate whether you are willing to or not willing to participate in the study. Please complete it as soon as possible and submit to your school's Guidance Councillor as soon as possible.

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Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Khummit Keshinro

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Student Consent Form

Research Project: Hearing secondary students' voice: developing a better understanding of students' academic success.

Please tick the appropriate box

	Yes	No
I have read the Information Sheet about the study project.	☐	☐
I have read and understood the guidelines regarding using my personal mobile or one that I have access to and how I am to handle the images or recordings I will take or record on the devise. These cannot be used by anyone except the researcher.	☐	☐
I understand the purpose of the study project and what you want me to do. All my questions have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.	☐	☐
I understand that it is my choice to help with this study project and that I can stop at any time, without giving a reason and that it will not have any effect on my grades.	☐	☐
I have received a copy of this Consent Form and of the Information Sheet.	☐	☐

Please tick as appropriate:

I am WILLING to take part in the study project ☐
I am NOT WILLING to take part in the study project ☐

Student's Name: _____

Student's Signature: _____

Information Management and Policy Services

University of Reading

DATA PROTECTION DECLARATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

This document can be used to provide assurances to your ethics committee where confirmation of data protection training and awareness is required for ethical approval.

By signing this declaration I confirm that:

- I have read and understood the requirements for data protection within the *Data Protection for Researchers* document located here:

  http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/imps/Data_Protection_for_Researchers__Aug_18.v1.pdf

- I have asked for advice on any elements that I am *unclear on* prior to submitting my ethics approval request, either from my supervisor, or the data protection team at: imps@reading.ac.uk

- I understand that I am responsible for the secure handling, and protection of, my research data

- I know who to contact in the event of an information security incident, a data protection complaint or a request made under data subject access rights

Researcher to complete

Project/Study Title_____

NAME	STUDENT ID NUMBER	DATE
Khummit Keshinro		August 25 2020

Supervisor signature

Note for supervisors: Please verify that your student has completed the above actions

NAME	STAFF ID NUMBER	DATE
Catherine Foley		18th August 2020

Submit your completed signed copy to your ethical approval committee.

Copies to be retained by ethics committee.

VERSION	KEEPER	REVIEWED	APPROVED BY	APPROVAL DATE
1.0	IMPS	Annually	IMPS	

University of Reading
Institute of Education
Risk Assessment Form for Research Activities February 2014

University of Reading

Select one:

Staff project: ☐ PGR project: ☑ MA/UG project: ☐

Name of applicant (s): Khummit Keshinro

Title of project: Secondary students' perception of the concept students' academic performance, how they understand and make sense of it.

Name of supervisor (for student projects): Dr Catherine Foley / Professor Cathy Tissot

A: Please complete the form below

Brief outline of Work/activity:	Students focused research aimed at obtaining their perspective on academic performance and academic success, how they interpret and make sense of it. Students will use their personal mobile phone or one that they have access to take photographs or audio record to document their perspective inside and outside the school's premises. One on one interviews will be used to triangulate the data provided by each student.
Where will data be collected?	One rural secondary school
Significant hazards:	Student participants may be verbally or physically threatened while taking photos or recording inside and or outside the school's premises. This may arise from students seeking to take photos of other students without prior approval
Who might be exposed to hazards?	Research participants and the researcher
Existing control measures:	The school's administration inclusive of the school's Guidance Councillor will be sensitized towards the significant hazards identified as a means of alerting the student body towards the activities associated with the study. Participants will be engaged in sensitization sessions to alert them of the rules and principles guiding the use of their personal mobile instruments, or one they have access to: • to seek permission before taking any photographs of persons • to not take any identifying features of persons, • no photographs of children under the age of consent, and • not to upload or other use the images they would take in any way outside of those stated for the research purpose. Participants will be asked not to take images outside of their school's compound, for those who would have returned to school following the resumption of their classes after the Covid19 outbreak. For those students not permitted to return to school all photographs taken must be done in their homes, no photographs should be taken in their community. Participants will be asked to sign the participant consent form, which is aligned to the participant information sheet, which provides guidelines. In addition, participants will also be guided on rules regarding use of the mobile contact number provided by the researcher to be used to submit images and audio recording and no other purpose. The researcher will establish regular communication with each participant to determine his or her comfort level and progress.
Are risks adequately controlled:	Yes ☑ No ☐

If NO, list additional controls and actions required:	Additional controls	Action by:
	Inform parents of the identify hazard and the steps taken to mitigate against these to include daily communication with student participants in the pilot.	Researcher

B: SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

I have read the Heath and Safety booklet posted on Blackboard, and the guidelines overleaf.
I have declared all relevant information regarding my proposed project and confirm risks have been adequately assessed and will be minimized as far as possible during the course of the project.

Signed: Print Name Khunaifi Lechina Date August 25 2020

STATEMENT OF APPROVAL TO BE COMPLETED BY SUPERVISOR (FOR UG AND MA STUDENTS) **OR** BY IOE ETHICS COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE (FOR PGR AND STAFF RESEARCH).

This project has been considered using agreed Institute procedures and is now approved.

Signed: ... . Print Name.....C. Foley..... Date...18th August 2020.....

* A decision to allow a project to proceed is not an expert assessment of its content or of the possible risks involved in the investigation, nor does it detract in any way from the ultimate responsibility which students/investigators must themselves have for these matters. Approval is granted on the basis of the information declared by the applicant.

Appendix 3 Guidance to students to collect data

Jamaican secondary students' perspective of academic performance and academic success; exploring high academic failure and low success rates.

Hello, thank you for volunteering to be a part of this research. As discussed in the first meeting with the other students, remember that if you feel uncomfortable or want to ask additional questions or have any queries relating to the research, please get in touch with your school's Guidance Counsellor, who will contact me so that I can speak with you. I will telephone or WhatsApp you, whichever is most convenient, so we can talk then.

Remember that you should select from one of the two methods, photovoice or audio journal, to give your answers to the research question. Also, remember that you should send me the photographs or recordings via WhatsApp by September 21, 2019. Afterward, remember that you will participate in an interview session with me and a focus group discussion with other participants to make sure that what I have written from the audio recording or interpreted from the audio recording and photographs is exactly what you wanted to show.

Other things to remember if you choose photovoice or audio journal to present your research question answers

a. You must stick to the rules we agreed on for taking photographs
    i. to ask people before taking their picture
    ii. not to take pictures of children unless they are students in your school, and you must still get their permission to take their pictures
    iii. not take pictures of anyone's face or anything that could make the person easy to identify, e.g., the school's crest
    iv. only take pictures on your school compound or in your yard. Not in other places,
b. you decide what to take pictures of or what you want to say in the recording to answer the research questions,
c. you can take as many pictures as possible you want to answer any of the questions,
d. you could label the photographs to tell me about them. If not, we will talk about them in the interview
e. you can send the photographs or recordings to me throughout the two weeks; if you think you may lose them
f. feel free to use either Jamaican patios or standard English if you want in answering the research question; if you choose audio journaling,
g. you will select which of the photographs is to be used to answer each research question. I will then interview you over the telephone about each selected photograph. I will call you at a time most suitable for you
h. the focus group discussion will be done at school, with all the other participants there as well, in a classroom. You will have a large sheet with everyone's answers to the research questions, but you will be unable to identify who said what, as pseudonyms will replace the names. I will provide transportation fare and refreshments on the day.

Appendix 4 Coding

Research Questions	Framing Cods using action words 'ing'	Focus Codes	Themes
How would you say your school describe who is an academically performing student?	Doing well Getting the school's average Performing well each term Grading/Averaging Writing tests Mastering subjects knowledge Getting awards for performing	High-grade score Written tests Subject content Rewards	Standards
How would you say your school describes a successful student?	Good behaving Self-motivating Lifelong learning Independent Learning Trying Being early Self-driven Constantly Performing Always Performing Passing Subjects Achieving Good grades Getting the average Knowing the information Mastering subject content knowledge Retaining subject content knowledge Playing sports	Subject content mastery Academic performance Good behaviour	Standards

Research Questions	Framing Cods using action words 'ing'	Focus Codes	Themes
	Participating in extra-curricular activities		
How does your school describe a) A non-academically performing student b) A student who is not successful?	Idling Poor work ethics Refusing to take responsibility Internalizing negative labels Challenging to retain subject content knowledge Challenging to remain focus Not interested in subjects No future planning No qualifying subjects Can't get good jobs	Poor Attitude Lack of interest Challenged	Poor Behaviour
What are your views on the use of written examinations as a main way of testing students?	Causing instability Challenging for some students & not for others Balancing for abilities Using alternative options Regurgitating knowledge, not testing, alternate needed Challenging for some abilities Judging abilities incorrectly Demonstrating capabilities Debilitating -mentally Leading to failing Testing measure Identifying alternate options Connecting to everyday realities to test	Challenging for students Alternatives testing Identifying abilities	Sense of self Alternatives

Research Questions	Framing Cods using action words 'ing'	Focus Codes	Themes
	Requiring specific abilities to be successful		
Are the students who are academic perfomers the only ones who performs?	Performing academically Choosing careers Nearing mastery Demonstrating interest in school work Attaining below average Doing practical subjects Trying student Stopping because you feel like you are not performing Having the ability Refusing to do better Managing based on abilities	Academic performance Trying Practical subjects	Academic Performance Trying
How do students make sense of the terms academic performance and success	Impacting Academic performance Success Identifying what happens in school Building up Putting at a disadvantage Affirming abilities Disaffirming abilities Teaching and sending message with attitudes Confusing	Good Behaviour Bad Behaviour Poor Performing Good performing Emotion School Labelling • Academic performer • Poor academic performer • Successful	Labels Emotions Categories Environment Impact Identity

Research Questions	Framing Cods using action words 'ing'	Focus Codes	Themes
	Grouping based on abilities Feeling unimportant Differentiating- treating students differently Caring and interests- attitude of teachers Focusing on academics and achievement not on education Focusing on skills Excelling in own space Good performers Labelling that motivates Labelling that demotivates /taken negatively Behaving badly due to labels Performing poorly Impacting - Depending on students' personality Internalizing information positively Internalizing information negatively- bad behaviour – poor performance Pushing to meet the level Needing encouragement	• Unsuccessful Stereotyping/categorizing	
Do you think how we define academic performance and success impacts students?	Feeling like underperformers Being on the outside of their peers	Feeling Outside Classifying	Identity Emotions

Research Questions	Framing Cods using action words 'ing'	Focus Codes	Themes
	Being outside of honour role award Classifying students Feelings successful Impacting positively Damaging self-esteem Demotivating students Affecting future Being unconcerned about passing or failing Having no interest in school Focusing only on successful students Demonstrating no interest in students struggling to perform Stereotyping students Labelling stereotypes students =low performing Responding to the definition as an opportunity =low performing students Accepting the meaning as it is	Success Impact Self esteem Stereotyping	
Do you think how we define a successful student impacts those students not defined as successful?	Playing out in the classroom Determining how teachers engage with students Differentiating between students' competencies =bright & dunce Damaging to students defined as not being successful	School Impact Categories	Environment Difference in impact Categories

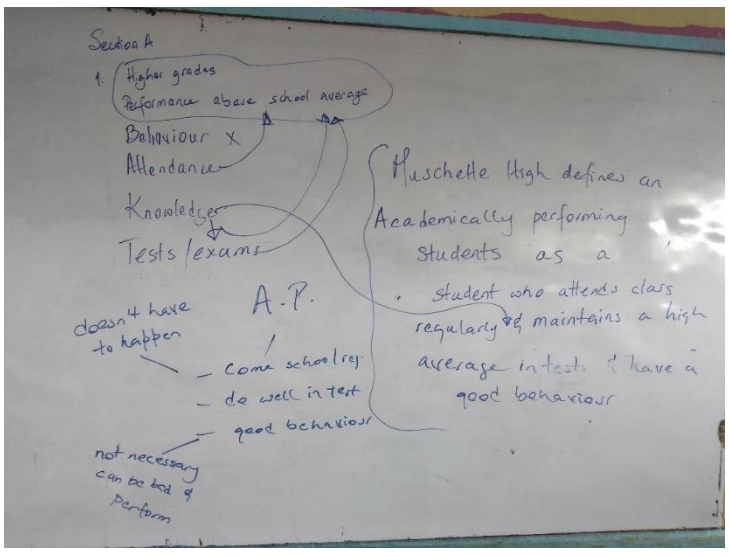
Research Questions	Framing Cods using action words 'ing'	Focus Codes	Themes
	• Feeling like they are underperforming • Feeling like they are failing because they are not doing well in academics • Noticing a focus on students seen as successful by teachers Motivating affected student to do better Giving praise to some students and not others Impacting negatively and positively Identifying school Having trouble accepting failure		
Do you think the words academic performance and success impact the goals of students?	Having many opportunities Zipping away opportunities with labels Impacting students labelled as academic performers positively Seeing the label of poor academic performer as a sign of not being good Impacting attitude negatively Resulting in poor academic performance Labelling helping students to shine Bringing out the inner self Receiving encouragement can change impact of labels	Opportunities Attitudes Impacting performance Categorize of skills Categorize of impact	Defines attitude and performance Categorization of students

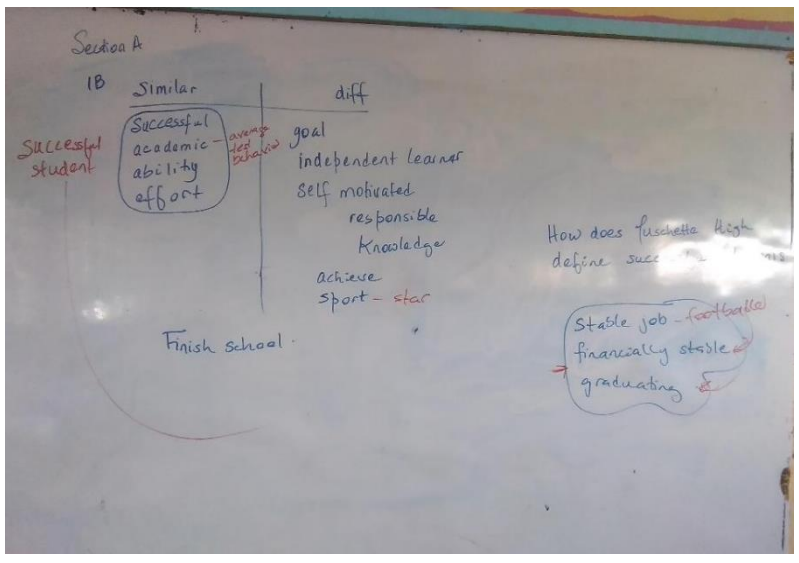
Research Questions	Framing Cods using action words 'ing'	Focus Codes	Themes
	Labelling impacts students future Motivating students seen as successful to succeed Seeing themselves as not coming to anything –those not labelled as successful Categorizing students as successful leads to positive attitude Categorizing students as successful leads to good performance Categorizing students as unsuccessful leads to hating teachers, learning, Categorizing students as unsuccessful leads to poor performance Having early sexual relations /partners Having low expectations of success from teachers Having poor self esteem Having no role models in		
Are there factors that make students not perform well in school? What are these?	Doing Sports Doing Drugs Feelings Family economic condition Ignoring students in classroom Experiencing crime and violence Family	Involvement Illicit activities Adverse Feelings Experiencing hostility	Negative experiences

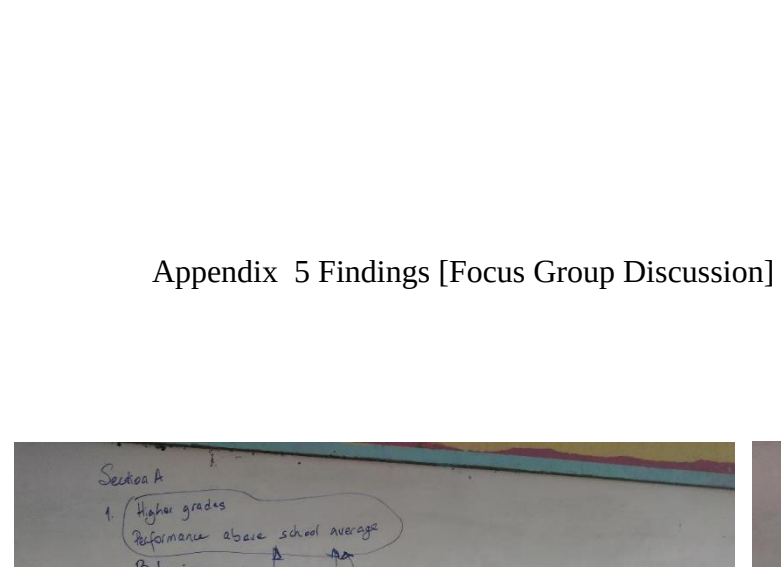
Research Questions	Framing Cods using action words 'ing'	Focus Codes	Themes
How would you describe who is an academically performing student?	Scoring high grades Having the word performer is a better word Doing well in extracurricular activities Socializing Taking responsibility Seeing everyone as learning /performing Trying student /making progress Focusing being determine Being at the top of the class Hardworking student Doing your best	Academic performance Involved in Soft skills activities Attitude	Psychosocial skills Academic performance
How would you describe who is an academically successful student?	Being able to show that you did well Having good behaviour Involving other areas of learning not just academics Doing well in school Doing well in sports Showing talent without fear Being responsible Gaining knowledge Focusing on value of leaning Being able to use knowledge learnt outside of classroom Trying student	Behaviour Academics Soft skills/vocational Attitude Rewards Professional employment	Learning [Holistic] Employment Attitude Rewards

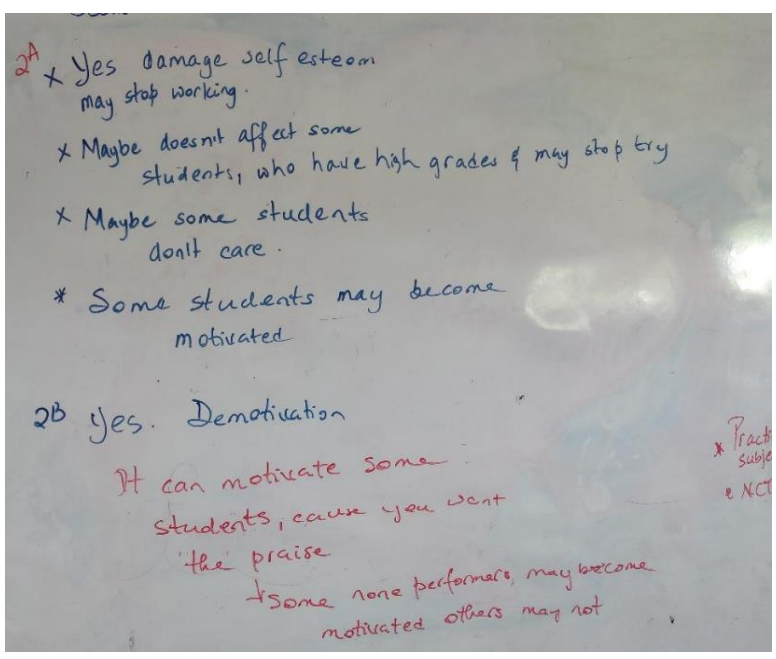
Research Questions	Framing Cods using action words 'ing'	Focus Codes	Themes
	Getting good grades Achieving your goals whatever those are Knowing where you want to go Planning Getting the work done/not idling Being responsible/motivated Receiving awards for performance Getting a professional job		
Do you think there are other ways outside of pen and paper tests that can be used to identify students abilities	Using talents Having science fairs /math fairs Using extra classes to teach Doing graded projects Using games Doing pen and paper tests Using this way is important for the work world Doing practical assessments	Pen & paper tests Alternate methods	Pen & paper tests Alternate methods

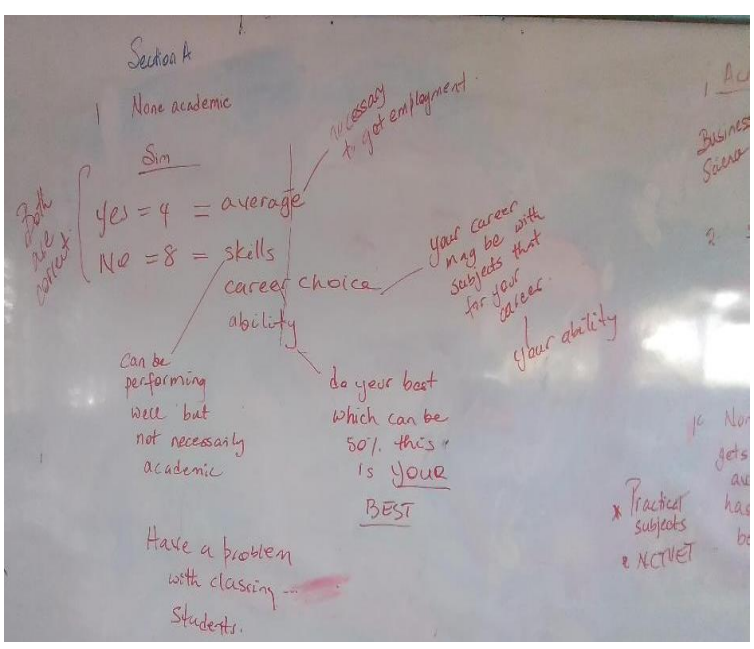
Appendix 5 Findings [Focus Group Discussion]

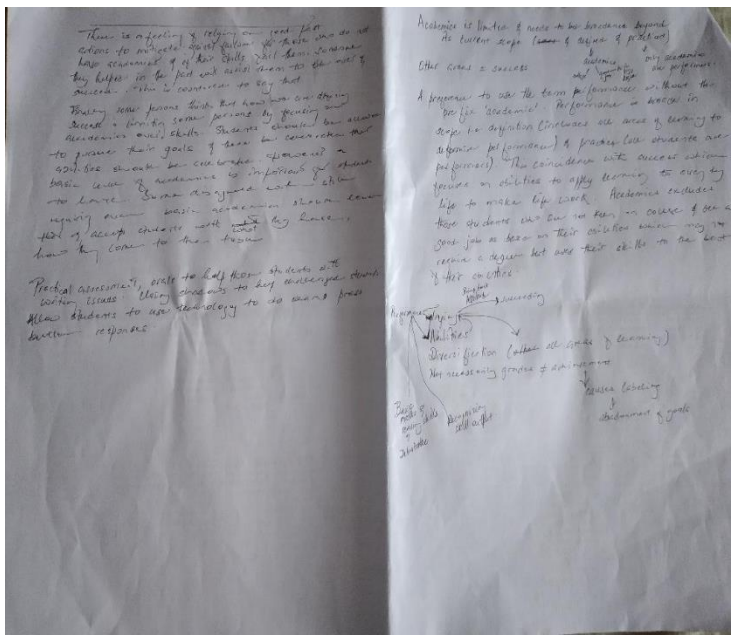


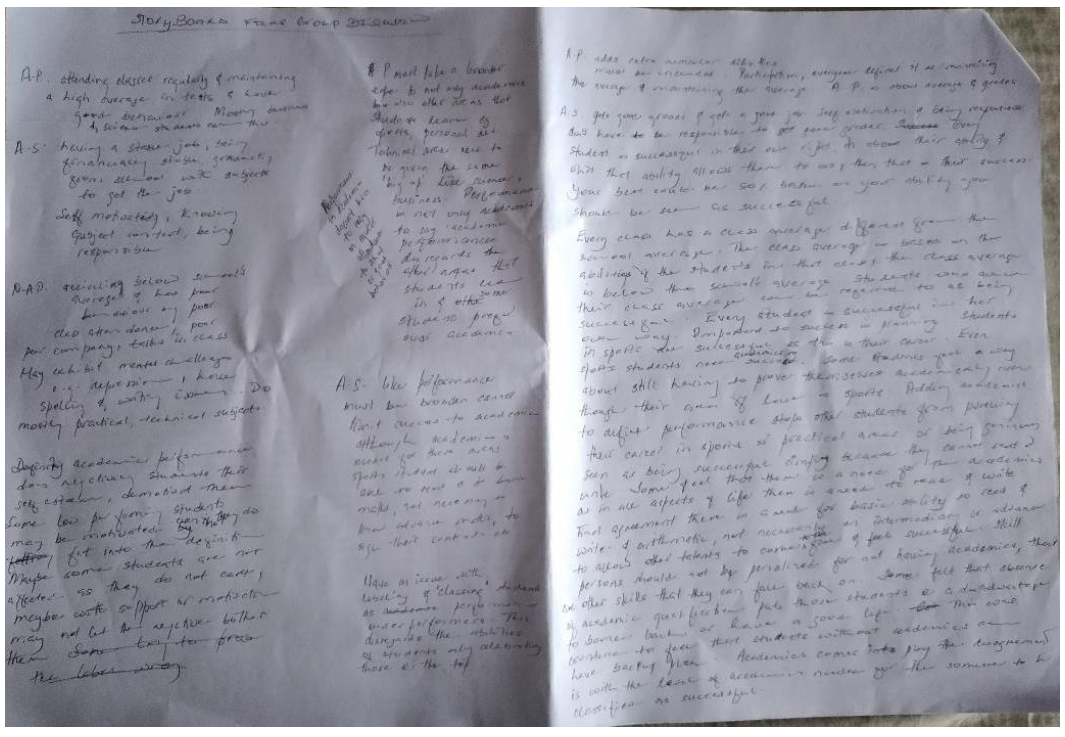


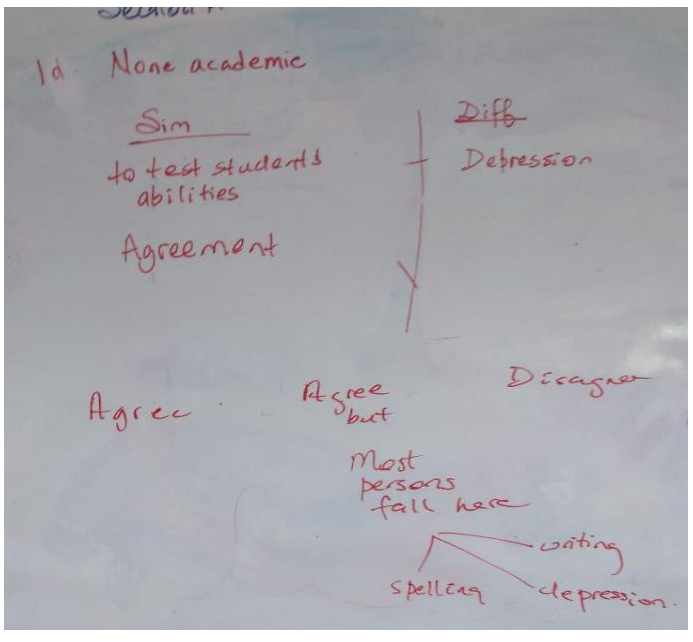


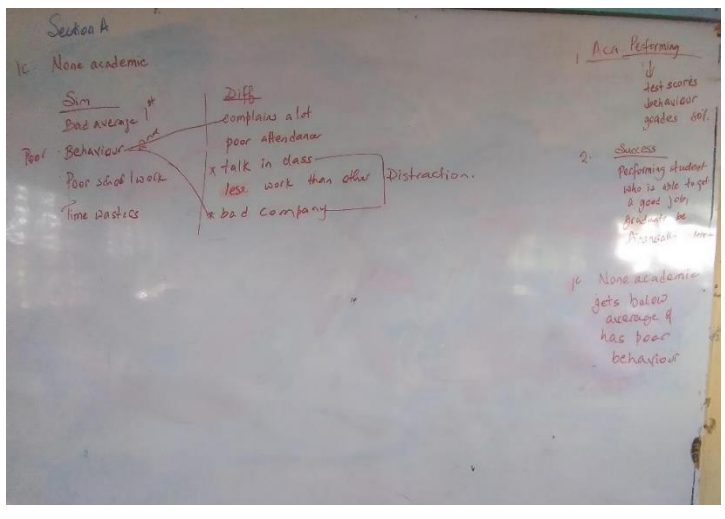







Story Boards
A.P. attending classes regularly & maintaining a high average in tests & exams
good behaviour
A-S. having a stable job, self
A.P.D. receiving below average
Academic performance
Academic skills
Not necessarily grades & attainment
Success labeling
Attainment of goals


1d None academic
Sim
to test students abilities
Agreement
Diff
Depression
Agree
Agree but
Disagree
Most persons fall here
writing
spelling
depression.


Section A
1c None academic
Sim
Bad average 1st
Poor Behaviour
Poor school work
Time pastics
Diff
complains alot
poor attendance
x talk in class
less work than other
x bad company
Distraction.
Acn Performing
test scores
behaviour
grades etc.
2. Success
Performing student who is able to get a good job
1c None academic
gets failed average & has poor behaviour

Appendix 6 Thesis Timetable

TASK	ASSIGNED TO	START	END
Pilot Study	K. Keshinro	August 5, 2019,	September 30, 2019,
Ethical form submission & approval	K. Keshinro	June 5, 2019,	July 18, 2019
Finalize with the Principal of the identified school	K. Keshinro	September 6, 2019	September 15, 2019
Procure equipment for research	K. Keshinro	June 12, 2019	August 16, 2019
Students sensitization, equipment, and consent form distribution and form retrieval	Guidance Counsellor, K. Keshinro	September 17, 2019	September 20, 2019
Students collect data using Photovoice Journals (voice recording)	Students	September 21, 2019	September 24, 2019
Retrieve images, select agreed images, and print	Students & K. Keshinro	September 21, 2019	September 28, 2019
Transcribe voice recordings	K. Keshinro	September 21, 2019	September 28, 2019
Photovoice one-on-one interview	K. Keshinro and students	September 21, 2019	September 28, 2019
Audio recording one-on-one interviews	K. Keshinro	September 21, 2019	September 28, 2019
Data assessment	K. Keshinro	September 30, 2019	October 28, 2019
Visit the UK	K. Keshinro	28/10/19	10/11/19
Complete pilot write up	K. Keshinro	24/10/19/	28/10/19
Phase 2 Main Research			
Ethical form submission & approval	K. Keshinro	November 28, 2019	August 26, 2020
Students sensitization, equipment and consent form distribution, and retrieval	Guidance Counsellor, K. Keshinro	May 4, 2020	May 27, 2020
Students collect data Photovoice Audio Journals One-on-one interviews Focus Group Discussion	Students	June 1, 2020	June 15, 2020

TASK	ASSIGNED TO	START	END
Retrieve photos, select the agreed amount, and print	K. Keshinro & students	June 15, 2020	July 15, 2020
Transcription of voice recording	K. Keshinro	June 4, 2020	July 30, 2020
Photovoice individual student session	K. Keshinro & students	July 4, 2020	July 20, 2020
Journals - individual session	K. Keshinro & Students	July 4, 2020	July 23, 2020
Data Analysis, Coding, and Transcription	K. Keshinro	August 3, 2020	October 25, 2020
Draft Findings Chapter Discussion Chapter	K. Keshinro	November 10, 2020	September 29, 2021
Complete Conclusion Chapter	K. Keshinro	November 28, 2021	December 29, 2021
Collate & Review Final Thesis Chapters	K. Keshinro	1/2022	5/2022
Submit the first draft of the compiled thesis to the Supervisors	K. Keshinro	5/2022	5/2022
Receive and Correct Supervisors' Feedback	K. Keshinro	5/2022	9/2022
Submit Amended Thesis to Supervisors	K. Keshinro	9/2022	9/2022