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**The Effect of Teacher Expectations on Student Achievement:  
Does The Pygmalion Effect Hold True for Cape Verde?**

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**The Effect of Teacher Expectations on Student Achievement**  
**Does The Pygmalion Effect Hold True for Cape Verde?**

APROVADO PELOS MEMBROS DO JURI, FOI HOMOLOGADO PELO CONSELHO CIENTIFICO COMO REGISTO PARCIAL A OBTENÇÃO DO GRAU DE LICENCIATURA EM ESTUDOS INGLERSES.

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Praia\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/2006

*Dedication:*

*I dedicate this work to my dear family. (My father,  
mother, brothers, sisters and others)  
This work is also dedicated to my dear schoolmates and to all my teachers.*

## **Acknowledgements**

I first want to thank God for his mercy and the love He has shown me and the chance He has given me to be what I am today. My thanks go to my advisor who helped me elaborate this present work; without her help it would not have been possible. I also want to thank all of the teachers and students that participated in the survey. My deepest gratitude is extended to everyone who has encouraged me along the way.

## Abstract

The present study is about the relationship between teacher expectations and student achievement. Do teachers have the power to influence student achievement? This is the question at hand. Are students under the influence of their teachers in regards to how they perceive themselves as achievers and ultimately how well they perform? What are the other factors that come into play when assessing student's academic achievement?

In light of the literature written on this topic, the two most prevalent theories are (1) Pygmalion in the Class and (2) The Sustaining Effect. These theories show a direct and determinant relationship between teacher expectations and student achievement. The main objective of this study was to investigate if in Cape Verde, teachers follow the same trend. Responses to teacher and student surveys carried out at Domingos Ramos High School gave revealing insights into how Capeverdean teachers view their students and the role the teachers themselves play in supporting the student's academic performance. Is the teacher's expectation of their students the last word? In general, teachers do have a powerful influence on their students for good or for bad, but the key questions are: (1) are they aware of this power and (2) how well do they manage it?

This paper includes an in-depth discussion on the different factors that influence student achievement and research carried out at an urban secondary school which characterizes how teachers and students view their roles in the student's academic success. Recommendations are also provided to assist teachers in managing their expectations to maximize their role as a positive contributor to the success of their students.

*“Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.”*  
(proverbs; 12:1)

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## **I. Introduction**

Human reactions are often mirror responses to how we are treated. Likewise students rely on teachers to set a standard of excellence; it is to this standard that they aspire. The focus of this work is the relationship between teacher expectations and student achievement. If we hold low expectations of our students they will probably perform low, but if we hold high expectations of our students they will most likely aspire to that standard of excellence. The reality is that low teacher expectations exist all over the world and Cape Verde is no exception. An extensive body of research has been developed by Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968 describing how teacher expectations can positively or negatively influence student performance.

According to researchers, merely holding certain expectations for students has no magical power to affect their performance and achievement, rather it is the manifestation of these expectations into behaviour that influences outcomes. The role of teacher expectations on student performance has been an object of several studies and these studies point out the causal relationship between these two factors. Critiques on the research about how teacher expectations influence student performance suggest that this body of knowledge needs to be further studied in order to produce more conclusive results however, despite its limitations and lack of precision, its importance and impact is hugely felt worldwide, including the hallways of our capeverdean secondary schools.

When walking through the corridors of Domingos Ramos secondary high school we can hear lots of teachers commenting on their students in regards to grades, attitudes, behaviour and effort. Often times these comments are what shape teacher's attitudes towards their student in a pre- judgemental way. Subsequently if not checked, their pre-judgement take place of the objective evaluations of the students' performance. Whether these comments are positive or negative, one thing is sure, the perception behind the comments have a powerful impact on



how a student sees him/herself which has a direct impact on achievement. Teachers play a powerful role in student achievement. Sometimes it is not visible; however teacher attitudes are perceived and reacted to whether it is one of encouragement or discouragement. How do we as teachers, use this power? How do we manage our expectations of our students? How do we become a catalyst (change factor) that can make the difference in an unlikely student's academic success?

In this context, the present study has been carried out with the objective to analyse how teacher expectations influence student performance in Cape Verde secondary school, case study Domingos Ramos. I have collected data through questionnaires from 20 teachers and 76 students, whose astonishing responses lay the groundwork for this study as well as future possible studies related to student-teacher relationships.

Rosenthal, Jacobson and others have shown that low teacher expectations do influence students' achievement. But my question is: Do Capeverdean teachers follow the same trend? My thesis argument is therefore: There is a definite and direct relationship between teacher expectations and student achievement, and if teachers were better aware of their power of influence, they could better manage their expectations and therefore more effectively serve as a catalyst for improved student performance

We need to better understand how teacher beliefs and attitudes towards their students influence student achievement and performance. This research has been written with the following objectives, in mind:

- Help teachers become aware of their expectations and how these expectations influence student achievement.
- Provide theoretical knowledge about teacher expectations as it influences student performance.
- Suggest ways in which teachers can better manage their expectations and offer suggestions to do so.
- Suggest overall recommendations to improve student-teacher relationships in capeverdean secondary schools.

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

Several cognitive and affective factors interact in the teaching-learning process, determining student performance. The affective factors refer to emotions or feelings while the cognitive side deals with thought. The Psychology of Education has given increased attention to the study of the affective factors involved in the learning process, because it is believed that they have a great influence on motivation, and also on student academic performance including the choice of their future career. The number of studies of the importance of the affective factors has considerably increased in the last two decades. Up until then the focus was on cognitive psychology (till the 70s) (Weiner, 1979)

*Psychology is completing two movements that have neglected the study of the affective factor. The first one is the Behaviourist period that denied the verbal report; the second one is the Cognitive movement that focuses in the intellectual structures. In contrast with these periods, I believe that psychologists and educators now have turned attention to the study of the affective factor. (pg.15)*

Both the cognitive and affective factors have a great deal of importance in the school context. As complements they help us understand the factors that influence student performance.

According to J. H. Barros de Oliveira and A. M. de Oliveira (1995, p 13), education should be student centred. But for now let's centre our attention on the role of the teacher that is essential to the learning process. The teacher is much more than what he or she knows but who he or she is; in many ways he/she is a point of reference for students. Beyond pedagogical knowledge the teacher must have the following: good character, professional behaviour and attitudes which he/she demonstrates in the classroom; a strong concept of self, demonstrated expectations and a distinct personality. These characteristics influence the learning process and contribute to students building their own self-image. (Oliveira And

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Oliveira, 1995 [transliterated text from the Portuguese]) Teacher expectations and his/her ability to individualise the teaching process are extremely important to student success. Teachers must be able to individualise the teaching process and not group cast students. (p20)

For a better understanding of what we are talking about, it is necessary to define expectations. According Ferguson, teacher expectations are inferences that teachers make about present and future academic achievement and general student behaviour in the classroom (either entire class or specific individuals). Expectations for individual students may be based on student record information (test data, grades, comments made by previous teachers), knowledge about the family, or initial contact with the student in the classroom (apparent motivation, attentiveness and contributions to lessons, general work habits). Willis (1972) has shown that contact with students leads to the formation of stable (and largely accurate) differential expectations within a few days after the school year begins. Her study (described in detail in Brophy & Good, 1974) illustrates that formation of expectations is normal and is inherently either good or bad. The critical issues are the accuracy of the expectations and the flexibility with which they are held. Inaccurate expectations will do damage if teachers do not correct them and begin to base instructional decisions on them. Therefore the problem is not having expectations but managing them, to avoid prejudicial treatment as they are used as a source to evaluate our students.

Jerry D. Bamberg in Raising Expectations to Improve Student Learning, ncrel monograph, states that Cooper (1984) defines three general types of expectations. The first refers to the teacher's perceptions at where a student is «at the present moment». While not really a statement about expectations of future performance, it does help identify the effect of expectations. For instance, it has been noted that teachers who believe that they are interacting with bright students smile and nod their heads more often than teachers who believe that they are interacting with slow students. Teachers also lean towards and look into the eyes of smarter students more frequently (Bamberg citing Chaikin, Singler and Derlega, 1974). Behaviours such as these are predicated upon how teacher initially perceived their students.

The second type of expectation involves a teacher's prediction about how much academic progress a student will make over a specified period of time. It appears that «expected» improvement is only weakly correlated with a teacher's present assessment of the student. However, Beez (1970) found that students labelled «slow» may receive fewer opportunities to

learn new material than students labelled «bright» and that slow students typically are taught less difficult material. The effect of such behaviour is cumulative, and over time, teachers' predictions of student achievement may in fact become true. Cooper (1979 p380) affirmed that teacher expectations frequently have an influence on student performance, and Dozier points out that teacher expectations tend to foretell students' performance.

The third type of expectation is the degree to which a teacher over or underestimates a student's present level of performance. This type of expectation results from a teacher's estimate of the student's ability based upon some formal assessment of that student's performance. It is most often driven by the use of a test that is perceived to provide an accurate measure of student ability.

The three types of expectations described above result in two «effects» upon student performance. The first is called the self-fulfilling prophecy or the Pygmalion effect. The second one is called the sustaining expectation effect.

### **The Pygmalion effect.**

The importance of teacher expectations towards students was clearly demonstrated in the classic study developed by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) named Pygmalion in the classroom. The word Pygmalion comes from the Greek mythology. Pygmalion in the classroom demonstrates what happens when teachers pre-judge their students based on undeterminant assumptions and based on the assumptions influence how the student sees him/herself and ultimately how well they achieve. It is also known as self-fulfilling prophecy. The Pygmalion study represents a self-fulfilling prophecy, because students achieve only to the point of fulfilling their teachers' expectations of them as a result of having been expected or foretold to do so.

According to Jerry D. Bamberg, *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968) describes how teacher expectations can influence student performance. While it would be misleading and inaccurate to state that teacher expectations, solely determine students' success, research clearly establishes that teacher expectations do play a significant role in determining how well students learn.

Also known as the Rosenthal effect, the Pygmalion theory caused extensive debate, because of the methodology used in their research. (Victor Sil 2004 p68). The research was carried out by Rosenthal and Jacobson at the Primary Oak School (U.S.A.). The students selected were 1<sup>st</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> graders; mostly from Mexican origin and from middle class suburbs. In Rosenthal's study there was an experimental manipulation of teacher expectations. At the beginning a standardised IQ test was given, (The General Ability Test of Flanagan). Rosenthal and Jacobson manipulated teachers' perception and expectations of these students by convincing them that only 20% had potential for academic growth. The teachers, convinced that this was true encouraged the 20% accordingly. After eight months, the class was given another IQ test and the results verified that the same 20% did exceedingly well above the others. By manipulating teacher expectations, Rosenthal and Jacobson proved that expectations work as prophecies, because their influence over student academic achievement (Victor Sil 2004 p68).

Is age a determinant factor? It was seen through the studies that the younger grade students performed better than the older students. This can be explained by the fact that they being more impressionable were more influenced by their teachers (in the first and second grades, the growth was higher than the rest of the group) (Oliveira and Oliveira 1995 p33). Is gender a determinant factor? In analyzing the gender question, the boys achieved higher scores on verbal expression, and the girls scored higher on the analytical section. One could easily make many convincing arguments for why this was the case (role of women vs. role of men) A comparative analysis of test performance of the other students (outside of the 20% target group) showed that they too earned good scores however, not as high as the target group. Positive expectations not just influenced students' performance on their IQ test, but also overall academic results and affective behaviour. (Oliveira and Oliveira 1995, p35)

The importance of these findings can not be neglected: students often internalise teacher expectations and manifest these same expectations in the academic performance. In the Rosenthal and Jacobson study the teachers involved encouraged their students to achieve high and the impact was very positive. But what if the teachers had discouraged their students? This study leads us to believe that the outcome would have been negative: the students' level of performance would have declined. Such is the self fulfilling prophecy.

**Sustaining expectations effect.**

The second type of expectation observed in the classrooms is the «sustaining expectations effect». The sustaining expectations effect «occurs when the teachers respond the student on the basis of their existing expectations for those students and their expectations do not change even when student performance suggest that they should. (when student performance changes as a result of factors outside of teachers domain). (Cooper & Good, 1983). When a teacher does not adjust his/her expectations accordingly to changes in student achievement, a sustaining expectation effect has occurred.

**Expectations which lead to stereotyping.**

According to Cristina Landgraft Lee Manoel, Maria de Lima Salum e Morais, Vera Sílvia Road Bussad, Emma Otta in *Psicologia: Reflexão e critica*, (2002, p271), interpersonal judgement is frequently influenced by stereotypes. Whether right or wrong, expectations are part of an inevitable human process, and are used as an easy way to evaluate people when there isn't enough information about them. Gilly (1974), cited by the above authors says that the teacher's professional role puts him/ in the position where is easy to form expectations which colour the student image. Consequently, as the student fits or does not fit the teachers image of the student, the teacher does not consider the students' "true image" but still relies on the way he/she sees the student.

**Factors which influence student performance.**

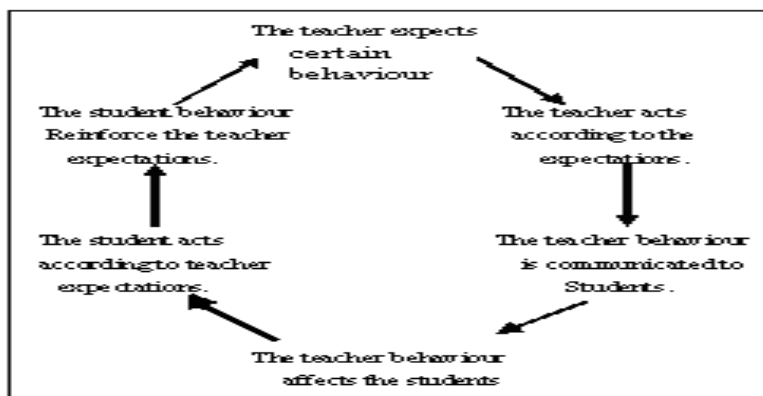
According to Brookover, et Al (1988), Cooper (1984), Good (1987) and others, teachers who hold low expectations for their students based on superfluous factors instead of appropriate information, are not acting out of malice, they may not even be aware that they hold low expectations. Victor Sil (2004) states that teachers' attitudes toward students are important for the educational environment, in the development of the pedagogical relationship and in the structure of the learning process. According to researchers, merely holding certain expectations for students has no magical power to affect their performance and achievement, rather is the manifestation of these expectations into behaviour. Meanwhile the attitudes develop over a long and slow period of time and often times the teacher is not aware of these attitudes, motives, perceptions, expectations and it is transmitted to the students through actions, thus affecting their attitudes and performance. According to Victor Sil, Kauffman, Lloyd and Mcgee's study in 1988 conclude that the teachers that feel responsible for the

conduct of their students and believe that they have means to change these behavioural characteristics, they hold high expectations for their students.

### **Student- teacher interaction cycle.**

According to Victor Sil (2004 p69) other investigations related to the effect of teacher expectations on students performance, demonstrated that teacher expectations in fact affect students achievement, the type of interaction and relationship that the teacher establishes with students. Due to increased public awareness, we know that teacher perception and expectations may determine student performance and interactions during the teaching-learning process. In his work he states Brophy and Good (1970) teachers interact with students according to their expectations of their students' performance. The quality of these interactions may have consequences that can or not be relevant to the student performance.

According to Brophy and Good 1987; Arends 1995, teacher expectations and student performance create a circular pattern as shown in the figure below:



Teachers have a great influence on their students, unfortunately sometimes in a negative way. Teachers should ask themselves, where are they on the cycle? Are they on the side that negatively influence their

students, or on the side that positively influence their students? According to Ruther et al (1979) student achievement is related to teacher behaviour, meanwhile Banks (1994) considers that the teacher's expectations for his/her students are a regulator element in the classroom, recommending to teacher to hold high expectations for the students.

### **Factors which influence teacher expectations.**

An investigation about teacher perceptions and expectations for the academic capacity of the students was developed by Bennett, Gottesman, Rock and Cerullo (1993) starting from the hypothesis that factors like sex and the students' behaviour (as perceived by teachers) affect the teacher's judgement about the student academic ability. The study included 794 students. The results showed that students who were considered to have had «bad behaviour» were judged less competent than those who had «good behaviour» The boy's behaviour was

considered less appropriate than the girl's. So the teacher's perceptions and expectations regarding the academic competence of the boys were less favourable than that of the girl's. According to Jerry Bamberg (1994), expectations that teachers have for their students and the assumptions they make about students' potential have a tangible effect on student achievement.

*“Research clearly establishes that teacher expectations do play a significant role in determining how well and how much students learn.”* Students tend to internalize the beliefs teachers have about their ability. Generally, they *“rise or fall to the level of their teacher's expectation for them... When teachers believe in students, students believe in themselves. When those you respect think you can, you think you can too.”* (James Raffini 1993)

Peggy Gonder in her work states that, conversely, when students are viewed as lacking in ability or motivation and are not expected to make significant progress, they tend to adopt this perception of themselves. Regrettably, some students, particularly those from certain social, economic or ethnic groups, discover that their teachers consider them “incapable of handling demanding work”

It is clear that teacher expectations do affect student performance. But as stated earlier, some teachers may not even be aware of their expectations, nor their origins. It is difficult sometimes to control the thoughts and attitudes we have of some of our students, but it is imperative our behaviour towards our students. We must keep in mind that students in many ways mirror what they see or sense from us as teachers.

It is important for us to know how inappropriate expectations are formed. It is obvious that they are not based on appropriate information such as cumulative performance data, recent achievement tests, etc. Then what are they based on? Kathleen Cotton in Expectations and Outcomes, talks about Researchers such as Brookover, et al. (1984), Good (1987), and others that have identified some factors which can lead to teachers holding lower expectations for some students than others (np). These include:

- **Sex.** Lower expectations are often held for older girls—particularly in scientific and technical areas—because of sex role stereotyping.
- **Social economic status.** Teachers sometimes hold lower expectations of students from lower social economic status backgrounds.



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- **Race/Ethnicity.** Students from minority races or ethnic groups are sometimes viewed as less capable than Anglo students, black students are usually perceived less competent than white students
  - **Type of school.** Students from either inner city or rural schools are sometimes presumed to be less capable than students from suburban schools.
  - **Appearance.** The expense or style of students' clothes and students' grooming habits can influence teachers' expectations.
  - **Oral language patterns.** The presence of any non-standard English speaking pattern or the presence of a native language that is not the language of the class can sometimes lead teachers to hold lower expectations.
  - **Messiness/Disorganization.** Students whose works in class or assignments are messy are sometimes perceived as having lower ability.
  - **Readiness.** Immaturity or lack of experience may be confused with learning ability, leading to inappropriately low expectations.
  - **Halo effect.** Some teachers generalize from one characteristic a student may have, thereby making unfounded assumptions about the student's overall ability or behaviour.
  - **Seating position.** If students seat themselves at the sides or back of the classroom, some teachers perceive this as a sign of lower learning motivation and/or ability and treat students accordingly.
  - **Negative comments about students.** Teachers' expectations are sometimes influenced by negative comments of other staff members.
  - **Outdated theories.** Educational theories which stress the limitations of learners can lead to lowered expectations.
  - **Tracking or long – term ability groups.** Placement in “low” tracks or groups can cause students to be viewed as having less learning potential than they actually have.

### **Expectations manifested into differential behaviour towards students**

It is also important to know in what ways teachers' expectations translate into differential behaviour toward students. Either consciously or unconsciously, teachers often behave differently toward students based on the beliefs and assumptions they have about them. For example, studies have found that teachers engage in affirming nonverbal behaviours such as smiling, leaning toward and making eye contact with students more frequently when they

believe they are dealing with high-ability students than when they believe they are interacting with “slow” students.( Jerry Bamberg 1994)

According to Kathleen Cotton (1989), students who are perceived to be slow in ability may also be given fewer opportunities to learn new material, asked less stimulating questions, given briefer and less informative feedback, praised less frequently for success, called on less frequently, and given less time to respond than students who are considered high in ability.

In addition, instructional content is sometimes “dumbed –down” for students considered to be low in ability. Students in low group and tracks are usually offered “less exiting instruction, less emphasis on meaning and conceptualization, and more rote drill and practice activities than those in high or heterogeneous groups and classes. According to Gonder, when teachers summarily categorize or label students, typically some students end up receiving “a watered-down curriculum and less intense-and less motivating-instruction” (np).

## **Chapter III**

### **Method**

My investigatory research had as an objective to prove or disprove Rosenthal's results in the Pygmalion Experiment. Rosenthal concluded that teacher expectations do have a direct effect on student achievement, be it positive or negative. Therefore the underlying inquiry was if in Capeverdean secondary school system, teacher negative expectations unduly affect student achievement. I framed my research question in two parts: (1) what are capeverdean secondary school teachers' attitudes towards student achievement, i.e. what type of students are high achievers? (2) How do capeverdean teachers help their students achieve? The survey included 8 open-ended questions and was distributed to 30 teachers from all disciplines and 95 students at Domingos Ramos secondary school, where I teach. I chose a questionnaire over other investigation instruments because it is easier to use and it gives easy statistical results. Also teachers are more available to answer questionnaires than other investigation instruments because of its low maintenance structure.

As in any research paper there are lots of difficulties and problems faced during the data collecting process. The first challenge that I faced was figuring out what data was necessary and how to collect it. I learned a lot as I struggled through the research process. The questions had to be written in a way that I could receive the responses that would bring clarity to my thesis argument. Therefore it was necessary to write and rewrite questions that were reliable, clearly stated and unambiguous. This was a trial and error process, arduous but necessary.

The second challenge was choosing a secondary school where I could collect the data. After deliberating, I chose Domingos Ramos for convenience sake. It is the school where I work but also it is situated in the centre of the city and they have all secondary school cycles. It is also a

school where we can find all kind of students, coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds and neighbourhoods resulting in a fair representation of Capeverdean students.

I chose students from the 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades because they represent the last year of the three school cycles which suggests that the majority of their teachers they have had for the past two years. The students were both male and female, approximately, 13-18 years old. About 80% responded. The questionnaire was distributed to thirty teachers both male and female.

I was a little disappointed because not all of the teachers returned their questionnaires, only 66,7% responded. However they provided me with some good information. I was surprised that more students responded than teachers. I was astonished by the responses that some teachers provided. Their responses led me to rethink my topic in more profound way. These disclosures are dealt within chapter III

Distributing and collecting the data was done within a week. I believe that the process worked smoothly because I am a teacher at Domingos Ramos and I personally delivered and collected the surveys. I was able to discuss with the teachers my interest in my project. This I believe made them more amenable to assist me. For the students, the questionnaires were applied collectively to ensure a better understanding of the questionnaires; the questions were carefully read and explained, in addition to how to answer them. I stayed with the students as they completed their form. This I believe assisted greatly in the high return rate.

I learned from this process that even in something as small as the research process, expectations come into play. I was surprised to receive such good and useful data from the students surveyed.

## Chapter IV

### Survey Analysis.

The Rosenthal study, otherwise known as “Pygmalion in Class” was the object of this survey with the intention to discover if Rosenthal’s findings: that teachers hold certain expectations regarding their students and that these expectations being positive or negative play a significant role in influencing or determining students’ intellectual development, is a reality in Cape Verde.

Student Respondent profile.

Table 1: Grade Level (GL) and Gender

Gender / GL	8 <sup>th</sup> grade	10 <sup>th</sup> grade	12 <sup>th</sup> grade	Total	%
Male	11	12	2	25	33%
Female	24	20	7	51	67%
<i>Total</i>	35	32	9	76	100%

Students surveyed fell into the 13-17 age category. Of the respondent pool 1/3 was male. Analysis

of chart 1 shows that across grade levels there were more female respondents than male, which is a fair representation of the student body. In analysing responses received were well balanced across school levels and gender; comments were mostly the same; there were no responses given to suggest that age or gender played a significant role in how students perceived their teachers.

Teacher respondent profile.

Table 2. Age distribution.

Table 3. Years of teaching experience

20-25	26-35	36+		> 1	1-2	3-4	5-10	<10
2	8	9		2	0	2	5	11

1 Non respondent

As reported by teachers, their level of education is superior to high school. They either have earned a *Bachelorlato* diploma, received a *Licenciatura* or are studying towards its completion. The fact that these teachers have had post secondary school education suggests that they all have some form of formal pedagogic training which may include coursework or seminars on student-teacher relationship if not more specifically the “teachers’ role in student achievement”.

Table 4: Gender distribution

Gender	Number	%
Male	9	45%
Female	10	50%
No response	1	5%

Table 4 shows that there is a fair balance between males and females, however the influence of gender on the teachers’ responses is not clear. There may be a relationship between gender and responses given but this was not revealed by the questionnaire. Perhaps if a different instrument such as interviews were used a clearer relationship could be seen.

The questions written fell into two major themes: (1) teacher’s pre-set expectations of their students and (2) strategies to improve student performance.

#### **Teacher’s pre-set expectations of their students.**

- Question 1- Do you believe that all students have the ability to perform well?  
If not what influences student achievement?
- Question 3- Do you have high expectations for all of your students?
- Question 4- Do you have low expectations for some of your students?  
If yes how do you identify a low achiever?
- Question 6- What influence if any, do the expectations you have for students, influence your students?
- Question 7- Characterization of student stereotypes.

Question 1- Do you believe that all students have the ability to perform well?

Table 5	Number teachers	%
Yes	9	45%
No	11	55%

*Some students are biologically, psychologically and socially inferior.*

Teacher response.

Table 5 shows that 55% of the respondents answered that they did not believe that all students have the ability to achieve. This response is indeed very surprising and suggests that teachers may hold low expectations of their students. But even more

surprising were the justifications. The statement to the left was one of a few statements that reinforced teachers' negative expectations of their students. Other statements included:

- By nature some students do not have the ability to achieve, even with resources available.
- Students from lower socio-economic levels do not have same abilities than others.
- Students from problematic neighbourhoods have more difficulties to learn.
- Depends a lot on the family environment and group of friends.
- If all students had potential to perform high, there would not be low grades in the end of each trimester.

It is interesting to question on which basis these statements were made. Is it values, emotions, a bad experience or a general lack of information on part of teachers? What ever the case may be, the comments were very negative and if viewed in isolation can be perceived as bias.

When asked why? Teachers stated the following:

Table 6

	Number answers	%
Lack of resources	5	22,7%
Lack of teacher preparation	3	13,6%
Lack of student effort	6	27,3%
<i>Large classes</i>	8	36,4%

In analysis, teachers felt that one of the major problems faced is the size of their classes. It is true that even the most experienced

teacher has difficulties working with large classes. Large classes represent not only a large number of students but most likely diversity of the student body in academic performance, socio economic backgrounds, study habits, behaviour etc. From the perspective of the teachers this is an overwhelming scenario. Many, even though degreed and with teaching experience do not have the capacity to manage such classes. This incapacity can very well find itself placed on the students where teachers fault the students and not themselves.

Another interesting theory is the correlation between IQ and socio economic status. Many teachers saw socio-economic level as a factor of intelligence. This argument is not new there

have been many schools of thoughts that claim that ones surroundings dictates who they are and what they potentially can do, this relationship between man and his environment is often used to champion poverty programs in low income or impoverished areas may very well influence student performance, however, is it true that environment definitively dictates student potential.

Another argument defended by teachers was that students who come from lower class families where there is a lack of parental guidance have less or no ability to achieve. This is a two prong argument. Here teachers focus not only on poverty but also parental guidance and support. Leading psychologists identify student support spaces as very important if not crucial to their well being and ability to perform. These “spaces” are identified as family, society and school. Nunes, 2002 (np). The role of the family is seen as the principle and first support contact and many feel that it is the most important. If it is true then the role of parental guidance is of great importance to student achievement. In further support of this are the responses that students gave on their questionnaire regarding who were the most important influence in their school life. See pg 30. The information given clearly points out that students surveyed saw their parents as their greatest source of moral support and influence. This response might seem to strengthen the argument that lack of parental guidance negatively affects student achievement, however to what degree?

It is important to say that there are many factors that influence student performance, and where some are principle, none are exclusive, therefore when family is less than supportive, are there not other factors that come to play and make the difference. The attitudes and beliefs of these teachers surveyed give credence to the Pygmalion theory: teachers’ pre-judgment of their students lead to preconceptions and premature responses to what they believe are low student achievement. Sustaining biases which prevent change.

However 9 teachers responded that all students have the ability to perform well. While contradicting the others, they explained as follows:



*When teachers believe in their students it is half the battle!*  
Teacher response

- Social status doesn't determine student performance!
- Strong family support & orientation promotes student achievement!
- Student learn at different paces, but all are capable of learning!
- Challenge students and they will respond with their innate ability!
- **A priori all students are equal!!!**

These positive responses shed light on the fact that some teachers saw students as a potential to work with and were empowered to think that they could be a catalyst of change.

Question 3- do you have high expectations for all of your students

Table 7	Number of teachers	%
Yes	7	35%
No	12	60%
No response	1	5%

In analysis, teachers stated that they haven't got high expectations on their student, being 60% of the answers negative, suggests that teachers

hold low expectations on their students as the chart of the question 4 shows.

Question 4- do you have low expectations for some of your students

Table 8	Number	%
Yes	13	65
No	7	35

This question was asked in order to verify responses to question # 3. The data verified that indeed teachers felt that more than half of their students are not capable of achieving (65% as compared to 60% in question #3)

Teachers felt that the two major indicators of a low achiever were: weak effort and behaviour problems. Teachers felt that if students are badly behaved they have less or no ability

Table 9	Number of answers	%
Weak effort	8	36,4
Access to few resources	3	13,6
Gender	1	4,5
Behaviour problems	8	36,4
Seating position	2	9,1

to achieve. But more surprising is that a teacher believes that gender is a determinant of academic performance. Unfortunately his or her answer does not specify if males are higher achievers than females or vice-versa. The seating positing also is perceived as an indicator of

low achievers, which suggests that teachers believe if a student places him/herself at the back of the class is a sign of lower learning motivation and treat students accordingly.

Question 6- What influence, if any does your expectations have on your students

Table 10	Number	%
High teacher expectations yield high student achievement.	13	65
High teacher expectations have no effect on student achievement.	2	10
No response	1	5
<i>Other</i>	4	20

Teachers also said that the relationship is not so linear and that there are some other factors to consider. Some said that it depends on the receptivity of the student and psychological approaches to motivate student are important to yield student success and students need to be challenged.

As we can see in the table above 65% of the teachers answered that high teacher expectations yield student achievement, which may suggest that these teachers do see the relationship between teachers expectations and student achievement. Whether or not they were able to see the corollary: teacher's low expectations may in turn result in low student achievement.. It is interesting to point out that 10% of the teachers said that high teacher expectations have no influence on student achievement.

When asked to justify their answers, some teachers affirmed that often times, students are looking for the attention that they do not find at home. Showing low expectations does not help the situation (does not motivate student success) on the other hand high expectations alone does not guarantee success – student effort is indispensable. According to a teacher, high achievement depends on many factors already noted. (See response to question #1) Achievement depends on two things, teacher expectations and students' effort, the teacher expectations work like a regulator. Teacher expectations stimulate the learning process toward success. When students feel valued they correspond to teacher expectations (they try to realise that goal, they rise to the occasion). When students feel valued they take more risks in the learning process.

According to the teachers students need to feel supported to learn well. When teachers set high expectations this creates an atmosphere where students take better advantage in questioning and learning more. Students need to be motivated to produce good grades; some students correspond to teacher expectations. Teacher's high expectations encourage increased high self-esteem on the part of the students which generates good results in learning. Students who feel that teachers give value to them highly work towards not disappoint the teacher and the class.

Responses to question 7 gives us a characterization of how teachers see their students.

Table 11	% True	% False
Well behaved students learn better than others.	22	0
Well organised students learn better than others.	22	1,5
Students with greater resources learn better than others.	19,5	2,9
Students who have parents with secondary school level education learn better.	15,8	8,8
Students with behaviour problems do not learn as well as others.	8,5	17,7
Students with disorganised notebooks and asked tasks do not learn as well as others.	8,5	17,7
Students with less resource do not learn as well as others.	3,7	23,5
Students, whose parents haven't completed high school, do not learn as well as others.	0	27,9

Here we see that teachers see a high correlation between behaviour and performance, second to the availability of resources, that would include didactic material, greatly assists student achievement. Other responses included that of personal organization which is reflected in the formation of good study habits. In analysis, from this table one might infer that in the opinion of these teachers, a high achiever would be a student who is well-behaved, well organized, of economic means and not first generation high school. This image may be accurate but does that mean that other less favourable profiles do not exist?

### Strategies to improve student performance.

- Question 2- How do you motivate your students?
- Question 5- How do you demonstrate your expectations to your students?
- Question 8- What would you do to improve student performance?

When answering question 2 teachers stated the following:

In analysis, teachers felt that using creative teaching techniques is the best way to motivate students. Well

Table 12	No. of answers	%
Positive feedback	9	25
Give well prepared classes	11	30,6
<i>Use creative teaching techniques</i>	15	41,7

prepared classes represented by 30,6% of the answers also is considered by teachers a way to motivate students. These teachers are making an effort to motivate their students; unfortunately they were not asked if they try to motivate all students or just the ones that they perceive as high achievers. But it seems that expectations do not play a significant role in teachers' responses to this question.

Other statements included:

● Using visual aids.	● Giving individual attention to students.
● Praising students.	● Making classes practical and realistic
● Creating a formidable learning environment	

These responses show a trend that was not evident in the responses to the initial survey questions. Teachers here are taking more responsibility in the teacher-student relationship.

Question five: How do you demonstrate your expectations to your students?

Teachers responded as follows: Through...

- Open dialogue (Students need someone to talk to and express their needs)
- Motivation (best way to motivate their students is by giving them positive incentives demonstrating confidence in their intellectual aptitudes and capacities)
- Listening (by listening to students you can discover strategies to help them better)
- Making students responsible for their own learning (encourages self-determination)

Oddly enough teachers had shifted almost 180° in their thinking. It was as if the light had been turned on and the veil lifted. Teachers now spoke of themselves as a formidable influence in student achievement. Teachers keep focusing on students' motivation by saying that they make clear class objectives and context and using creative approaches to stimulate student motivation. Teachers said that they solicit class evaluations and ask for recommendations of how they can better reach the class. Some teachers said they focus on positive things of life and demonstrate the value of education and how it fits into our life and future and also soliciting students' expectations of the class.

Question eight: What would you do to improve student performance?

This was the last question of the questionnaire and gave the teachers the opportunity to openly express what they thought would help students to perform well. Responses included?

- Group work
- Improved student-teacher relationships
- Improved student-teacher-parent relationships
- Solving school material resource problems
- Better class planning and preparation

*“I would create a proper environment to work with my students, create a pleasant environment in class for learning.”*

*“I would help students be confident, with high expectations.” “I would motivate and encourage students”. “Teacher should motivate his or her students, simplify the lesson, explore and encourage students’ aptitudes, stimulate them and challenge them.” “Create incentives to explore their capacities.”*

*“I always prepare well my classes, scientifically and pedagogically, which facilitates me in a way that I can provide students with very dynamic classes.” “I always try to innovate as much as possible to help my students, prepare well my classes.” “Bringing interesting themes, giving creative lessons, and of course I prepare my lessons.”*

It is important to note that the questionnaire had an unexpected function, it has been noticed a shift of attitudes from part of the teachers, which suggests they are seeing things a little bit different. Still there is a lot of work to do, but this shift of attitudes shed light to a possibility of change.

**Responses to student surveys**

Students also were surveyed, with the intention to check how students perceive their teachers, their attitudes and behaviour towards them.

76 students participated in the questionnaire, being 35 from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, 32 from the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and 9 from the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

In the first question the students were suppose to make a self evaluation. As the following table shows the results are very positive, the majority of the students answered affirmatively.

Question 1: Do you think you are a good student?

Table 1.1

	Number of students	%
Yes	68	89,5
No	8	10,5

If we take into account the percentage of the positive answers and compare it with the number of students that fail every year, we

will notice a discrepancy between them. The first question had a second part where students were suppose to justify their positive answers. They had 5 options to choose. "I have good grades; I study hard; I participate in class; I like to learn." In case of none of them or to add something they could choose the option "other."

In all levels, the majority of the students chose the options "I study hard and I like to learn."

The questions, two, three, four and five lead us to the motivational field.

In the second question the students were asked what motivate them to learn. Again the students had different alternatives to choose. "Interesting subjects; to be pride of my parents; future career; teacher involvement; teacher wants me to learn". The majority of the students chose the options "to be pride of my parents and future career". The options "teacher involvement and teacher wants me to learn" were the options less chosen by students, which suggest that students are not feeling motivated by their teachers.

In the question three students were asked to rank from one to five the people that most influence them in their school life. **Parents; Teachers; Colleagues; Religious leaders; Community leaders.**

The students mostly ranked their parents in the first position in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade 32 students, in 10<sup>th</sup> grade 30 and in 12<sup>th</sup> grade 8. In the 8<sup>th</sup> grade most students (21) ranked the teachers in the second position and in the 10<sup>th</sup> 20 students ranked their teachers in the second place, the rest followed the sequence colleagues, community leaders, and religious leaders. This question allows us to see how important other people are important to students in their school life. Students mostly felt their parents as their greatest source of moral support; however it is important to note that teachers were seen as their second source of support. This suggests that if the family is less supportive than expected, students probably will count exclusively with their teachers, which shows the great importance that teachers have in students' school life.

In the question four and five the students were supposed to answer about their teachers' attitudes toward them that motivate or discourage them to learn.

Question four: What does your teacher do to help you learn?

Table 2.1	Number of answers	%
Answers my questions	30	20,8
Encourages me when I do well	30	20,8
Corrects me when I am wrong	46	31,9
<i>Helps me in my difficulties</i>	38	26,5

Question five: What does your teacher do that discourages you?

Table 3.1	Number of answers	%
Does not pay attention to me	25	24
Does not answer my questions	13	12,5
Calls me names	13	12,5
<i>Treats students differently</i>	53	51

The students also said that teachers shout at them, what discourages them to learn. They also said that some teachers disvalue

their work and compare it to others, do not believe in their capability and disvalue their effort. According to students all these affect their learning process, because they do not feel motivated to learn. As a student said this can create a barrier between teacher- student and when it happens their affective filter is high the message does not pass.

The tables 2.1 and 3.1 give us a clear idea of teachers' attitudes in class; the first shows us the positive attitudes which help students to learn, as the table shows 46% of the answers, students said that teachers correct them when they are wrong and 38% of the answers they said that teachers help them in their difficulties. But the table 3.1 gives us a different and negative perspective of the situation. If we walk through the corridors of Domingos Ramos we are likely to hear students complaining about teachers' treatment in class, they are treating students differently as the table 3.1 shows that 51% of the answers, students affirmed that they are being treated differently. 25% of the answers the students affirmed that the teachers do not pay attention to them, which can be related to teachers' treatments toward students.

13% of the answers students claim that teachers are calling them names, which also can be related to teachers' treatments.

. According to other researchers previously mentioned in this work, when teachers hold low expectations on students they can call them names, give them less opportunities than high expectations students. Students who are considered slow are given briefer and less informative feedback, teachers tend to smile more with students considered high-ability students.

In the questionnaire students were asked what teachers could do to help students better learn, and one of their answers was that teachers should treat students equally, without taking into account the physical appearance of students and socio-economic status; teachers should be gentle to all students, not smiling for some and not to others and also teachers should not call students names; they affirm that their motivation to learn is low when they are treated differently.

As we can see students are aware of how they are being treated, and they are saying that they are being misjudge and jeopardized in their learning process. ***“Because some teachers do not believe that I am able to be a good student, for example the maths teacher does not believe that I am capable to get a 16.”*** (Stated by a 10<sup>th</sup> grader student).

***“Teachers should not treat students differently, if so students can loose their motivation for learning”*** (Stated by a 12<sup>th</sup> grader student).

***“Teacher calls me names because I get low grades”***. (Stated by an 8<sup>th</sup> grader student).

Question six: do you think your teacher believes in your ability to be a good student?

Table 4.1	Number	%
Yes	55	72,4
No	18	23,7
<i>Do not know</i>	3	3,9

Students explained that some teachers do not believe in their capability because they haven't got good grades and they do not behave in class. If a student gets a bad grade they do not help them to overcome it. A student said that when he gets late

teacher does not let him in and he gives more attention to others and look at him with a different look.



Some students basically said that it's not the teachers fault because they just did not help this year by playing in class and not doing the tasks demanded. But some said that when students get lower grades than usual teachers do not help them to overcome them, so students are not interested in teachers' words.

A 12<sup>th</sup> grader student stated that his teacher does not believe in his potential because he does not encourage him in order to have good grades, the teacher doesn't care for the more humble students and "the richer are those who know better." According to some students teachers do not care if they have learnt or not. They are always criticising them instead correcting them. A 10<sup>th</sup> grader student said that teachers do not believe in his capacity and he gives an example of his maths teacher that thinks that he is not able of getting a 16. An 8<sup>th</sup> grader stated that her teacher does not pay attention to her and she does not let her explain what she knows. The same student also said that the teacher thinks that she went school just to play and she can not see her inside as she is.

Many students explained that they think their teachers believe in their abilities because they make an effort to have good grades and they try to pass this idea to their teachers and whenever they show a lack of interest in class, do not pay attention, teachers always are there to what is going on and try to help them to overcome the bad grades. Some students affirmed that teachers encourages and praise them even when the grades are not so good, some teachers never quit supporting them in their difficulties, and encourages them when they already desperate, if it was the contrary they would be discouraged even giving their best.

Students state that teachers help them learning, correct their errors and teachers make an effort beyond their responsibility to help them. Teachers can see it in their work, effort and interest. Students said that teachers treat them with respect and show interest in helping them. Teachers give the students the opportunity to express themselves and expose their doubts and explain again in a soft way, without shouting and without calling them names.

A 10<sup>th</sup> grader student affirmed that the majority of the teachers say that if she makes an effort she will be an excellent student. The same student said that teachers told her that her energy should be used studying not playing around and remind her of her 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade that she was an excellent student and that she can continue like that. An 8<sup>th</sup> grader said that teacher advices him, asks for his effort, dialogue with him and corrects him when he is wrong. A 12<sup>th</sup> grader student affirmed that teacher always encourages him and believes in him and ask him to answer the most difficult questions.

According to a 10<sup>th</sup> grader student teachers are establishing contacts with parents to inform about their sons and also asking parents to support their sons. *“Because when I get bad grades, the majority of my teachers ask my parents to help me because I have potential to be a good student.”* Another student reinforced the idea of teachers being in contact with parents. *“Because they tell my mother that I’m a good student but I speak too much.”*

Students affirmed that teachers use encouraging words to motivate them and expressing their belief in their potential, as the quote shows; *“because he always encourages me; go ahead, do not quit, you can do it.”*

In questions seven and eight students were asked to give suggestions of what, could their teachers do, to improve their performance and achievement. Several suggestions were given but after the analysis, only the most important and with coherency to this work are presented here.

The suggestions given revealed certain awareness from part of the students of the need of being treated equally for their better achievement and performance, and led me to think that students are being treated differently by teachers.

According to students teachers are not given same opportunities to all students deriving from their preferences for some group of students so they believe that when this happens they can not be motivated, so they suggest that all students should have the same opportunities. *“Know more about the students, pay more attention to students, treat everyone same way and give chance to other students.”* *“Teacher should not have preference for a group of students, treat every student equally, should not call students names, because if teachers treat students differently students will lose motivation for learning.”*

*“Give all students the same attention and provide them the same opportunities to learn.”*

The quote that follows is something strong that requires a special attention. ***“Treat students equally, without looking to the colour of skin; who has long or short hair, who is beautiful or ugly, the socio-economic status.”***

The equality in treatment is something that worries student the most, through out the questionnaire they have complained that teachers do not treat students equally and that teachers sometimes do not individualize the learning process but treat students as group cast. The colour of the skin first time mentioned which is a very surprising response and which suggests that some teachers have prejudices. In analysis, the physical appearance plays an

important role in our society, even in the high school. Teachers normally tend to attribute qualities like intelligence to students that are considered to be more attractive than the others.

Other suggestions were given related to attention, students are complaining of a lack of attention from teachers. *“Give more attention for those who need, support the students, be more tolerant, and show what is right and what is wrong.”* *“Give more attention to students, clarify doubts, and do not get mad when students are wrong”*

According to students teachers should be examples, model, they should be patient and help students to understand; correct when they are wrong (not shout or call them names), encourage and praise when do well. Students also affirmed that teachers should improve their teaching method and get closer to students’ reality. Teacher should provide students with more opportunities to practice what they have been taught. Explain better and clearer, make every student participate. Teachers should respect students and not offend them, then demand respect. Teacher should make students understand the important role that education plays in their present life and future by being a model him/herself.

## **Chapter V**

### **Recommendations.**

We have opened “Pandora’s box” and the sky has fallen onto our heads, now it is up to us to put it back in its place. In the previous chapter we analysed teachers’ and students’ responses to the research questionnaires distributed. Teachers’ responses demonstrated a definite inclination towards viewing their students’ achievement in direct correlation to socio-economic and family background. Responses included gender, biological and psychological make-up as indicators of student success. However alarming these responses may seem, it is important that we as educators understand their origin and why teachers hold these opinions. Only then we will be able to address these concerns beyond our initial reactions and offer specific information and recommendations to better educate our teachers and therefore assist them in better educating their students. The critical issues are the political correctness and accuracy of the attitudes which we have learned through the literature review have a definite and powerful influence on what teachers expect from their students and how these expectations may unduly influence student achievement. While the Pygmalion effect vividly demonstrates the relationship between teacher expectations and student achievement. Rosenthal and Jacobson study was done showing the positive side of the experiment. But the reciprocal is just as true; low expectations that promote student achievement is damaging.

Teachers’ responses raised many interesting issues. Their comments on why students don’t achieve had less to do with their responsibility as teachers and more to do with what we might call outside determinants factors. Not surprisingly, their behavioural comments fell under four classical arguments:

- Poverty VS opportunity
- Ecology
- Parents’ involvement.

- Blaming the victim.

This chapter will discuss the arguments in order to challenge some of the attitudes raised and to offer recommendations or how to overcome these determinant factors and better assist students in the process.

### **Poverty/Socio-economic status VS Opportunity**

A major contributor to many problems facing our schools is their lack of resources. Unfortunately our schools with students from predominantly low-income neighbourhoods find it more difficult to obtain the needed resources, and the students in those schools simply have to do without. The socio economic factor has been stated as an indicator of low achievers by teachers in their responses to the survey. The fact students have not got the proper resources; itself is not an indicator of a lower achiever. It is interesting to note that teachers made a correlation between poverty and IQ. Teachers have seen socio economic status as a factor of intelligence. Poverty and socio-economic status can be unfavourable but it is a hurdle to overcome, we can not just group cast students because they are poor they can not learn, or else our expectations can be self sustaining which can prevent change in students achievement.

Perhaps even more critical than the need for additional resources for facilities, supplies, and instructional materials is the need for sufficient resources for training and staff development. As student populations become more diverse, their needs become more complex. Meanwhile, as increased opportunities for staff development becomes more critical. Guskey investigated if teacher expectations might change if teachers were given opportunities to improve their instructional effectiveness. The results suggested that chances in teacher expectations did occur and that high –quality staff development could be significant factor in attaining the twin goals of teacher efficacy and student success. I.S.E. has an important role in this matter. Therefore I suggest that should be introduced the study of the expectations in a more profound way, giving teachers the opportunity to improve their expectations. As the majority of the teachers surveyed belong to the old school, I suggest that teachers should be provided with an in course training, to provide them with new theories of teacher-student relationship.

The attitudes and beliefs of these teachers surveyed give credence to the Pygmalion theory: teachers' pre-judgment of their students lead to preconceptions and premature responses to what they believe are low student achievement. Sustaining biases which prevent change.

Whether right or wrong as teachers our attitudes have a strong impact on student performance and the way the students perceive the role of the teacher.

Whereas the ideal solution would be further challenge teacher attitudes and thus change teacher behaviour when needed to be, this is a life long process and requires different interventions, i.e. training. According to Cotton (1989), the research of Marshall and Weinstein (1984) and other investigators indicate that teachers can be trained to view intelligence as a multi-faceted and continuously changing quality and to move away from holding and communicating unfounded or rigidly constrained expectations to their students.

Given the power of the teacher expectations to influence students' learning process and their feelings about themselves, providing such teacher training is a good or perhaps essential investment in our educational system.

### **Ecology.**

It is interesting to note that some students are seen as low achievers because of their environment, considered problematic areas where no one can achieve. The opposite is also true. Teachers normally tend to group cast students according to students' living areas: students who come from poor and problematic areas do not learn; students who come from richer areas learn best. This argument it is not new and in fact there have been many schools of thought that ones surroundings dictate who they are and what they can do. This correlation between students and their environment was seen as a regulator to student performance, if it is true what about the school, is it not a favourable environment? If students' neighbourhoods are not favourable, it is up to us to create a favourable one in school where everyone should be equal as suggested by some teachers.

### **Parents' Involvement.**

One of the factors that appear to contribute to early student success in school is the acquisition of the intellectual tools and social skills needed to function effectively in a school environment prior to the student's entry into school. When primary and secondary teachers have to teach these readiness skills at the same time that they are trying to introduce the regular curriculum, they often become very frustrated. Teacher frustrations are compounded when parents are seen as no willing to take an active role in supporting the school's efforts to educate their children. Another argument defended by teachers was that students who come from lower class families where there is a lack of parental guidance have less or no ability to achieve. This is a two prong argument. Here teachers focus not only on poverty but also

parental guidance and support. Leading psychologists identify student support spaces as very important if not crucial to their well being and ability to perform. These “spaces” are identified as family, society and school. The role of the family is seen as the principle and first support contact and many feel that it is the most important. If it is true then the role of parental guidance is of great importance to student achievement. This might seem to strengthen the argument that lack of parental guidance negatively affects student achievement, however to what degree? 90% of students’ life is spent outside school. As mentioned before, a factor that appears to contribute to early student success in school is the acquisition of the intellectual tools and social skills needed to function effectively in school environment.

It is important to say that there are different kinds of factors that influence student performance, and where some are principle, none are exclusive, therefore when family is less than supportive, are there not other factors that come to play and make the difference?

Normally in Cape Verde, poor and minority parents often have been viewed as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Teachers have to accept that the parents of poor and minority children value education. We need to remember that it is the children who suffer from this unnecessary estrangement. Parents do care about their children, and schools in today’s society need to take the lead in fostering partnership with them. As a teacher suggested, establishing frequent contacts with them and creating a functional parents’ commission that would be always present in school.

### **Blaming the victim.**

A factor that concern teachers is the classroom management. It is true that the most experienced teacher would have problems to manage large classes. Large classes do not only represent a large number of students but also a great diversity of the student body in academic performance, socio economic backgrounds, study habits, behaviour. From teachers’ perspective and my own, this is an overwhelming scenario. Many of us even with a degree and a training course do not have the capacity to manage such classes. This incapability of dealing with these aspects is putting students at risk, teachers instead of looking for ways to solve this problem; they are blaming the victim, i.e. if a student is poor he or she can’t learn. Therefore to avoid that this incapacity finds itself placed on students, where teachers fault the students not themselves, I would suggest, as many teachers suggested in the survey, to create classes with no more than 25 students, so that teachers would better manage the class and be more available to all students. Teachers also should be provided with in course trainings of

how to deal with large classes, so that teachers would not limit their interactions with students.

Our failures have nothing to do with poverty, nothing to do with neighbourhood, nothing to do with style, nothing to do with children's families. We have one and only one problem: Do we truly will to see each and every student in this nation develop to the peak of his or her capacities?

*"If our destination is excellence on a massive scale, not only must we change from the slow lane into the fast lane; we literally must change highways. Perhaps we need to abandon the highways altogether and take flight, because the highest goals that we can imagine are well within reach for those who have the will to excellence."* (Asa Hilliard 1991)

Given these findings, what can be done to improve the ways teachers form expectations and communicate them, especially to students they perceive as having potential? Kathleen Cotton in Expectations and Outcomes listed some recommendations from the work of Brophy (1983), Cooper and Tom (1984) Cotton (1989), Good and Brophy (1984), Marshal and Weinstein (1984), Patriarca (1986), and Woolfolk (1984):

- Avoid unreliable sources of information about students' learning potential, e.g., social stereotypes, the biases of other teachers, etc.
- Set goals (for individuals, groups, classrooms, and whole schools) in terms of floors (minimally acceptable standards), not ceilings; communicate to students that they have the ability to meet these standards.
- Use heterogeneous grouping and cooperative learning activities whenever possible; these approaches capitalise on students' strengths and take the focus off weakness.
- Develop task structures in which students work on different tasks, on tasks that can be pursued in different ways, and on tasks that have no particular right answer. This will minimize harmful comparisons.
- Emphasise that different students are good at different things and let students see that this is true by having them observe one another's products and performances, etc.
- Concentrate on extending warmth, friendliness, and encouragement to all students.
- Monitor student progress closely so as to keep expectations of individuals current.
- Give all students generous amounts of wait-time to formulate their answers during recitations; this will increase participation and improve the quality of responses.



- In giving students feedback, stress continuous progress relative to previous levels of mastery, rather than comparisons with statistical norms of other individuals.
- In giving students feedback, focus on giving useful information, not just evaluation of success or failure.
- When students do not understand an explanation or demonstration, diagnose the learning difficulty and follow through by breaking down the task or re-teach it in a different way, rather than merely repeating the same instruction or giving up.
- In general, think in terms of stretching the students' minds by stimulating them and encourage them to achieve as much as they can, not in terms of "protecting" them from failure or embarrassment.

In short, the changes that are needed will take place only when we begin to view schools as complex systems in which every decision has enduring implications. If educators are truly committed to creating schools in which expectations are high for all students, then it is up to them to create schools as learning organizations in which teachers, administrations, students and parents work together.

## VI. Conclusion

The overall objective of this work is to show the relationship between teacher expectations and student achievement. Teacher expectations play an important role in student achievement. Rosenthal and Jacobson showed that teachers' expectations can have a positive impact on student achievement when teachers encourage their students, but their study leads us to conclude that if teachers discourage their students, students' motivation and achievement will decline.

All the literature reviewed for this work advocated that teachers have an important role in student learning process and that teacher expectations can negatively or positively influence students' achievement. Other studies clearly stated that the major problem is not having low expectations but thus manifesting them into behaviour, limiting their interactions with students and also having differential treatment towards students. When teachers engage in differential treatment of high and low expectation students, students are aware of these differences. The negative effects of differential treatment on low expectation students can be direct (less exposure to learning material) or indirect (treating students in ways that take away their learning motivation and sense of self-efficacy).

In an attempt to prove or disprove what other studies had found, I have done an action research in Domingos Ramos. The methodology used in this paper was to come up with research questions and then collect data through questionnaires, a teacher questionnaire and a student questionnaire. Twenty teachers and seventy-six students from Domingos Ramos were surveyed. Afterwards the data were treated and analysed in the third chapter.

The reality is that low teacher expectations for student achievement exist in Domingos Ramos high school to a much greater degree than I expected. And these expectations, as communicated school wide and in classrooms, can and do affect student achievement and

attitudes. Teachers are treating students according to their expectations, some teachers treat low expectation students in ways likely to inhibit their growth, i.e. treating them differently, calling them names, giving them less time to respond to questions, and communicating less warmth and affection to them. Some teachers form their expectations on the basis of inappropriate information, such as socio-economic status, poverty, physical appearance, seating position, parental guidance, and gender. As stated before and seen in the literature review when teachers engage in differential treatment of high and low expectation students, students are aware of these differences. The negative effects of differential treatment on low expectation students can be direct (less exposure to learning material) or indirect (treating students in ways that take away their learning motivation and sense of self-efficacy). However, it is important to note that teachers who hold low expectations on students may be not aware of their harmful thinking and behaviour. But training can enable school staff members to become aware of their unconscious biases and differential treatment of students, and help them to make positive changes in their thinking and behaviour. The truth is that in many schools haven't got the conditions that are needed for teachers to act differently. Even more critical than the need for additional resources for facilities, supplies, and instructional materials is the need for sufficient resources for training and staff development. Training course would be a great, important and worthy investment in our educational system.

Because of the importance of the role of teacher expectations and as stated in the literature review, there are still critiques on the methodology used in previous studies and its lack of precision; I suggest further research on this topic for a better understanding how teacher expectations can be a regulator or even a determinant factor of student performance and achievement.

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## APPENDIX

Appendix I      Teacher Questionnaire

Appendix II     Student Questionnaire

(Appendix I)

## QUESTIONÁRIO DO PROFESSOR.

## Expectativas e Percepções Sobre o Desempenho dos Alunos.

Prezado(a) professor(a)

Solicitamos a sua colaboração no sentido de responder as seguintes perguntas a respeito de seus alunos. Gostaríamos desde já de agradecer a sua atenção e ressaltar a relevância de sua contribuição.

Sexo: M ( ) F ( )

Idade: 20-25 ( ) 26-35 ( ) 36+ ( )

Nível Acadêmico: Básico ( ) Secundário ( ) Médio ( ) Superior ( )

Anos de experiência: Menos de um ano ( ) 1-2anos ( ) 3-4anos ( ) 5-10anos ( ) mais de 10 anos ( )

1- Acredita que todos os alunos têm potencial de ter alto desempenho?

( ) Sim ( ) Não

Explica \_\_\_\_\_

1b- Em caso negativo o que pode prejudicar a aprendizagem do aluno?

( ) Falta de recursos ( ) Turmas grandes ( ) Falta de empenho do aluno

( ) Falta de preparação do professor

( )

Outros \_\_\_\_\_

2- Como é que você motiva os seus alunos a aprender?

( ) Feedback positivo ( ) Aulas bem preparadas ( ) abordagens criativas

Outros \_\_\_\_\_

3- Você tem expectativas altas para todos os seus alunos?

( ) Sim ( ) Não

4- Você tem expectativas baixas para alguns alunos seus?

( ) Sim ( ) Não

Em caso afirmativo o que representa um aluno de baixo desempenho?

( ) Fraco empenho ( ) Poucos recursos ( ) Sexo ( ) Problemas de comportamento

( ) Posicionamento na sala de aula

(Appendix I continued)

Outros \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5- Como é que você demonstra as suas expectativas para os alunos?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6- Que influencia, se existe alguma, acha que as suas expectativas têm sobre o desempenho dos alunos?

- Expectativas altas influenciam altos desempenhos.
- Expectativas altas não têm nenhuma influencia no desempenho dos alunos.
- Outros
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Porquê?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7-Por favor indica quais das seguintes afirmações são verdadeiras (V) e falsas (F).

- Os alunos que têm recursos disponíveis têm melhores possibilidades de aprender.
- Os alunos cujos pais ou encarregados de educação têm no mínimo o nível secundário completo, têm melhores possibilidades de aprender.
- Os alunos bem comportados têm melhores possibilidades de aprender.
- Os alunos bem organizados têm melhores possibilidades de aprender.
- Os alunos que não têm recursos disponíveis não têm possibilidades de aprender.
- Os alunos cujos pais ou encarregados de educação não têm o nível secundário completo, não têm possibilidades de aprender.
- Os alunos mal comportados não têm possibilidades de aprender.
- Os alunos que apresentam uma certa desorganização nos cadernos, trabalhos exigidos, não têm possibilidades de aprender.

8-O é que você faria para melhorar o desempenho dos seus alunos?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



(Appendix II)

## QUESTIONÁRIO DO ALUNO.

Prezado(a) aluno(a)

Solicitamos a sua colaboração no sentido de responder a este material. É muito importante que respondas da maneira mais sincera possível.

Desde já agradecemos a sua valiosa colaboração

Sexo: ( ) M ( ) F

Idade: ( ) 13-14 ( ) 15-16 ( ) 17-+

Ano de escolaridade: \_\_\_\_\_

1- Achas que és um bom aluno?

( ) Sim ( ) Não

Em caso afirmativo, porquê?

( ) Tenho boas notas

( ) Esforço-me a estudar

( ) Participo nas aulas

( ) Gosto de aprender

( ) Outros \_\_\_\_\_

2- O que é que te motiva a aprender?

( ) Disciplinas interessantes .

( ) Para ser orgulho para meus pais.

( ) Carreira futura.

( ) Envolvimento do professor.

( ) O professor quer que eu aprenda.

( ) outros \_\_\_\_\_

3- Coloca por ordem de 1 a 5 as pessoas que mais te influenciam na vida escolar.

( ) Pais ou encarregados de educação.

( ) Professores.

( ) Colegas.

( ) Líderes religiosos.

( ) Líderes comunitários.

4- O que é que o teu professor faz para te ajudar a aprender?

( ) Responde as minhas questões.

( ) Incentiva-me quando saio-me bem.

( ) Corrijo-me quando estou errado.

( ) Auxilia-me nas minhas dificuldades

( ) outros \_\_\_\_\_

5- O que é que o professor faz que te desmotiva?

( ) Não presta atenção em mim.

( ) Não responde as minhas questões.

( ) Chama-me de nomes.

( ) Trata os alunos de formas diferentes.

(Appendix II continued)

( ) outros \_\_\_\_\_

6- Achas que o teu professor acredita no teu potencial de ser bom estudante?

( ) Sim ( ) Não

Explica

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7- O que é que o teu professor poderá fazer para ajudar os alunos a melhor aprenderem?

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8- Se tu fosses professor o que é que tu farias para ajudar os teus alunos a melhor aprenderem?

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