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The Nature of Boys’ Educational Aspirations in Urban Jamaica: An Exploratory Study

Abstract: Boys are severely underrepresented in higher educational institutions in Jamaica in comparison to girls. Education is seen as a precursor for development and so this poses a risk for the low-middle income country. The Jamaican literature focuses mainly on the issue of underachievement, so little is known of the extent to which boys aspire towards higher education or the nature of their educational aspirations. This paper reports on an exploratory, mixed-method study of the nature of boys’ educational aspirations in two secondary schools in urban Jamaica. The findings suggest that boys’ aspirations are shaped by their socio-economic background, type of school attended and by the nature of the ability stream they are placed in. Popular discourses relating to education within their home/community setting and the Jamaican Diaspora also shape dispositional beliefs held by these boys, towards/about higher education. Keywords: Educational aspiration, life aspirations, higher education, Jamaican Diaspora, capital