

ABSTRACT

Perceptions of the Quality of Work life in Primary Schools in the St. George East Division of Trinidad and Tobago

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This study investigated teachers' perceptions of the most common indicators of the quality of their work life (QWL). It sought to develop further conceptual categories as separate dimensions of quality of work life(QWL) and make comparisons among schools based on school type, gender, location and years of teaching experience. Comparisons were made among groups of selected schools with low(LQWL), moderate(MQWL) and high(HQWL) quality of work life. This study further determined teachers' perceptions of the strength of the relationship of each quality of work life factor on their overall quality of work life(QWL).

Given the inductive nature of this study, no prescriptive theoretical framework was used. Instead,

some useful and relevant existing models, theories, typologies and perspectives served as guidelines in getting a broader understanding of the field. These research 'guides' assisted greatly in the development of an emerging and tentative quality of work life (QWL) theoretical framework.

A mixed-methodology design consisting of quantitative and qualitative methods was used in the two phases of the study. The first phase was both quantitative and qualitative. In the initial qualitative phase semi-structured interviews were used to gather 'raw' data from 22 schools to ascertain teachers' perceptions of their quality of work life (QWL). Statistical techniques were employed in the quantitative first phase to reduce the most commonly perceived QWL descriptors from 85 to 32.

The second phase was both quantitative and qualitative also. In the quantitative second phase an induced QWL questionnaire was administered to a sample of 54 of 87 schools in the ST. George East Education Division to collect and analyze data on teachers' perceptions of their work life. All responses to the 621

questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS-SPG2). Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to test hypotheses and answer research questions.

In the second qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted in selected low (LQWL), moderate (MQWL) and high (HQWL) schools to compare and contrast teachers' perceptions of their work life in these schools.

The findings of this study revealed that teachers in government assisted schools, especially the other-Christian schools, perceived a higher QWL with regard to social integration, collegial relationships, student-related issues and intrinsic characteristics. It was further revealed that teachers perceived that smaller schools exhibited more cohesion, team spirit and collegiality as compared to larger schools.

With regard to years of teaching experience newer teachers (1-5 years) and the most experienced teachers (30+ years) expressed greater satisfaction with their quality of work life as compared to the inexperienced teachers (6-10 years). The newer teachers placed

more value on extrinsic factors while most experienced teachers focused more on intrinsic factors.

Both the qualitative and quantitative results confirmed that teachers placed more value on the social, humanistic and intrinsic aspects of their work life as compared to the extrinsic and physical environment factors.

The results further confirmed that social integration issues such as effective leadership, mutual trust, open communication, and participation in decision making were central and most potent in teachers' work life.

Comparisons between the global research literature and the local factorial QWL findings also revealed that there was strong support from the global model in many aspects of teachers' work life in the local context.