

ABSTRACT

Developing Professional Identity: Beginning Female Teachers' Perceptions About the Role of Dress at Secondary Schools

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This study sought to determine beginning female secondary school teachers' perceptions of the role of dress in the development of their professional identity. Data were collected from five secondary school teachers, at secondary schools in North and South Trinidad, through interviews and participant observation. The study focused on the dynamics that govern individual teachers' everyday dress behaviours. Findings suggest that dress can be an important component of individual role execution. The teachers who participated in the study appeared to recognize and engage the versatility of dress, though conflicting thoughts and understandings emerged on salient aspects of a proposed professional dress code for teachers. It was found that: 1) the teachers' preferences tended not to be suppressive of their individuality and 2) there were attempts to dress in a manner that placed emphasis on collegiality, participation, and horizontal social relations, rather than on conforming to an hierarchical or authoritative model.

Keywords: Secondary school teachers; Teacher attitudes; Beginning teachers; Women teachers; Perceptions; Dress code; Trinidad and Tobago