

ABSTRACT

This research examined the perception of Grade 11 students and their teachers and employers toward the vocational education programme offered in four New Secondary schools in Jamaica. Perception was interpreted to cover the following concerns:

- *interest in vocational education*
- *quality of teaching offered in the programme*
- *facilities for teaching the programme*
- *relevance of training to the actual work situation.*

Even though the research centered around vocational/technical education, it was felt that the opinions of Grade 11 Academic Subject teachers would contribute to a more global picture of the investigation. Specific attention was, however, paid to the four vocational option groups of the research - Business Education, Electrical Installation, Auto Mechanics and Catering.

Data were collected from 201 students, 77 teachers and 20 managers, using questionnaires and an interview schedule. The main findings were that:

1. *Students, their teachers and managers/employers have positive perceptions of their electives and tend to place much value on vocational education.*

2. *While all students had an interest in their respective vocational options, those in the Business Education group registered the highest rating, while the ones pursuing Auto Mechanics were the least positive. A similar pattern surfaced among the teachers, as the Auto Mechanics instructors had the lowest mean scores, while the teachers of Electrical Installation registered the highest mean, indicating the greatest interest in this option.*
3. *When the perception of students was looked at in terms of gender, girls registered a significantly more favourable ratings of the programme than their male counterparts.*
4. *An examination of the different groups' perceptions, revealed that students of the Business Education Option scored higher mean scores than the others. In other words they held the most positive perception of the vocational options.*

In light of these findings, the educational implications were discussed and recommendations for improvement and further research were offered.