

ABSTRACT

Perceptions of Jamaican Secondary School Principals, Teachers and Librarians of the Role of Librarians in Secondary Schools

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This study investigated the perceptions of the role of a school librarian held by Jamaican secondary school principals, teachers and librarians. It sought to determine whether there were any conflicting perceptions of their role among librarians as a group, or between librarians as a group and the teachers and principals with whom they interact.

There is consensus in the literature about the importance of the curricular role of the school librarian. It emphasizes collaboration in the development of students' library and information skills. However, the literature points to a discrepancy between what is described there and what is actually practised in schools.

Questionnaires were administered to the principal, school librarian and teachers of English, Science, Mathematics, Social Studies and Spanish in 48 public secondary schools in Jamaica. A five-point Likert-type scale was used to measure the perceptions of participants.

The major finding of the study was that there was no significant difference between the perceptions of principals, teachers and librarians except in respect of the variable, Services to Students, where there was a difference between teachers and librarians. Respondents' ratings pointed to a traditional role for the school librarian that involved management of the school library, resource provision and curricular support. They perceived leadership of the school library programme to be the most important function of a school librarian. There was a moderately positive relationship between librarians' perceived role and the role that they were actually playing in schools.

The primary curricular role of a school librarian was perceived to be teaching students how to use library resources and equipment. Programmes were usually developed independently of subject teachers. However, some collaboration was taking place.

Major recommendations are greater collaboration between teachers and librarians in the development of students' library and information skills, and the adoption of standards and guidelines for the development of school

libraries. School libraries should be administered full-time by persons with the appropriate qualifications in education and librarianship. Principals, teachers and librarians should be sensitized through education and training to the role of school libraries and school librarians in the achievement of curricular goals.

Keywords: Myrtle Elaine Harris; school librarians; school libraries; secondary education; Jamaica