

ABSTRACT

The Mathematical Preparedness of Post-primary Students For the Workplace in Trinidad and Tobago

Selby-Ann Robyn Augustine

This study sought to explore the mathematical preparedness of post-primary students for the workplace in Trinidad and Tobago. It sought to determine the extent to which post-primary mathematics education is fostering connections between school and the world of work. More specifically, the purpose of the study was to investigate the extent to which work done in the mathematics classroom, based on the post-primary syllabus prepares students to transfer their mathematics knowledge to mathematical problems set in a workplace context.

In order to achieve this, employers in selected establishments were interviewed, and employees in these establishments were observed and interviewed. The aim of these activities was to find out about the mathematics skills required by post-primary graduates to perform tasks in those contexts. Subsequently, a content analysis of the curriculum document was undertaken to assess the extent to which the curriculum addressed these skills required from post-primary graduates in the

workplace. Finally, a test of mathematical skills in matched pairs of items set in textbook and workplace contexts respectively, examined the level of mathematical competence of a selected group of post-primary students when items are set in these different contexts.

From these activities inferences were drawn about the type, degree and relevance of the preparation of post-primary students in mathematical skills that would be required of them in the workplace. In general, it was found that school mathematics was not perceived to have direct relevance, and that its relevance could be enhanced if more attention was given to the impact of context on the transfer of mathematical skills from a textbook context to a workplace context.

Keywords: mathematical preparedness, school, work, post-primary students