

THE ABSTRACT

This study examines Classroom Climate, Attitudes, Values and Academic Performance in the Secondary School System. The main objective was to determine the impact of physical, social and cognitive environment of the classroom on students' self esteem, academic self concept, levels of anxiety, values and academic performance. The sample consists of 14 high schools from across the island. These include 4 former traditional high schools, 3 technical high and 3 former comprehensive high schools. Eight of these schools are located in urban areas and 6 in rural areas.

This study used a combination of the qualitative and the quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. The ethnographic methods of participant observation, unstructured interviews, informal conversation and examination of field documents were used to collect qualitative data. While questionnaires and examination results were used to collect quantitative data. The study reveals that:

1. In spite of the great stride made by government to improve the physical facilities in the secondary system overcrowding, lack of space, inadequate teaching/learning resources are still a source of distress and frustration among teachers and students. Many teachers are of the opinion that these factors do not only contribute to poor performance but also to the high level of anti-social behaviour that this system is now experiencing. Chalk and talk still remains a strong

feature of classroom life, as with the absence of sufficient materials and classroom space, it's the easiest way to control the students.

2. The affective environment of the classroom is the most important aspect of classroom life for the development of positive attitudes and values and for enhancing performance. The findings showed that the quality of the teacher/student encouragement and support is the greatest enhancer of self esteem and academic success.
3. The location of the school is related to the students' self esteem of ability as well as their success.
4. The students who were exposed to the strategies and the methodologies proposed by the Reform of Secondary Education exhibited more positive attitudes towards themselves and their academic abilities and therefore, had higher levels of academic achievement than those students who were not directly exposed to the reform.
5. The observations also revealed that teacher-students and students-students relationships tended to be more cordial in the ROSE classrooms likewise more opportunities were provided for students to actively participate in the learning experiences.

In light of the above findings it was recommended that the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture should help teachers to become aware of the importance of creating a cordial working environment for teaching and learning and the impact their behaviours have on teaching and learning. This could be done in summer workshops where teachers with best practice can share their experiences and their achievements working with students. The analysis showed that the quality of the teacher/student encouragement and support is the greatest enhancer to the development of positive attitudes and values and academic achievement. Teachers should also be encouraged to be more tolerant of the males in their classes and to provide opportunities for them to interact with positive male models.