

ABSTRACT

I want to acknowledge the support of my supervisor Dr. Durian Darrow, who was the wind beneath my wings.

A Study of the Perceptions of Mathematics of Secondary School Students in
Educational Leadership and Policy - Trinidad.

Indiana Belief Scales in the same form in which they were used.

I also owe a great debt to Mr. John Hall for his personal advice and assistance

over and above the SPSS tutor.

Jacqueline B. London

This paper aimed to identify the feelings, thoughts and beliefs of students activated during an on-task time of Mathematics, as well as their general attitude toward, and their beliefs about the nature of the subject. It also attempted to ascertain what type of relationship existed between these perceptions and their performance. This was done using a mixed method approach in two stages.

Many thanks to all my colleagues who kept spurring me on and expressing their

During the first stage a sample of twenty students were interviewed. Responses from these interviews formed the basis of questionnaires that were administered to 345 students in the second stage. A total of five (5) questionnaires were distributed one of them being the Indiana Beliefs about Mathematics Scales which was constructed and validated in the United States. The qualitative data was analysed using the constant comparative method and for the quantitative data an SPSS package was used.

to send all these wonderful people my way and get me

The primary belief about the nature of Mathematics was as something that is useful in everyday life, helps with other things and important in the job world. Feelings were mainly negative from the most popular being 'confused' to the least popular 'sad'. Their thoughts were mainly about their self-efficacy beliefs according to the task on hand.

More than fifty percent (50%) of the students claimed to either like or love Mathematics and this corroborated with data from the instruments that asked the same question. Even though they claimed a preference for the subject many of them felt their Math classes were boring, it was confusing and they wished it was not so important. This self-report however, had a significant impact on performance and on other factors that also affected performance. It is an appropriate measure to be further investigated.

The study confirmed the importance of students' thoughts and beliefs but showed that there may be other factors which impinge on these and consequently contribute to level of performance. The study of students' perceptions holds a lot of potential for further research.

Key words: Jacqueline London; perceptions of Mathematics; nature of Mathematics beliefs; students' perceptions of Mathematics; doing Mathematics.