

## ABSTRACT

### **An Investigation Into the Perceptions of School Culture by Truants and Non-Truants at Two Secondary Schools in a Rural District of Tobago**

*Nicholas McKenna*

Through comparative analysis, this study examined the perceptions of five truant and four non-truant students about the school culture at two rural secondary schools in Tobago. Data were collected through interviews. The findings revealed that: 1) negative behaviours like fighting, cursing, “skipping” classes, and disrespecting authority were normal behaviours and practices at both schools, and feelings of frustration, discontentment, dissatisfaction, and discomfort are marked features of a normal day; 2) while the students at both schools generally believed that attendance was important, the truant students placed lesser value on it; 3) all the students believed that school should be enjoyable and stimulating, that students have varying abilities, and that teachers should demonstrate more care for their students, and exhibit professionalism in their duties; and 4) all of the students experienced discontentment, frustration, and demotivation as a result of the school’s culture, and had become apathetic towards it.

**Keywords:** Perceptions; Case studies; Secondary school students; Student attitudes; Educational environment; School climate; Discipline problems; Truancy; Absenteeism; Student attendance; Rural schools; Tobago; Trinidad and Tobago.