

## ABSTRACT

## Conceptions of Quality in Secondary Education in Trinidad and Tobago

Denzil Martin Noel

The study identified stakeholders' conceptions of quality in secondary education, determined in relative terms how stakeholders rated the quality of secondary education, and evaluated the extent to which stakeholders' conceptions of quality education are being met by education reforms at the time of the study. The study's objectives were achieved using a qualitative research approach involving three research questions: (1) What are stakeholders' conceptions of quality in secondary education? (2) How do stakeholders rate the quality of secondary education? and (3) Do existing reforms in secondary education accommodate stakeholders' conceptions of quality education?

The stakeholders used in the study were students, officials of the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers Association, officials of Private Sector Business Organisations and the Ministry of Education. The findings of the research suggested that stakeholders held different conceptions of quality in secondary education based on their contextualized environment. Two different conceptions of quality were identified among the stakeholders: 'cognitive excellence' and 'holistic development'. These two major conceptions were conceptualized with subtle differences by stakeholders even when similar descriptive words were used. As an example, a stakeholder may describe 'holistic' education as a conception of quality in secondary education, but skewed it towards functional development in preference to social and moral development.

The research is significant since it identified conceptions of quality held by stakeholders' in secondary education in Trinidad and Tobago. In so doing the research established a basis for understanding why stakeholders rate the quality of secondary education as they do and provided knowledge that can be useful in guiding education reform policies aimed at meeting stakeholders' needs. Finally, the knowledge provided can be used to inform and direct future research on issues related to quality in education.

Key words: Denzil Martin Noel, Conceptions of quality, Secondary Education, Qualitative Research, Cognitive Excellence, Holistic Development, Total Quality Education Management.