

ABSTRACT

Conceptions & Conditions of Educational Excellence in
Secondary Education in Trinidad and Tobago

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The quality of education is a major international concern. Trinidad and Tobago, having committed itself to mass secondary education, must find ways of ensuring that even with a declining economy, the education provided is of a standard that would herald a new era of nation building and social reconstruction.

The study explored the nature of conceptions of excellence in secondary education in Trinidad and Tobago. It sought indigenous conceptions, and compared them with the conceptions put forward by Drs. Prakash and Waks (1985).

In this thesis, a descriptive survey method probed the opinions of a panel of educators and a group of non-educators, on the quality of secondary schools. Inductive analysis of data as well as descriptive statistics were used to present an overall picture of what secondary education ought to be, and which schools were achieving the ideals.

The survey data derived from the 11 panelists interviewed and 63 respondents to the questionnaire revealed four indigenous conceptions of excellence: intellectual supremacy; character development; self-actualisation; and social consciousness, each belonging to a particular conception of education - the elitist; the moral; the personal; and the social, respectively. The only conception that did not in any way parallel a conception proposed by Prakash and Waks was excellence as character development. Educators and non-educators supported the indigenous conceptions and the majority of them expressed faith in the conception of excellence as self-actualisation. With respect to schools, the majority of those which educators and non-educators believed to be attaining excellence were assisted secondary schools. Junior and senior secondary schools combined, registered significant support among educators and non-educators for their potential in theory to contribute to the holistic development of students. Among educators and non-educators there was a high level of consensus on the priority that should be given to specific aspects of school life.