

## PhD Abstract

### Principal Professional Preparation, Principal Performance, and the Impact on Teachers in Creating Effective Schools at the Secondary School Sector in Trinidad and Tobago

This study explored the extent of the professional preparation of secondary school principals and the impact of principal's performance on teachers in creating effective secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

The design of the study utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies strategy (Sieber, 1973; Denzin, 1978; Newman & Benz, 1998; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Creswell, 2003). The quantitative component employed a cross-sectional and causal-comparative survey design involving a sample of eleven schools from the different secondary schools types in Trinidad and Tobago. For the quantitative phase, questionnaires were the main data collection instruments employed. A semi-structured interview instrument was relied on to collect data for the qualitative phase. Data were gathered over a nine-month period through questionnaires and in-depth interviews.

The sample for this study included 11 principals, 130 middle managers (vice-principals, deans, & HODs), and 285 teachers.

Findings from both middle managers and principals suggested that pre-service seminars and workshops for aspiring administrators of secondary school were not readily available, not well conceptualized, and consequently not well attended. However, the Diploma in Education Programme offered by UWI was more highly favoured than other pre-service professional preparation programmes.

The evidence also suggested that in-service workshops and seminars organized by schools but especially those organized by the MOE and the Dip Ed. Programme hold

great promise for the professional preparation of secondary school principals in Trinidad and Tobago.

From the findings, principals acknowledged that formal preparation programmes, informal in-school, and informal out-of school experiences had direct and indirect influences on the acquisition and refinement of administrative skills; values, attitude, and beliefs; knowledge and understanding of school governance. However, they believed that the combined influences of the experience gained from informal in-school assignments and informal out-of school activities had a more compelling influence on their (i) beliefs, values, and attitudes; (ii) skills; (iii) knowledge and understandings of school administration, compared to the contribution made by formal preparation programmes.

Principals also painted a picture of effectiveness and efficiency of their management and leadership practices. However, teachers from the different school types only marginally corroborated the views of principals.

The findings indicated that principals felt that they were the main catalyst for school effectiveness and that they had made positive contributions in developing teacher commitment, teacher competence, and teacher satisfaction. Except for principals' contribution to teacher competence, the evidence from teachers suggested the contrary to be the case.

An important finding of this study was that 71.7 % of the variance of the dependent variable - school effectiveness - was explained by the three leadership sub-variables- Human Resource/ Transformational/Interpersonal, Political/ Contextual, and Symbolic/Contextual Domains. Principals felt they had done enough in their schools to

influence teacher commitment, teacher competence, and teacher satisfaction. However, teachers consistently expressed uncertainty in respect of principals' influence on the capacity of teachers to contribute to school effectiveness.

Recommendations were offered for new partnerships to be established between the providers of professional development programmes and the MOE to work together in preparing secondary school administrators for the future. Recommendations were also presented for reconceptualization of the leadership role of principals in which greater emphasis is placed on micropolitics.

Also, it was proposed that professional development programmes must place greater emphasis on developing principals' knowledge and understandings in the core instructional activities of curriculum design, curriculum development, teaching learning and assessment.

As a consequent of the many discrepancies that surfaced between principals' and teachers' perceptions in this study it was recommended that principals need to interrogate their management and leadership practices, empower and encourage professional discussion among teachers on issues pertinent to principals' management and leadership practices.

Furthermore, recommendations were offered to stimulate and facilitate the reform agenda in education in Trinidad and Tobago