

College of Humanities, Behavioral & Social Sciences

The Relationship Between Teenage Pregnancy and One's Socio-economic Status in Jamaica

Authors: Pauline Gayle-Betten, Yuene-May Hutchinson, Kerry-Ann Matthews, Katrice Meeks, Anna Fraser

The high rate of teenage pregnancies in Jamaica, more specifically in the parish of Manchester, has been of great concern to several organizations and institutions within the parish. The purpose of this study is to determine the relationship, if any, between the level of teenagers' socio-economic status and teenage pregnancies. This research will seek to expand on a past research that was done in the same region. This study will utilize a mixed method, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in an effort to bring an understanding to the different ways in which socioeconomic status influences teenage pregnancy.

A socio-economic status scale will be used to measure the level of socio-economic status of teenagers and their families. Focus groups will be conducted, as well as the use of questionnaires in the data collection process. The sampling methods to be used are: convenience sampling and quota sampling. Participants will be targeted in their homes, clinics and women's centres.

Gender Roles Differentiation and its Impact on the Family Among Selected Households in St. Ann

Authors: Paulene Gayle Betten, Carlane Beecher

Gender roles within the households vary since the beginning of history. Today, men and women are supposedly equal, yet their roles in a relationship continue to be unequal. In today's society, it has been noticed that females do the majority of the household chores while males do very little or none at all. The main purpose of this research is to investigate the different roles that males and females play and the impact of these roles on family members.

The research will employ a methodology that is both quantitative and qualitative. The qualitative data will be collected by way of in-depth interviews, while a questionnaire will be used to collect the quantitative data. The questionnaire will contain questions formulated using a five-point Likert Scale.

The findings of this research will be of great benefit to parents in understanding the roles they play in socializing their children in household chores.

Gender and its Implications for Social Relationships in the Workplace

Authors: Paulene Gayle-Betten, Orville Perrier, Taneshia Bennett, Norda Nelson, Sheryl Clayton

For centuries, gender and its impact on relationships at the workplace have contributed to many of the social problems that exist in varied societies and cultures around the world. Through this study, one will become aware of these sensitive issues that affect many (if not all) sectors of the labour force and it is hoped that individuals (especially employers) will not only become knowledgeable of such information, but will also act upon it for the benefit of themselves, workers, and their workplaces.

The study will be guided by five (5) main objectives, with major themes, including: impact of gender on social functioning, preferential treatment of employees, gender's role in the hiring and promoting process of organizations, sexual harassment in the workplace, and gender's influence on career advancement. Implementing this study will no doubt yield valuable information which will contribute to the literature as it relates to gender issues in the workplace.

A mixed research design will be used, whereby both qualitative (through the use of in-depth interviews as well as a focus group discussion) and quantitative (through the use of short questionnaires) methods of data collection will be incorporated. An overall sample size of one hundred and twenty (120) persons will be used. These participants will be chosen systematically through the use of various sampling methods including convenient and purposive sampling and two focus groups. Results gathered will subsequently be analyzed both inductively (through the categorizing of information into recurrent themes and ideas) and deductively (through the use of statistical software in analyzing data garnered from administered questionnaires).

The Impact of Perceived Academic Support on Academic Performance

Authors: Paulene Gayle Betten, Damion Grant and Ackeem Salmon

Much emphasis is being placed on the declining performance of students in the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) exams. It is said that the curriculum which is set by the CXC is not student friendly. Special attention is not been placed on other factors that influence the academic achievement of the students. While the blame of the students' failure has been frantically passed around, the impact of academic support has largely been ignored. Support is integral in the students' well-being and it determines to a large extent whether the student is successful academically or not.

This study will explore the impact of academic support on the achievement of students in grades 9 to 11. It will investigate the relationship between perceived academic support from parents, teachers and peers, to the academic achievement of 9th-11th graders. The sample will be made up of 250 students, selected randomly, from the high schools within Mandeville, Manchester. The results obtained will help to clarify the relationship between students' academic support and performance.

The Nature and Significance of the Relationship Between Emotional-Social Intelligence [ESI] and the Academic Performance of Teenage Mothers in Jamaica

Author: Sriya Smalling

Purpose: This study determined the nature and significance of the relationship between emotional-social intelligence [ESI] and the academic performance of teenage mothers in Jamaica.

Significance: A study of the relationship between ESI and the academic performance of teen mothers in Jamaica is expected to: i) encourage further ESI research as it relates to teenage pregnancy and parenting, while beginning to address these gaps in the available data on ESI; ii) contribute to a process of advancing the interventions earmarked for teen mothers in Jamaica thereby improving the benefits derived by them, directly, and their offsprings, indirectly; and iii) guide the programme revisions and adaptations decided by policy makers, programme administrators, and helping professionals who are involved in the formulation and implementation of programmes for teen mothers to include specific coaching strategies for the development of their socio-emotional skills.

Methodology: Convenience sampling procedure was used to select forty-two (42) adolescent mothers from a target population of 1625 at a youth services and counselling centre in Jamaica. Respondent's ESI scores on the Bar-On EQ-i:YV and their overall grade averages were used to provide data for the study. A correlation design using the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was used to determine the relationship between ESI and the academic performance of adolescent mothers, while the independent samples t -test was used to determine the difference in the academic performance of teen mothers with high and low levels of ESI.

Results: The results of the study supported the hypothesis that the level of emotional-social intelligence of adolescent mothers in Jamaica is low [$n = 42$; $m = 90.59$; $SD = 13.22$] and indicated a significant positive relationship between ESI and the academic performance of adolescent mothers [$r = 0.437$, $p = 0.004$]. A significant difference was also found between the mean academic performances of adolescent mothers with high and low levels of ESI [$t(40) -2.13$, $p < 0.05$].

Recommendations: These results establish a credible basis for the inclusion of interventions that seek to directly foster the development of the emotional and social competencies of the teenage mothers at the youth services and counselling centre towards: a) enhancing their targeted academic performance; b) strengthening their overall ability to translate their in-service experiences into opportunities for personal growth, and c) improving their chances for overall success in life. There are also implications for the inclusion of such interventions in campaigns that seek to: a) promote healthy sexual and reproductive behaviours among youths, and b) reduce or eliminate the incidence of teenage pregnancy.

An Investigation of the Relation between Birth Order and Family Cohesion: A Jamaican Perspective

Author: Jason Wynter

The purpose of this study is to examine the relation between birth order and family cohesion among tertiary students in Jamaica.

Methodology: A survey research design was utilized in the study. This design was selected as it presents several advantages to this research in its use, namely: its economy and cost effectiveness and efficient collection of data over broad populations. The sample size in this study consisted of 226 participants (70 males and 156 females) in the following birth positions: firstborn, middleborn, youngest, or only child. A random systematic sampling method was used. Data was collected using the Family Environment Scale R- Form (Moss and Moss, 1986) to examine family cohesion. The main inferential statistics that was used in this study are point-biserial correlation, one-way analysis of variance, chi-square coefficient and the Independent Samples Test.

Results: The point-biserial correlation computations for birth position and family cohesion score supplied the following results: $r = 0.038$, $p = 0.572$, indicating an almost non-existing association between birth position and family cohesion. The variables are unrelated and are not statistically significant. Also, correlation computations for birth position and family cohesion score supplied the following results: $r = 0.061$, $p = 0.364$ indicating a very weak association between birth position and family cohesion. The youngest and only children reported higher family cohesion means. A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) $F(3, 222) = 1.525$, $p > 0.05$ indicates that there is no statistical significant difference among the family cohesion score means of the four birth order positions (first, middle, youngest, and only child). However, there is a statistical significant difference between the family cohesion score means for male and female ($t(224) = -2.15$, $p < 0.05$) as indicated by the independent samples t test.

Conclusion: This research has proven to be far from conclusive, but strong, active proponents persist in the face of equally strong and persistent criticism. Everyone has a birth order and has occupied one or more of the following birth positions: first, middle, youngest, or only positions. Beyond these ordinal positions, each family member has occupied particular roles or niches in their families that familiarized them with the characteristics of different sibling roles and birth orders.

In the final analysis, an individual's birth order is a possible influence on relationships with parents and siblings, which may affect family cohesion, personality formation and social behaviour across the lifespan (Buckley, 1998).

The George's Valley and Greenvale Initiative: A Comprehensive & Sustainable Children & Adolescent Empowerment Programme Toward Crime Prevention & Violence Reduction

Authors: Paulene Gayle-Betten, Sharon McBayne and Grace Kelly

The Department of Behavioural Sciences, Northern Caribbean University, developed the George's Valley and Greenvale "G²" initiative as one other intervention strategy to advance the national crime prevention initiative at the community level. The programme is one function of the Children Advocacy Project offered through the Community Counselling and Restorative Justice Centre and the Morris Entrepreneurship Centre – MEC. These programmes are built on partnerships established with the Ministries of Justice and National Security, HEART Trust/NTA, the Closed to Crime Initiatives of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and other local entities with a view to empower individuals, families, and communities to work towards the reduction of crime and violence.

Influence of Counselling on the Family Relationships of Alcoholics

Authors: Opal Davidson, Orlean Brown-Earle and Kenneth Morgan

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of alcoholics and family members of alcoholics on the effectiveness of the counselling that is available in Manchester to aid in the building of their family relationships, in spite of any denial by the alcoholic of having a drinking problem.

A quantitative study was done to collect the data using a cross-sectional survey design. A 25-item standardized self-administered questionnaire was used to complete the study. The instrument included a 13-item Short Michigan Alcoholism Screening Test (SMAST), administered to a sample size (N=126; n=63 alcohol abusers and n=63 non-alcohol abusers). These non-alcohol abusers were family members of alcoholics. The research sought to provide responses to: the effectiveness of the counselling available and the main problem affecting family relationships of alcoholics, identify the differences amongst the groups regarding their views about the denial by some alcoholics of having a drinking problem in seeking counselling. The main type of counselling that would help those affected by alcoholism will also be addressed.

The results showed that 29% of the respondents agreed that the counselling available was effective. The main problem of poor communication was seen as affecting the family relationships of alcoholics. The respondents (68.2%) agreed that the denial by some alcoholics of having a problem has a significant impact on counselling. Individual counselling was seen as most needed. Training of staff and public awareness were the two main improvements identified. In conclusion, the study revealed that much work is required in the counselling profession to ensure that more improved services are provided to the alcoholics and their family members to help build their relationships.

The Effectiveness of Balancing a Career and Family life Among Jamaican Professional Women

Author: Christine Williams

This study was designed to determine the effectiveness of balancing career goals and family among Jamaican professional women and to ascertain their perceptions regarding their academic institution's support. The study surveyed 237 professional women from four continuing education sites of a university in Jamaica. The questionnaires, which included thirty nine questions, were sent to the director of each campus site for administration. Four hypotheses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the analysis of variance (ANOVA).

The findings revealed that there is no significant difference among Jamaican professional women in the level of importance they place on advancing their career goals and balancing family life. It was found that students across all the campuses differed significantly in their perceptions of the challenges that exist in being a wife and having a job. It was found that there is no significant difference among Jamaican professional women's perceptions of the family support they received as it relates to balancing family life and career goals. Finally, the findings revealed that there is a significant difference in the perception of students across the campuses concerning the unavailability of after-school child care services.

This study will add to the body of literature which currently exists and will help therapists, employers and school administrations to understand the challenges that this group of individuals is facing in order for them to strategize and find solutions in accommodating this large majority.

The Socio-economic and Environmental Impact That the Productions at Appleton Sugar Factory Have on the Communities of Thornton and Appleton

Author: Selois Archer

In developing countries, communities have struggled to co-exist with industrialization in a sustainable manner. The communities of Thornton and Appleton in St Elizabeth, Jamaica, are no different. The aforementioned communities are located in close proximity to the Appleton Sugar Factory and have become a concern to many stakeholders in industrialization and community development, which includes the sugar industry in Jamaica.

It must be noted that rural areas are dynamic as there is normally conflicts between the built and the natural environment. This conflict is further influenced by the interaction of physical, socio-cultural, economic and environmental factors.

While the Appleton Sugar Estate employs many persons (directly or indirectly) from its adjacent communities, there has been very little impact in terms of development on the study areas. Furthermore, and most importantly, there have been constant degradation of the environment which is very fragile as it consists of swamps and many river tributaries and distributaries. Degradation in most cases takes the form of air and noise pollution and solid waste. These pollutants have been mitigated, but not to a satisfactory level, according to residents.

Despite the negative environmental and socio-economic impacts created by the Appleton Sugar Factory, residents still see the factory as a part of community identity and have taken pride attaching a sense of place to the Appleton Estate and Factory.

Development planning, for a number of reasons, has practically failed at promoting and guiding good-quality land use and monitoring throughout many rural areas in Jamaica, such as the communities of Appleton and Thornton. This is depicted in the manner in which the area was developed in the past, the current pattern it exhibits and the role that government agencies (NEPA, SDC, etc) have played in guiding an integrated community-based development process.

The state of the Jamaican environment has changed because of industrialization. There are, as a result, questions raised as to the role of government agencies in Jamaica's quest for development. The research against this background establishes and proposes mitigation strategies and recommendations for addressing the issues contributing to the negative impacts of sugar production on community environments in Jamaica, particularly in the study areas of Appleton and Thornton.

The Making and Use of Audio-Visuals for a Communicative and Student-Centred Approach to the Teaching of Literature

Author: Mario O. Castillo Rangel

The traditional courses of Literature tend to be one-sided, unilateral and teacher-centred. They are one-sided in as much as they focus their attention on the formal aspects of the literary works to the detriment of the significance of their story. They are unilateral in several respects: the connections of literature with the many cultural forms which it comprises or with which it is related (fine arts, religion, philosophy, politics, history, music, medicine, cinema, etc.) are not clearly or only poorly shown; poems and narratives are read as dead language with no relevance to the present-day issues and everyday life of the readers (students). And finally, the role of the teacher as informant is far above its role as a motivator and facilitator of the learning process, thus making the class considerably teacher-centred.

The classes of Survey of Literature I and II of 2008 and 2009, have been characterized by the introduction of procedures aimed at establishing a balance between all these different aspects. This paper shows several ways by which the traditional methods have been experimentally enriched. Samples of the applications of these techniques are shown and the students' opinions are collected and analyzed. The results seem to have been positive with respect to the motivation and activation of the students. However, their effect on the students' final essays is yet to be assessed. It is recommended that the literature class be further developed and organized on this basis so as to intensify the students' participation through a service learning project aimed at improving the Audio-Visual Classroom, while having them write critical reports of movies, documentaries and videos based on the biographies of the authors or their literary works.

Grieve If You Must

Author: Grace A. Kelly

This presentation will allow participants to explore the intricacies involved in grief and grieving and is designed for persons who might not have had the opportunity to appropriately grieve their loss and make restitution with themselves or others. Grief can be defined as a natural phenomenon that transcends the boundaries of age, gender, race, culture, religion, educational, socio-political and socio-economic status. It is an emotional response to hurt and loss. Grief is real. Grief is sure. My expertise on grieving is not solely a product of my academic training but, more so, of the many losses I have experienced and endured.

Participants will be exposed to the process of grieving. They will learn that when “grief pains” it can drive us to violent, unethical and inappropriate behaviours. It can cause us to be disconnected with family and friends. It can rob us of reaching our fullest potential. It can drive us to the grave. Essentially, they should leave this session with possible answers to such questions as: where has the grief resulting from pain and loneliness driven them, their family members, other relatives, friends, co-workers or those persons with whom they make contact on a daily basis?

The expected outcome of this presentation is that it will equip each participant with a better understanding of how to grieve and that they will appreciate the need to grieve and, at the same time, take advantage of this opportunity and grieve gracefully.

College of Business & Hospitality Management

An Empirical Analysis of the Impact of Business Incubation Services on Students' Academic Performance

Authors: Lawrence Johnson, Daphne Brown and Anthony Hutchinson

Over the years, business incubators have been used to increase business students' academic performance in tertiary institutions. However, NCU has never utilized this technique in the education of business students. The objective of this study is to measure the impact of incubator services on students' academic performance over the period of one semester initially and to be continued thereafter.

The null hypothesis is that business incubation has no significant impact on students' academic performance. The research hypothesis is considered a more favourable outcome. A stratified random sample of second-year students will be used. Students will be divided into two groups: "A" experimental, and "B" control. Treatment and data collection will occur over the period of one semester for both groups. The data will be analyzed using SPSS descriptive statistics and the t-test.

Sports Tourism: A Case Study of Jamaica's Sports Opportunities

Authors: Dwight Dunn, Noriel Jacobs-Gray and Merlene Senior

Sports tourism is now one of the fastest growing trends worldwide in terms of its contributions to national development and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This area deserves immediate attention in Jamaica as recent studies (Swart & Bob, 2007; Smith & Weed, 2007; Weed, 2007) have shown that sport tourism contribution worldwide in developed countries was between 1-2 percent of GDP.

A research of this nature should assist the government in developing a national sport tourism strategy framework from which policies could be implemented. The methodology to be pursued will take the form of a narrative descriptive approach, which is essentially using participants in the research as story tellers relating their own experiences. This approach will draw upon many techniques and sources for the collection and analysis of data. The methods will include survey, case studies and phenomenology. Instruments to be used will include interviews, questionnaires and observations. Sampling techniques will include both stratified random and convenience sampling.

The research participants will include current and past athletes and track coaches drawn from several target groups (GC Foster, MVP tract club, sports journalists, PIOJ, STATIN, the Ministry of Tourism , Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Sports, Culture and Information). The expected finding is that Jamaica lacks a sport tourism policy and the impact of sport tourism on Jamaica's GDP is not known or understood. Support for a sports tourism economic development strategy will therefore be promoted as a matter of priority and national importance to capitalize on Jamaica's sports tourism potential.

Student Performance: Correlation Between the Caribbean Examination Council Examinations Results and First Year Performance in A Business Administration Course at Northern Caribbean University

Authors: John McAllister, Kirkland Anderson and Devairakkamm Ebenezer

The quality of students' performance in first year College classes can be attributed to a number of factors. One of these factors is the level of academic performance exhibited in high schools, as evidenced by passes in the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) examinations. It is hypothesized that, if first year College students performed remarkably well (grades 1 and 2) in CXC examinations, they should perform very well in most subjects/courses in their first year of College.

This research investigation seeks to establish whether or not there is a strong positive correlation between students high school performance in Mathematics or Mathematics-based courses and their performance in a selected Mathematics-based Business Administration course. The research design selected is Pearson's Product Moment Correlation technique. Data will be analyzed using SPSS.

Crime and Violence in Jamaica and Its Impact on the Business Sector

Author: Andrea Baldwin

Each day the news media carry horror stories of crime and violence across the nation of Jamaica. In a recent Gleaner report, dated February 8, 2009, Dr. Karen Richards, a clinical psychologist, stated that Jamaica, as a nation, is suffering from borderline personality disorder (BPD). In 2005, there were 1,674 murders. In 2008, there were 1,611 murders. In the first 20 days of 2009, over 70 persons were murdered (Sunday Gleaner, February 8, 2009). In the business sector, the incidence of extortion rings and illegal 'protective services' continues to grow and dominate the lawful and peaceful pursuance of business activities.

According to Harriott (2008), over the past twenty (20) years, Jamaica has maintained homicide rates of over 59/100,000 persons. This classifies Jamaica as the most violent Caribbean nation and one of only three such nations with this level of violence in the world (the other two nations being South Africa and Columbia). Gayle (2009) cites Jamaica as a high violence society which has all the necessary stimuli for breaking into a civil war.

According to Guerra (2009), one of the biggest challenges surrounding violence prevention is that violence works. It is adaptive and it solves problems for the aggressor. To fight against crime, it is therefore essential to reduce its adaptive value by supporting pro-social behaviours and environments.

In light of these challenges, a mixed methods research project has been undertaken to investigate the impact that crime and violence is having on business practitioners and the viability of their businesses. Using a purposive sample, data have been gathered from the South Central parishes of Jamaica via structured and open-ended questionnaires. Data was analyzed using a thematic approach and SPSS.

Results showed that of 107 business operators, a total of 87.82% were being affected by crime and violence through loss of business, constant fear and anxiety as well as the perceived and real loss of

freedom of movement. When asked who should be responsible for addressing the issue of crime and violence, 74% of business operators stated that each citizen is responsible while 62% stated that the government through an enforced legal, punitive and justice system should be primarily in charge of addressing the issue.

Given these results and others, various questions arise: (1) Is it time for Jamaicans to become equipped and empowered to act on behalf of country above and beyond self interest? (2) If yes, who should initiate this vision and operation? (3) What will a 'developed' Jamaican nation look like and be like in the year 2030 if the scourge of crime and violence is not reversed?

It is time for mindlessness to demit office and in with carefulness for place and purpose.

College of Natural & Applied Sciences

Determination of Total Cyanide Levels in Some Cassava Food Products in Jamaica

Authors: Charles Kofi Koomson and Mark Harris

Levels of cyanide in several processed cassava food products were measured using Protocol B2 or the picrate paper kit B for the determination of total cyanide cassava products, involving the retention of linamarase in a small filter paper disc loaded with a phosphate buffer at pH 6. This enzyme catalyses the hydrolysis of linamarin to acetone cyanohydrins, which then, between pH 6 and slightly alkaline conditions, rapidly degrades to HCN. The released gas subsequently reacts with the yellow picrate paper. The latter was matched against a 10 shaded-colour HCN chart, revealing the total amount of cyanide in the food products.

Cassava food products sampled from the four parishes tested exhibited cyanide levels at least twice (>20 mg/kg) the allowable daily intake (ADI) of 10 mg/kg of body weight. Dried cassava flour had lower levels of cyanide than the un-dried flour. As cyanide breaks down under atmospheric exposure, it was concluded that a longer drying time before further processing for the flour (which is the precursor for the other foods), could reduce cyanide levels in the cassava products.

College of Allied Health & Nursing

Modeling the Effect of Hormonal Status on H₁ Receptors in Intact Versus Ovariectomized (OVX) Female Rats

Authors: Erica Robinson-Sturridge¹, Holly Bundrant², Leonard Preston Mercer³

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This study was to determine the nature of the relationship between hormonal status and brain histamine H₁ receptors elucidating their mutual effect on food intake, while exploring the influence of dietary protein levels within this complex regulatory process

Intact and ovariectomized female rats were placed on 25% or 1% casein, with food intake, weight change and H₁ receptor concentration measured. Ovariectomized rats (OVX) injected subcutaneously with either estradiol benzoate or corn oil was fed 25% or 1% casein and monitored.

OVX rats fed 25% casein demonstrated a significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) food intake (58.59 ± 0.92 g) and weight gain (16.64 ± 1.07 g) in comparison to intact rats (48.05 ± 1.24 g) and (7.83 ± 1.85 g) respectively for food and weight gain, and while on a 1% casein diet, similar ($p > 0.05$) food intake (OVX: 46.78 ± 1.85 g

and Intact: 45.44 ± 2.23 g) and weight gain (OVX: -10.96 ± 1.38 g and Intact: -6.52 ± 1.61 g) were obtained. Weight gain was reversed in OVX rats on a 25% casein diet injected with estradiol. Histamine H₁ concentrations was higher ($p < 0.05$) for intact rats on a 1% casein diet (81.56 ± 1.56 pmol/g protein) compared to ovariectomized females (75.36 ± 4.04 pmol/g protein). Both OVX (84.38 ± 2.88 pmol/g protein) and intact (86.40 ± 2.65 pmol/g protein) on the 25% diet showed no significant change ($p > 0.05$). There is synergy in physiological regulation between hormonal status and diet and their effects on H₁ receptor involvement in food intake and weight gain regulation.

School of Religion & Theology

Adultery in Light of the Text Critical Evidences

Author: Clinton Baldwin

Most textual scholars concede that the autographs or originals of the New Testament text cannot be recovered. At best, what can be determined from the practice of New Testament textual criticism is the possible approximation of the earliest original. While most of the approximately 300,000 variant readings in the New Testament are insignificant, there are many that affect doctrines and could alter the way(s) Christians relate to community.

In this paper, some of these significant variant readings found in Matthew 5:27-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12 and Luke 16:18 will be addressed. The textual evidences reveal that there are several variations of these passages which could be considered closest to the original. Because these variant readings are sometimes contradictory and also reflect later interpretive developments in the text, we cannot be certain exactly what Jesus said with regards to marriage and divorce. In light of these textual variations, could there be any adjustments to the popular Christian position on divorce and remarriage? And consequently, could there be any modifications to our influence on community? These are some of the practical questions which will be explored.

College of Education & Leadership

The Development of a Skills and Competencies Based Assessment and Development Model for School Principals and Administrators in Jamaica

Author: Vincent M. S. Peterkin

The Ministry of Education does not have an established, coordinated, and coherent system for training principals and administrators for today's schools. Considering the significant link between teacher quality and student achievement and, therefore, school improvement, the need for specific and unique professional development for school principals becomes more pronounced. However, there has not been a needs assessment of the professional development needs of the principals regarding the skills and competencies needed to facilitate a comprehensive school improvement initiative.

The purpose of this study was to determine the skills and competencies that could be offered to principals through professional development that will lead to school improvement.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASPP), the Educational Leadership Policy Standards (ELPS), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), the American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC), and Andrews University (AU), in conjunction with current research were used to identify leadership standards, skills, and competencies which are viewed as critical for success in principalship. The criteria for their selection were that they (a) be national in scope, (b) have made proactive leadership development a central focus of their mission, and (c) be well recognized in the professional literature. Data collected from these selected organizations were examined, analysed and sorted using the Taba Inductive Strategy, resulting in the establishment of twelve skills categories, each with their respective competencies designed for effective principal development.

The results of this research study on identifying the skills and competencies need of school principals to lead school improvement suggests that principals need to become proactively engaged in activities that will help them create and sustain high-performing learning systems that ensure that all teachers and students meet high standards. Principals recognized that they must build team commitment in order to create a learning organization for effective organizational development and continuous improvement. They noted that understanding the change process is essential to sustaining continuous growth. They conclude that effective principals must be developed and supported with the latest knowledge about what works and that research must be continued to better understand schools and the challenges of school leadership.