

Training Programme for Secondary School Principals: Evaluating its Effectiveness and Impact

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education



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The article presents the evaluation of the training programme for secondary school principals conducted in the period between 2006 and 2009. A mixed method approach was used to conduct the summative evaluation with 28 graduate participants. For the impact evaluation, 15 of the graduates were interviewed three years after the programme was completed. The quantitative data was analyzed using means and standard deviation. The findings revealed that participants gained technical and relational skills but responses were less favourable in relation to cognitive or conceptual skills, while the support from lecturers and workplaces was strong but less favourable from the central ministry. There was a positive impact on participants' performance during the period of training, especially in the areas of confidence, collegiality and overall leadership. For the impact evaluation, graduates credited the programme for their promotion to become principals, vice principals, senior teachers or give added responsibilities. They identified areas to be enhanced for any further programme to include school law, financial management, policy development and interpretation, and conflict management and relational skills. The main recommendation is that for any further programme for the training of principals should be guided by the findings of the evaluation.

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INTRODUCTION

The poor performance of the public education system of Jamaica has led to calls for improvement in the quality of leadership provided by principals. Correspondingly, the weak performance by students who sat the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examination and various national examinations was in part blamed on the NCPEA limitation of the principals (Hutton, 2010). The response by the Task Force on Education Reform (2004) was that “all principals are to get continuous training in school management and leadership in a variety of accredited institutions” (p. 36). While the Task Force on Education Reform seemed to imply a normal call for continuous upgrading or professional development, the reality was that many principals had not exhibited the competencies and abilities to impact the performance of schools (Hutton, 2010).

In response to the concerns for the leadership deficiencies in the school system, a training programme for principals and senior administrators was conducted by the School of Education, University of the West Indies. On completion of the training programme, a summative evaluation was completed followed by an impact evaluation three years after. The purpose of this evaluative study was to (a) determine if the training programme addressed the areas of weaknesses which were targeted for improvement by principals and other senior staff who participated, and (b) identify challenges experienced with the implementation of the programme.

Literature Review

There was a time when professional development in the education system was reserved for teachers and administrators. However, it was soon recognized that the principals also needed to display modern and effective management and leadership skills (Skria, Erlandson, Reed and Wilson, 2001). Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, Lapointe and Orr (2010) identified instructional and transformational leadership as the two interrelated and underpinnings factors for effective school leaders. A unique assessment of the principal was advanced by Owings and Kaplan (2012) who posited that over the period of stewardship as principal, their “perspective experience and behaviour may change . . . (therefore their) career should be considered flexible and fluid” (p. 517). The implication for this perspective is the necessity for principals to receive training and professional guidance in order to function effectively at each stage of their leadership development.

For the novice principals and others in training, Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) established that the approach that works has “both peer support, including cohort groups and collegial network; and expert supports, such as mentoring and coaching” (p. 75). Bossi and Warren (2008) identifying the areas of focus for the Association of California School Administrators/NTC said that the leadership training is individualized, supported by both coaching and mentoring and it is both on-site and institutional based in its delivery mode. Addressing the skills required of principals for the 21st century, Green (2010) postulated that while instructional leadership is central, managerial competencies are necessary for effective performance of schools.

Reeves (2002) described the traditional training programme for principals as fragmented and proposed that it should be “a combination of research, case study, small

group work and personal reflection... (and it) should focus on four key areas: people, strategies, organizations, and systems” (p. 162). Lovely (2004) endorsed Reeves (2002) view and emphasised that for the new approach to the training of principals, “apprentice and intern programmes allow prospects to get into the trenches and discover firsthand what it means to be a learning leader. Apprentice and intern programmes for aspiring principals are an excellent means of getting that experience to your candidates” (p. 40).

As we focus on how school leaders are selected and prepared, Fullan (2007) endorsed the use of “succession practices to ensure the continual cultivation and flow of new leaders; and the fostering of habits and practices that envision school heads as system leaders” (p. 296). Reeves (2002) suggested that (a) principals should emerge from the classroom, (b) schools should become a centre for training in principalship, and (c) training should be delivered by a variety of talents from the public, private and non-governmental sector entities.

The study of leadership has focused on leaders’ personal qualities, the skills they acquire and their actual behaviour. Personal traits have been identified as important to leadership effectiveness (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). Hutton (2010) noted that “high performing principals are self-confident and (they) believe in their ability to provide leadership for the school to achieve the goals and objectives being pursued” (p. 6).

Hoy and Miskel (2005) identified a combination of skills and trait variables under three broad categories: personality, motivation and skills. Yukl (2002) and Northouse (2004) identified technical, interpersonal and conceptual skills as important for effective leadership. Effective leadership in the 21st century is represented by an amalgamation of the: (a) contingency approach which focuses on the actual situation requiring leadership input (Hanson, 2003); (b) behavioural approach, which focuses on what leaders do--this was established by the Iowa studies of the 1930s and Ohio and Michigan of the 1950s (Gorton, Alston & Snowden, 2007), and (c) combination of traits and behaviours approach which is characterized as leadership styles (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). Therefore, it is evident that the delivery of any training programme must be informed by both the lessons learned from the experiences of an effective training programme and our knowledge of effective leadership skills.

Programme Background

The certificate programme in School Leadership for Secondary School Principals began in July 2006 as a 3-year project involving the School of Education and the Ministry of Education. The aim of the programme was to train 75 secondary school principals, in the principles and practices of effective school leadership. The programme came out of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Ministry and Finance and Planning and the Jamaica Confederation of Trade Unions (JCTU), which represented a part of the agreement to settle the salaries negotiation between the Government and the Jamaica Teachers Association in 2006. An initial sum of J\$3.4M was allocated to fund the programme, but this was increased by J\$2.8 in 2009 to fund the upgrading of the programme to a Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Administration. Sixty nine (69) principals, vice principals and senior teachers were recruited and trained between 2006 and 2009. All 19 students of Cohort 1 completed the certificate programme and the 27 of

31 students in Cohort II were also successful. Cohort III, which pursued the Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Administration, 16 of the 19 students completed the programme.

Of the 46 students from Cohorts I and II who did the Certificate programme, 19 of them successfully completed the Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Administration and graduated in 2011. Even though the programme was evaluated as successful by both client and participants, the Ministry of Education took the decision not to continue it beyond Cohort III because of the financial constraints. A number of the participants who were vice principals and senior teachers have since been promoted to principals and vice principals, respectively. The programme remains popular among graduates and those in the Ministry of Education who were responsible for its successful implementation.

Programme Structure

The certificate programme was designed to commence during the summer and complete at the end of the academic year. There were five, three-credit courses and a practicum and study. The programme initially started with an introductory non-credit module in computing. The third cohort of students was afforded the opportunity to pursue the Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Administration. The students who had already completed the certificate version of the programme were required to do an additional 12 credits to complete the Post Graduate Diploma. Some 62 students were successful in completing the programme at either the Certificate and Diploma or Diploma level only.

METHOD

Subjects

The sample selected for the summative evaluation consisted of 47 programme participants who pursued the Post Graduate Programme in Educational Administration. Twenty eight (28) persons completed the questionnaire, which represented a response rate of 60%. For the impact evaluation, 15 graduates of the programme were interviewed to elicit their responses to its effectiveness three years after they graduated. It should be noted that the small sample size represented a significant limitation of the study.

Measure

A questionnaire containing quantitative and qualitative items was used to capture responses from the participants. Quantitative responses were collected through the use of six sub scales. The sub-scale items were formatted using a five point Likert scale, where responses ranged from: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree. The sub scales were created and used to assess: 1) the skills, knowledge and attitudes acquired through the Principalship programme (16 items); 2) measure the support received by participants from their schools, the Department of Educational Studies, and the Ministry of Education (11 items); 3) to ascertain participant feedback on the organisation and delivery of the programme (6 items); 4) to assess the effectiveness of the principals' training programme (6 items); 5) assess how the programme prepared participants to develop and demonstrate personal skills and abilities

(6 items); and 6) the relevance of the programme to perform your duties and responsibilities at the participants' school (10 items). Qualitative responses were collected through the use of three open-ended statements which sought to elicit additional information on trainees' assessment of the training programme. The statements are as follows:

1. List two benefits you have achieved/will achieve from participating in this programme
2. List two things that you did not like about the programme
3. Indicate any other helpful comments related to the programme

For the impact evaluation a questionnaire guide consisting of ten questions were used to obtain information from respondents. The questions were related to (a) personal benefits gained as a result of the programme, (b) the overall impact of the programme three years after completion, (c) areas they would target for improvement, and (d) areas that they would add or remove from the programme.

Procedure

The questionnaires were administered on the final day of the programme for Cohorts 1 and 2. Participants were asked to complete the instruments and return them to programme administrators the same day or within a week after they handed out. The instruments were emailed to the Cohort 3 who had completed the programme the previous year. For the impact evaluation, respondents were contacted and telephone interviews were planned based on an agreed time scheduled. The interviews took between 10 and 20 minutes, and this phase of the data gathering was completed over a two-week period. Participants for the interview were selected from the list of trainees who pursued the Post Graduate Diploma in Education Administration.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data was collected using a Likert type scale, which focused on six categories, each representing a sub scale. The categories included competencies acquired, quality of support, programme facilitation, programme effectiveness, programme effect on personal skills and abilities, and plant and facilities maintenance and development. The data were analyzed using means, standard deviation and percentages. The qualitative data related to the summative evaluation were analyzed using the inductive thematic analysis technique, which was outlined in a word tree diagram (Thomas, 2003). For the impact evaluation, the themes were selected based on the areas that were consistently emphasized by respondents. The questionnaire was validated based on feedback provided by colleagues who participated in the programme along with students who completed the programme. The results of the Cronbach Alpha test conducted are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Cronbach Alpha Results for each of the Six Sub Scales Measuring Participants' Evaluation of Principals' Training Programmes

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
Competency Acquired Scale	.967
Quality of Support Scale	.797
Programme Facilitation Scale	.802
Programme Effectiveness Scale	.908
Programme effect on Personal Skills and Abilities Scale	.942
Plant and Facilities Maintenance and Development Scale	.903

RESULTS

1. What were the skills, knowledge and attitudes acquired as a result of the principals' programme?

The competencies acquired by participants in the training programme were measured by 16 items on a Likert-type sub scale. The means and standard deviation for the items are illustrated in Table 2.

The analysis reveals that “information related to the running of school rules, regulations and policies” (M=4.32, SD=0.9) was rated as the most frequently acquired skill on the scale. The least acquired skill was “applying creative solutions to solve problems” (M=3.92, SD=0.70). The mean for the sub scale was (M=4.63, SD=0.11) This indicates that an average participants were in “strong agreement” with the positively worded items, thus signifying that a substantial amount of skills and knowledge were garnered by programme participants.

Table 2
Competencies acquired as a result of the programme

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Interpreting information related to the running of the school-rules, regulations, policies, etc.	25	4.32	0.9
2. Formulating and communicating school vision	25	4.24	0.93
3. Displaying relational skills naturally and consistently	25	4.2	0.91
4. Communicating clearly with all stakeholders	25	4.2	0.82
5. Establishing sociable relationships with both school and non-school communities	25	4.16	0.90
6. Evaluating staff performance	25	4.12	0.83
7. Establishing cooperative and collaborative relationships with internal and external stakeholders	25	4.12	0.67
8. Being able to see the "big picture" related to the job	25	4.12	1.01
9. Maintaining student discipline	25	4.08	0.95
10. Interpreting and managing budget	25	4.08	0.95
11. Showing sensitivity, empathy, consideration, and tact	25	4.08	0.86
12. Being able to advance and or consider "big ideas"	25	4.04	1.09
13. Supervising and coordinating improvements in teaching and learning	25	4	0.95
14. Understanding the impact of the world and local environment on school life	25	4	0.76
15. Interpreting and using test results	25	3.92	0.95
16. Applying creative solutions to solve problems	25	3.92	0.70

Note: $N = 28$. Scale interpretation ranges for the scale means: 1 = Strongly Disagree (1.00-1.49), 2 = Disagree (1.50-2.49), 3 = Undecided (2.50-3.49), 4 = Agree (3.50-4.00), 5 = Strongly Agree (4.5-5). Scale $M = 4.63$ ($SD = .11$).

2. What was the quality of support received from your schools, Ministry of Education (MoE), and administrators of the programme from the School of Education?

The quality of support sub scale was used to measure how participant perceived the training programme. Results in Table 3 shows that generally the teachers ‘agree’ with all the items presented on the scale ($M = 3.84$, $SD = .437$). Specifically, participants indicated that support came primarily from the programmes instructors, and they strongly agreed that the “instructors were lenient with late assignment” ($M = 4.84$, $SD = .74$). Participants experienced the least amount of support from the Ministry of Education ($M = 3.23$, $SD = .83$).

Table 3
Support received during the implementation of the programme

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. The instructors were lenient with late assignments	21	4.38	0.74
2. My instructors demonstrated concern for the challenges I was encountering during the programme	21	4.38	0.59
3. I received assistance from my school in carrying out the responsibilities assigned to me when I was/am attending classes	21	4.33	0.73
4. My superiors at school provided emotional support while I attended the course	21	4.14	0.79
5. I received the travel support recommended by the MOE for attending the programme	21	3.86	1.42
6. My academic department (UWI) demonstrated concern regarding the needs of the students	21	3.86	0.66
7. Some of my personal responsibilities were taken on by other family members while I attend classes	21	3.76	1.22
8. My academic department (UWI) was responsive to the needs and concerns of the students	21	3.76	0.83
9. MOE was responsive to the needs and concerns of the students	21	3.33	0.86
10. I received general support in preparing my assignments	21	3.23	1.37
11. MOE demonstrated concern regarding the needs of the students	21	3.23	0.83

Note: $N = 28$. Scale interpretation ranges for the scale means: 1 = Strongly Disagree (1.00-1.49), 2 = Disagree (1.50-2.49), 3 = Undecided (2.50-3.49), 4 = Agree (3.50-4.00), 5 = Strongly Agree (4.5-5). Scale $M = 3.84$ ($SD = .437$).

3. How effective was the programme organized in order to facilitate your attendance and participation in classes while continuing to perform your responsibilities at school?

Table 4 shows the analysis of the programme facilitation sub scale. The results indicated that on an average teachers ‘agree’ with all the items presented on the scale ($M = 4.1$, $SD = .423$). The most appealing aspect of the programme’s organisation was the fact that “instructors were cognizant of the fact that they were adult learners” ($M = 4.5$, $SD = .67$). Participants were neutral with the view that the “programme was scheduled with due consideration not given to job commitments” ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.47$), thus ranking this item as the least appealing component of the programme.

4. How did you rate the effectiveness of the principals’ training programme?

Table 5 shows that when asked to rate the effectiveness of the principals training programme, the sub scale mean ($M = 4.1$, $SD = .423$) indicated that on an average participants ‘agreed’ with all statements in the sub scale. Overall, the statement with the

highest rating was “I am expected to play a leadership role in the implementation of the transformation programme in my school” (M=4.55, SD=.57). The lowest rank item on the sub scale was “my supervisors expected them to contribute more to the running of the school on completion” (M=4.39, SD=.67).

Table 4
Participant’s perception of the programme’s organisation

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Instructors were cognizant of the fact that we were adult learners	32	4.5	0.67
2. The instructional techniques used were appropriate	32	4.41	0.62
3. The instructors were prepared to deliver the courses they taught	32	4.38	0.49
4. The programme was executed in an efficient and effective manner	32	4.16	0.77
5. The physical learning accommodation provided were appropriate for the programme	32	4.06	1.11
6. The programme was scheduled with due consideration given not our job commitments	32	3.34	1.47

Note: N = 28. Scale interpretation ranges for the scale means: 1 = Strongly Disagree (1.00-1.49), 2 = Disagree (1.50-2.49), 3 = Undecided (2.50-3.49), 4 = Agree (3.50-4.00), 5 = Strongly Agree (4.5-5). Scale *M* = 4.1 (*SD* = .423).

Table 5
Participants perception of the programme’s effectiveness

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I am expected to play a leadership role in the implementation of the transformation programme in my school	31	4.55	0.57
2. I am expected to play a major leadership role in the school	31	4.55	0.68
3. My superiors will expect me to contribute more to the running of the school	31	4.52	0.63
4. I am expected to contribute more to the solving of problems in the school	31	4.52	0.81
5. I am expected to develop the relationship between my school and the wider school community	31	4.52	0.51
6. My supervisors expected me to contribute more to the running of the school on completion	31	4.39	0.67

Note: N = 28. Scale interpretation ranges for the scale means: 1 = Strongly Disagree (1.00-1.49), 2 = Disagree (1.50-2.49), 3 = Undecided (2.50-3.49), 4 = Agree (3.50-4.00), 5 = Strongly Agree (4.5-5). Scale *M* = 4.1 (*SD* = .423).

5. How well did the programme prepare you to develop and demonstrate personal skills and abilities?

Participants were provided with a sub scale to capture their views on ways in which the programme prepared them to develop and demonstrate personal skills and abilities. Based on the sub scale mean (M=4.5, SD=.077) respondents strongly agree with all the items on the sub scale. Respondents were mostly in agreement with the view “I am willing to demonstrate greater commitment to the development of the school” (see Table 6).

Table 6
Perception of skills and abilities acquired from participating in the programme

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I am willing to demonstrate greater commitment to the development of the school	32	4.66	0.70
2. I am willing to work harder to achieve the goals of my school	32	4.60	0.71
3. I am better able to challenge my superiors on policy issues which i fee are suitable for my school	32	4.53	0.62
4. I am more confident that i will demonstrate greater care in managing the resources and facilities in my school	32	4.5	0.72
5. I am more confident in performing my responsibilities	32	4.47	0.95
6. I am better able to work with colleagues and other constituents in my school	32	4.46	0.72

Note: N = 28. Scale interpretation ranges for the scale means: 1 = Strongly Disagree (1.00-1.49), 2 = Disagree (1.50-2.49), 3 = Undecided (2.50-3.49), 4 = Agree (3.50-4.00), 5 = Strongly Agree (4.5-5). Scale M = 4.5 (SD =.077).

6. How did you rate the relevance of the programme to perform your duties and responsibilities at your school?

The results in Table 7 below produced a sub scale mean (M=4.63, SD=.15), which showed that among respondents the training programme is of relevance to their duties and responsibilities at school. The training programme was perceived to be of greatest relevance to “leadership for school improvement” and of least relevance to “study”

7. What personal gains (including promotion, increased responsibilities, etc.) you have achieved as a result of the principals’ training programme? F45-50

Figure 1 shows that the majority of the respondents (40%) were of the view that their participation in the training programme resulted in them having greater respect from colleagues, while 32 % share the view that they were better able to manage specific programmes. On the other hand, 20% noted that they were assigned additional duties at their school. Only 8 % obtain a promotion upon completion of the training programme.

Table 7
Participants' perception of the programme relevance

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Leadership for School Improvement	28	4.82	0.39
2. Curriculum theory, planning and development	28	4.75	0.52
3. Organizational behaviour in education	28	4.71	0.46
4. Educational supervision and evaluation	28	4.71	0.53
5. Human, Facilities and financial management in schools	28	4.68	0.67
6. Legal and Professional Competencies for Educational Administrators	28	4.64	0.83
7. Issues in Jamaican education	28	4.61	0.57
8. Action research in educational administration	28	4.61	0.57
9. Practicum	28	4.43	0.88
10. Study	28	4.32	0.98

Note: N = 28. Scale interpretation ranges for the scale means: 1 = Not Important (1.00-1.49), 2 = Somewhat Important (1.50-2.49), 3 = Undecided (2.50-3.49), 4 = Important (3.50-4.00), 5 = Very Important (4.50-5.00). Scale M = 4.63 (SD = .15).

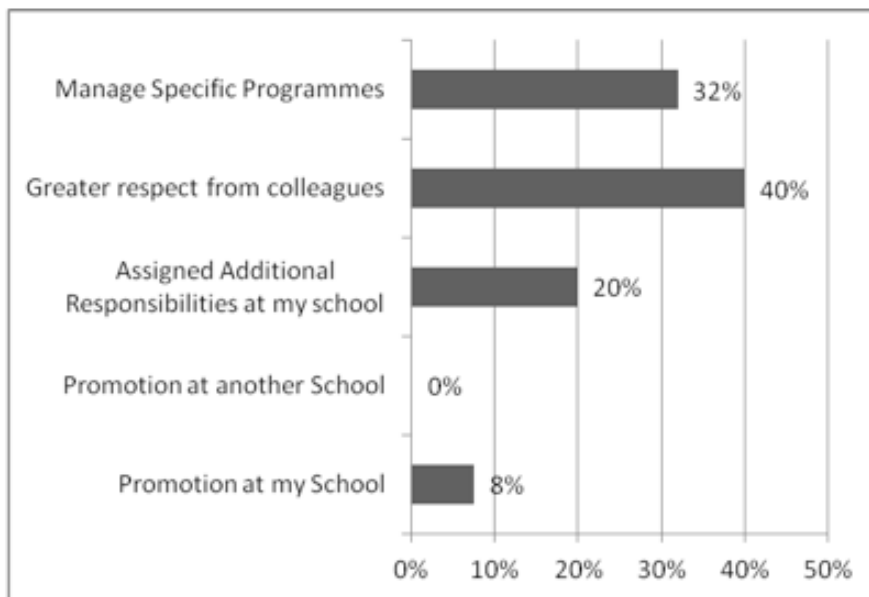


Figure 1. Participants perception of personal gains obtained from the programme

DISCUSSION

Quantitative Data Analysis

The high rating of the programme content by participants is an indication that they felt the programme targeted some of the critical areas which were related to deficiencies in their performance as principals and school leaders. Additionally, the high rating must be seen in light of the fact that (a) participants selected were practising administrators; (b) they were able to determine if the knowledge and performance gaps were covered by the content; and (c) it was a collaborative effort mainly between the central ministry and the University of the West Indies (UWI), which would naturally improve the relevance of the programme content.

Of particular relevance to the Jamaican situation, is the optimum approach to the training of school administrators in an American school system. As Lovely (2004) pointed out “to better align school districts’ needs with principal preparatory programmes, partnership needs to be established between university and a single or consortium of districts” (p. 29). Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) reminded us that the principals’ competencies are not limited to what they do but also what they know; therefore, it is when theory and practice are brought together that the effective principal is truly created.

One of the main areas of concern expressed by the programme participants was the quality of support received from Ministry of Education, the UWI administrators and family to completing academic and work-based assignments. There were also constant complaints surrounding issues such as special allowances that should have been provided by their schools as directed by the central ministry. Darling-Hammond, Lapointe, Meyerson, Orr and Cohen (2007) emphasized the importance of providing sufficient support for training, especially those which include professional development programmes “offered free of charge, (with) tuition waivers, release time to facilitate clinical fieldwork, and paid internships” (p. 96).

Even with the concerns raised by programme participants, aspects of the organization and execution of the programme received high ratings from them. For example, participants were permitted by central ministry to be away from school three days per week in order to participate in the programme. At the same time, when school assignments were not completed because programme participants were away at the UWI, a new time to complete outstanding tasks had to be found, which naturally increased the burden on the trainees. For future programme, this area has to be addressed although participants must expect to make some sacrifices, especially when they will benefit personally from a programme designed and implemented for their own upgrading.

There was high expectation for programme participants to perform more effectively after completing the programme. This was borne out of the fact that some persons were elevated to the post of principals or other senior administrative positions. For the others, they were given added responsibilities which assisted in building their own confidence. Participants were more willing and better prepared to operate at the strategic level in terms of goal setting, policy issues, and the general operation of the schools. This is a good outcome of the programme because there is the danger of focusing on operational issues “at the expense of their more strategic imperatives” (Fullan, 2008, p. 4). In addition to the skills related to organization and governance, their

relational skills were also enhanced based on working with colleagues and other school constituents. This is most important because principals should be able to “determine the strengths and expectations of those individuals, gain insights into their values, beliefs, interests, levels of motivation, and understanding how they view the school and the behaviour of the leader” (Green, 2010, p. 50).

The relevance of the programme was confirmed by the respondents in terms of the duties and responsibilities they had to perform. This was possible because courses were determined by the limitations exhibited by principals and other administrators in the school system. Within a collaboration framework, the Ministry of Education and the UWI identified the areas of greatest needs. The fit between the skills required to perform effectively as administrators and the content delivered seemed to match as far as programme participants were concerned.

The need for better programme alignment was confirmed by Lovely (2004) as important if principals are expected to improve performance. Further, Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) pointed out that one of the major problems with traditional training programme was the “misalignment between program content and candidate needs” (p. 7). The confidence that participants expressed in their willingness to take on additional administrative responsibilities while they were doing the programme should be specially noted; furthermore, coupled with the fact that their superiors were willing to assign them additional tasks, must at least be credited to the relevance and appropriateness of the programme.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Participants identified the development of confidence in self as one of the enduring benefits of the programme. This resulted from the exposure, experience and competencies gained from the courses and the overall programme setting, which allowed them to perform their leadership responsibilities with a greater level of certainty and resolve. As Oyer (2011) explained, confidence is a personal trait that does matter because it “is an essential attribute of effective leaders” (p. 109). According to respondents, the collegial atmosphere was also a central factor responsible for the confidence gained. It bolstered them to execute the roles they were assigned with greater level of effectiveness and efficiency.

Confidence was also associated with their ability to better manage human resources and apply the knowledge of culture to how things were done in the schools. Their ability to assist others in the schools, improve linkages with external organizations and performing duties related to curriculum matters was also related to confidence gained as a result of the programme. Their introduction to ideas and practices based on the most recent research on leadership and the effort made by programme providers to be more responsive and relevant to the needs of the students would have been central in building the confidence factor. Patterson and Kelleher (2005) noted that the level of confidence can make a difference between effective and ineffective performance. The training programme definitely enhanced confidence which in turn improved the performance of the principals in training.

The collegial relationship which developed among the principals and other administrators in training became a source of inspiration for each person. Although

Robbins and Alvy (2009) noted that “collegiality that exists when staff members collaborate is not created over night” (p. 115), in actuality, collegial relationships served as a parallel learning opportunity and source of information to address real problems in the schools. In these instances, colleagues shared their experiences and perspectives among each other. Subsequently, greater insights were gained regarding the resolution of intractable issues faced by administrators in their respective schools. The help of colleagues was also credited for assisting them to complete their post graduate diploma, gaining information of human resources and, importantly, managing the budgets more effectively. Additionally, building effective networking with other principals and understanding the vital role of stakeholders were linked to the collegial spirit that was fostered by the programme.

Factors related to time and work were identified as limitations to the programme. The lack of time impacted performance in five areas:

1. Programme participants expressed concern that assignments could not be completed satisfactorily because of the time constraints which created a stressful learning situation.
2. The programme itself was felt to be too time consuming because it was crammed over a period of one year.
3. Participants were required to continue to perform at their post even though they were away from the job sometimes three days per week.
4. The volume of work was also noted as one of the factors which had significant time implications.
5. The number of assignments given by lecturers was identified as one of the areas directly related to the volume of work.

The participants recommended that the programme should be broadened to include the other levels of leadership in the school system including, vice principals, heads of departments, and senior staff with major administrative responsibilities. Some persons expressed the view that all principals should be exposed to at least selected modules of this programme. Overall, the programme was seen as both timely and relevant with special credit given to the hands-on nature of the courses. It was recommended that this programme should be a prerequisite course of study for those selected for leadership responsibilities.

Programme Impact—Three Years After

A follow up evaluation was conducted with 15 of the participants who completed the programme, with the aim of ascertaining the impact of the programme. All 15 respondents indicated that the programme had a significant impact on their performance as administrators. One respondent said that “we have learned to improve the way we administer and lead” and the action research project that she completed “has been used to guide the development of the school’s safety and security programme.” Five of the individuals were promoted to either principals or vice principals and they all confirmed that the programme played an important role in their promotion. Affirming the role played by the programme in his elevation to the chief administrator at his school, one of

the participants said “we got a chance to practice what we learned while on the job and this assisted in my promotion to the principalship.” Another respondent indicated that the programme provided much information on school operations and the presentation on the new and expanded role of the principals in the present school system was enlightening.

As indicated in the initial evaluation, respondents restated the significance of sharing of experience among programme participants. They were able to relate to each other the problems they faced on a day-to-day basis and received suggestions and strategies to apply. Further, they were able to discuss the interventions and make adjustments after further discussions with their colleagues. One point of note was the number of experienced principals and other senior administrators who were instrumental in sharing tested formulas for addressing a myriad of problems including student discipline, school-community relationship, relationship with the central ministry and regional offices, among others. In fact, this could be considered a pre-networking formation because the relationship continued for some three years after the conclusion of the programme. The most beneficial experiences for most persons include (a) delivery of some courses, including organizational development; (b) sharing of ideas during class discussions and break periods; and (c) communicating with colleagues when they were actually on the job. In fact, these experiences could be characterized as networking being built from infancy.

The practicum experience was also cited as beneficial to the programme participants. Those who were given the opportunity to do their practicum at business enterprises had high praises for the experience gained, which in some cases were very different from what would obtain in a school setting. It was noted that decisions taken were carried out with dispatch, and management was less tolerant with persons who failed to perform; furthermore, there was no doubt regarding the priorities the companies identified as important. Areas such as production, accountability and quality were constantly emphasized and everyone was expected to play his/her role to achieve agreed targets. This was in contrast to the more laidback and lackadaisical approach taken by some school leaders. It was suggested that school leadership should be exposed to the practices of businesses in order to transfer some of these qualities to the school organization.

The courses identified as most useful by the respondents included: financial management and facilities maintenance. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) emphasized the need for “designing and implementing programmes that produce strong principals requires an understanding of how to organize and finance components and supports” (p. 133). With secondary schools operating annual budgets of over J\$20M and some are involved in income earning activities, it is important that principals, vice principals and other senior officers of the school system have substantial training so as to interpret the financial statements and understand the financial matters of the school. In fact, school principals are classified as the ‘accountable officer’ (Financial Administration and Audit Act, 1996, 74A) so they clearly have a functional responsibility for the financial affairs of schools.

Facilities maintenance was also one of the areas introduced for the first time in a formal training programme related to school administration. Increasingly, it is recognized that the quality of the physical plant impacts learning and students’ attitude to schooling. Commenting on the importance attached to the quality of the school facilities by

principals, Hutton (2010) indicated that “the high performing principals posited the view that, in addition to facilitating learning, the physical environment and the quality of the facilities are true representations of the conscience of the school and the pride the school community has in itself and stakeholders” (p. 13).

One of the main areas of complaint after three years since the conclusion of the programme related to how the programme was administered. Concerns were raised regarding the journey which some persons had to make across the Island to the location at UWI. One person suggested that if the programme was done on a residential basis, it would not have been so stressful, especially for the participants from the rural areas. It is prudent, therefore, that any new programme for the training of principals must take into consideration the general impact on the participants.

It seems that a programme that is designed and implemented by the central ministry must address the issues that will limit the performance of participants in the programme. Especially in a period of financial exigency, areas such as travel, time off, and formal staff replacement must be addressed before programme participants commence their programme. Given that participants have to travel long distances from the rural areas to attend classes in Kingston, Jamaica; the programme should be offered at alternative locations in order to minimize some of the problems identified above. Additionally, the use of online facilities would significantly address the problems related to travel.

A number of recommendations were made to improve the content of the programme. First, a number of graduates who were interviewed indicated that there is a need for principals to be equipped with effective interpersonal and conflict management skills. They emphasized its necessity because with some schools having over 70 teachers and in excess of 1500 students, conflicts would naturally arise, and it is the principal who is expected to intervene. One respondent pointed out that “in order to lead staff and motivate them effectively, human relation and interpersonal skills are necessary.” Emphasizing the urgency for principals to acquire these skills, one principal said that “sometimes the conflict and antagonist relationship are displayed by the teachers who are the trained professionals.”

The second area that was emphasised was the need to provide principals with the competencies to develop policies. Increasingly, schools which are broadening their scope of activities to include the wider community must introduce policies to effectively manage areas of agreements related to business contractions or joint ventures. This is in keeping with the thrust of the central ministry to decentralize some of the areas related to governance and authority to the lower levels of the education system, including the schools (Hutton, 2009). Additionally, principals’ ability to interpret existing policies, according to Skrla, Erlandson, Reed and Wilson (2001), are regional or national attainable and must be enhanced if they are to act in accordance with policy guidelines.

Third, it was recommended that the areas related to school laws and regulations must be strengthened. The fact is that some principals and school administrators are left frustrated and sometimes embarrassed because they failed to follow procedures that are consistent with the code of regulations and the laws of the country. Stader (2007) indicated that “a significant part of... (the) new responsibility (of the principal) requires an understanding, appreciation, and application of legal and ethical principles to school leadership” (p. 1). It should be noted that parents as well as citizens’ organizations are

opting to use the courts to deal with schools which may breach the code of regulations, the citizens' charter or the constitution of Jamaica based on the action taken. In order to respond appropriately to these issues, the central ministry along with the training institutions must provide the relevant training to get both principals and school boards better informed and more prepared.

CONCLUSION

The training programme for secondary school principals represented an important intervention coming out of the agreement which involved the public sector workers and their organizations, the Ministry of Finance and Planning, and the Ministry of Education. This tripartite approach identified and addressed an area of deficiency—school leadership, which is the single most important area outside of the role of teaching. While either the Jamaica Teachers' Organization or the principals' organizations played limited or no role in the implementation of the training programme, the limited run was fairly successful.

The proposal to introduce the National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL) would indeed play a more expansive and comprehensive role than the principalship programme. However, the question is: should a new entity be instituted when there are four universities and numerous teachers' colleges with the capacity and experience to implement this programme? Any presentation of a new programme specifically to train principals must be done in partnership with the principals' and teachers' organizations, the central ministry and the entities responsible for delivering the programme. While the programme which targeted the principals of secondary schools has ended, many useful lessons have been learned. These lessons should be used to inform any new programme that is considered for training principals in the future.

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