

PREFACE

SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP CONTINUES TO be the focus of much debate in Jamaica and globally as researchers and practitioners alike seek to ascertain what it is that makes some principals more effective than others. Research has consistently placed instructional leadership as the hallmark of effective leadership. Similarly, for the Jamaican principal, the business of instructional leadership is especially critical. This is so because, unlike many principals from developed countries, our principals do not always have an adequate support system; they sometimes have to single-handedly manage many responsibilities. Drake and Roe (1999) pose the million-dollar question: Should the principal be held accountable for the accomplishment of management tasks if he or she is primarily expected to exert educational leadership? If the answer is no, then careful consideration must be given to the roles of the principal. Despite the challenges faced by principals in Jamaica, some have been deemed effective and are making a significant difference in the academic performance of students. The question is, as posed by Johnson (2012): What are they doing that others are not doing? This book also seeks to shed some light on this question as it presents a discourse on leadership role in educational transformation and unfolds the journey of seventeen principals who have made a significant difference in the education landscape of Jamaica.

The stories told by these educators focus on their early years as principals; the difference they made to student and teacher performance; how they made teaching and learning a priority; the challenges they faced and how the challenges were overcome; how they dealt with issues such as student discipline, gender diversity, staff development, and mobilizing and motivat-

ing teachers; using data to make a difference; building an effective school culture; improving infrastructure; the role of personal traits; and fostering relationships with key stakeholders. Their stories are punctuated with relevant literature, thus adding to the intellectual integrity of the discourse. The language of the chapters is conversational and encourages reader participation and involvement.

The work is divided based on the school types existing in the Jamaican school system: (1) primary schools, (2) schools transitioning to upgraded high schools, (3) upgraded high schools and (4) traditional high schools. This approach was adopted because research has shown that the leadership behaviour of principals differs based on the type of schools they lead; it is expected that different strategies and approaches would be applied in meeting performance standards. Part 1 charts the journey of four primary school principals. Part 2 represents the experiences of two principals who transitioned from primary to upgraded high schools. Part 3 focuses on five principals who served in schools which are considered upgraded high schools. (These principals have lately made the transition from primary to secondary schools.) Part 4 highlights the journey of six traditional high school principals. The opening and the concluding chapters provide a framework for effective and successful leadership performance in school systems and highlight changes being pursued by the central ministry and the government at this time.

References

- Drake, T.L., and W.H. Roe. 1999. *The Principalship*. 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Johnson, B. 2012. "The Relationships between the Principals' Roles in Instructional Supervision and School Effectiveness in Selected Primary Schools". PhD diss., University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica.