

**IMPROVING JAMAICAN SCHOOLS THROUGH BETTER LEADERSHIP:
EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ASPIRING PRINCIPALS
PROGRAM: A MIX-METHODS ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL
LEADERSHIP PREPARATION IN JAMAICA**

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the effectiveness of Jamaica's Aspiring Principals Program, APP, administered by the National College for Educational Leadership, NCEL. The study is conceptually grounded in the Marzano School Leadership Model and the Tannenbaum Model of Training Effectiveness using a mixed-methods analysis of survey responses from 108 principals who are both APP and non-APP graduates in the seven administrative educational regions across the country.

The study reveals that APP graduates demonstrate significantly higher confidence levels in principalship roles in navigating conflict management and decision-making than non-APP graduates. A regression analysis shows that APP participation positively influences job satisfaction, while extensive administrative responsibilities tend to decrease it. Overall, the findings emphasize the transformative impact of the APP on enhancing leadership confidence, conflict management skills, and job satisfaction, underscoring the importance of continued investment in principal preparation in Jamaica.

The study underscores the critical need for policy reforms that integrate crisis management and adaptive leadership into the training of aspiring principals, ensuring that school leaders are well-prepared to navigate especially systems-altering occurrences like the COVID-19 pandemic. The study also encourages a licensing regime for principals, complemented by continuous professional development, to maintain high leadership standards and accountability. The findings emphasize the value of context-sensitive leadership preparation, advocating for a leadership preparation curriculum that blends theoretical knowledge with practical experiences tailored to the unique challenges faced by Jamaican school principals.

To my beloved sons Darien Henry, Jr. and Devonté Malachai Henry, you both are the torchbearers of a personal legacy rich in scholarship and human values. This doctoral dissertation is an academic endeavor and a pathway I have carved out diligently for you in your pursuit of personal and professional excellence. It represents a future where you both can stand as better men, equipped with the compelling knowledge and understanding necessary to contribute meaningfully to society.

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A special note of gratitude is extended to Professor Disralli Hutton, a retired professor of education at the University of the West Indies, Mona, whose seminal contributions to Jamaican school leadership have deeply influenced my work. Professor Hutton's scholarly body of work on educational leadership in Jamaica has been instrumental in shaping the depth and scope of my study. His academic rigor and thought leadership have provided a powerful framework for my exploration of principal leadership preparation.

I must acknowledge the Effective Schools Movement's profound influence, particularly Ronald Edmonds's work in the 1970s. Edmonds' seminal assertion that "all students are educable" resonated with me throughout this research. His emphasis on strong

administrative leadership and a positive school climate deeply informed how I approached this study. These foundational principles of effective leadership, which have been a central focus of my role as a school inspector guided by the Eight Characteristics of Effective Schools, were critical in shaping this research's theoretical and practical underpinnings.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The enduring challenge in Jamaica's education system lies in ascertaining and executing optimized solutions for effective transformational school leadership, providing high-quality instruction through impactful teaching and learning, and improving student achievement and outcomes. The Jamaican Education Transformation Commission (2021) and the World Bank (2022) have conducted the most recent and extensive analyses highlighting critical issues within Jamaica's educational system. These analyses emphasize the urgent need for a fundamental shift in addressing challenges related to principal leadership, teacher quality, and student outcomes.

The JETC report revealed disquieting statistics, indicating that 55% of the nation's schools were ineffective between 2010 and 2015, with 45% of school leaders rated unsatisfactory. These findings were further exacerbated by the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Hutton, 2022), compounded by issues of accountability and consistency in school leadership. Although there was an improvement in school and leadership ratings in 2016, with 63% of schools and 76% of leadership rated as satisfactory or above, persistent inconsistencies in data and ongoing underperformance in crucial subjects such as mathematics and English raised concerns regarding the sustainability of these improvements (Jamaica et al. Commission, 2021).

The World Bank's (2022) assessment stresses the critical role of teaching quality in influencing student progress. While teachers with university degrees have

shown a positive correlation with learning outcomes, the limited impact of teachers trained in teacher colleges suggests shortcomings in pre-service training programs. The quality of student outcomes at both primary and secondary levels needs to be improved, with significant deficiencies in literacy, numeracy, and employable skills. For example, the newly introduced Primary Exit Profile exam saw only 41% of students passing mathematics and 49% passing science. In contrast, less than half of secondary students passed the CSEC exams with five subjects, including English and mathematics.

In the global educational climate, schools are grappling with a pivotal concern of a crisis of relevance (Tichnot-Wagner, 2020). This is acutely pertinent within Jamaica's educational system, spotlighting the necessity for robust training of school principals to ensure that schools remain consequential and successful in meeting contemporary educational demands. Establishing the National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL), which offers the Aspiring Principals Program, is crucial in addressing serious gaps in school leadership and how the country prepares instructional leaders for the school system. However, reported delays in program completion rates and inconsistencies in training effectiveness highlight a gap between the provided training and school leaders' ability to implement learned strategies effectively (Jamaica et al. Commission, 2021; World Bank, 2021).

Hutton (2022) and Louis et al. (2010) stress the essential role of transformational leadership in fostering a conducive learning environment and improving school performance. They also stress the importance of continuous professional development for principals to equip them with the necessary skills to

navigate the complexities of educational leadership effectively. Richardson et al. (2016) emphasize that the role of school principals has undergone significant transformation in recent decades, evolving into a more complex and demanding position. Principals are now tasked with additional responsibilities as instructional leaders, including catering to the diverse needs of students in a multicultural society and integrating technology into educational settings (Farley et al., 2019).

Chan et al. (2019) highlight principalship's multifaceted and challenging nature across the global educational landscape, revealing a profession that navigates complex responsibilities, barriers, and supports. Principals, for instance, from diverse contexts, including China, Poland, Turkey, Hungary, Ghana, and the United States, share the common task of steering their schools toward achieving educational goals while managing the practical realities of school operations. Their major responsibilities, as emphasized by Chan et al. (2019), span from goal setting and public relations to cultivating school culture and ensuring the school's efficient organizational functioning... The Aspiring Principals Program in Jamaica prepares aspiring principals to manage the complexities of school leadership, balancing educational guidance with operational management while fostering community ties and financial acumen.

The work of Chan et al. (2019), which is corroborated by Hutton (2022 and Darling-Hammond (2022), resonates with the objectives of the Jamaican aspiring principals' program, emphasizing the need for strong leadership that can transcend local and global barriers. The study highlights school principals' universal challenges and the necessity for support and strategies tailored to each unique context. In the

case of Jamaica, such insights underscore the importance of the aspiring principals' program in fostering leadership skills that are responsive to both global educational trends and the specific needs of the Jamaican school system.

Effective principals are pivotal in enhancing student performance (Grissom et al., 2019; Hutton & Johnson, 2017). Whether centralized or distributed, leadership aspires to establish conducive conditions within organizations to support high-quality teaching and enhance learner outcomes. This function relies on granting individuals in leadership roles the autonomy to make discretionary decisions (Leithwood et al., 2020). Recent alterations in educational policies, such as the implementation of rigorous teacher evaluation systems and heightened external accountability measures, have raised expectations for principals to foster positive school environments, innovative teaching approaches, and improved student achievement (Liebowitz & Porter, 2019).

Purpose of the Study

This research project examined the evolving domain of educational leadership, specifically preparation for principalship in the Jamaican education system. Acknowledging the pivotal role of school principals as architects of the future of education, as delineated by Day et al. (2020), this research pivots on the premise that aspiring principals are the keystones for the resilience and progressive trajectory of educational systems and organizations. Aspiring educational leaders poised to assume this important position are critical to the education system's sustainability and growth (Bush & Glover, 2014). To ensure their readiness and

effectiveness, numerous programs and initiatives have been developed to provide aspiring principals with the necessary knowledge, skills, and experiences.

The linchpin of educational advancement, particularly in the context of Jamaican schools, hinges on the efficacy of training paradigms that mold future principals, which is a critical determinant of scholastic directionality and student outcomes, the latter being the ultimate barometer of success (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). The Aspiring Principals Program, APP in Jamaica, is a recent system undertaking to endow future school leaders with the competencies to navigate contemporary educational leadership's complexities (Hutton, 2022). It is expected that the training programs for individuals aspiring to become school principals in Jamaica should play a critical role in shaping the direction and success of schools, including student outcomes, which is the most important (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Jamaica has a dearth of empirical insights concerning the APP's effectiveness in achieving its foundational goals and optimizing leadership preparatory processes (Sazali, 2006).

This investigation extended its analytical lens to global literature, especially from Western Hemisphere counterparts, to fortify the understanding of this pivotal domain that constitutes the nucleus of our scholarly pursuit. Research is needed in Jamaica that focuses on the effectiveness of educational leadership preparation. There is a paucity of empirical research on whether the Aspiring Principals Program meets its set objectives or the most effective way to prepare and nurture aspiring educational leaders (Sazali, 2006).

The scholarly debate on the effectiveness of educational leadership preparation is polarized, with some research underscoring a beneficial relationship (Clifford et al., 2016; Corcoran et al., 2012; Fuller et al., 2011), yet there exists a conspicuous vacuum of systematic empirical evidence correlating preparatory programs with post-graduation impacts—a lacuna in the knowledge base of leadership preparation (Donmoyer et al., 2012; Fuller & Hollingworth, 2016; Orr & Orphanos, 2011; Young et al., 2009). Although controversial, Levine's (2006) seminal critique of school leadership preparatory programs is upheld for its exposition of the programs' inadequacies in priming aspirants for the rigors of educational leadership. While there may be some disagreements with Levine's findings, most critics agree with his assessment that these programs often inadequately prepare and support aspiring school leaders in taking on the demanding role of school leadership (Versland, 2013).

This critique, coupled with widespread disapproval over the robustness and support within these programs (Harris & Jones 2015), accentuates the imperative for enhancement strategies in the development of educational leaders. This research distilled the recurrent themes that have animated critiques of leadership preparatory training and applied them to scrutinizing Jamaica's APP (Creighton & Jones, 2001; Levine, 2006; Mitgang, 2012; Tondeur et al., 2012). Mitgang's (2012) critical dissection of the selection and development of potential school leaders in the United States exposes an overemphasis on academic credentials at the expense of evaluating core attributes like resilience, integrity, and commitment to collaborative progress. This oversight, as Mitgang (2012) suggests, has occasionally permitted entry to

individuals more inclined towards personal gain rather than to the substantive enrichment of educational leadership.

This critique echoes the complexities and challenges permeating leadership training programs' fabric (Hutton, 2022; Versland, 2013) in the United States and Jamaican education. The evaluation of the APP in Jamaica will not only address these critical issues but also attempt to unravel the intricacies surrounding the selection and nurturing of aspiring school leaders.

Overview of the Aspiring Principals Program

The Jamaica's Task Force on Educational Reform (2004) recommended that all principals receive ongoing school management and leadership training from authorized institutions. Hutton (2016) asserts that the establishment of the National College of Educational Leadership (NCEL) in 2011 directly resulted from concerns regarding the perceived inadequacies in the quality and efficacy of leadership demonstrated by principals within the educational system. The primary objective of the NCEL is to cultivate and bolster the proficiency of educational leaders who can establish and maintain successful schools, thus making a valuable contribution to the nation's advancement. The strategic objectives encompass several key areas, namely facilitating the availability of proficient school administrators, emphasizing leadership in school enhancement and student achievement, and delivering education policy, research, data, and best practices to offer superior and cost-efficient services (Hutton, 2022).

Regarding the program's structure, the Aspiring Principals' Program necessitates a minimum of 120 contact hours distributed throughout four modules,

each consisting of 30 hours. Hutton (2022) states that field-based practicum is included in the curriculum, spanning 30 to 45 hours. The four modules encompass transformational leadership, instructional leadership, community leadership, and organizational leadership. As of March 2021, the National College of Educational Leadership (NCEL) has provided training to 733 aspiring principals throughout seven cohorts. Out of the total number of individuals who received training, 535 individuals, or 73 percent, were identified as females, while 198 individuals, or 27 percent, were identified as males. See Table 1.1 for the details.

Table 1.1. *Cohort 1-7 of Aspiring Principals Trained by NCEL between 2014 and 2021*

Cohort	Male	%	Female	%	Total
1	16	36	28	64	44
2	28	25	85	75	113
3	21	22	76	78	97
4	34	30	80	70	114
5	32	31	71	69	103
6	37	32	80	68	117
7	30	21	115	79	145
Total	198	27	535	73	733

Adapted from Hutton (2022).

Professional Qualification for Principals, PQP

Professional Qualification for Principals (PQP) is the cornerstone credential of the Aspiring Principals Program. This program's conception is deeply informed by pivotal findings from the Ministry of Education, Youth (MoEY) reports. It encapsulates priorities from education transformation policy documents and insights from the National Education Inspectorate's reviews across eight essential areas of school effectiveness. It benchmarks from the Jamaica Teaching Council's Professional Standards for Educators (Smith, 2015). Stewart (2022) asserts that a

twofold philosophy underpins the PQP: it outlines the principles for preparing future principals. It delineates the capabilities necessary for school leadership in Jamaican educational settings. Acknowledging the imperative for principals to engender and sustain transformative shifts within school cultures, the program is structured around key management and leadership competencies deemed essential for the principalship. The APP is structured into five core compulsory modules (Perkins, 2022; Stewart, 2022).

1. Four foundational theoretical modules provide 30 hours of intensive learning on competencies critical for principalship success: Transformational Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Organizational Leadership, and Community Leadership. These modules are facilitated by the School of Education at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica, and typically last over five sessions, except for the instructional leadership module, which unfolds across six sessions.
2. A practical field experience module, administered by NCEL and appraised through a collaborative effort of NCEL's internal team and external evaluators engaged by NCEL. This component is a crucial aspect of the program's integrity, ensuring the seamless integration of theoretical knowledge with practical application, and is a reflection of the Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) ethos—that proficiency should be demonstrated in actionable skills pertinent to workplace demands.

Additional professional development courses—Academic Writing, Public Speaking, Interviewing Skills, Leadership and School Policy, and Child-Friendly Schools—were incorporated into the program in 2018.

While these non-credit, one-day courses are not mandatory, they are highly recommended for participants' personal and professional development (Stewart, 2022).

The responsibility of program delivery is shared between the School of Education and the Mona School of Business and Management at The University of the West Indies, Mona, with NCEL managing the Field Experience component. The APP is implemented in two geographic cohorts, one in Kingston, Jamaica, and the other in Montego Bay, Jamaica. In 2019, Cohort 5 marked a significant milestone, graduating 90 students who all received their PQP (Perkins, 2022).

Leading School Culture and Performance – The Jamaican Context

The consequence of school leadership in shaping school success is widely acknowledged. Hutton (2019) and Deal and Peterson (2009) contend that the central role of school leadership in determining school performance is well-established. In their study, Marzano et al. (2001) criticize the inconclusive results of previous studies on the effect of school leadership on student academic performance. The extensive meta-analysis covering 35 years of study reveals that school leadership significantly impacts student achievement, ranking second only to the influence of teachers.

Deal and Peterson (2009) emphasize the critical role of leaders in building the culture of educational institutions through the articulation of principles, effective communication of the school's vision, and recognition of accomplishments.

Evans (2001) argues that in Jamaica, the principal represents the wider school administration, taking responsibility for establishing a vision and creating an atmosphere that sets the tone for the entire school. According to Evans (2001), the principal's behavior, language, and sincere commitment to the well-being of students and the creation of favorable learning environments can inspire teachers and parents, encouraging them to maintain standards and collaborate towards shared goals. Hutton et al. (2021) draw attention to leadership issues in various schools within the Caribbean region. In their evaluation of the Jamaican education system, the Task Force on Education Reform emphasized some essential conditions necessary for achieving school success. The dominant feature is an initiative-taking principal who demonstrates strong leadership abilities and the efficient handling of teaching duties by principals, vice principals, and heads of departments (Davis, 2004).

In the Jamaican educational setting, there have been reports that raise concerns about the effectiveness of principal leadership. These reports suggest the country's school leadership is inadequate (Hutton, 2022). According to Davis (2004), the Task Force on Education Reform acknowledged the increasing reliance on Education Officers and the lack of initiative-taking involvement by principals and school boards (p. 71). Hutton (2019) studied the performance of Jamaican school principals and found that just over 12 percent of the 1,082 principals in the education system were classified as 'high-performing' principals.

The Evolution of Principal Training in Jamaica

The preparation and training of principals in Jamaica have always been intricately linked with teacher training institutions. According to Hutton (2022),

many Jamaican principals acquired their initial pedagogical training at educational institutions such as Mico University College in Kingston, Jamaica. While the educators did not receive explicit training in leadership, a significant number of them subsequently accepted leadership positions (Hutton, 2022). Ferguson (2023) highlighted a significant chronology of early developments, citing the importance of school leadership and management and the associated needs of training incumbents, including the publication of the Lumb Report in 1898. It recommended that school management be included in the teacher training curriculum and the crown colony government committee, which recommended additional training of teachers above the A1 grade, resulting in principalship (Ferguson, 2023; Hutton, 2022).

In 2002, a notable advancement was achieved in the explicit training of principals, facilitated by a partnership initiative between the Ministry of Education and Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Canada. The partnership resulted in the development of a specialized Diploma in School Management designed specifically for elementary school principals (Hutton, 2022). The project persisted until 2005, at which point St. Joseph's Teachers' College in Kingston gained a more prominent position in the program's execution, providing training for the majority of principals. St. Joseph's Teachers' College assumed a central role in training educators by integrating two additional institutions, namely Sam Sharpe Teachers' College and the College of Agriculture, Science, and Education (CASE), into its educational initiatives.

The program consisted of five sub-components and was discontinued in 2009 due to financial limitations. The University of the West Indies provided a

supplementary program to educate secondary school administrators. This program includes six modules, as well as practicum and research components. Funding limitations discontinued it (Hutton, 2022). In response to a recommendation of the Task Force on Education Reform (Davis, 2004), a series of modifications were enacted to ensure that all principals get ongoing training in school management and leadership from authorized schools. The establishment of the National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL) was initiated by the Ministry of Education in 2012. Its primary objective is to design and implement educational programs catering to the needs of existing and prospective school administrators. According to Hutton (2022), the creation of the NCEL and its extensive array of training initiatives, such as the Aspiring Principals Program (APP), has constituted a significant endeavor aimed at effectively tackling the issue of school leadership at a national level.

Jamaica and the Aspiring Principal Program

The National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL) was established to focus on training and offering support to school leaders in pre- and in-service positions to navigate the dynamics of educational leadership (Hutton, 2019). This initiative, overseen by the Ministry of Education and Youth, helps to improve school leadership and management to improve student learning outcomes. The program delivery is guided by a quality assurance plan (QAP) to ensure transparency and effectiveness, aligned with the principles of its quality assurance framework from 2013 (Ferguson, 2023).

The Aspiring Principals' Program (APP) is a core component of NCEL, designed to prepare individuals for school leadership roles. It includes theoretical

modules covering essential competencies for successful principalship and a practical field experience module. In 2018, non-credit professional courses were added to address soft skills. The selection process for the APP involves shortlisting and interviews, focusing on attracting mid-career professionals seeking career advancement (Ministry of Education and Youth, 2015). The NCEL Reports on Cohorts 5, 6, and 7 show that the selection process has effectively attracted candidates from diverse backgrounds, and the interview stage received positive feedback. Most applicants hold bachelor's degrees or higher, and the program's consistency in attracting applicants over the years suggests its effectiveness for career advancement (Stewart, 2022). Regarding program delivery, the APP traditionally had face-to-face sessions on weekends but transitioned to online delivery due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The transition to online platforms like Moodle and Blackboard Collaborate was well-received, with facilitators reporting increased participant engagement. Technical assistance and access to lecture notes contributed to a smooth transition. Some facilitators suggested maintaining a blended modality even after the pandemic. The report provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of the Aspiring Principals Program and highlights areas for improvement, such as ensuring consistency in data (Ferguson, 2023).

This study's major contribution is exploring the critical aspects of leadership preparation and evaluation, contributing to the ongoing conversation about how best to prepare and assess educational leaders in today's modern educational context (Hess & Kelly, 2007).

Through an in-depth analysis of existing literature, empirical research, and policy considerations, this study offered insights and recommendations to inform the future of leadership development in education. By exploring participants' perceptions and examining quality assurance findings, this study was designed to expose the strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas for enhancement within the Aspiring Principals Program.

Investigating the nexus of experiential learning, pedagogical strategies, and the evolving demands of modern education, this research sought to provide an in-depth understanding of the program's impact and effectiveness (Grissom et al., 2021). Amid the ever-evolving domain of education, understanding the effectiveness of pre-service educational leadership preparation becomes paramount for fostering capable leaders who can navigate the intricate challenges of educational institutions (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Hess & Kelly, 2005). This study intends to contribute valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on educational leadership, informing future iterations of the Aspiring Principals Program and guiding the refinement of pre-service programs to cultivate leaders primed to make meaningful impacts on the educational realm.

Through a rigorous examination of perceptions and quality assurance findings, this research strives not only to evaluate the present effectiveness of the Aspiring Principals Program but also to lay the foundation for the continual improvement of leadership preparation programs in Jamaica, thereby enhancing the leadership domain of educational institutions for years to come (Hutton & Johnson, 2017; Smith 2015).

Problem Statement

In Jamaica, as in many other countries, the quality of school leadership plays a significant role in the education sector.

Literature highly supports the idea that effective educational leadership is essential for shaping academic performance and the overall success of schools, as supported by Bush and Glover (2004) and Valentine and Prater (2011). In the Jamaican context, to address the pressing need for strong educational leadership, Jamaica introduced the Aspiring Principals Program, as mentioned previously. There is an urgent need for a thorough evaluation of the program's effectiveness. This is because ever since the training program was established, no studies have provided empirical information to understand the training program's effectiveness. This research was the first baseline study to examine the Aspiring Principals Program's impact on educational leadership using a mixed methods analysis of perceptions and quality assurance findings.

Jamaica's Aspiring Principals Program (APP) represents a significant improvement in preservice leadership development, aligning with research emphasizing leadership development's importance in education (Grissom et al., 2015; Hallinger et al., 1996; Hallinger et al., 2010). Currently, the APP is instrumental in fostering the skills and talents of individuals responsible for leading educational institutions (Perkins, 2022; Stewart, 2022). Although the APP occupies a strategic position in Jamaica's educational landscape, it has not been extensively assessed to determine whether it adequately prepares participants for educational leadership challenges. It is unclear whether the program adequately prepares

individuals for the complex challenges associated with leadership roles in educational institutions in the twenty-first century (Donmoyer et al., 2012; Fuller & Hollingworth, 2016; Hutton, 2022; Orr & Orphanos, 2011).

There exists a conspicuous deficiency in the evaluative methods, characterized by a specific absence of understanding of the viewpoints of the participants and the unity of the APP with quality assurance requirements in Jamaica.

This gap highlights the need for a systematic evaluation that can provide a comprehensive knowledge of the impact of the APP on the growth of educational leaders in the country (Robinson et al., 2008). The matter holds significant importance, necessitating a thorough examination of the program's influence on its graduates' readiness level (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Grissom et al., 2021; Leighwood et al., 2020). Using an evidence-based evaluation framework makes it possible to discern areas that require refinement, consequently enhancing the training of educational leaders. Conducting such an assessment will guarantee that the APP remains adaptable to the evolving needs of Jamaica's education sector, improving efficacy in cultivating capable administrators who adhere to set standards of quality (Hutton, 2022; Hutton & Johnson, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2004; Smith, 2015).

Importance of Quality Principal Preparation – The Challenges and Concerns

Research continues to stress the principal's capacity needs to be built to meet the demands of today's ever-changing school environment (Carbaugh, 2018; Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018; Marzano et al., 2005; Seashore et al., 2010; Swensson & Lehman, 2021). School principals must be effectively prepared for their new posts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Theoharis & Scanlan, 2020; Young & Crow, 2016).

In today's educational landscape, prospective school principals are expected to highlight their proficiency in a wide range of specialized skills.

For example, in the United States of America, the skills required by principals are detailed in the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards for Building-Level Leadership Preparation, as defined by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA, 2018).

According to a study by Young et al. (2018), familiarity with the NELP Standards improves principal candidates' abilities to lead collaboratively and effectively to ensure that student outcome becomes a certainty (Young et al., 2018).

Boyland et al. (2019) found that principal alums and superintendents viewed the university's principal preparation program positively and aligned with the NELP Standards. The unanimous recommendation from principal alums indicates high satisfaction with their preparation. The study also highlights the importance of continuous improvement in leadership education programs based on feedback from those who have experienced them. Some other studies have also examined the specific qualities or practices that make some school leaders more effective than others. Strong instructional leadership by the principal is a significant variable in promoting student achievement (Drummond, 2019; Hallinger, 2011; Seashore et al., 2010). This includes creating conditions that strengthen teaching and learning school-wide and recognizing and commending individuals who demonstrate commitment to outstanding teaching and learning (Thompson, 2017).

In addition to instructional leadership, effective principals set high student achievement and behavior standards while developing positive and caring school

climates (Louis et al., 2010; Swensson & Lehman, 2021). Effective principals understand how to create a vision that focuses on learning in a safe and cooperative environment while cultivating leadership in others, supporting teachers, and being skillful managers (Edition, 2013).

There is clear and mounting evidence that effective principals who emphasize instructional leadership, establish vision and high standards, employ best practices and strong management skills, and develop collaborative relationships can improve school conditions, heighten student outcomes, and even turn around failing schools (Branch et al., 2013; Bryk, 2010; Drummond, 2019; Leithwood et al., 2004; Seashore et al., 2010; Swensson & Lehman, 2021).

As the body of research regarding the importance of quality school leadership has grown, so has the call for higher-quality principal preparation (Anderson et al., 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Perrone & Tucker, 2019). The quality of preparation that candidates receive is effective (Anderson et al., 2018; Young, 2015), and specific program attributes, such as faculty quality, program rigor, program relevance, and internship quality, have been found to have a significant impact on graduates' standards-based leadership learning (Ni et al., 2019).

However, concerns have been raised that some principal preparation programs are mired in the past as expectations for principals have evolved in recent years, and the role has expanded to include more responsibilities, generating new questions about how to define, prepare, and evaluate principals (Osterman & Hafner, 2009; Perrone & Tucker, 2019; Young, 2015). Also, a recent expansion in the number of principal preparation programs in the United States has raised concerns

about variations in the quality and rigor of some programs (Grissom et al., 2019; Perrone & Tucker, 2019).

A report supported by the Wallace Foundation suggested that many district-level leaders were unhappy with the preparation of principals (Mendels, 2016).

Questions have been posed about some preparation programs being disconnected from the field and inadequate in preparing candidates for the authentic and inclusive school leadership needed in an increasingly complex and diverse society (Kemp-Graham, 2015; Theoharis & Scanlan, 2020). Based on these concerns, researchers and practitioners in P-12 administration have called for school leaders to be better prepared to improve schools and serve all students, including ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse students (Osterman & Hafner, 2009); students living in poverty (Dudley-Marling & Dudley-Marling, 2020); students with disabilities (Theoharis & Scanlan, 2020); and students who identify as LGBTQ or otherwise gender diverse (Kemp-Graham, 2015).

The NELP Handbook clarifies, "Strong preparation of school leaders includes attention to the learning and needs of all students' sub-groups as well as individual students" (NPBEA, 2018, p. 7). Educational leadership faculty members can use the NELP Standards to guide curricular and pedagogical developments. This research-based knowledge, skills, and practices promote strong school leadership preparation designed to improve learning and school conditions for all P-12 students.

Enhancing the Efficacy and Evaluation of Jamaica's APP

The National College of Educational Leadership (NCEL) evaluation reports provide a thorough analysis of the Aspiring Principals Program (APP). These reports discuss the positive feedback received by the program and identify areas that require improvement to enhance its effectiveness and ensure participant satisfaction.

According to Ferguson (2023), the APP programs have been well received, as evidenced by several strengths, such as the thorough end-of-course evaluations and surveys of the administrative process.

The evaluation report highlights crucial aspects that demand urgent consideration to maintain the program's brilliance and relevance within the educational sphere.

According to Stewart (2022), a significant obstacle that has been observed is the absence of consistency in the course outlines and participant guides, impeding the ability to make meaningful comparisons. The lack of a universally accepted structure has delayed the efficient assessment process and prevented the precise measurement of program efficacy. The earlier research underscores the requirement of enhancing training methodologies for the practicum, emphasizing the importance of providing consistent benefits to all participants in the program, regardless of their cohort (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Grissom et al., 2021; Southerland et al., 2018;) It is worth noting that approximately 20 percent of participants in the Aspiring Principals Program fail to finish the program successfully.

Ferguson's (2022) review highlights the importance of implementing a more comprehensive strategy for documenting course completion. It argues for adopting a more nuanced and precise methodology to monitor the development of participants

effectively. The reports also examined external communication tactics, suggesting a transition towards a more thorough approach to sharing information with other stakeholders instead of selectively providing extracts.

The reports stress the importance of augmenting facilitator reports with exemplary assignments to improve the thoroughness of the assessment of the program's efficacy (Ferguson, 2023; Stewart, 2022). The increasing prevalence of virtual learning has brought attention to the need for a timely assessment of students' experiences with Moodle and Blackboard Collaborate, particularly in the setting of the educational landscape following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Harmonizing Instructional and Operational Leadership – A Critical Imperative for Aspiring Principals

Dufour and Marzano (2011) advanced the notion that authentic instructional leadership demands a thorough understanding of the interconnectedness of pedagogical instruction, curriculum delivery, and student assessment to significantly optimize student learning and outcomes. This, in effect, distinguishes the principal leader simultaneously as an operational leader, which Dufour and Marzano (2011) describe as a school principal operating in varying roles to assure high school functionality, which includes culture, ethos, safety, and security, learning climate, administrative oversight and financial management.

The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model, updated in 2018 (Carbaugh, 2018; Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018), demonstrates an unambiguous connection between operational and instructional leadership notions, which aspiring principals would benefit from. This approach promotes a balanced combination of

instructional expertise and operational skills for promoting student learning (Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018). The alignment described is significant in Jamaica's educational system, as principals are now expected to show expertise in using data and managing complex operations to implement school improvement projects and programs effectively while ensuring positive student outcomes.

The model promotes data-driven techniques, urging school leaders to utilize data to establish and achieve school development goals (Carbaugh, 2018). This aligns effectively with Jamaica's educational agenda, which prioritizes evidence-based practices and is important to the instructional leadership component of the Aspiring Principals Program.

Prospective principals may utilize this emphasis to develop and execute methods to improve student achievements, especially in settings with limited resources when maximizing educational results is of utmost importance (Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018). This strategy not only improves the quality of training but also guarantees that leadership decisions are well-informed and focused.

Professional development is a fundamental aspect of the updated Marzano Model, reflecting the developmental philosophy of Jamaica's Aspiring Principals Program. The model's focus on the Continuous Development of Teachers and Staff highlights the need for leaders to foster a culture of growth through reflection and customized professional development programs. This ensures that all educators are prepared to meet the varied needs of students (Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018; Southerland et al., 2018). Continuous learning is essential for Jamaican educational leaders navigating complex and ever-changing educational situations.

The model provides a framework for aspiring principals in Jamaica to develop crucial skills in instructional and operational leadership, addressing the two key areas of responsibility. The emphasis on operational leadership is especially relevant, involving managing resources and collaborating with district and external stakeholders. These factors are crucial in the Jamaican context, where the allocation of resources and engagement with stakeholders significantly impact educational outcomes (Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018).

The Marzano Model stresses the importance of fostering a community characterized by compassion and cooperation in educational institutions. This aspect is especially relevant in Jamaica, where active community involvement and a supportive school environment tremendously influence student success (Hutton, 2016; Hutton & Johnson, 2017; Hutton, 2022; Hutton et al., 2021). The strategy corresponds with the Jamaican educational system's purpose of developing strong relationships that go beyond school boundaries by ensuring that school administrators create an inclusive atmosphere where the opinions of all stakeholders are appreciated (Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018). The Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model provides a valuable framework for developing effective school leadership in Jamaica. It aligns with the mission of the Aspiring Principals Program to equip leaders with the necessary skills to address the complex challenges of educational administration.

Principal Preparation and Job Satisfaction

The impact and long-term influence of principal preparation on job satisfaction is an emerging area of research, particularly for programs aimed at aspiring principals, such as the Aspiring Principals Program (APP) in Jamaica. Berry and Reardon (2022) underscore the implication of leadership training and administrative experience in preparing individuals for the principalship, describing these components as integral to what they refer to as "sponsored mobility" (p. 30). Using Turner's (1960) conceptual framework, Berry and Reardon, who studied the career trajectories of black principals, argue that active participation in district or school-sponsored programs is crucial for successfully transitioning into leadership roles. Berry and Reardon (2022) also assert that such preparation equips future principals with essential skills and enhances their job satisfaction by fostering a sense of competence and support in their roles.

Mickelsen (2023) explored the correlation between principal preparation and job satisfaction, focusing on assistant principals. His findings indicate that effective preparation programs significantly influence a principal's ability to manage job demands and maintain a positive outlook. Mickelsen (2023) also suggests that principals who undergo comprehensive preparation are better equipped to navigate the complexities of school leadership, which leads to higher job satisfaction. Anselmus et al. (2022) examined the role of self-efficacy in principal job satisfaction, discovering that principals who are confident in their abilities are more likely to experience job satisfaction. This confidence, or self-efficacy, the researchers contend, enables principals to manage the challenges of their roles more effectively,

significantly reduces stress, and increases their commitment to their schools, providing a sense of reassurance and confidence.

Drummond and Halsey (2022) focused on rural school leadership and principals' unique challenges in these settings. Their research found that rural principals who receive formal preparation before assuming their roles report higher levels of job satisfaction. The APP's objective of providing comprehensive and targeted training for all aspiring principals, regardless of their future school context, is essential for ensuring that principals are equally prepared and satisfied in their roles, whether they are in urban or rural settings (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Grissom et al., 2021; Hutton, 2022; Perkins, 2022; Stewart, 2022,).

Program Quality Insights from the Aspiring Principals Program, APP

The Aspiring Principals' Program (APP) is a cornerstone in advancing educational leadership to equip emerging school leaders with the requisite skills and insights for effective administration (Perkins, 2022; Stewart, 2022).

The program's reported progressive adaptation to the evolving demands of educational leadership integrates current best practices and feedback from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, offering a curriculum that merges theoretical knowledge with practical implementation. Stewart (2022), for instance, emphasizes the program's engagement with case studies, simulations, and firsthand experiences, which are instrumental in preparing candidates for the multifaceted nature of school leadership roles.

The APP's commitment to continuous enhancement is further evidenced through its rigorous quality assurance protocols, including participant feedback,

performance evaluations, and independent reviews, as detailed by Perkins (2022) and supported by quality assurance reports for cohorts 5 through 7. These measures ensure that the program remains congruent with both national and global educational standards, highlighting a structured approach to upholding excellence. Hutton (2022) and Hutton and Johnson (2017) declare that APP has had a notable impact on educational leadership, documenting noteworthy advancements in leadership competencies, decision-making capabilities, and strategic thinking among program graduates. Such outcomes elevate the confidence and effectiveness of these individuals as leaders and position them to enact meaningful changes within their schools.

The program needs support with scalability, resource allocation, and meeting the diverse needs of its participants. Stewart (2022) elaborates on the necessity to tackle these issues to broaden the program's reach and improve its efficacy for a more comprehensive array of aspiring principals. As compiled across the documents, feedback from stakeholders reflects a positive view of the program's value and impact but also signals the importance of continuous dialogue, adjustment, and continued research in response to the changing educational landscape. The comparative analysis undertaken by Perkins (2022) places the APP in a broader context, benchmarking it against similar international initiatives. This comparison highlights the APP's distinctive contributions, areas ripe for development, and the potential for cross-border collaboration.

UWI (2023), Stewart (2022), and Perkins (2022) advocate for further research and the program's evolution, with a particular focus on incorporating digital

technologies, extending accessibility to underserved groups, and fortifying support for graduates as they transition into leadership roles. The quality assurance studies by Stewart (2022) and Perkins (2022) provide a foundation for evaluating the Aspiring Principals' Program's effectiveness in influencing educational outcomes and leadership competencies. This research study scrutinized the degree to which the APP has succeeded in its objectives thus far since its inception in 2012, focusing on the program's stimulus on school leadership quality and the resultant educational improvements and student outcomes.

Insights into program areas needing enhancement and participant job satisfaction will also be crucial. This will lead to research questions probing the relationship between the APP's training, student's educational achievement and the practical leadership abilities exhibited in educational settings, the program's adaptability to participant needs, and the impact of such training on job satisfaction among principals who have been certified in the program.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual framework

The conceptual underpinnings of this study are situated within the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model (Carbaugh, 2018; Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018; Narinesingh, 2020; Southerland et al., 2018) serving as a framework to scrutinize the leadership attributes, behaviors, and attitudes of principals. This model categorizes leadership behaviors into six domains and twenty-one elements, facilitating self-assessment and professional development among school leaders within the paradigm of ongoing leadership development (Cook, 2002).

Embedded within empirical research, the Marzano Model delineates a principal's influence on student achievement by fostering a professional community conducive to effective instructional practices, thus impacting student learning outcomes. It underscores the impact of leadership practices aimed at enhancing teachers' instructional abilities, thereby emphasizing the pivotal role of school leaders in cultivating a culture of continuous learning and performance enhancement among students (Narinesingh, 2020).

In the context of Jamaica's educational landscape, particularly within policy-driven initiatives like the Aspiring Principals Program (APP), evaluating leadership behaviors and their consequences on desired outcomes resonates with the theoretical constructs of the Marzano Model. Leithwood et al. (2003) advocate for an understanding of leadership's indirect effects on outcomes, mediated through factors

like classroom dynamics and school climate, aligning with the multifaceted approach of the Marzano framework towards effective leadership and school improvement.

Murphy et al. (2006) reinforce that leadership behaviors significantly influence student achievement outcomes. The Marzano Model accentuates the importance of fostering teacher development through constructive feedback and meaningful interactions between school leaders and teachers (Carbaugh, 2018; Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018), highlighting its relevance in the context of the APP and its objectives of preparing future educational leaders. Within the Marzano framework, leadership behaviors are depicted as catalysts for nurturing a positive school culture conducive to student success. Through elements such as setting clear goals, modeling effective teaching practices, and fostering collaborative relationships, aspiring principals are poised to contribute towards enhancing student achievement outcomes, thus aligning with the overarching goals of the APP (Carbaugh, 2018; Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018; Southerland et al., 2018)

The Marzano Model underscores the importance of continual improvement and reflection in leadership practices. Aspiring principals enrolled in the APP stand to benefit from ongoing feedback loops and professional development opportunities to refine their leadership skills, echoing Leithwood et al.'s (2003) assertion that leadership behaviors indirectly shape outcomes through iterative adjustments to classroom strategies and school operations. The theoretical lens offered by the Marzano Model suggests a comprehensive framework to examine the impact of leadership behaviors within the context of educational leadership programs like the APP. In recognizing the indirect pathways through which leadership influences

outcomes and the mechanisms for fostering teacher development, as demonstrated by Leithwood et al. (2003) and Murphy et al. (2006), this study endeavors to deepen understanding of effective principal preparation leadership developing and capacity building practices in Jamaican educational settings.

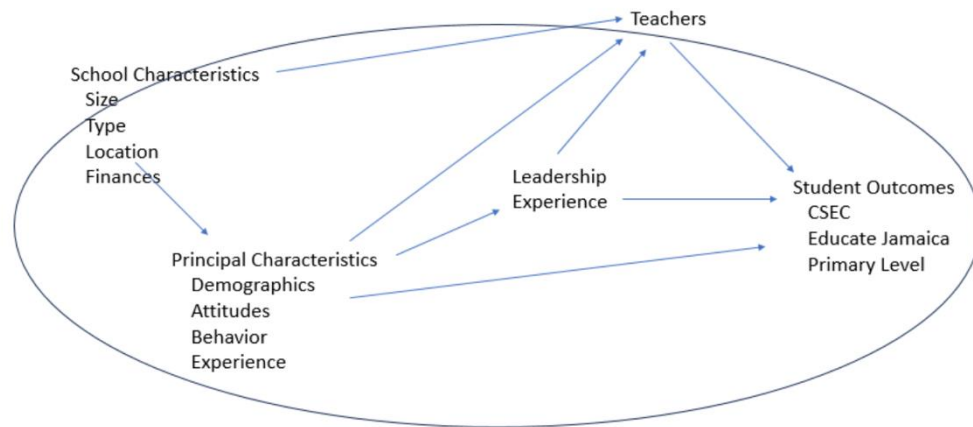


Figure 2.1: Theoretical Frame of Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Aspiring Principals Program. It seeks to explore leadership and school attributes in their role in shaping academic achievement.

(Carbaugh, 2018; Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018) and the foundational modules of the Aspiring Principals Program (APP) forms a cohesive framework for the development of effective aspiring school leaders and evaluate educational leadership preparation in Jamaica (See Table 3.1). The APP's module on Transformational Leadership is imperative in fostering an environment where core values are articulated and lived by school community members. This module prepares leaders to inspire and

motivate staff and students, creating a culture of high expectations and shared responsibility for school success (Perkins, 2022; Stewart, 2022). It aligns with the Marzano domain of fostering a Community of Care and Collaboration, emphasizing the importance of building trusting relationships and a strong school community where stakeholders feel valued and supported.

The Instructional Leadership module directly supports the Marzano domains of Instruction of a Viable and Guaranteed Curriculum and A Data-Driven Focus on School Improvement. Aspiring principals learn to lead and support teachers in implementing effective instructional practices aligned with a rigorous and relevant curriculum. This module emphasizes using data to inform teaching and learning, ensuring that instructional decisions are based on evidence of student achievement and school performance (Perkins, 2022; Stewart, 2022).

Community Leadership in the APP addresses the vital role of the principal in engaging with parents, families, and community members. This module aligns with the Marzano Community of Care and Collaboration domain, focusing on developing partnerships supporting student learning and well-being. Aspiring principals are taught effective communication and collaboration strategies with stakeholders, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for student success (Perkins, 2022; Stewart, 2022).

The Organizational Leadership module prepares aspiring principals to manage school resources efficiently and effectively. This encompasses not only financial and physical resources but also human resources. It aligns with the Marzano domain of Resource Management, highlighting the importance of strategic

planning, budgeting, and staffing to support the school's educational goals and improve student outcomes.

The Practical Field-Based Component of the APP serves as a capstone experience, allowing aspiring principals to apply their learning in real-world settings across all Marzano domains.

This firsthand approach ensures that participants can integrate and apply the principles of Transformational, Instructional, Community, and Organizational Leadership coherently and effectively, preparing them for the multifaceted role of an effective school leader (Perkins, 2022; Stewart, 2022;). See Table 2.1 for further details.

Table 2.1. *Demonstration of the relationship between the outcomes of the Aspiring Principals Program (APP) and the six domains of the Marzano School Leadership Model (Carbaugh, 2018; Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018; Perkins, 2022; Stewart, 2022;)*

Marzano School Leadership Model	Aspiring Principals Program	Connection
1. A Data-Driven Focus on School Improvement	Instructional Leadership	Focuses on using data to inform curriculum implementation and improve school performance.
2. Instruction of a Viable and Guaranteed Curriculum	Instructional Leadership	Emphasizes guiding effective teaching practices and ensuring a robust curriculum.
3. Continuous Development of Teachers and Staff	Transformational Leadership, Instructional Leadership	Encourages the development of teachers through inspiration, motivation, and effective instructional guidance.
4. Community of Care and Collaboration	Transformational Leadership, Community Leadership	Builds a supportive school culture and engages with the community to foster collaboration.
5. Core Values	Transformational Leadership	Promotes the establishment and adherence to core values, inspiring the school community.
6. Resource Management	Organizational Leadership	Involves strategic management of resources to support educational objectives.

Understanding the Conceptual Framework

The concepts from Tannenbaum's Model of Training Effectiveness (Tannenbaum et al., 1993; Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1997) were adopted to explore the APP's effectiveness. Tannenbaum's process model was chosen for this study as his model took into account both individual and organizational variables that were overlooked in most studies and showed clearly how these critical factors play a significant role in training effectiveness (Holton, 2005; Tannenbaum et al., 1993). Tannenbaum's Model of Training Effectiveness framework distills how training can be successful and impact individuals and organizations. It consists of four levels:

Level 1: *Reaction*: This level focuses on how participants feel about the training. Did they like it? Did they find it interesting? Did they think it was relevant to their job? This level measures the trainees' immediate response and satisfaction.

Level 2: *Learning*: This level assesses what participants have learned from the training. Did they acquire new knowledge and skills? Can they apply what they've learned in their job? Level 2 looks at the knowledge transfer from the training to the workplace.

Level 3: *Behavior*: This level examines whether employees apply what they've learned daily. Are they using new skills and knowledge on the job? Are there observable changes in their behavior or performance?

Level 4: *Results*: Level 4 evaluates the overall impact of the training on the organization. Did the training result in positive outcomes, such as increased productivity, better quality, higher sales, or improved customer satisfaction? This level connects the training to the broader goals and success of the organization.

Adapted from Tannenbaum et al (1993); Tannenbaum (1997)

- **Reaction:** These measures show how learners have responded to the training, including the critical aspects of the activity, such as utilizing reviews, questionnaires, or talking to participants to get honest feedback on the training experience.
- **Learning:** It measures what the trainees have learned and how much knowledge they have gained.
- **Behavior** This indicates how trainees apply the learned information and how it has impacted their performance and attitude.
- **Results** The last aspect is the ‘why’ part of the training. It captures the differences in participant behavior before and after the program. It includes outcomes the organization has determined favorable for both business and employees.

Tannenbaum's model of training effectiveness suggests that various individual and organizational factors play a crucial role in determining how effective training programs are (Tannenbaum, 1993). Individual factors include demographic characteristics, attitudes, self-belief (self-efficacy), abilities, and attitudes such as locus of control, motivation, anxiety, and more. Organizational and situational factors involve aspects like the overall organizational climate, the process of selecting trainees, the purpose of the training, organizational policies, and the nature of tasks. These individual and organizational pre-training factors influence the identification of training needs, guiding the training program's design. This design includes considerations like the content of the training, how it's delivered, who

provides the instruction, and the teaching methods employed (Tannenbaum et al., 1993; Tannenbaum, 1997).

The interplay between these pre-training factors and the training design affects the motivation of trainees to learn. This motivation subsequently impacts the learning process and how trainees change their behavior during training.

After the training, motivational factors, like those existing before training, influence the trainees' motivation to apply what they have learned on the job (Berry & Reardon, 2022; Southerland et al., 2018). The initial training moderates the effectiveness of this transfer of learning to real-world job performance needs analysis. According to Tannenbaum et al. (1993), achieving organizational effectiveness because of training depends on how well the training addresses the relevant organizational, individual, and task-related needs. They emphasize that training effectiveness cannot be fully optimized without considering these individual and organizational factors, no matter how well-designed the training program may be.

These factors have often been overlooked but have significantly impacted training effectiveness (Noe, 1986; Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992). This research specifically aimed to investigate the individual factors that influence training effectiveness, recognizing their importance in enhancing the outcomes of training programs.

Review of Literature

A systematic review of empirical work is essential to position the research within the wider academic domain. This section will examine existing literature,

summarizing and critiquing relevant studies and scholarly contributions. This critical analysis aims to identify gaps, contradictions, and emerging trends that warrant further investigation. This research as designed to shed light on what is known about the leadership preparation program, offering valuable insights for decision-makers, academic institutions, and stakeholders invested in the continuous improvement of educational leadership and the enhancement of Jamaica's education system. A systematic and well-structured literature review is a pivotal foundation for pursuing a thorough examination of the effectiveness of the Aspiring Principals Program in Jamaica.

This study explored the major aspects of the Aspiring Principals Program in Jamaica. It investigated the perceptions of the preservice training program from its participants and the quality assurance findings that show its effectiveness. The critical examination of this program was the central focus of this study, as the competence (Bringle et al., 2013) and preparedness of educational leaders impact the overall educational experiences of students and the advancement of schools (Cross et al., 2015).

As such, understanding the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement within the program is essential for enhancing the quality of educational leadership preparation and the educational outcomes of students (Bush & Jackson, 2002). By synthesizing the perspectives of the program's participants with the insights drawn from quality assurance evaluations, this study aimed to provide a holistic understanding of the Jamaica Aspiring Principals Program's effectiveness.

This study's purpose was to highlight the implications of the findings for the broader field of pre-service educational leadership preparation, paving the way for evidence-based improvements and innovations in shaping the educational leaders of tomorrow. Effective school leadership has long been recognized as a pivotal factor in shaping student achievement and the overall quality of education (Cheney & Davis, 2011).

Two critical questions have emerged at the forefront of educational discourse: how can we best equip school leaders for the dynamic challenges of the 21st century, and how can we accurately assess their effectiveness in an evolving educational domain (Day et al., 2020)? These concerns have led to increased policy attention on evaluating APPs and holding them accountable for their effectiveness, including holding them accountable for the outcomes of program graduates (Cheney & Davis, 2011).

This study examined these pressing issues mentioned above and shed light on the complex relationship between leadership preparation and evaluation in educational leadership (Crawford et al. 2014). It is documented that the role of school principals has undergone a profound transformation (Bush & Jackson 2002).

Principals were traditionally acknowledged as overseers and enforcers of discipline, but today's school principals take on a multifaceted position (Hutton, 2016). This position goes beyond traditional administrative duties to include strategic planning, financial oversight, adherence to legislation, execution of educational reforms, and the pivotal task of improving student performance (Medina, 2008).

The educational community acknowledges the pivotal impact of school leaders on the learning environment, but the methods of preparing them for this multifaceted role have been a subject of intense debate and scrutiny (Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001; Donmoyer et al., 2012; Levine, 2005; Ni et al., 2017; Orr & Barber, 2007). Throughout the 20th century, formal educational leadership programs were established to provide training for aspiring school principals. Research has shown that these programs have often struggled to keep pace with the evolving demands of principalship (Butler, 2008; Duncan et al., 2011; Fleck, 2008; Hernandez et al., 2012; Lashway, 1999, 2003; Levine, 2006, 2005; Lynch, 2012; Miller, 2013; Reed & Kinsler, 2010). Some scholars have argued that the disconnect between leadership preparation and the changing demands of the role has raised concerns about the effectiveness of the training programs in adequately equipping future school leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022).

The Impact of Educational Leadership Preparation on Academic Outcomes

The starting point of our discourse is the literature looking at APP and academic performance outcomes in schools. There is literature on the importance of leadership and management concerning educational outcomes, as demonstrated by studies worldwide (Bush & Jackson, 2002). It has also been asserted that leadership makes a difference in the school's ability to improve by influencing the motivation of teachers and the quality of teaching in the classroom (Rahimah, 1981; Hargreaves, 1994). Pre-service educational leadership preparation has drawn debate over its effectiveness, with various standpoints being presented by different stakeholders (Rowan et al., 2015). From one angle, individuals contend that these instructional

courses have tremendous value for potential education leaders since they impart knowledge on both theoretical and practical aspects regarding managing learning institutions, coupled with firsthand internships that enhance their expertise (NPBEA, 2001; Peterson, 2002).

Conversely, critics argue against this school of thought, claiming that the instructional courses do not sufficiently prepare protégés for real-life situations or challenges specific to managing learning institutions effectively, such as inequality or diversity considerations. Many studies and reports highlight the slow pace of adaptation of preparation programs (Grogan & Andrew, 2002; Hess & Kelly, 2005). Sammons (1995) identified eleven factors for effective schools and asserted the importance of the leadership factor. Sammons claims that almost every single study of school effectiveness has shown primary and secondary leadership as a key factor.

The Influence of Principal Preparation on Instructional Leadership

Shelton (2021) outlines how principal preparation programs (PPPs) in educational leadership significantly equip nascent principals with the skills needed to affect student progress positively. The study by Shelton identifies six fundamental practices in PPPs, emphasizing the impact of competencies, including data analysis, offering observation feedback, and fostering professional learning groups. These components are crucial for fostering the growth of instructional leadership skills in aspiring principals. Shelton's qualitative research reveals the common deficiencies in these programs, such as the need for more focus on overseeing non-instructional procedures and developing soft skills crucial for smooth leadership transitions.

Grissom et al. (2021) discuss the crucial role of the principal in creating a positive learning environment and promoting collaboration among educators. They claim that effective instructional teamwork, led by the principal, is associated with improved student achievement. These researchers recognize principals as crucial components of educational institutions, using impactful techniques to promote formal collaboration and participatory leadership.

Scholars stress that intangible assets, such as time allocation and external social capital, are equivalent to material assets in educational leadership. Principals' time management skills are linked to their efficacy and ability to use strategic scheduling to enhance teaching and learning. Grissom et al. stress the importance of principals actively participating in the broader community, which they connect to better educational results, particularly in literacy. This engagement involves tactics that enhance family involvement and community integration, such as establishing parent liaison roles and supporting staff-led home visits. This helps build strong relationships and improves access to school resources.

Shelton (2021) and Grissom et al. (2021) stress the importance of principal preparation programs in providing future leaders with essential instructional leadership abilities for student success. These studies indicate that PPPs should prioritize acquiring hard skills in instructional leadership and developing softer skills like relationship-building and systems management. The training of principals is a complex process that involves developing various abilities and understandings to meet the ever-changing requirements of educational leadership.

Principal Preparation Programs and Student Achievement

Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) contend that it is difficult to establish a clear link between principal preparatory programs and patterns in student achievement and outcomes. The issue stems from the scarcity of studies that fulfill the required characteristics, such as sufficient duration, comprehensive control measures, and a suitable comparison group, which are crucial for accurate and significant comparisons.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) reason that there is strong empirical evidence in some compelling studies conducted over the last ten years that there could be a strong correlation if carefully evaluated.

Cosner et al. (2012) conducted a distinct examination to analyze the enduring results of a primary preparation program at the University of Illinois. This program was specifically tailored to equip aspiring leaders to govern and oversee elementary and high schools in low-income metropolitan areas. Throughout 11 years, they uncovered compelling results. The main findings indicate that 72% of elementary schools, which program graduates headed, and 60% of secondary schools, also led by program graduates, regularly exceeded the average student growth gains set by the state. Significantly, these favorable disparities started to appear in the initial years of principals' incumbency in these positions (Cosner et al., 2012). In addition, schools led by University of Illinois alums showed superior performance compared to district norms in vital educational areas, such as student attendance rates in elementary and secondary schools.

Secondary schools demonstrated exceptional performance in freshman on-track rates, high school graduation rates, and annual dropout rate reductions, surpassing the district norms. Out of the initial eight groups, 96 participants who successfully finished the residency program witnessed 65 persons assume the role of urban school principals in only four years, with most of them working in schools with high needs. In addition, according to Cosner et al. (2012), 30 individuals who completed the program accepted positions as district administrators or assistant principals.

Gates et al. (2014) conducted a seven-year study on the New Leaders Aspiring Principals Preparation Program.

This one-year residency program is implemented in ten Baltimore, Charlotte, Chicago, Memphis, Milwaukee, New Orleans, New York, Oakland, Prince George's County, and Washington D.C. school districts. The extensive investigation produced vital results that suggest a correlation between leadership training and student performance. The study by Gates et al. (2014) found that children who attended schools under the leadership of New Leaders principals achieved higher academic progress than students in schools headed by non-New Leaders principals in the same districts. Nevertheless, as posited by Darling-Hammond et al. (2022), the degree of these advancements in academic performance exhibited notable disparities throughout the examined districts. In four districts, students in schools under the leadership of New Leaders principals demonstrated better positive outcomes on at least one metric compared to students in schools led by principals from other programs.

In contrast, pupils in four other districts exhibited less favorable outcomes on at least one indicator. In the two remaining districts, specifically Chicago Public Schools and New York City Public Schools, there were modest and statistically insignificant changes in achievement. Both of these districts had principal preparation programs similar to New Leaders, which makes it improbable to identify significant distinctions (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022). The results indicate that the support mechanisms within the school environment and the administrators' experiences, in addition to the actual preparation, may impact student achievements (Gates et al., 2014).

Corcoran (2012) assessed New York City's Aspiring Principals Program (APP), a 14-month residency program with a rigorous admissions procedure separated into three sections. The study uncovered no significant performance differences between schools led by APP Principals and those headed by new principals from alternative programs.

These findings are noteworthy for Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) because APP principals frequently took on leadership positions in underperforming schools that had previously shown more pronounced declines in student achievement before the change in the principal, compared to the schools used for comparison. According to Corcoran (2012), principals who underwent APP training exhibited more substantial progress than their counterparts from other programs.

In a subsequent study two years later, Corcoran (2014) investigated a school district in the midwestern United States where the National Institute for School Leadership's Executive Development Program (NISL-EDP) was being assessed. The

study's objective was to examine the hypothesis that students enrolled in schools under the leadership of principals who received training from NISL-EDP would achieve similar average improvements in mathematics and reading compared to students in schools led by principals who did not get NISL-EDP training. In 2014, the children in the control group achieved superior results in reading and mathematics compared to their counterparts, who were led by principals educated in NISL-EDP.

Advancements in Educational Leadership Development

Herman et al. (2022) afford insights into the University Principal Preparation Initiative (UPPI). This significant leadership preparation endeavor took place from 2016 to 2021 involving seven universities: Albany State University, Florida Atlantic University, North Carolina State University, San Diego State University, University of Connecticut, Virginia State University, and Western Kentucky University. This project significantly influenced the restructuring of principal preparation programs through close collaboration with district and state educational entities to adjust curricula to meet the changing requirements of educational leadership.

These universities made significant advancements in curriculum design by integrating academic knowledge with practical leadership experiences, supported by strong mentoring programs.

The UPPI significantly impacts the creation of unified cohort structures, promotion of peer collaboration, and development of supportive learning environments essential for fostering future educational leaders. The developments represented progress but also revealed issues related to scalability and inclusivity,

leading to the continuous adoption of strategic and flexible approaches to improving the program (Herman et al., 2022).

Cosner and De Voto (2023) point out a national trend in Principal Preparation Programs (PPPs) focusing on improving clinical experiences for future principals. This trend reflects a national movement towards prioritizing experiential learning and the practical application of leadership skills in educational leadership development, influenced by policy-driven reforms and increased program improvement networks and funded projects.

Districts increasingly acknowledge the need for on-the-job support, such as mentoring and coaching, to improve principals' instructional leadership skills. This change aligns with studies showing that competent principals influence student performance (Leithwood et al., 2004). Gwinnett County Public Schools offers programs that give customized support for new principals, helping them establish collaborative learning settings and foster positive transformations in their schools (Gill, 2019).

The Wallace Foundation's Principal Pipeline Initiative highlights the impact of supervisor participation in giving practical feedback and promoting instructional leadership abilities (Goldring et al., 2018; Wallace Foundation, 2016). This changing method indicates a shift from conventional models of principal oversight, highlighting a more thorough comprehension of principal assistance as essential to enhancing instruction (Turnbull et al., 2016). Investing in on-the-job support may involve extra expenses. However, as demonstrated by the changes observed in schools such as Meadowcreek High School under Tommy Welch's guidance, the

lasting advantages highlight its importance in fostering cooperative school environments and enhancing student results (Gill, 2023).

Criticisms of Principal Preparation Programs

Shelton (2021) emphasizes significant areas for improvement in current Principal Preparation Programs (PPPs), especially in non-instructional systems administration and the development of interpersonal skills crucial for effective leadership. The deficiencies he highlighted could hinder prospective principals from smoothly transitioning into their posts and may affect their ability to improve student outcomes. Shelton (2021) supports a comprehensive overhaul of principal training, promoting a combined method that combines theoretical understanding with firsthand, experiential learning to provide candidates with the necessary skills to manage the complex difficulties of school leadership.

Grissom et al. (2021) emphasize the continuous need for leadership program improvements to align with current best practices despite significant progress made since the early 2000s. Their study emphasizes shortcomings in the UPPA program, identifying specific areas that require enhancement in the training curriculum. The gaps cover many talents, from the practical knowledge of operational processes like budgeting and facility maintenance to the more subtle soft skills needed for successful change management and cultural leadership.

Moving from assistant principal to principal is recognized as a significant obstacle not covered well by present training procedures. Grissom et al. (2021) suggest that a thorough revamp of training methods could more effectively equip incoming principals for the complex reality of their positions. In a survey of 1,006

public school superintendents and 925 public school principals, (Farkas et al., 2003) found that 72% of superintendents and 67% of principals agreed that administrative preparation programs are “out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today’s school district.” Further, 95% percent of the principals surveyed reported that colleagues and previous on-the-job experiences were more helpful in preparing them for their jobs than graduate school (Farkas et al., 2003). Yet, these criticisms of preparation programs are not something new.

Principal preparation programs have received public scrutiny for decades. For example, in 1960, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) called the preparation of school leaders a “dismal montage” (Creighton & Johnson, 2002). A 1987 report by the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEAA) recommended closing 40% of the nation’s 505 administrative preparation programs, claiming they lacked the resources and commitment to offer a quality program. In a study by Pinder (2017), the methodology involved interviews with in-service principals to explore their perceptions of their pre-service principal preparation programs. The findings suggest potential gaps in the training these programs provide, which could be further explored in future research to improve the effectiveness of school leadership preparation (Pinder, 2017). Another study by Mulford and Silins (2003) found a significant gap between expectations and reality when preparing educational leaders.

Findings from the qualitative study conducted by Darling Hammond et al. (2007) showed that most education schools do not provide adequate training for aspiring school leaders. Conversely, some studies state that leadership programs can

be effective if they are designed properly. For instance, a meta-analysis conducted by Marzano et al. (2001) found that leadership development programs with a clear focus on instructional leadership were more likely to impact student achievement positively.

Also, while there are differing views on the effectiveness of educational leadership preparation, there is room for improvement in current programs. As noted by Mulford and Silins (2003), "continuous professional development opportunities" (p. 186) should be provided to ensure that aspiring leaders are better equipped for their roles. Donmoyer et al. (2012) pursued a mixed-methods study to investigate the relationship between student success, principal behavior, and the quality of principal preparation programs in a large U.S. school district. The findings of this study demonstrated a strong and noteworthy connection between these variables. Robinson et al. (2008) and Marks and Printy (2003) emphasized the importance of instructional leadership in improving student learning, finding that its influence surpasses that of transformational leadership. This underscores the necessity for conducting more extensive and thorough investigations in this field (Leithwood et al., 2004; Pounder et al., 1995).

Grissom et al. (2019) raised apprehensions over the inconsistency in the caliber of principal preparation programs affiliated with universities. The proponents advocated for the use of program outcomes as a means of ensuring accountability for public-private partnerships. However, they acknowledged the difficulty in accurately identifying consistent high or low performers. The study conducted by Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) provided evidence of an advantageous association between

the quality of preparation and work performance. The researchers differentiated between exceptional programs and what Levine (2005) termed "cash-cow" programs with a dominant position in the field. In a study undertaken by Pannell et al. (2016), a comparison was made between the main preparation programs in Mississippi, specifically examining the differences between traditional and alternate route programs. Remarkably, the researchers discovered no statistically significant difference in academic performance outcomes among students enrolled in either of the two program types.

Walker et al. (2013) examined five leadership programs in global districts known for their success in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, and the United States were among these jurisdictions. Although the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results do not establish a clear correlation between leadership preparation and effectiveness, they are noteworthy policy indicators. These results have the potential to stimulate international competitiveness and motivate the implementation of educational reforms. These programs were discovered to share similarities, but they also display significant variations in their methodologies (Walker et al., 2013). These differences encompass a spectrum of factors, including explicit program structures, the nuanced utilization of instructional tools, and the distinction between programs mandated by government bodies and those designed by program developers. In a sweeping critique of educational leadership preparation in the United States, Levin (2005) concluded that the programs consistently failed to meet the established criteria for many important quality indicators such as the curriculum structure,

faculty composition, admission criteria, alignment of degrees with relevant standards, management of financial resources, and evaluation methods.

Levin (2005) also analyzed the financial aspects of these programs in academic institutions, highlighting how they could compromise educational quality. According to his study, universities sometimes provide insufficient funding for these programs or utilize them as revenue-generating entities, then reallocate the funds generated to other programs within the university.

According to Farkas et al. (2003), a notable percentage of principals believed that graduate institutions' leadership programs were disconnected from the practical aspects of school leadership. Hess and Kelly (2007) scrutinized the instructional content provided by a stratified sample of 61 leadership preparation programs across the United States. Their qualitative study revealed noteworthy gaps in the programs and questioned the alignment of these programs with the evolving demands of modern education. The findings suggested that the current curricula may not adequately prepare graduates to navigate the complexities and demands of an educational landscape marked by heightened accountability.

Using descriptive and inferential data, Styron and LeMire (2009) reported that a significant majority of principals, at 77%, affirmed their readiness in key aspects of their profession—student achievement, school management, and communication—as instilled by their preparatory programs. This level of preparedness, while substantial, was noted for its divergence from earlier findings (Hess & Kelly, 2007; Levine, 2005), motivating the researchers to advocate for a

more focused effort within university programs to equip future principals with the skills necessary to serve special populations effectively.

Research in Principal Leadership Programs and the Shifting Landscape

Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) reviewed comprehensive preparation programs and concluded that they regularly yielded positive results in enhancing graduates' leadership competencies. These programs, according to Darling-Hammond et al. (2022), were found to have a positive impact on various complex leadership skills, including effectively managing personnel, adeptly identifying and solving issues in educational settings, leading groups of teachers, showing expertise in strategic planning, and actively engaging in collaborative decision-making processes.

Beard (2018) advanced the emerging engaged school leadership theory to analyze data on the qualities of effective training programs and the use of positive psychology concepts (such as flow, Engagement, organizational virtuousness, enabling structure, and achievement) among principal licensure students in the Midwest region of the United States. Beard (2018) identified significant correlations among these variables. Significant associations were observed between traits such as Goal Achievement, Commitment, and Accomplishment and the concept of "flow."

According to Beard (2018), flow is intricately linked to the quality of a person's experiences, asserting that optimal experiences elicit profound excitement and pleasure, resulting in enduring memories (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). This perspective emphasizes fluidity in producing remarkable and highly gratifying experiences. This discovery indicates that people who expressed greater degrees of

goal attainment, dedication, and success were more prone to experiencing a feeling of flow. Beard (2018) determined a strong correlation between flow and engagement, underscoring the need to comprehend the psychological states of prospective principals in educational leadership programs. He concluded that there was a substantial correlation between "Care" and Commitment and Coping. This highlights the influence of empathy and compassion in molding the levels of commitment and coping strategies among aspiring school leaders.

Braun et al. (2013) conducted a sequential explanatory mixed-design study to examine the Principal Residency Network (PRN) at Johnson and Wales University's Centre for Leadership and Educational Equity. This extensive investigation aimed to evaluate the achievements and opinions of PRN graduates while simultaneously building a structured method for collecting data and conducting continuing program evaluations. The study conducted by Braun et al. (2013) yielded compelling results. They concluded that the PRN consistently showed positive effects, such as participant performance, growth, program completion rates, and the achievement of leadership positions after graduation.

The survey results revealed that participants credited a substantial influence on their ability to bring about a major change to every facet of the PRN program. The significant influence remained stable throughout the program's 12-year duration. The focus group talks conducted in the study revealed the program's transformative nature, with special emphasis on the synergistic impact of its structural components and the immersion residential experience on participants (Braun et al., 2013). The study also discovered that a primary objective of the PRN program was to train

leaders dedicated to implementing practices that promote equity. Participants regarded the equity-focused approach as a fundamental and all-encompassing element of their learning process, smoothly incorporated into every aspect of their educational encounters. Braun et al.'s (2013) study highlights the efficacy of the PRN program in developing future principals. This is supported by its consistent good results, transformative influence, and focus on fostering educational leaders prioritizing equity.

Leithwood et al. (2003) found compelling evidence about the effectiveness of leadership development programs on student achievement. The study on the Greater New Orleans School Leadership Center (SLC) provides convincing substantiation of the impact of leadership development programs on student learning. Leithwood et al. (2003) highlight significant improvements in student achievement as measured by state testing programs and engagement metrics, suggesting a positive trajectory in the program's early years that tends to level off by the third year without regressing to baseline levels.

Cliffe et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study in England to investigate the preparation of school leaders at the secondary level, which revealed a transition from reliance on the National College and local authorities to a greater emphasis on teaching schools, their alliances, and multi-academy trusts. The study specifically explored the opportunities available to individuals within secondary school leadership teams. The findings of the interviews by Cliffe et al. (2018) indicate a notable absence of active involvement between the participants and local educational authorities. A prevalent trend in the educational landscape has been transforming

several schools into academies and teaching schools. This shift emphasizes leadership development, which academy chains facilitate, rather than relying on local authority participation.

According to Simkins (2012), there was a shift in how schools were positioned as the focal point of leadership development initiatives. The prevailing opinion among the participants indicated a notable decrease in the perceived impact of local authority support. According to one participant's perspective, the local authority's function has significantly shrunk in the present condition. There needed to be more uniformity in the availability of these possibilities among different educational institutions. Cliffe et al. (2018) found that not all participants saw senior leadership teams (SLTs) as venues for personal growth, indicating discrepancies in opportunities resulting from varying underlying philosophies.

Variability was detected in both School Leadership Teams (SLTs) and local authorities, indicating the decentralized structure of the educational system.

Preparing Principals to Lead Effective Schools

The effective schools movement, which began in the United States with the Coleman Report in the 1960s (Coleman et al., 1966), pioneered by Ronald Edmonds in the 1970s (Edmonds, 1979) and later refined by (Lezotte, 1991), underline that all students can achieve academic success if schools are effectively led and managed, well-organized, and have clear vision with sound instructional leadership (Edmonds, 1979). This principle resonates within the Jamaican educational context, where disparities in student outcomes across socio-economic groups remain a long-standing and pressing concern (Hutton, 2022; Hutton, 2016).

Studies consistently show that effective school leadership directly impacts teaching quality and student achievement (Johnson et al., 2018). Furthermore, contemporary scholarship highlights the importance of context-sensitive leadership preparation (Gümüş & Bellibaş,2020) that addresses the specific challenges faced by educational leaders in different environments (Johnson et al., 2018). In Jamaica, the diverse socio-economic and geographical realities of urban and rural schools and traditional and non-traditional schools necessitate leadership programs tailored to local needs (Hutton and Johnson, 2017; Ying, 2022).

The APP includes elements that reflect this, such as training in community leadership and instructional improvement, both essential to managing under-resourced schools. This emphasis on adaptive leadership relates to the broader objectives of the Effective Schools Movement. It reinforces the program's focus on equity, ensuring that aspiring principals are equipped to meet the diverse needs of all students while maintaining high academic standards across the education system.

Advancing School Leadership Preparation and Job Satisfaction

Contemporary educational leadership studies have emphasized the importance of establishing a well-organized "principal pipeline" to cultivate the requisite abilities for effective school leadership and improve job contentment for principalship positions. Recent research by Doss et al. (2022) and Gordon (2020) has highlighted a comprehensive approach that includes principals' recruitment, training, mentorship, and retention, pivotal to their professional fulfillment. The researchers are of the view that the journey from being a successful teacher to a satisfied and successful principal involves a series of critical steps: engagement in a targeted

principal preparation program, obtaining initial licensure, immersion in a thorough induction program as a principal; and a commitment to ongoing professional development as a principal, all of which are essential for job satisfaction (Gordon, 2020).

The United States Department of Education (2003) points out the need for educational programs to develop a stronger sense of direction and structure. Hess and Kelley (2005) add that institutions tasked with preparing educational leaders often lack the resources and willingness to make meaningful changes to their curricula, which is necessary to truly prepare future leaders capable of enhancing curriculum, pedagogy, and student achievement. To combat the shortage of qualified principal candidates, New Jersey initiated a rapid-response educational program in 2003 designed to efficiently prepare leaders for school administration's complexities, aligning with state and national standards (Styron & Lemire, 2009). Similarly, the Boston Principal Fellowship Program has successfully equipped principals with the capabilities to take on leadership roles in some of the most challenging district schools immediately.

The First Ring Leadership Academy, formed by the suburban districts around Cleveland in partnership with local universities, has made strides in addressing the principal shortage and has been well-received, indicating high satisfaction levels among its participants (Styron & Lemire, 2009). The LAUNCH program, with over 188 participants committing to four years in the Chicago educational system, has been highlighted as a model of successful principal preparation and satisfaction by the Broad Foundation (Styron & Lemire, 2009).

Chiang et al. (2005) examined job satisfaction within the hotel industry and found that high-quality training programs significantly enhance job satisfaction and employee retention. Their study revealed that employees who received substantial training were more satisfied with their jobs and more likely to remain with their employers. This research emphasizes the crucial role of structured training in boosting job satisfaction, suggesting that the APP's comprehensive training approach could similarly benefit aspiring principals in Jamaica (Chiang et al., 2005).

Drummond and Halsey (2014) examined the impact of formal leadership preparation on job satisfaction among rural school principals in Australia. Their study involving 658 rural school leaders found that principals who underwent formal training before their appointments reported higher levels of job satisfaction than those who did not. This finding was statistically significant even after controlling for various demographic and school-related factors. The study highlights the importance of leadership training in improving job satisfaction, reinforcing the potential benefits of the APP in preparing and supporting future school leaders in Jamaica (Drummond & Halsey, 2014).

Pascual (2023) explored the relationship between school principals' leadership styles and teachers' job satisfaction in the Philippines. The study focused on transformational and transactional leadership styles, revealing that principals who effectively utilized these styles significantly improved teachers' job satisfaction and self-efficacy. Teachers led by transformational leaders reported feeling more motivated and engaged, which contributed to higher job satisfaction levels. This underscores the importance of leadership training in fostering a positive and

supportive work environment. By incorporating elements of transformational and transactional leadership training, the APP could similarly enhance job satisfaction among aspiring principals in Jamaica (Pascual, 2023).

Sodoma and Else (2018) explored job satisfaction among Iowa public school principals and found that those who received comprehensive training reported higher levels of job satisfaction. The study showed that well-trained principals were better equipped to manage the demands of their roles, leading to increased job satisfaction. This aligns with the findings of Chiang et al. (2005) and Drummond and Halsey (2014), highlighting the positive impact of quality training programs on job satisfaction. Bush (2018) also highlights the implication of practical training and development programs in enhancing school leadership and job satisfaction.

Conclusion of Literature Review

The review highlights the influence of empirical research in assessing the effectiveness of leadership training programs, focusing on the Aspiring Principals Program (APP) in Jamaica. It emphasizes the importance of analyzing these programs through comprehensive literature reviews to identify gaps, inconsistencies, and new developments. The APP aims to strengthen educational leadership and improve educational outcomes by concentrating on the preparedness and competence of future educational leaders in Jamaica. Effective school leadership has a critical role in influencing student progress and the quality of educational outcomes. It raises questions regarding preparing school leaders for current difficulties and evaluating their performance (Darling-Hammond, 2007 & 2022; Leithwood et al., 2004).

The literature confirms that principals have evolved from supervisors to adaptable leaders responsible for strategic planning and educational innovations, highlighting the importance of comprehensive training programs. The literature shows a disconnect between the demands of the position and the training provided, with worries regarding how quickly these programs adjust to evolving educational needs. Studies have raised doubts about the efficacy of these programs in adequately equipping leaders to manage real-world challenges and school-based complexities, such as diversity and inequality (Davis et al., 2005). Debates exist over the influence of APP and comparable programs on academic achievements.

Some studies demonstrate favorable effects on student accomplishment, while others suggest a lack of substantial evidence connecting principal preparation to improved academic outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022). This mismatch underscores the challenge of assessing leadership training programs and indicates a requirement for more thorough studies with rigorous controls and comparisons (Anderson & Reynolds, 2015).

This dissertation evaluated the APP's effectiveness in Jamaica based on these findings. This involved examining the program's impact on the readiness and skill of future principals, its ability to adjust to the changing requirements of educational leadership, and its overall impact on educational results, job satisfaction, and program enhancement. The questions are designed to add to the broader discussion on preparing educational leaders, offering evidence-based insights for policymakers and educational stakeholders to improve the quality and efficacy of these programs.

Research Questions

This section will illuminate the research questions that guide this study.

These questions serve as the compass that steers the inquiry, helping to focus efforts and structure the investigation. By clearly defining the research questions, we can ensure that our study addresses the most pressing issues and contributes to advancing knowledge in this field.

1. Research Question 1: How does completion of the Aspiring Principals Programme (APP) influence principals' confidence compared to those who have not completed the program?
2. Research Question 2: What are the perceptions and experiences of educational leaders who have undergone the Aspiring Principals Program regarding its impact on their leadership skills, decision-making abilities, and overall effectiveness as school administrators?
3. Research Question 3: What is the perceived impact of the APP on job satisfaction?

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This research project aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Aspiring Principals Program (APP), administered by the National College of Educational Leadership (NCEL), an agency of the Ministry of Education and Youth in Jamaica. This chapter discusses a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to comprehensively analyze the APP's influence on school leadership, student academic achievements, and effectiveness.

The research methodology included a structured survey distributed to a randomly selected group of principals from primary and high schools across Jamaica's seven educational regions. The survey encompasses APP graduates and non-graduates, facilitating a comparative analysis to identify the program's distinct impacts on these groups' leadership skills and practices. This dual sampling approach covers various school environments throughout Jamaica, providing insights into how the APP may affect leadership practices in different educational settings. As discussed in Chapter 2, two leadership models were used in this project. Each approach brings a different but complementary perspective. I will begin with the Marzano Focused School Leader Evaluation Model.

The suitability of the Marzano School Leadership Model (Carbaugh, 2018; Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018; Southerland et al., 2018) for the Aspiring Principals Program (APP) research methodology can be assessed by considering several

confounding variables, including school and principal attributes, leadership expertise, and teacher caliber.

The financial situation, size, nature, and location of a school are all substantial confounding factors that can influence the efficacy of a principal's guidance. The Marzano model is considered highly suitable for incorporating these variables owing to its all-encompassing structure, including domains that scrutinize school leadership's organizational dimensions. The Model evaluates a leader's capacity to oversee resources efficiently, a critical component when contemplating financial limitations. The Model's adaptability permits its modification to suit distinct school types and locations; thus, the research can be customized to incorporate these attributes, thereby furnishing a more precise evaluation of the application's influence in diverse academic settings.

In addition to experience, demographics, attitudes, and behavior are significant principal characteristics. The isolation of the effects of individual leadership competencies on the overall impact of the APP can be facilitated by the Marzano model's emphasis on these attributes. As an illustration, the Model assesses the preparedness and reaction of a leader towards the particular requirements of their educational institution's body of members, which can significantly differ based on the leader's personal history and professional background. Utilizing this framework in the research methodology also permits the researcher to differentiate between the inherent qualities of the principals and the competencies acquired through the APP. This distinction provides valuable insights into how personal attributes interact with

the instruction received, offering a nuanced evaluation of their combined impact on leadership development.

The caliber of teachers and leadership experience can significantly impact student outcomes and the principal's perceived effectiveness. Given its focus on the advancement and maturation of leaders, the Marzano model is highly suitable for assessing the progression of leadership abilities over time while also considering previous experience. The domain of 'Monitoring and Confirming Effective Teaching' within the Model is associated with the caliber of teachers, establishing a connection between the capacity of a principal to cultivate teaching of superior quality and the achievement of students. Considering these domains within the confines of the research framework will ensure that the methodology will possess an enhanced ability to consider the complex relationship between the quality of instructors, the principals' experience, and the APP's results.

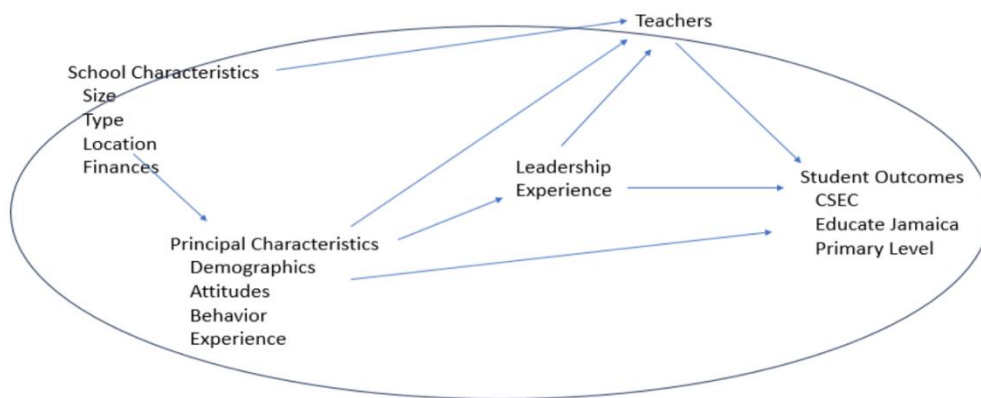


Figure 3.1 Evaluating Educational Leadership Preparation using the model to assess the effectiveness of the Aspiring Principals Program in Jamaica.

The second model, Tannenbaum's Training Effectiveness Model (Tannenbaum et al., 1993; Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1997), proposes that successful program completion should enhance organizational outcomes, specifically academic performance. Educational leaders' level of engagement with the Aspiring Principals Program is another independent variable indicative of their active participation and involvement. The dependent variables are the principals' self-perceptions of the program's impact on their leadership skills, decision-making abilities, and overall efficacy.

Research question 3, which focuses on the perceived impact of the Aspiring Principals Program (APP) on job satisfaction and program improvement, relates to Tannenbaum's Level Four evaluation, which assesses the practical application of skills and knowledge acquired through training. In this context, the completion of the APP and the level of engagement of educational leaders with the program serve as independent variables, representing the extent and quality of the training experience. These variables are anticipated to positively influence job satisfaction among principals, reflecting their enhanced leadership skills and decision-making abilities as per Tannenbaum's Model (Tannenbaum et al., 1993; Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1997).

Active participation in the APP is expected to contribute to program improvement, as feedback and insights from engaged leaders can inform refinements to the curriculum and delivery methods. Thus, by applying Tannenbaum's Level Four evaluation, this research aimed to discern the practical implications of the APP on both job satisfaction and ongoing program enhancement.

Data Collection

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a survey design generates a quantitative description of a population's trends, attitudes, and opinions by sampling a portion of that population. A descriptive, non-experimental survey was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data on the perceptions of a sample of Jamaica school principals. This type of research design enabled me to evaluate the effectiveness of the aspiring principals' program.

The initial phase of this research project focused on gathering quantitative data to determine the relationship between the completion of the Aspiring Principals Program and school academic performance outcomes.

Region 1 includes schools in Kingston and St. Andrew; Region 2 covers institutions in the parishes of St. Thomas, Portland, and St. Mary on the island's eastern side. Schools in St. Ann and Trelawny comprise Region 3, while Region 4 includes institutions in St. James, Hanover, and Westmoreland, all located in the western part of Jamaica. Region 5 incorporates schools in St. Elizabeth and Manchester; Region 6 covers public educational institutions in St. Catherine; and Region 7 contains schools in the parish of Clarendon. See Fig 3.2 and Table 3.1 for further details.

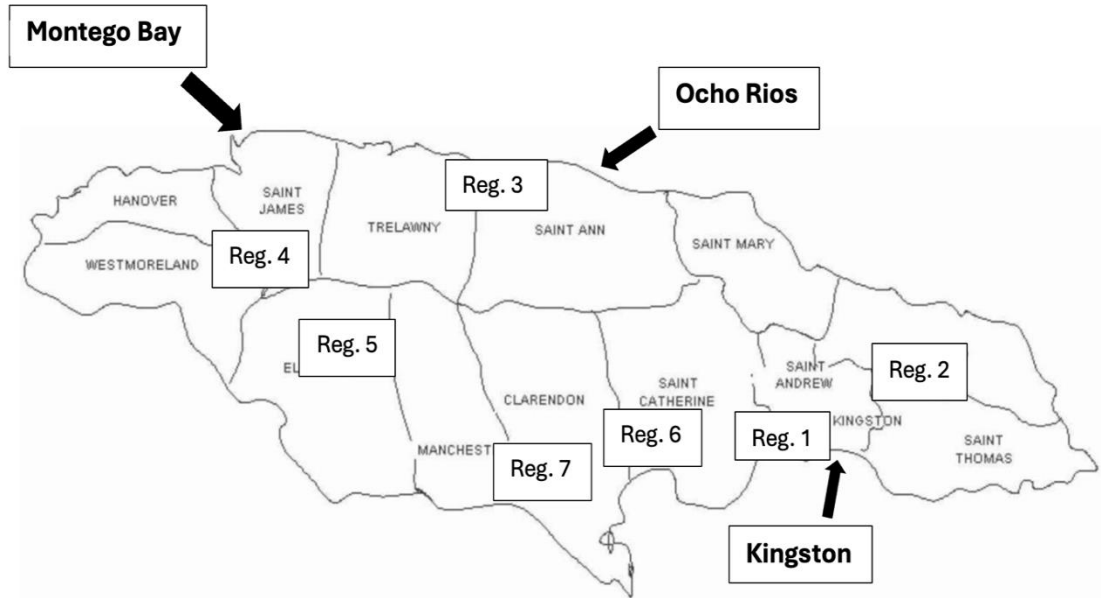


Figure 3.2. Map of Jamaica depicting the seven educational regions. Adapted from maps-jamaica.com

Table 3.1. Distribution of parishes according to the assigned educational region.

Region	Parishes
1	Kingston and St Andrew St. Thomas, Portland, and
2	St. Mary
3	St. Ann and Trelawny St. James, Hanover, and
4	Westmoreland St. Elizabeth and
5	Manchester
6	St. Catherine
7	Clarendon

Survey respondents were recruited with the assistance of the executive committees of the Association of Principals and Vice Principals, APVP, and the Jamaica Association of Principals of Secondary Schools. The assistance of the program administrators of the National College of Educational Leadership, NCEL, and the Regional Directors of Educational Services was also used to recruit respondents for the study.

Instrument Design

The survey instrument was designed to elicit data on the participants' demographic characteristics, such as age and gender, perceptions, and principal experiences concerning the Aspiring Principals Program. A Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 was used for responses to facilitate the measurement of these perceptions using Qualtrics for data collection, ensuring efficient distribution and capturing the data while maintaining the confidentiality of respondents' identities.

The survey covers many questions that aim to collect comprehensive personal, professional, and perceptual data from principals. This encompasses demographic data, such as gender, years of teaching and principalship experience, and educational qualifications. This data offers a fundamental comprehension of the profiles of the principals, assisting in the linkage of these aspects with their professional perspectives and experiences.

The survey explored principals' professional lives and duties with questions specifically developed to evaluate their daily tasks, difficulties, and degrees of satisfaction related to their positions. Asking detailed questions regarding the amount of time spent on different tasks, such as administrative duties and contacts with

students and teachers, provided vital information about the practical aspects of their job and how it may affect their effectiveness and job satisfaction. Questions on their concurrence or dissent with statements concerning job stress, contentment, and the influence of external circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic offer a qualitative assessment of their occupational well-being and viewpoints on the challenges and benefits of the role.

The survey also collected elements of professional growth and leadership effectiveness, with inquiries designed to ascertain the principals' perspectives on their competencies and accomplishments in enhancing student outcomes and school performance. This encompasses their level of assurance in utilizing data to facilitate academic enhancements, their engagement in professional development endeavors, and their impression of the leadership's contribution to educational triumph. These questions are essential for determining where principals succeed and need improvement. This information can be used to develop specific support programs and make policy reforms to strengthen school educational leadership.

These responses, expressed in the participants' own words, are instrumental in gaining deeper insights into their personal experiences and professional challenges. Integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection methods enhances the research's depth, making it well-suited for educational research where understanding personal experiences and subjective interpretations is as critical as gathering empirical data. This dual-method approach not only improves the validity and comprehensiveness of the study but also ensures that the findings accurately reflect the diverse experiences of the principals involved.

Sampling

The survey was distributed to approximately 150 participating school principals using a random sampling technique to ensure a diverse representation of leadership experiences and school environments. This random selection method helps eliminate selection bias, providing a more representative cross-section of school leadership across the country. A total of 118 principals responded to the survey, of which 108 were deemed valid for analysis, reflecting a robust engagement across the educational spectrum and a response rate of 72 percent based on the valid responses.

The remaining ten responses were rejected due to incompleteness, which could skew the overall results and interpretations of the program's effectiveness. This detailed vetting process was essential to maintain the integrity and accuracy of the research findings. The demographics of the valid responses illustrate a balanced gender distribution among the participating principals, with 50 male principals (46.3%) and 58 female principals (53.7%). This gender distribution reflects the leadership landscape within the sampled educational settings, providing insights into the gender dynamics of school leadership in Jamaica.

Regarding the educational level of the institutions represented, the sample included 44 primary school principals (40.7%) and 64 secondary school principals (59.3%). This distribution allows the research to address potential differences in leadership challenges and outcomes between the two types of schools. The diverse composition of the sample, achieved through random sampling, supports a nuanced analysis of how the Aspiring Principals Program impacts leadership practices in

different educational contexts, contributing valuable perspectives to the discourse on academic leadership in Jamaica.

Data Collection Procedures

The study's data collection procedures were structured and executed through the online survey platform Qualtrics. The distribution process commenced with an initial email containing the survey link sent to key educational associations—the Association of Principals and Vice Principals and the Jamaica Association of Principals of Secondary Schools. These bodies aided in further disseminating the survey electronically to their membership. Weekly follow-up emails were dispatched every Monday to encourage participation.

The survey link was also shared via the National College of Educational Leadership, NCEL, which utilized its database of graduates and current school leaders to reach potential respondents. The target group for the survey comprised approximately 150 principals, including participants and non-participants of the Aspiring Principals Program. Out of a targeted population of 150 principals, 118 responses were collected, of which 10 were excluded due to incomplete entries on the survey instrument, resulting in 108 valid responses.

The survey's introduction and accompanying emails outlined how the collected data would be used and safeguarded, ensuring transparency and adherence to ethical standards. Participants were required to provide informed consent before engaging with the survey, confirming their agreement with the data use and privacy terms. In compliance with the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines, all raw data will be preserved for at least five years following publication.

This directive ensures that the data can be reviewed or reanalyzed if necessary, supporting the integrity and verifiability of the research.

To guarantee the confidentiality and security of the data, all physical copies were stored in a securely locked box. Electronic data were maintained in a protected environment, inaccessible to unauthorized personnel. After the stipulated five-year period, all data will be methodically destroyed, ensuring that personal and sensitive information is irretrievably disposed of, thus safeguarding participant privacy per the ethical standards outlined in the study protocols.

Data Treatment, Sorting, and Coding

The data cleaning, treatment, coding, and sorting were critical steps in the study that facilitated a systematic analysis of the survey responses. Initially, data received from the survey, including quantitative and qualitative responses, were carefully coded to ensure anonymity and streamline the analysis process. All identifying information was removed to protect participants' confidentiality. Quantitative responses were assigned numeric values suitable for analysis in SPSS, a statistical software used extensively for handling complex data sets. This step was crucial for performing statistical tests and generating reliable, interpretable results.

Additionally, qualitative responses were analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns, which were then categorized to enrich the understanding of the principals' perspectives and experiences. The coding process involved assigning numbers to the responses, following a methodological approach recommended by Nardi (2018). This approach aids significantly in tabulating statistics and simplifying the analysis process. This approach streamlines statistical analysis and minimizes

errors during data entry and analysis. Using SPSS software, responses were transformed into a format that could be easily manipulated and explored statistically.

The software's robust analytical tools allowed for the execution of complex statistical procedures, which helped to unveil significant trends and insights from the data collected from the principals.

Data sorting was the final step in organizing the survey responses for detailed analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed using various statistical techniques to determine correlations, variances, and other statistical measures that offer insights into the data trends. On the other hand, qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis, where responses were grouped into themes representing the participants' sentiments or opinions. This dual approach in handling both quantitative and qualitative data ensured a comprehensive study, providing a holistic view of the research questions addressed in the survey. This meticulous data treatment, coding, and sorting process was pivotal in drawing meaningful conclusions from the data collected.

Graduation Rates from the APP

In assessing the characteristics of the principals surveyed, 73.1% (79 out of 108) reported graduating from the Aspiring Principals Program (APP), illustrating the program's apparent substantial presence and influence among school leaders in Jamaica. This indicates a significant penetration of the program among school leaders, highlighting its influence within the educational sector. Conversely, the remaining 26.9% or 29 out of 108 principals had not participated in the APP,

providing a comparative backdrop to assess the program's effectiveness against those who did not partake. See Table 3.2 for further details.

Table 3.2. *Did you graduate from the Aspiring Principals Program?*

	N	%
Yes	79	73.1%
No	29	26.9%

Year of Birth Categories Among Respondents

The distribution of APP graduates and non-graduates is somewhat consistent across most age categories among the respondents surveyed, with the highest APP graduation rates observed in 1969-1976 (81.8%), 1977-1984 (75.8%), and 1985-1990 (79.4%), categories on a percentage basis. See Table 3.3 for further details.

Table 3.3. *Birth Year Categories of Survey Respondents*

Year of Birth Range	APP		Total
	Graduates	Non-Graduates	
1961-1968	5 (55.6%)	4 (44.4%)	9 (100%)
1969-1976	18 (81.8%)	4 (18.2%)	22 (100%)
1977-1984	25 (75.8%)	8 (24.2%)	33 (100%)
1985-1990	27 (79.4%)	7 (20.6%)	34 (100%)
1991-2023	4 (40%)	6 (60%)	10 (100%)
Total	79 (73.1%)	29 (26.9%)	108 (100%)

$\chi^2 = 22.118, p = .815$

The chi-square test result ($\chi^2 = 22.118, p = .815$) indicates no statistically significant difference in age-related graduation status. The highest concentration of candidates within the 1977-1984 and 1985-1990 categories suggests that most

respondents are mid-career professionals, likely at a stage where they seek leadership development or advancement opportunities.

Gender and APP Completion

The data suggest a significant relationship between gender and being an APP graduate, as indicated by a chi-square value of 5.891 and a p-value of .015. Among the APP graduates, 82.8% (N=48) are females, while 62.0% (N=31) are males, indicating a higher graduation rate for females. Conversely, non-graduation rates are higher among males (N=19, 38.0%) than females (N=10, 17.2%). See Table 3.4 for further details.

Table 3.4. *Gender Distribution of APP Graduates and Non-Graduates*

Gender	APP Graduate	Non Graduate	Total
Male	31 (62.0%)	19 (38.%)	50 (100%)
Female	48 (82.8%)	10 (17.2%)	58 (100%)
Total	79 (73.1%)	29 (26.9%)	108 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 5.891, p = .015$

Gender and School Type

The Aspiring Principals Program was closely examined for gender representation across established school types. Data were categorized based on school types: Early, Primary, Early and Primary, Secondary, Primary and Secondary, and Early through Secondary.

This categorization helped facilitate a comparative analysis of gender distribution, offering insights into the broader landscape of leadership training and preparation in various educational settings.

The chi-square test analyzing gender representation across different school levels revealed that gender is unrelated to school type ($\chi^2(1) = 2.946, p = .086$). On a percentage basis, females were more likely to be in primary schools (15, 25.9%) and males in secondary schools (34, 68.0%). See Table 3.5 for further details.

Table 3.5. *Gender and School Type*

Education Level	Male	Female	Total
Early Childhood	0 (0%)	1 (1.7%)	1 (0.9%)
Primary	10 (20.0%)	15 (25.9%)	25 (23.1%)
Early and Primary	6 (12.0%)	11 (19.0%)	17 (15.7%)
Secondary	34 (68.0%)	29 (50.0%)	63 (58.3%)
Primary and Secondary	0 (0%)	1 (1.7%)	1 (0.9%)
Early through Secondary	0 (0%)	1 (1.7%)	1 (0.9%)
Total	50 (100%)	58 (100%)	108 (100%)

$\chi^2(1) = 2.946, p = .086$ (Primary)

$\chi^2(1) = 2.946, p = .086$ (Secondary)

Crosstabulation of Gender and Years Served as a Teacher Among Respondents

An analysis of the crosstabulation data shows a statistically significant relationship between gender and the duration of teaching experience, with a chi-square value of 10.463 and a p-value of .015. See Table 3.6 for further details.

Table 3.6. *Crosstabulation of Gender and Years Served as a Teacher Among Respondents*

Years Served	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
1 - 4 yrs	9 (0%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)
5 - 9 yrs	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	10 (100%)
10 - 14 yrs	14 (48.3%)	15 (51.7%)	29 (100%)
15 or more yrs	25 (37.9%)	41 (62.1%)	66 (100%)
Total	48 (45.3%)	58 (54.7%)	106 (100%)

$X^2(1) = 10.463^a$ $P = .015$

Male respondents comprise the majority (90.0%) with a tenure ranging from 5 to 9 years, although a significant percentage (48.3%) have served for 10 to 14 years. Conversely, a lesser proportion of female instructors (10.0%) have worked for 5-9 years, while the majority (51.7%) have accumulated 10-14 years of experience. The proportion of female respondents with 15 or more years of service is 62.1%, whereas for males in the same group, it is 37.9%. The observed distribution indicates that female respondents have longer tenures than male colleagues. The low p-value suggests that this variation is improbable to be attributed to random chance.

Based on a chi-square value of 1.964 and a p-value of .742, the crosstabulation study comparing gender with the number of years served as an assistant principal shows no significant link between these variables. The data indicate that the allocation of male and female Vice principals over various tenures is comparable and does not exhibit a statistically significant difference between genders. See Table 3.7.

Table 3.7. *Crosstabulation of Gender and Years Served as a Vice Principal Among Respondents.*

Years Served as Vice Principal	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
0 yrs	13 (52%)	12 (48%)	25 (100%)
1 - 4 yrs	12 (41.4%)	17 (58.6%)	29 (100%)
5 - 9 yrs	11 (52.4%)	10 (47.6%)	21 (100%)
10 - 14 yrs	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	5 (100%)
15 or more yrs	1 (25%)	3 (75%)	4 (100%)
Total	40 (47.6%)	44 (52.4%)	84 (100%)

$X^2 (1) = 1.964$ P=
.742

Crosstabulation of Gender and Years Served as a Principal Among Respondents

The crosstabulation analysis examining the relationship between gender and the duration of principal service shows no statistically significant relationship, as evidenced by a chi-square significance level of 3.458 and a p-value of .484. See Table 3.8.

Table 3.8. *Crosstabulation of Gender and Years Served as a Principal Among Respondents*

Years Served as Principal	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
0 yrs	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)
1 - 4 yrs	11 (55%)	9 (45%)	20 (100%)
5 - 9 yrs	19 (46.3%)	22 (53.7%)	41 (100%)
10 - 14 yrs	8 (38.1%)	13 (61.9%)	21 (100%)
15 or more yrs	9 (50%)	9 (50%)	18 (100%)
Total	49 (48%)	53 (52%)	102 (100%)

$X^2 (1) = 3.458$, $p = .484$

Gender does not substantially impact the distribution of years worked as a principal. Within the group of principals who have been in their positions for 15 years or longer, the gender distribution is balanced, with males and females each accounting for 50.0%. However, on a percentage basis, females were more apt to have been principals longer than males. For example, 62,1% (N = 41) of the females were in the 15 years or more category, while 37.9% (N = 25) of the men were.

The analysis also highlights a significant gender disparity in APP completion rates, with female school leaders demonstrating higher completion than their male counterparts. The data reveal that 60.8% of female participants complete the APP, compared to 65.5% of males in the non-graduate category. This substantial difference is statistically significant, as indicated by a Pearson Chi-Square value of 5.891 and a p-value of .015. Please see table 3.9 for further details.

Table 3.9. *Gender Distribution among APP and Non-APP Graduates*

Gender	APP Graduate (Yes)	None Graduate (No)	Total
Male	31 (62.0%)	19 (38.0%)	50
Female	48 (82.8%)	10 (17.2%)	58
Total	79 (73.1%)	29 (26.9%)	108

$\chi^2(1)=5.891, p=.015$

Age and APP Participation

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted on the Aspiring Principals Programme (APP) reveals significant findings on the age differences between APP graduates and non-graduates. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) findings indicate a significant difference in the ages of individuals who have completed the APP program compared to those who have not ($F(1, 106) = 6.151, p = .015$). The average age of APP graduates was 46.62 years, with a standard deviation of 6.242. On the other hand, non-graduates had an average age of 49.83 years, with a standard deviation of 5.078. Please see table 3.10 for further details.

Table 3.10. *The Average Age of APP Graduates*

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD
Age of Principals	APP Graduates	79	46.62	6.242
	Non-Graduates	29	49.83	5.078
Total		108		

$F(1, 106) = 6.151, p = .015$

These findings indicate that younger principals are likelier to participate in and complete the APP. The inference is that the APP appeals to younger educational leaders in the initial phases of their careers and is looking to improve their leadership abilities and educational influence through organized, professional growth. The implication of these findings extends beyond mere participation rates; they reflect potential variations in receptiveness and application of the training provided by the APP based on age.

Younger principals, as indicated by their lower mean age among APP graduates, may bring a different set of expectations and a different engagement style to the program, which could significantly impact the APP's effectiveness and the development of educational leaders.

Years of Experience

The ANOVA results for years of experience as a principal between APP graduates and non-graduates indicate significant differences in the experience levels of principals within these groups. The ANOVA yielded an F-value of 10.114 with a highly significant p-value of .002, reflecting notable disparities in tenure between the two cohorts. Notably, APP graduates had a mean of 6.33 years in the principal role with a standard deviation of 5.254, suggesting relatively newer principals are part of this group. In contrast, non-graduates reported a higher mean of 9.86 years with a standard deviation of 4.711, indicating that those not participating in the APP tend to have more experience in such positions. See Table 3.11 for further details.

Table 3.11. *Years of Experience as Principals Among APP Graduates and Non-Graduates*

Group	N	Mean	SD
APP Graduates	79	6.33	5.254
Non-Graduates	29	9.86	4.711
Total	108		

$F(1,106) = 10.114, p = .002$

The implications of these findings are significant, as they imply that the APP is more likely to attract and benefit principals who are relatively new to their roles. This could indicate that newer principals seek development opportunities to enhance their skills early in their administrative careers. At the same time, those with more experience may not see the same need or may have other avenues for development. The lower standard deviation among non-graduates also indicates a more uniform group regarding years of experience compared to a broader range of tenure among APP graduates.

Tenure of Principals among APP and Non-APP Graduates

A larger proportion of APP graduates (32, 43.8%) have served as principals for 5-9 years compared to non-APP graduates (9, 31.0%). In contrast, non-APP graduates are more evenly distributed across the experience categories, with 31.0% (9) each in the 5-9 years, 10-14 years, and 15+ years categories. APP graduates are less represented in the 15+ years category (9, 12.3%) than non-APP graduates. This could imply that APP graduates are generally earlier in their principalship careers, potentially due to the relatively recent introduction of the APP or its increasing relevance in educational leadership. The chi-square test result ($\chi^2(4)=12.963$,

p=.011) shows that these differences in years of experience between APP and non-APP graduates are statistically significant. Please see Table 3.12 for further details.

Table 3.12. *Tenure of Principals among APP and non-APP Graduates*

Years as Principal	APP Graduates	Non- APP Graduates	Total
0	1 (1.4%)	1 (3.4%)	2 (2.0%)
1-4 years	19 (26.0%)	1 (3.4 %)	20 (19.6%)
5-9 years	32 (43.8%)	9 (31.0%)	41 (40.2%)
10-14 years	12 (16.4 %)	9 (31.0%)	21 (20.6%)
15+ years	9 (12.3%)	9 (31.0%)	18 (17.6%)
Total	73 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	102 (100.0%)

$\chi^2(4)=12.963, p =.011$

Scale Construction

For the APP data analysis, summative scales were constructed by aggregating individual item scores to create composite measures representing broader constructs of interest in the research. The reliability and validity of these scales were assessed using Cronbach's alpha to ensure internal consistency, Wiedermann et al. (2024). The validity of the scales was evaluated to confirm that they accurately measure the intended constructs, thereby providing a convincing basis for subsequent analyses. This method allows for a more complete understanding of the relationships within the data, ensuring that the scales used are reliable and valid.

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha is a widely used measure to estimate the internal consistency of items within a scale, indicating the extent to which responses to survey questions correlate (Cronbach, 1951; Cronbach & Shavelson, 2004).

Cronbach's alpha measures the extent to which responses to survey questions correlate and estimates the proportion of systematic or consistent variance in a set of survey responses (Cronbach, 1951; Cronbach & Shavelson, 2004). An alpha value closer to 1 suggests higher reliability, and values above 0.7 are considered acceptable for social science research (Vaske et al., 2017). In the provided scale, "*Principal's Confidence*," which includes items such as "*Students may not achieve despite good leadership*," "*Some students are just not prepared to learn*," "*Working collaboratively with teachers*," and "*Working with other School Leaders*," the Cronbach's alpha is calculated to be 0.651. See Table 3.13 for further details.

Table 3.13. *Reliability Analysis of the Principals Confidence Scale Using Cronbach's Alpha*

Scale Names	List of Items	Cronbach's α
Principal's Confidence	Working with other School Leaders	0.651
	Working collaboratively with teachers	
	Students may not achieve despite good leadership.	
	Some students are just not prepared to learn.	

This value suggests moderate internal consistency among the items, indicating some correlation (Vaske et al., 2017).

Principal's Job Satisfaction

The Cronbach's alpha value of 0.772 for the "Job Satisfaction" scale indicates good internal consistency among the items. The alpha value noted in Table 3.13 falls within this acceptable range, asserting the quality of this research. In this scale, the items include various statements related to principals' job satisfaction, such as "The stress and disappointments not worth it being a principal," "Generally satisfied with being the principal," "Satisfied with being a principal in general," "Would leave for higher pay," "Think about transferring schools," "Enthusiasm has decreased since starting the job," "Often too tired to go to work," "Consider transferring out of the region," and "COVID made the job much harder." The alpha value of 0.772 (see Table 3.14) suggests that the responses to these items are consistently correlated, indicating that they reliably measure the underlying construct of job satisfaction among principals (Vaske et al., 2017). This high level of reliability in our scale instills confidence in the robustness of our research methodology. See Table 3.14 for further details.

Table 3.14. *Reliability Analysis of the Principals Job Satisfaction Scale Using Cronbach's Alpha*

Scale Name	List of Items	Cronbach's α Value
Principals' Job Satisfaction	The stress and disappointments are not worth it being a principal	0.772
	Generally satisfied with being the principal	
	Satisfied with being a principal in general.	
	Would leave for higher pay	
	Think about transferring schools.	
	Enthusiasm has decreased since starting the job.	
	Often too tired to go to work.	
	Consider transferring out of the region.	
	COVID made the job much harder.	

Analysis of Qualitative Responses

Open-ended questions were used to get broad insights into the experiences and leadership nuances encountered by school principals to analyze and evaluate the qualitative responses from the Aspiring Principals Programme (APP) study. See Table 3.15 for details.

Table 3.15. *Percentage of graduates providing qualitative responses*

Question #	Question	Percentage Response
15	This project is focused on learning more about what educational leaders need to lead effectively. Is there anything you would like to add?	48.10%
19	What did you like most about the APP?	3.7%
20	What did you like the least about the APP?	5.6%
21	How can the program be improved?	43.5%

Question 15 - All respondents N=108

Questions 19, 20 & 21 – Only APP Respondents N= 79

These questions aimed to pinpoint the most challenging components of being a principal, the least like aspects of principalship, and recommendations for enhancing the APP. The data were initially obtained from SPSS and categorized into two primary groups in Word. Initial responses from principals who had completed the APP and subsequent responses from principals who had not facilitated a coherent juxtaposition of viewpoints of APP graduates and non-graduates, therefore emphasizing disparities and points of convergence in their experiences and requirements.

After categorization, the responses were further grouped into key themes from the data, including Resource and Support Needs, Professional Development

and Training, Leadership and Governance, School Culture and Ethos, and Stakeholder Interaction and Conflict Resolution. For example, APP and non-APP graduates highlighted the Resource and Support Needs theme, frequently mentioning the difficulty of managing limited resources and the need for increased funding and support. Under the Professional Development and Training theme, APP graduates expressed a desire for continuous professional development and targeted training in financial management and educating specific student groups, such as boys. The theme of Leadership and Governance revealed calls for improved policies, mentorship, and a possible licensing regime for principals, indicating a need for more structured support in school leadership roles.

Although the quantitative data indicated that APP program graduates generally expressed greater confidence, the qualitative responses provided further insights by emphasizing certain requirements and areas of concentration, such as continuous professional growth and support. The difficulties outlined by those who did not graduate from the APP program included managing resources, meeting stakeholder expectations, and providing a framework for understanding their somewhat lower levels of confidence. Fusing these qualitative themes into the quantitative findings facilitated a more thorough understanding of the APP's influence on school principals, emphasizing the need for focused assistance, ongoing growth, and efficient resource allocation in improving school leadership.

Conclusion

The methodology outlined in Chapter 3 provides a robust framework for evaluating the impact of the Aspiring Principals Program on school leadership and especially academic outcomes in Jamaican schools. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates quantitative and qualitative data collected from a representative sample of school principals at the early childhood, primary, and secondary levels. This method ensures comprehensive coverage of the diverse educational settings across Jamaica's seven educational regions, enabling a detailed analysis of the APP's impact on leadership practices and school performance. Adopting the Marzano Focused School Leader evaluation model and the Tannenbaum Model of Training Effectiveness further refines the research by accommodating various confounding factors that could influence leadership effectiveness.

The structured survey, distributed to APP graduates and non-graduates, is designed to capture nuanced data on the principals' professional experiences and perceptions of the APP. The procedures for data handling, including calibration of survey instruments and training of researchers, are meticulously detailed, underscoring the research's commitment to methodological rigor.

Chapter 4 of the dissertation will delve into the analysis of data focusing on the impact of the Aspiring Principals Program (APP) on principal's perception of student academic performance outcomes as perceived by Jamaican school principals and the influence of the APP on principals' leadership practices, job satisfaction, and the broader implications for educational policy and leadership development. It will

assess how participation in the APP correlates with principals' professional growth and their schools' performance outcomes, aiming to offer insights that could inform enhancements in leadership training initiatives.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

In Chapter 4, I present the findings from the survey on the effectiveness of the Aspiring Principals Programme (APP) in Jamaica. This program, which is significant to the Jamaican educational landscape, has been evaluated based on quantitative and qualitative responses from 108 Jamaican principals across early childhood, primary, and secondary education levels, including graduates and non-graduates of the APP.

This chapter assesses the APP's impact on principals' perceptions of student academic performance, leadership and decision-making skills, and job satisfaction, providing a comprehensive understanding of its influence. This research comprehensively explains the APP's influence and broader effects on educational leadership, informing future policy and practice.

Research Question #1: How does completion of the Aspiring Principals Programme influence principals' confidence compared to those who have not completed the program?

Principal's Confidence and Participation in the APP

The data analysis from the Aspiring Principals Programme (APP) underscores noteworthy findings regarding principal confidence levels, gender distribution among participants, and trends in graduation years. The statistical results reveal that APP completion has a markedly positive correlation with enhanced confidence levels among school principals compared to principals who did not graduate from the program. This relationship is quantitatively substantiated by a

Pearson Chi-Square test, which yields a value of 28.173 with a p-value of .043, decisively affirming that APP graduates generally report higher confidence scores.

See Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. *I am confident that I can raise students' achievement.*

Self-Confidence Level (Likert Scale)	APP Graduate	None- APP Graduate	Total
Strongly Disagree	1 (14.3%)	6 (85.7%)	7 (6.5%)
Disagree	12 (70.6%)	5 (29.4%)	17 (15.7%)
Neutral	20 (83.3%)	4 (16.7%)	24 (22.2%)
Agree	25 (92.6%)	2 (7.4%)	27 (25.0%)
Strongly Agree	21 (84%)	4 (16%)	25 (23.1%)
Total	79 (73.1%)	29 (26.9)	108 (100%)

$(\chi^2) = 28.173, p = .043$

Principals' Confidence in Raising Student Academic Achievement

Although the relationship between APP status and confidence in raising student achievement is not statistically significant (Chi Sq=2.434, p = ns), consideration of the relevant percentage difference is of interest. On a percentage basis, APP graduates were more apt to respond "Strongly agree" (57, 72.2%) than were non-APP graduates (17, 58.6%).

Qualitative Responses from APP and Non-APP Graduates

Qualitative responses from APP graduates further expound educational leaders' perceived conditions, aligning with the quantitative results, particularly around the theme "Resources and Support Needs." One graduate stated, "Adequate resources are needed also as you can have a good principal whose school is lacking in resources," highlighting the importance of resource availability for effective

leadership. Another emphasized the necessity for financial support, stating, "Greater access to funding; there are times when there are things a principal needs such as providing an incentive to enhance motivation," and "Greater financial support, fiscal training," underscoring the need for financial resources and training to support their roles effectively.

Continuous professional development emerged as a critical need-based, highlighted by the established qualitative theme "Professional Development and Training." APP graduates emphasized that "Continuous professional development is important for school principals and student success" and "More emphasis is needed to provide continuous support for principals." This aligns with the finding that higher confidence levels among principals are associated with APP completion, suggesting that ongoing development is essential for maintaining and enhancing leadership capabilities.

The need for targeted support in specific areas of education was highlighted. One graduate mentioned, "Focusing on educating boys needs greater attention with more capacity building for principals," pointing to the need for specialized training to address particular student demographics. Another response suggested, "Include a parent-support program for curriculum reinforcement at home," indicating the importance of community and parental involvement in the educational process. This aligns with the qualitative theme of "Stakeholder Interaction and Conflict Resolution."

The qualitative data also reflects the stress and demands associated with the role of principals. One response noted, "More focus is needed in giving principals

professional support as they deal with the stress associated with the job demands." This aligns with the quantitative finding that APP graduates report higher confidence, potentially mitigating the stress of leadership roles through better preparation and support.

Responses from non-APP graduates echo similar themes, emphasizing the need for resources and support. One stated, "Resources (human and material) when requested," while another highlighted the need for ongoing support, "Continue support is needed for school administrators." Additionally, the importance of professional development was reiterated, "More support is needed for principals, for example, professional development."

Principals' Perception of Student Performance in National Exams

Although the relationship between APP status and the principal's perception of student performance in national exams was insignificant (Chi-Square = 1.609, $p = ns$), the difference in percentage values is noteworthy. Specifically, a higher percentage of APP graduates were inclined to "strongly agree" (28, 35.4%) compared to non-APP graduates (4, 5.1%). See Table 4.2 for further details.

Table 4.2. *There has been a noticeable improvement in students passing national Exams*

Response	APP Graduate	None APP Graduate	Total
Strongly Agree	28 (35.4%)	10 (34.5%)	38 (35.2%)
Agree	40 (50.6%)	16 (55.2%)	56 (51.9%)
Neutral	7 (8.9%)	3 (10.3%)	10 (9.3 %)
Disagree	4 (5.1%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (3.7 5)
Strongly Disagree	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	79 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	108 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 1.609, p = .657$

Principals' Ability to Use Data and APP Graduation Status

Although the relationship between APP status and the principal's ability to utilize data for students' academic improvement is not statistically significant (Chi-Square = 2.796, p = ns), the difference in percentage values is noteworthy.

Specifically, a higher percentage of APP graduates were inclined to "strongly agree" (38, 48.1%) compared to non-APP graduates (15, 51.7%). See Table 4.3 for further details.

Table 4.3. *I know how to use data effectively to drive student achievement*

Ability to Use Data Effectively	APP Graduate	None APP Graduate	Total
Strongly Agree	38 (48.1%)	7%)	53 (49.1%)
Agree	39 (49.4%)	3%)	53 (49.1%)
Neutral	2 (2.5%)	0%)	2 (1.9%)
Disagree	0 (0.0%)	0%)	0 (0.0%)
Strongly Disagree	0 (0.0%)	0%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	79 (100.0%)	0%)	108 (100.0%)
$\chi^2 = .796, p = .672.$			

Principal’s Ability to Target Students Under Performance

While the relationship between APP status and the principal’s ability to target students’ under performance is not statistically significant (Chi-Square =2.091, p = ns), the difference in percentage values is noteworthy. Specifically, a higher percentage of APP graduates were inclined to "strongly agree" (46, 58.2%) compared to non-APP graduates (13, 44.8%). Please see Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. *I can lead initiatives that target student underperformance*

Response	APP Graduate	None APP Graduate	Total
Strongly Agree	46 (58.2%)	13 (44.8%)	59 (54.6%)
Agree	32 (40.5%)	16 (55.2%)	48 (44.4%)
Neutral	1 (1.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.9%)
Disagree	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Strongly Disagree	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	79 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	108 (100%)

$\chi^2 = 2.091$, $p = .352$.

Qualitative Responses on Address Performance

Integrating qualitative responses from APP graduates and non-APP graduates enhances understanding of how principals perceive their ability to address underperformance within their schools, mainly through the perspective of the qualitative theme: “Resource and Support.” The qualitative feedback from APP graduates underscores a significant recognition of the necessity for adequate resources and financial support in improving school performance. One graduate explicitly mentioned, "Adequate resources are needed also as you can have a good principal whose school is lacking in resources."

This sentiment highlights a crucial understanding that leadership effectiveness is heavily contingent upon the availability of sufficient resources. The need for greater access to funding is emphasized with remarks such as, "Greater access to funding; there are times when there are things a principal needs, such as providing an incentive to enhance motivation."

The call for "greater financial support, fiscal training" also points to a desire for more financial resources and enhanced capability in managing those resources effectively. Non-APP graduates similarly stress the importance of resources in supporting their roles, albeit with a slightly different focus. Their feedback, "resources (human and material) when requested," suggests a straightforward need for more immediate and direct access to human and material resources. This implies a perceived gap in the current support structure that could hinder effective intervention addressing underperformance.

Principals' Involvement in Professional Development by APP Graduation Status

The data reveal that most APP graduates (63.0%, 46) participated in specialized programs like the APP, indicating a solid alignment between APP graduation and engagement in similar professional development activities. This is contrasted by a mere 6.9% (2) of non-APP graduates who participated in these specialized programs, suggesting that graduation from the APP may influence continued involvement in related specialized training. The data show a marked difference in participation in graduate-level classes between the two groups. Non-APP graduates are more likely to have engaged in graduate classes (58.6%, 17) than APP graduates (19.2%, 14). This may imply that non-APP graduates seek further academic qualifications, perhaps as an alternative to specialized programs like the APP.

Participation in special sessions at professional association meetings is higher among non-APP graduates (20.7%, 6) than APP graduates (2.7%, 2), possibly indicating a preference for networking and professional development through

associations rather than structured programs among non-APP graduates. The data suggest distinct patterns in professional development choices based on whether individuals have completed the APP, highlighting the program's potential impact on shaping future professional development trajectories.

The analysis between professional development activities and whether individuals graduated from the Aspiring Principals Programme (APP) is reinforced by a Pearson Chi-Square test, which yielded a value of 34.753 and a p-value of less than .001. This highly significant outcome ($p < .001$) suggests a convincing association between graduation from the APP and the types of professional development activities in which individuals participate. Please see Table 4.5 for further details.

Table 4.5. *What professional development activities have you participated in?*

Professional Development Activity	APP Graduates	Non-APP Graduates	Total
Specialized programs such as the APP	46 (63.0%)	2 (6.9%)	48 (47.1%)
Special sessions at professional association meetings	2 (2.7%)	6 (20.7%)	8 (7.8%)
Graduate classes in something like a Masters program	14 (19.2%)	17 (58.6%)	31 (30.4%)
Online courses	4 (5.5%)	3 (10.3%)	7 (6.9%)
Other (please explain)	7 (9.6%)	1 (3.4 %)	8 (7.8%)
Total	73 (100%)	29 (100%)	102 (100.0%)

$\chi^2(4) = 34.753, p = <.001$

Principal’s Ability to Implement New Curriculum

While the relationship between APP status and the principal’s ability to implement a new curriculum to improve student outcomes is not statistically significant (Chi-Square = 2.707, p = ns), the difference in percentage values is noteworthy. Specifically, a higher percentage of APP graduates were inclined to "strongly agree" (45, 57.%) compared to non-APP graduates (16, 55.2%). Please see Table 4.6 for further details.

Table 4.6. *I have implemented new curricula to improve student outcomes*

Response Category	APP Graduates	Non-APP Graduates	Total
Strongly Agree	45 (57.0%)	16 (55.2%)	61(56.5%)
Agree	28 (35.4%)	13 (44.8%)	41(38.0%)
Neutral	6 (7.6%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (5.6%)
Disagree	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Strongly Disagree	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	79 (100%)	29 (100%)	108 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 (2) = 2.707, p = .258$

Qualitative Responses on Principal’s Ability to Implement New Curriculum

Qualitative responses stress the need for continuous support and professional development for principals to build professional capacity to implement new curricula to improve student academic outcomes, aligning with the qualitative theme of “Professional Development and Training.” One respondent highlighted the importance of mentorship: "More emphasis is needed to provide continuous support for principals." This suggests that ongoing mentorship is crucial for developing the skills to implement new curricula and effectively lead improvement initiatives.

Another respondent stressed the need for professional support in managing job-related stress: "More focus is needed in giving principals professional support as they deal with the stress associated with the demands of the job." This response highlights the pressures principals face and the necessity of support systems to help them manage these challenges while striving to improve student outcomes.

Continuous professional development was also identified as essential for school principals. One principal noted, "Continuous professional development is important for school principals and student success." This aligns with the findings that APP graduates are more likely to engage in professional development activities, which can enhance their leadership capabilities and confidence in implementing new curricula and addressing student underperformance. Focused training on specific issues, such as educating boys, was mentioned as a critical area for capacity building: "Focusing on educating boys needs greater attention with more capacity building for principals." This response underscores the need for targeted professional development to address particular challenges within schools, further supporting the role of specialized programs like the APP in enhancing leadership skills.

Principals also highlighted support for curriculum reinforcement at home. One respondent suggested, "Include a parent-support program for curriculum reinforcement at home." This indicates the importance of involving parents in the educational process to ensure that curriculum changes and initiatives to address student underperformance are supported outside the school environment.

Perceptions about Collaborating with Teachers

Although the relationship between APP status and the principal’s ability to work collaboratively with teachers will improve student outcomes is not statistically significant (Chi-Square = 4.875, p= ns), the difference in percentage values is noteworthy. Specifically, a higher percentage of APP graduates were inclined to "strongly agree" (58, 73.4%) compared to non-APP graduates (18, 62.1%). See Table 4.7 for further details.

Table 4.7. *Working collaboratively with other teachers will improve student Outcomes*

Response Category	APP Graduates	Non-APP Graduates	Total
Strongly Agree	58 (73.4%)	18 (62.1%)	76 (70.4%)
Agree	16 (20.3%)	11 (37.9%)	27 (25.0%)
Neutral	2 (2.5%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.9%)
Disagree	3 (3.8%)	0 (0.0%)	3 (2.8%)
Strongly Disagree	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	79 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	108 (100%)

$\chi^2 (2)=4.875, p= 0.181$

Qualitative Responses on Working Collaboratively with Teachers

Qualitative responses from APP graduates provide further insights into these perceptions, aligning with the qualitative theme: “School Culture and Ethos.” One APP graduate emphasized the importance of school climate: "An excellent school climate/ethos will always result in improved student engagement, limited disciplinary issues, and better academic performance." This underscores the consequence of creating a positive school culture to foster better educational outcomes.

Non-APP graduates also shared their views on leadership challenges and school culture. One respondent highlighted the need for practical support: "Training on how to deal with challenging staff (power struggle), Ministry officials, and other challenging stakeholders." This points to the necessity of providing principals with the skills and support to navigate complex leadership dynamics effectively. Another non-APP graduate emphasized the difficulty of changing school culture: "School culture is difficult to change, and where there are poor relationships among senior leaders, it becomes almost impossible to adjust school climate effectively." This response aligns with the quantitative findings, highlighting the significant impact of school culture on leadership effectiveness and student outcomes.

Curricular Support Impact by APP Graduate Status

Although the relationship between APP status and the principal's perceived ability to support curricular material that has resulted in higher achievement in mathematics is not statistically significant (Chi-Square = 4.718, $p = ns$), the difference in percentage values is noteworthy. Specifically, a higher percentage of APP graduates were inclined to "strongly agree" (42, 53.2%) compared to non-APP graduates (14, 48.3%). See Table 4.8 for further details.

Table 4.8. *I have supported specific curricular materials that have resulted in higher student achievement.*

Response Category	APP Graduates	Non-APP Graduates	Total
Strongly Agree	42 (53.2%)	14 (48.3%)	56 (51.9%)
Agree	26 (32.9%)	12 (41.4%)	38 (35.2%)
Neutral	10 (12.7%)	1 (3.4%)	11 (10.2%)
Disagree	1 (1.3%)	2 (6.9%)	3 (2.8%)
Total	79 (100.0%)	29 (100%)	108 (100.0%)
$\chi^2 (2)=4.718, p= 0.194$			

Summary of Results for Research Question 1

The data analysis shows a pattern that implies principals who have completed the APP have significantly greater confidence levels than principals who have not participated in the program. The findings of a Pearson Chi-Square test, which displays a value of 28.173 with a p-value of .043, support the observed statistical significance by showing that principals' varying degrees of confidence are related to their graduation status from the APP. While further statistical analysis indicates no significant correlation between completing the APP and principals' confidence in improving student academic achievement ($\alpha^2 = 2.454, p = .293$), there are noticeable variations in confidence levels between APP and non-APP graduates. More specifically, a greater proportion of graduates from APP programs indicated a high confidence level compared to non-graduates. This observed difference may indicate a favorable impact of the APP on self-reported effectiveness. The app program seems to have affected confidence but has little effect on actual performance as a principal.

In the qualitative data, graduates of the APP program highlighted the significance of ongoing professional development for school leaders and the achievement of students. This observation is consistent with the prevailing pattern of increased confidence among graduates of the APP program, indicating that the training and support provided by the program may contribute to the improvement of principals' self-perception of their leadership skills.

Principals' evaluations of their capacity to efficiently use data to enhance student achievement exhibited a comparable trend, as graduates of the APP program were more inclined to strongly agree compared to those who did not graduate from the APP program.

Despite the lack of statistical significance, the observed percentage differences suggest that the abilities and competencies acquired through the APP may enhance confidence in data-driven decision-making. This is further supported by the qualitative feedback, in which a graduate of the APP program emphasized the importance of providing specific assistance, adding, "There is a clear need to prioritize the education of boys and enhance the skills and abilities of principals." The aforementioned observation demonstrates the particular and targeted training that participants of the APP program may have undergone, which could result in enhanced confidence and effectiveness in leadership practices, particularly in the use of data.

The qualitative responses received from both graduates of the APP program and those who have not unfurl valuable insights into the factors that influence their perceived performance in school leadership positions. Many APP program graduates

emphasized the need for resources and ongoing assistance to sustain and improve their leadership abilities. One graduate noted that more financial support and fiscal training are essential for better management and effectiveness. This feedback is consistent with the quantitative data indicating that, while not statistically significant, graduates of APP programs frequently reported higher confidence levels. Non-APP grads, however, highlighted the urgent requirement for resources, namely "the availability of resources (both human and material) upon request," suggesting a lack of assistance that may impact their perceived efficacy in leadership. This qualitative analysis emphasizes the complex and diverse aspects of leadership confidence. It indicates that although completing the APP program does not statistically assure increased confidence, its training methodology may foster a stronger feeling of readiness and competence among school leaders.

Several opportunities for improvement have emerged for the Aspiring Principals Program, APP to better prepare school leaders based on the non-significant findings in some areas. For example, the APP could implement targeted programs to improve student achievement by offering a more extensive curriculum that tackles current educational issues, sophisticated teaching methods, and ongoing guidance.

In another area, promoting collaboration among educators could prove essential as it facilitates the exchange of successful strategies and encourages the development of innovative teaching approaches. Furthermore, the program could integrate robust data-driven evaluations to prepare emerging principals better to track student advancement and direct instructional enhancements.

Providing continuous professional development and curricular support for leaders can enhance their ability to make well-informed decisions about pedagogy in general and successfully guide their teams in particular. Implementing these suggested improvements could see the APP better equip principals to achieve positive student outcomes and build even greater confidence in their leadership skills.

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions and experiences of educational leaders who have undergone the Aspiring Principals Programme regarding its impact on their leadership skills, decision-making abilities, and overall effectiveness as school administrators?

Fulfilling the Role of Principal

The data show that a majority of both APP graduates (47, 59.5) and non-graduates (12, 41.4%) rated their confidence level as "Very Good." However, a higher percentage of non-graduates (11, 37.9%) rated their confidence as "Good," compared to (12, 15.2%) of APP graduates. APP graduates had a greater proportion rating their confidence as "Excellent" (19, 24.1%) compared to non-graduates (4, 13.8%).

The classification of "Adequate" was ranked much lower overall, with only (1, 1.3%) of APP graduates and (2, 6.9%) of non-graduates selecting this level. The chi-square test result (Chi-square =9.895, p = .019) suggests that the differences in confidence level between the APP and non-APP groups are statistically significant. This could infer that involvement in the Aspiring Principals Programme could

contribute to higher self-reported confidence levels, particularly at the "Very Good" and "Excellent" levels.

The higher percentage of non-graduates reporting "Good" as their confidence level (11, 37.9%) might indicate that individuals may feel less confident in their abilities without the specialized training and support provided by the APP. See Table 4.9 for further details.

Table 4.9. *I am confident in fulfilling the role of principal*

Confidence Level	APP Graduates	Non-Graduates	Total
Adequate	1 (1.3%)	2 (6.9%)	3 (2.8%)
Good	12 (15.2%)	11 (37.9%)	23 (21.3%)
Very Good	47 (59.5%)	12 (41.4%)	59 (54.6 %)
Excellent	19 (24.1%)	4 (13.8%)	23 (21.3 %)
Total	79 (100%)	29 (100.0%)	108 (100.0%)
$\chi^2=9.895, p = .019$			

Qualitative Responses on Leadership Confidence and School Culture

The qualitative responses from graduates and non-graduates of the Aspiring Principals Programme (APP) amplify the impact of the quantitative findings concerning confidence in fulfilling the role of a principal and support the qualitative theme “Leadership and Governance.” These narratives provide a vivid illustration of how APP training impacts the perceptions and experiences of educational leaders, supporting Hypothesis 2 (H2), which posits that APP graduates report significantly higher improvements in leadership skills, decision-making abilities, and overall effectiveness compared to non-participants. APP graduates describe transformative experiences that have significantly influenced their leadership approach and effectiveness.

One graduate highlighted the impact on school climate, noting, “An excellent school climate/ethos will always result in improved student engagement, limited disciplinary issues, and better academic performance.” This underscores the direct and positive impact of APP training in enhancing the school environment, which is crucial for successful educational leadership and should inspire optimism about the potential for positive change.

Further insights from graduates about the importance of “transformational leadership and instructional leadership” and the pivotal role of “leading educational change” suggest that the APP equips them with crucial skills for managing and inspiring change effectively. APP graduates frequently cite specific aspects of their training that have bolstered their confidence and leadership abilities. For example, one graduate emphasized the transformative nature of their learning, saying, “Transformational and Community Leadership Modules from the APP training changes how I lead and manage.” This reflects a significant shift in leadership style, likely contributing to higher confidence. Another noted the direct impact of their training on educational outcomes, stating, “Maintaining consistent passes among boys should be a priority.”

This focus on measurable academic improvements underscores their commitment to educational excellence and confidence in their ability to effect change rooted in APP training.

Additionally, APP graduates emphasized the practical applications of their training, with one stating, “The courses in APP were engaging and helped us to be practical in our approach,” and another advocating for “the licensing of principals beyond the

completion of the aspiring principals' program.” This indicates a perceived need for ongoing professional development even after formal training ends, highlighting the graduates’ commitment to continuous improvement and adherence to high standards. In contrast, a non-APP graduate’s response highlights significant challenges, particularly in modifying school culture. They explained, “School culture is difficult to change, and where there are poor relationships among senior leaders, it becomes almost impossible to adjust school climate effectively.” This points to potential barriers to effective leadership among non-graduates, who may feel less equipped to overcome interpersonal and institutional challenges due to a lack of targeted training like that provided by the APP.

These qualitative responses corroborate the statistical findings that APP graduates feel more confident in their roles and enrich our understanding of the areas where the APP has had a substantial impact. This narrative evidence strongly supports H2, illustrating that the APP effectively develops leadership qualities that are not only perceived internally by the participants but manifest in their professional practices and approaches to school leadership.

Confidence Levels in Fulfilling the Role of Principal and Years of Experience – APP and Non-APP Graduates

The data drawn from a survey of principals, both graduates and non-graduates of the Aspiring Principals Programme (APP), were analyzed using the Pearson Chi-Square test to determine if tenure as a principal has any bearing on their self-reported confidence levels.

The data distribution reveals that tenure correlates significantly with confidence levels in fulfilling the principal role among APP graduates. The data confirm that as experience increases, so does the number of respondents: 20 principals (19.6%) have served between 1-4 years, 41 principals (40.2%) between 5-9 years, 21 principals (20.6%) between 10-14 years, and 18 principals (17.6%) have over 15 years of experience.

Among the APP graduates surveyed, 19 have been in their role between 1-4 years, 32 between 5-9 years, 12 between 10-14 years, and 9 have over 15 years of tenure. On the other hand, of the non-graduates, one has not yet served as a principal; one has between 1-4 years of experience, nine have between 5-9 years, nine have between 10-14 years, and nine have been in their roles for over 15 years.

Statistical analysis, supported by a Pearson Chi-Square test result of 12.963 with a p-value of .011, confirms statistically significant differences in confidence levels related to the years of service. Please see Table 4.10 for further details.

Table 4.10. *Crosstabulation of years of experience and confidence in the role of principal*

Years Served as Principal	APP Graduates	Non-Graduates	Total
0 years	1 (1.4%)	1 (3.4%)	2 (2.0%)
1-4 years	19 (26.0%)	1 (3.4%)	20 (19.6%)
5-9 years	32 (43.8%)	9 (31.0%)	41 (40.2%)
10-14 years	12 (16.4%)	9 (31.0%)	21 (20.6%)
15 or more years	9 (12.3%)	9 (31.0%)	18 (17.6%)
Total	73 (100%)	29 (100%)	102 (100%)

$\chi^2=12.963$, p-value = .011

This compelling statistical result implies that the longer a principal is tenured and experienced is assumed to considerably impact principals' confidence levels and suggests that professional development, such as that provided by the APP, plays a crucial role in enhancing leadership confidence, particularly noticeable in the earlier years of a principal's career.

Qualitative Responses to Handling Conflicts Among Teachers by APP Participation

Analyzing principals' confidence in handling conflicts among teachers and comparing responses from graduates and non-graduates of the Aspiring Principals Programme (APP) offers a clear view of the program's impact on leadership skills supporting Hypothesis 2 (H2) and the qualitative theme: “ School Culture and Ethos.” H2 posits that educational leaders who have undergone the APP report significantly higher levels of improvement in leadership skills, decision-making abilities, and overall effectiveness as school administrators compared to those who have not participated in the program.

Among APP graduates, the confidence ratings show a robust sense of self-assurance: none rated their confidence as poor; three rated it as adequate (3.8%), 18 as good (22.8%), 43 as very good (54.4%), and 15 as excellent (19.0%) out of 79 respondents. On the other hand, non-graduates demonstrated a range of lower confidence levels: one rated their confidence as poor (3.4%), three as adequate (10.3%), 13 as good (44.8%), 12 as very good (41.4%), and significantly, none rated their confidence as excellent, out of 29 respondents. This distribution underscores a generally higher confidence level among APP graduates, particularly in the higher confidence categories.

The Pearson Chi-Square test statistically validates the differences in principals' skills between APP graduates and non-graduates when managing conflicts among teachers. The test yielded a value of 14.168 with a p-value of .007, indicating a significant difference. See Table 4.11 for further details.

Table 4.11. *I am confident in handling conflicts among teachers*

Confidence Level	APP Graduates	Non-Graduates	Total
Poor	0 (0%)	1 (3.4%)	1 (0.9%)
Adequate	3 (3.8%)	3 (10.3%)	6 (5.6%)
Good	18 (22.8%)	13 (44.8%)	31 (28.7%)
Very Good	43 (54.4%)	12 (41.4%)	55 (50.9%)
Excellent	15 (19.0%)	0 (0%)	15 (13.9%)
Total	79 (100%)	29 (100.0%)	108 (100.0%)

$\chi^2=14.168$, p-value =007

These findings directly support H2 by demonstrating that APP graduates perceive themselves as more capable in conflict management, an essential leadership skill.

Qualitative Responses to Managing Conflict

The qualitative responses from APP graduates and non-graduates further enrich the understanding of the quantitative findings, illustrating specific human resource and leadership challenges faced by principals highlighted by the qualitative theme: School Culture and Ethos.” There is a clear emphasis on managing various aspects of teacher behavior and conflict among APP graduates. Graduates noted the importance of “leading/managing human resources,” “managing teacher behavior,” and “dealing with teachers managing conflicts.” These responses indicate a comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in school human resource

management, aligning with the higher confidence levels reported by APP graduates in the quantitative data.

One graduate mentioned “holding teachers accountable for students’ performance,” highlighting a focus on accountability and performance management, crucial aspects of effective school leadership. These insights validate Hypothesis 2 (H2), which posits that APP graduates report significantly higher improvements in leadership skills and effectiveness. On the other hand, non-graduates expressed concerns that reflect broader struggles with managing teacher performance and behavior. They mentioned challenges such as “dealing with indiscipline teachers” and “dealing with inefficient teachers.”

These issues suggest that non-graduates might lack the structured approach and skills provided by the APP, which could explain their lower confidence levels in handling conflicts among teachers. A non-graduate highlighted the need to “help expand teachers’ mindset towards 21st-century teaching,” pointing to a struggle with modernizing teaching practices and managing staff performance and interpersonal staff issues that may arise. This qualitative feedback underscores gaps in leadership capabilities among non-graduates.

In contrast, the broader and more generalized concerns of non-graduates illustrate their ongoing struggles, reinforcing the importance of targeted professional development programs like the APP. These programs are crucial in equipping school leaders with the necessary skills to manage human resources and leadership challenges effectively, thereby validating H2 and emphasizing the APP's effectiveness in enhancing educational leadership.

Confidence in Managing School Finances

While the relationship between APP status and confidence in managing budgets is not statistically significant (Chi Sq= 3.366, p = ns), the relevant percentage difference is considered; on a percentage basis, APP graduates were more apt to respond "Excellent" (13, 16.5%) than were non-APP graduates (4, 3.8%).

Please see Table 4.12.

Table 4.12. *I am confident in managing a school budget.*

Confidence Level	APP Graduates	Non-Graduates	Total
Excellent	13 (16.5%)	4 (13.8%)	17 (15.7%)
Very Good	20 (25.3%)	9 (31.0%)	29 (26.9%)
Good	22 (27.8%)	8 (27.6%)	30 (27.8%)
Poor	0 (0%)	1 (3.4%)	1 (0.9%)
Adequate	24 (30.4%)	7 (24.1%)	31 (28.7%)
Total	79 (100%)	29 (100%)	108 (100%)

$\chi^2 = 3.366$, p-value = .498

Qualitative Responses on Confidence in Managing School Budget

This potential impact is highlighted by qualitative responses from APP graduates, who frequently emphasize their competence in managing limited financial resources—an important administrative skill fostered in APP training. In contrast, non-APP graduates expressed more struggles with financial management. They reported “the disparity in resource allocation and the struggle with excessive paperwork” and the challenge of “managing the school’s finances to meet all obligations with the inadequate funding provided by the government.”

These qualitative responses underscore non-APP graduate principals' difficulties and appear to reflect a pressing need for more structured training in

financial management underscored by the qualitative theme: “Professional Development and Training.” The qualitative data and the quantitative trends suggest that while the statistical analysis did not show significant differences, APP graduates appear to have higher confidence in managing budgets.

This supports Hypothesis 2 (H2), which posits that educational leaders who have undergone the APP report significantly higher levels of improvement in leadership skills, decision-making abilities, and overall effectiveness as school administrators compared to those who have not participated in the program. The APP’s specific financial management training may appear to prepare principals to handle the financial constraints and challenges of running a school more effectively.

Confidence in Implementing Policy by APP Participation

While the relationship between APP status and confidence in implementing policies to improve teacher engagement is not statistically significant (Chi Sq= 5.372, p = ns), consideration of the relevant percentage difference is. On a percentage basis, APP graduates were more apt to respond "Excellent" (26, 20.3%) than were non-APP graduates (2, 6.9%). See Table 4.13 for further details.

Table 4.13. *I am confident in implementing policies to improve teacher engagement*

Confidence Level	APP Graduates	Non-Graduates	Total
Excellent	16 (20.3%)	2 (6.9%)	18 (16.7%)
Very Good	33 (41.8%)	10 (34.5%)	43 (39.8%)
Good	23 (29.1%)	13 (44.8%)	36 (33.3%)
Poor	1 (1.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.9%)
Adequate	6 (7.6%)	4 (13.8%)	10 (9.3%)
Total	79 (100%)	29 (100%)	108 (100%)

$\chi^2=5.372$, p value =.251

However, despite the lack of statistical significance, the trend in the data tends to favor APP graduates, indicating a potential positive impact of the program on principals' confidence in implementing policies. This trend is further supported by qualitative responses from APP graduates, who emphasize the importance of mentorship, regulatory support, and accountability, the obligation of an individual to accept responsibility for their actions, and enhancing their leadership capabilities in implementing school-based policies. This is highlighted by the qualitative theme: "Leadership and Governance."

One graduate highlighted the need for the "licensing of principals beyond the completion of the aspiring principals' program," suggesting that continuous professional validation is crucial for maintaining high standards in school leadership and adeptness in implementing change policies. Another graduate called for "stronger regulatory support to hold teachers more accountable" to secure full compliance in policy implementation, reflecting a desire for policies that align with modern HR best practices. APP graduates also stressed the importance of ongoing mentorship and coaching to sharpen their competence in policy implementation and strategic management. One noted that "more emphasis is needed to provide continuous support for principals," highlighting the necessity of sustained professional development and support networks.

The quantitative data indicate that this emphasis on mentorship and support aligns with their higher confidence levels in managing teacher compliance, accountability, and conflicts. Additionally, APP graduates feel well-prepared in

operational and strategic management, discussing their proficiency in "implementing policies to improve teacher engagement or changes after consulting with stakeholders to secure buy-in." This demonstrates their skill in strategic decision-making and effective policy execution.

In contrast, non-APP graduates reported more challenges in securing adequate resources, which affects their ability to implement policies effectively. One non-graduate expressed the burden of "not getting adequate resources and the burden of soliciting funds and materials for school improvement," which is required in policy implementation for teacher engagement and better student outcomes. This reflects a significant hurdle that non-APP graduates face, potentially impacting their confidence and effectiveness in policy implementation.

These qualitative insights and the quantitative trends suggest that while the statistical analysis did not show significant differences, APP graduates are more confident in implementing policies to improve teacher engagement. This supports Hypothesis 2 (H2), which posits that educational leaders who have undergone the APP report significantly higher levels of improvement in leadership skills, decision-making abilities, and overall effectiveness as school administrators compared to those who have not participated in the program.

Supporting Academically At-Risk Students

Although the relationship between APP status and confidence in raising student achievement is not statistically significant (Chi Sq= .197, p = ns), consideration of the relevant percentage difference is. On a percentage basis, APP graduates were more apt to respond "Strongly agree" (29, 36.7%) and "Agree" (47,

59.5%) than were non-APP graduates (12, 41.4%) and (12, 55.2%), respectively.

Please see Table 4.14.

Table 4.14. *I know how to identify and support academically at-risk students*

Response Category	APP Graduates	Non-APP Graduates	Total
Strongly Agree	29 (36.7%)	12 (41.4%)	41 (38.0%)
Agree	47 (59.5%)	16 (55.2%)	63 (58.3%)
Neutral	3 (3.8%)	1 (3.4%)	4 (3.7%)
Disagree	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Strongly Disagree	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Total	79 (100%)	29 (100%)	108 (100.0%)

$\chi^2(2)=.197, p = .906$

Qualitative Responses on Supporting Academically At-Risk Students

APP graduates emphasize the need for focused interventions, particularly regarding "the education of boys." One graduate noted, "Focusing on educating boys needs greater attention with more capacity building for principals." This statement reflects a specific concern within the educational framework that requires targeted strategies, suggesting that APP training helps leaders identify and articulate specific educational needs. Additionally, APP graduates highlighted the necessity of encompassing educational support beyond the classroom.

One respondent suggested incorporating a "parent-support program for curriculum reinforcement at home," indicating a proactive approach to engaging parents in the educational process. Other concerns voiced by APP graduates included "managing community violence and its impact on the school," enhancing "parental involvement," and improving "interaction with parents and getting them to carry out

their roles in supporting their children's growth and development" underscored by the qualitative theme: "Stakeholder Interaction and Conflict Resolution."

In contrast, responses from non-APP graduates also focused on challenges related to parental engagement but with a slightly different emphasis, reflecting perhaps a more reactive approach to immediate issues. For instance, one non-graduate described the difficulty in "dealing with parents who refuse to meet the school halfway as it relates to conversations for the improvement in student behavior and learning." This response highlights the challenges in fostering cooperative relationships with parents, a crucial aspect of effective school administration. Other responses included practical concerns such as "running a school during a pandemic" and addressing "student disciplinary issues," alongside efforts to engage parents more effectively, similar to their APP counterparts, in "getting the parents to encourage and control their children."

The presence of similar themes across both groups underscores a shared understanding of the critical role that parental involvement plays in student success. This shared understanding unites both groups in their mission to improve student outcomes. However, APP graduates' specific mention of structured training and strategic approaches might indicate that APP training provides a framework that helps leaders recognize and implement structured and potentially more effective strategies to engage with these challenges. These findings indicate that while APP training influences how leaders perceive and articulate their roles and challenges, translating these perceptions into effective practice that markedly outperforms non-

APP experiences might require further investigation and enhancements to the training program.

The qualitative data support H2 by demonstrating that APP graduates identify specific educational needs and proactive strategies and articulate a more structured approach to addressing these challenges. This reaffirms the APP's effectiveness in fostering higher leadership skills and strategic decision-making among its participants. It's a testament to the program's impact, even if there's room for further development.

Summary of Findings – Research Question # 2

The survey results involving graduates of the Aspiring Principals Programme (APP) and their non-graduate counterparts offer insights into the nuances of educational leadership. With their strategic approach, APP graduates demonstrate a high level of proficiency in managing educational institutions, particularly in resource management, human resources, and stakeholder engagement. Their ability to manage tight budgets and resources, showcasing skills like effective budget allocation and financial stewardship developed through the APP's rigorous training, instills confidence in their leadership capabilities.

APP graduates highlight their adeptness in handling complex human resource challenges, including conflict resolution and staff motivation—areas they manage with a structured approach learned through their training. They also demonstrate proactive strategies in enhancing parental involvement and addressing community issues, which are crucial for fostering a supportive educational environment.

In contrast, non-APP graduates also show considerable capability in these areas but often emphasize immediate, practical challenges more than strategic management. These practical challenges include [specific examples such as day-to-day operations, student discipline, or teacher evaluations]. Both groups recognize the importance of parental involvement and the impact of community relations on educational outcomes. However, the structured training of APP graduates equips them with a more systematic approach to these challenges.

The findings suggest that while APP training enhances leadership skills and strategic decision-making, the practical challenges school administrators face are similar across both groups, highlighting the role of on-the-job experiences and other professional development opportunities alongside formal training programs. The analysis of principals' confidence in fulfilling their roles and ability to implement policies, manage conflicts, and handle financial responsibilities reveals significant differences between graduates and non-graduates of the Aspiring Principals Program (APP).

Qualitative responses further substantiate these quantitative findings, highlighting the practical and strategic benefits derived from the APP. Graduates frequently mentioned the importance of mentorship, continuous professional development, and regulatory support in enhancing their leadership skills. They emphasized the program's role in improving their ability to manage school culture, engage with parents, and handle conflicts effectively. For example, one APP graduate noted, “An excellent school climate/ethos will always result in improved student engagement, limited disciplinary issues, and better academic performance,”

underscoring the comprehensive impact of APP training on their approach to leadership.

To improve the effectiveness of the Aspiring Principals Program, APP, emerging principals should be exposed to key strategies to effectively identify and support academically at-risk students through early intervention programs and data-driven monitoring systems that ensure timely and targeted assistance. The APP could focus on fostering teacher engagement mechanisms by assisting aspiring principals to develop policies to create collaborative professional environments, implement robust teacher evaluation processes, and encourage continuous professional development in respective learning communities.

Moreover, incorporating comprehensive training on school budget management, a point of concern among new principals, would better equip future principals to manage resources astutely, prioritize expenditures according to school needs, adhere to procurement and audit rules, and maintain financial sustainability in schools, thus boosting their effectiveness as principals.

Research Question 3: What is the perceived impact of the APP job satisfaction?

The final research question seeks to determine the perceived impact of the Aspiring Principals Programme (APP) on job satisfaction and identify areas for improvement within the APP. A multivariate regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the APP's impact. The findings will guide recommendations for enhancing the program.

Variables Entered in Regression

This regression measured seven variables, the dependent variable being principals' job satisfaction. Specifically, the regression tested the relationship between job satisfaction and the following variables: principal interactions with the Ministry of Education and Youth (MOEY) at 50% or more per week, gender, years of experience, confidence levels, and time spent on administrative tasks at 50% or more per week. See Table 4.15 for further details.

Table 4.15. Variables Studied in Regression on Principals' Job Satisfaction

Regression Variables	Mean/Proportion	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Principal Job Satisfaction	20.8	5.38	0	8
Principal-MOEY Interaction = 50%	0.1204	0.32691	0	1
Male	2.16		1	2
Principal's Experience (Years)	9.3039	5.9107	0	20
Principal's Confidence Scale	21.87	3.872	12	30
Principal spends 50% of the time on internal administrative tasks.	0.7059		0	1
APP Graduate	1.28		1	2

Non-significant variables, including the extent of interaction with parents and students at 50% or more, engagement in curriculum and teaching-related tasks, enthusiasm for the job, ability to use data effectively, leading targeted interventions, and the capability to set actionable goals, were included as controls to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing principals' job satisfaction. Years of experience and gender were factored as significant variables. Additionally, variables such as leading initiatives to target student underachievement, implementing new curricula, improving school climate, working collaboratively with teachers, collaborating with other school leaders, and identifying and supporting at-risk students were also tested but found not statistically significant.

Correlation

In analyzing regression variables related to principals' job satisfaction, it is vital to ensure that the variables studied are not significantly related to each other to maintain the validity of the regression model. The variables include interactions with the Ministry of Education and Youth, Gender, Years of Service, Principals' Self-confidence, Handling Internal Tasks, APP Graduation Status, and Principals' Confidence. To confirm the independence of these variables, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated. The Pearson correlation coefficient measures the linear association between each pair of variables. This is essential to prevent multicollinearity, which can distort the regression analysis results (Alin, 2010). For this multivariate analysis, multicollinearity was not an issue.

The analysis revealed that the most significant Pearson correlation among the variables was between principals' self-confidence and interactions with the Ministry

of Education and Youth, indicating a moderate positive relationship. The regression results showed that the principal's interactions with the Ministry of Education and Youth 50 percent or more significantly positively affected job satisfaction and principals' self-confidence. Principals handling internal tasks 50 percent or more each week had a significant negative impact. See Table 4.16 for further details.

Table 4.16. Pearson correlation coefficients between variables studied in regression related to principal job satisfaction

Variable	Principal Job Satisfaction	Principal-MOEY Interaction \geq 50%	Gender	Principal Experience (Years)	Principal Confidence	Principal Admin Tasks \geq 50%	APP Graduate Principals
Principal Job Satisfaction	1	0.172	0.051	0.09	0.168	-0.206*	0.156
Principal-MOEY Interaction \geq 50%		1	-0.014	-0.055	-0.158	-0.031	-0.028
Gender			1	0.065	0.104	0.155	-0.22**
Principal Experience (Years)				1	-0.077	0.176	0.309**
Principal Confidence					1	0.025	-0.243**
Principal Admin Tasks \geq 50%						1	-0.07

Table 4.16 (continuous)

1

APP Graduate
Principals

* p < .05; ** p < .01

Regression Findings

In analyzing the regression, the variables affecting principals' job satisfaction, the overall regression model is statistically significant, with an F-value of 3.075 and a p-value of 0.006. The F-value indicates the overall significance of the model. The R^2 value of 0.186, which is the proportion of the variance in the dependent variable that is predictable from the independent variables, suggests that the model explains approximately 18.6% of the variance in job satisfaction among principals by the independent variables. Please see Table 4.17 for further details.

Table 4.17*Regression of Principal's Job Satisfaction*

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Regression Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-1.418		-1.553	0.124
Principal-MOEY	0.806	0.217	2.29**	0.02
Interaction \geq 50%				
Gender	0.242	0.101	1.037	0.303
Principal's Experience (Years)	0.019	0.092	0.908	0.366
Principal's Confidence	0.077	0.253	2.589**	0.01
Principal's Admin Tasks \geq 50%	-0.584	-0.223	-2.31	0.02
APP Graduate Principals	0.536	0.202	1.936*	0.05

*p = <.05, **p = <.02

Four of the seven variables entered into the regression analysis were statistically significant. They are:

- Spending 50% or more of one's time with the Ministry added, all other things equal, .806 points to the job satisfaction score.
- Having graduated from an APP program, all other things equal, added .536 points to the satisfaction.
- Spending 50% or more on internal administrative tasks, all other things equal, subtracted .536 from the job satisfaction score.

In the regression analysis on principals' job satisfaction, principals' self-confidence emerged as a significant factor, with a standardized coefficient of 0.253 and a p-value of 0.011, indicating that higher self-confidence substantially boosts job satisfaction. This finding aligns with Hutton's (2016) study, highlighting that personal philosophy, abilities, and leadership are interrelated and crucial for high performance. Bellemans and Devos (2023) emphasize that mastery experiences, though often small successes, are the most potent source of principal self-efficacy. These insights collectively suggest that initiatives to enhance self-confidence through mastery experiences can significantly improve principals' job satisfaction and overall leadership performance.

Conversely, some variables exhibit negative or non-significant relationships with job satisfaction. For instance, handling internal tasks shows a significant negative relationship, with a standardized coefficient of -0.223 and a p-value of 0.023. This indicates that more time spent on internal administrative tasks is associated with lower job satisfaction. Other variables, such as gender, years of

service, and APP graduation status, did not show significant relationships with job satisfaction, as evidenced by their higher p-values. These findings highlight the complexity of job satisfaction and the necessity of considering multiple factors to understand and improve it comprehensively.

While the null hypothesis(H₀) was rejected at the 5% significance level, supporting the conclusion that APP graduates exhibit higher job satisfaction than non-participants, this rejection is tentative. It suggests that further investigation with a larger sample size or additional variables might be necessary to strengthen the evidence. This underscores the ongoing nature of research and the need for continuous exploration in this field.

Qualitative Responses on Principal's Job Satisfaction

Additional insights into the elements that influence interest levels were obtained through qualitative responses from APP graduates and are underscored by the theme: "Professional Development and Training." They highlighted the need for increased mentorship and professional support for stress management. One APP graduate mentioned, "More emphasis is needed to provide continuous support for principals." At the same time, another emphasized, "More focus is needed in giving principals professional support as they deal with the stress associated with the demands of the job." Other challenges that principals who are APP graduates mentioned included "Managing with limited resources" and "Dealing with challenging adult stakeholders."

APP Graduates also expressed difficulties navigating governance issues, such as "Handling conflicts with Board Members, some of whom do not understand how a

school is to be led and managed," and stakeholder interactions, including "Dealing with hostile parents and behavioral issues." Non-APP graduates also provided valuable feedback. They suggested improvements in leadership and governance, such as "Policy makers should consider a licensing regime and continuous professional development of principals." Practical support for leadership challenges was also highlighted: "Training on how to deal with challenging staff (power struggle), Ministry officials, and other challenging stakeholders." Non-APP graduates identified the most complex aspects of their role, including "Running a school during a pandemic," "Managing diverse expectations of educational stakeholders," and "Meeting the expectations of multiple stakeholders at the same time." Additional challenges highlighted by non-APP graduate principals included "Solving conflicts with staff, bridging the parental support gap, maintaining mental alertness in a high-stress environment," and "Getting the parents to encourage and control their children."

To further improve job satisfaction, integrating more practical elements into the APP curriculum, specifically focusing on stress management and stakeholder engagement, could elevate the satisfaction levels of educational leaders even more. The qualitative responses reinforce these recommendations, highlighting the need for continuous support, stress management, and practical leadership training.

Managing the COVID-19 Pandemic on Job Satisfaction and APP Participation

The qualitative findings from the survey responses vividly illustrate the profound challenges faced by school leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic and their implications for job satisfaction.

They particularly underscore the unique difficulties encountered by graduates of the Aspiring Principals Programme (APP) and non-graduates, stressing the urgent need for improved support systems and resources for school leaders. Despite these challenges, school leaders have shown remarkable resilience.

APP graduates detailed various issues exacerbated by the pandemic, impacting their job satisfaction significantly. One respondent indicated that 'disciplinary problems escalated,' demonstrating increased maladaptive behavior issues among students. Another highlighted the socio-economic impact on learning, noting that 'the socio-economic background of parents and other social factors affected teaching and learning, causing students to fall behind significantly.' Starting a job during the pandemic posed unique challenges, with one respondent stating, 'It took a while to bond with students and staff as we were strangers.' Additionally, there was a noticeable 'increase in the indiscipline level among students,' further complicating classroom management and affecting the overall job satisfaction of principals.

The pandemic also resulted in operational challenges, such as "low enrollment and limited resources," and the relentless demands from the Ministry, with one respondent noting that "the Ministry and other stakeholders showed little regard for personal time, requiring responses at any hour." Students' academic performance also suffered, with another respondent observing that "most students were performing below their grade level." Engaging stakeholders remotely proved difficult, as "moving from face-to-face engagement with stakeholders was challenging, and monitoring staff and students was below expectations." These

operational difficulties likely diminished the job satisfaction of school leaders due to increased stress and responsibility.

The myriad of issues faced by students was also a significant concern for APP graduates, with one respondent stating, "Some foundational learning gaps in students could be addressed if home and school worked together." The overall decline in student behavior and academic performance was evident, as another observed, "Student behavior and academic performance have gotten worse." The regression in student learning was mentioned, with one noting that "students regressed in some areas," and there was an "increased need for student attention" post-COVID. These challenges added to the burden of principals, impacting their job satisfaction negatively.

Non-APP graduates also reported substantial pressures that affected their job satisfaction. One respondent emphasized the "immense pressure placed on administrators, teachers, students, and stakeholders," highlighting the accountability of administrators in implementing health and safety policies without adequate resources. The pandemic exacerbated societal issues, with one noting, "Students' exposure to societal ills during the pandemic became more pronounced in school post-COVID." The gaps in learning were a significant issue, as one respondent pointed out that "gaps in learning created major issues for teachers and students, with teachers frustrated by students' lack of requisite skills and interest in education." Teacher efforts and accountability measures were often ineffective, as highlighted by a respondent who said, "The learning gap widened as teachers did little to reach students, and accountability measures were ineffective."

The increase in antisocial behavior was another significant issue, with one noting, "Most students did not access online learning, leading to increased antisocial behavior." The overall attitude of students towards learning also worsened, making it challenging to bridge learning gaps despite the efforts from teachers and the Ministry of Education. These factors likely contributed to a decline in job satisfaction among non-APP graduates. The rise in social media usage created distractions for students, with one respondent stating, "The burst of social media usage has created a distraction, and changes in family structure and student migration caused issues for the school." Increased teacher frustration required new teaching and learning methods, as highlighted by one respondent: "Teacher frustration has been heightened, necessitating new teaching and learning methods." A "worsening in student behavior" and a "significant decline in student enrollment" brought about additional problems. These factors compounded the stress experienced by school leaders, further affecting their job satisfaction. Overall, the management of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic presented significant challenges for APP and non-APP graduates. The increased stress, operational difficulties, and pressures from various stakeholders created a challenging work environment.

Hypothesis 3 (H3) is validated by the findings, indicating that educational leaders who have completed the APP exhibit higher job satisfaction than non-participants. The significant chi-square values for the relationship between APP participation and tenure underscore the importance of experience in job satisfaction. To further improve job satisfaction, it is crucial to integrate more practical elements into the APP curriculum.

Specifically, focusing on stress management and stakeholder engagement could significantly elevate the satisfaction levels of educational leaders. The qualitative responses reinforce these recommendations, highlighting the need for continuous support, stress management, and practical leadership training. These data support the argument for a more hands-on, real-world-focused approach to leadership training.

APP Program Improvement

The qualitative responses from APP graduates provide invaluable insights into how the program can be improved to prepare aspiring principals better. A significant theme in the feedback is the need for increased mentorship and support. Graduates emphasized the importance of “more coaching and mentoring from experienced principals,” suggesting that “ongoing mentorship for newly minted principals” should be available. Additionally, there was a call to “provide greater in-the-field leadership support, especially in crisis communication and student disciplinary issues.” This underscores the necessity of practical guidance in real-world scenarios to enhance the leadership capabilities of new principals.

Another critical area highlighted by APP graduates is the importance of practical experience within the program. Responses indicated a strong desire to “emphasize hands-on training in financial management,” with a practical component in every course “executed in the school setting.” The suggestion to “introduce three-week internships shadowing outstanding principals” was also notable, alongside the need for “more follow-ups to ensure standards acquired are practiced.” This practical approach is essential for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-

world application, ensuring that principals are well-prepared for the complexities of school leadership.

Graduates also noted the need for continuous improvement in the program's structure and evaluation. They recommended "regular program evaluations to determine effectiveness" and suggested that the program should be "subjected to continuous evaluations." Additionally, introducing a "licensing component for principals" and ensuring the program "attracts university credits" were proposed, which could enhance the program's credibility and value. Ensuring that the program is "managed and taught by qualified and experienced principals" was also deemed crucial, as it would ensure the delivery of high-quality, relevant instruction. Accessibility and relevance of the program content were also highlighted as other significant areas of concern. Graduates indicated that the program needs to address specific needs, such as "more focus needed on mentoring and coaching." They should include modules to help "educate boys and governance matters."

They stressed the importance of program content updates to cover current educational challenges like "financial management, school policy, conflict management, and addressing indiscipline and maladaptive behaviors." Frequent module updates were called to reflect new trends in preparing principals for leadership. Moreover, "between supervision of field experience is needed" to ensure practical learning is effective and aligned with contemporary educational standards. Interestingly, no specific improvement suggestions were identified from non-APP graduates, indicating that the feedback and areas for enhancement are primarily driven by those who have experienced the program firsthand. This highlights the

critical role of graduate feedback in the ongoing development and refinement of the APP.

Summary of Findings – Research Question # 3

The final research question explores the impact of the Aspiring Principals Programme (APP) on job satisfaction and identifies potential areas for improvement. The regression model accounts for 18.6% of the variance in principals' job satisfaction, indicating that the model moderately explains the factors influencing job satisfaction. The multivariate regression analysis shows that principal interactions with the Ministry of Education and Youth (MOEY) at 50% or more per week and higher levels of principal confidence significantly enhance job satisfaction. Conversely, spending 50% or more time on administrative tasks negatively affects job satisfaction.

The study underscores the urgent need for continuous program improvements, particularly in practical training and stress management. Enhancing the APP curriculum with hands-on instruction and addressing principals' specific challenges, such as stakeholder engagement and governance issues, could significantly elevate job satisfaction. Qualitative feedback from APP graduates highlighted the necessity of increased mentorship, professional support, and frequent content updates to reflect current educational trends and challenges. These improvements are crucial for the continued success of the APP program.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on job satisfaction was significant for both APP and non-APP graduates, with many agreeing that the pandemic negatively affected their job satisfaction. Despite this, APP graduates demonstrated

resilience and highlighted the importance of practical training in coping with such challenges. Overall, the findings suggest that the APP program plays a crucial role in enhancing educational leaders' job satisfaction and career longevity while identifying areas for further improvement to address evolving challenges in the educational landscape.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Chapter 5 discusses the significant findings from Chapter 4, interpreted through the conceptual frameworks of the Marzano School Leadership Model (Carbaugh, 2018; Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018; Southerland, 2018) and the Tannenbaum Model of Training Effectiveness (Tannenbaum et al., 1993, Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1997). These models provide far-reaching perspectives on the effectiveness of the Aspiring Principals Program (APP) in improving academic outcomes through better leadership.

Contemporary literature highlights the broader impact of high-quality principal preparation programs. Gümüs and Bellibas (2020) determine the direct and indirect links between principals' involvement in professional development, PD activities, and their effectiveness in leading school success. Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) further support these findings by noting an increasing body of scholarship, suggesting that high-quality principal preparation programs are associated with positive outcomes for principals, teachers, and students. These outcomes range from principals' feelings of preparedness and engagement in more effective practices to more muscular teacher retention and improved student achievement.

The regression results obtained from the study of the Aspiring Principals Program in Jamaica, which show a positive relationship between the quality of training and job satisfaction, align with the findings of Chiang et al. (2005) and Drummond and Halsey (2014). Chiang et al. (2005) emphasize that efficient training directly impacts job satisfaction, positively affecting employees' inclination to

remain with the organization. Similarly, Drummond and Halsey (2014) discovered that receiving formal leadership training designed for rural school principals in Australia increased work satisfaction. This effect persisted even when accounting for other demographic and school-related variables. These empirical findings emphasize the importance of comprehensive training programs in improving job satisfaction among professionals, regardless of whether they work in the hospitality or education sectors.

The regression results from the APP study provide compelling evidence to corroborate these conclusions, demonstrating a substantial correlation between the quality of the APP training and increased work satisfaction among individuals desiring to become principals. This is also consistent with Marzano's framework (Carbaugh, 2018; Carbaugh & Marzano, 2018; Southerland, 2018), highlighting the crucial role of effective school leadership in promoting student achievement and overall school success.

The APP's emphasis on training aspiring principals in leadership competencies seemingly contributes to heightened job contentment, promoting a more stable and efficient cadre of school leaders. These data validate the Tannenbaum model of training efficacy (Tannenbaum et al., 1993; Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1997), suggesting that well-designed training programs improve work performance and satisfaction. The APP's intensive training program effectively equips aspiring school leaders with essential skills and behavioral attributes. As a result, it enhances work satisfaction and potentially decreases turnover rates among school principals in Jamaica. Therefore, an all-encompassing strategy for cultivating

leadership skills is fundamental for ensuring the long-term success and stability of the educational system.

Regular and meaningful engagement between principals and the MOEY provides principals with better support, resources, and a clearer understanding of policy and administrative expectations, thereby boosting their confidence and competence. The implications of this finding suggest that fostering stronger and more frequent connections between school leaders and the MOEY can lead to higher job satisfaction among principals, contributing to more effective school management and improved educational outcomes. Conversely, non-APP graduates reported considerable challenges related to resource management and maintaining staff morale, adversely affecting their job satisfaction. This aligns with Tannenbaum's model, which focuses on the human relations aspects of leadership, noting that insufficient support and resources can lead to job dissatisfaction (Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992; Tannenbaum et al., 1993).

These challenges highlight the need for more robust support systems and broader professional development opportunities for school leaders not involved in the APP. Tannenbaum's model underscores the importance of individual and organizational factors, such as demographic characteristics, self-belief, motivation, and organizational climate, in determining training effectiveness (Holton, 2005; Noe, 1986).

The Effects of Job Satisfaction on the Performance of Principals

The impact of job satisfaction and confidence on the performance of school principals has been a significant focus of contemporary empirical research, particularly in educational leadership programs like the Aspiring Principals Program. For instance, Harini et al. (2022) and Mailool et al. (2020) emphasize that job satisfaction is crucial in enhancing school leaders' normative commitment and performance. Harini et al. (2022) found that job satisfaction directly influences a principal's commitment to their school, affecting their performance.

This is particularly important because a principal's sense of satisfaction can motivate them to remain committed to their role, thereby fostering a stable and productive school environment. The study also highlights those extrinsic factors, such as colleague support and adequate compensation, are significant drivers of job satisfaction, which are more influential than intrinsic factors like personal achievement or recognition.

Moreover, the research conducted by Mailool et al. (2020) underscores the importance of organizational commitment, which is closely tied to job satisfaction. Their study on vocational school teachers indicates that when principals are satisfied with their job, they are more likely to make effective decisions that enhance teacher performance and, consequently, overall school productivity. This suggests that a satisfied and confident principal is better equipped to lead a school toward its educational goals. The study also points out that a positive school climate, which can be influenced by the principal's leadership style and decision-making, further strengthens the relationship between job satisfaction and performance.

Hutton (2016) argues that principals who exhibit high levels of self-efficacy and confidence are more effective in implementing school reforms and driving academic success. This confidence often stems from the knowledge and skills acquired through programs like the APP, which aim to enhance leadership capabilities. The APP provides principals with the tools to feel competent in their roles, increasing their job satisfaction and confidence. This, in turn, leads to improved school performance, as confident leaders are more likely to inspire and motivate their staff, leading to better outcomes for students.

Professional Development and Principal Preparation

The ability of principals to manage stress and maintain a professional balance significantly impacts job satisfaction. APP and non-APP graduates reported feeling underappreciated and the loneliness associated with leadership roles, underscoring the emotional toll these positions take. Enhancing the APP to include more extensive training on stress management and support systems could help principals better cope with the emotional demands of their roles. This aspect is vital for sustaining job satisfaction and aligns with Marzano's emphasis on continuous development and support for school leaders (Gümüs & Bellibas, 2020).

The study reveals that principals engaging in professional development tend to adopt learning-centered leadership practices, supporting Marzano's emphasis on continuous learning and development for effective school leadership. This underscores the need for policies in Jamaica to incorporate mandatory ongoing PD into the licensing regimen for principals, ensuring they are well-equipped to meet the

challenges of their roles and enhance educational outcomes (Murphy, 2020), as suggested by some respondents.

The statistical analysis, including a Pearson Chi-Square test yielding a value of 9.895 and a p-value of .019, alongside a Linear-by-Linear Association test with a p-value of .005, clearly indicates a statistically significant difference in confidence levels between APP graduates and non-participants. This finding underscores the substantial impact of the APP on graduates' self-assessed confidence. It underscores the crucial role of the APP in cultivating essential leadership qualities needed for effective school administration, decision-making abilities, strategic leadership, and overall effectiveness in enhancing student performance outcomes.

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2022), some empirical studies have associated principal learning with student achievement gains, noting that while not all studies have found direct correlations, many have faced constraints in the research context, such as insufficient duration, inadequate controls, inappropriate comparison groups, or issues with implementation fidelity. However, despite these limitations, the consistency of findings across numerous studies provides confidence in the overall conclusions (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Hutton, 2022)

Tenure or years of service significantly influences principals' confidence levels, underscoring the importance of professional development, such as the APP, in boosting leadership confidence, particularly during the early years of a principal's tenure. Statistical analysis, evidenced by a Pearson Chi-Square test result of 12.963 with a p-value of .011, confirms the statistically significant differences in confidence levels related to years of service. Pham et al. (2018) support this, stating that it

typically takes around three years for a principal's impact to become evident regarding school-level changes.

Implications for Policy

The importance of preparing principals for pandemic and system-altering occurrences cannot be overstated within the context of fulfilling the principal role and being confident and satisfied with the principalship role. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on job satisfaction was significant for both APP and non-APP graduates, with a high percentage of respondents agreeing that the pandemic negatively affected their job satisfaction. Despite this, APP graduates demonstrated resilience and highlighted the importance of practical training in coping with such challenges. This finding emphasizes the importance of incorporating crisis management and adaptive leadership training into the APP curriculum to ensure principals are prepared for unforeseen events that can drastically alter educational systems and, in particular, negatively impact student learning.

Arundel (2024) reveals that students in the United States of America, for example, need about 4.8 additional months of reading and 4.3 months of math to return to pre-pandemic achievement levels, with significant gaps widening in grades 4-8 due to below-average growth in recent school years. While in-depth research on the impact on students in Jamaica is to be undertaken, these findings underscore the importance of preparing principals to manage pandemic-level disruptions effectively. Murphy (2021) contends that the Jamaican education system will require several decades to recover from the substantial learning losses incurred, especially among

primary and high school students, particularly in core subjects such as mathematics and English.

This decline was exacerbated by the noteworthy number of students who were not engaged in online remote learning during the height of the pandemic. Principals must, therefore, be trained to use data-driven strategies to address legacy learning gaps and lead ongoing and decisive recovery efforts with sound pedagogical techniques, ensuring they can support their schools in overcoming academic setbacks and fostering resilience in their educational communities.

Hutton (2022) suggests that the licensing of principals could be integrated into the certification program sponsored by the NCEL, requiring all principals to acquire the professional certification provided by the NCEL. This licensure should be considered at a policy level. It could be renewed every five years, ensuring continuous professional validation and adherence to high standards, and it is in tandem with the proposed Jamaica Teaching Council Bill, which proposed the mandatory licensing of teachers. One graduate noted, "Consideration should be given to the licensing of principals beyond the completion of the Aspiring Principals Program," highlighting the need for ongoing professional validation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022). The APP's structured training and practical learning modules potentially align with these findings, equipping principals with the skills to manage conflicts, manage teacher compliance, and implement policies effectively.

The findings of the APP study underscore the need for future school leaders to develop the capacity to collaborate with other principals and stakeholders outside the school system to benefit from collective wisdom and avoid costly mistakes

(Hutton, 2022). While not directly addressed in this dissertation, Jamaica's declining birth rate must propel schools to prepare for a reduction in student populations in the medium to long term, particularly in rural areas.

This could lead to a corresponding decrease in the number of teachers needed, a decreased demand for classroom space, and potential school closures, which could inevitably shape the future of Jamaican schools. Future principals must be prepared for systems leadership, thinking ahead, and planning proactively to address these impending changes (Hutton, 2022; Smith, 2015). The National Council on Education (2016) emphasizes that school principals must create and sustain transformation in the school culture.

The emerging literature also underscores a 'context-sensitive' approach to principal leadership preparation, highlighting the importance of adapting training to specific governance levels and local challenges (Brauckmann et al., 2023). For example, Sweden's National Principal Training Program, administered by six universities under the Swedish National Education Agency, combines theory and practice through courses on legislation, goal management, and school leadership. This program, which includes interactive methods like group coaching, where principals can learn from each other's experiences, and real-life dilemma discussions, where they can apply their learning to practical situations, ensures principals can manage diverse educational challenges, evidenced by a 97% satisfaction rate among participants (Brauckmann, 2023)

Like the Swedish model, the APP must emphasize the importance of blending theoretical knowledge with practical experiences, such as internships and

mentorships. This combination is vital for nurturing leadership skills that can effectively tackle the challenges faced in modern educational systems (Hutton, 2022; 2016; Smith, 2015). The APP's effectiveness can be bolstered by adopting a context-sensitive approach to leadership preparation, akin to the Swedish program and others. This approach ensures that the specific needs of Jamaican principals in their unique local contexts are met, thereby reassuring the audience about its potential success.

Principals who know how to implement best practices are essential for schools with underserved populations, and aspiring principals should intern under these experienced leaders to gain valuable insights (Cox & Mullen, 2023). This approach aligns with the APP's findings, highlighting the importance of practical, firsthand experiences in developing capable and adaptable school leaders who can navigate the complexities of contemporary education and positively impact teaching and learning over the medium to long term.

Comprehensive Evaluation of Principal Preparation in Jamaica

Hutton (2022) discloses that the most serious attempt to address school leadership comprehensively began in 2011 when the Ministry of Education and Youth established the National College for Educational Leadership (NCEL), which administers the Aspiring Principals Program (APP). Future studies should prioritize examining how the APP is implemented to ensure it meets its intended objectives. Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) emphasize evaluating whether a principal learning program is being executed as planned when assessing its features and outcomes. Consequently, future research should avoid exclusively prioritizing APP outcomes

due to the potential for misleading interpretations. Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) also argue that ensuring program fidelity or ‘program integrity’ (page 79) involves adhering to the planned design, including matching the intended dosage (time and treatment provided), maintaining high-quality delivery, and ensuring participant engagement, such as consistent attendance and completion of assignments.

Principalship and Professional Development

Gümüs and Bellibas (2020) investigated the relationship between professional development and school principals' leadership practices, confirming direct and indirect links between principals' involvement in PD activities and their self-efficacy. This aligns with findings from the APP study, which show that APP graduates who engage in more PD activities exhibit higher confidence and enthusiasm. Consequently, there is evidence that principals who participate in more PD activities develop a stronger belief in their ability to influence teacher improvement and student learning, leading them to engage more actively in related practices.

The implications for the Aspiring Principals Program (APP) and the professional development of principals are weighty, especially given graduates' calls for additional professional development opportunities. The findings of Gümüs and Bellibas (2020) underscore the importance of continuous PD in fostering self-efficacy and effective leadership practices among school principals.

Limitations

The study yields promising findings about the impact of educational leadership preparation on principal's job satisfaction, leadership decision-making, and self-reported perceptions of improving student academic outcomes.

However, several limitations should be noted. The study underscores that the qualitative data received lays the foundation for future qualitative studies on the impact of principal preparation on student academic outcomes in Jamaica. The study's inability to analyze student performance data in schools led by APP and non-APP principals is a missed opportunity to directly measure the program's impact on educational outcomes.

The study also stresses the importance of considering the impact of different school types and resource allocation. It's important to note that the sample size, representing approximately 10 percent of Jamaica's principal population, could have been larger to enhance the study's measurement sensitivity and detect potential differences. More control variables could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing leadership skills and effectiveness.

Equipping Aspiring Principals for Systemic Challenges

According to Ying (2022), disruptive forces play a crucial role in shaping the future of education. This means aspiring principals in Jamaica must be prepared to lead through these challenges. The ongoing effects of COVID-19 and the exponential progress in technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Blockchain, Big Data, and nanotechnology are already influencing the education sector. The increasing threats posed by climate change and geopolitical conflicts, as seen by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, stress the necessity for leaders in the future to be robust and flexible. Ying (2022) stresses that the forces at play in Jamaica pose both challenges and opportunities for education. It is vital to equip future principals with the skills to

effectively manage and take advantage of these disruptions to ensure the educational system's long-term viability and adaptability.

The issue of teacher migration from Jamaica presents significant challenges for the preparation of aspiring principals. The preparation of aspiring principals in Jamaica must consider the chronic issue of teachers leaving the classroom at an increasing pace. According to Morris (2024), the Jamaica Teachers' Association (JTA) warned that the migration of teachers to more lucrative job opportunities overseas continues to deplete the local teaching workforce of the most qualified educators. This migration impacts the ability of schools to maintain a stable and experienced teaching staff, which is vital for the mentorship and professional development of future school leaders. As aspiring principals require guidance and support from seasoned educators, the loss of experienced teachers undermines the foundation of effective leadership training programs (Gentles, 2020).

Gentles (2020) further elaborates that the Jamaican government's focus has been replacing rather than retaining teachers, which has proven ineffective. This approach fails to address the root causes of teacher dissatisfaction, such as poor remuneration, heavy workloads, and inadequate professional support. Ovenden-Hope et al. (2020) highlight the importance of addressing these systemic issues to ensure that current and future school leaders can work in supportive and conducive environments that promote stability and effectiveness in the education system.

The implications of this ongoing teacher migration are profound for Jamaica's overall education quality. Van-Nuland (2020) emphasizes that retaining experienced teachers is crucial for maintaining high education standards and ensuring students

receive quality instruction. For aspiring principals, the continuous turnover of teaching staff means they must frequently adapt to new team dynamics and often take on additional responsibilities to fill gaps left by departing teachers. This hinders their professional growth and affects the school's ability to provide consistent and practical education to students. Addressing the factors contributing to teacher migration and implementing strategies to retain teachers are essential to preparing competent and confident principals who can lead schools successfully.

Areas for Further Research

For future research, implementing a longitudinal study to track the long-term impact of the APP on leadership effectiveness and student outcomes is recommended. This approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the program's benefits and help refine the objectives and module configurations based on evidence and outcomes. Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) also recommend using mixed methods skillfully to deepen the understanding of program processes and their effects, especially those that link program features to outcomes.

Another area for future research is exploring the viability of licensing principals through the Aspiring Principals Program in the Jamaican education system. A licensing regime linked to the successful completion of the APP could elevate the profession by formalizing the professional status of school principals and ensuring a consistent competency standard. This licensing process would require meeting specified performance benchmarks during and after the program, incentivizing ongoing professional development, and adherence to high educational leadership standards based on global benchmarks (Hutton, 2022).

Conclusion

The Aspiring Principals Program (APP) has demonstrated meaningful potential in enhancing the leadership capabilities of Jamaica school principals, which is crucial, given that leadership is the second most important variable affecting student performance, next to teaching. The findings from this study highlight the profound impact that well-prepared principals can have on teaching and learning over the medium to long term. Equipping principals with the necessary skills to foster inclusive educational practices and effectively manage various challenges, including global health crises, allows the APP to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of education.

The quantitative and qualitative data analysis confirm that the APP significantly boosts principals' job satisfaction, leadership confidence, and decision-making competencies. APP graduates exhibit higher enthusiasm and job satisfaction, translating into more effective school administration and improved student outcomes. These programs prepare principals to improve academic performance outcomes and equip them with the skills to foster inclusive educational practices and effectively manage global health crises. The discussion underscores the importance of such programs in developing capable and adaptable leaders who can navigate the complexities of contemporary education (Hutton, 2022; Johnson, 2017; Smith, 2016).

The implications for continuous professional development and pre-service and in-service training for principals are paramount. Ongoing professional development activities for educational leaders are beneficial and essential in

maintaining and enhancing the skills of school principals, ensuring they remain adaptable and responsive to evolving educational challenges. The APP should emphasize continuous learning and practical application as a model for other professional development programs aimed at educational leaders, reinforcing the importance of ongoing learning and adaptation in education.

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APPENDIX
APP IN JAMAICA

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1 Thank you for being willing to take this survey. Your thoughts are important, and I know that your responses will help me understand the experiences of principals in general and the Aspiring Principals Programme in particular. Do you want to continue?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Thank you for being willing to take this survey. Your thoughts are important, and I know that your... = No

Q2 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
 - Female (2)
 - Other. Please specify. (3) _____
-

Q3 In what year did you first teach full-time?

Q4 What subject(s) did you teach when you were a classroom teacher? Check ALL that apply.

- Elementary subjects in a self-contained classroom (1)
- Mathematics (2)
- Reading, English, or English Language Arts (3)
- Science (4)
- Social Studies (5)
- Art or Music (6)
- Health and Physical Education (7)
- Computers and technology (8)
- Non-classroom teaching (e.g., Reading Specialist) (9)
- Special education (10)
- Other. Please specify (11)

Q5 In what year did you become a full-time principal?

Q6 How many years have you served as:

	0 yrs (1)	1 - 4 yrs (2)	5 - 9 yrs (3)	10 - 14 yrs (4)	15 or more yrs (5)
Teacher (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vice principal (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Principal (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MOEY Central administration office (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other. Please explain. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7 About what percentage of your time in a typical week is spent on. Remember, the percentages may not sum to or may exceed 100% as your activities vary from week to week.

	0 % (1)	1- 25 % (2)	26 - 50 % (3)	51- 75 % (4)	76% and high er (5)
Internal administrative tasks (e.g., reports, budget. etc.) (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Curriculum and teaching-related tasks (e.g. observations, grade level meetings, mentoring teachers) (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student interactions (discipline and academic guidance) (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Teacher interactions (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parent interactions, both formal and informal (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MOEY Region interactions (e.g., meetings) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other. Please specify (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Indifferent (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
The stress and disappointments involved with being a principal at this school aren't really worth it. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am generally satisfied with being the principal at this school. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am generally satisfied with being a principal in general. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If I could
get a
higher-
paying
job, I'd
leave this
job as
soon as
possible.
(4)

I think
about
being
employe
d to
another
school.
(5)

I don't
seem to
have as
much
enthusias
m now
as I did
when I
began
this job.
(6)

I think
about
just
staying
home
from
school
because I
am just
too tired
to go. (7)

I think about leaving the school region I am employed. (8)

The COVID pandemic made this job much harder. Please explain. (9)

Q9 My school includes (Check all that apply)

Early childhood grades (1)

Primary grades (2)

Secondary grades (3)

Q10 In what year were you born?

Q11 We have some questions about leadership.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
Students may not achieve despite good leadership. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Some students are just not prepared to learn. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working collaboratively with teachers will improve student outcomes. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working with other school leaders is a good goal. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Q12 Please tell us more about your leadership.

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
I am confident that I can raise student achievement. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know effective strategies to improve literacy rates in my school. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to use data effectively to drive student achievement. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can lead initiatives that target student underperformance. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I have implemented new curricula r to improve student outcomes. (6)

There has been a noticeable improvement in students passing the national exams. (7)



Q13 We have a few more questions relating to your views on school leadership.

	Stro ngly agre e (1)	A gr ee (2)	Ne utr al (3)	Disa gree (4)	Stro ngly disa gree (5)
I am well prepared to monitor and evaluate teacher instructional methods. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have supported specific curricular materials that have resulted in higher student achievement in mathematics (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am confident that I can use data from assessments to drive academic improvements (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I am confident that I can lead initiatives that target academic underperformance. (5)

I am prepared to monitor and evaluate teachers' instructional methods for academic gains. (6)

I am able to improve the school's academic climate. (7)



Q14 Please give us your thoughts.

	Stron gly agree (1)	Ag ree (2)	Neu tral (3)	Disa gree (4)	Stron gly disag ree (5)
I can set actionabl e and measura ble academi c goals for my school. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe mentori ng and coachi ng program s for teachers can improve academi c success. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student motiva tion program s will lead to improve d academi c achieve ment. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I know how to use technology to enhance teaching and learning outcomes (4)

I know how to improve parental involvement to improve student outcomes. (5)

I know how to identify and support academically at-risk students. (6)

I know how to support teachers. (7)



Q15 This project is focused on learning more about what educational leaders need to lead effectively. Is there anything you would like to add?

Q16 Did you graduate from the Aspiring Principals Programme?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Did you graduate from the Aspiring Principals Programme? = No

Q17 When did you graduate from the Aspiring Principals Programme?

- 2012 (1)
- 2013 (2)
- 2014 (3)
- 2015 (4)
- 2016 (7)
- 2017 (8)
- 2018 (9)
- 2019 (10)
- 2020 (11)
- 2021 (12)
- 2022 (13)
- Other. Please specify. (6) _____

Q18 Since completing the APP, please rate the items listed below.

	Poor (1)	Adequate (2)	Good (3)	Very good (4)	Excellent (5)
How effective was the APP in preparing you for principalship? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How do you rate your performance as a principal now? (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How do you rate the yearly academic performance of your schools now? (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How would you rate the termly academic performance of your school? (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How do
you rate
your
leadership
skills
now? (23)

Q19 What did you like most about the APP?

Q20 What did you like the least about the APP?

Q21 How can the program be improved? Click to write the question text.

End of Block: Default Question Block
