

# RESEARCH BRIEF

## COLLEGE of EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

### **Analyzing Principal Perceptions of Educational Purpose in Southern Belize through Scholar-Practitioner Research**

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#### **Introduction:**

The purpose of this research is to analyze the mission and perceptions of the principal's vision of student success characteristics within Belizean schools in the Toledo district. This study is embedded within the scholar-practitioner approach to leadership, as the researchers were directly involved with the workshop classes that provide the data. Scholar-practitioner research recognizes not only the multiple influences and variables, but also the impact of the researcher on the outcome.

#### **Methodology:**

During a four day training session of principals in the Toledo district, 30 primary school principals were divided into five focus groups. The principals were asked to determine and define the mission of their schools, i.e., "the enduring purpose". In addition, the principals were asked to write what they considered successful characteristics among students who finished primary school and the same for a 25 year old former student. Groups were assigned through a random process and were given 20 minutes to record a primary mission and 45 minutes to discuss related issues.

#### **Results & Discussion:**

The principals were fairly uniform in their responses to the mission of the primary schools. Each group used the term "holistic" to describe the mission. The principals further clarified this to mean the mission of the schools was to address the needs of the entire child; not only focusing on academic issues, but also teaching to the spiritual, physical, emotional and social needs. The goals discussed by the principals were directly in line with the mission statement by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The principals notably failed to include passing the PSE (Primary School Examination), a standardized test given to all students, as a characteristic of success. In general, all missions emphasized the importance of becoming a good citizen.

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