

AN EVALUATION OF THE FITNESS FOR PURPOSE OF THE
ASSOCIATE DEGREE IN BUSINESS STUDIES
OFFERED BY JAMAICAN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

An Evaluation of the Fitness for Purpose of the Associate Degree
in Business Studies Offered by Jamaican Community Colleges

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This dissertation uses Stake's Countenance Evaluation model as a framework to examine the quality of the A.Sc. in Business Studies offered by Jamaican community colleges. Quality is defined as fitness for purpose, that is, the extent to which the programme has fulfilled its stated purpose and has satisfied stakeholder expectations. The constructs Employability and Transfer Effectiveness are used to further define fitness for purpose. The study espouses an explanation of quality that is client-centred and that recognizes a range of stakeholders and their role in its definition. A mixed method design utilising both quantitative and qualitative data is therefore adopted to enable both data triangulation and methodological triangulation, thus capturing perspectives of multiple observers. The evaluation focuses on programme description and programme outcomes and research questions concentrate on congruence between the stated intents of the programme and the actual outcomes. The functions of community colleges and of the associate degree are also reviewed. The study results reveal that stakeholders express fairly high levels of satisfaction with the programme's fitness for purpose, that there is much consonance among the views of stakeholders, and that these results are not significantly influenced by selected lecturer and student factors, except for school location. Results also show that there is no statistically significant difference in the average performance of holders of the A.Sc and that of GCE 'A' level students from community colleges and from traditional high schools, in their first semester at UWI. Limitations and implications for further research are discussed.

Keywords: Stake's countenance evaluation, quality, fitness for purpose, employability, transfer effectiveness, stakeholder perceptions, higher education, community colleges, associate degree