

ABSTRACT

This study arose from the introduction of CXC Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) in Geography to replace the Cambridge Advanced Level Examination (A'level). Traditional High School students in Jamaica are currently sitting both examinations. Teachers teaching Cambridge Advanced Level are reluctant to change and students and members of the society have also resisted the change. This study examines the experiences and attitudes of students to both examinations to help to explain the reluctance and resistance to change.

The research design centred on a qualitative comparison of the Cambridge A'level and CXC CAPE syllabi and statistical analysis based on students sitting both examination and on a number of dependent variables. The sample was drawn from traditional high schools in the Kingston Metropolitan Area, Jamaica with established sixth forms. The method of obtaining data used was by a questionnaire given to students and teachers in the participating schools, as well as by an informal interview with teachers conducted by the researcher.

The research methods used were qualitative and quantitative. A detailed description and an analysis of both geography syllabi were done to ascertain the differences and similarities in the structure, content and modes of assessment. Statistical tests used were Bivariate Correlation and Levene 't' test to assess the variables and to achieve the following objectives:

- the results the students attain at the CSEC, G.C.E. O'Level and the results at the end of one year of Advanced studies

- the experiences in the development of analytical, data processing, application skills as well as an appreciation of the geographical environment
- attitudes such as the level of satisfaction with and enjoyment of the syllabi being studied
- the methodology, resources and facilities used in the teaching/ learning process

Summary of Results

The structure and assessment of the CAPE examination is different from the Cambridge Advanced Level, but aims and rationale are quite similar. There were significant differences found in the correlation of the results of the examination taken at fifth form with the examination taken in first year sixth form. Cambridge students entered sixth form with a better grade but a significant amount received an unacceptable grade in the Advanced Subsidiary examination. A high correlation was found with CAPE students as all students received an acceptable grade.

No significant result was found in the syllabus preparing students for analytical and data processing skills. But a significant difference was found in the development of awareness of the environment between both syllabi. The levels of enjoyment and satisfaction with the sixth form course were found to be significantly higher for CAPE students. CAPE students were more aware of the field trip methods used in the geography course. Not all facilities for the teaching of Geography were available in any of the schools in the survey.