

ABSTRACT

The Extent to Which Success at the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) Physics Programme Prepares Students for Undergraduate Introductory Courses of the Physics Department, Faculty of Science and Agriculture, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine

Cheryl Ann Ramadhar

This study sought to explore the extent to which Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) physics is perceived by students, lecturers, and teachers to adequately prepare students for first year university physics courses in the Physics Department of the Faculty of Science and Agriculture at The University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine. Specifically, the paper sought to examine: 1) UWI lecturers' perceptions of the level of preparedness of CAPE physics graduates for introductory physics courses at UWI, 2) CAPE physics graduates' perceptions of their level of preparedness for introductory physics courses at UWI, and 3) CAPE physics teachers' perceptions of the adequacy of CAPE as preparation for introductory UWI physics courses. Data were collected from a purposeful sample of 4 UWI physics lecturers, 60 first-year UWI physics students, and 5 CAPE physics teachers from two secondary schools in Port of Spain, using interviews, focus group discussions, surveys and documentary analysis. Among the findings were that: 1) there was some correlation between CAPE and UWI examinations, 2) some CAPE physics students were not generally well prepared for physics as offered at UWI, 3) several students viewed the laboratory exercises as the most stressful aspect of UWI physics, and 4) the UWI physics lecturers perceived that there was a diminished level of preparedness among students.

Keywords: Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination; Physics education; University preparation; Physics lecturers; Secondary school teachers; Undergraduate students; Perceptions; Trinidad and Tobago