

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to assess the relevance of the General Proficiency level of the CXC English Language Examination on two dimensions: (1) the extent to which it fosters the development of the language skills that are perceived as critical to advanced studies, and more specifically, successful studies at the University of the West Indies; and (2) the extent to which it fosters the development of the language skills that are fundamental to the major occupations in Barbados.

Methodology and Analysis

Data were collected from: (1) 280 fifth form students drawn from both Newer and Older Secondary Schools, by means of a questionnaire and a diagnostic test; (2) 60 employers drawn from both the public and private sectors, by means of a job component inventory; (3) a cross-faculty panel of 7 university teachers, using a structured interview schedule; and (4) 8 English Language specialists. The main statistical methods employed to analyse the data were percentages, means, standard deviation, chi-square and t-test. However, a summary and a matching strategy were also employed.

Conclusions

The main conclusions were:-

- (1) CXC seems to place high premium on a network of language skills which may be meaningfully classified under two

broad headings:- (a) Understanding Skills and (b) Expression skills.

- (2) The majority of the language skills needed for successful studies at the University of the West Indies, and all those needed for the major occupations in Barbados fall within the purview of the language skills perceived to be of most worth to CXC.
- (3) A large percentage of the students who have been prepared to write the CXC General Proficiency English Language Examination do not possess the language skills that are perceived to be most important to CXC.