

ABSTRACT

The Effect of the Caribbean Examinations Council Foreign Language System of Assessment on Teaching and Testing in Barbados and Grenada

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This study sought to investigate the impact created by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) Foreign Language examinations, on the teaching and testing practices in some secondary schools in Barbados and Grenada. The study also looked at the era of testing prior to the introduction of the CXC foreign language examinations and compared these external examinations with the CXC examinations and supporting documents. The study sought to find out subject specialists and teachers' views about the effect of the CXC examinations on the classroom. Finally, the CXC foreign language examinations were inspected to determine whether they were more relevant than former examinations.

An analysis of documents including examination papers was done. Six language specialists were interviewed in Barbados and Grenada using a semi-structured interview schedule. Data was collected by means of a questionnaire from thirty teachers of French and Spanish in Barbados and nineteen teachers in Grenada.

There was evidence of major changes in teacher acquisition of knowledge, skills and approaches in foreign language teaching and testing, in both of the territories in this study. This improvement stated and implied, was seen as a result of teacher involvement in the CXC system of examining. The evidence showed that the majority of teachers, particularly those in Grenada, benefited greatly from their involvement with the CXC examination process. The study found that the examinations were relevant and appropriate, but that the supporting documents such as the schools' reports and oral examination documents are not fully utilized. The timeliness of the changeover evident in this study from external examinations to regional examinations was in keeping with many major examination boards worldwide. Many of these testing bodies had already started examining new strategies and initiatives. There was evidence in the literature of exploration of alternatives to traditional testing in many public examinations.