

CXC GRADUATES, EMPLOYMENT AND FURTHER STUDY: REPORT ON A TRACER STUDY OF CXC GRADUATES WITH BASIC PROFICIENCY LEVEL GRADES I AND II

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The Caribbean Examination Council offers a Basic Proficiency examination which is intended to test a wider range of abilities than the General Proficiency examination, thereby catering for a wider segment of the school population. The examination has been controversial and there is a perception among many teachers, students, parents and potential employers that Grades 1 and 2 at the Basic Proficiency level are of little value in obtaining employment or as a platform for further education. This paper investigates that perception. The results of the questionnaire survey suggest that Grades 1 and 2 are in fact inadequate for gaining employment or for qualifying for entry to advanced levels of education.

Introduction

In a newsletter commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) (1982a), it was reported that the Council developed a Basic Proficiency examination in order to test a "wider range of abilities" (p. 9). It was elaborated as follows:

... While CXC's General Proficiency meets the narrower mandate to replace the GCE O'Level with an examination of comparable level it is with the introduction of the Basic Proficiency that CXC attempts to serve a wider segment of our school population. (p. 9)

CXC claimed that the Basic Proficiency attempts to test that section of the school population "hitherto not deemed capable of certification" (p. 9) at the GCE Ordinary Level. CXC stated explicitly that the Basic is not 'a watered down' version of the General Proficiency but that it was designed "to bring within the reach of those candidates an examination in which there is a reduction in content coverage and/or examination demand." (p. 9)

The following are statements which describe the Basic and General Proficiencies:

The Caribbean Examinations Council endeavored to cater for a large segment of the school population by offering two examination schemes - a General Proficiency and a Basic Proficiency scheme. The General Proficiency scheme caters for those students who intend to pursue a subject beyond the fifth year of secondary school. The Basic Proficiency Scheme is meant to serve one or more of five purposes which may be summarised as follows:

To provide a measure of:

- (a) a candidate's ability to write a subject under the General Proficiency scheme.
- (b) knowledge and skills needed by 15-17 year olds for direct entry into the world of work and into certain levels of further vocational education.
- (c) a candidate's achievement in subjects (in a Basic Proficiency-General Proficiency combination) best suited to his needs, interests and abilities.
- (d) a candidate's performance on a restricted syllabus relating to concepts and principles and their applications.
- (e) a profile of abilities which is different in shape from the profile normally measured under a General Proficiency scheme. (CXC, 1981)

In 1980, it was agreed that a study of CXC's Basic Proficiency Examination should be undertaken with the aim of establishing a clearer understanding of the purpose, nature and uses of the examination.

Consequently, a research project consisting of five separate but related sub-projects was set up (CXC, 1982b).

In 1982, when there was an increase over the 1981 entries for Basic Proficiency subject entries, it was recommended that a combination of General and Basic be advised based on the particular interests and aptitudes of the candidates (CXC, 1982b).

In 1984, there were four out of five studies on the CXC Basic Proficiency examination received by CXC. One of the major findings was the "lack of recognition of the Basic Proficiency." (CXC, 1984, p. 4). CXC, in its 1984 news bulletin pledged to continue its effort to promote understanding of the concept on which the Basic Proficiency scheme was designed and the value of the qualification (CXC, 1984, p. 4).

Rationale of the Study

The members of the Caribbean Examinations Council National Committee of Trinidad and Tobago is comprised as follows: Officials of the Ministry of Education at Supervisory level, representatives of subject panels, the Trinidad and Tobago Unified Teachers' Association, the business community, NIHERST, the Faculty of Education, principals and a journalist representing the general community. This broad based committee is chaired by the Chief Education Officer.

At several meetings, there were discussions on the value of the Basic subject Grades 1 or 2 for employment and for qualification to higher education. It was argued that students in Trinidad experienced difficulty in obtaining jobs and entry to Advanced Courses if they possessed a CXC Certificate with a combination of General and Basic Proficiency Grades 1 and/or 2. This difficulty, it was also argued, increased if the certificate was one with Basic Proficiency Grades (1 and/or 2) only.

It was suggested that a study be done to try to determine the validity of this assertion. A Sub-Committee of four members was selected to attempt this study and to report to the National Council Committee.

The Sub-Committee was advised by the National Council to limit the size of the study and to have as its main aim, a tracer study of graduates with CXC Basic Proficiency Grades 1 and/or 2.

Throughout this study, any reference made to the acquisition of subjects rests on the assumption that Grades 1 and/ or 2 have been obtained.

The Sub-Committee met and decided to specify the objective of the study:

To provide data that may assist in determining whether the Basic Proficiency Scheme is serving purposes (b) and (c) as outlined in the Introduction.

Specific Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To discover whether male and female students of secondary schools who obtain grades 1 and 2 at the CXC Basic Proficiency Level examination obtain employment;
2. to ascertain whether students who obtain grades 1 and 2 at the CXC Basic Proficiency Level examination, pursue any other examination and/or further their studies;
3. to discover whether the employment is related to the subjects in which the students obtained their Basic Proficiency grades;
4. to determine the association between types of school from which students obtained their passes 1 and 2 in Basic Proficiency and employment.

Data Collection Method

It was agreed to limit the study of CXC graduates to those graduates of secondary schools in County St. George, incorporating as wide a variety of school types as possible. County St. George was chosen because: (i)

County St. George embraces a wide variety of school types which was necessary for this study, and (ii) of the limitations of time and other resources of the members of the research team.

Schools in County St. George, Trinidad and Tobago were identified and classified as follows:

1. Comprehensive
2. 7-year Grammar (boys)
3. 7-year Grammar (girls)
4. 5-year Grammar (girls)
5. 7-year Government
6. 5-year Government

Care was also taken to select schools from both urban and suburban areas, as well as schools that catered for male and/or female students.

The following schools which were selected indicate the fair spread of the selection.

TYPE OF SCHOOL	NAME OF SCHOOL	URBAN/SUBURBAN
Comprehensive	St. Augustine Senior	suburban
Comprehensive	Barataria Senior	suburban
7-year Grammar (boys)	Fatima College	urban
7-year Grammar (boys)	Hillview College	suburban
7-year Grammar (girls)	St. Joseph's Convent, P.O.S	urban
5-year Grammar (girls)	Lakshmi Girls'	suburban
7-year Government	St. George's College	suburban
5-year Government	Diego Martin Government	urban
5-year Government	Belmont Boys'	urban

From these schools, lists were obtained of students who passed the Basic Proficiency examinations with Grades 1 or 2 in 1980 and 1987. These two years were chosen because it was felt that they represent the *boom* (1980) and *post boom* (1987) periods in Trinidad and Tobago.

Thirty-three percent (33%) were useful responses. An examination of the respondents indicated that they represented all categories of the schools sampled in a reasonable ratio to the sample. (See Table 2 (b)). The members of the Sub-Committee agreed that the respondents sufficiently resembled the characteristics of those in their sample, and by extension their population, and therefore their conclusions could be used to make generalizations about the population.

Limitations

It was intended that there should be both *boom* and *post boom* categories, but the technicians at the computer centre, in computing the responses, ignored these categories. Although the Committee felt that this categorization of the respondents would have enhanced the study by allowing the comparison, the consensus among members was that the omission by the technicians did not detract from the main objective of the study, which was to investigate the Basic Proficiency passes and employment.

Questionnaires were sent to a sample of 300 students. Responses were received from 113 (approx. 38%) Thirty two (approx. 11%) others were returned unopened because they could not be located. This was indicated by the official remarks on each envelope returned by the post office. Together, these accounted for approximately 49% of the sample.

Approximately 5% could not be used in the study mainly because of inadequate or confused responses, or inaccurate coding which prevented the data from being effectively useful for analysis.

The Population

The population comprised 559 students who obtained Grades 1 and/or 2 at the Basic Proficiency Level examinations in 1980/81 and 1986/87. A random sample of 300 was selected. The proportion contributed by each school list to the population determined its representation in the sample. Table 1 shows the population breakdown with males and females identified.

Table 1

Population of Study

SCHOOL	1986/87		1980/81		TOTAL
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
7-year Government St. George's	3	2	9	5	19
7-year Assisted Fatima/Hillview St. Joseph's Convent	-	-	58	-	58
	-	-	-	23	23
5-year Government Belmont Diego Martin	-	-	11	-	11
	57	23	-	-	80
5-year Assisted Lakshmi	-	-	-	15	15
Sen. Comprehensive Barataria St. Augustine	-	-	38	73	111
	92	150	-	-	242
TOTAL	152	175	116	116	559

Table 2

Sample of Study

SCHOOL	1986/87		1980/81		TOTAL
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
7-year Government St. George's	2	1	4	2	09
7-year Assisted Fatima/Hillview St. Joseph's Convent	- -	- -	31 -	- 12	31 12
5-year Government Belmont Diego Martin	- 30	- 12	6 -	- -	06 42
5-year Assisted Lakshmi	-	-	-	10	10
Sen. Comprehensive Barataria St. Augustine	- 44	- 88	20 -	38 -	58 132
TOTAL	76	101	61	62	300

Table 2(b)

Sample and Respondents

SCHOOL	1986/87				1980/81				Total	
	Male		Female		Male		Female			
7-year Government	2	2	1	0	4	0	2	0	09	02
7-year Assisted (boys)	-	-	-	-	31	8	-	-	31	08
7-year Assisted (girls)	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	1	12	01
5-year Government	30	6	12	3	6	1	-	-	48	10
5-year Assisted	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	4	10	04
Comprehensive	44	21	88	40	20	4	38	10	190	75
TOTAL	76	29	101	43	61	13	62	15	300	100

Key: Col. 1: Sample
Col. 2: Respondents

Table 3

Gender and Length of Employment

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
GENDER	UN-EMPLOYED	LESS THAN 1 YEAR	1 - 3 YEARS	4 - 6 YEARS	7 - 9 YEARS	TOTAL BOTH GENDERS	% OF TOTAL
NA:							
No.	0	1	0	0	0	1	
%	0	1	0	0	0		1
MALE							
No.	16	12	6	3	6	43	
%	16.2	12.1	6.1	3.0	6.1		43.4
FEMALE							
No.	31	12	5	4	3	55	
%	31.3	12.1	5.1	4.1	3.0		55.6
TOTAL	47	25	11	7	9	99	
%	47.5	25.3	11.1	7.1	9.1		100.0

Data and Analysis

Objective 1: To discover whether male and female students of secondary schools who obtain grades 1 and 2 at the CXC Basic Proficiency Level examination obtain employment.

Approximately 58% (56.7%) of the respondents were unemployed up to the time the data were collected.

The following tables indicate the categories of employment of the 42.2%, the relationship between the gender of the respondents and the length of time employed (Table 3); gender and type of job (Table 4); gender and specific occupation (Table 5).

Approximately 31% (31.3%) of the females were unemployed. This is almost twice that of the males (16.2%).

Of those employed for periods of less than 1 year to 7-9 years, the table shows that 27.3% were male and 24.3% were females.

More males (6.1%) were employed longer (7-9 years) than females (3.0%).

Most of the respondents were employed in private firms with 18.0% of the males and 15.2% of the females in this category. However, more females (3.0%) were self-employed than males (1.0%).

Table 4**Gender and Type of Job**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
GENDER	UN-CATEGORIZED	SELF-EMPLOYED	PRIVATE	GOVERNMENT	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
NA						
No.	0	0	1	0	1	
%	0	0	1.0	0		1.0
MALE						
No.	18	1	18	6	43	
%	18.2	1.0	18.2	6.1		43.4
FEMALE						
No.	32	3	15	5	55	
%	32.3	3.0	15.2	5.1		55.6
TOTAL	50	4	34	11	99	
%	50.5	4.0	34.3	11.1		100.0

Approximately 53.5% of the males who were occupied in the categories of specific occupations listed in columns 2 to 8 (Table 5) were employed mainly as machine operators or messengers.

Among the females, approximately 32.7% were engaged in the specific occupations listed in columns 2 to 8, and the category clerk/typist accounted for 77.7% of those occupied.

Table 5

Gender and Specific Types of Jobs

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
GENDER	UN-CATEGORIZED	CLERK TYPIST	SALES PERSON	MACHINE OPERATOR	MESSENGER	POLICE OFFICER	MEDICAL	TEACHER *	TOTAL	% OF TOTAL
NA										
No.	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	
%	0	0	0	0	1.0	0	0	0		1.0
MALE										
No.	20	1	3	7	6	1	1	4	43	
%	20.2	1.0	3.0	7.1	6.1	1.0	1.0	4.0		43.4
FEMALE										
No.	37	14	1	0	2	0	0	1	55	
%	37.4	14.1	1.0	0	2.0	0	0	1.0		55.6
TOTAL	57	45	4	7	9	1	1	5	99	
%	57.6	15.2	4.0	7.1	9.1	1.0	1.0	5.1		100.0

The category housewife/house husband is divided into those who were not engaged in this type of occupation [unemployed] and those who were [employed]. Ninety-six percent (96%) of the respondents did not answer

Table 6

Housewife/Househusband

	1	2	3	4
GENDER	UNEMPLOYED	EMPLOYED	TOTAL	%
Not Stated	1 1.0	0 0	1	1.0
Male No.	43	0	43	
%	43.4	0		43.4
Female No.	51	4	55	
%	51.5	4.0		55.6
Total No.	95	4	99	
%	96.0	4.0		100.0

Objective 2: To ascertain whether students who obtain grades 1 and 2 at the CXC Basic Proficiency Level examination, pursue any other examination and/or further their studies.

Forty percent (40%) of the respondents continued their studies after receiving the CXC Basic Proficiency Grades 1 and 2. The levels of educational training attained by the respondents are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Type and Number of Students in Post-CXC Basic Study

LEVEL ATTAINED	NUMBER
GCE O'Level	7
GCE A'Level	1
Polytechnic	1
Secretarial	6
Youth Camp	1
Technical Institute	8
University	2
Other	14
TOTAL	40

The forty students have all gained employment in various fields of occupation. This information is set out in Table 8.

Table 8

**Occupations of CXC Basic Proficiency 1 and 2
Graduates Who Continued Their Studies**

LEVEL OF ATTAINMENT	OCCUPATION	NO. EMPLOYED
GCE O'Level	Clerk Typist	4
	Salesperson	1
	Machine Operator	1
	Police	1
GCE A'Level	Salesperson	1
Polytechnic	Machine Operator	1
Secretarial	Clerk Typist	6
Technical Institute	Clerk Typist	1
	Machine Operator	1
University	Medical	1
	Teacher	1
Other		15
TOTAL		40

Table 9: Relationship between Basic Proficiency Grades 1 and 2 National Examinations, Employment and Occupation Types.

Question 7 of the questionnaire sought information about student passes at the National Examinations in 5 subject groupings. For the purpose of data analysis each group is identified as follows:

National 1:	Air Conditioning, Electrical, Auto and Diesel, Machine Shop.
National 2:	Cabinet Making, Construction, Carpentry, General Drafting.
National 3:	Masonry, Plumbing, Welding.
National 4:	Tailoring, Beauty Culture, Dressmaking and Design.
National 5:	Agricultural Science Craft.

These groups were cross referenced with: (i) How Long Working; (ii) Type of Job; (iii) Occupation; (iv) Housewife-Househusband; (v) Other. The data show that only 4% of the respondents passed one subject at the National Examinations in one of the groups listed below:

Airconditioning, etc.	1
Cabinet making, etc.	2
Tailoring	1

Out of these four respondents, one who passed in the Cabinet making category and one in the Tailoring category were listed as being employed, but not in any of the listed occupations. Another was employed as a messenger for an unclassified time period. One who passed in the Airconditioning category was a machine operator in private employment.

Because of the almost total absence of passes in the National Examinations among the respondents who obtained Grades 1 and 2 Basic Examinations and who sat the National Examinations, a more detailed analysis was not possible.

Table 9

Relationship between Basic Proficiency Grades 1 and 2 National Examinations, Employment and Occupation Types Subject and Type of Employment

SUBJECT GROUP	OCCUPATION								
	1 UNLISTED OCCUPATION	2 CLERK TYPIST	3 SALES PERSON	4 MACHINE OPERATOR	5 MESSENGER	6 POLICE	7 MEDICAL	8 TEACHER	9 TOTAL
Air Cond. No.	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
%	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
Cab. Making No.	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
%	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0
Masonry No.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Tailoring No.	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
%	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
Agric. Sc./Craft No.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
%	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Unlisted/Other No.	55	15	4	6	8	1	1	5	95
%	55.6	15.2	4.0	6.1	8.1	1.0	1.0	5.1	96.0
Total	57	15	4	7	9	1	1	5	99
%	57.6	15.2	4.0	7.0	9.1	1.0	1.0	5.1	100.0

Objective 3: To discover whether the employment is related to the subjects in which the students obtained their Basic Proficiency grades

Table 10 indicates the percentage employed, categories of employment and the type and number of subjects obtained at Grades 1 and 2.

Approximately 58% (56.7%) of the respondents were unemployed at the time the data was collected.

The largest group was that in the Clerk/ clerk/typist category who obtained Grades 1 or 2 Basic in the Office Procedure category. Those who had one subject accounted for 27.3%, and those with two subjects accounted for 28.6%.

Another large group comprised those who passed three Arts subjects and were employed as Messenger/labourer. This group accounted for 27.1%. In the Home Management category, the second largest, 18.2%, had one subject and were employed as messenger/labourer. Similarly, those who had two subjects in Office Procedure (14.3%) were also employed as messenger/labourer.

Most of the respondents in the category of Salespersons had one Science subject and one Skill subject.

Ten percent (10%) of those who gained one Arts subject and 9.1% of those who passed three Arts subjects were employed in the Teacher/Nurse/Journalist category.

Machine/Trades, etc. category attracted those with one or two Science subjects (7.6% and 9.3%), Arts 5.0% and 4.1%, Home Management 9.1%, and none in Skills.

Approximately 3% (3.4%) of those employed in the Protective Services and as Senior Public Servants possessed one Basic Science subject.

Approximately 2% (2.3%) of the respondents in the Medical Doctor/Lawyer/Engineer/Director - category of professionals obtained two Basic subjects in Science.

Table 10

Relationship between Subject and Type of Employment

EMPLOYMENT	SCIENCE		ARTS			OFFICE PRACTICE		H.M.	SKILLS
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)		
Clerk, C/typist, etc.	10.7		14.1	5.0	5.0	27.3	28.6	-	-
Salespersons	10.7	4.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	18.2
Tax/Business	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Machine/Trades, etc.	7.6	9.3	5.0	-	4.1	-	-	9.1	-
Messenger/Labourer, etc.	9.1	9.3	5.0	-	27.1	-	14.3	18.2	-
Policeman/Fireman, etc.	3.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Senior Public Servant	3.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Med. Dr/Lawyer Eng./Director	-	2.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teacher/Nurse/Journalist	-	2.3	10.0	-	9.1	-	-	-	100.0
Housewife	96.4	23.3	10.0	-	-	1.0	-	-	-
Others	14.0	18.6	10.0	9.1	-	-	-	-	-

When the subject categories were taken into consideration (Table 11), the highest number of persons employed form the Category: Office Procedure, Principles of Accounts, Principles of Business, Typing, Book-keeping and Economics—81.8%. These were mainly employed with private companies (63.6%)

There was a larger number of those who passed one subject in Science employed (60%) than those unemployed (39.3%). Both private firms and Government equally employed 21.4%.

A larger percentage of those with one subject in Arts was employed (53.5%) than those with two subjects (45.0%) or 3 subjects (51.0%), and like those in the Office Procedure category, they were mainly employed by private firms, except those with three subjects who were employed mainly by Government.

The majority of those with one subject in the Home Management category was unemployed (71.4%) and those who were employed (28.6%) were either self-employed or employed with private firms.

This pattern is also true of those with one subject in the Skills category. In this group, only 36.4% were employed as against 63.6% unemployed, and most of those employed were self-employed (9.1%) and in private firms (18.2%).

In contrast, however, those with two Grades 1 and 2 in the Skills category were all (100%) employed with private firms.

Table 11

Subjects, Categories and Percentage (%) Employed

GROUP	NO. SUBJECT	% EMPLOYED	% UNEMPLOYED	SELF EMPLOYED	PRIVATE	GOVERNMENT
Science	1	60.7	39.3	7.1	21.4	21.4
Arts	1	53.5	44.2	9.3	32.6	9.3
	2	45.0	50.1	-	36.0	10.0
	3	51.0	-	-	-	50.0
Office Procedure	1	81.8	18.2	-	63.6	-
	2	-	100.0	-	-	-
Home Management	1	28.6	71.4	14.3	14.3	-
Skills	1	36.4	63.6	9.1	18.2	-
	2	100.0	-	-	100.0	-

Objective 4: To determine the association between types of school from which students obtained their passes 1 and 2 in Basic Proficiency and employment

The following table illustrates the type of school at which the respondents obtained their Basic Proficiency Level Grades 1 and 2 and the length of time they were employed.

Observation of the data in this table indicates that approximately 74.7% of the respondents attended Senior Comprehensive schools, and that the majority (40.4%) of those unemployed (47.5%) during the period of this survey belong to the Senior Comprehensive schools. The remaining 52.5% have been employed from less than one year to nine years. Roughly half (25.3%) of those employed (48.7%) have been employed for less than one year. The Senior Comprehensive schools account for approximately 35% of the total employed. This is almost twice that of the percentage represented by the other six types of institutions (18.0%).

School Type	#	Total	# Employed
Senior Comprehensive	1	389	150
Junior Comprehensive	3	81	210
Other	3	420	299
Total	7	890	659

Table 12

Type of School and Length of Employment

SCHOOL	HOW LONG WORKING					TOTAL %
	1 UNEMPLOYED	2 LESS THAN 1 YEAR	3 1 - 3 YEARS	4 4 - 6 YEARS	5 7 - 9 YEARS	
Comprehensive No %	40 40.4	15 15.2	9 9.1	6 6.1	4 4.0	74 74.7
7-year Grammar Boys No %	2 2.0	2 2.0	1 1.0	1 1.0	1 1.0	7 7.1
7-year Grammar Girls No %	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	1 1.0	1 1.0
5-year Grammar Boys No %	1 1.0	1 1.0	1 1.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	3 3.0
5-year Grammar Girls No %	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	1 1.0	1 1.0
7-year Government No %	2 2.0	2 2.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	4 4.0
5-year Government No %	1 1.0	5 5.1	0 0.0	0 0.0	2 2.0	8 8.1
Unclassified No %	1 1.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	0 0.0	1 1.0
TOTAL %	47 47.5	25 25.3	11 11.1	7 7.1	9 9.1	99 100.0

Table 13
School Type/Type of Employment

SCHOOL	TYPE OF JOB				
	1	2	3	4	5
	NOT IN ANY CATEGORY	SELF EMPLOYED	PRIVATE	GOVERNMENT	TOTAL
Comprehensive					
No	43	3	23	5	74
%	43.4	3.0	23.2	5.1	74.7
7-year Grammar Boys					
No	1	0	4	2	7
%	1.0	0	4.0	2.0	7.1
7-year Grammar Girls					
No	0	0	0	1	1
%	0	0	0	1.0	1.0
5-year Grammar Boys					
No	2	0	1	0	3
%	2.0	0	1.0	0	3.0
5-year Grammar Girls					
No	0	0	0	1	1
%	0	0	0	1.0	1.0
7-year Government					
No	2	0	1	1	4
%	2.0	0	1.0	1.0	4.0
5-year Government					
No	1	1	5	1	4
%	1.0	1.0	5.1	1.0	4.0
Unclassified					
No	1	0	0	0	1
%	1.0	0	0	0	1.0
TOTAL					
NO.	50	4	34	11	99
%	50.5	4.0	34.3	11.1	100.0

When the data on employment is detailed into more specific occupations, the Senior Comprehensives again dominate all the categories. For example, Table 14 shows that the respondents from these schools account for 74% of those employed, 44% of the 57% uncategorised occupation, 11% of the 15% clerk/typist, 8% of the 9% messenger group and 3% of the 5% teacher/nurse group.

Among the remaining six categories of secondary schools, the 5-year Government account for 8%, the 7-year Grammar/Boys for 7% and the 7-year Government for 4% of those employed.

Table 14
School and Occupation (Type of Employment)

SCHOOL	HOW LONG WORKING								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	NOT CATEGORIZED	CLERK TYPIST	SALES PERSON	MACHINE OPERATOR	MESSENGER	POLICE	MEDICAL	TEACHER	TOTAL
Unclassified									
No	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
%	1.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.0
Comprehensive									
No.	44	11	4	4	8	0	0	3	74
%	44.4	11.1	4.0	4.0	8.1	0	0	3.0	74.7
7-year Grammar Boys									
No	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	7
%	4.0	0	0	0	0	1.0	1.0	1.0	7.1
7-year Grammar Girls									
No	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
%	0	0	0	1.0	0	0	0	0	1.0
5-year Grammar Boys									
No	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	3
%	1.0	0	0	1.0	1.0	0	0	0	3.0
5-year Grammar Girls									
No	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
%	0	1.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.0
7-year Government									
No	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
%	3.0	0	0	1.0	0	0	0	0	4.0
5-year Government									
No	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
%	4.0	3.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8.0
TOTAL									
NO.	57	15	4	7	9	1	1	5	99
%	57.6	15.2	4.0	7.1	9.1	1.0	1.0	5.1	100.0

CONTENT ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' COMMENTS

In reply to the questionnaire sent out to the subjects, 99% of the respondents felt that the Basic examination was a *waste of time* and that a pass at this level was of *no value*. They claimed that:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| (1) | Respondents felt that a Basic pass, i.e. Basic 1 or 2 did not assist them in gaining employment. |
| Quote #1: | "... businessmen do not recognize it as a pass for employment." |
| Quote #2: | "To me, the basic pass is useless because it does not serve its purpose. I was assured that a basic pass was recognized in the working fraternity and yet I am unemployed due to the lack of a full certificate. Even in the Government, that same Government that introduced the Basic level in the first place, even there, they do not recognize it. Exactly what kind of job requires the basic level anyway?" |
| Quote #3: | "... employers prefer a General 3 above a basic 1 and 2." |
| Quote #4 | "... there are few employers who consider a General Proficiency 3 above a basic 1 and 2, I might have been turn [sic] down many of times because I have a General 2 in English although I have a Basic 2 in that same subject." |
| Quote #5: | "My opinion is that the Basic Level of examination should be abolish [sic] because when looking for employment the minimum requirement is subjects of General Proficiency. It is a waste of time doing Basic subjects because you still have to come back to do it at General Proficiency." |
| Quote #6: | "... there is no kind of job that requires Basic." |

Quote #7: "... I find that the Basic examination should be removed because it makes no sense that it is there and when you do the exams and passed it you cannot get any jobs."

(2) **Problems that students with passes at the Basic Proficiency encountered**

Quote #1: "I was advised to do my French at basic level by my teacher and I have regretted ever since. I believe that I was capable of doing the French at the general level, which was further instilled in me by the fact that I obtained a Basic 1. To me, the basic pass is useless because it does not serve its purpose. I was assured that a basic pass was recognized in the working fraternity and yet, I am unemployed due to the lack of a full certificate. What is the use of educating a child at the basic level, especially since it is not recognized? Even in the Government, that same government that introduced the Basic level in the first place, even there, they do not recognise it. Exactly what kind of job requires the basic level anyway? Is it the kind of job that satisfied the ambitions of the students, the parents?"

If the basic level is to be useful it has to first be accepted. I have accepted the fact that it will not take me where I want to go and therefore I am repeating the French at the General Level."

P.S.: "I could not resist adding that my past efforts in obtaining a job also included the Ministry of Education. I was also turned down there, so it is little wonder that I have so much to say."

Quote #2: "I was employed as a Temporary Clerk with Service Commission Department from Dec. '81 to Nov. '84. My service was terminated because I had four O'level subjects. My basic grades did not help me because it does not fulfill the job requirement... In all I think that Basic grades has [sic] no value because the Government

does not employ people with basic grades. Government only recognizes General Proficiency Grade 1 and 2 in order to give employment."

Quote #3: "The basic exam is not recognized [sic] by employers its [sic] difficult to get a job. Unless you did general, I had to go back and do London because I did Basic. That was unfair after all those year [sic] in school. I feel like I wasted my time."

One respondent felt that Basic Proficiency examination should be discontinued because it lowered the standard of education.

"Personally I think that the Basic Proficiency should be discontinued because it lowers the standard of education."

Another respondent indicated that the Basic Proficiency was good and even this statement was without reservations.

"To me the Basic examination is both good and bad. It's good in a sense that it help [sic] the weak students [sic] to cope with some sort of examination ..." It's bad in a sense that those who are successful have a lesser change [sic] at a job that those who have general passes. So they would have to re-take the examination in a general form. Then compete out their [sic] for a job, which is wasting a lot of time sometimes."

One hundred percent (100%) of the respondents suggested that students who obtain passes at Basic Proficiency should be allowed to do the General Proficiency examination without going to Continuation Classes and without having to pay for the examination.

Ninety-nine percent (99%) of the respondents felt that the Government who introduced the examination must recognize a pass at Basic proficiency as a *real pass* or the examination should be terminated.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The statistics reveal the following:

1. Most respondents with Basic Level Proficiency *passes* are unemployed.
2. There were more unemployed females than males.
3. More females were self-employed than males.
4. Most of the respondents were self-employed or were employed with private enterprise.
5. The jobs obtained were jobs at the lower level of the spectrum. There was a very small percentage (2%) in the professional group.
6. Those in the professional group possessed various combinations of Basic, General and Advanced Level passes.
7. There were no respondents who had combinations of Craft courses and Basic Proficiency Grades 1 and/or 2.
8. The jobs were generally not related to the subjects which they obtained with Grades 1 and/or 2 at Basic Level except for Office Procedures and related subjects.
9. Most of the respondents were graduates of the Senior Comprehensive schools and most were unemployed.
10. Interestingly, in terms of numbers employed, of the seven types of institutions listed, the Senior Comprehensive school graduates account for almost twice the number of the other six types of institutions.

The respondents perceive the following about the Basic Proficiency level *pass*.

1. The fact that the Basic was introduced to students in Trinidad and Tobago, means that the Government supports it. If the Government is serious about the Basic, it should employ persons with Basic Proficiency Grades 1 and/or 2 in its services. Moreover, the Ministry of Education, the arm of the government which is perceived to endorse this Proficiency, does not recognize the Basic Grades 1 and /or 2 as worthy of consideration for employment.

2. Respondents who passed Basic Proficiency at Grades 1 and/or 2 are more readily employed by private firms than by Government.
3. Respondents who passed Basic Proficiency 1 and/or 2, have difficulties in obtaining employment even if their certificate consists of only 1 Basic pass and 4 General Proficiency Level grades.
4. Those with a combination of Basic Grades 1 and/or 2 and General Proficiency Level Grades 1 and/or 2 have a better chance of obtaining jobs than those with mainly Basic Grades.
5. As a consequence, respondents perceive the Basic Level as useless.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Committee recommends that similar surveys be conducted to investigate the perceptions of CXC candidates in other territories who attempt the Basic Proficiency examinations.
2. The Committee further recommends that the Ministry of Education should take steps to reduce the negative perceptions of the value of the Basic Proficiency.
3. That a public relations campaign should be carried out to publicize the value of Basic Proficiency 1 and/or 2 for employment. This campaign should be especially targeted at students, parents and employers.

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