
EDITORIAL

This is a special issue of the *Caribbean Teaching Scholar* which deals with the perceptions of both students and lecturers about their teaching and learning experiences. The articles underscore the importance of continuously reflecting on teaching practice and learning experiences to ensure congruence of perspectives and, more importantly, to identify, where they may exist, the disconnect between the best of intentions cited in curricula and the reality of the learning experiences, as determined by students and their teachers. Thus, apart from encouraging and facilitating the reflective habit, the issue highlights the importance and value of reflections on the whole to the advancement of the teaching/learning enterprise.

In the first article Stephen Joseph, Centre for Education Programmes, University of Trinidad and Tobago, examined students' perceptions of history to determine the conceptual paradigms that exist in their thinking about the subject. A mixed method approach was used to triangulate quantitative and qualitative data obtained from questionnaires, focus groups and interviews. Over 400 students from secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago participated in the study which revealed a general weakness in students' understanding of concepts such as historical evidence, causation and historical explanation. The author proffered, as a cause for these results, that history concepts were taught only incidentally, if at all, at the upper secondary level. The results therefore speak to the need to re-examine teaching approaches to include more conceptualisation within the discipline of history.

Clio's matrix addressed by John Campbell, Faculty of Humanities and Education, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine expanded the history discourse. In this article, however, the author reflects on the 'what' of history as opposed to the 'how' to teach history addressed in the previous article. The author provides an exposé of new trends in the history offerings at universities ostensibly to keep in step with technological advances, openly accepted by academia worldwide. His perception that while there are several positive and obvious outcomes to the trends in expanding history offerings, consideration must also be given to the downsides including issues of objectivity and use of sources within historical writing. He cautioned that the downsides escalate when the field of Digital History is examined. He theorised that it is a thinly veiled attempt to redefine what traditional historical writing is and the basis of its legitimising authority.

The focus of the third article in this issue is on perceptions of medical students of the inclusion of an epidemiology and biostatistics course in their first year programme of study. Douladel Willie, Trevor Ferguson, Marshall Tulloch-Reid and Affette McCaw-Binns, Faculty of Medical Sciences, The University of the West Indies, Mona reviewed students' evaluations after the implementation of their

course to determine their views on their course experience. They also administered a questionnaire to obtain feedback in particular, on their views regarding course content and instructional strategies which were reviewed and summarised. The students' reflections show that they had a strong preference for teacher-centred approaches although they were able to determine that such methods were less valuable for content that was more difficult for them to digest. Notwithstanding their preference, the students were also able to identify specific ways in which learner-centred approaches contribute to their own learning and development. The paper highlights the challenge of preparing students to engage in more learner-centred strategies which might indeed provide them with greater learning benefits.

Damian Cohall and Desiree Skeete, Faculty of Medical Sciences, The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill presented an account of the relationship between student attendance at lectures and their performance. Student performance in the Fundamentals of Disease and Treatment course before and after the implementation of an attendance policy was the subject of this paper. The policy was designed to improve attendance and consequent performance of students in a foundation course to which they exhibited a poor attitude: reflected in low attendance, and in which they traditionally registered poor performance. Selected statistical tools were used to analyse the attendance and performance data. The results showed statistically significant improvement in attendance, but a similar or comparative improvement in performance was not registered. The findings seem to support the view that factors beyond attendance may be more critical in improving student performance.

The final paper in this issue considered the perspectives of the practical learning experiences of a first year master's level Clinical Psychology class. Stacey Brodie Walker, Faculty of Social Sciences, The University of the West Indies, Mona examined both the expectations and clinical training experiences of the students. Mainly qualitative methods were utilised in this case study. The results showed that the students' expectations were mediated, mollified and aligned through the clinical experiences even though hands-on participation was limited.

Anna-May Edwards-Henry
Executive Editor