
EDITORIAL

Volume 3 of the *Caribbean Teaching Scholar*, as in previous volumes, underscores the scholarship which should and does underpin our most effective teaching efforts. The articles in this issue further emphasise that teaching is a thought-provoking, proactive, yet reflective process that is marked by critical inquiry. Throughout the research and reflective articles that comprise this issue, the confluence of these ideas and processes form the bedrock for improved practice and the thrusts that constitute the dynamic enterprise that is teaching and learning.

The research articles in the current issue illustrate how the systematised use of pedagogical methods and approaches can impact and enhance student learning and performance, fostering desirable changes in the learning behaviours of our students. We also continue to showcase *Tales from the Field* in which the authors in their deeply reflective and professional roles recount ways in which teaching practice employs or can employ tools and ideas in unique ways to engage and empower students and facilitate the learning process.

The focus of the first research paper in this issue is on the use of mind maps for the measurement and improvement of learning. Cathy-Ann Radix and Azim Abdool, Faculty of Engineering, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, use this form of graphic organiser, mind maps, to assess and improve learning quality. The authors examined the impact on their students, of interactivity in learning groups while creating mind maps in support of specific constructivist learning practices. The mind maps were found to be appropriate as an alternative to concept maps for observing constructivist learning. Further, the practice of collective mind map creation using an initial spoke structure positively impacted learning quality within the community of learners.

The second research paper investigates the use of journal writing as an active learning tool in history education. Dian McCallum, Faculty of Humanities and Education, The University of the West Indies, Mona, reports on her investigation and reflects on journal writing from a pedagogical perspective. Journal writing was systematically included both as an on-going teaching/learning tool as well as a form of assessment in two history education programmes. Data were obtained from selected journal writings by her students on the usefulness of the process as a teaching/learning and assessment tool and in promoting active learning in history education. The main findings of this investigation showed that journal writing does facilitate students' engagement in reflecting on their early pre-teacher education beliefs about teaching. Journal writing also allows for active engagement in their learning.

In this issue's first *Tale from the Field* Joseann Knight, Faculty of Social Sciences, The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, proposes an action research initiative to address the incorrect use of the homophones 'they, their and there' by Level II and Level III students in the Department of Management Studies at the

Cave Hill Campus of The University of the West Indies. The author postulates that basic grammatical errors are becoming more commonplace in written submissions from Business students at the University. Further, many members of the Caribbean business community view effective writing as a key marker of the quality of the university graduate. Thus the proposed action research has implications for assuring the current reputation of The University of the West Indies within the regional business community in terms of preparing high quality graduates. Mastery of language structures on the whole, is also important for minimising the difficulty that graduates could confront if they fail to address writing and communication deficiencies before entering the workplace. The paper advances the use of peer tutoring and mechanical testing as the preferred mechanisms for addressing the incorrect use of the homophones, while examining their practical and theoretical implications.

Tara Chase, Faculty of Social Sciences, The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, provides a professional reflection on the evaluation of a Bachelor of Science (BSc.) Management (Marketing) programme specifically to determine how it could be improved to satisfy its students. The researcher used a focus group to obtain the students' perceptions of their programme experience. Interviews were also conducted with the programme facilitators to determine the improvements they wished to see within the programme. It was determined that students preferred practical methods of learning to theoretical and were motivated by the completion of authentic projects that allowed them to make a contribution to society. Implementation of recommendations based on the findings of this study is expected to improve the quality of the programme and student experience and redound to the benefit of the wider business community.

The third *Tale from the Field* is presented by Dianne Thurab-Nkhosi, Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, who examines the blended learning policy being adopted on the St. Augustine campus. The campus has intensified efforts to incorporate technology in teaching and learning with a newly drafted blended learning policy. The largely descriptive paper draws on publications on the implementation efforts of blended learning at The University of the West Indies, St Augustine over time and reviews data on current courses. The findings of this paper form the first phase of a study that reviews the status of blended learning and identifies the gaps that need to be filled to achieve future objectives with regard to the new blended learning policy on the St. Augustine campus. It outlines the status of the implementation of blended learning and emphasises the need to fill gaps in institutional support, identify hindering and facilitating factors, and complete a comprehensive costing model that can drive the process so as to ensure buy-in from stakeholders and sustainability of the initiative.

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