
EDITORIAL

The second issue of Volume 3 of the *Caribbean Teaching Scholar* focuses on classroom events and practices: as we move towards learning-centredness unearthing how students engage and how our practices facilitate that engagement. Two articles in particular are at the heart of this focus while a third examines how we may get there. The other articles, including a tale from the field, reference our practice, our building of community and the pragmatism in our approach.

The first article by Stephen Joseph, Centre for Education Programmes, The University of Trinidad and Tobago, Trinidad and Tobago examined the use of differentiated instruction as a viable teaching and learning approach for enhancing student learning experiences at a higher education institution. The study focused on the use of assessment of individual student readiness, interest, and learning preference to modify instruction in one of three ways: by content, process or product. It was found that participants generally showed higher intellectual growth through the use of differentiated assessment processes. It was concluded that, if properly applied, differentiated instruction can both enhance adult learning and provide a workable alternative to the pedagogy/andragogy dichotomy.

Wesley D. Hickey and Ross Sherman, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, The University of Texas, Tyler, USA examined the perceptions of principals in selected schools in a Belize district with regard to the challenges of using hands-on activities to facilitate active student engagement. The researchers located the Belize teaching experiences squarely in the more traditionally passive formats that relied less heavily on resources. However, with the view to improving student engagement a programme to utilise more hands-on approaches was instituted, with assistance from external sources. The article specifically addresses how principals exposed to the newer methodologies perceived the use of active teaching methodologies in their schools. The general consensus was that while there are obvious benefits to active student engagement, there were sufficient challenges, including the lack of materials and safety issues, to make the use of these teaching methods prohibitively difficult.

In the third article Danielle Watson, Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics, The University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, considers academic writing and the changes that should be effected to better engage and develop students. This article used information from a range of stakeholders from the corporate world, university faculties and the student body on the applicability of courses to their outlined objectives, goals and purposes in the institution's premier academic writing course. This study involved the review of course content, teaching strategies and forums, while also examining pedagogical advances, with the primary aim being to improve teaching and learning within

the academic writing classroom. This study defined a service course underscored by comprehensive teaching and learning ideologies and highlighted the need for continued review and reflection.

Keisha Valdez Noel, Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago focused on the development of a faculty learning community from a distance, using available technology. The article considered a community of practice in higher education teaching as a network of lecturers/instructors who engage in meaningful conversations about teaching and learning, share ideas and resources and problem-solve together for the purpose of improving their teaching. Using a combination of best practices recommended for developing online learning communities, and best practices for developing communities of learners, this paper describes how a faculty training programme offered in a blended format was designed to foster community development among the teaching staff members at a Caribbean Community College.

Patricia Worrell, Independent Researcher, Trinidad and Tobago, provides a tale from the field from a recently introduced blended learning journalism programme at The University of the West Indies. The article focused on the blended delivery mode, with courses being delivered both face to face and using the University's online learning platform, myeLearning. A primary reason for making the programme blended was the desire to create a social space that would support the students' engagement in the course by providing them with authentic learning experiences. It was observed that students used the online element of the course primarily to access required readings and to upload assignments. At the same time, they developed and interacted extensively with their own social media including their own Facebook page and blogs. They responded to blogs created by their colleagues, and interacted with each other on Twitter. They used these social media to fulfil many of the purposes for which the official course online learning management site was established but which they did not necessarily use as expected. The paper describes the student interactions at the different sites, explores possible reasons for the patterns of interaction, and suggests implications for planning blended programmes.

This publication is one of the products of the Educational Research Association (ERA¹) of The University of the West Indies (UWI) and provides a vehicle for the dissemination of research information of particular relevance to education in the Caribbean context.

Anna-May Edwards-Henry
Executive Editor

¹ The Educational Research Association (ERA) is proposed by the University of the West Indies (UWI) as an umbrella body with a focus on research in all disciplinary areas of education (e.g. engineering education, history education, teacher education, vocational education, business education), and at all levels (e.g. tertiary, secondary) within the national system. The Association views Education in its broadest sense to include, for example, policy, teaching and learning, administration and leadership.

The primary goals of this Association are to provide a common platform for discourse within the educational community, encourage and facilitate a progressive education research agenda, and to provide mechanisms for the dissemination and promulgation of relevant research findings. By promulgating and disseminating relevant research findings we adopt an approach to education decision-making that is reflective of best practice. The Association recognises Education as a discipline in its own right, the best practice of which, as for any other discipline, is supported by research and empirical evidence. A strong view of the Association is that educational research must be studied and structured based on evidence of the culture, social environment, resources and the context of practice. While the Association acknowledges that in the local context much work has been done in the educational arena there needs to be a stronger and more deliberate connection among the various elements and contributors to our growing knowledge of education, and more deliberate efforts to facilitate a culture of practice based on evidence.