
Editorial

The first issue of Volume 5 of the *Caribbean Teaching Scholar* features articles that explore teacher efficacy through their pre-training beliefs; the predictive value of pre-test scores and the impact of different assessment modalities on student overall performance in third year medical students; and perspectives of selected engineering students in relation to their laboratory engagement.

The first article which focuses on exploring the influence of teacher variables on their pre-training efficacy beliefs is a submission by Madgerie Jameson-Charles and Sharon Jaggernaut of the School of Education, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago. These researchers sought to gain insight into the efficacy perceptions of untrained teachers in the in-service Diploma in Education programme. Using two cohorts of students, they investigated the differences in perceptions of efficacy of in-service teachers with respect to variables that included gender, area of specialisation, age and years of teaching experience. The researchers used a conventional measurement scale to collect data following a lecture on teacher efficacy. The results suggest that classroom management efficacy beliefs had the lowest mean for both groups. Statistically significant differences in efficacy beliefs among curriculum specialisation were reported, with mathematics, science and modern language teachers' efficacy lower than other curriculum areas. According to the data, there were significant differences in perceptions of efficacy based on the age of the teachers and their years of teaching experience. Results are discussed in terms of the factors that may affect teaching efficacy and how to maximise the efficacy of teachers.

Researchers from the Faculty of Medical Sciences, The University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, contributed two articles to this issue of the journal. One article focused on the relationship between the pre-test performance of medical students in the third year and their performance in the final examinations. The other article examined the relationship between assessment in selected modalities and the final integrated examinations. The researchers were Sehlule Vuma, Department of Para-clinical Sciences, Bidyadhar Sa, Centre for Medical Sciences Education, and Samuel Ramsewak, Faculty Dean. In their first article they contend that diagnostic pre-testing is a valuable tool to identify gaps in knowledge among medical students, to determine teaching requirements and direct teaching programmes to take corrective measures. Additionally, they felt that pre-test scores may predict student performance in final examinations, and this was the focus of their study. The researchers performed a retrospective descriptive correlational analysis on the performance of third year medical students who completed a diagnostic pre-test at the commencement of their third year in the programme. The pre-test proved to be a good predictor of

final examination results. Significant correlation was found between the pre-test and various final examination elements. It was concluded that the pre-test grade is a reliable indicator of performance in the final examinations although it appeared that modified interventions need to be employed to encourage more individual, student engagement.

Building on the work highlighted in their first article of this issue in terms of the pre-test predicting performance in final examination components, the researchers also tried to determine any relationship between and among performance in selected modalities and the final integrated examinations. They reported on an analysis of correlations in students' performance in different modalities of assessment in haematology and multi-specialty (anatomical pathology, chemical pathology, haematology, immunology, microbiology and pharmacology) final integrated examinations. Medical educators generally believe that proper alignment between learning objectives, modes of delivery and assessment modalities is a key factor in shaping the desired outcomes. They also suggest that it is equally important that modalities of assessments are in concurrence among themselves within the assessment framework. Their analysis of the medical students' performance in different assessment modalities in five courses found positive correlations amongst all haematology components as well as the final integrated examination. The continuous assessment elements had the strongest correlations with the total haematology component. Their analysis showed that combinations of multiple modes of assessment are important for adequate and fair assessment of knowledge and skill, and continuous assessment encourages students to work consistently throughout the course.

In the final article of this issue, Althea Richardson, Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago and Erik Blair, Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago sought to gain insight to practical engagement of selected students. Specifically, they attempted to determine the perspectives of undergraduate civil engineering students who actively engage with laboratory practicals. Underpinning their study were two key philosophies. The first is that a major goal of engineering education is to produce graduates who have the appropriate level of cognitive development to allow them to manipulate processes, solve problems and produce new knowledge. The second is that teaching and learning using laboratory practicals is an approach that is designed to engage students in the investigation of real-world problems. The researchers believe that since the critical role of laboratory work can be correlated with the fact that engineering is an applied science which requires that students attain some level of hands-on skills in their chosen discipline. However, not all students see the benefit of such hands-on experiences. In the present study, Kolb's experiential learning theory was used to assess the experiences of undergraduate civil engineering students at The University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago who had elected to undertake laboratory-based projects. The participants in this study represent a minority group within their particular cohort

as they actively engaged with practical laboratory activity. This study determined that the 'engaged' students showed a lack of deliberation around laboratory work as a learning experience in itself, but valued its worth as a means of developing their technical skills. For these students, it was not the laboratory practical per se that was their focus nor was there any focus on the improvement of laboratory skills so that they could be more technically equipped. Rather, practicals were used as a means of increasing their future employability through the enhancement of skills relating to project management, decision making and time management.

The articles in this issue highlight the need for understanding teachers' professional site as a means of understanding their practice; the insights that can be gained by analysing assessment data, and the underlying issue of how students engage to create meaningful learning.

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