
Editorial

Blended learning and the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in teaching and learning are topics that continue to feature in academic journals and conferences. This issue of *Caribbean Teaching Scholar* features two articles that explore these topics from the Caribbean perspective. Other topics explored are professional development of Early Childhood (EC) educators and the relationship between learning styles and academic performance.

The first article in this issue, *Blended Learning: A Critical Look at the Pilot Implementation Within the University of West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine–Student & Teacher Perspectives*, expands on a project first explored in Volume 3(1) of this journal, published in 2013. In that issue I examined the issues surrounding the implementation of a Blended Learning Policy on the St Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies. Three years on, Riann Singh, Sherlan Cabralis and Marcia Nathai-Balkissoon share the satisfaction, perceptions and recommendations of students and lecturers involved in the pilot programme of this policy-based project. Findings of their study indicate that students had positive perceptions of the blended format and were highly satisfied with their learning and performance. Students felt that there was need for more timely feedback on queries, more timely communication/responses about assessments, greater clarity of instructions, and a greater balance of online activities with practical offline activities. Lecturers in the programme were generally satisfied with the learning management system, software tools, and the format of the blended learning programme. The lecturers perceived the format as useful, allowing for flexibility and convenience however, they felt that training on an ongoing basis was one of the most important requirements if teachers are to improve their blended teaching effectiveness.

Keeping within the framework of Information and Communication Technologies, *The Development of Teacher ICT Competence and Confidence in using Web 2.0 tools in a STEM Professional Development Initiative in Trinidad* by Vimala Judy Kamalodeen, Sandra Figaro-Henry, Nalini Ramsawak-Jodha and Zhanna Dedovets examines the use of Web 2.0 tools within a professional development programme, to instill confidence and competence in teachers of STEM subjects. This study reports gains in confidence of teachers at various levels in the education system. They also found high levels of confidence among the teachers when they were in digitally enriched environments. One of the recommendations of the study was the need to improve digital environments in the school system to allow for greater levels of competence among teachers.

Early childhood teachers play an integral role in setting up the foundation for learning for our young children. The professional development of this group is therefore of the utmost importance in any teacher training programme. Sabeerah

Abdul-Majied, Colleen Johnson and John Campbell, in their article *Professional Development and Early Childhood Teachers' Performance: A View Through an Undergraduate Foundation Course*, investigate how the foundation course Caribbean Civilisation impacted the professional development of a group of in-service Early Childhood (EC) student teachers. The findings of their study showed that following participation in the foundation course, the pre-school teachers demonstrated greater awareness of Caribbean identity and a better understanding of regional diversity. The evidence suggested that students made better connections between life experiences and new learning and they felt empowered to provide unbiased knowledge to children, colleagues and community members.

The final article in this issue is *Assessing Differences in Learning Styles: Age, Gender and Academic Performance at the Tertiary Level in the Caribbean*, written by Akhentoolove Corbin. This author sets out to examine the relationship between student learning styles and performance at a Caribbean university. Responses were collected from 670 students, with findings suggesting that while Collaborative Learning was the most preferred learning style, Independent and Avoidant Learning styles were significant predictors of students' academic performance. The paper concluded by suggesting that more consideration needs to be given to teaching styles that match students' learning styles.

In closing, on behalf of the editorial team of the *Caribbean Teaching Scholar*, I would like to thank all our contributors, reviewers and readers. The publication of any journal is no easy task and without your support, it would have been almost impossible to publish six volumes. I would like to take this opportunity to also inform all our supporters that the journal will be on a brief hiatus, as we review our operations and prepare to revise the publication. We look forward to serving you again very soon with an enhanced publication, and we hope that you will find this issue intellectually stimulating.

Dianne Thurab-Nkhosi
Editor