Preface

The idea for this book emerged when I was looking for specific material on the Caribbean and found limited empirical material. I felt that there needed to be more expansive information on Caribbean issues so that we can learn from each other. It has been a struggle in getting the book to this stage. I sent out a call for submissions many years ago and no-one responded. I waited until I felt the time was right and I resent a call for submissions and this time educators responded. However, some of the original respondents could not fulfil their obligations due to personal or professional commitments. This final edited book is the result of many hours of proof-reading, honing, and discussion of the chapters with each author.

It is with great hopes that I write this preface so that educators in Trinidad, the Caribbean and the world can both identify and learn that they are not alone and are fellow sufferers/kindred spirits on this journey called teaching. As we continue to inspire, motivate, create and play the various roles our altruistic vocation dictates, I offer a glimpse of some of the challenges confronting leadership and teachers as we continue to share the Herculean task of leading/managing/educating/parenting our student population.

Each author in this book is involved in education at the tertiary level and as such brings a wealth of experience, expertise, and knowledge to her chapter. As you read each chapter, I would like you to see it as a journey into the daily lives of teachers who are placed in the classroom to disseminate information and transcend all boundaries as they continue to inculcate values, beliefs and principles into their students.

I challenge you with the task of reading this book as a means of gleaning information on the various issues confronting teachers in the Caribbean. In fact, I chose to place the chapters into themes so that the reader can see that there are recurring issues locally and regionally. The first section commences with the issue of principal and teacher leadership. This theme, I believe, is the pivotal point towards sustaining and maintaining higher standards of excellence in education. Principals, heads of departments and other teacher leaders within the educational sphere, have the onerous responsibility of ensuring that the mission, vision and stakeholders’ needs are being met. The importance of professionalism among educators ends this section.
With heads of departments and principals placed in positions for which they may not have been trained, the need for more training in leadership is explored. This is segued by Hill-Berry’s research into professionalism among Jamaican educators. This mixed methodology study found that the Jamaican educators surveyed considered professionalism along the lines of deportment, conduct, attire, and adherence to ethical codes. Lee-Pigot’s study of the influx of new principals possessing improved base-entry qualifications and concerns about principal-school ‘fit’ in Trinidad and Tobago continues the discussion on leadership in schools. The findings of this chapter suggest that the new principals’ school culture awareness is indirectly associated with school change, vis a vis their improvement foci and their leadership practices and strategies.

Vaz-Miller’s discussion of principals and student violence can serve as an example for some of the issues currently facing Trinidadian principals as the increase in school violence continues to be featured in social media and mass media. The underlying theme that interweaves this chapter is that of training and professional development. How are we preparing our school leaders to effectively and efficiently lead a school? The authors of this section explore that question.

The latent theme of training continues in this section on assessment as teachers discuss their concerns. A valuable aspect of teaching is assessment and in the second section teachers’ perceptions of the summative assessment of Common Entrance in St. Lucia is discussed. The formative assessment called Continuous Assessment Component (CAC), in Trinidad is presented. The teachers interviewed, indicated that they do not feel prepared and that they have not had enough training to fully implement and evaluate the CAC. It is important to note that this component of cumulative formative assessment is no longer being used as a component to place Trinidadian primary school students into secondary schools as of March 2016. This is a recent occurrence which makes this chapter very significant, timely, and topical.

With issues in problematic behaviors among primary school students on the rise, Carrington-Blaides explored teachers’ perceptions of such concerns. She also examined teachers’ knowledge of asthma and asthma management in inclusive education. With limited information on asthma as it relates to inclusive education, this chapter elaborates on such daily issues facing teachers in the inclusive classroom.

In Section 4, Lee-Pigott presents a unique and extended discussion on school culture and its effect on three schools of differing effectiveness states – ‘excelling’, ‘mostly effective’, and ‘under academic watch’ within Trinidad facing socio-economic challenges. Lee-Pigott’s findings reveal that the professional orientation of teachers, particularly their dispositions and psychological states, are critically important to many aspects of schooling, including, students’ orientations and their academic performance and achievement. With the obvious increase in technology use in schools, Jameson-Charles et al. discuss teachers’ perceptions of the laptop imitative
in Trinidad. This is very relevant since the current government has announced that it would no longer be adhering to that policy set by the previous administration. Another aspect of Section 5 is the action-research chapter on the use of technology in the flipped classroom. The success of this action-research is fodder for consideration of further implementation within the tertiary level classroom. Moreover, the recommendations made can aid both tech savvy and neophyte educators in ideas for more integration of technology in the curriculum at any level in the educational sphere.

Bissessar examined students’ perceptions of the government’s higher education funding with a view to demonstrating that the Trinidadians government, in making available such funding, has improved the human and psychological capital of its tertiary level students at one technical vocational institution. Moreover, this funding has allowed them to be optimistic about their future and their quality of life. This issue is significant, topical, and timely since the Trinidadians government’s announcement that it would be revising and reviewing funding to tertiary level students.

With such changes taking place at all levels within the education system in Trinidad and Jamaica, each chapter in this book sets an example of what to do and not to do and what repercussions can be expected when certain changes are made. Therefore, each chapter adds to the limited body of information on education in the Caribbean and serves as lessons learned for all Caribbean islands and indeed the international educational community. The themes in this book are issues confronting local, regional and international educators. Training and effective leadership which foster continuous and meaningful professional development are very critical globally if teachers are to stay in the profession.

The implementation of technology in the curriculum and issues surrounding technological initiatives are vital in exemplifying what is happening in the Caribbean and can also be used as a touchstone for measuring the level of integration of technology in the curriculum.

This book is intended to be read by students and educators looking for current and topical empirical research on issues facing educators in the Caribbean. These issues are topical enough that they could serve as comparative literature for educators in developed, developing and under-developed countries. It is hoped that students at the Bachelor, Masters, and PhD levels in education will find the chapters of this book an insightful and meaningful contribution to the extant research on education in the Caribbean. This book was compiled to give voice to educators because, far too often, their voices are not heard. For this reason, the editor and contributor is, herself, an educator.

*Docendo discimus*

*While teaching we learn*