CJED
CARIBBEAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Editorial

Caribbean Educational Scholarship in a Changing Publishing Landscape

This general issue of the *Caribbean Journal of Education and Development* (CJED) marks another stage in the journal's development. It is the second general issue since the amalgamation of the *Caribbean Journal of Education* (CJE) and the *Journal of Education and Development in the Caribbean* (JEDIC), two journals published by the School of Education at The University of the West Indies, Mona, with clear areas of common interest. Their consolidation into CJED created a more streamlined publishing structure while bringing the development orientation of JEDIC into a broader journal concerned with education in the Caribbean and beyond.

The change was also accompanied by another important decision about how the journal would publish. CJED is now an online only, open access journal operating through rolling publication. This represents a significant departure from an earlier model in which access to published research was restricted by a paywall. The move was motivated by a straightforward but important principle: scholarship has greater opportunity to contribute to knowledge when authors can reach readers and readers can reach research.

There is, however, a certain irony in this transition. Open access increases availability, but online only, open access journals are also sometimes regarded with suspicion because these characteristics have become unfairly and indiscriminately associated with predatory publishing. Open access and predatory publishing are not synonymous. The quality and integrity of a scholarly journal rest on matters such as rigorous peer review, editorial independence and accountability, transparent policies, ethical publishing practices, and the quality of the scholarship published. International open science frameworks similarly position open access within a wider commitment to making scholarly knowledge more accessible, inclusive, and equitable while retaining quality and integrity as central principles (UNESCO, 2021).

For CJED, therefore, accessibility and scholarly rigour are not competing ambitions. Both matter.

There is a temptation when introducing a general issue, simply to describe the articles that follow. Certainly, an editorial should help readers enter the issue. Yet this particular point in the journal's development seems to invite a wider conversation. What do the papers tell us collectively about educational research being undertaken in the Caribbean? What kinds of evidence are we producing? Where are the gaps? How successfully does that knowledge travel beyond the academy? What role should regional journals play in strengthening the visibility of Caribbean scholarship? And, increasingly, what does the rapid development of artificial intelligence mean for the production, integrity, and visibility of that knowledge?

The eight articles in this issue provide a useful place from which to consider these questions.

Education and the Demands of Change

The papers range widely in subject matter. They address teacher education and values, tertiary education reform, early childhood science learning, technology integration, virtual laboratories, mental health and school leadership, school violence and community engagement, and student performance in university chemistry.

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At first glance, this is the diversity one expects of a general issue. Read together, however, an interesting connection emerges. Each is concerned, in some fashion, with the ways in which learners, educators, institutions or communities respond to changing educational and social demands.

Denise Minott's study, *The Incorporation of Values into the Pre-service Teachers' Preparation Curriculum*, examines the representation of values within the written curriculum of a Bachelor of Education programme in Jamaica. Based on content analysis of 86 course outlines, the study found that values appeared in relatively few instances across elements of the curriculum and argues for their more deliberate incorporation into teacher preparation. The paper prompts consideration of what it means to prepare teachers for contemporary schools. Subject knowledge and pedagogical competence remain indispensable, but teachers also work within societies confronting questions of citizenship, sustainability, relationships, responsibility, and social change. The values communicated through teacher education, whether intentionally or otherwise, are therefore consequential.

At the level of tertiary education systems, Byron Coon, Stacy McAfee, and William Schonberg examine the pressures shaping two institutions in the Cayman Islands. *Tertiary-Level Education in the Cayman Islands: Identifying Challenges, Creating Opportunities, and Moving Forward with Solutions* considers the influence of policy, funding, accreditation, globalisation, professional standards, and institutional expectations. The questions raised extend beyond the Cayman Islands. Small state higher education institutions routinely negotiate expectations originating locally, regionally, and internationally. International standards matter, but so too does the ability to judge when models developed elsewhere are appropriate for the circumstances in which Caribbean institutions operate.

Three papers focus particularly on science teaching, learning, and technology.

Rowena Kalloo, Sabeerah Abdul-Majied, and Sandra Figaro-Henry examine students' experiences of a non-digital Food Bingo game in early childhood science classrooms in Trinidad. Their intervention produced statistically significant improvement in children's knowledge of food groups, while the qualitative findings illuminate aspects of the children's experience that achievement scores alone could not reveal. Most found the game enjoyable, but losing, waiting for turns, and delayed gratification also generated emotional responses that teachers regarded as opportunities for social development. There is something refreshing about an innovation in a contemporary issue that does not depend on a screen. At a time when innovation and technology are easily treated as synonyms, the study brings our attention back to pedagogy and to the quality of the learning experience.

Melissa Gayle and Elvis Nurse turn explicitly to technology in their examination of preservice teachers' readiness to integrate it at a teachers' college in Jamaica. Their findings suggest relationships among techno-pedagogic knowledge, self-efficacy, and the modelling of technology use by teacher educators. The qualitative findings add an important layer, revealing hesitancy among some preservice teachers and instances in which observed technology integration remained limited and traditional. The distinction between having technology available and knowing how to use it well for teaching is an important one. Teacher educators are central to this process, not only through what they teach about technology, but through the practices they model.

Nicole Kerr-Walker and Sharon Bramwell-Lalor investigate another dimension of technology-supported science learning in *Perceptions of Virtual Laboratories and Attitudes Towards Chemistry Among Jamaican Grade 10 Students*. Students reported moderate perceptions of virtual laboratories and moderate attitudes towards chemistry before and following their experience with the virtual laboratory activities. The authors conclude that virtual laboratories have potential as a supplement to chemistry teaching. The word *supplement* deserves attention. In educational contexts where access to physical laboratories and resources can vary, virtual environments may extend opportunities for learning. Their availability, however, does

not remove the need to consider the particular learning purposes for which different forms of laboratory experience are best suited.

Schools, Communities, and Wellbeing

The contributions by Shellon Samuels-White and by Therese Ferguson and Keriffe Clark bring into sharper focus the social contexts within which schooling takes place.

Samuels-White's *Post-Pandemic School Leadership: Jamaican Principals' Approaches to Supporting Students' and Teachers' Mental Health* examines the responses of five rural school principals to the mental health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. These included social-emotional learning, wellness initiatives, and partnerships with external stakeholders. The COVID-19 pandemic made the relationship between wellbeing and learning impossible to ignore. As the immediate pandemic period recedes, the challenge is not to allow that recognition to recede with it. The work of school leadership is academic, organisational, and profoundly human.

Ferguson and Clark consider another difficult social challenge in *The Role of Parental and Community Involvement in Addressing School Violence: Insights from the Change from Within Programme in Jamaica*. Their findings show that parental and community involvement can both strengthen and complicate school peacebuilding efforts. Parents and community members can contribute time, care and partnership, while behaviours within communities can also be reproduced within schools. The paper resists an easy separation of school from society. Schools exist within communities, and some of the most persistent problems they encounter cannot be solved from within the school alone.

The issue closes with Eddia P. Copeland Solas' exploration of factors affecting university students' performance in first year physical chemistry. The study examines high school chemistry achievement alongside attitudes towards chemistry, self-efficacy, and university learning experiences. Particularly noteworthy is the moderately significant relationship between high school chemistry achievement and students' subsequent physical chemistry scores. The implications extend to matriculation decisions, transition into university science, and the forms of support that may be necessary once students arrive.

Taken together, these studies are concerned with different phases of education and different problems. Yet beneath that diversity is a shared concern with responsiveness. Teacher education must respond to the broader purposes of education. Higher education institutions must respond to changing external and internal pressures. Educators must make judgements about new and established pedagogies. School leaders must respond to needs that extend beyond academic attainment. Schools and communities must work together around complex social problems. Universities must understand what students bring with them and what support they subsequently require. That is a useful picture of education itself. It is rarely static.

What Does This Issue Tell Us About Our Research?

The collection also provides an opportunity to consider not only *what* is being studied, but *how* educational research is being undertaken.

One of its strengths is methodological diversity. Across the eight papers we encounter qualitative case study, institutional ethnography, documentary and content analysis, mixed methods and multimethod research, intervention research, questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, teacher observations, pretest and posttest measures, and correlational analyses. No single methodological tradition dominates the issue.

That plurality matters. The questions facing Caribbean education do not yield to one form of evidence. Understanding how institutions respond to policy pressures requires different evidence from determining whether students' knowledge changes following an intervention. Exploring how principals interpret mental health needs is different from examining statistical relationships among student characteristics and achievement. Methodological choices should follow the questions we are trying to answer.

Another notable characteristic is the attention to context. Several of these investigations are deliberately bounded to a programme, an institution, a small group of schools, or a particular national setting. Such work matters. Contextually grounded studies enable us to see educational experiences in detail, including aspects that may disappear in larger datasets or broader international comparisons.

Regional journals have a particular responsibility to make room for this kind of scholarship. A question does not become unimportant simply because it concerns one Caribbean country, one programme or a small number of schools.

At the same time, the issue prompts another question: **where does the regional evidence base need to go next?**

We need detailed studies of individual contexts, but we also need more opportunities to connect evidence across contexts. What might we learn if researchers in several Caribbean territories investigated the same problem together? Which findings are strongly shaped by national or institutional circumstances? Which patterns recur across the region? What can one territory learn from another without assuming that educational practices can simply be transplanted?

There remains considerable scope for cross-country Caribbean research, multi-site studies, and longitudinal work. There is also room for more research that follows educational innovations beyond their initial implementation. Studies of perceptions, experiences, and existing conditions are valuable. They help us understand what is happening and how those involved make sense of it. We also need research that increasingly asks what happens next.

What works?

For whom?

Under what conditions?

For how long?

Can a promising intervention be sustained when the original researchers or project resources are no longer present?

Can an approach developed in one school, institution or territory be adapted elsewhere, and what happens when it is?

These questions move us towards intervention, implementation, impact, and sustainability research. The Food Bingo study in this issue provides one example of research entering an intervention space. Other papers establish evidence from which subsequent interventions or longer term investigations might develop.

It would, however, be easy to call for more ambitious research without acknowledging what such work requires. Multi-country projects, longitudinal studies, and large-scale investigations need funding, time, research infrastructure, data access, and sustained collaboration. Caribbean scholars have long identified challenges associated with building and sustaining strong research cultures, including the need for closer collaboration between universities and the societies they serve (Lewis & Simmons, 2010).

The human realities of academic work also matter. Research is frequently undertaken alongside heavy teaching, administrative tasks, and service responsibilities. Gill and Gosine-Boodoo's (2021) study of academic librarians at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, although focused on a specific professional group, identified insufficient time within the work week and limitations in structured mentorship among the barriers affecting research and publication. These concerns will be recognisable well beyond librarianship.

Emerging researchers face a further challenge. Learning to undertake rigorous research and learning to publish it are related, but they are not identical processes. High scholarly standards should never be relaxed in response. But journals can ask whether constructive peer review, thoughtful editorial feedback, mentoring opportunities, and other forms of scholarly development might help promising researchers become stronger contributors to the regional evidence base.

This is part of what it means to develop a research community, rather than simply produce a journal.

Publishing Caribbean Scholarship: Access, Visibility, and Trust

Academic publishing performs several functions. It places research into a scholarly record, subjects claims to scrutiny, and allows researchers to contribute to wider intellectual conversations. Publication is also deeply embedded in academic careers, including appointment, promotion, and professional recognition. These realities understandably shape decisions about where scholars choose to publish.

There is no reason for Caribbean researchers to not publish in leading international journals. Caribbean scholarship should travel widely and participate fully in international debates. Indeed, greater international engagement should be encouraged.

But there is another side to the question.

If the strongest Caribbean research is routinely directed elsewhere, what happens to regional journals? And if work grounded in Caribbean educational priorities is considered valuable primarily when validated by publication outside the region, what does that communicate about our own scholarly infrastructure?

Lewis and Simmons (2010) raised a related concern more than a decade and a half ago, describing Caribbean university knowledge traditions in which ideas tended to travel from metropolitan centres towards the region and calling for stronger research cultures that engage more directly with Caribbean publics. Their argument remains relevant. The goal is not intellectual isolation. It is intellectual reciprocity.

Caribbean researchers should be readers of international scholarship and contributors to it. We should also generate research questions from our own educational circumstances and build a sufficiently strong regional scholarly infrastructure to publish and debate the resulting knowledge. This is one reason the move towards open access at CJED matters.

Iton and Iton (2016), writing about open access among UWI science faculty, argued that open access offered considerable potential for Caribbean scholarly communication, while also identifying limited knowledge and engagement among the academics they studied. Almost a decade later, the broader case for access is even harder to ignore. UNESCO's *Recommendation on Open Science* identifies open access to scientific knowledge as part of a wider commitment to equity, inclusion, diversity, transparency, and the reduction of inequalities in access to knowledge (UNESCO, 2021).

For CJED, the decision to move from paywalled publication to an online only, open access model was therefore about more than format. It was also a decision about reach. Authors should have the greatest reasonable opportunity for their work to be read. Teachers, students, policy-makers, and researchers should not encounter a payment barrier before they can engage with research that may have direct relevance to their work.

Yet accessibility does not automatically produce trust.

The growth of predatory publishing has complicated perceptions of open access journals. Because many predatory outlets publish online and describe themselves as open access, those characteristics can themselves arouse suspicion. The association is understandable, but it is mistaken. Open access describes the conditions under which research can be accessed. It does not determine whether the research has been rigorously reviewed or whether the journal operates ethically.

This distinction places an additional responsibility on legitimate open access journals. Credibility must be visible. Peer review processes must be clear. Editorial policies must be transparent. Ethical expectations must be explicit. Authors and readers should be able to see how the journal operates and what standards it applies. The Directory of Open Access Journals (https://doaj.org/apply/guide/), for example, evaluates open access journals using criteria that include editorial governance, peer review, licensing, transparency and publishing ethics. These are useful reminders that openness and quality need not be opposites.

For CJED, increased accessibility must therefore go hand in hand with continued attention to scholarly quality, editorial integrity, and transparency.

Visibility presents a different challenge. Making an article freely available does not guarantee that anyone will find it.

This brings us to the longstanding divide between research and use.

Educational research can be methodologically sound, professionally reviewed, and freely accessible, yet still fail to reach the teachers, school leaders, policymakers, or other practitioners who might benefit from it. Research on the relationship between educational evidence and practice continues to identify this as an international challenge (Schlicht-Schmälzle et al., 2024).

Academic articles are written primarily for scholarly audiences. Policymakers may require evidence in a different form. Teachers and school leaders may have little time to locate and interpret journal articles. Researchers, meanwhile, may receive considerably more professional recognition for publishing an article than for translating its implications for practitioner audiences.

A journal concerned with both education and development cannot ignore this tension.

For CJED, an important question is therefore: **How do we help Caribbean educational research travel?**

It should travel among researchers and across Caribbean territories. But it should also cross the boundaries between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers. Rolling publication and online open access create useful conditions for doing so; but they are not, by themselves, sufficient.

Publication should not always be the final stage of the research journey.

Artificial Intelligence and the Visibility of Caribbean Knowledge

Questions of access, discoverability, and whose knowledge travels have become more urgent with the rapid development of generative artificial intelligence.

Discussion of AI in scholarly publishing has understandably concentrated on immediate questions of integrity. Can authors use generative AI in preparing manuscripts? When should its use be declared? Can an AI system be named as an author? What happens to confidentiality if an unpublished manuscript is uploaded into an external AI platform? Where does responsibility lie when AI generated information is inaccurate?

These are important questions, and journals need clear positions on them. International publishing guidance increasingly converges around several principles: AI cannot assume authorship because it cannot take responsibility for published work; human authors remain accountable for accuracy and integrity; relevant AI use should be disclosed; and editors and reviewers must protect the confidentiality of unpublished manuscripts.

CJED will need to continue developing its own policies as both the technology and scholarly norms evolve.

But for Caribbean scholarship there is, I believe, another issue that deserves at least equal attention.

What Does AI Know About Us?

Generative AI systems do not encounter the world's knowledge evenly. What they are able to represent is influenced by the information, languages, perspectives, and sources that are available within the environments from which they learn or retrieve information. UNESCO (2021) has specifically warned that generative AI may deepen existing digital and data divides and has emphasised the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity, inclusion, equity, and plural perspectives in its development and use.

For Caribbean educational research, the implications deserve careful thought.

If scholarship from the region is difficult to find, poorly indexed, unavailable digitally, or underrepresented in particular fields, AI does not make that absence disappear.

It may reproduce it.

Imagine a teacher, student, policymaker, or researcher asking a generative AI system about an educational problem in a Caribbean country.

If the system has little accessible Caribbean evidence from which to construct its response, it may draw heavily upon research and assumptions generated in educational systems elsewhere.

The answer may be polished.

It may sound confident.

It may even contain useful information.

But is it an answer to *our* question?

That possibility gives the visibility of Caribbean scholarship a significance that extends beyond conventional concerns with journal rankings and citation counts. Publishing research, preserving it digitally, making it accessible, and ensuring that it is discoverable increasingly influence whether Caribbean knowledge is present within the wider information environment through which people encounter ideas.

The issue is therefore not merely whether Caribbean academics will use AI. It is whether Caribbean scholarship will be sufficiently visible in a world where AI increasingly mediates access to knowledge.

This is one of the reasons I believe regional journals matter now as much as they ever have.

There is an obvious caution. The answer cannot simply be to publish more material so that Caribbean content exists somewhere online. Visibility without quality solves very little. What enters the scholarly record should be rigorous, ethically produced, contextually grounded, and worthy of trust.

AI itself also offers possibilities that should not be dismissed. Used responsibly, it may support aspects of searching, organisation, language, analysis, and dissemination. It may help researchers communicate findings in forms suitable for different audiences. For scholars working in environments where research and editorial support are constrained, some of these capabilities may prove particularly useful.

We should explore these possibilities.

But scholarly judgement cannot be outsourced. Research requires decisions about what questions deserve investigation, what constitutes appropriate evidence, what interpretations that evidence can sustain, which perspectives are missing, what ethical responsibilities arise, and which claims a scholar is prepared to defend. AI can assist with elements of scholarly work. It cannot carry scholarly responsibility.

That responsibility remains ours.

What Should CJED Become?

The creation of CJED brought together two journals with related educational interests and allowed their work to be concentrated within a single publication with a broader education and development remit. Streamlining has value, especially when it permits attention and resources to be focused on the elements of publishing that matter most: the quality of the scholarship, rigorous review, editorial standards, timely publication, accessibility, and visibility.

It also gives the journal a clearer identity.

CJED is not, nor should it claim to be, *the* voice of Caribbean educational research. There are other important regional journals, and a healthy scholarly ecosystem requires multiple sites of inquiry and debate.

CJED should, however, seek to be a strong and recognisable contributor to that ecosystem and a coherent scholarly platform through which the School of Education at The University of the West Indies, Mona, contributes to wider regional and international conversations about education and development.

What might that require?

Certainly, high quality research. But that alone is too modest a vision.

CJED can help make Caribbean educational research more visible. It can encourage researchers to work across territories rather than remain within national research silos. It can create credible opportunities for emerging scholars while maintaining rigorous standards. It can encourage established researchers to continue placing work of regional significance in Caribbean journals. It can welcome the close, contextual studies represented in this issue while also encouraging comparative, longitudinal, intervention, and impact research.

It can encourage conversations across methodological traditions.

It can ask how educational research reaches the people whose work and lives it seeks to understand.

And it can help make the case that Caribbean educational questions are not peripheral questions.

None of this requires turning away from international scholarship. Caribbean researchers should engage confidently with the strongest work produced anywhere. But intellectual engagement should be reciprocal. The Caribbean brings distinctive histories, cultures, institutions, educational systems, problems, and intellectual traditions to global educational research. Our scholarship should not merely provide local examples of questions formulated elsewhere. Caribbean evidence and thought should also contribute to determining which questions are asked.

The eight articles in this issue contribute to that project. They demonstrate methodological variety, close engagement with context and concern with educational problems that matter to the people and institutions involved. They also leave questions unanswered, as worthwhile research invariably does.

Those unanswered questions are not shortcomings.

They are invitations.

As CJED continues to develop, its task is therefore larger than filling issues or increasing publication counts. It is to contribute to a stronger, more connected, and more visible Caribbean educational knowledge base. It is to provide a trusted home for rigorous research. It is to support established and emerging scholars. It is to narrow, where possible, the distance between research, policy, and practice. And it is to ensure that Caribbean educational knowledge remains present as the ways in which knowledge is produced, published, discovered, and used continue to change.

Artificial intelligence makes this work more urgent.

It did not create the need for it. The need has always been there.

We invite readers to engage with the eight contributions in this issue, to question them, to build upon them and to bring their findings into conversation with evidence from other settings. That is how a research community develops, and it is how a regional journal earns its place within that community.

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— Dr Lois George
Chief Editor