

Voices in Education

Student Success: A National Focus

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Student Success: A National Focus

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Aims and Scope

Voices in Education is a scholarly journal that serves as a voice and resource for students, researchers, educators, and the community. It contributes to the realization of Bermuda College's vision by addressing "the diverse needs of the community through research."

The aim of this publication is to heighten awareness of current trends, to encourage discourse and practice, to challenge thinking, and to widen and strengthen the scope of research in education. *Voices in Education* serves local and global audiences in academia by providing peer-reviewed, multidisciplinary articles.

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Foreword

Phyllis Curtis-Tweed
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Co- Editors

The year 2020 will be forever associated with two major global events: the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and a renewed focus on racial and social justice. The theme for this year's BC Journal Voices in Education, *Education 2020: The Great Online Pivot & the Intersection of Education and Race*, aptly addresses these two prescient concerns.

The coronavirus pandemic took the world by storm causing illness and death globally. It resulted in lockdowns and health and safety measures designed to stem the spread of the virus. During this timeframe, the world has been flooded with concerns about health and safety with heightened focus on mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Educators everywhere engaged in a sudden forced pivot to virtual instructional platforms which further isolated instructors and learners but also unveiled inequities in access to technology and possible deficits in teacher preparation for online instruction.

Lightbourne describes the changes that teachers had to make to adjust their teaching delivery, voluntarily and involuntarily. She talks about the stressors that the pandemic caused using the Kübler-Ross cycles of change, usually associated with responses to death, as metaphorical to the dispositional changes that occurred for educators during the pandemic. She also states that these occurrences underscored the need for educators to build stronger relationships with one another, noting that some would not have gotten through without calling on others.

Being able to call on others is also relevant to the article by McFarlane and Wallder on academic advising. They discuss a study that indicated the effectiveness and value of academic advising which is always essential to student success but became even more important for academic and career guidance during the pandemic. They found that students did seek out advisors for their expertise and also preferred to speak with advisors about personal matters.

Seeking support is one of the coping strategies that Maybury recommends for maintaining mental health during a crisis. Maybury generally highlights the magnitude of anxiety and its inroads into all segments of society and provides strategies for relieving/lessening and controlling anxiety.

As this crisis was emerging, an unprecedented heightened global focus on racial and social justice was stimulated by the horrific murder of George Floyd recorded on video and seen globally. Marches and protests on racial and social injustice rivalled events of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement in their intensity and were supported across racial boundaries.

The pandemic provided a context for unveiling continued inequities by race and class and the racial crisis called attention to the role of education in empowering communities of colour. Harvey describes glaring evidence of inequality in systems worldwide relative to climate change and to experiences of Covid-19. The inequities are global and are differentiated by race, age, and socioeconomic status, impacting economically disadvantaged communities of colour disproportionately. She recommends that education can close such gaps and empower communities by equipping them with tools that foster resilience and sustainability.

Smith encourages educators and students to use art as a viable medium to respond to felt life experiences specifically considering issues of race. He advocates for the creation of art in Bermuda in particular as a medium for expressing lived experiences related to racial oppression. He evidences approaches to the subject of race made by artists connected with Bermuda.

Wolde stresses that harmonizing community equity depends on actions beyond marches and protests. He stresses that multicultural education coupled with honest cultural socialization should be the benchmark for all models of

social restructuring. He describes this as the moral responsibility of educators on the path towards an egalitarian system.

Curtis-Tweed argues that Bermuda must seek to close the racial and socioeconomic divides historically perpetuated in public and private education in a neo-colonial context. Stakeholders must grapple with the undergirding elements which sustain the divide by addressing race relations, depoliticizing education, and encouraging the development of agency to empower oppressed communities.

The topics of covid-19 and the intersection of education and race, at first glance, might seem disparate. However, these topics and resultant articles are unified and overlap on the themes of inequity, resilience, and empowerment. Both the pandemic and the death of George Floyd seemed to pull the proverbial tenuous scab off a wound of inequity that cannot heal without intervention. Much has happened globally in the timeframe between the emergence of these crises and the present time. However, to date the pandemic thrives, and the same concerns regarding racial and social inequity and injustice are also extant. Hope for change still focuses on education to provide an equalizing context and a path forward.

Pedagogy and the Pandemic

Dana D. Lightbourne

Abstract

The first known case of the novel Coronavirus appeared on December 31, 2019 in Wuhan, People's Republic of China. The first reported death from Covid was also in Wuhan on January 9, 2020. The first death outside of China was in the Philippines on February 1, 2020 (WHO, 2020). While scientists are still in debate about whether the disease was manufactured in a lab or originated from bats, we can all agree that it has devastated people globally. There isn't a single region in the world that has not been affected by it. Covid-19 has singlehandedly changed the landscape of life abroad and here in Bermuda. The first confirmed Coronavirus case in Bermuda was reported on Wednesday, March 18, 2020. Hearing that it had breached our shores caused anxiety and fear. All schools, government and private, moved to a virtual platform. The virus was unique, unpredictable, and novel but, sadly for many educators, our pedagogy for years had been quite the opposite. In a matter of mere hours, educators were grappling to make adjustments in order to meet the crisis.

Keywords: Covid-19, pandemic, pedagogy

Introduction

According to the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, Distance Education emerged as a global movement in 1992 (AECT, 2001). Consequently, numerous educators all over the world have been designing curriculum and adjusting pedagogy in order to include scenarios in which the teacher and the learner are in different locations. A distance education committee at Bermuda College was established in 2008. Among other things, its goals were to encourage faculty to teach at least one online course, become online teaching certified, and utilize tools to accommodate different types of learning structures. What that committee had hoped to achieve for years was realized in only a matter of hours to the extent that nearly every course at Bermuda College was transformed into either a fully distance or hybrid course.

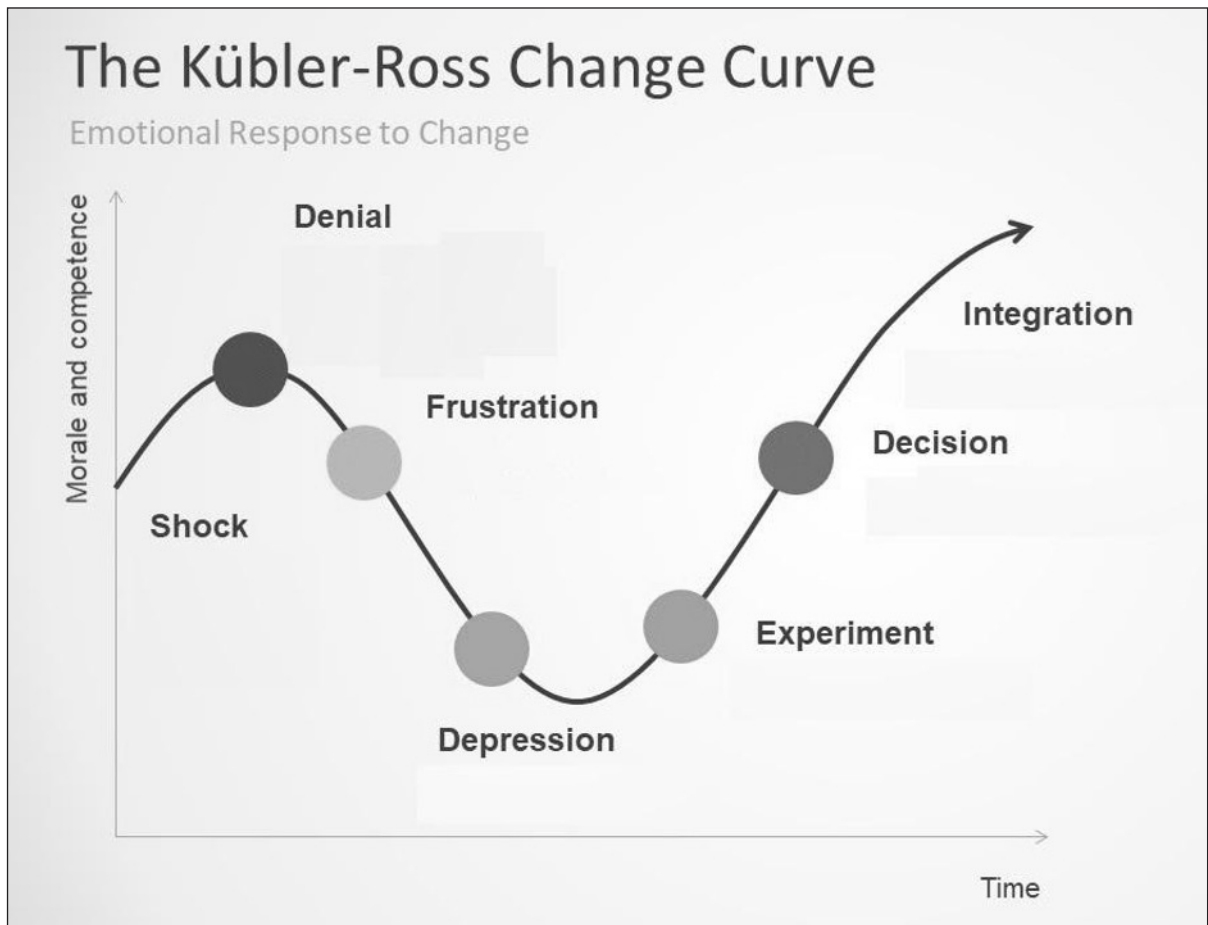
What is the specific goal of education during a time of crisis? What strategies are expendable, and which are indispensable? As it relates to pedagogy during the pandemic, this article will discuss involuntary change, technology literacy, networking, and future effects.

Involuntary Change

Cohen (2017) acknowledged that change is a constant companion in education, and educators must embrace the constancy of it. The pandemic certainly triggered a change to our current educational structure.

In 1969, psychiatrist Elizabeth Kubler-Ross developed a curve based on the emotions that her patients experienced when facing death (Belyh, 2020). Most recently, variations of the Kubler-Ross model have been used by educators and others to highlight an individual's reaction to change in general. The model below is a true indicator of what many educators experienced and continue to encounter (Lovelace, 2020).

Figure 1

The Kübler-Ross Change Curve (1969)

The Covid-19 pandemic caused some educators to experience the same symptoms as medical patients. The notification that all courses would be moved online was met with shock and denial among Bermuda College faculty. Everyone understood that safety should be the first priority; however, it was unthinkable that masks would be commonplace and that the entire island of Bermuda would be in lockdown. Frustration soon followed. Frustration for some was due to a lack of online preparedness. Current pedagogy for many educators was designed around face to face interactions. Developing an online course can be a daunting task. Add the shortness of available time dynamic; therefore, it is understandable why frustration was the result.

While some educators scrambled to find ways to engage students amidst the changing climate and unpredictable conditions, others looked for ways to remain the same. A smart board was merely replaced with a computer screen and a dry eraser with a stylus. Lesson plans remained flat and simply moved online.

With sites like *edx.org*, *Master Class*, and *Khan Academy* already online, what would be the draw for students to attend synchronous online courses? What information did each Bermuda College class have that uniquely set it apart, so that students could find value in attending class while having access to countless other resources?

Attempting to answer that question led educators to reconsider their pedagogical approaches. They saw the benefit of contextualization in teaching because all of the students were at home. Bedrooms were converted into classrooms,

so it was beneficial to connect course content to the ‘real world.’ After the experimentation stage, educators slowly began to find things that worked for them and their students. The *new normal* did not seem as new anymore.

The Kubler-Ross change model ends with acceptance and integration. Once educators realized that moving beyond the pandemic would take longer than expected, they began to adjust to the change out of a necessity to still be productive in the virtual classroom. Newly learned strategies such as flipped classrooms and virtual field trips were integrated into the pedagogy, and ingenuity was awakened.

Technology Literacy

One question that arose from the pandemic was how much technology literacy is required or necessary for a 21st century educator? When courses are being taught online, pedagogy is understandably influenced by the technology literacy of the educator. During Covid-19, technology provided educators with the medium to meet the students where they were. Technologically proficient educators had multiple ways to connect with students. In addition, not all students could receive the data in one way due to their varying resources at home. Consequently, differentiated instruction and assessment during the pandemic often hinged on the relationship between the technology literacy of the educator, the students, and the availability of technological resources. One author wrote, “It takes time, even for master teachers, to get to be good at teaching with technology. At first, teachers tend to use new technologies to extend existing practices. Only with time, practice, experimentation and support do they move on to more novel applications” (Reich et al., 2021, p. 23). While the use of novel applications was ideal during the pandemic, time was in short supply.

Educators soon discovered, however, that the majority of what they needed to do could be achieved with the right digital resource. Blogs and breakout rooms were used, and YouTube videos were created. Technology provided answers for how to vary assessments and foster collaboration. If educators were unaware of the existence of resources, then their methods for delivering content were limited. Covid-19 caused educators to recognize and acknowledge their limitations.

The emergence of the virus prompted a closer look at pedagogy which is often defined as an approach which is more effective if the focus is on who is being approached. If pandemic pedagogy was to be learner focused, it certainly required adjustments. According to an educator, effective online teaching requires educators to possess various multifaceted skills which require continual fine-tuning (Hardy, 2017). The pandemic provided the perfect backdrop to fine-tune online teaching.

For those educators who have had the privilege of teaching in both the 20th and 21st centuries, it is clear that the pedagogy for one set of learners needed to be adjusted for the next set. The world is changing, but education was lagging behind. It took the pandemic to expose the need for change, adaptation, facilitation, and better evaluation.

Today, traditional students have been classified as digital natives. The Oxford dictionary defines a digital native as a person born or brought up during the age of digital technology and therefore familiar with computers and the internet from an early age (Oxford, n.d.). However, growing up with technology does not equate to being tech savvy and being comfortable with technology does not equate to productivity and learning in an online classroom. Millennials are technology dependent, but they are not necessarily tech savvy (Wesch, 2010). While they rely heavily on digital media to manage their daily lives and stave off boredom, fewer digital natives maintain blogs, or make use of RSS feeds, *wikispaces*, or other productivity enhancing tools (Wesch, 2010). Some educators faced learning a new skillset during the pandemic; students also required education on the proper use of technology for educational purposes.

Networking

The pandemic highlighted the need for educators to build stronger connections with other educators. Entities like banks and mortgage companies set up relief plans for those who needed help during the chaotic time. What about educators? They needed help but, for many, there wasn't a relief package, no *easy button*. There was no educational hub where one could enter his or her lesson plans and immediately be given strategies and tools for disseminating the information seamlessly in a virtual environment. Consequently, educators began to rely on each other, many for the first time. They shared pedagogical strategies and resources. It was through networking that tools like *Thinglink*, *Miro*, *Calendly*, and *Matterport* were discovered, giving educators an abundance of options.

What happens when the need to be innovative clashes with the time available? According to the UVA Centre for Teaching Excellence, "One of the critical components of designing and delivering an effective, engaging online course is to balance the workload for both students and yourself as the instructor. Strategies for reducing workload and saving time in face-to-face classes do not always work in online classes" (CTE Authors, 2020, p. 1). The issue of workload was often discussed between educators during networking sessions which provided educators with tools for managing the increased workload.

Future Ramifications

The effect of Covid-19 on students may be felt for years to come. Educators were not the only ones searching for pedagogical strategies. Many parents, some for the first time, were tasked with providing instruction to their children while the schools were closed. Whether or not they did a good job is yet to be seen. In the documentary *Disrupted – How Covid changed Education*, host Amna Nawaz said, "There's a lot of uncertainty about the long term effects of remote learning, social isolation, the loss of routine, and security and normalcy. We are just beginning to reckon with the systemic inequities and opportunity gaps made even worse by the crisis" (Estrada, 2021, p. 1).

Unfortunately many institutions were clearly not able to effectively deliver content to students during the pandemic. Many variables had to fit together for the process to work smoothly. In some cases, children did not have computers at home or access to the internet. According to Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021), even in many developing countries, economically disadvantaged children are unable to afford online learning devices; the online education also poses a risk of exposure to increased screen time for the learner. In addition, some schools did not even have robust learning management systems.

Pedagogy must be designed in a way to provide a window through which each student is able to first view and then live in a changing world. As the world evolves, pedagogy must also evolve in order to facilitate students' preparedness to function effectively and be productive citizens. Educators have a choice to either routinely change their pedagogy, or change will be forced upon them based on environmental uncertainties. For those lecturers who already had a solid online presence, who had familiarized themselves with the newest and most productive ways to present information, adjusting their teaching methods and practices to suit an online format was not a huge leap. For some others, the effect of the pandemic on pedagogy was earth shattering. Now that adjustments have been made, there is much left to consider in the future.

The pandemic will undoubtedly have a future effect on students as well. Educators had to make adjustments in order to teach lessons differently. Likewise, students may have realized for the first time the value they placed on socialization with their peers and how that impacted their learning: positively or negatively. Attending classes at home, with significant distractions, may have deprived students from receiving important information.

Hickling et al., (2021) posits that adapting to teaching during a pandemic: Pedagogical adjustments for the next semester of teaching during covid-19 and future online learning suggests barriers to quality learning and teaching: limited peer support and interaction, limited access to educational technologists, and competing demands of academics in relation to family and life stresses.

As a result, students may exhibit learning deficiencies post the pandemic. They may also have to unlearn some bad habits that were developed during their learning experiences at home.

Conclusion

Covid-19 has had a negative impact on a plethora of things: restaurants, hotels, and businesses have closed and numerous people have died. Pedagogical approaches to teaching were severely impacted as a result of Covid-19. Experiencing this involuntary change led educators to experiment with new technologies to enhance teaching given the current conditions and make it possible for students and teachers to continue connecting in meaningful ways. Technology literacy was pivotal in determining the depth of adjustment each educator was able to make to his or her pedagogy.

Therefore, during the pandemic, networking between educators was either created or upgraded for teachers to share ideas and strategies. We may never fully understand or grasp the full ramifications of Covid-19 on pedagogy and education in general. Of a certainty, educators are resilient. If the pandemic could be classified as being good for anything, it certainly provided many educators with the tools needed for diversifying pedagogy.

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Engaging Students for Success during a Pandemic: The Impact of Academic Advisement upon Course of Study Completion Rates amongst Business & Computer Studies and Industrial Technology Students at the University of Technology, Jamaica

Rachelle McFarlane and Stephen R. Wallder

Abstract

*The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted education provision and access across the globe. One key aspect affected is **academic advisement**, vital to a student's university experience for enhancing **success and engagement**. While recognizing disparities between academic advisement and student progression at the University of Technology, Jamaica, the study explored the robustness and effectiveness of institutional academic advisement processes since the onset of the **Covid-19 pandemic** toward successful student engagement and subsequent **course completion**. A mixed method approach, utilizing surveys, enabled the description of the advisor / advisee experience so that understanding of the role, function, and benefit of academic advisement and its practices could be reviewed. The research was informed through data collected from 108 students and 15 lecturers attached to a Bachelors of Education qualification. The findings revealed that 80% of students sought their advisors on matters related to their course of study. Whilst students valued the advisor's experience and approach, they also recognized weaknesses in administrative functions attached to the process, specifically in student support system capabilities and follow-up. Recommendations include the strategic institutionalization of a mandatory advisement function, enhanced through a dedicated unit with the purpose of successfully enriching the advisee / advisor experience for both student and institutional success in **higher education**.*

Keywords: Academic advisement, Covid-19 pandemic, student success and engagement, higher education, course completion

Introduction

In 2017 Carolyn Thomas, Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education at the University of California, penned timely words.

It is a unique moment for academic advising. The elements are aligned for its stature to rise, even as greater judgment of its work takes place. There is no better time for us to work, in earnest, to ensure that campus leadership knows the unique contributions that academic advisors can make [to] their institutional goals for student success. (Thomas, 2017, p. 1)

The success of students in higher education is not only for the students and institutions, but for all stakeholders. Whilst the concept of success is not always easy to articulate, factors that contribute are frequently acknowledged, which include advisement. If institutions cultivate enthusiastic student engagement, the likelihood of achievement in a particular study programme is expected (Zegarra, 2019). Increasingly, higher education institutions recognize the potential for utilizing academic advisement activities further toward positive student engagement (Pargett, 2011), hence, fuelling its growth (Johnson, 2018).

The University of Maine (2020), defines academic advisement as a process between the student and academic advisor that focuses upon maximizing the benefits of education while discussing goals in keeping with appropriate course selections and university services/policies. Banat (2015) emphasized that effective advisors assist advisees discover their potential for decision making, thereby contributing to the development of mature and self-directed students. However, research conflicts as to whether this advice is delivered more effectively when conveyed by assigned advisors, as opposed to any available advisor (Massey, 2018; Pargett, 2011).

In 2020 the University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech, Ja), like many global institutions, further recognized the criticality of advisement in any successful educational experience. The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic led the University to adjust its advisement policy to further assist students, particularly its vulnerable online learners (The University of Technology, Jamaica, 2020). All full-time faculty are assigned as academic advisors. The policy limits advisee numbers to a maximum of 30, thereby avoiding excess advisement demands that diminish efficient advisement services. Notably, in a report to faculty board, dated 29th October, 2018, the Academic Advisement Coordinator within the Faculty of Education and Liberal Studies (FELS) reported that notwithstanding some overload anomalies, these aforementioned ratios were 1:10 in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and 1:17 in the School of Technical and Vocational Education (SOTAVE).

Acknowledging the importance of advisement in student and university performance, former President of UTech, Ja., Stephen Vasciannie, reported average student retention (in 4 year programmes) of 84% for 1st and 2nd year students in academic year 2017/18. An improvement upon just 51% graduating from 2014/15 and 2015/16 cohorts, the University's 2018 Institutional Self Study, (2017/18) reported that this figure had increased to 56% of programme enrollees graduating (Jamaica Observer, 2017). Researchers from the University of Texas, analyzed similar 4 year programme data, concluding that proactive advising bore tremendous influence upon university retention and increasing degree completion rates (Massey, 2018).

Past President Vasciannie's indications of the disparities between advisement and student progression at UTech, Ja are significant. This study seeks to explore the robustness of the advisement process since the onset of the pandemic, with its subsequent impact, and the success of institutional advisement for student engagement and success.

Academic Advisement

The literature relating to academic advisement and success, particularly in a Jamaican and Caribbean context is limited, though growing in significance worldwide. Exploration of such research, journals, studies and publications is intended to support and frame the relevance of the research advanced here. Literature is organized in line with themes advanced through the research questions.

The Role of Academic Advisors and Academic Advisement in Higher Education

Academic advisors deliver an important function, providing students with academic/career guidance (Pargett, 2011). As an educational process, academic advisement is critical in interconnecting students with learning opportunities that foster and support engagement, and attainment of key learning outcomes, thereby shifting student focus toward an appreciation for learning (Campbell & Nutt, 2008). Baker & Griffin (2010) advance that advisement facilitates academic success by integrating a component for achievement in faculty education targets. Stevens et al. (2018), indicate that, higher education students unaware of, and deprived of advisement have experienced lesser progress. Zegarra (2019) affirms, without academic guidance, students may remain in college longer than necessary due to failure in meeting course requirements, or according to Chisholm & Kennedy (2014), be ill-informed to make decisions for fulfilling degree requirements.

Institutions must ensure the visibility and availability of advisement to students, hence institutional organization and physical structure may require re-orientation to encourage engagement (Cuseo, 2015). Whilst not unique,

UTech, Ja, mandates that an initial advisement meeting is convened with incoming students to discuss University expectations, opportunities, and potential challenges (University of Technology, Jamaica, 2019). Similarly, the Mico University (Mico), in Kingston, advances that it is through its academic advisement policy that students be provided with appropriate counsel to enable them to make informed decisions concerning academic and career goals and thereby successfully complete studies in the prescribed time. Further adding that student satisfaction with the quality of educational programmes is an imperative (The Mico University, Academic Advisement Policy, 2019, p.4). Academic advisement thereby occupies a cornerstone position, facilitating both student and institutional success, extending beyond academic objectives to ensure student satisfaction. Within this context, academic advisors are positioned for a primary role in facilitating universal success (Thomas, 2017).

Key Components of Academic Advisement in Higher Education

Institutions seek to advance their prominence by promoting academic advisement as a learning activity that espouses institutional objectives and student success (Campbell & Nutt, 2008). Incorporating advisement into faculty induction activities promotes its profile, emphasising higher expectations of student/faculty interactions that promote success (Tinto, 2010).

Providers and users of advisement must be congruent in recognizing its key components so that advancement strategies may be pursued, policy at UTech, Ja., exemplifies this.

Academic advisement serves to develop and enrich students' educational plans in ways that are consistent with their personal values, goals, and career development, preparing them to function as lifelong learners in a global society. The University recognizes that there are vulnerable populations in tertiary education including online learners for whom academic advisement must be provided (University of Technology, Jamaica, Academic Advisement Policy, 2020, p.1).

The Mico Academic Advisement Policy, (2019) stresses similar objectives, collaboratively. Tinto (2010) further identifies advisement's importance in developing attributes, such as initiative and responsibility. Whilst Cuseo (2015) suggests advisement targets specific actions, including clear definition, incentives, advisement strategies, training and quality standards, elevating advisement from an administrative demand to a strategic learning tool.

Pointedly, academic advisement, whilst beneficial in advancing strategic institutional objectives, should not be overlooked as an insignificant factor in student success, the other arguably being student-centred learning (Thomas, 2017; Wallder & Brown, 2019). Significantly, as Miller (2016,), in concurring with previous studies advanced, it is advisement that "provides the opportunity for students to develop a personal, consistent relationship with someone in the institution who cares about them" (50-51).

Characteristics of the Academic Advisor

Without identifying specific roles and responsibilities of an academic advisor, poor academic advice may ensue. In this regard, Cuseo (2003) summarized undergraduate student perspectives that valued advisors as mentors/counsellors; favourable attributes included availability, accessibility, approachability, personable, and knowledgeable.

Campbell and Nutt (2008) recognize academic advisement as a *tool* in higher education, through which a student-teacher mentoring relationship may be promoted. Within this relationship students develop social and intellectual skills, whilst learning to balance and prioritize activities. Critically, advisors facilitate this development through innumerable pedagogical strategies and techniques. It is from this description of the academic advisement activity that scholars may seek to advance advisory characteristics for academics, one that develops value added components for advisees while they engage in learning. Notably, such attributes likely advance student satisfaction, learning, and persistence toward graduation (Hossler, 2000). Cheung et al. (2017) sought student views and expectations of advising, from which an overall positive evaluation of academic advising was delivered. Students preferred a

developmental, non-prescriptive structure, one that addressed their life, academic and career objectives via an appreciation of their educational potential

Student Participation in Academic Advisement

Data points to the usefulness of academic advisement in enhancing course completion rates (Hefling, 2019) as it evolves and grows, so does current practice (Johnson, 2018; Pargett, 2011). Green, (2016) observed that infrequent advisor/advisee interactions were detrimental to a students' educational experience. However, whilst provision of academic advisement may increase to enhance student's academic experience (Zegarra, 2019; Bryant, 2016) usage is contingent upon student participation. Johnson's (2018) research indicated that significant numbers of students in a returning cohort adopted advisement support voluntarily (78% of sample). However, Lowenstein (2013) found results to the contrary, when advisement was mandatory, students viewed advisement as an obstacle to overcome. Amongst students placed upon academic probation, McCoy (2018), found that significant numbers declined support.

Academic advising can directly affect a student's persistence and probability of graduating, indirectly impacting grades and university satisfaction. Historically, satisfaction with academic advising was among the college experiences rated lowest (Allen & Smith, 2008) though recent research suggests increased receptivity (Cheung et al., 2017). Drake et al. (2013) suggest successful advisement systems result from better understanding student expectations. Smith & Allen (2006) sought student views of 12 academic advising functions. They found students primarily valued accurate information about graduation, followed by information concerning subject selection, careers, and university regulations/policies. Research from Hong Kong (Cheung et al., 2017) reaffirmed these priorities. Students sought information concerning study programmes, career development, personal goals, and advice regarding academic problems (Grites, 2013). Priorities were reinforced, with the addition of relationship building by Chan, (2016).

Purpose of the Study

The Covid-19 virus has redefined how humans interact on a daily basis, impacting economic and social sectors across the globe. Academic advisement in tertiary education, as outlined, is certainly not unscathed. Evaluating disparities between academic advisement and students' progression at UTech, Ja., requires understanding. This study, thus, seeks to assess faculty's engagement of students for success during the Covid-19 pandemic. Specific focus is given to the impact and experience of advisement upon course of study completion rates amongst students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education in TVET within FELS.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How significant is the process of academic advisement in enhancing student success and retention for course of study completion?
2. In what ways has academic advisement assisted students pursuing a degree in education to address challenges and concerns that they may experience during their course of study?
3. In what ways did student challenges and concerns, as addressed by Academic Advisors change as a result of the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic?
4. Are there significant characteristics of academic advisement and academic advisors that assist in ensuring the robustness of advisement in the current Covid-19 pandemic?

Methodology

The study utilized survey instruments that relied on a mixed method research design. Mixed methods research design is a procedure for collecting, analysing, and integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods into a single study to understand a research problem (Creswell, 2012). The participants were student-teachers and lecturers from SOTAVE enrolled in the Business and Computer Studies (BCS) and Industrial Technology (IT) options. A student-teacher sample of 196 participants was targeted; 108 responded. Participants were exposed to the academic advisement experience preceding and subsequent to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Sixteen lecturers attached to the courses of study reviewed were also surveyed. Notably, the methodology pursued in reaching the targeted audience was in-keeping with Covid-19 protocols and accumulated information kept confidential within this study.

Data Analysis

Chart 1

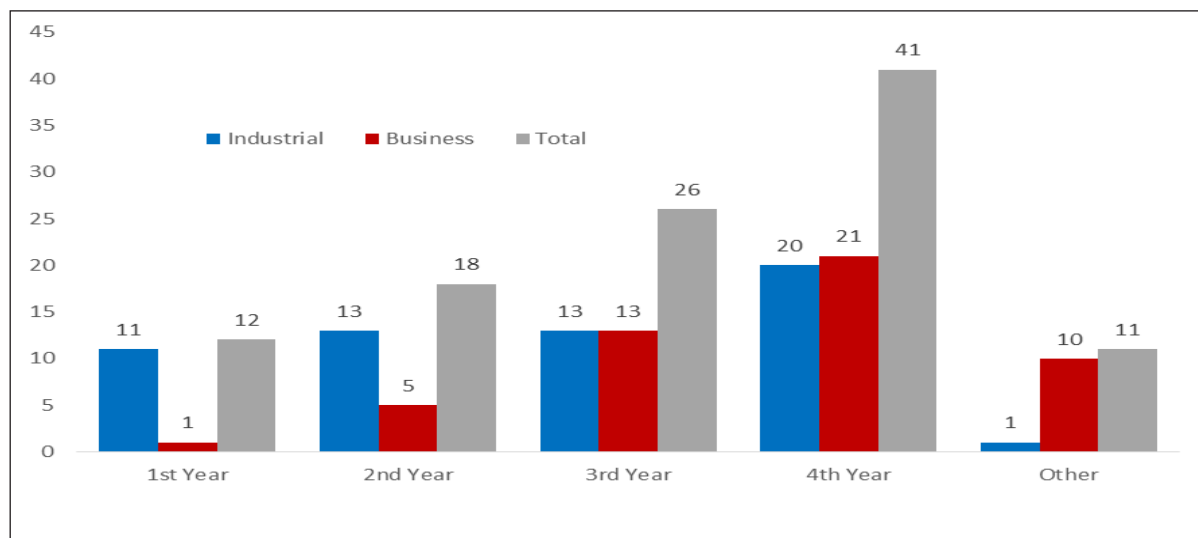
Research Questions Alignment with Survey Instrument

Research Question	Data collection method	Data analysis
1. How significant is the process of academic advisement in enhancing student success and retention for course of study completion?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Questionnaire (questions 26 – 30) 	Descriptive Analysis
2. In what ways has academic advisement assisted students pursuing a degree in education to address challenges and concerns that may be experienced during their course of study?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecturer Questionnaire (question 9) Student Questionnaire (questions 5 – 21) 	Descriptive Analysis
3. In what ways did student challenges and concerns, as addressed by Academic Advisors change as a result of the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecturer Questionnaire (questions 6 – 8) 	Descriptive Analysis
4. Are there significant features of academic advisement and academic advisors that assist in ensuring the robustness of advisement in the current Covid-19 pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecturer Questionnaire (questions 2-5, 10) Student Questionnaire (questions 22 –25) 	Descriptive Analysis

Data was collected using Google forms and further analysed utilizing Microsoft Excel, to organize data and create charts depicting results. Descriptive statistics assisted in describing and summarizing the data accumulated (Fallon, 2016). Both quantitative and qualitative data was processed to identify themes and grouped in alignment with the research questions (see Chart 1.). This process of analysis is supported by Taylor-Powell & Renner (2003) research centred on qualitative data.

Results

The 56% response rate garnered comprised 56% male and 44% female respondents, 63% being under the age of 25. Respondents comprised of 50 BCS and 58 IT.

Figure 1*Year of Study Distribution among Students by Year*

As reflected in Figure 1, 41% were enrolled in their 4th year of studies, 10% in the 5th or beyond, 91% being BCS students. Amongst academic advisors approached, 15 of 16 responded. Fifty-three percent were female, 47% male, 67% having over 5 years' experience as an academic advisor. 80% of advisors had 20 or less advisees, in keeping with the university's policy of a 1:30 advisor:advisee ratio (University of Technology, Jamaica, 2019).

Academic Advisement and the Role of the Advisor

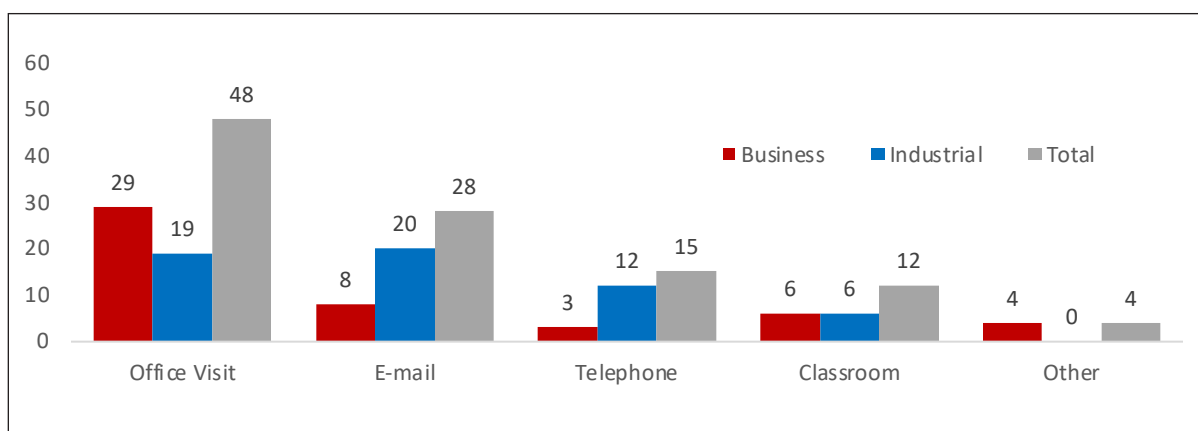
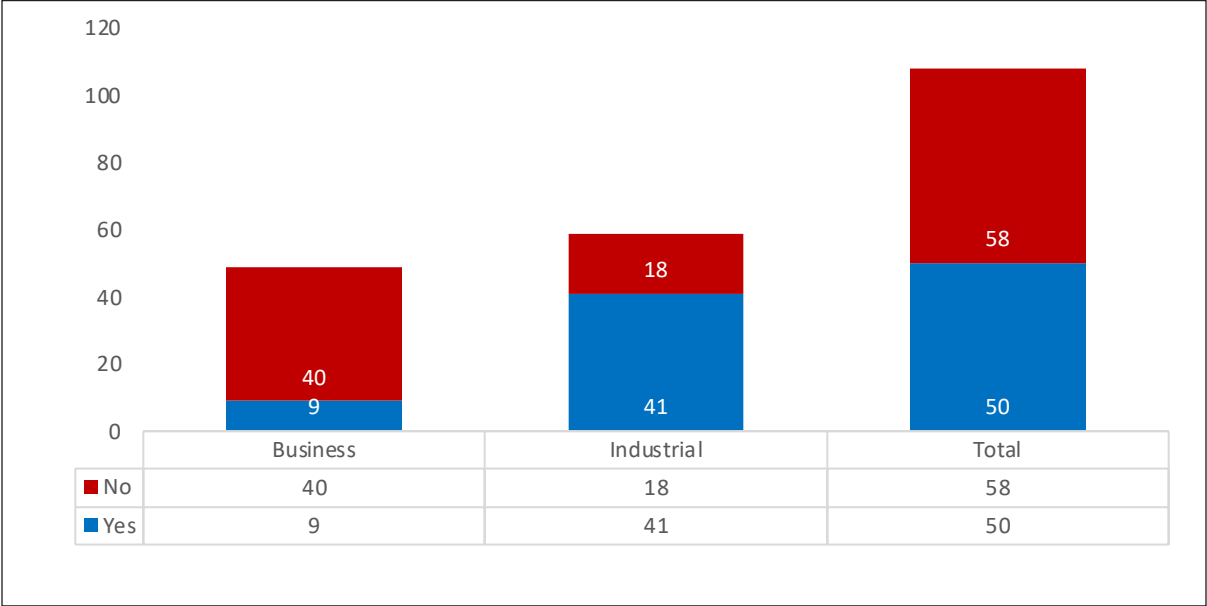
Figure 2*Students Preferred Mode of Interaction with Academic Advisors*

Figure 2 illustrates 48% of students surveyed expressed preference for face-to-face meetings with advisors. Fifty-nine percent of students made appointments to meet with advisors; 55% kept these appointments. Only 46% of students were asked to complete the Meeting

Figure 3

Students Requested to Complete AA05 Forms



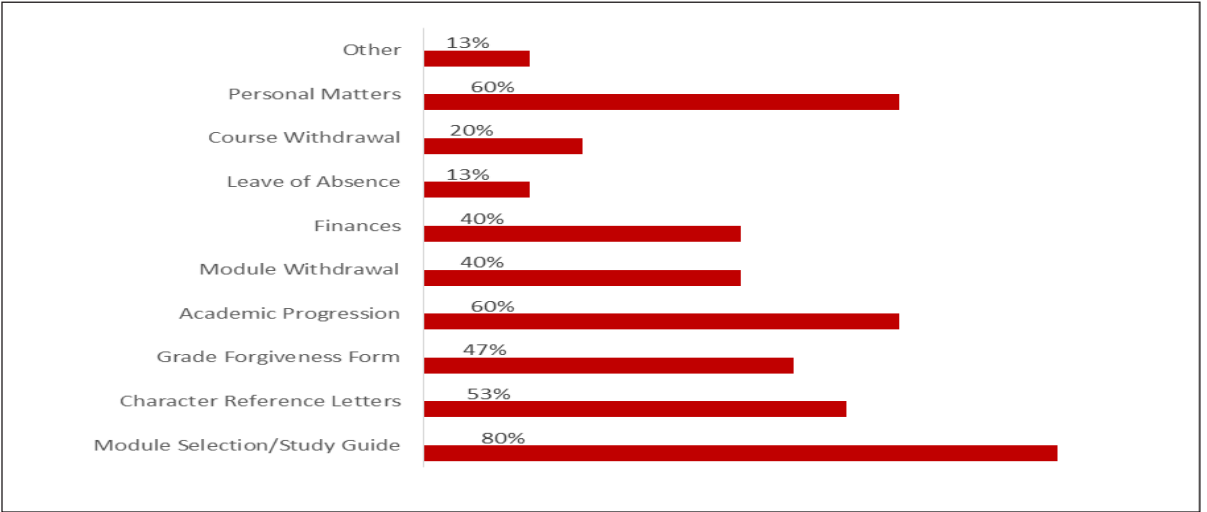
Record Form, AA05 by advisors, Figure 3., illustrates, BCS students were notably delinquent. Interestingly, 87% of advisors were familiar with the Integrated Student Administration System (ISAS), however, usage was limited. Markedly, 53% of students agreed that their academic advisement experience contributes to successful course of study completion (Thomas, 2017; Zegarra, 2019).

Student Participation in Academic Advisement

Industrial Technology advisees and advisors discussed the greatest variety of issues, primarily concerning Module/ Study/ Academic matters and administration.

Figure 4

Student Issues Brought to the Attention of Academic Advisors



This is consistent with advisor reporting depicted in Figure 4. Advisees sought counsel in course, academic, personal and financial matters. Such demands are consistent with UTech, Ja academic advisement objectives and reinforce research advancing that student engagement improves course completion rates (Pargett, 2011; Banat, 2015).

Significant Characteristics for Successful Advisement and Advisors

Study respondents appreciated specific advisement and advisor attributes, including advisors *knowing* the advisee, acknowledging their adulthood (75% plus), whilst valuing concerns, opinions, and feelings relating to key matters discussed.

Chart 2

Strengths and Weaknesses of Academic Advisors

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Good listener▪ Understanding▪ Informed▪ Approachable/Available	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Needs more time▪ Unprepared for meetings▪ Poorly structured meetings▪ No Follow up/ low interest in students

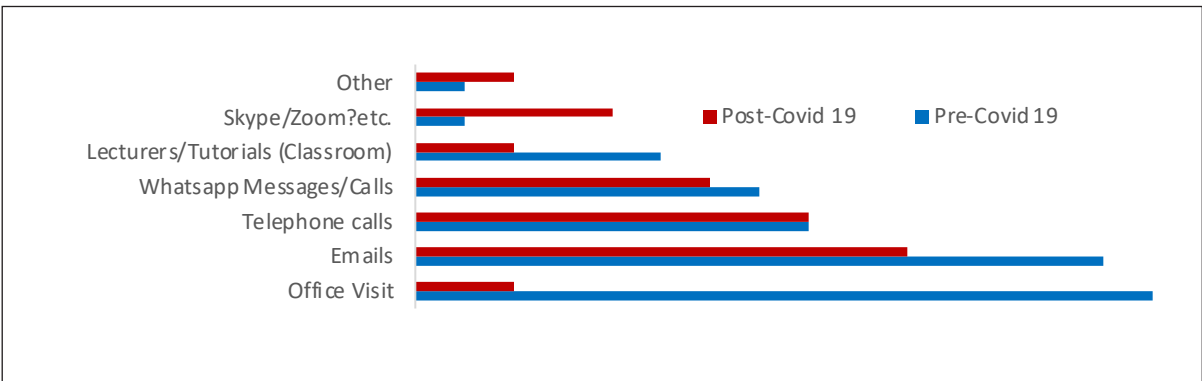
Such observations in Chart 2 are consistent with matters that predominate in other research - academic, career, and life goals (Cheung et al., 2017; Grites, 2013). Interestingly, as reflected in Chart 2, students appreciated the effective *soft skills* practised by advisors; however, this pointed to weaknesses in administrative activities. Intriguingly, 65% of respondents indicated reservations about recommending their academic advisor to fellow students.

Academic Advisement and the Covid-19 Pandemic

Whilst advisors mainly saw little change in relation to the matters which advisees sought assistance (academic, administrative, career, finance), significantly, 80% saw an increase in advisees consulted and the volume of issues raised (45%). One notable issue arose due to the Covid-19 pandemic, internet connectivity, without which accessing course modules and university services was impossible.

Figure 5

Engagement Modality for Academic Advisement (Pre- and Post- Covid-19)



Interaction however continued. Figure 5 indicates the shift toward increased use of email, messaging and video platforms.

Discussion

Prevailing research aligns with this study and highlights advisement's critical influence upon student success and institutional retention. This study elucidates that strategically institutionalizing advisement encourages advisee participation, certainly in the groups explored. Such practice likely boosts opportunities for student success. This is demonstrated by higher levels of advisor/advisee engagement amongst IT students, making it more likely that these students graduate within 4 years, when compared with BCS counterparts, (Figure 1) (Zegarra, 2019; Massey, 2018; Thomas, 2017). Overall, high levels of participation in academic advisement were found; all respondents reporting experience of advisement, including 80% utilization in academic and 60% in personal matters.

Advisees sought advice predominantly on academic/career issues followed by financial and personal matters (Figure 4); however, inconsistency in the quality of advising experienced is significant (Cuseo, 2015). Our data reflected the significance of these matters in advisor/advisee interactions, approximately 60% of advisees indicating that advisors assisted them effectively in aforementioned areas. Aligned with our findings, Young-Jones et al. (2013) pointed to the significance of quality advising practice accruing more benefit as advisees mature, thereby driving success.

Personal issues cannot be ignored as they may impact a student's ability to function and meet daily requirements of their course of study. In our investigations, though University policy points students toward counselling services in addressing personal matters (whom, in turn advisors will refer), respondents indicated a preference toward resolving issues with advisors. Advisors were recognized for ensuring availability, whilst also assisting in surmounting obstacles (60%).

As evidenced in some of the aforementioned studies, the successful performance of students in tertiary education is entrenched in strategies and approaches that target both personal and academic weaknesses with enriched communication. Notably, it is the individual circumstances that predetermine needs in advisement. In this study, advisees indicated the preponderance of both personal and financial issues. Anecdotally, these are precisely the matters that advisors state predominate; global research supports these findings (Cheung et al., 2017; Grites, 2013). Consequently, with the onset of the pandemic, the modes of communication certainly changed though issues prevailed. Whereas all advisees sought and preferred office visits prior to the pandemic; subsequently, messaging (WhatsApp) and telephone communications predominate, accounting for 60% of preferred communications.

Both academic advisement systems and advisor competencies/characteristics are important in achieving success. Study data demonstrated that over half (53%) of respondents advanced that their advisor's assisted in successful course completion. Additionally, advisees appreciated advisors *soft skills* practise. Interpersonal skills viewed positively include good listening, empathizing, and encouragement. These *soft skills* may be the key factor in enhancing student retention within the programmes studied. Inconsistencies were however apparent in administrative practice, with 70% of IT students requested to complete the record meeting documentation (form AA05) as opposed to less than 25% of BCS advisees. This is significant for *follow up* (only 45% of advisors interactions performed well here) and to resolving issues that had been initiated within advisement processes. Likewise, a little over 50% of advisors were seen as having adequate knowledge of university policies and the ISAS.

Conclusion

By no means did this study reveal a perfect advisee/advisor. Findings were consistent with wider research and many of the challenges and commonalities identified globally. Further, this research does lead to some key assertions that will likely enhance student success and course completion.

In ensuring that a meaningful advisor/advisee relationship is developed, it is suggested that academic advisement be prioritized as a significant university experience, one identified with the university's shared vision, throughout the student's tenure.

Effective communication is crucial and the seemingly smooth transition between advisors and advisees in continuing communication with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic is testament to the robustness of systems prevailing in the university. Whilst issues arose with regard to administrative functioning, the study data indicated that activities were maintained. Whilst communication modalities shifted from face-to-face to virtual and traditional forms of telecommunication, weaknesses in both institutional infrastructure and the wider national levels of internet connectivity led to reduced accessibility to learning platform(s) for students. Though a consequence, partially external, it is significant due to its capacity to halt learning interactions!

Administrative functions linked to the academic advisement process (including for advisor competencies) may be strengthened through the creation of a dedicated unit within the faculty. Whilst this centrality underlines its importance, as a function it would serve to enhance student access, consistency, and the quality of information provided to students. Consequently, reducing students' tenure to within the prescribed 4 years, which study data suggests may have been previously exceeded due to weaknesses in advisory follow-up and also unfamiliarity with ISAS features. Mitigating these compounding issues would wholly enhance advisor:advisee interactions. Tying academic advising fully into a student administrative system where mandatory meetings and *checkpoints* are programmed will assist in delivering a seamless and successful institutional journey.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

The Impact of Academic Advisement upon course of study completion rates amongst Business & Computer Studies and Industrial Technology Students at the University of Technology, Jamaica

Student Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to collect information relating to the experience of academic advisement by students pursuing a course of study within the Faculty of Education and Liberal Studies at the University of Technology, Jamaica. The information will be utilized to facilitate proposals aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of academic advisement in course of study success rates.

Please answer each item as carefully and as accurately as possible. Responses provided will be treated confidentially and anonymously. **Please do not write your name on this paper.**

Section A: Background Information

Instructions: The items in this section are designed to obtain information on your profile. Please read the items carefully then tick (✓) and write the appropriate responses where required.

1. What is your gender? Male ☐ Female ☐
2. What is your age range?

20 years & below	<input type="checkbox"/>
21 - 25 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
26 - 30 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
30 years & above	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Indicate your course of study (Please state): _____
4. Please indicate which year of study you are currently completing:

First year	<input type="checkbox"/>	Second year	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Third year	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fourth year	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Section B: Academic Advisor Assessment

Instructions: Thinking back to your interactions with your Academic Advisor, please respond to questions 5 and 6 by ticking the applicable box(es) and questions 7 – 21 by indicating your level of agreement with the statements made.

5. Please indicate how you interact with your Academic Advisor (indicate all that apply).

Office Visit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email	<input type="checkbox"/>	Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (Please state): _____

6. Indicate which issues you discussed with your Academic Advisor (indicate all that apply).

- Module Selection/ Study Guide ☐
- Character Reference Letters ☐
- Grade Forgiveness Form ☐
- Academic Progression ☐
- Module Withdrawal ☐
- Finances ☐
- Leave of Absence/ Course ☐
- Withdrawal ☐

Other (Please state): _____

Key: Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1, Disagree (D) = 2, Agree (A) = 3, and Strongly Agree (SA) = 4

My Academic Advisor...		SD	D	A	SA
7.	Knows who I am.	1	2	3	4
8.	Is a good listener	1	2	3	4
9.	Expresses an interest in me as a unique individual	1	2	3	4
10.	Respects and values my feelings and opinions	1	2	3	4
11.	Makes themselves available when I need assistance	1	2	3	4
12.	Verifies understanding of matters/points discussed	1	2	3	4
13.	Recognizes me as an adult, responsible for making my own decisions	1	2	3	4
14.	Is aware of current University policies and procedures and/or could source relevant information in discussion	1	2	3	4
15.	Encourages me to pursue an active role in pursuing my academic/career goals/professional development	1	2	3	4
16.	Assists me with making course selection decisions to enable me to progress toward my course of study objectives	1	2	3	4
17.	Considers my personal abilities, talents and interests when advising me about courses of study	1	2	3	4
18.	Assists me in developing my long-term education plan	1	2	3	4
19.	Assists me in overcoming obstacles in achieving my academic/career goals	1	2	3	4
20.	Assists me in accessing University resources/services where appropriate	1	2	3	4
21.	Takes the initiative in arranging meetings/follow up activities following discussions	1	2	3	4

Section C: Student Self-Assessment

Instructions: The following questions require either YES or NO responses. Please tick (✓) your response or provide a short explanation in the space provided.

22. As an advisee, I made appointments to meet my Academic Advisor YES ☐ NO ☐

23. I kept my appointment that I made with my Academic Advisor YES ☐ NO ☐

24. I ensured I was well prepared for my appointment with my Academic Advisor
YES ☐ NO ☐

25. Were you instructed to complete an AA5 Meeting Record form by your Academic Advisor
YES ☐ NO ☐

26. What strengths/best features does your Academic Advisor possess?

27. How might your Academic Advisor improve the quality of his/her advising?

28. Would you have any hesitation in recommending your Academic Advisor to other students?

YES ☐ NO ☐

29. Do you believe that your experience of academic advisement is assisting you in completing your course of study successfully?

YES ☐ NO ☐

30. Please suggest how the university may improve its academic advisement process. _____

Thank You for Completing this Questionnaire!

Appendix 2

Engaging Students for Success during a Pandemic: The Impact of Academic Advisement upon course of study completion rates amongst Business & Computer Studies and Industrial Technology Students at the University of Technology, Jamaica

Lecturer Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to collect information relating to the experience of academic advisement by students pursuing a course of study within the Faculty of Education and Liberal Studies at the University of Technology, Jamaica. The information will be utilized to facilitate proposals aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of academic advisement in course of study success rates, whilst also investigating the impact and demands upon lecturer activities and responsibilities, as Academic Advisor, during the Novel Coronavirus - Covid 19 pandemic.

Please answer each item as carefully and as accurately as possible. Responses provided will be treated confidentially and anonymously. **Please do not write your name on this paper.**

Section A: Background Information

Instructions: The items in this section are designed to obtain information on your profile. Please read the items carefully then tick (✓) and write the appropriate responses where required.

5. What is your gender? Male ☐ Female ☐
6. How many years of academic advisement experience have you?
 - 2 years or less ☐
 - 2 - 5 years ☐
 - 5 years plus ☐
7. How many academic advisees are you responsible for (Please state):

8. How many advisees, officially and informally do you advise each semester (Please state number)?

9. Since the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic has the number of advisees you advise increased?
Yes ☐ No ☐

Section B: Academic Advisor Assessment

Instructions: Thinking back to your interactions with your Advisees Advisees please respond to the following questions (6 – 9) by ticking the applicable box(es) adding your responses, as appropriate.

Please indicate how you regularly interacted with your Academic Advisees prior to the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic (indicate all that apply).

Office Visit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email	<input type="checkbox"/>	Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>
Whatsapp	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

(please state): _____

7. Indicate which issues you discussed with your Advisees (indicate all that apply).

Module Selection/ Study Guide	<input type="checkbox"/>
Character Reference Letters	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grade Forgiveness Form	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic Progression	<input type="checkbox"/>
Module Withdrawal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finances	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leave of Absence/Course	<input type="checkbox"/>
Withdrawa	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal Matters	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (Please state): _____

8. Please reflect upon your response to question 7. In what way(s) have you found that the emphasis upon the issues discussed with your advisees, as indicated above, has shifted since the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic? (please comment):

Thank You for Completing this Questionnaire!

Coping with Anxiety in an Unprecedented Time

Algene Maybury

Abstract

A low level of anxiety is common, as it is a healthy reaction to the unknown for most people. However, unforeseen circumstances such as a pandemic, can heighten anxiety to unhealthy levels thus impacting an individual's ability to function. Germani et al. (2020) states, "Uncertainty and instability are emotions... that generate worries about the present and future and are a source of anxiety that impacts negatively on personal and interpersonal functioning. Anxiety seems a central part of the pandemic..."(p. 1). Strategies to cope with heightened anxiety are geared towards providing a calming effect or to change focus on what is causing the anxiety. Traditionally, many chose activities such as massages, travel, or socializing, to unwind and take their minds off the general stressors in their lives. However, these options were not available for the majority of 2020. This paper discusses the strategies of exercise, meditation, and laughter, which may seem basic, but can serve the purpose of easing anxiety. These strategies do not replace therapies but could be used in conjunction with other treatments.

Key Words: anxiety, coping strategies, pandemic, exercise, meditation, laughter

Introduction

Anxiety is a typical response especially when uncertainties such as poor weather conditions, exams, and trying something new are experienced. The American Psychological Association (2021) defines anxiety as "an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes like increased blood pressure." In some instances, anxiety is heightened to the point where it impacts our ability to function typically in our established state of normalcy. For example, many students experienced heightened anxiety marked by rapid heartbeat, panic and, perhaps, unexplained emotions or changes in mood, because of changes experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The immediate move to remote learning from face-to-face classroom instruction had a tremendous impact on regular routines for both students and teachers. This was ascribed to unfamiliarity using online platforms like Zoom with teaching. Furthermore, the introduction of restrictions such as limited social gatherings, the cancellation of family holiday celebrations and traditions, curfews, and set days to visit the grocery store heightened anxiety. These restrictions were trending not only locally but worldwide. Very few living individuals had experienced such unprecedented events. As a result, the main question was how do we remain focused and adjust to the unknown? What will happen next and how do individuals remain patient and calm? However, as concerned students seek answers on how to cope, there are some common strategies to assist them with this new found experience of anxiety.

Exercise

Exercise is essential for overall wellness. However, during a crisis, when anxiety arises, one of the first stops is often to a grocery store to purchase an abundance of comfort food. Unfortunately, these foods are often high in sugar and calories. Additionally, emotional eating can lead to the gain of unwanted pounds. Therefore, exercise combined with healthier food choices helps to get rid of undesirable weight and serves to relieve anxiety. There are numerous workouts and sports activities to choose from on land, water, or virtually.

Any form of exercise is helpful to relieve anxiety. A walk, bike ride, swimming, or dance can be low intensity. High intensity options such as High-Intensity Interval Training is another option. Low intensity is best for those who are beginners or do not exercise regularly. Exercise redirects the mind to focus on positive outcomes such as relieving tension and leaving individuals feeling energized, especially after completion. Find joy in the activity that is selected; there will be motivation and willingness to continue.

If restricted to a particular area or distance, walking is an excellent choice. A brisk walk will increase the heart rate and enjoyed while listening to a playlist of favourite songs. Alternatively, strolling along a scenic route while listening to the sounds of nature will clear the mind of whatever is causing the anxiety and replace it with a more pleasant, stress-free experience. Overall, there are many positive effects of exercise that contribute to how one feels. Atkug and Demir (2020) state, exercise creates “a sense of calmness and mental relaxation” (p. 1733) as a result of the secretion of endorphins that trigger a positive feeling in the body. To maintain this feeling, Atkug and Demir recommend to try activities and continue with them at least three times per week for thirty minutes, even if not experiencing anxiety (p.1733). After a good workout and, as a daily practice, drink water to rehydrate the body. This practice helps with overall body function which leads to feeling better physically and mentally.

Meditation

Quiet reflective time helps to clear the mind but can be difficult if there is preoccupation with feeling anxious. According to Saeed et al. (2019), “It is generally agreed that mindfulness is a form of mental training that requires calming the mind” (p. 624). Meditation and mindfulness are sometimes used interchangeably. Meditation is a form of mindfulness of breathing.

Listening quietly to yourself breathe in and out promotes stillness and improves self-awareness. Using quiet time to breathe deeply has a calming effect. As an additional bonus, essential oils to the room or space for meditation. This enhances the calming effect and also activates good feelings. Choose from many forms of meditation. Behan (2020) discusses walking meditation “where the focus is on awareness of our feet in contact with the earth and grounding to the present moment” (p. 2).

Practicing yoga is another way to meditate. This allows for mindfulness while gently exercising or stretching. It also helps to ease anxiety when combined with meditation. The combination of stretching and deep breaths slows down anxiety and, in turn, reduces cortisol (stress hormone) levels. Saeed et al. (2019) concluded that “practicing yoga frequently with 40-minute sessions daily or at least once per week is associated with reductions in anxiety symptoms” (p. 622). The slow deep and intentional breaths promote calm. Closing your eyes visualizes a pleasant or happy place. Ultimately, all of the muscles in the body are relaxed, creating an incredible peace of mind. Lemay et al. (2019) hypothesized and concluded, “Yoga and meditative practices may provide a skillset to assist college students in their coping mechanisms, both in and out of the classroom” (p. 748). Many online programmes and apps are available to demonstrate different forms of meditation.

Laughter

Media coverage of the pandemic was extensive and continuous. People were attentive to television and social media sites throughout the day, watching press conferences and listening to news updates on the number of cases, deaths, and the economic impacts of COVID- 19. The Mayo Clinic (2019) found that negative thoughts manifest into chemical reactions that can affect your body by bringing more stress into your system and decreasing your immunity.... This added to anxiety because there were no solutions or signs of improvement. To minimize anxiety, view less television, turn it off, or focus on programmes that will ease the mind. According to the Mayo Clinic,

“When you start to laugh, it doesn’t just lighten the load mentally, it actually induces physical changes in your body” (p. 2). A good laugh has both short-term and long-term effects. In the short term, organs such as the heart, lungs, and muscles are stimulated. The long term outcomes of a good laugh helps to soothe tension and results in a relaxed, happy and improved mood.

Family and friends

Sharing thoughts with family and friends is an effective way to relieve anxiety as well. Isolation from friends, family, and everyday social activities leads to loneliness, especially among older people. Living alone exacerbates anxiety, fear, and feeling trapped (Ivbijaro et al., 2020, p. S395). An important factor is realizing that others are having the same or similar feeling. It is also a way of expressing feelings to get a sense of relief. Additionally, they can offer support and advice. Happy memories can be created and shared via social media if an in-person meeting is not feasible.

Conclusion

The article presented strategies which can become normal routines to cope with heightened anxiety. Therefore, when the unexpected happens, individuals are better armed to cope with anxiety. The goal is self-awareness and knowing when the anxiety is negatively impacting the body. Exercise, meditation, laughter and a support system move attention away from what is causing the anxiety and replace it with positive, calm thoughts, and feelings. The Mayo Clinic (2019) concludes, “Positive thoughts can actually release neuropeptides that help fight stress” (p. 1).

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Parallel Lessons from Climate Change and COVID-19

Amy Harvey

Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic has held a mirror to our society: exposing the cracks and blemishes of our many systems, highlighting the inequalities that exist, and revealing the disproportionate effects this disease has on definite segments of our communities. COVID- 19 is considered a global emergency mirroring another ongoing global emergency: climate change which also impacts vulnerable sectors of our populations more significantly. It makes them more at risks to hazards and less likely to be able to adapt and recover from this environmental pandemic. Many of the issues currently faced by both emergencies stem from a historical imbalance in our communities and inherent social inequalities. It is further exacerbated by a growing disconnect between the pillars of sustainability: society, economy, and the environment. If we consider the parallels and links between the two global emergencies, we may gain insight into what our focus should be in order to help our world recover and prepare for a better new normal.

Keywords: Climate Change, COVID-19, Social Inequality, Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction

Disadvantaged communities are experiencing a disparity in the impacts experienced from both climate change and COVID-19. These differences are seen not only across lower socioeconomic groups but also in race, age, and even gender. These variables are often intertwined and compounded in their effects on the response to each emergency – the emergent health (COVID-19) and the environmental (Climate Change). A 2017 study by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs mapped out how multidimensional inequalities increase the effects of climate change on these disadvantaged populations (Islam & Winkel, 2017). These populations have greater exposure, susceptibility to damages as well as poor responses to and recovery from climate hazards. As a result, these disadvantaged sectors of our community continue to have higher losses that keep them from being able to recover as well or as fast as the privileged sectors of society.

Figure 1

Three Effects of Inequality on Disadvantaged Groups (Islam & Winkel, 2017)

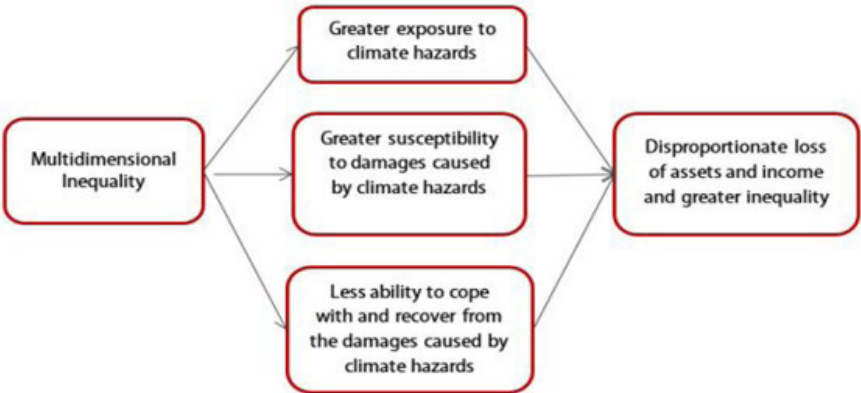


Figure 1 outlines the connections between multidimensional inequality, the effects of climate change, and the outcomes for these disadvantaged groups.

An analysis of social inequity and climate change policy actions in African countries concludes that higher social inequity resulted in less climate change policy actions. Studies specifically examined inequities in water, energy, and food security since climate change significantly impacts these three areas. The disadvantaged communities were shown to bear the burden disproportionately: climate change policy actions in water, food, and energy sectors fall around 23% for every 1% rise in the combined inequality in these sectors (Nyiwul, 2021). The previous author also identified that climate change policy actions in some countries and sectors do not benefit the poor but in fact widen the gap, further increasing their vulnerability (2021). It can be argued that these same patterns and connections studied through the lens of climate change are being witnessed as we face a global pandemic. This article will also explore the idea that social inequalities also influence how the COVID-19 virus affects disadvantaged people. These individuals are potentially more exposed and affected by the virus because their circumstances are enhanced by existing inequalities. Ultimately, there will be ramifications of the disease on all aspects of their lives, both in the short-term and the long-term. The effects of COVID-19 on these disadvantaged populations may be detrimental to their physical and/or mental health as well as to their economic stability, with environmental factors further contributing to the level of damage experienced.

Figure 2

Three Effects of Inequality on Disadvantaged Groups by COVID-19. Adapted from (Islam and Winkel, 2017) by Amy Harvey

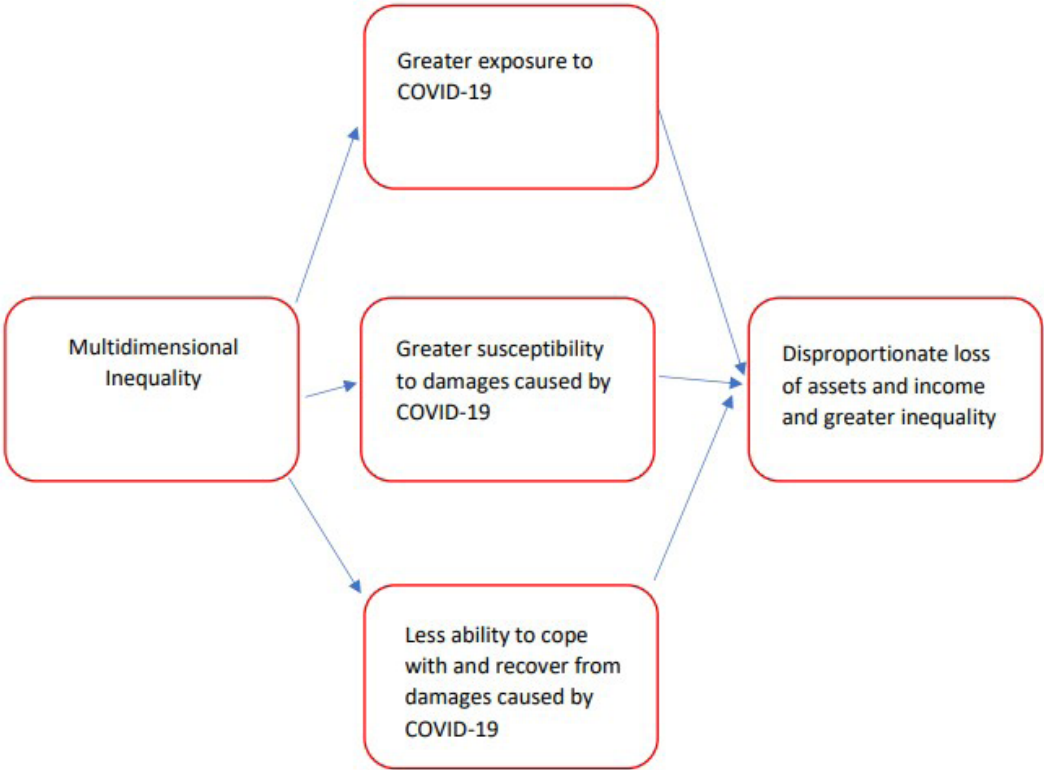


Figure 2 mirrors the connections discussed above for climate change but through the lens of COVID-19.

Exploring parallel lessons from each of these emergencies are essential to understanding the unequal outcomes enhanced by existing social inequalities. In 2015 The United Nations outlined 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with Goal 10 addressing *reduction of inequality within and among countries* (United Nations, *THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development* 2015). Recognizing these existing inequalities and the significance of how they affect the overall sustainability of our planet is important for developing realistic solutions that give fair assistance to all parts of our society. Goal 10 needs to be prioritized first by countries so that the other Sustainable Goals are actually plausible and achievable. Earth needs a healthy population with equal access to a quality of life to combat any emergency that our planet faces.

An abundance of documentation shows that climate change is affecting poorer nations more significantly. In the early part of this century, a report entitled *Poverty and Climate Change: Reducing the Vulnerability of the Poor through adaptation* detailed that climate change is affecting the poor more and that in order to meet sustainable development goals, poverty reduction is key (OECD, n.d.). These nations are being hit hard by climate change through increased weather events, lack of food security, reduced access to potable water, and increased health risks due to exposure to climate hazards.

Similarly, during COVID-19, disadvantaged communities are more vulnerable to this disease in addition to already being at risk to aforementioned environmental threats. Pandemics and their uneven effects are not new. According to historian Frank M. Snowden, “Marginalized groups have long borne a greater burden from pandemics. Considering a third wave of bubonic plague lasting from 1898 to 1910, they follow the international fault lines of inequality, poverty, and neglect” (Snowden & Graaf, 2020, p.38). Massive inequalities exist globally; if they remain unchanged, they will prevent recovery and resiliency for the disadvantaged sectors of our community.

Inequity Based on Socioeconomic Status and Race

It is undeniable that climate change is bringing extreme weather occurrences to all parts of our world. However, depending on one’s locality, it may affect individuals differently, based on their socioeconomic status and race. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (Fifth Assessment Report (AR5), 2014) noted that differential effects of climate change with respect to race are found in both developing and developed countries, although in both cases low-income status is also intertwined with race and ethnicity. In 2021, for example, winter storms in Texas came at a time when Texan communities were already vulnerable from COVID-19. Texas had approximately 9% of the US reported corona virus cases with 44,178 registered deaths (<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/usa/texas/>. Texas. 2021 February). It has been reported that the historic winter weather exacerbated pre-existing disparities like poor infrastructure and lack of resources in marginalized communities. Thus, Black and Latino communities who were disproportionately hit by COVID-19 struggled to recover from one of the worst weather events to ever hit Texas. Previous disaster response failures indicated the situation may get worse as the state thaws out (Yancey-Bragg & Jervis, 2021).

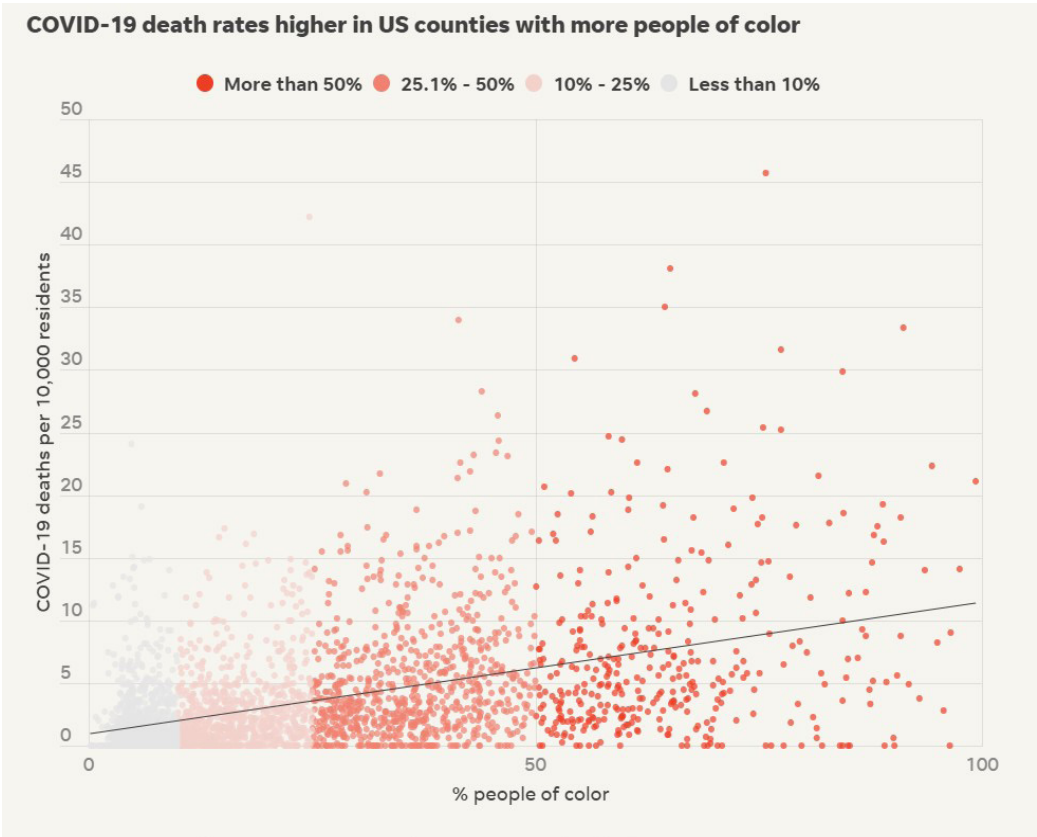
Added to the weather and Covid problems was exposure to environmental pollutants such as particulate matter (PM) that is emitted when the power plants are turned back on. Particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 microns (PM_{2.5}) is of particular concern for health risks, especially respiratory diseases. In the days before and after Hurricane Harvey in 2017, Houston’s network of petrochemical plants and refineries released millions of pounds of pollutants, raising health concerns in nearby communities (Dobbins & Tabuchi, 2021). A study conducted in 2019 by Tessum found that air pollution in the United States is not evenly distributed in terms of who is impacted by it. The researchers looked at consumption trends and found disparity in those that produced the emissions versus those that felt the burden of the pollution. This inequality was based on not just socioeconomic status but race as well. PM_{2.5} exposure is disproportionately caused by consumption of goods and services mainly by the

non-Hispanic, white majority, but disproportionately inhaled by black and Hispanic minorities. On average, non-Hispanic whites experience a *pollution advantage*: they experience 17% less air pollution exposure than is caused by their consumption. Blacks and Hispanics on average bear a ‘pollution burden’ of 56% and 63% excess exposure, respectively, relative to the exposure caused by their consumption (Tessum, 2019, 6001-6002).

Marginalized communities, not just in Texas but around the world, tend to live in industrialized areas, increasing their health risks in normal circumstances but escalating further risks during a pandemic. These disadvantaged communities tend to have houses that may not be built from materials that can withstand extreme weather conditions and simultaneously do not have the insurance to cover the damages after the fact. Similarly, these poorer communities have had limited access to resources for the fight against COVID-19. They experience barriers such as lack of testing centers, lack of insurance for medical care, as well as more exposure to the disease since the people in these communities tend to be essential workers who must work to pay bills. They have not been able to shelter in place like other socioeconomic groups. Furthermore, poorer communities tend to live in densely populated areas and in crowded, intergenerational homes – circumstances that make the spread of the disease more likely. According to surveillance data from the Centers for Disease Control on September 28, 2020, African Americans, who represent about 13.4% of the US population, comprised 18.2% of COVID-19 cases and 20.9% of deaths. Whites were underrepresented. African Americans were 3 times more likely than whites to become ill and 3.5 times more likely to die (Snowden & Graaf, 2020).

Figure 3

COVID-19 death rates higher in US counties with more people of color (Gomez et al., 2020)



SOURCE USA TODAY analysis of Census Bureau demographic data and Johns Hopkins University Covid-19 death rates as of Sept 1.

Figure 3 illustrates the positive relationship between the number of COVID-19 deaths and the percentage of people of colour affected by this disease.

This pattern is not unique to the United States. Systematic racism across many countries has made people of colour vulnerable to this disease because they have not had the same educational opportunities that could potentially put them in a better position to face COVID-19. Globally, Black, Indigenous, and other people of colour tend to live in densely populated and heavily polluted areas, putting them at further risk of not only catching the disease but also being more impacted by it. Of the 10 U.S. counties with the highest death rates from COVID-19, seven have populations where people of colour make up the majority, according to data compiled by USA TODAY (Gomez et al., 2020). This author also posits that of the top 50 counties with the highest death rates, 31 are populated mostly by people of colour (2020).

Brazil is having similar results in differences of mortality rates from COVID-19 based on socioeconomic status and existing inequalities. A study was conducted at the neighbourhood level in the Aracaju municipality, Sergipe state, Northeast Brazil. According to the study, “Geographically, the highest mortality estimates have been observed in the North and West zones, which have a large number of socio-economically deprived neighbourhoods in Aracaju” (Martins-Filho et al., 2020, p.2).

People living in socio-economically disadvantaged communities are substantially less likely to have education, adequate sanitation, access to clean water to wash hands, opportunity to work from home offices, and healthcare access (Martins-Filho et al., 2020). These poorer Brazilian communities also tend to have pre-existing conditions like hypertension and diabetes, making them more susceptible to COVID-19. Brazil has recently appealed for oxygen since the country, ironically, cannot supply its COVID-19 patients with the needed treatment despite having the Amazon forest which supplies 20% of the world’s oxygen. Marcellus Campelo, a local health secretary, said the state needed three times the amount of oxygen it can produce locally and appealed for help (Covid-19: Brazil hospitals ‘run out of oxygen’ for virus patients, as cited by *BBC*, 2021). Brazil has the second highest death tally behind the United States with respect to COVID-19. Socioeconomic disparities reduce the country’s ability to efficiently combat this disease.

Inequity based on Age

Covid-19 and Climate Change severely affect both ends of the age structure. Children and the elderly tend to be most susceptible to diseases that are often exacerbated by climate hazards such as increased temperatures and flooding. IPCC reports that flood-related mortality in Nepal among girls was twice as high as for women (13.3 per 1000 girls). The mortality rate was also higher for boys than for men (AR5 IPCC, 2014). Flooding not only causes physical damage to the homes where these children reside but also contaminates the water supply. About 361, 000 children under 5 years die because of diarrhea, resulting from inadequate access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WHO, 2017). WHO also reported that some 200,000 children under 5 die from environmental-related injuries such as drowning, falls, and poisoning. The elderly also suffers ill health effects stemming from increased flooding episodes, as well as more exposure to further climate hazards resulting from not being able to relocate. Elderly residents of Limpopo, South Africa lacked access to labour necessary to construct their houses to withstand flooding. Consequently, their dwellings suffered greater damage (as cited in Islam & Winkel, 2017).

Additionally, increased temperatures from human-induced atmospheric warming are increasing the range of pests such as mosquitoes and thus the transmission of diseases carried by this vector. Warmer temperatures can also provide more suitable environments for some infectious agents in general. “Climate change can affect the epidemiological dynamics of multiple infectious agents, including vector-borne, water-borne, and food-borne pathogens. For instance, high temperatures can change the replication, virulence, and survival of microbes; and heavier more frequent precipitation may overwhelm sanitation systems or the viability and geographical distribution of mosquitoes” (Christaki et al., 2020, p. 2).

Approximately 200, 000 deaths from malaria among children under 5 years could be prevented through environmental actions, such as reducing breeding sites of mosquitoes or covering drinking-water storage (WHO, 2017). Health responses to increased temperatures may also be due to heat stroke, which affects elderly populations. Thus, the elderly and children in poorer nations will not be able to afford amenities like air conditioners to combat increased temperatures; consequently, these individuals may suffer even more. Heatwaves have notable effects on the elderly, particularly as they are already more likely to suffer from chronic illnesses, such as coronary heart disease or respiratory diseases that can be exacerbated by heat (Islam & Winkel, 2017).

COVID-19 also affects both ends of the age structure of a population for other reasons. The elderly, who are more fragile and who may have chronic conditions, will have potentially worse outcomes from this disease if infected than will younger persons. Higher mortality rates at older ages may be associated with the increased prevalence of chronic conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and chronic respiratory disorders (Jarosz & Kaneda, 2020). Those countries with higher populations of elderly should have prepared appropriate COVID-19 responses to protect those vulnerable age groups. Italy, for example, has an ageing population and implemented social distancing measures early on to help reduce deaths to the elderly residents.

In 2020, Italy was home to some of the oldest people in the world: nearly 30% of its population was 60 years and older and nearly 4% was aged 85 and older (Jarosz & Kaneda, 2020). February 2021 reports show that most deaths from COVID-19 in Italy were in the elderly population. Of the 94.9 thousand coronavirus deaths considered in one study, more than 86% were patients aged 70 years and older (Stewart, 2021).

Figure 4

Coronavirus (COVID-19) deaths in Italy as of February 24, 2021, by age group, (Stewart, 2021)

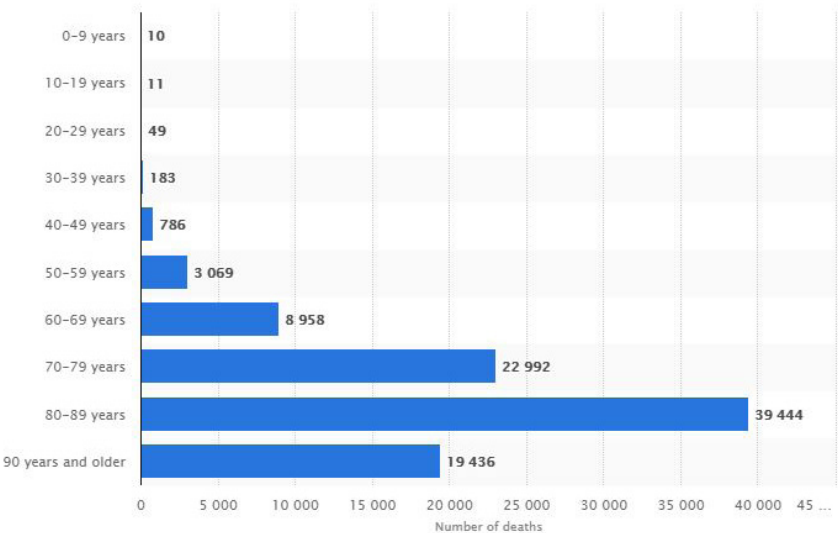


Fig 4 shows the spread of COVID-19 deaths in Italy based on age structure.

The younger population may not have high mortality rates due to COVID-19 but this disease is affecting this potentially vulnerable age group in other ways. Children in most countries have been in at least one lockdown in 2020, preventing them from going to school and socializing with their peers. They have been thrown into an unnatural environment that has affected both their physical and mental wellbeing. The COVID-19 crisis poses a substantial threat to children's mental health, physical health, and skills development, particularly if they are already disadvantaged (Yekaterina Chzhen, LSE British Politics and Policy, 2020).

It is important to note that the UK is a G7 country but has some of the highest rates of child poverty in the EU and OECD. Approximately 1 in 4 children in the UK live in income poverty (Yekaterina Chzhen, LSE British Politics and Policy, 2020). These impoverished children will be disadvantaged during the pandemic since they may not have access to the nutritional food that they usually received from the school system. Additionally, many families in lockdown will have reduced incomes and not be able to afford healthy foods which tend to be more expensive; these families are relying on cheaper processed foods. Having access to affordable nutritious food is the very basis of food security, which is under threat by both climate change and COVID-19.

In the US, though the CARES Act includes some provisions for maintaining school lunch programming and family nutritional assistance, since 2018 food insecurity has doubled among families with children (Snowden & Graaf, 2020). An added complication due to lack of nutritional food is that these families are relying on high-density calorific foods that lead to increased obesity, one of the morbidity factors that increase the severity of the individual's response to COVID-19 if contracted. Previous research has suggested that obesity, which is defined as having a body mass index (BMI) over 30 increases the risk of dying from Covid-19 by nearly 50% and being in hospital by 113% (Geddes, L., 2021).

A news article released on March 4, 2021 states that a World Obesity Federation report claims that around nine in ten COVID-19 deaths have occurred in countries with high obesity rates. This includes the UK, which has the third-highest COVID death rate in the world and the fourth-highest obesity rate (ITV News, 2021). Basically, socio-economically disadvantaged families are increasing their likelihood of becoming obese as the pandemic-induced lockdowns force sedentary lifestyles and reduced incomes lead to unhealthy diets.

Another effect from this pandemic on disadvantaged children is that they may not have access to resources needed to ensure that they are able to successfully learn in a remote setting when funding decreases as governments respond to stressed economies. In the US, 20% of the requested funding to expand building and online-learning capacity, processes, and outcomes should be carefully tracked and evaluated by local governments and school districts (Snowden & Graaf, 2020). Lack of education and access to it will only accentuate the problems for these vulnerable children and minimize their recovery from the overall effects of this pandemic.

Inequity based on Gender

Both Climate Change and COVID-19 are affecting women disproportionately around the world. Climate change, for example, is threatening water sources, making them harder to access. Typically, women and children are the ones who collect water for their families. With increasing drought, women especially must spend more time in search of clean, potable water and, therefore, have less time for other tasks. Women and children spend 200 million hours every day collecting water (Water.org, *Women and Water - A Woman's Crisis*, n.d.).

COVID-19 is also making life difficult for women in a manner that may have future repercussions on their careers. Women who do not have the same opportunity as men to succeed in the workforce under these current pandemic working conditions will see their career advancement stifled. Often the burden of household chores and homeschooling falls on women who are also having to work themselves. A recent study on publishing rates by

women during 2020 suggests that there is gender bias in what is being produced and published in scientific journals (Ribarovska et al., 2021). More research must be done. Furthermore, there were some inferences that there could be a shift in publications to countries that did not have as many women scientists (Ribarovska et al., 2021). However, an alternative explanation lies in increased care-giver responsibilities falling to women as childcare and schools below the tertiary level have closed and children have required home-schooling and full-time care (Ribarovska et al., 2021). Further studies should be conducted investigating pandemic-induced changes to lifestyle for women in the workforce and the possible effects on career progression.

Conclusion

The overarching parallel lesson that can be learned from both the Climate Change and COVID-19 emergencies is that we have a world that has multifaceted inequalities that compound the direct and indirect problems associated with each event. The solution for countries going forward is to address the SDG 10 immediately by striving for systems based on equality. We need our communities to have equal and fair access to a good quality of life that will not overburden the planet. This quality of life needs to be attained through sustainable behaviours that make sense and do not increase the gaps.

To close the gaps that inequality creates, governments need to focus on education which will drive empowerment and provide disadvantaged groups with more tools to participate in global solutions more fairly and sustainably. Countries with educational curricula that build on the concepts of sustainability while adopting holistic and inclusive approaches will thrive. Education will empower governments as well allowing them to make more sound policies that help all of their citizens. Empowerment through education will create populations who are prepared and resilient to any emergency they face.

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Art and Activism: Implications for Art Education in a Twenty-first Century Colony

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Abstract

The art component in the chaotic intersections of 2020 cannot be ignored. The expressive outputs of thoughts and feelings that are relevant first-person accounts in the struggle against oppression are also valuable markers that illuminate historical timelines. How reflective are these situations, and what can be derived from these moments? What do the happenings of these times mean for art educators, students, and fellow artists in one's community? This article advocates the creation of art as a viable medium to respond to felt life experiences. This article is also intended to encourage both educators and students, on their own artistic paths, to consider approaches to the subject of race made by artists connected with Bermuda - as artists who share their space and place in this 21st century colony.

Keywords: Art, activism, race, Bermuda

Introduction

The discourse of the role of art as a part of public protest actions and other revolutionary efforts to achieve societal change is a recurring one in art education. There was a resurgence with the civil unrest of the summer of 2020 when, within the stressed environment of a world-wide pandemic, simmering racial tensions exploded in the United States. Visual art tributes assisted in bringing together global support against racial oppression. As younger, wealthier, and greater numbers of people openly added their voice to the resistance of offensive and unequal treatment based on race (Buchanon, et al., 2020), universities and museums, on both sides of the Atlantic, were quickly developing interdisciplinary modules and projects that addressed art and activism (Suwito, 2020).

Certainly, artistic interest in racial themes is due to a sense of shared consciousness and existential inquiry, and it ensures both a connection with contemporary affairs and collaboration with activists. As such, this discourse is not limited by geographic location and population size. Implications of relevance is particularly applicable to art education in Bermuda.

Bermuda has a racial legacy as an active participant in the Atlantic World history of displacement, subjugation, resistance, and reform. This is prominently highlighted by economic and social disparities, with historical markers such as the publication of the slave narrative of Mary Prince (Prince, 1831), and more recently, the overwhelming participation by a cross-section of the island's population in the Black Lives Matter March.

There are not many artists with connections to Bermuda who have overtly addressed racial themes in their work. Nevertheless, individuals and instances addressing race visually to foster discussion and positive changes, can be found. Importantly, relevant considerations applicable to an ongoing refinement of culturally-responsive teaching can be extracted from the lived experience and perspectives of those artists who have explored race. The ensuing information will highlight several of these experiences and perceptions.

Shared Identities and Experience

Art education provides learning opportunities that enable students to develop their critical thinking, curiosity, resourcefulness, and collaboration skills to make necessary connections and to seek creative solutions for problems.

It engages and nurtures student minds, hearts, and abilities (Sousa & Pilecki, 2013). In ideal situations, these opportunities are meaningful experiences and lead to more than the learning of cultural heritage, the preparation for employment in creative fields, and the creation of marvelous imagery.

Art education is also a route to enable students to learn of themselves and the responsibility of participating and contributing to their society. This endeavor is made more relevant and impactful when art educators are seen to embody this interest and aspiration. As lifelong learners themselves, teachers are aware that of all that transpires in the interaction of the course of study, the attention, relatability, and trust they receive may be established solely on perceived shared identities.

Dame Jennifer Smith, in regarding her teacher, artist and art educator, Charles Lloyd Tucker, emphasized that he was normal (Osuna-Diaz, 2009, Video). As a child, she was astonished to learn that he did ordinary things and was known by her family. Furthermore, he was one who produced art and depicted realities with which she was familiar. In essence, beyond sharing her interest in art, he shared her space and place, thus becoming relatable. This briefly stated recollection reveals recognition of a life in a place and time with divisions and mores that would certainly include the racial component. It was symbolic of wider Bermuda.

While acknowledging that an impact on student's lives and learning may be realized by their physical presence alone, shared identity and artistic interest, although advantageous, is not sufficient. Art educators must be strategic and intentional - leading to student engagement (hooks, 2009). Learning is effectively achieved when the parties are communicating and there is trust in each other.

Dialogue must occur. In the sharing, the effective art teacher would relate not only the experiences of other relevant artists but also their own lived experience. By incorporating into communications and presentations personal stories of facing oppressive realities based on racial treatment, the teacher should aim to be seen as an invested facilitator also facing and learning life lessons. This was an ideal hoped for by the Progressive Group in their 'Analysis of Bermuda's Social Problems' (The Progressive Group, 1958).

This role is not easy for the art teacher. Letting students know one's feelings and positions on matters is an exposure that can make one vulnerable, but can also lead to rewarding trustworthy relationships that will, in turn, build relationships and benefit both parties (Terronez, 2017). The aim is a mutual understanding that while times change, [the] struggles associated with social integration have not; art should challenge and reward the human spirit (Chapman, 1978). Felt experiences often provide strong stimulation, leading to genuine expression and personal fulfillment.

Sharon Muhammad (formerly known as Sharon Wilson) is Bermuda's most outspoken artist on the transformative role of art and art education on personal perspectives. She is an embodiment of intentional and revolutionary engagement. She acknowledges the impact of shared identities and makes opportunities to share her perspective and its influencing factors. Muhammad readily states that she came to realize the power of imagery in an amazing personal discovery when, as a young person, she noted the absence of Black people in works of art that she saw. She explains how this invisibility had a major impact on both her life and work - recently celebrated by the Bermuda Arts Council as a legacy of uplifting black identity and narratives. While she remains engaged in the personal struggle to identify herself and how she desires to be perceived, she wants her community to recognize the "social, spiritual and psychological effects which imagery has on our lives" (Muhammad, 2020). Furthermore, she seeks to enable successive generations of Black Bermudians to also produce inclusive, uplifting imagery of their humanity. Muhammad sees this production as a healing activity as she desires for them to proudly see themselves depicted in the beautiful ordinariness of their lives and not to blindly assimilate the imagery and trends of the prevailing Eurocentric standard (2020).

Included in the next generation of artists who share the passion for stories and uplifting imagery that counter prejudice and discrimination based on race within this British colony is contemporary photographer Jayde Gibbons. Posting as Queendom Heights, she too documents and inserts into the community's visual consciousness the humanity of the Black population, and Black men in particular. In her work, individuals of all ages appear in an honest reality, alone and in company, candid and posed, rugged and fashionable. She shares this space and place, making ordinary daily experiences extraordinary simply by providing an exposure of the overlooked (Queendom Heights, 2020). The isolated moments place attention on identity and allows community members to see themselves as significant in a home where many feel otherwise.

A Legitimate Response

Art educators must have their students see the use of art as a medium to express their feelings and to seek societal change as an important and legitimate response. For some artists and art critics, this focus is the actual job of the artist - to be an agent for change. Certainly, resistance and conflict have always been factors in generating art (Dewey, 1934). Furthermore, the message and content of art, as with lived experience, is not limited to the positive and pretty or to an established perspective. Imagery has been used extensively in Western art by individual artists in causes such as protesting wars, i.e. Picasso's *Guernica* (Hunter, et.al, 2005, p. 224), to artist groups protesting sexism and racism within the art world (Guerilla Girls, 2020).

Mixed media artist, Calix Smith, (also known by the moniker NOBODY) an artist with a self-proclaimed socio-political agenda, is one who is disturbed by what he sees as the lack of activism in Bermudian art. He would like to see more. He questions why there remains a resistance to addressing Bermuda's ongoing racial tensions, with artists preferring to depict paradise, in a *collective culture of avoidance*. For him, avoidance, and the fear of offending, actually serves to perpetuate the existing status quo (Smith, 2018).

Smith's perspective is an indictment. While addressing race has actually been the content and major theme in the work of many Black American artists, this has not been the case in Bermuda. Into post-segregation, life for Bermuda's Black population did not provide the luxury of fine art expression and exhibition. Furthermore, the branding of the island as a paradise offered no encouragement for public discourse on their perspectives or the oppression of racism. Regardless, these impediments no longer serve as excuses for addressing the legacy of racial oppression and contemporary prejudice and discrimination. Additionally, students must be taught that each first-person account is a visual marker of historical value that can illuminate the timelines. No one else can tell the individual student's perspective. Today's creations and commentary benefit others tomorrow (Moniz, 2009).

However, according to Bill (Mussy) Ming, artists must be allowed to self-classify. Artists must determine their own interests and focus of their work. This sculptor and mixed-media artist, stresses that while he is a Black artist, his art is not limited to however being a Black artist may be defined. For him, artists must choose their own labels and not accept categorization and the expectations that accompany it. His art is informed and shaped by his upbringing on-island but also by his African heritage and the influence of life in the U.K. His interest is in healing and honesty and a desire to be frank about the human experience (Ming, 2013).

Art students, while encouraged to have passion and meaning in their work, must be made aware that when choosing to create activist work, these works are legitimate responses no matter how they are received. As artists address felt prejudice and discrimination, in turn they run the risk of offending. Their differing perspectives can bring controversy and result in pushback and difficult choices to be made. However, art is no crime and it is every artist's responsibility to make art that is meaningful (Neshat, 2010).

Manuel Palacio, an outspoken resident artist who addressed racial tensions often and who had never shied away

from controversial content, temporarily chose to turn away from his oeuvre to other subject matter. He produced a body of work that intentionally pandered to commercialism. Entitled, *Bermuda Point of View*, this exhibition was an unabashedly commercial venture featuring Impressionist landscapes “with paint spread like icing” and an iconic display that would be the “best show in Bermuda” (Hill, 2011). The exhibition met with mixed reviews. Palacio returned to his passion, initiating conversations on race and other social themes, and for some, his work continued to offend.

While there are many artists who have left the island for employment and education opportunities and who have benefitted from the effect on perspective that only distance can provide, for popular ceramicist and sculptor, Carlos Dowling, who depended on his art for his living, the decision to leave his home country was one he felt he was forced to make. After the installation of his large commissioned bronze sculpture, *Sally Bassett, Pregnant with the Spirit of Liberty* in 2008 (Hill, 2009), pending works were cancelled and no further commissions were received. In a conversation with Dowling, this change came as a surprise to him. He considers his sculpture, incidentally, Bermuda’s first memorial to a slave, as the one which he is most proud of in his artistic career. Dowling simply says, “The phone stopped ringing” (Dowling, 2009). As a matter of survival, Dowling left Bermuda, eventually settling in Virginia.

Freedom for Experimentation

Despite the low numbers of artists who have addressed race overtly in this community, those who have and continue to do so employ a variety of media and with the full range of possibilities between representation and abstraction. Art educators must encourage student experimentation with a wide variety of approaches, materials and media as well.

During the *Black Lives Matter March*, June 7, 2020, in Bermuda (Bell, 2020), photographer Meredith Andrews (peacefulartprotest, 2020) captured the image of one adult black male standing with a raised clenched fist against a clear blue sky. The iconic image, reminiscent of civil rights protest imagery from the United States in the 1960s, is a bold powerful statement. Andrews’ use of a photographic representation of the symbolic gesture is immediately a strong and clear salute to both human rights and Black power and is a faithful documentation of an event. Incidentally, the image was later reproduced as a mural in the city of Hamilton.

Hodgson (1989) in a review of the works of artist Charles Lloyd Tucker reveals that, although he is known for his representational work, he experimented much with a wide variety of modernist techniques and media. One will also observe that he relied on distorted and exaggerated forms in his sculptures and with his famous painting *Storm in a Teacup*. In this painting, gently curling and rising steam became dancing, unrestrained people of colour, eclipsing the teacup from which they emerged. With this coded imagery, Tucker responded mockingly to a dismissive statement by a prominent member of the oligarchy, while referencing the 1959 Theatre Boycott.

Other Bermudian artists have also found the use of partially abstracted forms to be advantageous in communicating messages on racial issues. Sculptor Chesley Trott’s use of minimal detail in his bronze sculpture *When Voices Rise* (Trott, 2009) successfully and artistically references picketing activists. Robert Bassett’s loose abstraction in his paintings gave him the artistic freedom to portray his Black subjects as expressive and memorable beings (Hardy, 2015). Calix Smith’s boldly contoured and distorted figures, at times with text, strategic layering, and juxtapositions, make provocative imagery. His installations and paintings, often in search of African roots, challenge audiences to confront uncomfortable realities, to ask questions, and to leave the space with an intention of finding answers for themselves (Simmons, 2015).

Lewis (1998), a pioneer black abstractionist (and little known by many locals as having Bermudian parentage) was

a representational painter before moving towards full abstraction. Initially, he painted figuratively to portray the struggle for existence his Harlem community shared. Increasingly, he came to see this style as *a waste of time* and not meeting his desire of benefitting his community. Abstraction brought for him self-discovery and the belief that the drive to capture personal feelings and emotions leads one away from literal depictions of troubled conditions. Remarkably, his later work, with pure abstractions including splashes of color and rhythmic markings, continued to evoke the daily activity of the Black community and reveal his social interest. He remained an ardent activist for Black equality and inclusion but he chose to participate in activism with his presence rather than in his art - notably, founding schools and galleries for Black artists and demonstrating against injustices - even picketing alone on occasion.

Contemporary mixed-media artist Hassell (2020) works predominantly with collage on paper. To this she adds painted elements and found materials. Her works, mostly figurative, are imaginative, colourful and textured compositions that often display fashionable, poised, and self-assured young Black females. Thus, Hassell's art is at once experimental and also a confident, overt celebration of life as a young Black female. As a part of her latest exhibition, *I Am Because You Are*, she includes mixed-media portraits in which she has reimagined the identities of enslaved Bermudians. With a postcolonial gaze, she depicts individuals not with the slave label but as persons of means with comfortable lives. Her emphasis on Black identity came into focus during her studies abroad. She says, "In Bermuda, I was very much unaware of what my blackness meant in the world because Bermuda is predominantly Black" (Hassell, 2020). Her comment is reminiscent of that by Robert Barritt who years earlier stated, "When you are here you are in it and part of it, and it is hard to get an objective view of what's going on" (Moniz, 2009).

Conclusion

What information can be extracted from the lived experience and perspectives of artists connected with Bermuda who have already explored racial themes? The following qualitative points summarize relevant observations and considerations. These will assist art educators as they take advantage of intersections, such as the present intersection of race, education, and art, to refine their pedagogical approach to this discourse:

- Teachers must recognize the need for intentionality, to have students value and appreciate their own point of view. As artists not of European descent entered the art-world locally, some of their work revealed new interests and points of view including visual responses to non-representation, misrepresentation, and unfair treatment based on race.
- Teachers must be aware that the presence and work of home-grown artists and art educators can be seen as inspirational for those who perceive a shared identity with them.
- Teachers should be willing to be relational and vulnerable, sharing their own lived experiences, feelings and position as invested facilitators also facing and learning life lessons.
- Art is a first-person expression. It provides critical communication that has value for both present and future audiences.
- There are artists who believe that overt activist art is lacking and needed. There is also pushback by some artists to labels such as Black artist and to accompanying expectations that their work is to represent a culture of the racially oppressed, mostly producing expressions of affectedness.
- Artists must be comfortable in their perspective and choices of art directions and themes, staying true to their inspiration and passion. Despite unfavourable reception at times, artists who have addressed racial themes in their work achieved personal satisfaction and fulfillment in doing so and have not expressed

regret. Teachers must encourage both honest heart-felt expression and involvement in activism beyond their visual statements.

- Sameness kills. Students must be encouraged to experiment with a variety of approaches, media, and materials to best convey their unique statements.
- The future looks brighter for activist art. Emerging artists who choose to address the legacy of race in Bermuda in their work are receiving rave reviews and overwhelming support. This reception by prominent cultural institutions and wider audiences exposes a growing interest in art that serves as a fresh voice, exploring difficult subjects and seeking social change.

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Education Proper

Wolde Selassie

Abstract

Analyzing the impact of the Civil Rights Movement and the Post-civil Rights era, this article will attempt to delineate how marches and protests, while highlighting political and social injustices, do not holistically advance ideals of egalitarianism and cultural empowerment. It will discuss how an authentic Multi-cultural Education and honest socialization may be the catalyst for an inclusive egalitarian society that systemically diminishes the discriminatory practices and hostilities that have necessitated the expansion of the Black Lives Matter crusades.

Keywords: Egalitarianism, Civil Rights Movement, Post-civil Rights, Multi-cultural Education

Introduction

Egalitarianism is a word that has populated the vocabulary of modern social activists. It is used as a punch for distributive justice and social inequity and translates into an ideal that all people are dignified humans and must be respected as such. Gosepath (2011) clarifies that egalitarianism is not a disapproval of individual achievements or a comparison of individual acquisitions. Pure egalitarianism, as a socio-political model, maintains a moral baseline for equitable education that allows all humans to achieve a good life based on the moral and judicious applications of knowledge, and skills. Miller (2017) supports stating that the social context for egalitarianism is a moral baseline that systemically regulates equitable education. Within this scope, any inequities indicate a flaw in the systemic regulations.

One can infer from the above that egalitarianism (Z) is upheld if, and only if there is equitable education (X) and systemic moral justice (Y) for all citizens. In essence $\leftrightarrow X \blacktriangle Y$. This formula became the blueprint for the Civil Rights Movement.

Civil Rights Movement

The vigour of the civil rights campaign began with the formation of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP). Janken (2019) states that the NAACP, organised in 1910, tirelessly advocated for quality education and distributive justice for Blacks, and other minorities. For over forty years, the NAACP was the most influential civil rights agency in politics and maintained that position until the mid 1950s culminating with the landmark victory *Brown V Board of Education* 1954. Another author supports the above asserting the NAACP, with its network of social activists, cultivated public awareness of social inequities with organised community campaigns and influential legal documents (Morris, 1984).

Organised in 1957, the birth of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) provided the NAACP with a veracious partner in the civil rights campaign. Bowers (2017) writes that, during the Civil Rights Movement, the collaboration of the SCLC with the NAACP changed the course of American history. Fairclough (1977) supports stating the effectiveness of the SCLC was the implementation of a pragmatic religious campaign that defended the

moral legitimacy of the NAACP crusade. The leaders utilized dynamic tactical skills and political sophistication to expose racist policies as an international problem. Another author states that the SCLC leaders injected a new energy in the egalitarian struggle. Their educational background and magnetic personalities coupled with their articulate speeches and robust tactics garnered international recognition. The resultant was Dr. M.L. King and the SCLC leaders emerging as the face of the Civil Rights Movement (Morris, 1984).

One cannot dis-regard the efforts of Malcolm X (El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) who emerged as one of the most articulate advocates for civil rights. Many speak of Malcolm as a prolific contributor to the international civil rights campaign. Harper (1971) says Malcolm's transparent and uncomplicated speeches, searing the minds of people across the spectrum, influenced many civil right leaders and student activists. Research, supporting the above, speaks of Malcolm as a brilliant example of eloquence and his resolute calls for collective consciousness affected substantive social change by redefining self-empowerment and civil liberties (Terrill, 2007). Another scholar indicated that Malcolm's call for human rights and collective unity for Blacks loosened the civil rights liberalism and embraced a nationalistic agenda for education. This philosophy appealed to a proletariat who rejected the political methodology of the SCLC (Taylor, 2003).

Collectively, the above-mentioned crusades encompassed the Civil Rights Movement. People of colour benefitted from the ensuing Civil Rights Legislation and Blacks were finally acquiring some reprieve from a system of overt racism, and the associated hostilities.

Black Lives Matter

Today, many Blacks and other minorities are now commanding glamorous profiles on stage and in the cinemas. Blacks command positions as Professors, Educators, Senators, Congressmen, Police Chiefs, as well as Generals in the Armed Forces. Under the leadership of the 44th President of the United States, many Blacks were elevated to key positions. However, there remains a necessitation for marching and protesting for civil freedoms and social justice for Black people who, in large numbers, continue to be abused, imprisoned or killed. It defies rational logic that marches for civil liberties continue to be so phenomenally essential in societies that boast numerous high-profile African descendants in key-decision-making positions.

- Why are African descendants continually being victimized with abuse and imprisonment or being killed? Why do African descendants continue to rely on Europeans for social equities and substantive education reform?

The answers may lay in the strategic social restructuring during the Post-civil Rights era.

Post Civil Rights

After the assassinations of Malcolm X (1965) and Dr. King (1968), there was a void within the intellectual strategy and oratory eloquence of the Civil Rights Movement; this crippled the momentum of the crusade. One researcher explains that the assassinations cemented the message that political and social activism leads to the unexpected horrific death of the community leaders. Accordingly, the assassinations momentarily paused civil rights activism (Sokol, 2018). The pause created the void which provided a major opportunity for the White legislators and political think-tanks to strategize and employ new tactics that would retain their political superiority. Education was the predominant discussion.

There were two models of education for consideration: The *Integration Model* and the *Separatist Model*. Integration

advocated participation as equals in a Eurocentric dominated regime which entails being educated with the established curricula. Conversely, separatism advocated building self-regulated schools that heralded curricula that accommodated the cultural and social needs of Blacks, without the influence of Eurocentric ideology. In actuality, both models held true to the rudiments of Science, Mathematics, and Language; however, the Separatist Model, sympathetic with the OAAU (1964), would have boasted curricula that aligned with historical truths of African Culture and would have provided lessons that celebrated African contributions to Philosophy, Technology, and Social Science. Blackpast (2007) states that the OAAU philosophy posited employing qualified educators who are armed with a vast knowledge of African dignity and sophistication. These educators would charter a course to liberate the mindset of Black students as well as cultivate leaders who intellectually embraced and celebrated the inherent nobility of Black people.

The vast majority of Whites held massive disdain for both ideals; nevertheless, economically, it was imperative to mollify the Blacks. Holding that it is easier to control and manipulate a group that assimilates into the predominant culture, separatism was rejected as being overly radical and divisive. Moreover, separatism would also maim the profits from Black labour. The majority of Black leaders also supported integration surmising that being educated within the paradigm of the existing curricula promoted equal standing within the community. On the surface, the desegregation of schools was a massive victory for the Civil Rights Movement. Correspondingly, Black scholars began to enroll in White dominated schools and universities. In response, leaders of the integrated and *coloured schools* systematically facilitated programme alignment with the dominant curricula. This process provided *academic accreditation* for the schools.

At the risk of being dismissed as a paranoid conspiracy theory, I suggest the advancement of the *Integration Model* has been problematic because social inequity and second-class citizenship were strategically and deliberately entrenched in the prevailing curricula. Let us review.

The Social Contract

To analyze a system that has successfully perpetuated social inequities, one has to examine the prevailing *Social Contract*. To simplify, a Social Contract is an agreement by all citizens to morally comply with the fundamental social rules, laws, and principles outlined by the political system. On the surface, the contract renders equality and protection for all members of society. However, during the integration model, the term *morally comply* was used to justify and endorse education and social reforms that benefitted only the White members of society. One theorist explains the contract, as a political construct, was designed to uphold the goals and ambitions of a distinctly identified assemblage. An underlying addendum ensured only this assemblage (the White race) was granted socio-political power. The addendum continues to safeguard policies and laws designed to benefit Whites as well as safeguards Euro-values for social advancement. Accordingly, the majority of Blacks, oblivious of African sophistication, embraced Eurocentric models as the exemplar for education (Mills, 1997).

Within the integration model, a network of education facilities consistently indoctrinated students with models of euro-supremacy that celebrated Whites as the *masters* of the Universe. Although some Blacks escaped the claws of eurocentrism, the vast majority of successful Blacks assisted with the propagation of euro-values in order to protect their perceived social standing. One author states that the Civil Rights Movement was brilliant in advancing legislative policies against overt racism but did little to eradicate the effects of discriminatory education. Thus, the mindset of Blacks was shaped by the educational institutions that systematically developed self-destructive and self-restrictive insecurities for African descendants. Methodically, as part of the overall systemic plan, both White, and Black administrators advanced eurocentrism while holding massive disdain for any deviance from the presiding rules (Loury, 1998). Another research supports the above and explains although the Civil Rights Act

(1964) dismantled many discriminatory barriers, the newly integrated school system utilised harsh disciplinary policies and biased curricula that methodically pushed Blacks and minorities out of the classroom and into the street and, by default, into the criminal justice system (John & Jones-Castro, 2016). In essence, the application of integrated schools has been disadvantageous for Blacks.

Problems Inhibiting Blacks

Loss of Self-respect.

Self-respect is vital for maintaining moral honour and stability. Dillon (2018) concludes that self-respect correlates with confidence, dignity, and pride. When self-respect is lost, there is a struggle to retain it and, in many instances, the struggle precipitates shame, resentment, aggression, self-abuse, and social abnormalities.

Lack of Self-love

Self-love is just as important as self-respect. Some hold that self-love can be emotionally narcissist. Helm (2017) disagrees saying self-love, as an emotion proper, evokes a cognitive rationality that promotes calm action-influencing processes. Another research agrees that self-love evaluates and motivates underlying cognitive mechanisms that stimulate structured and rational achievements (Salmella & Nagatsu, 2016).

Relevance

The above essential values of *self-esteem* were overlooked for generations and many have contributed to this dialogue. One writer contends that years of inculcation with erroneous curricula will eventually create a social class that does not value, respect, or love its intrinsic ancestral culture; a social class that finds it difficult to succeed within its cultural paradigm (Deweese-Boyd, 2021). An older critique on education remains very relevant today. The author posited that the existing institutions earmarked holistic education as a White privilege and only trained Blacks to adhere to what society wanted them to be. Thus, Blacks remain unequally yoked in the socio-political environment. The author recommended in Chapter Six that all existing Black schools must culturally develop and train students to embrace self-development as social equals while preserving the tenets of ancestral pride (Dubois, 1903). One may extrapolate that, from the dawn of the twentieth century, curricula were not encouraging self-respect, self-love, and self-actualisation for Blacks.

Effects of Irresponsible Education

Although causation is difficult to prove, it is not unreasonable to state that, in the absence of a sustained positive imagery, children and adults become psychologically and subconsciously aligned with the negative imagery, and act accordingly. For some, it cultivates a superiority syndrome that rationalises and justifies distrust and hostilities. For others, it cultivates an inferiority syndrome of antipathy and low self-esteem that also justifies distrust, and hostilities. One writer states that the core of the Brown victory (1954) was human dignity and racial equality. However, the public education curricula have not debunked white superiority and, consequently, the psychological effects of racism remain a generational challenge for everyone (Rush, 2010).

Consider how current curricula consistently idolise White accomplishments in all spectrums of human activity while denigrating and shaming the global accomplishments of people of colour. Hence, White superiority is inculcated in schools and accepted as truths that are reinforced with examinations. The de facto bigotry in curricula is particularly harmful to the psyche of Black people. Although standing tall and speaking eloquently, we struggle with a subconsciousness that submits or over-reacts to the symbols and ideology of eurocentrism; a process that stagnates ancestral pride and social transformation for many Blacks. This is the fundamental problem.

A distinguished advocate described the problem as *Double Consciousness*. The theory in Chapter One defined how a peculiar double consciousness was formed when Blacks subconsciously viewed themselves through the condescending eyes of racism. One half of the soul aligned with the negative inferior misrepresentations indoctrinated during childhood and the other half attempted to nurture self-worth and nobility. Within one dark body, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled ideals that ultimately produced a psyche of self-doubt that generated hypocritical pontification and mis-guided social values that venerated eurocentrism (Dubois, 1903). Standards of social conduct, according to another writer, correlate with and are intricately connected to childhood socialization and education because, collectively, both form the world view of an individual, or a group. If the socialization and education are culturally negative, self-worth and ancestral pride will be exacerbated (Arneson, 1997). Afrocentric values, that addressed the self-empowerment cultural needs of Blacks, were never incorporated into the prevailing pedagogical theorem. Children and adults were, and continue to be, socialised with images that systematically celebrated Whiteness as the supreme mindset. Consequently, generations evolved that instinctively depended on Whites for universal freedoms, and distributive justice.

In review, one may reasonably assert that the *Integration Model* has been used to sustain a subordinate ethnic cleavage with erroneous pedagogy that excluded Black voices, denigrated dark complexions, and promoted White supremacy. Within de-segregation, obscured racism was upheld within an orchestrated complex system that ultimately inhibited Black Consciousness, social equity, and distributive justice. It is also reasonable to state that the above is the nucleus for the discriminatory practices and hostilities that necessitated the expansion of the *Black Lives Matter* crusades. However, there is a viable tool that may systematically rectify and reconcile the above-mentioned social obstacles. It is called Multi-Cultural Education.

Multi-cultural Education

There are many journals and articles that speak against Multi-cultural Education programmes. Some authors are cautious on the viability of Multi-cultural Education as a solution for cultural insecurities. Quite a few argue that many educators are strongly attached to current programmes and this will undermine the effect of Multi-cultural Education. Others hold that a Multi-cultural Education agenda is contradictory to the current *cultural capitol* programmes adopted by schools. OFSTED (2019) states that a focus on *cultural capitol* in the classroom trains students to understand a wide range of cultures. The students are able to intelligently discuss the merits, principles, and values of cultural paradigms. The programme enhances community social standing, builds character, and creates broad-minded global citizens.

Nevertheless, there are critics who state cultural capitol agendas in education place too much emphasis on social culture declaring this affects participation and examination results. Thompson (2016) states most Cultural Capitol programmes focus on the dominance of middle-class culture in social institutes and does not acknowledge underachievement as a flaw in education. Accordingly, if you are middle-class, you are more likely to succeed and thus middle-class is defined as culturally superior. This process continues to marginalize and categorize students which leads to the underachievement of competent children in the education system.

A Multi-cultural Education differs from the above. The curricula are not influenced by *social status or cultural paradigms*. Success is not based on examination results. Instead, Multi-cultural Education, as honest transparent curricula, culturally and intellectually empowers all students during all levels of education. The agenda is designed to systematically train students to metacognitively analyse and discuss *Cultural Universal Truths* in all subject matters. This is essential for the equitable development of diverse communities.

Sleeter (1996) submits schools and colleges continue to produce culturally illiterate students because the current programmes concentrate on the superficial cultural aspects of performing arts, culinary arts or social status. An

authentic Multi-cultural Education focuses on *Social Reconstructionist* ideals that teach directly on ancestry nobility, political and economic oppression, discrimination practices, and positive social action. This pathway will provide students with the mindset to sustain an intellectual resistance to oppressive relationships and inequalities. Another author deduces that educators will inspire the creative aspirations of future generations by celebrating the relevant African contributions to *Science, Technology, and Innovations*. This will build confidence and pride in ancestral connections (Mayhunga, 2017).

The theory of Multi-cultural Education can be applied during any course of study. It is not a *stand-alone course* or a specific *lesson module*. The programme augments studies in every discipline; however, it is more dominant in Social Science, History, and Communication Arts. Of course, to empower students, educators are required to conduct a metacognitive research outside of their own comfort zones.

Understanding that education is multi-faceted, it is necessary to rectify all forms of culturally biased curricula. For example, western Christian precepts are not guiltless for promoting ethnic stratifications and social inequalities. Historically, ethnicity was irrelevant in the *Universal Truths* of early Christendom. Tanabe (2019) states Trinitarianism and Arianism were the primary discourse during early Christendom and during the Nicene Council (325 C.E.) the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Western Catholic Churches, as equals, assented Trinitarian Dogma with the Nicene Creed. Accordingly, race or ethnicity was not a factor.

However, during the era of European colonialism, the dominant western churches redefined the history of Christianity to depict White supremacy. Goetz (2012) elaborates stating that at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Europeans redefined Christianity as a religion for white people and historical biblical truths were re-defined to delineate white superiority. This altered the freedom of worship and created the ideology for western racism.

Anglo church leaders assented all Africana as being sacrilege and people of color as heathens. Throughout the church, religious icons were modified to sanctify whiteness and to systemically dehumanize, marginalize, and control the African and Indian descendants who were denied freedom, political power, and wealth. Another author supports positing that early Christians only used ethnic reasoning to legitimize universal humanity. However, during modernity, the universal egalitarian ideals of Christendom were eclipsed by a racist ideology and the harmonizing imagery. Although the Civil Rights Movement provided some relief, the anti-racist intercessions did not eradicate the discriminatory dogma and practices in western churches (Buell, 2008).

Aggravating the above is the media that intertwines every aspect of society. Generally, western media content was always selected and endorsed by the dominant political group that ensured African descendants were portrayed as community heretics. Thus, media has always had the liberty to educate without credible information. Puyanunt-Carter (2008) agrees that western media has consistently intensified Black characteristics as comical, hypersexual, violent, under-educated, and as social misfits. The stereotypical misrepresentations are endorsed on White, and Black owned media outlets. Another researcher concludes that cultural misrepresentations within media are very problematic; however, simply ridiculing and devaluing media is not effective. In order to protect cultural nobilities, curricula within *communication arts, social studies, and history* must have cultural guidelines that nurture students to critically evaluate fallacious information (Chen, 2007).

In essence, Multi-cultural Education will provide the essential tools for students to identify and evaluate cultural fallacies in text books and other forms of media. Similarly, cultural awareness and ancestral pride will transform the Black mindset into knowing it is more logical to create and only support curricula guidelines that do not impede the development of our children's intrinsic self-respect, self-love, and cultural relevance. Although many acknowledge current syllabi remain culturally bias, few educators exercise the moral fortitude to openly challenge the veracity

and repudiate detrimental curricula. Consider, to date, models of social reconstruction are not evident in most classrooms and, apparently, educators are satisfied with providing fallacious information that deprecates African contributions to philosophy, and religion. Moreover, most Christian leaders of the afro-diaspora do not openly acknowledge the erroneousness of educating that everyone must observe, without question, a white-face deity along with white-face biblical icons; regardless of historical facts. Essentially, it is a persuasion that cultural history, and history as a whole, is insignificant. This speaks to the multifaceted system that generationally trained us to accept anesthetic policies that decelerated sophisticated models for progressive education, and social transformation.

Conclusion

Marches and protests have always benefitted social consciousness and legislation continues to provide opportunities for growth. However, harmonizing community equity requires truthful cultural socialization coupled with authentic Multi-Cultural Education curricula. It is the moral responsibility of educators, Black educators in particular, to ensure that a multi-cultural platform is the benchmark for all models of social restructurings. Synonymously, pedagogical innovations must not circumvent teaching the power of truth and the truth of power. Finally, any oxymoronic precepts to the above will inhibit veracious egalitarianism as well as sustain the insecurity syndromes and the obscured discriminatory victimizations that manufacture the antipathetic discontent that ushers in social unrest.

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Neocolonialism and Education Reform: An Intersection between Moral Agency and Revolution

Phyllis Curtis-Tweed

Abstract

Inherent in neocolonial systems of power is the perpetuation of racism, injustice, and inequity reinforced in education systems. In Bermuda, this phenomenon is exemplified by the division between public and private education and the relative inequities and outcome deficits in public education. The divide is systemic and sustained by government policies, which preserve a racial stratification in educational and economic attainment by stopping short of transformational changes that would close the divide. The community at large inadvertently reinforces this divide when they attempt to circumvent the possible negative impact of a public education on their children. Transformative change requires a vision of what public education can and should become, accompanied by action to close the divide that transcends the bounds of the neocolonial legacy. Extracting the community from entrenchment in neocolonialism requires commitment to the development of human capital, understanding that excellence in public education is fundamental to creating avenues of change for the community at large and will contribute to the sustainability of Bermuda.

Keywords: Neocolonialism, public, education, reform, agency, Bermuda

Introduction

Change is needed in systems of power that thrive on the perpetuation of racism, injustice, and inequity. These systems exist relative to colonized people all over the world and are manifest in internal colonialism or neocolonialism in many countries. In the 1960s, Malcolm X articulated neocolonialism as a global power structure that thrived on the economic and political suppression of people of colour (Malcolm X, 1965; Allen, 2005). One manifestation of this form of suppression occurred in the development of a black middle class as a vehicle for sustaining oppression that encouraged the illusion that institutionalized racism had gone away, but actually promoted economic and educational divides, and suppressed the unification of communities of colour in seeking self-determination and empowerment (Curtis-Tweed, 2005). The impact of this phenomenon persists in the 21st century and, in Bermuda, is exemplified by the division between public and private education and, in particular, the relative inequities and outcome deficits in the public education system.

The elimination of this divide requires not only changes in the delivery of education and in the structure of the system, but more fundamentally, a paradigm shift in perspectives and actions that preserve the legacy of neocolonialism as a proponent of capitalism and elitist systems in education. The divide is systemic and sustained by government policies, regardless of party majority, which maintain the status quo in public education and ultimately education outcomes by stopping short of transformational changes that would close the divide. The community at large inadvertently reinforces this divide when they take steps, like sending their children to private school, to circumvent the possible negative effect of public education on their children's educational development and attainment. Simultaneously, by this action, they engage in avoidant behaviour by removing themselves from the urgency of holding the system accountable and elevating educational opportunities for the public good. Systemic

change in education requires ‘self-understanding’ at the level of the individual that includes knowledge of Bermuda’s history and awareness of the legacy of neocolonial power structures, as well as a collective sense of agency on the part of stakeholders to identify deficits and enact remedies undergirded by a commitment to eliminate inequities in education. Transformative change requires a vision of what public education can and should become accompanied by action that transcends the bounds of the neocolonial legacy.

Neocolonialism and Black Migration to Private Education: The Promotion of the Divide

The education of blacks in Bermuda has historically suffered from inequities in infrastructure, resources, and access, relative to the education opportunities for white Bermudians and the children of white guest workers/ex-patriates (Clark et al., 1978). While these factors might have been somewhat expected in a segregated Bermuda prior to 1960’s, the inadequacy of buildings, paucity of resources, and inconsistency in the quality of education provided in schools delineated by the Houghton report (1963) were still observed in the Hopkins Report (Hopkins et al., 2007) almost fifty years later. References to the superiority of the education standards of private school, which still serve predominantly white and/or non-Bermudian populations, abound (Hopkins et al., 2007; Lawrence & Codrington, 2014).

In a context where data showed that private education is better than public education, it is no wonder that with the integration of schools, which started in the 60’s, black Bermudians would increasingly send their children to private school. This action would provide children with the desirable educational opportunities that could translate into assimilation into majority culture and ultimately economic mobility (Lawrence & Codrington, 2014). People of colour still seek and feel somewhat individually elevated by educational and economic attainment although their attainments fall short at the hands of institutionalized racism (APA, 2012). In Bermuda, this has been historically exemplified by glass ceilings in job promotions or disparities in employment opportunities for qualified Black Bermudians relative to whites or guest workers. (Mincy et al., 2009; Lawrence & Codrington, 2014). Indeed, the opportunities in private school foster an illusion of assimilation, by means of education, with social and economic mobility among black Bermudians.

In Bermuda, there has been an increase of blacks at upper income levels sending their children to private schools at a cost often in excess of 20k per year (Lawrence & Codrington, 2014). Additionally, parents of high achieving children who may not be able to afford the tuition, often seek scholarships to send their children to private school. One impact of this migration on public education, as indicated by the Hopkins Report (Hopkins et al., 2007), is that higher achieving students might have left the public education system leaving a largely more academically challenged population to be educated in an already challenged system. One might argue that this bifurcation fostered further declines in public education commensurate with decreased use over time by the politically and economically influential who might otherwise be personally and more urgently invested in improving public education for their own children.

This situation exemplifies Malcolm X’s point that the actions of the middle class or economically-able sustain economic and educational divides by promoting attainment in one group. Malcolm X (1963) said “the wealthy, educated Black bourgeoisie...never reach back and pull the rest of our people out with them. The Black masses remain trapped in the slums.” Almost sixty decades after Malcolm X’s insightful observation, the systemic division persists and becomes further entrenched when social mobility via education remains elusive for those at lower economic levels (Robinson, 2016), who, in this particular case, are predominantly black Bermudians. The subsequent growth within the middle class and ultimate entrance into the workforce of privately educated people of colour gives the illusion that institutionalized racism has gone away because they appear to have assimilated

into the dominant culture. In actuality, the division by class has suppressed the possibility of communities of colour uniting in self-determination and empowerment to rectify problems in public education in terms of infrastructure, resources, and educational attainment. Bermuda has a public education system that writhes from the pains of the legacy of neocolonial oppression. While the under education of black people in Bermuda is a facet of colonialism, it becomes a pawn in sustaining the neocolonial power structure in a capitalist system when poor education is systemically perpetuated. Robinson (2016) similarly describes this phenomenon in the context of global capitalism. Bermudians are not unified in attending to the improvement of the public education system which currently reinforces the ongoing disempowerment of users of the system. This situation reinforces the notion of two Bermudas: Separate and unequal in public and private education.

This is not an indictment of black Bermudians who send their children to private school or the existence of private education. Rather, the focus here is to draw attention to the importance of developing public education that will empower the entire community regardless of economic status or race, and the need to unify the community toward that end. Just as challenges in education are a part of our history, such unification is also a part of Bermuda's history. In the 18th century, concerned about the inequity of educational opportunities available to black Bermudians, a group of well-educated and economically successful black men of vision took on the moral responsibility to improve education. Over eighteen years, they raised money, worked with churches, black and white community leaders, and other organizations to create an educational institution which they intended to be integrated to benefit the community-at-large. Due to their vision and sense of moral agency, the school they developed would remain sustainable beyond their existence (Robinson, 1962). This kind of unification could pave the way to transform the neocolonial power structure.

Government's Role in Maintaining the Status Quo in Education in a Neocolonial System

Prior to the Education Act 1954, all education was private and segregated, with all schools receiving public funds from the government (Christopher, 2009). Schools for white children had better facilities, more resources, and trained teachers, while schools for black children were overcrowded, poorly resourced, and staffed with untrained teachers (Houghton, 1963; Clark et al., 1978). White students were afforded generous scholarship opportunities and, generally, limitless academic and professional opportunities, whereas black students had few scholarship opportunities and were streamed towards domestic and vocational training or, at most, could enter civil service, mainly as educators (Government of Bermuda, Education Reports, 1958).

Post segregation, with schools under government control, racial stratification has become systemic with sufficient integration to allow some people of colour to join white counterparts in attaining the small percentage of the academically elite and economically advantaged in the population. Lawrence and Codrington (2014) demonstrate this racial stratification in their report of the small number of black Bermudians in senior official and managerial positions compared with the white population which dominates the economy.

Government members, most of whom are educated and/or economically advantaged, regardless of race, have participated in maintaining this status quo in a neocolonial system in which they have power and control of public education. Education legislation has been shared across political parties in control of the government: the Education Act of 1996 occurred under the United Bermuda Party (UBP); the transition to middle school was implemented under the Progressive Labour Party (PLP), although developed under the UBP; the middle school system remained in place under the PLP even though reviews of public education, culminating with the Hopkins report (Hopkins et al., 2007), indicated that middle schools were ineffective; and the same middle school system was maintained under the One Bermuda Alliance (OBA) government. Since 2017, the PLP has circulated a narrative to Bermuda which

states that the government is reforming education to create a more equitable system. However, the transformation plan intentionally stratifies children, post-primary, into subject area streams, called ‘signatures,’ that will delimit their possibilities for educational and economic attainment. This design will also foster the existence of a strata in the workforce with little autonomy, creativity, and critical thinking abilities. These actions are in keeping with global capitalist ideology in education, as described by Robinson (2016), which requires education to produce a strata of humanity with “basic numeracy and literacy skills and not much more alongside training for high-skills and knowledge workers” (p.10). Robinson (2016) observes that this type of education results in “an intensification of the very capitalist development that had generated the social conditions to be eradicated” (p.11). In Bermuda, responsibility for the resultant educational barriers is shared across political parties invested in the same capitalist ideology, which thrives on and, consequently, perpetuates inequalities.

The Psychological Legacy of Neocolonial Power Structures

In Bermuda today, the deep-seated entrenchment in neocolonialism impedes the development of a vision to transform the education system among black people and other users of this system. Fanon (1963) noted that in many cases, minorities simply want the things their oppressors kept from them, like power and wealth, and therefore tend to replicate the same structure that they found to be oppressive. Even in places, like Bermuda, with a semblance and illusion of autonomy, the structures of oppression, as described by Fanon (1963), are often repeated by people of colour once in power or economically successful due to a complex psychological desire to basically trade places with one’s oppressor. This is practically evident in the institutionalization of systems of power that results in oppressive behaviour within races, such as when people of colour are complicit in perpetuating an inequitable system of education (Curtis-Tweed, 2020).

Further, people of colour, particularly black people, still grapple with an internal conflict regarding a duality of self as described by Dubois’ conceptualization of double consciousness (Dubois, 1903). According to Dubois, African Americans struggle to reconcile their perception of self as African American and self as American in the context of oppression by white America. Gilroy (1993) suggests that DuBois “produced this concept... to illuminate the experience of post-slave populations in general” (p.126). Therefore, to extrapolate Dubois’ perspective to the broader context, one might claim that Black people, or in fact, oppressed people, experience an internal struggle with their perception of self as a distinctive racial, ethnic, and/ or cultural being and another self that struggles to be accepted in majority culture. The latter self, consistent with Fanon’s perspective, tends to participate in dominant culture structures that oppress others (Fanon, 1963). This phenomenon is about assimilation and the manifestation of the power of the dominant culture. This is quite remarkable in Bermuda where whites are the minority population but hold the majority of the wealth. Blacks comprise the majority of the population but, on average, earn less than whites (Lawrence & Codrington, 2014). The sustained perception that white culture is perceived to be the dominant culture attests to the economic power of neocolonialism (Lawrence & Codrington, 2014). How else, in an island as small as Bermuda, could there be a division in the quality of education, and who has access to the better quality education, when education itself is regulated by the government? What does it take to stimulate unification toward change in a context of such well documented relative deprivation?

In Bermuda, private schools’ test results are often compared with those of public schools with the caveat that public schools’ results are lower because public schools serve everyone regardless of ability. While this may be true, reviews of public education also indicate deficits in teaching and learning. While the Hopkins report (Hopkins et al., 2007) noted that Middle Schools were the least effective component of the public system and that reading scores tended to decrease after children entered Middle School, they indicated that the majority of primary schools were satisfactory. By 2018, the Department of Education reported a startling decline to unsatisfactory levels in primary

schools' scores in reading and mathematics (Johnston, 2020). This situation does not bode well for achievement in upper grades. However, it does serve to perpetuate racial stratification by limiting possibilities in education attainment. This state of public education becomes a form of oppression that denies access to quality education and should elicit outrage among those who depend on it to educate their children and stimulate motivation and peaceful revolt to foster change.

Unfortunately, from a moral and psychological standpoint, the sense of outrage, may create cognitive dissonance with our knowledge of the experiences of others, but it does not necessarily have a deeper moral or ethical meaning, nor does it necessarily create a desire to change one's day to day life. It is easier to back away from or suppress that sense of dissonance and seek equilibrium in prior structures than to engage in the rather nebulous path of deconstructing and reconstructing a new way of being. On a psychological level, this phenomenon may undermine the commitment to change. In education, this translates into elaborate plans for solutions that are only partially implemented or easily derailed by transitions in leadership (Curtis-Tweed, 2020)

For example, in the United States in response to the Civil Rights Movement of the 60's, changes in education, including integration, equal opportunity policies, and affirmative action were all steps in the right direction but always limited by economic shortfalls or other changes in political agenda that caused the possible solutions to fall short of enacting broad changes (Allen, 1969). One such effort, Head Start, has seen limited success since being implemented in the 60's. However, the elements of Head Start that would have transformed the lives of families in poverty were never fully implemented. Therefore, while some children in poverty have been well served by the programme, the transformative societal changes that could have resulted were never realized. Changes remained at a level where they did not impact the economic and political systems of the nation that are the heartbeat of capitalism.

Similarly, in Bermuda, the Bermuda Technical Institute, which succeeded in developing black businessmen in the trades, was closed after only 14 years in operation. Ebbin (2018) notes that the school had successfully provided programming for 2500 people, during 1956-1969, between the high school and evening programme; it had ensured that young men were employed. Bermuda Technical Institute was thriving in 1969 when the government decided to close it in favour of moving technical education from high school to the college level. This measure created a gap of several years before technical education became available at Bermuda College. No explanation or reason for this puzzling change is documented but the impact was devastating. Many in the community believed this action was because the effectiveness of the school threatened the balance of socioeconomic power structures on island (Wasi, 2018).

More recently, Middle Schools were extensively planned and implemented but ultimately ineffective in Bermuda. According to the Hopkins report (Hopkins et al., 2007) the inadequacies of Middle School were associated with transitions in leadership, lack of appropriate structure and deficits in teacher training. In short, the plan was not fully implemented.

In the case of education, in equilibrium-seeking, government members and other stakeholders maintain the status quo and avoid transformative change by deflecting attention onto areas of related concern that are not the actual problem. It becomes easier to focus on the poor quality of buildings than to closely examine and correct what goes on inside them or to blame children for not learning and teachers for not teaching than to identify systemic deficits and correct them. These maladaptive tendencies prevent transformation of the system and true resolution of the problems.

Although outrage may unite people in acknowledging a collective responsibility to demand change, the path to change remains unclear, as if at an intersection between moral agency and revolution. Fanon (1967) stated that

fervour is the weapon of the impotent. If only fervour or outrage occur, the momentum dies. To extend Fanon's comment, fervour must be transformed into sustainable action by developing shared understanding and agency to effect social change. If that does not occur, the political machine will once again establish equilibrium and destabilise society as it has in the past. Inequities in public education will remain. How can we stimulate outrage matched with sustainable action?

Movement toward Closing the Divide

On the surface, improving public education in Bermuda requires an understanding of all elements relevant to education including student characteristics, the proximal and distal influences in their lives and their level of readiness for education; teaching and learning, possible barriers to student success; and leadership. The plan to change must also engage all stakeholders, elicit external consultation, connect, and collaborate across public and private school leadership as suggested over the years in reviews of the public education system (Houghton 1963; Clark et al., 1978; Hopkins et al., 2007). Viewed in the context of systematic assessment and strategic planning that addresses both short term and long-term educational needs, the resultant plan must reflect a vision that looks towards Bermuda's future and promotes the sustainability of public education.

At a deeper level, Bermuda must grapple with the undergirding elements that sustain the divide, including neocolonial power structures embedded in political ideology and internalized racism. Ultimately, improving public education requires closing the divide. To this end, elements that sustain and perpetuate the divide must be identified and addressed:

- De-politicize and clarify government control of education. Deliberations on reform should consider Bermuda's history in education including structures, intents, and results, with an awareness of capitalist ideology and its impact on education. This knowledge base is relevant to enhancing self-understanding and to developing a collective sense of agency in defining change. The objective of change should be to transform the education system. However, including members of the community in conversations, research, or planning teams to reform education becomes no more than a public relations exercise if its underlying purpose is to encourage groupthink to endorse a given political platform or agenda. Therefore, the authority of an independent education oversight group which mainly comprises experts in the field of education should be legislated to empower the group to focus on education goals as opposed to a political agenda. Independence from political control would sanction the collective sense of agency to transform the education system and eliminate deterrents, such as groupthink, by encouraging critical thinking and engaging the uncomfortable and difficult questions about education in Bermuda.
- Address Race relations. Collaborations across public and private education should be designed to develop a mutual culture of excellence in education. Conversations between users of both systems should stimulate cognitive dissonance regarding white supremacy in private education, and the inequity in public education by sharing experiences, exploring the various meanings of privilege and the lack thereof, and seeing each other as equal. These efforts should enhance empathy for the other, an understanding of diversity and develop solutions for change.
- Recognize internalized inferiority. The remnants of neocolonialism are still extant in economic disparity and internalized inferiority on the part of oppressed people relative to the dominant society and culture. Fanon (1967) indicated that the source of inferiority is economic largely and subsequently the internalization of the sense of inferiority. To Fanon this is the existential issue for individuals. These existential questions about cognitive dissonance and the self are relevant to chartering the path forward.
- Act with agency in moral action. The moral imperative in this context is the need for moral action. This

kind of transformation requires a heightened sense of agency so that change can occur, understanding that the sense of agency is differentiated by the individual's experiences. Differences in participants' sense of agency could limit possible outcomes and the definitions of prospective change (Curtis-Tweed, 2003). Therefore, in addition to the heightened sense of agency, a shared understanding of concepts and goals will undergird moral action (Curtis-Tweed, 2020). Developing a shared understanding of possible solutions is essential to agency development. Concepts like reforming education, axing Middle Schools, closing primary schools are all frightening if there is a lack of understanding and agreement about what the concepts mean, how their implementation will impact everyone's lives, and how they will improve education. A shared understanding should increase a collective sense of agency in taking steps to move toward closing the divide (Curtis-Tweed, 2020).

Conclusion

Finally, people of colour should be empowered to eliminate the psychological struggle of a double consciousness in which one represses the authentic self in order to fit in or not offend others in the dominant culture. There is a sense of agency that undergirds but is also heightened by unapologetically embracing the self and not internalizing the concept of being a minority, especially when actually in the majority, or having to assimilate into a dominant culture. This sense of agency allows the person of colour to participate in redefining social norms (Curtis-Tweed, 2003), including those pertaining to public education. At the same time, the onus should not be on the individual, to resolve the psychological conflict of unifying dual selves born of oppression, but on society to eradicate the factors that stimulate the internal conflict. To that end, public education should foster the attainment of excellence and the realization of potential for all students rather than exist as a vehicle for a few to trade places with an other in a capitalist system in which someone is always oppressed. Ideally, education reform should transform the system to embrace and empower all members of the community to realize their potential.

Extracting the community from this entrenchment in neocolonialism requires commitment to the development of human capital, regardless of race, ethnicity, and/or class, understanding that excellence in public education is fundamental to creating avenues of change for the community at large and will contribute to the sustainability of Bermuda.

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