

The College of The Bahamas in Research: A Process In Motion

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ABSTRACT

Though not previously thought of as a “research” institution, much has been written or published about the College of the Bahamas by past and present faculty and students as well as scholars not associated with the institution. To what extent, though, are researchers publishing about the College of The Bahamas and what percentage are published in the College’s research journals as opposed to elsewhere? The focus of this article is on a select body of research published over the past 40 years by the College of The Bahamas research journals and publications as noted in the ProQuest database in which the college is the subject of the research.

INTRODUCTION

In 1974 the Government of the Bahamas passed the Act for the establishment of the College of The Bahamas (COB) as an academic institution to provide post-secondary education for Bahamians. In his 1975 Communication to Parliament, then Minister of Education and Culture the Hon. Livingston N. Coakley noted that, “the college would ... engage in research that is directed towards the optimal utilization of the country’s natural resources” (1975). In spite of this proclamation, the primary focus of lecturers during the College’s early years was on programme development and teaching, as opposed to research. However, while not so much in the forefront, research within COB has had a very long and historic affiliation with the institution. As the College grew, and as faculty prepared themselves academically to advance the institution beyond programme offerings at the certificate and associate degree levels, research assumed a more prominent position.

The Early Years

In 1980 COB published its first academic journal, *College Forum*. It was an annual publication, which enjoyed a 17-year run, with the exception of a break in 1985 and an 8 year gap between 1986 and 1994. With no research office or staff in place, this publication fell under the direction of the Dean of Academic Affairs, Claire Hepburn (Bynoe & Hepburn, 1980, p. 1). Volume 1 would be followed by the publication of an additional eight volumes culminating with Volume 9 in 1997. The content in the inaugural volume ranged from articles on Bahamian history and general science, to education and library science. The focus throughout the life of this publication was never exclusively COB or even Bahamian, but was rather general in scope. Of the nine volumes published, three had no content with direct reference to the College (Table 1).

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APA reference: Walker, B. L. (2014). COB in research: A process in motion. *The International Journal of Bahamian Studies*, 20(2), V 12-16. <https://doi.org/10.15362/ijbs.v20i2.238>

Table 1. College Forum Articles

Vol. (Year)	Articles about COB	Research Focus
1 (1980)	1 of 5 (20%)	Librarianship
2 (1981)	1 of 6 (16.7%)	Education/teacher education programme
3 (1982)	0 of 5	-
4 (1983)	1 of 5 (20%)	Education/questioning technique
5 (1984) 5a (1986)	0 of 5	-
6 (1994)	1 of 4 (25%)	Nursing
7 (1995)	1 of 5	Faculty work load
8 (1996)	0 of 5	-
9 (1997)	3 of 8 (37.5%)	Teaching styles; librarianship; Continuing Education

From Strength to Strength

After the publication of the 1997 volume, *College Forum* went into a 4 year hiatus. Fortunately there were faculty members on staff who saw the value in such a publication and who were prepared to devote their time and expertise to reviving the journal. It was also agreed that perhaps it was time to breathe new energy into the publication with a name change, given the many changes that had occurred within the College since the first publication of *College Forum* in the 1980s. In 2001, Volume 10 of the research journal, under the editorial leadership of Dr. James Urwick, faculty member in the School of Education, was published under the new title, *The College of The Bahamas Research Journal*. The next six volumes (Vol. 10, 2001-Vol. 15, 2009) would be published under this title and successive editorships of Ann Lawlor, Marie Sairsingh-Mills and Virginia Ballance (Table 2).

Table 2. College of the Bahamas Research Journal

Vol. (Year)	Articles about COB	Research Focus
10 (2001)	1 of 4 (25%)	Language teaching
11 (2002)	0 of 6	
12 (2003)	0 of 6	
13 (2005)	0 of 5	
14 (2008)	0 of 5	
15 (2009)	1 of 4 (25%)	Creole teaching/learning

Like the *College Forum*, almost all of the research articles published in the *College of The Bahamas Research Journal* were on non-COB matters, written by COB faculty as well as scholars from overseas.

In spite of the gaps in the publication of this title (2004, 2006 and 2007), there were notable significant changes occurring. As noted by the Managing Editor of the journal, later issues of this title focused more on public policy matters; hence there was an increased focus on local community concerns and general education matters (domestic violence, Bahamian history, agriculture, the local economy, gender issues, etc.). Another matter of great significance was the publication of the first online, open access edition, making the publication available to an even wider and more technologically-savvy audience. This method of publication would see a significant increase not only in the number of persons viewing this publication, but also in the number of articles downloaded (Ballance, 2010).

In 2010, with the publication of Volume 16, the editorial board once again saw a need for a change in the journal's focus so as to remain relevant to its readers and to attract additional researchers and increased readership. The journal would once again undergo a title change to become the *International Journal of Bahamian Studies (IJBS)*. Like the mandate articulated by then Principal Jacob Bynoe and Dean of Academic Affairs Claire Hepburn, who noted that the "journal represents an effort not only to spread the results of academic activities in the College, but also to stimulate participation in such activities and an exchange of ideas by a broad cross-section of interested members of the Bahamian community" (1980, p. 1), the *IJBS* was intended to be a more international publication although "all articles will now have a Bahamian focus or include content or topics of Bahamian interest" (Ballance, 2010, p. i).

Unfortunately, none of the issues under this journal title have published an original research article with a focus on COB. Coverage has been exclusively on local community or Caribbean concerns.

ProQuest Presence

Searching COB as a subject in ProQuest™, a database abstracting and indexing research from approximately 90,000 authors and containing more than 6 million digital pages (<http://www.proquest.com>), revealed that the College was the subject of research from the

early 1970s. Between 1980 and 2014 there were 17 thesis/dissertations focusing on COB in the areas of education, counselling, curriculum, administration, information science, and institutional history (Table 3). The most popular area of graduate research was education, with continuing education prominently featured. COB as subject matter would also feature prominently in academic journals in articles by John Enger (1983), Barry Greenberg (1981), John Reid (1979), and Autumn Tooms (2007).

Table 3. ProQuest™ Dissertation Citations with COB Focus

Year	Author	Institution	Research Subject
1979	Higgs	University of Nebraska, Lincoln	Business Education
1982	Marshall	The American University.	Higher Education
1982	McPhee	Oklahoma State University	Academic Guidance Counselling
1982	Klovekorn	University of Miami	School Administration
1984	Thompson	University of Toronto	School Administration
1985	Roach	Andrews University	Adult Education; Continuing Education
1989	Carter	SUNY Buffalo	Curricular, Teaching
1991	McDonald	Texas Southern University	Higher Education, Economics, School Administration
1991	Bouchard	University of Miami	Academic Guidance Counselling
1991	Cleare	University of Tennessee	Educational Evaluation; Mathematics
1997	Carey-Baines	Washington State University	Higher education. Rhetoric, Composition.
1998	McCollin	Univ. Southern Mississippi	Continuing Education; Adult Education
1999	Vanderpool	University of Toronto	International Cooperation; Higher Education
2003	Pinder	Penn State University	Adult Education; Continuing Education
2004	Keck-McNulty	Kent State University	Academic Guidance Counselling
2005	Walker	Nova Southeastern University	Information Science
2010	Dames	University of North Texas	College of the Bahamas History

Conclusion

Research is a significant focus in tertiary education institutions. It was a part of the vision for COB from its inception and has grown as a primary expectation over the years. Research as produced by current and past individuals over the past 40 years of the College' existence is well documented in academic as well as non-academic publications. College-specific research within the College's publications is sparse, but is

much more evident in the wider scholarly arena. Over the years, the focus of research has shifted from its former regional and local perspective to a more global presence. While there has been an increase in research and publication, perhaps researchers of all kinds within the institution will take advantage of opportunities available via the College's research journals to inform ourselves and the global academic community of what COB is about and how our practices and procedures

might impact the global academic arena. As the institution prepares for the move to university status, there will be an even greater focus on what we do, on how we do it and on associated outcomes. With a focus on accreditation and student success, there will be

an even greater need for us to “research” ourselves. In keeping with the College’s mandate to play a wider role within the local community, conducting research and publishing the findings will add legitimacy to the academy.

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