

Uma parceria de tempo e profundidade: conexões entre a Educação Artística na Jamaica e nos Estados Unidos

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RESUMO – Uma parceria de tempo e profundidade: conexões entre a Educação Artística na Jamaica e nos Estados Unidos – Este artigo apresenta uma narrativa pessoal do meu engajamento crítico no desenvolvimento de uma parceria internacional entre duas instituições de ensino superior, que resultou no aprimoramento da Educação Artística na Jamaica e nos Estados Unidos, ampliou o entendimento das identidades culturais de cada país e entre os dois países. Neste artigo, se sugere que o tempo viabiliza a profundidade de um relacionamento colaborativo entre países e tem um impacto significativo no aprendizado e no crescimento dos indivíduos envolvidos. A Faculdade Edna Manley de Artes Dramáticas e Visuais em Kingston, na Jamaica, é a principal faculdade de artes de língua inglesa no Caribe e mantém uma parceria de quinze anos com o Departamento de Educação Artística da Universidade do Estado de Ohio. Estudantes da Jamaica completaram seus doutorados na Universidade do Estado de Ohio desde 1980. Este relacionamento foi se transformado em uma parceria que levou ao desenvolvimento de um programa de mestrado *on-line* em Educação Artística para professores de arte na Jamaica e eventualmente a um programa de estudo no exterior para os estudantes da Universidade do Estado de Ohio viajarem para Kingston. Compartilhar o conhecimento entre estes dois países através de várias perspectivas socioculturais permitiu aos participantes complexificarem as noções a respeito de cada país e, portanto, criou oportunidades para refletirem sobre suas próprias identidades culturais, realidades e limitações como artistas e educadores de arte.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Parcerias acadêmicas. Colaboração internacional. Educação Artística caribenha. Pós-graduação. Intercâmbio internacional.

ABSTRACT – A Partnership of Time and Depth: Jamaica’s and America’s Art Education Connections – This article presents a personal narrative of my critical engagement and partnership role in a longstanding international relationship between two higher education institutions that has deepened understandings of art education in both Jamaica and America and broadened understandings of cultural identities of each across and within the countries. As such, this article suggests that time and depth of a relationship across countries has significant impact to the learning and growing as well the variety of individuals involved in educationally giving and receiving, which has supported the duration of the partnership through developing multiple sustainable relationships. The Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts in Kingston, Jamaica is the premier arts college in the English-speaking Caribbean and has retained a fifteen-year partnership with the Art Education Department at The Ohio State University, which came out of the work of Ohio State doctoral students who were from Jamaica beginning in the 1980s. The budding relationship turned-partnership led to the development of a “mostly” online Master’s degree program in Art Education for art teachers in Jamaica and eventually to a study abroad program for Ohio State students to travel to Kingston. Sharing expertise across the countries and through a variety of social and cultural lenses has allowed participants to complicate notions and understandings of each country, and therefore reflect on their own cultural identities, realities and limitations as artists and art educators.

KEY WORDS

Academic partnerships. International collaboration. Caribbean art education. Graduate education. International exchange.

We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves (BERGER, 1972, p. 9).

In 2005, I completed my doctoral studies and accepted a faculty position at The Ohio State University in the Department of Art Education¹ with the goal to remain committed to community engaged-research and teaching. Ohio State was known as (one of) the top art education program(s) in the country, and I held deep concerns. I wondered if I was “good enough” to meet expectations at a top-tier research institution. I wondered if my activist research and community-engaged teaching philosophies would be supported in what I perceived to be a socially conservative and competitive environment. I wondered if I could teach the way I wanted to teach – through community partnerships and service-learning pedagogy. I wondered what I would learn. My identity as a white woman with working class roots certainly contributed to much of my concern, the imposter syndrome so many young professors from underrepresented feel when entering academia (HUTZEL, in progress book chapter).

Immediately, I was tasked with running the department’s “Mostly” Online MA degree program by department chair Dr. Patricia Stuhr, in which a doctoral student from Jamaica, Dr. Phyllis Hill, was advancing by developing an extension program for arts educators in Jamaica. At the time, I didn’t realize the depth of this university partnership as Hill worked with Dr. Michael Parsons at Ohio State, her dissertation advisor, to extend the OSU online program to Jamaica. I also didn’t understand the political context in Jamaica that led her toward developing this program. At the time, the Jamaican Ministry of Education was requiring teachers to increase their own levels of education to meet new, higher standards. For art teachers in Jamaica, this meant they would need to pursue MA degrees in “general” education at local universities or at institutions online. There were no online options at the time specifically in art education; nor were there options for advanced degrees in art education in Jamaica or surrounding Caribbean islands. Therefore, during her studies at Ohio State, Hill developed a partnership between the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts (EMCVPA) and Ohio State to develop an Online MA in Art Education

¹ Ohio State’s Department of Art Education was renamed in 2012 to the Department of Arts Administration, Education and Policy (AAEP).

program specifically targeted to art educators in Jamaica and the Caribbean. She further explained the impetus for her work:

Throughout the latter part of my career I became preoccupied with concerns of the failure of education in Jamaica to address pressing social, economic and environmental issues and in finding solutions. As an art educator, I have constantly grappled with such questions as: how art education could be used as a catalyst of social, economic, political and environmental change, and how art education could participate in the discourse of 'sustainability' and 'development' (HILL, 2006, p. 2).

Hill worked with the faculty at Ohio State to develop a parallel online program for Jamaican art educators that worked to attend to her vision and goals to build leadership and expand opportunity in arts education in Jamaica. EMCVPA worked with Ohio State to recruit the first cohort of 16 students from Jamaica in the online program, which began with a one-week course taught by Ohio State faculty member, Dr. Christine Ballengee-Morris in Jamaica at the EMCVPA campus. Each summer of the three-year program, one or two faculty from Ohio State would travel to Kingston, Jamaica to deliver an intensive one-week course in person to the online students. And throughout the school year, the online students would take one online course at a time with an Ohio State faculty member. After three years of courses, 14 of the students graduated with an MA in Art Education from Ohio State. Five of the graduating students travelled to Columbus, Ohio to attend the incredibly large all-university graduation ceremony. Ohio State faculty and graduate students hosted the visiting Jamaican students in their homes for their visit, and faculty member, Dr. Vesta Daniel, made sure to have their group photo taken with the university's President (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Loraine Thompson-Stewart, Rayon Simpson, Dr. Vesta Daniel, Dr. Gordon Gee, Peter Omal, Dr. Trudy-Ann Barrett, and Georgette Thompson. Ohio State University graduation ceremony



Source: Personal file.

I didn't walk in the graduation ceremony for my MA degree program. It felt unnecessary for me. The occasion wasn't celebrated, and I went on to pursue a PhD without much of a thought about my MA program, other than the reality that it opened my eyes to my desire to learn more than I felt I had during my undergraduate years. I was baffled by the desire for the Jamaican students to travel to Columbus to participate in the ceremony. It was so far. It must have cost so much. The ceremonies are so boring. Why did they do it?

My understanding of the students' desire to attend the ceremony was a slow learning process for me. While my working-class roots and family support attributed to a sense of understanding about the value of higher education for social advancement, my understanding about Jamaica as a developing country was quite limited. I didn't come to understand the significance of their graduate education at Ohio State when I first taught them online, or when I visited them in Jamaica for the one-week session at EMCVPA. In fact, when I taught the Jamaican cohort of students online for the first time, I partnered with Jamaican scholar, Dr. Nadine Scott, the first Jamaican graduate of Ohio State's PhD program in Art Education. We decided to combine the American

online cohort together with the Jamaican online cohort for this course on Multicultural Art Education. Scott and I (2011) published an article about the course, describing the differences among the students, the impact of a service-learning assignment they each conducted in their own schools, and our learning as educators. Essentially, I found the Jamaican students took their learning more seriously than I had ever experienced with American students. For them, and I realize I'm generalizing them as a group, the grades weren't as important as the learning, and their intensity and commitment to the course enlivened me as an educator. Of course, they were each an individual, and getting to know them each as individuals allowed me to better understand the cultural complexities of Jamaica and the Caribbean. However, there were also similarities among the Jamaican students that were actually quite different from the American students. There was a different perspective overall about the value of education for the Jamaicans that I feel American students often take for granted, myself included.

At this point, the partnership felt a little like missionary work in that we as outside Americans were providing a service in the form of education to Jamaicans. It felt a little one-sided. The relationship certainly benefited us at Ohio State, but mainly the faculty members who had the opportunity to teach the Jamaican students online or in person, as well as the one group of American students Nadine Scott and I co-taught. The second cohort of Jamaican students in the online MA degree program was smaller, and so we decided to fold them in with the American cohort to create one group. It seems obvious that we could have done this from the beginning, but in trying to uphold Hill's desire for the program to be culturally relevant to the Jamaican students, we kept them apart. The course Nadine and I co-taught proved beneficial for both groups of students, and we were cognizant of the need to attend to cultural issues when blending the next cohort. In reality, we had to combine them due to the numbers, however it was important we do so thoughtfully. Perhaps some of the cultural relevance for the Jamaican context was lost in the blending, however there were also some positive outcomes for the development of cultural understanding across the groups. Most significant was how the Jamaican students challenged the mostly white "American" cohort of students on issues about race. Their dialogue was honest and direct to the point that the American students struggled to respond... a struggle many later

attributed to their growth in learning and better understanding racial issues in the United States.

Occasionally, faculty members would notice the students were only choosing to dialogue with other students from the same group, and not reach across groups. Most faculty would attend to those instances to encourage cross-cultural dialogue. In hindsight, it might have worked better to have co-taught the Multicultural course with Nadine as the first course they took together because the content of the course was intended to engage students in dialogue about social and cultural differences, but the opportunity for such a mixed group was not realized again.

Jamaican Development of an Online Program in Art Education

One of the original goals of the partnership between EMCVPA and Ohio State was for Ohio State to support EMCVPA in developing their own online MA program to create self-sustainability and financial benefit within Jamaica. This goal proved more difficult for a number of reasons. First, EMCVPA needed more faculty with PhDs to develop and teach a graduate-level program, and our desire for the online MA students to attend Ohio State for a PhD was not working out as expected. Second, EMCVPA had never offered an online program or a graduate program before and had many hurdles to overcome with their government and accreditation institutions.

After the first two cohorts of online students from Jamaica graduated, the numbers of interested students began to wane and scholarship money from within Jamaica dried up. One or two students have enrolled every year or two since that second cohort, but the cost was incredible for them. In the meantime, EMCVPA developed an online certificate program for art educators, and several Ohio State faculty along with Jamaican scholars taught in that for EMCVPA.

At about the same time, I worked with Vice Principal Annie Hamilton at EMCVPA to receive a Fulbright Fellowship to spend time on the campus to help prepare EMCVPA instructors to teach online. Annie had been pivotal to the successful recruitment of students from Jamaica to participate in the online MA program at Ohio State, and had taken some courses along with them, as well. She also spearheaded

the online certificate program at EMCVPA, which she partially modelled after the Ohio State program. Annie worked with me to secure the Fulbright to visit EVCVPA on three trips of two weeks each to deliver trainings, brainstorm with faculty, work with the technology office, identify institutional management, and ultimately encourage development of online courses.

My Fulbright plans were unexpectedly halted when I was diagnosed with cancer and had to delay my travel to Jamaica. As I battled breast cancer over the summer of 2014, I focused on those things I was looking forward to post-cancer, including and especially this project. Annie and several of my colleagues and students in Jamaica sent me well wishes throughout my journey, and I realized the value of human connection to this partnership. I was able to reschedule my Fulbright trips due to Annie's flexibility, and eventually stayed on the EMCVPA campus for three two-week trips. During my visits, I worked with instructors and staff on a variety of fronts to help build a structure for online education. In the meantime, I developed deeper friendships with some and built new friendships with others. I spent time with my former online students, joined a walking group at the campus, and met students with whom I shared living spaces.

From Ohio to Jamaica: Study Abroad

Just like language, one's eyes are socio-culturally framed and there are various 'ways of seeing'... People gaze upon the world through a particular filter of ideas, skills, desires and expectations, framed by social class, gender, nationality, age and education. Gazing is a performance that orders, shapes and classifies, rather than reflects the world. (URRY & LARSEN, 2011, p. 2)

As a result of my time on campus and the trust established between members of the institutions, Annie and I began to develop a new study abroad course for Ohio State students to travel to Jamaica with the goal for them to stay on campus and engage with EMCVPA's summer children's program, as well as learn from practicing art teachers and visit arts and cultural sites. Ultimately, our goals for the course were to engage Ohio State students in learning 'ways of seeing' (URRY & LARSEN, 2011),

or the *cultural* practice of seeing (JENKS, 1995), directly through contemporary arts and education practices in Jamaica.

The program took two years to develop, and the first group of eleven Ohio State students travelled to Jamaica in the Summer of 2015 for a two-week in-country educational experience. Ohio State's newest faculty member, Dr. Joni Acuff, co-led the group with me and EMCVPA instructor, Susanne Lee Quee, co-directed with Annie. As was the case from the beginning of this partnership, and how I myself became involved, it was our intent to engage additional faculty from each institution to carry on the programming beyond our own individual involvement. As Annie retires from EMCVPA, and my role at Ohio State takes up more of my time, Joni and Susanne are stepping in to carry on the partnership, right now through the study abroad program. My hope is that the partnership continues to evolve and change because of new people such as Joni and Susanne, who may identify new ways to connect. My own work also continues the partnership in new ways, as I'm currently working with a former Online MA student from Jamaica, Dr. Trudy-Ann Barrett, to write a book on Jamaican Art Education, as I describe later in this article.

The Ohio State study abroad students did not end up staying on the EMCVPA campus due to logistical issues, however we stayed in a small set of townhomes in a wealthier part of Kingston and within walking distance of a grocery store and shopping mall. This made mobility easier for the students and allowed for some level of freedom for them in a city whose crime rates kept students from total free exploration. We presented this dynamic to the students by explaining that as they are new to an area, they must first know their surroundings and limitations, and that their ability to travel abroad is a great privilege in itself. We urged them not to allow that privilege to cause them to think they could venture anywhere and be accepted and safe.

The study abroad course introduced American students to Jamaican culture before we travelled to the country, with readings and videos from Jamaican perspectives, critiques of American representations of Jamaicans in media and film, and group dialogue and personal reflection about cultural appropriation. The students read Rex Nettleford's (1972, 1998; 1993; 2003) groundbreaking work on identity, race and protest in Jamaica, along with others (BOLLAND, 1997; THOMAS, 2004), to begin

to examine Jamaican culture through a lens different than they had been exposed to in America. We discussed the recent colonial past of Jamaica, issues of race and class, as well as the country's policy plans for cultural development. Students made comparisons to their understandings of such in America, and we raised compelling questions to encourage them to view similar issues in America through different lenses. This ultimately led them to self-reflect on their own privileges, to question the dynamic between the two countries, and to increase their curiosity about arts and education in Jamaica. In essence, we tried to disrupt the tourist lens through which most Americans view Jamaica — as a place for their consumption and enjoyment — and replace it with a political and cultural lens that considers the culture of resistance and protest that is found in Jamaica's music and arts.

The first cohort of study abroad students from Ohio State included nine white women, one black woman, and one black Jamaican-American man. In the first few days of our time there, the students were eager to shop for kitschy items from vendors along the roadside, spoke excitedly about making a "Jamaican friend," and took selfies at inappropriate locations and times. Toward the end of our time, we took the students to Dunn's River Falls, a popular tourist destination in St. Ann's near Ocho Rios where cruise ships drop off tourists. After our day of water activities in a very crowded tourist destination, the students said they did not enjoy it much and became tired of the vendors selling their crafts. They soon began to articulate an appreciation for why the crafts were sold to tourists, yet saw another side of Jamaica in its food, people, and contemporary arts practices. They began to see educational tourism and sensitivity to culture as a more rewarding form of travel and began to question the systems and structures that prevented most Americans from similar opportunities. Their lens had shifted, as they questioned much more about international travel and about American media representations of Jamaicans.

Conversations about race became open and honest, and the students started to ask questions they were afraid to ask before... or perhaps that they didn't know to ask before. The white students developed a greater awareness of their racial privilege both in America and abroad, as they reflected on how it felt to be an "other" in Jamaica. Several students struggled with feeling stared at by Jamaicans while in Kingston, and

we discussed the daily micro-aggressions African-Americans often experience in America, and the emotional exhaustion they often experience as a result. They could relate to being othered; to many for the first time.

The students submitted visual art representations of their learning and exhibited a mature understanding of their own growth and a more complex knowledge of Jamaican culture and tourist industry. Several claimed a “life-changing” experience through the course and saw how it would benefit them when they became art teachers. For instance, undergraduate art education student Trina Lang compiled a visual and written blog about her learning: <http://www.trinalang.com/blog/july-06th-2015>. She also did a series of paintings about the one beach day we experienced as a group, one of which is included here (Figure 2). Each painting got progressively less realistic and more painterly as time went on and her examination of the visual progressed with time and distance.

Figure 2 – Painting by Trina Lang. Port Antonio beach



Source: <http://www.trinalang.com/blog/july-06th-2015>

Reciprocity and Respect: Collaborative Scholarship

The partnership between EMCVPA and Ohio State started out with one graduate student and one professor across two countries who were attending to an identified need for higher education in Jamaica. The development of an online MA

degree program for Jamaicans provided a degree-granting opportunity to support the growth and leadership of Jamaican art educators in Jamaica. This was more than an outreach project by Ohio State, as Jamaican students earned degrees that increased their opportunities for advancement in Jamaica. Several of the graduates went on to promotions, including becoming principal of a high school, becoming a lecturer at a College, and going on to earn a PhD.

Meanwhile, EMCVPA developed an online advanced certificate for arts educators, which kept educational funds within the country and made a degree accessible by a greater number of arts educators. The ownership of this program by EMCVPA also enhances their educational offerings toward the development of their first graduate degree.

The study abroad program opened the door for American art education students to expand their understandings of race and culture to positively influence their practices as future art teachers. As well, the students were challenged toward a better understanding of issues of immigration and race, as well as a realization of their own privilege to travel internationally with ease, and to exist as a part of the majority (for most of the Ohio State students) in a country still haunted by racial inequity and violence.

The partnership has served both institutions in positive ways, as each were seen as having assets to contribute to the partnership and each considered what they could learn from the other. As the relationship evolved so, too, did the individuals who participated. Ultimately, the partners have a perspective of appreciation and value for the other, as the partnership and relationship is based on human beings uplifting one another and learning in the process. As I mentioned earlier, I am currently collaborating with a graduate of the first cohort from the Online MA program, Dr. Trudy-Ann Barrett, who went on to earn a PhD at The University of Canterbury, Christchurch in New Zealand, on a book on Jamaican Art Education. Such a book does not yet exist and will serve to archive a dual analysis of the development of art education in Jamaica from each of our lenses as Jamaican and American scholars. This work will extend our understandings of art education in Jamaica and how they relate to similar issues in the United States, with implications for expanding our art education research and practices

in America. It will also serve to archive the tremendous development of art education in Jamaica toward identity development and mental liberation as a country whose emancipation from colonialism is less than 60 years old.

Berger's (1972) notion of looking as relational is significant to this narrative because it recognizes the personal when examining the 'other.' The partnership between EMCVPA and Ohio State through art education has grown and changed based on the individuals involved seeing each other and ourselves critically, openly, and with humility. Our shared goal is learning in and through culture. As Urry and Larsen (2011) quoted previously in this article, there are various ways of seeing, and to expand our gaze and challenge our lens allows for the relational aspect of partnerships to be prioritized. My own growth and development has been enhanced tremendously through the relationships I've developed in this partnership, as I continue to reflect on my identity as a white woman who now carries power and privilege greater than my blue-collar upbringing. The partnership with EMCVPA in Jamaica is a necessary ongoing reminder of the struggle and potential for social and community development as I watch and see how far EMCVPA and the whole country of Jamaica has come since my first visit thirteen years ago. I have developed a great admiration for the determination of the arts educators at EMCVPA and in the schools who are changing their own country and reflect on similar struggles in America that are often overshadowed or denounced by the sheer size and segregation of the country. America has a lot to learn from the development of Jamaica, and this partnership has, for me, illuminated this potential for art education.

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