"A Stepping-Stone to Do Something Else" Exploring Why Jamaican Student Teachers Enter and Complete Teacher Education (Paper 14-063)

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Abstract: *This paper is based on a study which explored why Jamaican student teachers, who were not aspiring to learn to be teachers or teach, entered and completed a three-year diploma in teacher education programme. Postcolonial theory (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffen, 1989) and theory of occupational choice (Ginzberg, 1963, 1972) served as analytical frames to assist in better understanding the Jamaican student teacher experience. Qualitative methodology provided the means to including the essential "voices" of eight Jamaican student teachers who were enrolled in the programme. The findings from the study raised the notion of "youthfulness", and how this may have influenced aspirations and decisions of post-secondary students living in a small island developing state of limited economic and academic options and opportunities. They also reinforce the idea that teacher education serves as a "stepping-stone" to more desirable educational or occupational goals. Ways of enhancing Jamaica's teacher education programmes, in light of current reforms, are also discussed.*

Keywords: Student Teachers, Teacher Education

Goals, Aspirations and Becoming a Teacher

As a new teacher educator at a Teachers' College in Kingston Jamaica, I was of the mindset that individuals were motivated to learn to teach because they wanted to become teachers. They wanted to become teachers for reasons such as a love of children, the opportunity to contribute positively to society, or to make a difference in young people's lives. Research, both internationally and in Jamaica, has shown that these reasons are common among individuals who choose to teach (Ashby, Hobson, Tracey, Malderez, Tomlinson, Roper, Chambers, & Healy, 2008, Brookhart & Freeman, 1992, Evans, 1993, Lortie, 1975; Malderaz, Hobson, Tracey, & Kerr, 2007). However, over time, I became especially interested in the more extrinsic reasons why a significant number of Jamaican student teachers chose to enter teacher education, and pursue what appeared to be a path to teaching.

The conversations I had with my students over the years, predominantly young, Black females, from urban or rural working class backgrounds, revealed that a noticeable number had entered teachers' college for reasons which did not seem related to wanting to teach. I could see that they realized the importance of education and they were certainly motivated to learn; however, the same keenness and motivation did not seem to apply to the prospect of becoming a classroom teacher, particularly for any extended period of time. Some expressed a desire to use teachers' college as means to obtain a university degree. Those who said they were taking this route popularly referred to teachers' college as a "stepping-stone". Others alluded to teaching as a "backup" occupation, something they could do in the interim until they were able to move on to their desired career goals. In other instances, students stated that they applied to teachers' college because they did not want to stay at home and do nothing, or that they did not have the

money to pay high university tuition fees. Finally, there were those who said they were influenced by family members or significant others who believed that teachers' college would be their best post-secondary option at the time.

The reasons expressed by my student teachers regarding why they entered teacher education, along with my own reflections, were the source of my curiosity regarding why Jamaican students choose teacher education, and therefore a path to teaching. My thinking was also largely influenced by three studies which explored why Jamaican student teachers chose to teach (Bastick, 1999; Brown, 1992; Evans, 1993). Much of the analysis and discussion in these studies focused on the intrinsic, altruistic, and extrinsic reasons why Jamaican student teachers wanted to become teachers; however, several of the responses to the question of wanting to become a teacher appeared to be more appropriate responses to the question of why one would choose teacher education or teachers' college. The primary purpose of this paper is to focus on Jamaican student teachers, who did not aspire to teach, yet entered and completed a teacher education programme. The discussion concentrates on the findings related to the following question:
What accounts for Jamaican students, who indicate that teacher education and teaching are not their educational or occupational aspirations, entering and completing a teacher education programme?

This question was one of two essential research questions which guided a study that was conducted at a teachers' college in urban Jamaica in 2012. A paper of this nature is relevant at this time given the numerous educational reforms (teacher education included) that are currently taking place in Jamaica. A better understanding of who enters teacher education today may be an asset to a transforming education system where student teachers may at some period, for whatever period of time, become the teachers who implement revised curriculum, or frontline administrators of educational initiatives.

Postcolonial theory (Ashcroft, Griffith, & Tiffen, 1989) and theory of occupational choice (Ginzberg, 1963, 1972) were used to develop a deeper understanding of the Jamaican student teacher experience. Postcolonial theory was useful in that it provided an analytical frame for recognizing that education in colonial and postcolonial Jamaica served as an instrument to control and transform the actions, thoughts, and values of the majority black working class population. Furthermore, postcolonial theory helped to explain how teacher education, although a means by which the colonizer could control the masses, also served as a significant stepping-stone to higher education and employment for many black Jamaicans. Resulting from this legacy was the plethora of teachers colleges' that exist in Jamaica today; which, predominantly young, black, females from working class backgrounds use as their stepping-stone to higher education and employment.

In addition to postcolonial theory, theory of occupational choice (Ginzberg, 1963) was used to develop a deeper understanding of why Jamaican students were choosing teacher education. This analytical frame was useful in that it revealed how planning an educational and career path can be a very intricate process; and, to explain how the process of making educational and occupational choices may be greatly influenced by factors such as the age, sex, race, socio-economic class, values, and academic aptitude of the individual.

Methodology

The student teachers that participated in this study attended Town Teachers' College in Kingston, Jamaica. Seventy-seven final year students in Town's three year Diploma in Teaching Programme participated in a research survey. A more purposive sample of eight student teachers was selected from the 77 to participate in two rounds of interviews. Qualitative research methodology was used to explore a number of issues. Qualitative research in this instance was viewed as the "best fit" and suitable means to acquiring a "thicker" understanding of the questions being asked (Delamont, 1993; Punch, 2009).

Grounded theory was used as a research strategy for both the collection and analysis of the data. This research strategy was also a means to generating theory based on the "voice" of the participants, and their empirical data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Punch, 2009). Grounded theory was utilized with an open-mind; meaning that relevant literature, and aspects of colonial/post-colonial theory (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffen, 1989) and theory of occupational choice (Ginzburg, 1951, 1963, 1972), would augment the concepts, themes and theories which emerged from the empirical data.

Participants

The eight student teachers who were selected through purposive sampling were on the verge of completing their final year of the Diploma in Teaching Programme at Town Teachers' College. They were selected because they indicated that they did not necessarily want to go into teaching, but had chosen teacher education as a post-secondary educational option. Their stories indicated that they entered teachers' college because they were young and unsure about what to do (youthfulness), were advised what to do by others (influence), could not access programmes they preferred (limited credentials/funds), or believed teachers' college could lead to preferred programmes and career paths (stepping-stone). Table 1 below summarizes the information that they provided on the questionnaire and during the interviews; information which was relevant to their selection as participants in the purposive sample, and to answering the research questions which guided the research study.

Table 1: Profile of Eight Student Teachers

Name	Age	Education Pre-Teacher College	Reasons for entering teacher education	Post-secondary goals/aspirations	Post- college goals/aspirations
Tahira	17	(7) Subjects Math (re-sit)	Unsure Influenced Stepping-stone	Nursing Pediatrics Culinary Arts Food & Nutrition	Teach Food & Nutrition
Staci	18	(6) Subjects No Math.	Influenced Affordable	Law Food & Nutrition	Teach Special Ed. Degree
Mel	18	(5) Subjects Math	Unsure Influenced Stepping-stone	Graphic Design Journalism Accounting	Degree
Neka	19	(5) Subjects Math.	Affordable Influenced	Nursing Business Admin. Constabulary Maritime Studies	Teach (short term) Maritime Studies Uncertain Degree

Miguel	20	(4) Subjects Math.	Stepping-stone	Culinary Arts Hotel Management Event Planning Human Resources	Teach (short term) Culinary Arts Computers Special Education Study/work Canada
Adriana	23	(7) Subjects (C.A.P.E.) Math. (C.S.E.C) Incomplete university programme	Influenced Stepping-stone Calling/Fate Wanted something else	Hospitality and Tourism Nutrition University Post-Graduate	Teach (short term) Degree MA. and Ph.D. Degrees
Jade	25	(4) Subjects No Math. Incomplete private college	Stepping-stone Wanted something else Influenced	Journalism Business Admin.	Teach (long term) Principal B.Ed. Degree Pass C.S.E.C. Math
Gabriel	27	(6) Subjects Math Repeated 4th Form Incomplete assoc. degree programme	Calling/Fate	Accounting Cosmetology Employment Own Nursery	Teach (short term) Businessperson Own Nursery Degree

Why Jamaican Students Choose Teacher Education

I was not surprised when 45 of the 77 (58%) student teachers who completed the student teacher survey indicated that teacher education was not their first choice for post-secondary schooling. I was not taken aback when a significant proportion of these student teachers indicated that their first choice was tertiary education related to some other profession/ occupation such as nursing, medicine, journalism, accounting, or law. Specifically, the findings in this study revealed that 26 of the 77 (34%) participants chose to do teacher education because it could serve as a stepping-stone to university or further education. Another 12 (16%) identified a variety of other reasons to explain why they chose teacher education. These results confirmed what I as a teacher educator had been hearing from my students for the past 13 years; that is, a significant number of Jamaican student teachers who were enrolled in teachers' college did not aspire to teacher education, and were not aiming to become teachers. In the following sections, I present the reasons why this social phenomenon exists.

Youthfulness

"I am always told that I am young; I have enough time to do whatever I wish to do" - Tahira

It was Tahira who drew my attention to the notion of youthfulness, and how this may have had some influence on the educational and occupational aspirations of the young participants in this study. Tahira was the youngest participant, and one of four who had started teachers' college before the age of 20. When asked why she did not pursue her aspiration to become a pediatrician, Tahira responded by stating that "when you are young some decisions you make aren't the way they are supposed to be. I guess that [is] why. I am always told that I am young; I have enough time to do whatever I wish to do. I am just taking it one step at a time." This statement is intriguing, in that the "decisions [youth] make [may] not [be] the way they are supposed to be." It suggests that that a poor or wrong decision may be associated with being

young, and a characteristic of the optimism associated with being at a stage of exploring how they might translate their interests into career and occupational possibilities.

Among the eight student teachers who were interviewed for the study, those who started teacher education before the age of 20 expressed an interest in a greater variety of educational and occupational options than the older participants. For example, Neka expressed she had an interest in nursing, the constabulary, and marine biology. On the other hand, Jade, the second oldest among the participants, seemed to have been only interested in journalism, and teacher education was supposed to be her route to journalism.

The Influence of Others

"...my brother believed that I had to do something, teachers' college was my only option" - Neka

The other message Tahira's statement sends is that the decision to choose a particular career path can be greatly influenced by others; usually, by those who were closely related to the student. Eleven of the 77 (14%) student teachers, particularly the younger student teachers who participated in the survey, indicated that the influence of others was a reason they decided to enroll in teacher education. As the participants in the purposive sample revealed, friends – as in the case of Mel - and parents and siblings, played an influential role in their decision to go to teachers' college. For example, Neka revealed that it was her older brother who insisted that she enroll in teachers' college, and as she put it, "I did not know what I wanted to do [and] I guess my brother believed that I had to do something, so I guess teachers' college was my only option. So I just went ahead".

Staci and Tahira, two of the younger student teachers, had their list of options reduced by significant others who believed that they were more capable than what the programmes they were aspiring to had to offer. Both Staci and Tahira had considered doing Food and Nutrition at H.E.A.R.T. Trust, a vocational training programme. Staci described the opposition she received to her wish by stating that "... [she] told [her] guardian that [she] wanted to go to the Human Employment and Resource Training Centre [H.E.A.R.T.], she said I can't go there because I am too smart...". Tahira, unlike Staci, was not given a reason why she should not attend H.E.A.R.T., but her aspirations of doing Food and Nutrition was also frowned upon by a parent who was "...not in full agreement with that [H.E.A.R.T.] programme...".

Based on what Tahira, Stacie and Neka said about their post-secondary aspirations being directed/redirected, it would appear that significant others did have an influential role to play in the decisions a significant number of student teachers made regarding their choice of post-secondary schooling.

High School Credentials

"I needed to have five subjects (C.S.E.C.) or more, and I only had four" – Miguel.

The inability to satisfy admission requirements for preferred post-secondary programmes also had an influence on the decision some of these students made regarding their enrolment in teachers' college. The quantity and quality of the academic credentials of Jamaican high school graduates can have an effect on their options to access higher education. Fifty-six students (73%) who participated in the survey component of the study had completed high school up to fifth form (grade 11), and possessed credentials which qualified them for only certain post-secondary

programmes e.g. certificate, diploma, and some associate degree programmes. The majority of the students who participated in this study would have passed a minimum of four required subjects at the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (C.S.E.C.) level which, along with other admission criteria, would have qualified them for a diploma in teaching programme. However, these students would have found it very difficult, if at all possible, to be accepted into more advanced post-secondary programmes such as a three year degree, or nursing programme at the University of the West Indies.

The high school credentials of Adriana, Miguel, and Neka provide a good example of how success in regional examinations, leading to the acquisition of subjects, can influence the number of post-secondary options available to Jamaican high school graduates. Adriana, the only student teacher to complete high school up to C.A.P.E. level (grade 12 and 13), clearly had more post-secondary options from which to choose. When Adriana was asked to speak about her experience in applying to education programmes at the university level she said, “I have applied to every single programme [and] I've been accepted for every programme, except Science, Medicine [and] Pure and Applied Science”.

Miguel, who had completed high school up to fifth form, clearly did not have the same number of options. In Miguel’s case, a lack of C.S.E.C. subjects (four) reduced his chances of attending university and eliminated an opportunity to enrol in a college programme in Canada. Miguel described the disappointment at not getting into the Canadian college programme by stating that “... I needed to have five subjects [Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate] or more, and I only had four...They said I could do another programme, in which I study there for a while, [and] do what they call their high school level first”.

It is also worth noting that several of the student teachers in this study indicated that mathematics was a subject that they were uncomfortable with, and not very competent at. Mathematics is an important subject to pass succesfully at the regional examination level (CSEC), especially if one hopes to be qualified for a wide array of higher education programmes and institutions. It is one of the subjects that several Jamaican tertiary education programmes expect from an applicant in order to satisfy admission requirements. Adriana, the participant with the most high school credentials, and the most qualified for a wider selection of post-secondary programmes, was very animated when she explained that she had “...never really been good at Math, [and to her] it was like a disease...” She went further to say that it was Mr. Jay, her Agricultural Science teacher, who convinced her about the importance of the subject, and through his offer for her to attend his extra lessons (remedial) classes at no charge she was able to pass the examination with a modest grade 3.

The More Affordable Option

“She didn't have the money to send me to school for seven years or more...” - Staci

Several of the student teachers who participated in the study indicated that the cost of financing their post-secondary education was a major issue. Some indicated that they could not afford to attend the higher education programmes to which they had been accepted, or those to which they were aspiring. Adriana, who been accepted to a degree programme at the university, revealed that she could not continue in the programme because she “never had the financial resources to do so; and, at one point never had anyone who could sign for a student loan.” Staci

wanted to pursue a university education; however, her guardian indicated that she “didn't have the money to send [her] to school for seven years or more [and] she couldn't afford Law.” Neka, during our second meeting, indicated she also was aspiring to do another tertiary education programme, but this was dependent on her having the financial means. She said, “I wanted to change my area of study, but due to financial difficulties I [wasn’t] be able to”. Seeing that these students had ultimately entered and completed teachers’ college a simple explanation would suggest that teachers’ college was an affordable option.

The Accessible Option

After closely examining these student teachers’ reasons for enrolling in teacher education, it was apparent that after completing high school many did not have a wide variety of tertiary education options from which to choose. For instance, those who expressed a desire to enter university level programmes could not because they lacked the high school academic credentials, and/or financial means to qualify for admission to these programmes. As the findings showed, the options for these student teachers were further reduced by significant others who may have been more partial to an academic teacher education programme than a programme of a vocational nature. Therefore, teacher education for these student teachers was one of a few, possibly the only, post-secondary educational choice available to them.

The Significance of Teacher Education as a Stepping-Stone

Several of the student teachers who participated in the study indicated that they chose teacher education because they could use it as a stepping-stone to other higher education programmes and possibly other occupational fields. For some, such as Jade, teacher education would be a possible path to journalism. For others, like Tahira, whose choice was influenced by a family member, teachers’ college was viewed as a possible step to a career in medicine. Even today, among students who are enrolled in a four year Bachelor of Education in Teaching Degree programme, it is not surprising to be told by many that teachers’ college was not a first choice for post-secondary schooling, and it is a springboard or stage to a more desired educational or occupational goal. It can be argued that the stepping-stone phenomenon among students in the teachers’ college is prevalent, and for this reason deserving of our full acknowledgement and effort to view it as phenomenon that can have value for both the student teacher and Jamaica.

One reason why this phenomenon might be viewed positively is because it supports the popularly accepted educational principles of “lifelong learning” and “continuing education”. With these principles in mind teacher education, via the teachers’ college, can be viewed as a constructive component of a broader and more complex career plan, one which may eventually lead young student teachers such as Tahira, Staci and Neka toward their ultimate education and career goals. With these principles in mind the stepping-stone concept implies that the youthful student teacher will be engaged with tertiary level schooling for an extended period of time. It suggests that their education does not stop after completing a Diploma or a Bachelor of Education in Teaching. This can be viewed as a positive endeavour particularly if it results in the student teacher remaining in higher education to further develop personal and professional skills. By completing the teacher education program students can learn a new/other skill(s) in addition to teaching, buy time to “crystallize” educational and occupational values and aspirations (Ginzberg, 1963) and insulate themselves from a depressed economy when there may not be an abundance of employment opportunities in teaching.

If teacher education is viewed as a valuable constituent of students' lifelong learning and continuing education, then what can the teachers ' college potentially do to address this social phenomenon? I believe the possible answer begins with the teachers' college conceptualizing teacher education curriculum in broad and more complex terms. In exemplary teacher education programmes these features are fundamental, and are usually of a high standard and quality (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Teacher education should no longer be considered merely the compilation of subjects and syllabus documents which set out educational aims, objectives, activities, theory and practical experiences. Neither should teacher education curriculum be just about a technocratic transmission of knowledge. Teacher education must resist the pressure from internal and external sources which advocate that the most essential purpose of teacher education is to impart knowledge and train teachers.

Teacher education curriculum could be more holistic; one which aims at being experiential and liberating. Within this pedagogical framework teacher education would be concerned with all of the student teacher's experiences, whether planned or not, formal or hidden, and can be acknowledged as important to learning to teach (Miller & Sellers, 1990; Zais, 1981). Teacher education curriculum of this nature would deemphasize - not remove - the reductionist notions that subject knowledge, educational theory and teaching strategies are the most vital and sole qualities of learning to teach and being a teacher. A holistic curriculum would encourage student teachers to explore beyond the technical aspects of teaching in hope of developing a more comprehensive understanding of what it means to be a teacher, professional, and global citizen. A holistic teacher education programme of this nature would create space to explore issues such as teachers' college serving as a "stepping-stone" to other academic and career goals.

Teachers' college may not be the final stop in the educational and career journey of numerous young Jamaican student teachers. With this understanding, could more have been done for the students who participated in this study, during their three years at teachers' college, to inform, guide, and support their educational and occupational plans and aspirations? Could more have been offered in addition to the job search skills which they would have been taught in courses such as Personal Development, or to the support they would have received from the Placement Officer, Guidance Teacher, or sympathetic Lecturers? In my opinion, the uncertainty about future goals and aspirations, and the disappointment and frustration associated with not working or having the financial resources to pursue further studies, may have been mitigated to some extent had there been opportunities within the teacher education programme for these student teachers to thoroughly explore the educational and occupational options available to them following teachers' college.

Indications that more could have been done in terms of preparation for life after teachers' college surfaced during my conversations with these student teachers six months after their completion of the programme. It was at this time I heard what I believed was a narrow discourse related to educational and occupational plans. When they spoke about pursuing a first degree their options were usually limited to either completing the degree at another local teachers' college, or the local university. When they spoke about finding a job in teaching this was usually confined to employment at one of the local high schools, primary schools, or early childhood centers. Very little was said about pursuing further education or employment beyond the shores

of Jamaica - either through distance education or via migration. There was also very little said about using their newly acquired qualifications to seek volunteer positions or employment in teaching in either the Caribbean region or further overseas.

I believe, within the context of a holistic teacher education programme the discourse related to educational and occupational plans and aspirations may be broadened. I offer this suggestion with good intentions, but not irresponsibly incognizant of the challenges and limitations which may besiege the ambitious young Jamaicans who may be eager to study or work outside of their small island developing state. A postcolonial analysis reminds us of the social, economic, cultural, and political structures that hegemonically steered these student teachers down the educational and occupational paths they had started. It also helps to explain why school and living expenses, work permits, student visas, family responsibilities, academic credentials, and a willingness to leave the familiar for the strange can be a challenge for a keen novice teacher with limited resources, qualifications, information, and support. The postcolonial standpoint recognizes the seriousness of "brain drain" and how the loss of innovative and productive workers and professionals can deplete a small developing country of its prized human resources, and most vital elements for sustainable development.

The Significance of Teacher Education as an Accessible Higher Education Option

The majority of the students who participated in the purposive sample of the study expressed a desire to enrol in university level programme at some point in order to earn a degree. These students could not fulfill this desire immediately after completing high school for reasons related to limited academic qualifications, insufficient financial resources, or the influence of significant others. For these reasons, it would appear that teacher education, by default, emerged as one of a few, if not the only, post-secondary educational option for these student teachers. The teachers' college as one of a limited number of post-secondary options is not new in the Jamaican context. Evan's (2001) in her study also noted that a significant number of Jamaican teachers chose to "…go to teachers' college, because of the limited opportunities that [existed] at the tertiary level" (p. 31).

Understanding that the teachers' college may provide one of, if not the only, opportunity for young and ambitious Jamaicans to continue their education beyond high school should be enough incentive to try and make sure that the teachers' college remains a viable and accessible higher education option for those who may be disadvantaged as a result of social, cultural, economic, or political factors. As Gentles (2004) informs us, "Teachers' colleges are the cheapest form of tertiary level education available [and] thus heavily subscribed by the poorest students" (p. 132). Interestingly, the role of the teachers' college is a salient part of Jamaica's colonial legacy; whereby, after both slave emancipation and colonial independence it has served as a stepping-stone to higher education and a means to upward social mobility for many marginalized Jamaicans (King, 1998; Hall & Bryan, 1997; Evans, 1993; Gentles, 2003).

Given that teacher education is an accessible post-secondary option for many young Jamaicans, how do we ensure that the teachers' college remains viable and accessible? And, is it fair to so many young and ambitious Jamaicans that teacher education, in spite of its good intentions, remain one of, if not the only option for higher education? In my opinion, the answer to the first question is straightforward; that is, if teacher education remains one of, if not the only,

post-secondary option for a substantial proportion of the nation's marginalized youth population then it should be as accessible as possible. Therefore, teacher education should remain a feasible option for those who have limited qualifications and financial means to access other forms of tertiary schooling. It should also be open to those students who, as a result of their youthfulness and impressionability, are coerced into attending teachers' college. The answer to the second question, however, is not as straightforward because it asks to us to consider how the post-secondary options of more Jamaican students might be expanded so that "all eggs do not have to be placed in one basket". In the following paragraphs I discuss what might be considered.

Before discussing how the post-secondary options of marginalized Jamaican youth may be expanded it is important to note that Jamaica has followed behind other middle income countries in regard to the access their most vulnerable youth have to higher education (Evans & Burke, 2006). This is important to recognize because access to higher education is vital to the sustainable development of any nation. Educational levels in a country are usually directly proportional to its level of growth and development. For this reason, education and opportunities to access quality higher education should be viewed as essential mechanisms for economic growth and sustainability.

If the post-secondary options for young working class Jamaicans are to be expanded then there should be a continued push within the Jamaican public education system to find strategies and initiatives which enhance student success in high schools. This might include continuing to find strategies that improve student competence in core subjects like Mathematics and English Language, subjects which are usually essential prerequisites for acceptance into numerous tertiary level programmes. At the same time, tertiary level institutions should closely examine the value and relevancy they place on these subjects as prerequisites for admission to some of their programmes.

Jamaican high schools, as I have recommended for the teachers' college, may also consider developing or expanding comprehensive educational and career planning programmes which assist the young high school student with his or her post-secondary plans and aspirations. A similar recommendation has come from the Task Force on Educational Reform (2004) stating that a revised Jamaican secondary school curriculum should include "cross-curricula themes such as career education...for the holistic development of the child." (p. 100). High schools may also consider "extending the length of the schooling experience" as a means to keeping young fifth form students in secondary school for a while longer. Ideas such as these are not groundbreaking. The call for their implementation exists within Jamaica's Task Force on Education Reform Report (2004) particularly in the sections that recommend improvement strategies for curriculum, teaching and learning.

Finally, I believe that community college education in Jamaica is an underrepresented source of higher education in proportion to the size of Jamaica's population, particularly the age 18-24 cohort. An expanded community college sector and attractive vocational and apprenticeship programmes might provide many more post-secondary options for Jamaican high school graduates. The University Council of Jamaica's (UCJ) list of recognized institutions and programmes, at first glance may appear to be quite lengthy and fairly extensive. However, upon closer examination, it appears that the diversity of programmes and the capacity to accommodate

students in particular study areas is not as impressive as may seem. For example, approximately 14 of the 68 (21%) University Council of Jamaica recognized higher education institutions and programmes focusing on teacher education, and another eight (12%) specialize in theology (www.ucj.org.jm). In contrast to this is the presence of only five community colleges (7%) which offer a wider variety of educational choices in such fields as business studies, environment studies, information technology, computer servicing and electronics, management information systems, library technical studies, performing arts, clothing and fashion, architectural and construction technology, and hospitality and hotel management (The Council of Community Colleges: Corporate Plan 2010-2013). This creates an interesting situation in that approximately one third of the registered and accredited post-secondary programmes in Jamaica focus on preparing the citizen for either the classroom or the pulpit. Maybe this should come as no surprise given the significant purpose education and religion has served in maintaining social order and control in Jamaica's colonial society (Turner, 1987).

Conclusion

The knowledge and understanding provided by the Jamaican student teachers who participated in this study has confirmed what I learned early during informal conversations with my past students; that is, teacher education may serve as a stepping-stone to do something else. The invaluable information provided by those who participated in this research has confirmed this and more. Their words have helped to explain and provide a deeper awareness of how education in a postcolonial/neoliberal context may not be equitable; yet, still be one of the best means of resisting and reversing this inequity. Their voices have also shed light on how youthfulness, the influence of others, high school credentials, and affordable and accessible higher education can play a significant role in determining future educational and occupational goals and aspirations. The insight provided by these student teachers has taken the discourse of "why teacher education" beyond merely the reasons that influenced their decision to enter or to become teachers. As result of their openness to share their thoughts, beliefs and experiences I now have a better understanding of what value and benefit the Jamaican student teacher can possibly obtain from teacher education. This enhanced understanding offers hope and optimism in that it implies that student teachers can benefit holistically from the teacher education experience in spite of their intentions to use teacher education as a "stepping-stone to do something else" or because they have limited desires to teach.

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