“A STEPPING-STONE TO DO SOMETHING ELSE”
EXPLORING WHY JAMAICAN STUDENT TEACHERS ENTER AND COMPLETE
TEACHER EDUCATION

BY

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
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Abstract

The extensive educational reforms currently being implemented in Jamaica, in addition to my personal curiosity as a teacher educator, provide the rationale for this research. A better awareness and understanding of who enrolls to learn to teach may be critical to the viability and success of the current reforms taking place in the Jamaican education system, and teacher education in particular.

This study explores why Jamaican student teachers, who were not aspiring to learn to be teachers or teach, entered and completed a three-year teacher education programme. The study was guided by two essential research questions: (i) What accounts for Jamaican students, who indicate that teacher education and teaching are not their educational or occupational aspirations, entering and completing teacher education? (ii) What do these Jamaican students experience within the teacher education program that contributes to their belief that such a program is of benefit to their educational and occupational aspirations?

Postcolonial theory (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffen, 1989) and theory of occupational choice (Ginzberg, 1963, 1972) serve as analytical frameworks 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; and, grounded theory the means to collecting and analysing what they had to say about entering and completing teacher education.
The findings raise the notion of “youthfulness”, and how this may influence aspirations and decisions in an economic and academic environment of limited options and opportunities. They suggest that teacher education may serve as a “stepping-stone” to more desirable educational or occupational goals. The findings also reveal what these student teachers believed were significant aspects of the teacher education experience, and how this experience may contribute to their future educational or occupational plans and aspirations.

Finally, this study supports the movement to reform teacher education in Jamaica; however, not at the expense of reducing the opportunities for higher education within the wider Jamaican populace. Suggestions are presented regarding possible reforms to secondary and post-secondary education in general; therefore, reforms which may support or enhance existing teacher education programmes.
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Prof. Carl James, my mentor, colleague, and dear friend. The journey would never have begun without the words of advice, guidance, and encouragement you provided when the thought of doing doctoral studies was just a “twinkle in my eyes”. I cannot thank you enough for the critical insight, time and suggestions you unselfishly provided during the process. In the acknowledgements of my Master’s Thesis I said “I hope we will work together again – either here (Toronto) or in distant lands”. It puts a smile on my face to see that that has happened.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Abstract**

i

**Acknowledgements**

iii.

**Chapter One: Introduction**

i. Becoming a teacher  
ii. My interest in goals, aspirations and becoming a teacher  
The Aims of the Study  
The Rationale for This Study  
Conceptual Frames  
i. Postcolonial theory  
ii. Theory of occupational choice  
Outline of the Thesis  
Summary  

**Chapter Two: Review of Literature**

Choosing Teacher Education and/or Teaching  
Why Individuals Choose to Teach  
Why Individuals Choose Teacher Education  
The Jamaican Education System in Earlier Times  
Normal Schools and Government Role in Teacher Training  
Who Has Entered Teacher Education and Teaching in Jamaica  
Choosing Teaching /Teacher Education: The Jamaican Context  
Teacher Education: Value to Educational/Occupational Aspirations  
Summary  

vii
Chapter Three: Methodology

Qualitative Research 56

The Context 58

i. Admissions 58

ii. Programmes 60

iii. Courses 62

iv. Teaching practicum 63

v. Other activities 65

vi. The students 65

vii. The draft strategic plan (2008-2018) 67

Accessing the Site 68

The Participants 69

The Methodological Approach 72

i. Qualitative research 72

ii. Teacher research 75

iii. Grounded theory 77

iv. Data collection using grounded theory 80

v. Questionnaires 80

vi. Interviews 82

vii. Documentary data 85

viii. Data analysis using grounded theory 85

ix. Coding 86

Content Analysis and the Presentation of Findings 88

The Role of Literature in the Analysis of the Data 89

Limitations of the Study 90
Chapter Four: Participant Profiles

Eight Student Teachers 96
Profile of Eight Student teachers: Summary of Data (Table 1) 97

Tahira 99
Staci 104
Mel 108
Neka 111
Miguel 115
Adriana 120
Jade 125
Gabriel 129

Summary 133

Chapter Five: Findings

Why Choose Teacher Education 135
Youthfulness 136
Limited Options 142

Number of High School Credentials 146
Dreaded Mathematics 148
Finding Funds for School 152
Teachers’ College the More Acceptable Option 156

Summary 158
Chapter Six: Findings

The Teacher Education Experience 160
A Comprehensive and Challenging Programme 161
Demanding Coursework 165
Moments of Success 168
Teaching practice 170
The Value of Teacher Education 173
The Status of Being a Teacher 174
Learning Skills for Teaching 176
Personal Development 178
i. Professionalism 178
ii. Maturation 180
iii. Interpersonal skills 180
iv. Creativity 181
Activities and Aspirations 182
Benefits to Educational and Occupational Aspirations 192
Summary 198

Chapter Seven: Discussion

The Value of Student Teacher Voices to Teacher Education 200
What Can We Learn From Student Teachers…? 201
i. Maintain teacher education as an accessible education option 201
ii. Teacher education: More than just learning to teach 203
iii. Modify the teacher education programme 204
What Can Be Done if Teacher Education is Useful for Different Reasons 207
i. Envision and create more holistic teacher education 208
Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Reflecting on the Past and Future 218

References 226

Appendices

Appendix A – Request for Permission to Conduct Research 235
Appendix B - Introduction Letter to Prospective Participants 239
Appendix C – Participant Consent Form 242
Appendix D – Student Teacher Survey 244
Appendix E – Interview Questions 246
Appendix F – Second Interview Questions 249
Appendix G – Selective Coding... 250

Figures

Figure 1 - Post-secondary Aspirations 260
Figure 2 - Reasons for Enrolling in Teacher Education 261
Chapter One

Introduction

i. Becoming a teacher. I began teaching soon after graduating from York University in 1981 with a combined honours degree in physical education and geography. Finding a job in Canada after completing my undergraduate studies was difficult and, for this reason, I was open to working outside of Canada if the opportunity presented itself. My job-hunting started during the height of a global recession, when job prospects in Canada were supposedly very scarce. After accumulating numerous job rejection letters, the opportunity to work at a prominent high school in Kingston, Jamaica presented itself. I accepted an offer to teach geography at the school for a two year period.

I remember being both elated and anxious about the opportunity to teach; elated that I would be working in a field which was usually held in high regard and anxious because I was unsure about my abilities to teach. At this time a university degree in geography was the only qualification I had for the position. I did not possess any credentials, or formal experience, directly related to the occupation; after all, my only experience with what I considered comparable to teaching was what I had done as a soccer (football) coach, as a summer student recreational worker, and as a member of the Student Teaching Corps in my senior years of high school. I also had minimal aspirations or desire to teach. In preparation for teaching in Jamaica I read as many education and resource books as possible, and I reassured myself that I could meet the challenge by teaching the way my best teachers had taught me. My teacher education up to this point closely resembled what Lortie (1975) has described as the “apprenticeship of observation”, a theory which claims that the pedagogy of many classroom teachers is strongly influenced by the way they were taught in school (pp. 61-67).
I must have performed adequately and showed some promise because I was not asked to relinquish my position after my first year of teaching. My confidence level increased with each positive comment from staff and students about my teaching abilities, work ethic, interpersonal skills, and level of professionalism. I also found myself enjoying teaching, especially as I became increasingly comfortable with curriculum, colleagues, and most of all the students. I came to realize the immense influence good teaching could have on the academic, social, and personal development of young students. This helped me appreciate and enjoy the occupation even more. As a result, I seized the opportunity, when it arose, to teach fulltime and enroll in a teacher education programme.

In my second year of teaching I enrolled in the University of the West Indies In-service Diploma in Education programme. The length of the programme was one academic year, and it was structured so that the in-service students could teach classes at their respective schools from Monday to Thursday, and attend university lectures and tutorials all day Friday. Being an in-service programme made it convenient for those of us who did not have teaching qualifications, but who were currently teaching in Jamaica’s education system. This programme provided the opportunity to enter teacher education after becoming acquainted with the reality of teaching. Unlike many of the student teachers whom I teach today, I had the luxury of previewing the duties and responsibilities of a teacher before having to decide whether I wanted to learn to teach.

After teaching in Jamaica for two fulfilling years and completing my teacher education I returned to Canada where I taught for 10 years in a middle school in the Ontario public school system. I returned to Canada believing that I would be able to use my new skills, qualifications,
and experience to teach in a system where I would be better compensated for my labour, and therefore in a better position to achieve other life goals and aspirations. As a middle school teacher I developed a greater appreciation for and an enjoyment of teaching. During this time, I realized that teaching would be my career; as a result, I made it a point to expand my qualifications and improve my “craft” (Beattie, 2006) by participating in the professional development sessions and additional qualification courses made available through the school, school board, and university programmes.

It was also during this time that I became particularly interested in the career goals and aspirations of the early adolescent Black male students whom I taught and coached. The desires and plans they expressed about becoming student and professional athletes seemed too prominent and poignant to be flippantly regarded as mere wishful thinking and the misguided life goals and ambitions of youth. For me a deeper and more intriguing story was within, a story about the hopes and dreams associated with being young, Black, and male in an education system and society which seemed to be more adverse than accommodating to their career goals and aspirations. My curiosity concerning the career goals and aspirations of these grade eight students was the impetus for my Masters in Education research. Like the student teachers in this study, those I included in my Masters study had also piqued my pedagogical curiosity and, as a result, were called upon to offer their voices to the process of developing a better understanding of their lived experiences.

I, my spouse of 13 years and our child migrated from Canada to Jamaica at the turn of the new millennium. The decision to move to Jamaica was greatly influenced by several push and pull factors. Some push factors included the ubiquitous commercialism, consumerism, racism, and cold winters which seemed to be increasingly defining and adding to the complexity of life
in the North. The opportunity for us, particularly our child, to experience some of the aforementioned within a different, yet familiar, social, cultural, economical, and geographical space was what pulled us to the much warmer climate of this developing small island state.

It was in Jamaica that I entered the field of teacher education and, it would seem, it is probably where I will exit the field of education. Since the year 2000 I have worked as a teacher educator at Town Teachers’ College (pseudonym) in Kingston, Jamaica. I should add that Town is the site for this research study. I am currently a Senior Lecturer (Acting) in the Geography, History and Social Studies Department. Interestingly, I entered teacher education as I did teaching with no official qualifications and very little experience. The only experience I believe resembled teacher education up to this point was the little mentoring that I provided the student teachers in Canada with whom I worked with as an Associate Teacher during their teaching practicum. However, entering teacher education is not as unusual as entering teaching without qualifications because, as the research has shown, most teacher educators are not formally prepared to teach student teachers (Beck and Kosnik, 2003; Murray and Male, 2005). Though some initiatives to prepare teacher educators working with student teachers currently exist (Korthagen, Loughran and Lunenberg, 2005; Kosnik & Beck, 2008; Kosnik et al., 2011; Schuck, Abusson & Buchanan, 2008) it is still the case that many are either members of academia and/or teachers who were exemplary in their respective subject areas or fields (Murray and Male, 2005).

ii. My interest in goals, aspirations and becoming a teacher. As a new teacher educator, 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 et al., 2008, Brookhart & Freeman, 1992, Evans, 1993, Lortie, 1975; Malderaz et al., 2007). However, over the past 11 years, in my capacity as a teacher educator, I have become especially interested in the more extrinsic reasons why certain Jamaican student teachers chose to enter teacher education, and what appeared to be a path to teaching. I was fascinated with the substantial number of student teachers who seemed to have entered teacher education for reasons other than a strong desire to become a teacher.

The conversations I had with my Jamaican student teachers over the years, predominantly young, Black females, from urban or rural working class backgrounds, revealed that they 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. 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.

In retrospect, my path into teacher education and teaching and the paths that many of my students followed were very different. Not aspiring to learn to teach, or wanting to become teachers before entering teacher education were the most salient similarities that we seemed to share. In a relatively developed economy like Canada’s there were many post-secondary options
for me to choose from after graduating from high school. Furthermore, access to these programmes was not dependent upon my performance on standardised tests; access was more reliant upon my academic performance in the high school I attended, and the admissions criteria of the institution to which I applied. I was also able to afford the cost of post-secondary schooling by virtue of my privilege as a member of Canada’s large and economically comfortable middle class\(^1\). I should mention that there was very little influence from my parents in terms of what I should do after completing high school. Other than the subtle suggestions that I should consider medicine, and the expectation that I would further my education, they recognized my “coming of age” and allowed me to decide my future educational and career path.

These narratives about educational, occupational and career aspirations, goals, plans and realities, my own and those of the students with whom I have interacted, are significant to this study. They are the basis for my curiosity, puzzlement, and research interest. Collectively these stories have revealed the complexity and multiplicity of educational and career aspirations, choice, and attainment. Personally, they have disrupted my belief that our educational and occupational plans are predominantly the result of what we want to do and be, and if we just set our minds to it we can achieve. My work as a Graduate Assistant, with OISE’s Initial Teacher Education programme, has also contributed to my understanding that career planning, especially as it relates to teaching, is not always a simple and straightforward endeavour. My focus during this research was on what teacher candidates expected from OISE’s consecutive teacher

\(^1\) I should add that as a Black-Canadian, the son of Jamaican parents, I sometimes questioned the degree to which I benefitted from this privilege. I often wondered if this status lessened my opportunities; therefore, possibly explaining why White guidance teachers did not encourage me to pursue my first postsecondary interest which was to obtain a degree in Radio and Television Arts. I also wondered if it was the reason why I received numerous job application rejection letters after graduation from university, and why I was unsuccessful securing what seemed to be a sure job after passing through two positive rounds of interviews with a reputable provincial crown corporation in the process of mass hiring.
education programme, and how this may have contributed to issues such as withdrawal from the programme (Cummings & Moizumi, 2010; Thomson et al., 2010). However, the data resulting from this research also revealed that ambiguity about wanting to do teacher education and teaching does exist even among teacher candidates in a much different economic and cultural context than that of Jamaica.

The reasons expressed by my students in Jamaica regarding why they entered teacher education, the postgraduate work I have accomplished to this point, and my own reflections about teacher education and teaching have encouraged me to think deeply about how individuals might find their way into certain educational programmes and on route to a particular occupation. My thinking has also been influenced by three studies which explore 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. For example, in both Bastick’s (1999) and Evans’ (1993) studies there were participants who indicated that their decision to become teachers was influenced by the affordability of teachers’ college. In my opinion, this response seemed better suited to explaining why the individual had chosen teacher education as opposed to why they were choosing teaching. Responses such as these are what led me to believe that it might be worthwhile to focus specifically on the reasons why individuals chose teacher education. I believed that focusing on these reasons and the underlying issues might be one way of explaining why teacher education was an affordable stepping-stone option for a significant number of the student teachers with whom I had interacted. I also envisioned an
exploration of this nature leading to the revelation and discussion of other issues, such as how students might be disadvantaged by formal examinations which dominate some education systems; how youthfulness may influence important educational and career decisions; how post secondary educational options may be limited as a result of academic performance and accessible tertiary programmes; or, how the legacy of a post-colonial education system may still be influencing the post-secondary options that are accessible to poor working-class students of African ancestry.

This study is also a response to what appears to be a paucity of research which focuses on the value of teacher education to the student teacher. There is research which shows that not all student teachers enter teacher education wanting to become teachers, and that teacher education serves a purpose beyond preparing the student teacher for a career in teaching (Hobson et al., 2006). The reasons given by many of the Jamaican student teachers for entering teachers’ college have clearly indicated that they hoped to gain more from the programme than just learning to teach. For those who planned to use it as a “stepping-stone to do something else” there was the hope that it would help them to matriculate with a university degree programme. But, what about those who were persuaded to attend teachers’ college rather than do nothing at all? What about those for whom teachers’ college was basically the only affordable post-secondary option? What value did teachers’ college hold for these student teachers? These questions suggest that there is much more to know and understand in regard to what value and benefits teacher education can provide to the student teacher, particularly those who are not keen about teacher education and teaching. I believe a deeper analysis of this aspect of teacher education may reveal the benefits that a teacher education programme provides, including benefits which are beyond those related
to learning to teach. In the following sections I discuss the aims and rationale for this research, the conceptual frameworks that have influenced my thinking, and the outline of the thesis.

The Aims of the Study

One of the aims of this study is to explore why students who did not aspire to teach entered and completed a teacher education programme. The other is to better understand what these student teachers experienced during a three-year teacher education programme, and what value they believed they gained from having completed it. The student teachers that participated in this study and ultimately contributed to achieving these research aims 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 what I believe may be new and relevant data. I also decided to use this research strategy as a means of 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 post-colonial theory (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffen, 1989) and theory of occupational choice (Ginzburg, 1951, 1963, 1972), would augment the concepts and theories which emerged from the empirical data.

The study was guided by two essential research questions:
1. 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?

2. What do these Jamaican students experience within the teacher education programme that contributes to their belief that such a programme is of benefit to their educational and occupational aspirations?

These questions were designed to help unveil the complexity and perplexity associated with choosing teacher education as a post-secondary educational option in Jamaica. The results are intended to broaden our knowledge and understanding of a particular type of Jamaican student teacher. I also hope that the results may serve the purpose of informing teacher education initiatives, such as those related to admissions, curriculum, pedagogy, and ultimately student competence and success.

The Rationale for This Study

Dewey (1916) stated that education is “a necessity of life”, and teaching and learning within formal systems of education is critical to the sustained existence of a society (pp. 1-9). It may be said that teachers, as key constituents of the formal education system, are key contributors to the subsistence and development of a society. Schools, as one of the incubators of life, create social settings or “mini-societies” where the knowledge, norms and values, which are required to function within a society, are transmitted between teachers and students (Evans, 2003, p. 30).

The teacher should then be considered essential to the life of Jamaican society where educational reforms are created and initiated with the intention of replacing or transforming obsolete and irrelevant curriculum and pedagogical practices with that which is more pragmatic and culturally relevant. The Jamaican teacher may be considered vital to the society because of the essential
role he/she plays in the application of this reform which is intended to enhance the academic, cognitive, social, economic, and cultural education and growth of its citizens, and contribute to national sustainable development. I would further argue that the preparation of Jamaican teachers is essential, presuming that student teachers may at some period, for whatever period of time, become the teachers who implement the curriculum related to these reforms in the classroom.

These are some of the reasons why I believe it is timely for research which may support and contribute to the reforms currently taking place in the Jamaican public education system, and teacher education in particular. I am referring specifically to research that contributes to a better understanding of individuals who enter into teacher education, and who may eventually be the frontline administrators of educational initiatives which are designed to provide the nation’s citizenry with an improved education system. A comprehensive study of student teachers should provide useful and meaningful knowledge for teachers’ colleges and a national education programme which has been subjected to harsh public criticism (The Gleaner Monday June 8th, 2009), despite the attempts to reform and improve the system.

Jamaica is by no means new to educational reform. Over the past two decades in particular, educational change has been active at all levels. During this period there have been revisions to primary education through the Primary Education Support Project (PESP), a project which was officially launched in January 2001 as a continuation of the gains made in the early-nineties under the Primary Education Improvement Projects I and II (PEIP 1, PEIP) (http://www.moec.gov.jm retrieved June 10, 2011). There have also been changes at the secondary school level through the Reform of Secondary Education Curriculum (R.O.S.E.). This reform was implemented in 1994 and was designed to provide a common integrated curriculum

Reforms to teacher education have also been ongoing. There have been reforms to education courses which are specially designed for student teachers. One course in particular, The Emergent Teacher\(^2\), was developed with the aim of assisting student teachers to develop a better sense of self, and what the occupation of teaching might entail. This course, along with four others, was a component of a Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE) and Institute of Education (UWI) initiative started in 2001 to revise the education programme in Jamaica’s teachers’ colleges. This initiative was deemed necessary in order to prepare teachers pedagogically for the revisions which had been made to the primary and secondary school curricula (Evans, 2006). This teacher education course was designed to allow first-year student teachers the opportunities to explore their perceptions of teaching, examine the characteristics that had shaped their lives, and develop a better understanding of their own identity (The Emergent Teacher Syllabus, January 2004). The course also provided an opportunity for student teachers to engage in meaningful activities such as observational and service learning activities in community based projects. Connecting to such projects would hopefully help them to “develop a socio-cultural consciousness, caring and affirming attitude towards all [their] students, and an ability and commitment to work for their development” (Evans, 2007, p. 157).

Generally speaking, this course was intended to give student teachers a chance to learn more about teaching and themselves, and to understand what it means to be a professional and productive citizen in Jamaican society.

\(^2\) This course is now titled The Emergent Professional. The change came into effect when the course was revised for the recent Bachelor of Education degree Programme being offered in the teachers’ colleges. From what I have learned, as of May 2012, this course may be undergoing further revisions.
Currently, there is a much wider-scale reform initiative taking place in Jamaica’s teacher education sector. This initiative entails the restructuring of the three-year Diploma in Teaching programme into a four-year Bachelor of Education in Teaching Degree Programme. This huge change stems from the report of the Task Force on Educational Reform in Jamaica where it was recommended that teachers in the profession should have a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree by 2015 (Jamaica: A Transformed Education System Report, 2004). Initially, as a means to realizing this national vision, ten teachers’ colleges offering teacher education diplomas formed the Consortium of Institutions for Teacher Education (C.I.T.E.). Part of the Consortium’s vision was to “enhance” and “improve the capacity” and “capability” of the colleges to respond to the call for a more qualified teacher education graduate (http://www.sjtc-ja.com/BEdCite.html, http://www.stcoll.edu.jm/cite.html retrieved 13/04/2009). The previous Government placed a moratorium on the consortium model; however, they have still mandated that all teachers’ colleges offer a teacher education degree programme. In September 2011, Town Teachers’ college officially started admitting students who intend to complete a Bachelor of Education in Teaching Degree.

The goals and objectives set out in Town’s current strategic plan provide further justification for this research. The plan addresses three areas which are critical to the operation of the college: academic, administrative and financial. In the section pertaining to academics, reference is made to the sort of graduate the college hopes to prepare. The profile of this graduate is in keeping with the Ministry of Education’s goals for higher standards and qualifications among teachers. Like the Ministry of Education, those who have established Town’s future goals agree that a Diploma in Education or a university degree in a specialty subject area are “no longer sufficient; teachers must possess both the teaching certification and a degree” (Draft
Interestingly, very little is said about the type of recruit or applicant they seek. This suggests that the individual who decides to enter teachers’ college to earn a Bachelor in Education may not be that different from the individual who entered the Diploma in Teaching Programme. This creates an interesting situation in that the teachers’ colleges will continue to accept students who are similar to those they admitted into the previous programme; however, it must offer these candidates a more academically rigorous and challenging teacher education curriculum in order to prepare teachers of a high standard with increased qualifications.

It therefore seems prudent that there be a better understanding of the individuals who apply, and are selected to carry out the essential educational and socializing functions of formal teaching. As I stated earlier, individuals who enter teacher education, whether they aspire to be teachers or not, may ultimately find themselves in a classroom educating the nation’s citizens. For reasons such as this, I believe it would be useful to move beyond a basic understanding of the intrinsic and extrinsic reasons why Jamaican student teachers choose teacher education. Evans (2000) suggests that teacher education can do more in regards to acquiring a better understanding of teacher applicants, and those who enter teacher education. She states that “we know little about what and how students learn during the pre-training phase” (p. 24), thus a better understanding of the pre-trained applicant might be a worthwhile endeavour. As Evans further points out, the experiences of the applicant prior to teacher education are important to acknowledge and understand, in that they could have significant implications for curriculum planning and delivery (p.8). In support of what Evans is suggesting, I have designed this study as a means to better understand student teachers before they entered teacher education, by examining why they chose to enroll despite limited aspirations to go into teaching. I also hope
that the findings from this study will contribute to broadening teacher education programmes in ways that, in the absence of alternative postsecondary educational opportunities, will meet the educational needs, interests and expectations of both aspiring and non-aspiring teachers.

**Conceptual Frames**

1. Postcolonial theory. Postcolonial theory is one of two conceptual frameworks that are used to assess and explain why certain Jamaican citizens find themselves in teacher education and, in many cases, ultimately teaching. It is important to recognize that education, including teacher education, in colonial Jamaica served as an instrument to suppress and manipulate the actions, thoughts, and values of the majority black working class population (Bacchus, 2006; D’Oyley, 1963; Gentles, 2003; Miller, 1987; Turner, 1987; Whyte, 1983). Following emancipation, achieving this purpose within the context of the labour market was not an easy task for the colonial rulers. The numerous work stoppages, strikes, and rebellions by the ex-slave population, within Jamaican society, were a clear indication that another approach would have to be taken to produce a submissive and cooperative workforce. Therefore, education, from elementary through to teacher education, was viewed by the British as an effective agent for socializing the masses in the social behaviours, and values they desired. As Turner (1987) states:

   If the [Jamaican] labour market could not force the development of attitudes and the behaviour desired, then it was left to education through its affective process to teach the acceptance of the prescribed economic status and of such puritan virtues as industry, perseverance, and continence in appetites. (p.58)

   The socializing intentions of the colonial education system did not have the best interests of the Jamaican masses at heart; however, it could be argued that many used the opportunities afforded by these colonial education policies, institutions, and curriculum that were established
by the British government over the years. For instance, elementary education offered a more formal type of education to a wider cross-section of the Black population than what was available prior to emancipation. Furthermore, teacher education offered the “best and the brightest” from this population the opportunity to advance their education to a higher level. This in turn facilitated the upward social mobility of the trained teacher, and the chance to educate his/her fellow citizens in the hope that this education would also improve their social status and well-being. In retrospect, this was a remarkable attitude for a Black, trained teacher to possess after having been taught and required to teach a prescribed and oppressive colonial curriculum.

The experiences of Black Jamaican student teachers today are distinct from those in the past. For example, the student teacher today has easier access to various levels of education. This student teacher, unlike those in earlier times, is also likely to have experienced a more relevant and liberating Jamaican/Caribbean-focused curriculum. Although, for the most part, the experiences of Jamaican student teachers today and those of yesteryear are quite distinct it may be argued that they do share some similarities. For instance, in contemporary Jamaica, a significant number of Black Jamaicans from working class backgrounds access higher education through teacher education institutions. This in turn provides many from humble backgrounds with the opportunity to move upward socially and economically, and a chance for a better quality of life. Also, like their predecessors, Black Jamaican student teachers today are placed in a position where they can positively influence the lives of younger Jamaicans with whom they may share similar circumstances and experiences.

On the surface, social phenomenon such as this may appear to be simple and straightforward. However, peeling away the layers may reveal additional knowledge, meaning, and understanding regarding what has been observed, read, or heard within the social world of
the research participant. A complete and deeper understanding may not be easily achieved by utilizing research methodology which relies heavily upon participant disclosure, and researcher observation and interpretation. This is the point at which methodological strategies such as grounded theory may fall short of providing the most comprehensive understanding of the research participant’s experience. I believe theoretical standpoints are needed to complement the “voice” of both the researcher and the researched in order to make greater sense of the social, cultural, historical, political, and economic phenomenon which is under study.³

I believe that postcolonial theory can be a useful analytical tool for viewing, thinking, and critiquing the impact that imperialism and colonialism have had on colonized nations and their peoples. It may serve to explain why a significant number of young Black working class Jamaicans still find easier access to higher education through the teachers’ college. It is also important to acknowledge the complexity of postcolonial theory when considering its utility and effectiveness as a tool for critical analysis. As a theoretical framework it has been subjected to much interpretation, debate, and critique and, as a result, has expanded into a wide range of definitions and meaning (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffen, 2007). Defining the postcolonial period, for example, is one dimension of this analytical framework which has oftentimes been problematic. Whether this was the period following the emancipation of slave communities in colonial territories, or when colonial nations achieved independence from colonial rulers, or is a continuation under the banner of neo-colonialism, the issue of “when” was the postcolonial is one which is perplexing, nebulous, and debatable (Childs & Williams, 1997). For the purpose of this research, postcolonial is understood to be the period which starts with the emancipation of the slave population in Jamaica, including the nation’s independence from Great Britain, and

³ I discuss, in more detail, the relationship between grounded theory and theoretical frameworks/standpoints in Chapter 3.
continued up to the present day. Postcolonial theory, as an analytical tool to be used in this research, is applicable to this period in time.

My understanding of postcolonial theory has been largely influenced by the thoughts and ideas in the postcolonial discourse of a variety of academics, writers, artists, activists, and freedom fighters (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffen, 1989; Biko, 1978; Childs & Williams, 1997; Fanon, 2004; Freire, 1970; Manley, 1990; Miller, 1987; Said, 1993; Slemon, 1991; Turner, 1987). Through their work the unjust and oppressive aims and actions associated with imperialist ideology and colonial systems have been deconstructed and exposed and, subsequently, provided a critique which offers colonised nations and their people strategies for resistance and reconstruction. In addition to these thoughts and ideas my concept of postcolonial theory/post-colonialism is one which is informed by and aligns with Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffen (2007) who define post-colonialism as:

The study and analysis of European territorial conquests, the various institutions of European colonialisms, the discursive operations of empire, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and the resistance of those subjects, and, most importantly perhaps, the differing responses to such incursions and their contemporary colonial legacies in both pre- and post-independence nations and communities. (p.169)

Postcolonial theory is one of the conceptual frameworks I use in this research to examine Jamaica’s education and teacher education systems, and interpret how these institutions may still be influenced by the legacy of “European (British) colonialism”, or newer forms of colonialism (North American/Asian). I also rely on this framework, as Ashcroft and others suggest (1989) to pay particular attention to the “differing responses” to colonialism which, I interpret to mean
paying close attention to what the state and its people have done, or are doing, to resist and change the elements of counterproductive colonial and neo-colonial actions and structures.

**ii. Theory of occupational choice.** “Theory of Occupational Choice” (Ginzberg, 1963) is another conceptual framework which is used to examine the complexity of why certain Jamaican individuals enter teacher education and a path into teaching. Planning an educational and occupational path and choosing a profession can be a very intricate process, which can be further complicated by factors such as the age, sex, race, socio-economic class, values, and academic aptitude of the individual who is planning his/her career course. It can also be affected by the social, political, and economic conditions and opportunities available within the society in which the individual must make his/her important educational and occupational decisions. Ginzberg’s theory is viewed as a useful analytical tool for examining this complexity. It, like postcolonial theory, may also contribute to a deeper understanding of why some Jamaican student teachers enter and complete a teacher education programme even though they may not necessarily want to be career or long-term teachers.

As a means of demonstrating how multifaceted and complex the task of choosing an occupation/career could be, Ginzberg (1963) theorized a three stage process which considered changes in an individual’s interests and values, which in turn contributed to his/her choice of career. In his explanation, he identified the following periods in the process of career choice: (1) the aspirations of the child during the early childhood years (fantasy period); (2) the aspirations of the early to late adolescent during the secondary school years (tentative period) (3) the aspirations of the late adolescent and young adult after the high school years (realistic period). The “tentative” and “realistic” periods are those stages in the process which appear to be most relevant to this study.
Within each of these periods, Ginzberg (1963) identified different stages an individual passed through as he/she made occupational choices. The person he described as being in the transition stage of the tentative period or the exploratory stage of the realistic period are, in my estimation, most relevant to this research study. As Ginzberg explained, the late adolescent (17-18 years) in the transition stage of deciding on a career path shifts from subjective values and interest-based reasons for occupational choice to reasons which are more realistic and influential in “determining the final choice he [she] is about to make” (p. 88). As Ginzberg discovered, a substantial number of college-bound students believed that “the proper time for decision-making [regarding occupations] is in college.” (p. 91) Furthermore, he noticed it was not unusual among college freshmen a hesitancy in respect to “shape[ing] their college programme in terms of a firm occupational objective.” (p. 97) It would appear that even after entering college, with more realistic aspirations about occupational options, these late adolescents were still subjectively-oriented, although their subjectivity had a different quality from that of the high school [student].” (p. 103) Ginzberg described this as a characteristic of late adolescents/young adults who were at the exploration stage of the realistic period in their process of choosing a long term occupation.

Elements of Ginzberg’s (1963) theory are relevant to this study because many who enter teacher education in the Jamaican context are approximately the same age and at the same level of schooling as the participants who Ginzberg described as being in the transition and exploration stages of choosing a long term occupation. Therefore, it might be expected that the Jamaican late adolescent, as he/she progresses from secondary to tertiary level schooling, would also be subjectively-oriented in terms of his/her occupational aspirations, and also just as focused on exploring his/her occupational options. However, unlike the participants in Ginzberg’s study,
many young Jamaicans choose a college programme which is specifically geared toward teacher education; therefore, suggesting that they are also choosing to pursue the occupation of teaching. I believe this creates an interesting situation whereby a late adolescent/young adult in Jamaica enrolls in and completes an occupational-specific programme although he/she may still be in a transitory and/or exploratory phase of his/her educational and occupational decision-making. Presumably this could have implications in terms of how committed student teachers are in terms the programme they have entered, the occupation/career they appear to be pursuing and/or how optimistic they are about the role the programme will play in his/her educational and occupational plans, goals and aspirations.

Ginzberg (1972), realizing stage theories were not flawless or rigid, eventually reformulated his original theory in order to consider specific socio-cultural experiences in the hope of developing a better understanding of the occupational choice process. Considering the modified theory and its attention to the socio-cultural factors, it may be argued that some Jamaican students, despite choosing to enter teacher education and initiating a path into teaching, are still in the transition or exploratory stages of choosing an occupation: they are therefore using teachers’ college for more exploratory purposes rather than a means to long-term occupational goal. It is for these reasons that Ginzberg’s revised theory may be even more fitting for research which is designed to explore the educational and occupational aspirations of contemporary Jamaican student teachers, particularly since socio-economic and cultural factors are afforded greater theoretical consideration.

**Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis is organized into the following chapters. This introductory chapter outlined my personal journey into teaching and how interaction with student teachers, concerning their
educational and career aspirations, sparked my interest in wanting to better understand why they chose teacher education. In this chapter, I also presented two theoretical frameworks – postcolonial theory and theory of occupational choice – as established theories which may support my quest for a deeper and more critical understanding of my findings. I also present the aims of the research, the guiding research questions, and the rationale for wanting to better understand why some Jamaican students enter and complete a teacher education programme despite having limited aspirations towards becoming a teacher.

In Chapter Two, I review the literature related to student teachers, and the reasons why they decide to do teacher education and/or become teachers. A special emphasis is placed on reviewing the information that is related to the reasons why Jamaican student teachers choose teacher education and teaching. The chapter begins with an overview of teacher preparation in Jamaica, and an emphasis is placed on who historically has entered teacher education and why. In this section, I highlight the political, social, cultural, and economic factors that have influenced who prepared to be a teacher in Jamaica in earlier times. This information helps to explain why there appears to be a propensity of individuals from Jamaica’s Black working class population represented in teacher education today. Here teacher education is shown to be one of a limited number of educational options that provide a means of upward mobility for a substantial number Black Jamaicans from post-emancipation, following independence from colonial rule, and into present times. The chapter ends with a brief overview of what has been said about the value of teacher education to the educational and occupational aspirations of student teachers, particularly Jamaican student teachers.

My research methodology is outlined in Chapter Three. In this chapter, I provide the context for the study, a description of how I accessed the site, and an overview of the target
population. Following this, I discuss my methodological approach. In this section I justify qualitative methodology as the best “fit” with my research questions, and a means to including the “voices” of the Jamaican student teachers. I discuss how grounded theory was used as a means to collect, organize and analyze the empirical data I collected from the student participants. I also explain how grounded theory, along with the relevant literature or established theories could possibly complement or enhance theory or ideas which may emerge from the empirical data. In this chapter I also discuss content analysis as a means of analysing the findings. Limitations of the study, trustworthiness of the findings, and ethical considerations are also discussed in this chapter.

In Chapter Four a profile of the primary research participants is presented. This chapter focuses on the eight student teachers who were selected to participate in the study as members of the purposive sample. These were student teachers who expressed that they did not necessarily want to go into teaching, but had entered teacher education as a post-secondary educational option. In this chapter, I provide the reader with a more detailed description of who these students are in terms of the uncertainty, joy, and hopefulness they felt prior to, during, and following the teacher education experience.

In Chapters Five and Six, I present the findings of this research. The findings are comprised of the data which was derived from the student teacher survey, and what the eight primary participants expressed during the semi-structured interviews. Chapter Five contains findings which explain what may account for student teachers entering teacher education, although they did not aspire to teacher education or teaching. These findings raise the notion of “youthfulness”, and how this may influence aspirations and decisions in an economic and academic environment of limited options and opportunities. The findings also suggest that
teacher education may be one of a limited number of post-secondary options available to these students, and possibly one of a few opportunities that can help them to achieve more desirable educational or occupational goals.

The findings in Chapter Six relate to my second research question: What do these Jamaican students experience within the teacher education programme that contributes to their belief that such a programme is of benefit to their educational and occupational aspirations? This chapter is structured to show how the experience of teacher education may be a benefit to the educational and/or occupational aspirations of some Jamaican student teachers. It reveals what these student teachers experienced in the teacher education programme, and what they acquired from it which they believed would be of value to their educational and/or occupational aspirations. Generally speaking, the comprehensiveness of the teacher education programme, contending with the academic workload, moments of success, and the teaching practicum are discussed as being significant teacher education experiences.

In Chapter Seven, I discuss the implications of these findings for Jamaican student teachers and teacher education in particular. I discuss how an enhanced understanding of the student teacher persona may contribute to the success of future teacher education reforms and initiatives. Here I ask that we consider the teachers’ college to be an essential component of Jamaica’s higher education sector. I advocate that further revisions be made if need be; however, that teacher education remain an accessible and viable post-secondary option for the wider Jamaican populace. I argue that teacher education and the teachers’ college be maintained particularly for those whose post-secondary options may be limited. I also introduce and discuss possible reforms to secondary and post-secondary education which may support or enhance the
existing teacher education programme. It is in this chapter that I “imagine” the way forward with regard to the relevancy and quality of teacher education, and ultimately student teacher success.

Summary

In this chapter, I described how my personal journey into teacher education and teaching, and the exchanges I have had with my student teachers has influenced my interest in conducting this research study. I support the notion of the teacher being essential to education, society and ultimately life and I use this as a part of the rationale for developing a better understanding of the individuals who may eventually assume the role of teacher. Educational reforms at the national and institutional levels in Jamaica also provide justification for this work. In this chapter I argue that a better awareness and understanding of our student teachers is critical to the viability and success of current reforms in teacher education, and possibly education overall. I also suggest that postcolonial theory (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffen, 1989) and theory of occupational choice (Ginzberg, 1963, 1972) may serve as analytical frameworks to develop a deeper understanding of the Jamaican student teacher experience. Finally, and probably most importantly, this study is intended to critically examine the findings that emerge from the voices of the student teachers themselves, and consider these in view of making teacher education a fulfilling experience for both aspiring and non-aspiring teachers.
Chapter Two

Choosing Teacher Education and/or Teaching

Explaining why individuals choose to become teachers is a topic which has been discussed extensively (Ashby, 2008; Barker & Reyes, 2001; Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Bullough & Knowles, 1991; Bullough, Patterson & Mayes, 2002; Chin & Young, 2007; Edmonds et al., 2002; Freire, 1998; Hansen, 1995; Kyriacou et al., 2003; Lortie, 1975; Malderez et al., 2007; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Merseth et al., 2008; Olsen, 2008; Priyadharshini & Pant, 2003; Skillbeck & Connell, 2003; Snyder et al., 1995; Stiegelbauer, 1992; Su et al., 2001; Weiner et al., 1993; Younger et al., 2004). The literature shows that there are multiple reasons why individuals choose to teach. Some of these reasons include the love individuals have for a particular subject, the love they have for children, their desire to make a difference in society, their belief that teaching is their “calling”, or for reasons such as salary, work benefits, job security and long holidays. Indeed the reasons why individuals choose to teach have been explored to the point where some authors have suggested that less attention be given to this topic (Brookhart and Freeman, 1992). Others have argued that much more needs to be known about student teachers in terms of their values, aspirations, abilities, and experiences prior to and following teacher preparation (Purcell et al., 2005). In the Jamaican context, researchers have also alluded to the need for further research which enriches our understanding of student teachers (Brown, 1992; Evans, 1993, 2000). Evans (1993) in particular, has stated that there is a need for greater insight into what “values” Jamaican student teachers hold, what “abilities” they possess which they believe make them suitable for teaching, or how the teachers’ college “experience” may have changed their views about teaching and their career decisions (p. 241).
This research study aims to contribute to the understanding of the student teacher experience by focusing primarily on eight Jamaican student teachers who indicated that they were not aspiring to long-term employment or a career in teaching. The study seeks to discover why these individuals entered and completed a teacher education programme, and how the teachers’ college experience was of value or relevance to their educational and occupational aspirations. It is expected that the findings from this research will build on and expand the current body of research exploring the reasons why Jamaican students choose to become teachers (Brown, 1992; Evans, 1993; Bastick, 1999) by focusing on a particular subset who may not become teachers. Attention is given to these student teachers in particular because in Jamaica it is not uncommon for individuals to apply and enter teachers’ college despite having limited, if any, interest in teaching as a long term occupation. Their motivation for entering teacher education programmes may be influenced by other factors. Evans (2001) informs us that, “many [Jamaican] teachers also decide to enter the profession [teaching], or at least go to teachers’ college, because of the limited opportunities that were available at the tertiary level.” (p. 31) It is my belief that greater insight can be gained into what it means to become a teacher in Jamaica by focusing on the aspirations, plans and experiences of student teachers such as these.

In this chapter, I reviewed what is generally known about the reasons why one may decide to enter teacher education and/or choose teaching. A particular emphasis was placed on presenting what is known about Jamaican student teachers’ reasons for entering teacher education programmes, and/or choosing to become teachers. The literature regarding the reasons why Jamaican teachers enter teacher education is limited. The paucity of this information provides one of the main incentives for research of this nature.
The first part of this chapter begins with a discussion that focuses on what has been found internationally regarding the reasons student teachers aspire to teach and/or enter teacher education programmes. In this section, the altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic reasons why students enter teacher education and choose teaching as an occupation are presented. The discussion then proceeds to a brief historical overview of the circumstances which have restricted or allowed individuals in the Jamaican context to train and practice as teachers. This is followed by the presenting the more recent literature related to why Jamaican students enter teacher education, and choose teaching as an occupation. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the interrelationship which may exist between choosing teacher education and one’s occupational or career aspirations. This discussion is limited as a result of the lack of information which focuses on the role teacher education serves in the educational and occupational plans of Jamaican student teachers.

**Why Individuals Choose to Teach**

There is a substantial body of research which focuses on what motivates individuals to want to become teachers. This research indicates that the motivation to become a teacher may be derived from altruistic (Bullough, Patterson & Mayes, 2002; Hansen, 1995; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Snyder et al., 1995), intrinsic or extrinsic reasons (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Freire, 1998; Lortie, 1975; Malderez et al., 2007; Olsen, 2008; Stiegelbauer, 1992; Su et al., 2001; Weiner et al, 1993; Younger et al, 2004) or a combination thereof (Ashby et al, 2008; Purcell et al, 2005). These reasons for wanting to teach are common among those who choose to become certified through what may be considered the typical or traditional university-education school routes. However, similar reasons have also been expressed by those who enter alternative teacher
certification programmes (Chin & Young, 2007; Merseth et al., 2008) as well those who switch careers to go into teaching (Priyadharshini & Pant, 2003).

Those who are motivated altruistically typically want to teach because of a selfless concern for the welfare of others and/or the belief that it is their moral duty to provide an essential service to society. What may be considered the ultimate altruistic reason for wanting to teach is the belief that teaching is a “calling” and thus a mission which they are compelled to fulfill (Bullough, Patterson, & Mayes, 2002). Those who are motivated intrinsically are influenced by reasons from within, personal reasons which they believe are essential and important to teaching and wanting to become a teacher. Some common intrinsic motivating factors for wanting to teach include the love for a particular subject, the love for children, or the desire to make a difference in society. Those who are motivated extrinsically tend to be influenced by reasons outside of themselves, external factors which may not necessarily be viewed as essential to the act of teaching per se but have a significant influence on the individual’s decision to become a teacher. Research shows that extrinsic reasons such as salary, work benefits, job security, and received long holidays factor into some persons’ motivation to teach.

The research also shows that reasons which motivate or influence one to teach may vary depending on sex, age, race, socio-economic status, family background, influence of others, level of teaching, and whether teaching is a first or second career. For instance, research has shown that women, who generally comprise the largest portion of the teaching population globally, may choose to become teachers because teaching, as a career, is seen as compatible to being a mother (Olsen, 2008). Research has also revealed that mature teacher candidates tend to be more “committed” to teaching, and are more likely to choose teaching as their final career choice.
(Synder et al., 1995) or, in a quest for more personal and intellectual fulfillment, as their second-career choice (Chin & Young, 2007). Studies have shown that becoming a teacher can be especially important to working-class urban student teachers, who may be the first in their family to attend college, because of the opportunity it provides to move from a working class situation to establishing a foothold in middle class society (Weiner, 1993). It is also well-documented that those who choose to teach may be inspired to become teachers as a result of the influence of significant others, such as family members or past teachers (Green & Magliaro, 2003; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Younger et al., 2004). Finally, research has shown that differences exist in regard to the reasons why elementary and secondary student teachers decided to become teachers. Findings indicate that typically elementary student teachers choose to teach for intrinsic reasons related to the love of children while secondary student teachers who are more attracted to teaching because of their love for a particular subject area (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Synder et al., 1995).

Notwithstanding, altruistic and/or intrinsic reasons appear to be the predominant reasons why individuals choose to teach. Lortie (1975) identified five principle “attractors” to teaching during his comprehensive study of American school teachers. Of these five attractors three could be described as intrinsic in nature. The three principal intrinsic factors included: the opportunity that teaching provided to be in a “protracted contact with young people” (interpersonal); to perform a “special mission” to society (service); and to work in a setting or subject area that one is “attached to” or “likes” (continuation) (pp. 26-33). The work of Brookhart and Freeman (1992) also confirmed that intrinsic factors were the predominant reason why American teacher candidates wanted to teach. They write:
Despite differences in phrasing or content for different survey instruments, the consistent pattern has been that altruistic, service oriented goals and other intrinsic sources of motivation are the primary reasons entering teacher candidates report for why they choose careers in teaching. (p. 46)

Su et al. (2001), in their comparative cross-cultural study of Chinese and American student teachers, also found that both sets of student teachers wanted to teach for predominantly intrinsic reasons, but the Chinese student teachers rated these intrinsic reasons on a much lower scale than their American counterparts (p. 620). More recent research studies, particularly in Australia and the UK, have discovered that student teachers, regardless of age, sex, or race clearly identify altruistic or intrinsic reasons as the predominant motivation for choosing to teach (Ashby et al., 2008; Kyriacou et al., 2003; Malderaz, 2007; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Skillbeck & Connell, 2003; Younger et al., 2004).

The extrinsic reason which appears to be a significant motivating factor in one’s decision to teach is the influence of a significant other such as a teacher, mentor, or family member (Ashby et al, 2008; Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Malderaz, 2007; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Priyadarshini & Robinson-Pant, 2003; Younger et al, 2004). However, though this may be a popular reason for deciding to teach, several studies have shown that extrinsic reasons in general do not have much influence on an individual’s decision to teach (Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Purcell et al., 2005). This should not come as a surprise given the humanistic and social nature of teaching, in combination with the limited extrinsic or economic benefits to be gained from the occupation.
Why Individuals Choose Teacher Education

As previously mentioned, much is known about why individuals choose to teach, and less is known in regard to why they choose to enter teacher education. It may be reasonable to accept that there is a correlation between the factors which motivate one to enter a teacher education programme and factors which motivate one to teach. There is a body literature which either directly or indirectly addresses the issue of why student teachers choose teacher education or training (Ashby, 2008; Coultas & Lewin, 2002; Hobson et al, 2006; Lewin & Stewart, 2003; Malderaz, 2007; Purcell, 2005; Su, 2001); however, these still tend to provide a discourse which best describes and explains why student teachers are motivated to teach. This may be the case because student teachers view reasons for wanting to enter teacher preparation programmes as being inextricably linked to wanting to become a teacher. However, for this reason there may be a greater need to carefully separate the question of why teach from the question of why teacher education. This could be particularly useful for research such as this, which is designed to achieve a clearer and deeper understanding of why persons enter teacher education programmes, and how this relates to their educational and occupational aspirations. Closer attention to other reasons for entering teacher preparation programmes such as the opportunity “to study alongside their peers or people in the same situation as themselves” (Malderaz et al., 2007, p.234), or “as a result of lower test scores on college entrance examination, or because of practical financial and economic considerations” (Su et al., 2001, p.620) could prove invaluable to the overall understanding of why persons enter teacher education, and thereby begin the process of becoming teachers.

The Multi-Site Teacher Education Research project (MUSTER) which was conducted between 1998-2001 is worth noting because of the description it provides of who chooses to enter
teacher education and teach (Lewin & Stewart, 2003). The MUSTER project was coordinated by the Centre for International Education at the University of Sussex, Institute of Education in partnership with the Institute of Education at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana, the Institute of Education at the National University of Lesotho, the Centre for Educational Research and Training at the University of Malawi, the Faculty of Education at the University of Durban-Westville in South Africa, and The School of Education at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, in Trinidad. The methodology consisted of mainly questionnaires which were administered to new student teachers in each of the four countries. The data from these questionnaires was used to produce a profile of new entrants. Self-reporting was also used to ascertain family background, and instruments involving a Likert scale were used to generate data related to career expectations and attitudes about the teaching profession. Educational autobiographies, focus groups and individual interviews were also used for data analysis purposes. Overall the samples included 400 student teachers in Ghana, 90 in Lesotho, 176 in Malawi, and 299 in Trinidad.

The MUSTER research project is of relevance to this study because it provides a substantial amount of information related to the characteristics of the population that enters teacher education programmes according to age, sex, religion, ethnicity, language group, prior experience, and academic achievement. The findings are also important because they reveal the educational and career aspirations of the student teacher participants. For example, many of the Ghanaian respondents in this study indicated that they would have rather gone to university than a teacher education college (Coultas & Lewin, 2002; Lewin & Stewart, 2003). This study focused on the characteristics of student teacher candidates in developing economies, and
therefore provides information which can complement a study such as this which is also concerned with the experiences of student teachers in a developing world context.

**The Jamaican Education System in Earlier Times**

Before discussing who currently enters Jamaica’s teacher education programmes, it is important to develop a basic understanding of how the early Jamaican education system was structured, and who taught in this system. Before the Abolition of Slavery Act\(^4\) in 1833, organized schooling in Jamaica was primarily for a small number of free black, coloured\(^5\) and white children (King, 1998). Education during this time was largely provided by missionary societies, churches and private individuals (King, 1998; Turner, 1987; Whyte, 1983). There was very little schooling for the slave population prior to emancipation. The few who were fortunate to learn to read were usually the beneficiaries of the pious, yet humanitarian intentions of some missionaries (Bacchus, 2006). The children of the wealthiest members of society – the plantation owners/primary whites – were sent to England for schooling because it was believed that “a good education could only be achieved in England” (p. 32). The Negro Education Grant (1835) was created as a result of the clause in the Abolition of Slavery Act which spoke to the provision of education which would address the religious and moral principles of the recently freed slave population (King, 1998; Whyte, 1983). The Imperial government (Britain) earmarked £7,500 to assist those groups and individuals who had been providing education to the local population all along, rather than to be administered by an uninterested local Legislature (Jamaican Government). It is this period in Jamaica’s history which is said to be the start of the formal elementary school system for the “newly liberated working class”, or ex-slave/black population (King, 1998, p. 47).

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\(^4\) Also referred to as the Emancipation Act

\(^5\) These were the children of a white slave owner and a black slave mother.
Secondary schooling, for the most part, catered to the free members of Jamaican society (Whyte, 1983). These schools were operated separately from the elementary schools, and specifically for a certain sector of the population. Prior to emancipation and up until 1878, these schools were run by “private benefactors of education in Jamaica” (Whyte, 1983, p. 31) and the “churches and publically established trusts” (King, 1998, p. 48). The secondary schools provided an education for the children of Jamaica’s middle-class population of whites [primary/secondary], coloured, and Jews who, unlike the children from the wealthiest families, could not afford to be sent to school in England (Miller, 1987). The curriculum used in these secondary schools was very similar to that which was offered in Britain, and the teachers were predominantly English expatriates (Whyte, 1983).

In 1879 a law was passed leading to the establishment of the Jamaica Schools Commission. This Commission was given the mandate to “reorganize the endowments of charity schools established for the education of poor whites during the period of slavery” (Miller, 1987, p. 110), and to begin the development of Jamaica’s formal secondary school system. Development of the secondary system meant that those who were being given assistance to provide elementary education would now be given funding to offer secondary schooling (Whyte, 1983). This formalization of Jamaica’s secondary school system was considered “a direct response to the ruling class’ concern that the education of middle and upper-class children should keep pace with the education being provided for working-class [Black] children in elementary schools” (King, 1998, p. 49). Secondary schooling was exclusively for children in the higher socio-economic classes up until the passing of the Secondary Education Act in 1892, when policy in this act provided an opportunity for the most able Black students from the elementary school system to obtain a secondary school education. Initially, however, this was provided to
only a very few students who received scholarships, and a path to a free secondary school
education (King, 1998). For the most part this two-tiered system of education continued up to
1960, two years prior to Jamaica’s independence from Britain (Gentles, 2004).

**Normal Schools and Government Role in Teacher Training**

Normal schools also played an important role in Jamaica’s two-tiered education system. Normal
schools were established in Jamaica, on the recommendation of Rev. John Sterling, to address
the issue of preparing a local teacher supply for the elementary school system (Whyte, 1983).
During slavery only one Normal school, the Refuge was in operation for the purpose of teacher
training. This school was operated by the Moravian Missionaries. When slavery ended many
other denominations\(^6\) opened normal schools for the purpose of training teachers to keep up with
the demand for education (D’Oyley, 1963). The interdependence between the elementary and
Normal school was such that the best students in the elementary schools were recruited to attend
the Normal school (King, 1998). The Mico Charity, with funds provided through the Negro
Education Grant, established three such schools in Jamaica. Mico University College, a teacher
education institution in Jamaica, is a product of these Normal schools, and is still in operation
today (Bacchus, 2006).

The Normal schools in Jamaica thrived on funding which was provided by the British
government through the Negro Education Grant (1835-1845). This funding was utilized
primarily by the missionary societies for the purpose of teacher training. During this period the
local Jamaican government played a minimal role in the process of teacher preparation. The local
legislature did not operate any teacher training school, and for the most part “were observers who
participated indirectly” in the enterprise of teacher education (D’Oyley, 1963, p. 212).

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\(^6\) The Anglican, Church Missionary, and Baptists were predominant denominations at the time (D’Oyley, 1963 p.204).
After the termination of the Negro Education Grant in 1845 the Jamaican government officially became more involved in the business of teacher training. The British government’s urging, along with the funding available from the Negro Education Grant, encouraged the Jamaican Government to establish Jamaica’s first Board of Education (D’Oyley, 1963). Another sign that the local government was assuming a more active role in teacher training appeared when the Normal School of Industry was established in Spanish Town in 1847 in order to prepare teachers to teach agriculture in the elementary schools (Whyte, 1983). This school, however, closed in 1852.

It was not until Sir John Peter Grant assumed the post of Governor of Jamaica in 1866 that the Jamaican government became even more involved and serious about the business of teacher preparation. At this time the Normal schools, largely as a result of limited financial resources, were reduced to four denominational institutions. Grant, being committed to the improvement of education and especially teacher quality, put in place a large government training college for male students, and a smaller regional one for both sexes. The large training institution was opened in 1870 in Stony Hill in order to train students to teach in Jamaica’s industrial schools. Port Antonio Training College, the smaller institution, was established in 1872 for the purpose of improving teacher quality in a “severely neglected area of the island” (D’Oyley, 1963, p. 324). The main purpose for teacher training at this time was to prepare candidates for teaching industrial subjects and skills. However, the ex-slave population’s abhorrence for manual labour resulted in a condemnation of industrial education, and a demand for education which could produce upward social mobility for their children. This demand influenced the government’s decision to change the educational focus at the Stony Hill College
from an industrial one to one which was more academic and theoretical. Not surprisingly, along with this change came the need to raise the “academic quality of the prospective teacher (p. 325).

The Stony Hill College was viewed by the British government as a “total institution which could be used for effective socialisation” (Turner, 1987, p. 63). As a total institution the teachers’ college was comprised of organised groups, well-defined boundaries, and a distinct internal hierarchical structure. It was an arrangement which strongly resembled the type of structure that existed in prisons, on ships and slave plantations. The teachers’ college was so regimented that the schedule of the young men between the ages of 18-25 was carefully arranged from the time they woke at 5:30 a.m. until lights went out at 10 p.m. Interaction with the general public was strictly restrained as a means of breaking the young student teachers clear from their previous lives so that new attitudes and identity could be imposed. In these total institutions young student teachers were trained to promote higher ethical standards and the greater good of the ruling body (Hall & Bryan, 1997). Interestingly, arguments have been made that the teachers’ college, as recently as the 1970’s, was more concerned about preparing teachers who would be the “gate-keepers” for the education system rather than “promoters and developers of the full potential of students for change processes” (Presaud, 1975 in Gentles, 2010, p. 52).

**Who Has Entered Teacher Education and Teaching in Jamaica**

Jamaica’s teaching corps in the post-emancipation years could be described as a motley, yet very intriguing, mix of individuals. This group was comprised of clergymen, missionaries, private individuals, apprentices (pupil teachers), trained teachers from Britain, coloureds, and ex-slaves. A selection such as this created a rather interesting profile in terms of race, class, nationality, age, gender, qualifications to teach, and reasons for entry into teaching. A number of Jamaican/Caribbean researchers have provided accounts describing the individuals who taught in
Jamaica’s education system. Whyte (1983) discusses the missionaries and their limited teacher preparation by recounting the words of Rev. John Sterling who believed that they were the “best promoters of education among the young”, however, their teaching abilities were of a low standard, and their main qualification for teaching seemed to be their willingness to undertake the job (p.8). Further on she provides additional information which highlights the diversity of teachers in the Jamaican elementary school system. She states:

Teachers employed in the schools were of several categories. There were Europeans sent out by the parent missionary societies in England. Other white persons resident in the island also did some teaching. Then there were the adult coloured persons who were sufficiently literate to conduct schools, and the young people who received training at the Normal Schools or larger Elementary Schools (p. 10).

Hall & Bryan (1997) enhance the profile of a diverse teacher population by describing the elementary school teachers who were the “bright sons and daughters of slaves who formed the leadership of the peasant class” (p. 241). These prospective teachers were individuals who left their small districts to participate in “a greater mission to raise the people up from ignorance, and help in the development of society” (p. 241). Many of these graduates were well respected and would be acknowledged by the title of Teacher as would the Doctor or Pastor be acknowledged by their professional titles. To be a teacher, at this time, “carried status, even if it was localized influence” (p. 241).

It was the failure of the Normal schools to provide an adequate supply of teachers to the elementary school system which led to the training and employment of another intriguing category of teacher for the Jamaican education system. Pupil teachers taught in the elementary system largely because of the short supply of teachers for the elementary schools (Bacchus,
The pupil teacher system was introduced by the Jamaican government in 1877, and was based on a model which had been introduced in England in 1846 (Bacchus, 2006; D’Oyley, 1963). The pupil teacher was usually between the ages of 13 – 17, had passed at least Standard Five of elementary school, and showed an aptitude for teaching (Whyte, 1983). They were expected to assist with classroom teaching, and at the same time improve their personal academic standing. The latter was usually achieved under the tutelage of a Head-teacher, and measured by their performance on the Pupil Teachers’ Examination. Doing well on this examination was also important to the pupil teacher because this had a direct influence on the amount they were paid in wages. Bacchus (2006) provides a good account of how the pupil teachers’ mentorship was structured, and mentions some of the ensuing problems. He states:

Head-teachers were expected to offer instruction to their pupil teachers for a certain number of hours each week. And provide them with professional guidance to upgrade their teaching competence. But pupil teachers rarely received such assistance and often had to teach full-time, without supervision. They therefore tended to adopt the teaching strategies to which they were exposed as students and this perpetuated the use of out-dated teaching methods. (p. 145)

Generally the pupil teacher system was viewed as problematic for the reasons mentioned by Bacchus, and because the number of “volunteer [teacher] candidates” taking the Pupil Teacher Examination always exceeded that of pupil teachers (Whyte, 1983). It should be understood that volunteer candidates were allowed to sit the Pupil Teacher Examination as long as they paid the necessary fees. Pupil teachers did not have to pay to sit the examination. The pupil teacher system was also questionable because the qualifications they earned from successfully

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7 The Jamaican government in 1867 developed a classification of academic levels for students in the elementary school system. These classifications ranged from First to Sixth Standard.
8 The Pupil Teacher Examination was later replaced by the Jamaica Local Examinations.
completing the examination could be used for entry not only into teaching, but nursing, the police force, and the post of sanitary inspector (p. 46).

Throughout Jamaica’s history there are signs that the colonial rulers were cognizant of the important role education, and teachers in particular, could play in the socialization and control of a population of people whom they perceived to be inferior. It is well-documented that education systems can be designed to foster the development of social values and behaviours that prepare and condition the person to acculturate and meet the needs of a capitalist democratic society. These values and behaviours are promoted and internalized through mechanisms such as discourse, curriculum, school practices and even the manner in which schools are structured. Several writers have drawn particular attention to the relationship which exists between education and the reproduction of workers for capitalist societies (Arratia, 1997, Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Gandin & Apple, 2002; Yoge & Ayalon, 1991).

The Jamaica Education Act, which had been introduced in 1867, was implemented with the primary intention of maintaining an industrious and compliant workforce for a plantation economy (Turner, 1987). This Act was the British and Jamaican governments’ response to several violent uprisings\(^9\) which were sparked by the recently emancipated Jamaican slave population, and what they perceived to be an ineffective system of church-run elementary schools. The colonial rulers believed that these schools were incapable of fulfilling the social objectives they desired, which was to convert the “debased moral state of the Jamaican labour class ... promote habits of industry and foresight, and inculcate values that would make for acceptance of the hierarchy of roles in the society” (pp. 57-58). The colonial authorities also wanted to instill their White British values, values which they viewed to be far superior and more civilised than those of the working class (p. 56).

\(^9\) The Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865 is the most significant of these rebellions.
The colonial rulers also believed that achieving these social objectives would not be successful unless deliberate thought and careful consideration was given to the sort of teacher who should be teaching the masses. This notion of the teacher as a key player in the social reproduction process is shared by others who have written about the socialising intent of education in other historical and cultural contexts (Bacchus, 2006; Eklof & Seregny, 2004; Mazawi, 1994; Mehran, 1992). In colonial Jamaica close attention was paid to issues such as the attitude and behaviour of the individual who could potentially teach a populace that was believed to be depraved and rebellious (Turner, 1987, p.62; Bacchus, 2006, p. 142). The colonial government’s education policy and precise moral and principles-laden curriculum had a much better chance of being administered if a compliant teacher was stationed in the classroom. Fulfilling personal aspirations and wanting to teach were certainly not the reasons for entering teaching at this time. The character of teacher training candidates during this period was essential to the socialising process. Therefore, candidates who were believed to be already “socially formed human beings” (Turner, 1987, p. 63), with good and honest principles, and not necessarily high intellectual capabilities were favoured. For these reasons close attention was paid to carefully recruiting individuals who could develop the skills, impart knowledge and provide the ideal classroom climate to have a significant influence on the “direction and intensity of the socialisation process” (p. 62).

The government of Jamaica enhanced its teacher training programmes between the years of 1884-1895. This enhancement was most evident in the development of female teacher education institutions, and government funding for denominational teacher training colleges. As mentioned, initially teacher candidates and teachers in Jamaica were predominantly male. However, as new social concerns emerged, such as the behaviour of male teachers in relation to
their female students, measures were put in place to induct more female teachers into the occupation. Bethebara (now Bethlehem) was established by the Moravians in 1861 (D’Oyley, 1963). This was followed by the establishment of Shortwood and St. Joseph Teachers’ Colleges in 1885 and 1897 respectively (Bacchus, 2006; D’Oyley, 1963). These female teacher training institutions, particularly Shortwood and St. Joseph, were created on the premise that there would be “no moral upliftment in the mass of women in Jamaica until they could be taught by their own sex” (Turner, 1987 p. 64). What appears to be a socially and morally sound decision to benefit the empowerment of the female sex was actually a response to the doubts the authorities had regarding the “reliability of men for the attainment of value objectives” (p. 64). The reported cases of sexual liaisons between older female students and male teachers, and the extremely high rate of illegitimate births in 1884 prompted these doubts and contributed to the recommendation that there be an increase in the number of trained female teachers (pp. 64-65).

The enterprise of teacher training in Jamaica took another turn during the period of 1895-1913. During this period the Lumb Commission, headed by British judge Charles Lumb, was critical of Jamaica’s education system as being too theoretical for a country which was “predominantly agricultural, [and] where knowledge of certain skills and practical education were economic necessities” (D’Oyley, 1963 p. 281). Government regulations, as recommended by a more vibrant Board of Education, were implemented to create a new emphasis on more practical teacher training programmes. This period has been described in the scholarly literature as “the age of maturity” in the development of teacher education in Jamaica (D’Oyley, 1963). This period has been described as such because it was the time when “both voluntary (denominational) groups and the government recognized the others’ right to be involved in the process of re-shaping the country” (p. 385).
Interestingly teachers who were trained in the local teacher college system did not figure prominently in the Jamaican secondary school system which, through the efforts of the Jamaica Schools Commission, was in full reform and development mode by 1911. Up to 1943 the secondary school teacher population was comprised of trained graduates 10%, degree holders 21%, Cambridge Senior School Certificate holders (high school qualification for entry to a British University) 45%, special subject teachers 18%, and Teacher College Certificate holders 8% (Miller, 1987). The majority of these teachers were white, some coloured, and a very small group of blacks. Even among those who possessed a Teachers’ college Certificate, a portion of these were earned in Britain. This reduced the number of locally trained teachers, particularly locally trained black teachers, to an even less significant number. Acting on recommendations, such as the one made in 1919 to stop the practice of “senior boys and senior girls being promoted to positions of junior masters and mistresses” may have created the opening for the inclusion of more locally trained teachers in Jamaica’s secondary school system (p. 118). As Miller argues “the quality of the staffs in the [secondary] schools would have been improved were such teachers [locally trained] recruited to man the positions held by untrained Senior Cambridge school leavers” (p. 134). The consequence of this was that up until 1943 many Black Jamaicans were not teaching in the secondary school system, therefore teaching in the secondary school system “remained a white and brown occupation” (p. 134).

In the period leading up to the 1960’s, and a decade after Jamaica’s independence from Britain in 1962, the commercial sector in Jamaica was growing slowly and new categories of jobs were not being created at a rapid pace. Access to the few jobs that were being created in this sector, as well as those in the expanding tourism sector was not easy for the majority of Black male and female Jamaicans. Colonialism and racism, in their current form, continued to be
responsible for the restrictions which prevented Black workers from accessing the few newly-formed jobs. For many of the Black Jamaicans who graduated from elementary school, or who successfully completed the Third Jamaica Local Examination\(^{10}\), “teaching was regarded as an attractive occupation” (Evans, 1993 p. 228). It was also a favourable option because of the limited access these persons had to a secondary school education. Surprisingly, because of the lack of access to the secondary schools, the Teachers’ colleges were often used by Black Jamaicans as a means to gaining a secondary education (p. 228) along with teacher education qualifications and a path into teaching. It was not until the 1970’s, when there was significant expansion of occupations in the commercial, tourism, technology, banking, and insurance sectors, that Black Jamaicans had a bit more leeway in regard to pursuing a wider variety of educational and occupational aspirations (p. 228).

Long after Jamaica gained independence in 1962, teacher training remained an accessible option for Jamaica’s Black population to further their education. This, it would appear, was largely attributed to the increased demand by the “newly enfranchised masses...for better educational opportunities” (Gentles, 2004, p. 125). The Jamaican government, with the assistance of foreign aid, responded to this demand by rapidly increasing their development of educational facilities, “Jamaicanizing” curriculum, and expanding the local teaching force (p. 125). Meeting the demand for teachers during this period of accelerated expansion (1962-1982) resulted in the creation of two significant teacher education programmes. During the 1960’s the Teacher Internship Programme was implemented “in order to increase the speed with which

\(^{10}\) The Jamaica Local Examinations had their genesis in the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century, when they were known as Pupil Teachers’ Examination. From their inception, they were identified with the field of teacher recruitment, and in the first instance confined to pupil teachers. Volunteer candidates were later allowed to sit the examinations. During the 1930’s the name was changed to the Jamaica Local Examination. Source: Ministry of Education Document, Ministry Paper No. 9 July 7\(^{10}\), 1960.
trained teachers could be placed in the classroom” (p. 126). In this programme student teachers spent two years in teachers’ college, and in their third year they completed an internship whereby they were in full control of a classroom. During the 1970’s, a time when fifty new schools were built, the Jamaican government had little choice but to hire untrained individuals to teach in Jamaica’s classrooms. The In-service Teacher Education Thrust (ISET) was offered at this time to train these individuals\(^{11}\) to teach on a part-time basis while they remained in their fulltime teaching positions. These “stopgap measures” stayed in effect until 1982, at which point the more familiar three-year teacher education programme was introduced as a means of addressing concerns about teaching quality.

Young Jamaicans, particularly Black Jamaicans, presently have more educational and occupational options to choose from when compared to what their forefathers and foremothers had after both emancipation and independence. However, there are those who argue that the options are still limited for poor Black Jamaicans; thus, the reason why teacher education is used as a “stepping-stone” to more desirable educational and/or occupational goals. I find it interesting that many of the students who I teach are Black, and are from working-class backgrounds. Although there is an absence of statistical data related to which racial groups and socio-economic classes are represented in Jamaica’s teacher education programmes it would appear that the teachers’ colleges continue to be an affordable post-secondary option for a large segment of Jamaica’s Black working-class population. As Gentles (2004) informs us:

> Teachers’ colleges are subsidized by government and are the cheapest form of tertiary level education available. They are thus heavily subscribed by the poorest students.

> Teachers’ colleges are seen therefore as the domain of working class students. (p. 132)

\(^{11}\) It could be argued that this is where the practice of using pre-trained teachers (those who teach in the formal education system without teacher qualifications) in Jamaica started. There are still a substantial number of pre-trained teachers who teach predominantly in the elementary school system today.
Conversely, teachers’ college is less of an option for the less populated, yet more affluent young White and Brown Jamaicans. They do not choose teacher education because:

The low-income expectations for graduates of teachers’ colleges are a disincentive for children from affluent backgrounds. Hence, most middle class parents do not encourage their offspring to go to teachers’ college or to become teachers. Those few who want to pursue education as a career usually opt to do a degree in education at either a local or foreign university. (p. 132)

The Jamaican research, like the international research, also shows that vastly more females than males enter teacher education and teaching (Bastick, 1999; Evans, 1993). Enrolment in the 10 teachers’ colleges in 2001-2002 totaled 4,728 students of which 81% were female and 19% male (Evans & Burke, 2006, p.37). It is also worth noting that a substantial number of Jamaican student teachers enter teacher education programmes after completing the Caribbean Secondary Education Council examinations (CSEC) in their fifth form year (grade 11). For this reason, many entrants to teacher education programmes in Jamaica are young and fall within 17 – 19 years of age (Evans, 1993). It is a true that some entrants complete A-Levels (grades 12/13) and/or a first degree, or enter the workforce before entering a teacher education programme; however, this group of entrants accounts for a small proportion of those who enter.

Choosing Teaching/Teacher Education: The Jamaican Context

The body of research specifically related to student teachers in Jamaica reveals that they also choose teaching for various altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic reasons (Bastick, 1999; 2000; 2002; Brown, 1992; Evans, 1993; 2000; 2001; Richardson, 1988). The literature suggests that Jamaican student teachers, like their international counterparts, also aspire to teach for reasons such as a love for children, a desire to make a positive contribution to society, or a need for job security.
Two prominent Jamaican research studies in particular, from the 1990s, are very relevant to this study (Bastick, 1999; Evans, 1993). These studies provide a commendable and comprehensive in-depth analysis of the intrinsic, altruistic, and extrinsic reasons why Jamaican student teachers chose teaching, but they do not directly address the question which specifically asks why these individuals chose to enter teacher education. They also do not fully address issues related to what Jamaican student teachers thought about their teacher preparation programmes, and how they perceived the programme in terms of its value or relevance to their educational and/or occupational aspirations.

Evans’ (1993) comprehensive qualitative study explored why student teachers in Jamaica chose to teach. The study focused on a target population of all the student teachers who graduated from 10 teachers’ colleges and education departments which were in operation in Jamaica in 1989. There were a total of 270 graduates in this cohort of which 108 (40%) participated in the research. A twenty-one item questionnaire was designed and administered in order to examine what problems the graduates may have experienced in the programme; how they used the knowledge they learned in the college, and what college courses they felt were most useful. A smaller random sample of 20 student teachers participated in in-depth interviews. The research was guided by two primary research questions: What is the main reason why you choose to become a teacher? And, what other reasons made you decide to become a teacher? (Evans, 1993).

Like the international studies, the survey component of Evans’ (1993) research revealed that Jamaican student teachers also chose teaching primarily for intrinsic or altruistic reasons. More than half of the respondents (n=73) indicated in the survey that providing a service to society or country, a love for children, and liking the profession were their main reasons for
wanting to teach. Interestingly, as Evans notes, the data gathered from the survey were only “partially borne out in the interviews” (p. 236). She attributes this to the possibility that “respondents, given the right emotional climate, and providing [that] the topic is not threatening, express more frank points of view than respondents who answer an anonymous questionnaire” (p. 238). Therefore, among the 20 students who were interviewed, a minority \((n=9)\) indicated that they had always wanted to teach from a young age. However, the remaining students \((n=11)\) indicated that they chose teaching because of blocked aspirations, the relative ease in which they could enter teachers’ college\(^{12}\), an indecisiveness about their future, or because they were influenced by others to do teacher education. What is interesting about these responses is that they appear to be extrinsic reasons for why the student teacher chose to enter teachers’ college as opposed to why they chose teaching as a profession.

Another significant research study was conducted by Bastick (1999). This island-wide study was completed some 10 years after the Evans’ (1993) study\(^{13}\). Bastick’s study was designed primarily to respond to the concerns regarding the fluctuations in teacher supply which had been occurring in Jamaica between 1976-1997. The research was basically organized into three stages. In stage one 96 student students and four lecturers took part in a 15 minute semi-structured interview, while 30 other students participated in a focus group. The main purpose of the interviews was to gather the baseline data about the reasons why these students chose the teaching profession. A total of 19 prevalent reasons were documented. In stage two the 19 prevalent reasons were used as the basis for a constructing a survey which was administered

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\(^{12}\) Ease of entry in this case does not refer to admission or matriculation requirements, but rather to the affordability of Teachers’ college as a post-secondary or higher education option (p.236)

\(^{13}\) It is important to note that Bastick makes reference to the Evans’ study as the only one previous to his which specifically examined why Jamaican student teachers were choosing teaching as a career. Brown (1992), who conducted a similar study which compared Jamaican student teachers with their Caribbean counterparts, has also made reference to Evans’ study.
randomly to 1,444 student teachers. In this survey students were asked to rate their agreement with each reason using a scale from 0 - 9, zero representing agreement and nine representing maximum agreement. In stage three the results of the survey were entered into a factor analysis in order to test a three part motivational model.

Unlike the international studies, particularly those conducted in developed economies, the findings in Bastick’s (1999) study indicated that extrinsic reasons, such as teaching being the profession with the most holidays and the fees for teachers’ college being affordable, had the most influence on Jamaican student teachers’ motivation to choose teaching as a career. Bastick attributed these findings to be consistent with “studies cited from developing countries and lower [socio-economic] groups in developed countries” (Bastick, 2000, p. 9). These findings are also consistent with those presented in the interview portion of Evans’ (1993) study which also indicated that extrinsic factors were significant in motivating one to teach. The extrinsic factors which were identified in this study, particularly the one related to the teachers’ college fees being affordable, once again, present reasons why students may be motivated to enter teachers’ college as opposed to why they chose to go into teaching.

After closely examining the Jamaican research the argument could be made that intrinsic reasons are not a predominant factor motivating Jamaican student teachers’ to choose teaching. Support for this argument places the Jamaican research findings at variance with the general findings from international studies conducted in developed economies (Ashby et al., 2008; Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Edmonds et al., 2002; Hobson et al., 2006; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Younger et al., 2004) and more aligned with the findings of studies which explored the reasons why individuals in developing economies chose teaching (Coultas & Lewin, 2002; Lewin & Stewart, 2003; Su et al., 2001). The findings from the Jamaican research also revealed
what may be considered the significant role of external factors influencing one’s decision to
teach. Bastick’s (1999) study discovered that reasons, such as teachers’ college being an
affordable post-secondary option and a teacher’s salary being adequate for personal needs, were
very important to numerous student teachers’ in making their decision to teach - particularly
female students. These reasons were expressed so frequently that he declared that “extrinsic
motivation was the most important ...reason that Jamaican teacher trainees had for choosing the
teaching profession” (p. 8). These findings are comparable to those discovered by Su et al.
(2001) where the Chinese student teacher participants indicated frequently that extrinsic reasons
such as low test results on college entrance examinations, financial and economic constraints,
pressures from parents, and viewing teaching as the only option were very influential in their
decisions to teach (p. 621).

The influence or impact which intrinsic and extrinsic factors have on one’s decision to
teach in different cultural and economic contexts is an issue which deserves careful attention,
especially if we are to develop a better understanding as to why individuals in small developing
economies such as Jamaica enter teacher education and initiate a path to teaching. This is an
issue that Evans (1993) also believed was important to explore if one was to more fully
understand why individuals in developing countries choose certain occupations. She states:

The dynamics of occupational choice in particular social/cultural contexts invite
special examination. In non-industrialised countries for example there may exist a
narrow range of choices with respect to the number of occupations that exist. The
individual in these countries may have a narrow range of choice because of lack
of information or because of the absence of the financial or educational
qualifications which provide access to the particular occupation. And factors
which ease one’s entry to an occupation such as availability of scholarships or free
tuition for the required training, may exercise a strong influence on one’s
occupational choice. (p. 227)

What is also interesting about the reasons which appear to have had a noticeable influence on several of the Jamaican student teachers’ decisions to choose teaching is the way in which they appeared to be a response to the question of why they chose teacher education or teachers’ college. For example, a reason such as the “affordability of college” seems more related to reasons for choosing a teacher education programme as opposed to choosing it as a means to employment or a career in teaching. This may be the case for the following reasons. First, there may have been some degree of ambivalence regarding the question which asked the participants why they chose to pursue teaching. It is also possible that there was no confusion or uncertainty on the part of the student respondents, but because they had limited or no aspirations to teach then the only reasons they could provide for wanting to teach were those which explained why they chose to enter teacher education. Secondly, it is possible that the question may have been asked assuming that all participants in a teacher education programme had intentions of teaching. Like many of my teacher educator colleagues, we teach all students as if they have aspirations of becoming classroom teachers. Finally, it is also possible that reasons which appeared more applicable to explaining why student teachers chose teacher education programme were not distinctly differentiated from reasons explaining why student teachers were choosing to teach. This would have been the case because the intention of these studies was to answer the question related to why student teachers chose to pursue teaching as a career. These are the reasons why this study is especially concerned with student teachers, and their reasons for entering teacher education.
**Teacher Education: Value to Educational/Occupational Aspirations**

There are findings in the broader body of scholarly research which indicate that among those who enter teacher education, teaching was not necessarily their first career choice (Book, 1983; Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Hobson et al., 2006; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Su et al., 2001). In Jamaica, the research related to why student teachers choose to teach also provides some indication that persons enter teacher education for reasons other than to pursue a career in teaching. For instance, five of the 20 students who were interviewed during Evans’ (1993) study indicated that they were “undecided about the future and [as a result] were encouraged...to enter [Teachers’] College” (p. 236). As Evans mentions, the teachers’ college programme, as an equivalent to A-Levels (grades 12 and 13), provides “for many young secondary school graduates...a strong incentive for attending...though it is not clear that they all intend to become teachers” (p. 229). A response such as this implies that a student teacher may have limited interest in teacher education and/or teaching. If this is the case then one should be curious as to what purpose teacher education serves to the educational or occupational aspirations of these student teachers.

To those who aspire to teach the significance of teacher education seems fairly clear, but for those for whom teaching is not a career of choice or a vocation for the long-term one has to question how valuable and relevant teacher education is to their educational and occupational aspirations. There is very limited, if any, comprehensive research which provides findings related specifically to this matter and what may appear to be data related to this matter is assumptive. As one male student in the Becoming a Teacher Project (2006) explained “once you have got your B.Ed. and a bit of experience, there is far more doors open up to you than teaching, it is not your only option, so, I can keep all my options open now” (p. 205). A simple
interpretation of this statement suggests that the teacher education experience serves a purpose other than preparing one for a career in teaching. In the case of this particular student he may have entered teacher education with the intention of using it as a “stepping-stone” or as a “backup” to another occupation/career he was pursuing. Based on his response it also very possible that he may have entered the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Programme with aspirations of wanting to teach, but during the course of the programme these intentions and aspirations changed. However, in order for these interpretations to be confirmed, it is necessary to probe further so that we can develop a broader understanding of why student teachers such as these enter teacher education and what they gain from the experience.

Summary

There appears to be sufficient literature, both internationally and in Jamaica, which discusses the multiple reasons why student teachers choose to teach. There, however, appears to be a paucity of research which specifically focuses on the issue of why some individuals choose to enter teacher education programmes, and even less, if any, which explores why individuals who are not aspiring to teach or teach long-term enter and complete teacher education programmes. In the Jamaican context the issue related to why some individuals choose to enter teacher education programmes inadvertently surfaces within scholarly discussion pertaining to why individuals choose to teach. The findings in the Jamaican research also suggest that there are extrinsic reasons which have a significant influence in motivating numerous Jamaican student teachers to enter teacher education.

There is also very limited research which specifically examines how teacher education is related, relevant or of value to the educational and/or occupational aspirations of the student teacher. The findings from this study will hopefully broaden the understanding of student
teachers in general and Jamaican student teachers in particular. This study is designed to provide voice to a specific segment of Jamaican student teachers and to include their voice in the wider teacher education and student teacher based discourse.
Chapter Three

Qualitative Research: A Means to Better Understanding Jamaican Student Teachers

When researchers are curious or perplexed by what they observe in the physical or social world they ask questions and investigate in hope that they will discover a clearer and deeper understanding of what is happening in reality. In this chapter I discuss the methodology I used as a framework for collecting, organizing, and analysing the data which I believed would provide a clearer and deeper understanding of the Jamaican student teachers’ experience. The methodology was predominantly qualitative.

I chose a qualitative methodology because I support the principle that “methods and data used (qualitative, quantitative, or both) should follow from and fit in with the questions being asked” (Punch, 2009, p.4). This principle has much to do with the latitude qualitative methodology provides for pragmatic research. I should be clear that my use of the term pragmatic is partially influenced by “pragmatism”, which is a philosophical view associated with mixed methods research (Tashakkorie & Teddlie, 2003). However, what I have taken from the paradigm of pragmatism to justify the pragmatic qualities of qualitative research is its insistence that the researcher focus on what works best for the research study, and the research questions should be the driving force behind the methodology, and not visa-versa (Punch, 2009). I argue that qualitative methodology, as a pragmatic approach to research, “has much in common with how we find things out in everyday life, [yet is] an organized and logical process of inquiry, [which] uses empirical information (data) to answer questions” (p. 10).

My decision to use a qualitative methodology was also influenced by another principle which suggests that it is possible for qualitative research to proceed without the establishment of
theoretical frameworks or standpoints. The principle proposes that through qualitative research theory can emerge; theory can be constructed from the data which are collected. As Punch (2009) states, “a conceptual framework may be developed ahead of the study, or it may emerge as the study unfolds” (p.114). The data which were essential and relevant to my research questions came from what the participants expressed about their experiences as student teachers who had recently completed a teacher education programme. There was no single conceptual framework that suited this highly innovative study. In doing this research I was open to the possibility of new theory emerging, and to referring to established theories, when suitable, to augment those which emerged.

This chapter is organized into primarily seven sections. In section one, I provide the context for the study by describing the research site, the programmes, the staff, and the students. In the second section, I describe how I gained access to the research site. The third section is used to introduce and describe the participants in the study. This includes the 77 recent graduates of Town Teachers College Class of 2010 who completed the survey, and the eight who participated in the two semi-structured interview sessions. Section four is devoted to discussing the methodological approach. This is the section where qualitative research and grounded theory are explained and justified as an appropriate methodology and strategy for this study. The instruments I used to collect and analyse the data – surveys and interviews - are also explained in this section. Content analysis, the strategy I used to analyze my findings, is also

14 I realize I was not following the conventional format for a methodology chapter by describing the research site, Programmes, staff, and students in this section of the thesis. Usually this information appears in a chapter on its own. However, I believe that methodology is highly dependent upon the context in which the research will take place; and, particularly if the research is of a qualitative nature. It seemed natural, for the purposes of flow and the provision of context, to tell the reader as much about Town Teachers’ college before discussing access to site, qualitative research, and grounded theory. From my understanding, the primary intention of qualitative research and grounded theory is to develop the most comprehensive understanding of the participant’s world as possible; therefore, where better to begin to understand than with the physical world in which these participants were learning to be teachers.

15 Pseudonyms are used throughout in reference to participants and the Teachers’ college they attended.
discussed. In the final three sections I address the very important issues of limitations, trustworthiness, and ethics.

**The Context**

I conducted this research at Town Teachers’ College (TTC), which is located in Jamaica, in the parish of St. Andrew, on the outskirts of the capital city of Kingston. The neighbourhood where TTC is situated, can be described as a middle class residential community. Two secondary schools, one public and the other private, are located within a 2 km radius of the college. Three preparatory schools (private) and a primary school (public) are also located within this area. The latter is also considered to be a practice teaching school, which is associated with Town Teachers’ college, and available for practice teaching purposes. Town is one of three teachers’ colleges located in the corporate area, and one of 10 teachers’ colleges nationwide. There are also three multi-purpose community colleges which also offer teacher education programmes (Evans & Burke, 2006).

The student teachers who are the participants in this study were enrolled in the three year full-time Diploma in Teaching Programme. At the time of this study they were days away from completing the programme. The Diploma in Teaching Programme has been recently revised to the full-time Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) in Teaching Programme which began in September 2011. For this reason much of what is written in regard to this study is in reference to either the previous full-time Diploma in Teaching or the current B.Ed. in Teaching Programmes. Reference to other teacher preparation programmes is made where appropriate.

**i. Admissions.** Approximately 500 individuals applied to Town’s Diploma in Teaching Programme in 2010. Of the 500 who applied 225\(^{16}\) were admitted. There are several reasons

\(^{16}\) Of the 225 admissions 57 were accepted to the early childhood education Programme and 168 to the secondary Programme. Source: Student Affairs Office, Town Teachers’ college. 17/02/2012.
which might explain why approximately 300 students were not admitted. Some of these reasons for refusing applicants include their inability to meet the application requirements, inability to pass the English Language entry test, declining an offer of acceptance, or the recommendation from faculty – after having been interviewed - not to offer admission. The programme can accommodate only a specific number of students; therefore, limited space also has an effect on the number of applicants who are admitted.

The first stage in the Diploma in Teaching admissions process is the submission of a completed application form accompanied by a Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC)\(^\text{17}\), birth certificate, four passport photographs, and two sealed letters of recommendation. This application is usually submitted early in the calendar year (January – March). The second stage of the process requires that all applicants sit an English Language Entry Test. Some applicants are required to sit entry tests for specific programmes (e.g. Mathematics, Religious Education) in addition to the English test. Applicants to the Early Childhood Education Programme must sit a Mathematics entry test in addition to the English test. Applicants are interviewed by college faculty in the third stage of the admissions process. Each interview is usually conducted by two members of the academic staff. These faculty members are responsible for administering a short reading comprehension test, speaking briefly about what the College/Department offers, and asking the applicant to answer questions and/or respond to hypothetical situations related mainly to teaching. With the exception of the Early Childhood Education Programme, faculty interviews only those individuals who have applied to the programme in which they teach. At the end of the interview faculty complete a form which summarizes the applicant’s performance in respect to the reading test and his/her deportment, as

\(^{17}\) This certificate includes the student’s regional examination results. These examinations are set by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) and are administered to students in the English speaking Caribbean during their fifth form (grade 11) year.
well as a recommendation to accept or not accept the applicant into the programme. A month or so after the interview, applicants are notified as to whether or not they are being offered admission. Successful applicants, who accept the offer, are required to complete a medical examination and pay their tuition fees as the final requirements in the admissions process.

**ii. Programmes.** Over the years Town Teachers’ college has prepared students for a variety of programmes: early childhood education, primary, and secondary. In 2000 the primary programme at the College was discontinued. In September 2011 all 159 students who were admitted to Town were enrolled in the Bachelor of Education in Teaching (B.Ed.), a four-year full-time programme designed to prepare students to teach at either the early childhood or secondary levels. It is worth noting, for future reference, that the number of admissions to the B.Ed. Programme was down by approximately 30% when compared to the previous year. This programme replaced the Diploma in Teaching, a three-year full-time teacher preparation programme. The student teachers who are the participants in this study had just completed the Diploma in Teaching Programme.

Some of those who completed the Diploma in Teaching will have the option of doing the Bachelor of Education in Teaching 3+1 Advanced Programme. This is a degree programme which is designed to upgrade those with a Diploma in Teaching to a Bachelor of Education in Teaching. However, this programme is only open to students who completed the Diploma in Teaching with a B average (3.0 GPA) or better, and who specialized in early childhood

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18 The primary Programme was discontinued as a result of a Jamaican government initiative to rationalize and reorganize the Programmes offered at each of the teachers’ colleges. Town was designated to offer early childhood and secondary education Programmes.

19 Of the 159 admissions 41 were accepted to the early childhood education Programme and 118 to the secondary Programme. Source: Student Affairs Office, Town Teachers’ college. 17/02/2012.

20 This Programme is no longer being referred to as a completion Programme. It will be an advanced placement Programme, whereby students who have completed a Diploma in Teaching will apply to the B.Ed. in Teaching Programme and be exempted from certain courses, and expected to complete others equivalent to 21 credits.
education, geography/history/social studies, human ecology, mathematics, religious education, and language arts. The B.Ed. 3+1 Programme appears to be the continuation of a B.Ed. Programme which was established in 2007 through the Consortium of Institutions for Teacher Education (C.I.T.E.)\textsuperscript{21}, a consortium basically comprised of the teachers’ colleges and the Joint Board of Teacher Education (J.B.T.E.).\textsuperscript{22}

The requirements for entry into the recently developed B.Ed. in Teaching Programme are basically the same as they were for entry into the Diploma in Teaching. Applicants are required to have passed a minimum of five subjects in the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate regional examinations. These subjects must include English Language and Mathematics, and students must have achieved a grade of one, two, or three (since 1998) at the general proficiency level. Grades of A, B, or C are accepted if a student completed examinations under the previous British General Certificate of Education (G.C.E) ‘O’ Level system.\textsuperscript{23} Among the five subjects required early childhood applicants must have achieved a grade three or better in Science, Social Studies, History, or Visual Arts. Students applying to the secondary programme must have a grade of one or two at the CSEC general proficiency level, or an A or B at the GCE level, in the

\textsuperscript{21} The Task Force on Educational Reform in Jamaica recommended in its report (2004) that teachers entering the profession should have a minimum of a Bachelor’s Degree. To realize this national vision ten teachers’ colleges, offering teacher education diplomas, formed the Consortium of Institutions for Teacher Education (C.I.T.E.). Part of the Consortium’s vision was to ‘enhance’ and ‘improve the capacity’ and ‘capability’ of the colleges to respond to developmental challenges within teacher education. One of its key objectives was to develop a reflective practitioner and teacher-researcher who will be able to analyze and respond appropriately to the demands of the learner, the school and community. (St.Joseph’s Teachers’ college, http://www.sjtc-ja.com/BEdCite.htm, and Shortwood Teachers’ college, http://www.stcoll.edu.jm/cite.html retrieved 13/04/2009)

\textsuperscript{22} The Joint Board of Teacher Education is the certifying body for teachers in Jamaica, Belize and the Bahamas. It is a partnership in education which includes Ministries of Education, institutions responsible for executing teacher education Programmes, the Faculty of Humanities and Education at the University of the West Indies, teachers’ organizations in the 3 countries, and independent members. One of JBTE’s major functions is to guarantee standards in teacher education.

\textsuperscript{23} This is an academic qualification that examination boards in the United Kingdom award to secondary students in the UK and commonwealth countries, such as Jamaica. In the UK, since 1988, this has been replaced by the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) and in the Caribbean by the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC).
subject areas they wish to specialize. Students who earned Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Education (C.A.P.E)\textsuperscript{24} qualifications are also accepted and may be exempted from certain courses. This may also apply to students who possess a post-secondary degree or another form of tertiary level qualification. This process of granting exemptions to those with higher education qualifications is referred to as advanced placement.

Town Teachers’ college offers three other programmes leading to teacher certification, and one post-graduate degree in early childhood education. The three programmes leading to teacher certification include the following: (a) the part-time Diploma in Teaching for individuals 30 years or older who have been teaching, uncertified at the early childhood level for a minimum of 5 years; (b) the Post-Graduate Diploma in Teaching (Professional Studies), a programme designed for university graduates who desire to teach, or who are presently teaching uncertified in the school system; and (c) the full or part-time Bachelor of Education in early childhood education degree which is offered in collaboration with the University of the West Indies, a programme designed for early childhood professionals based in Jamaica or other countries in the English speaking Caribbean. Town also offers a Masters in Early Childhood Education (M.A.) in collaboration with the University of South Florida. This post-graduate degree programme is primarily designed for individuals who possess a B.Ed. in early childhood or primary education, or child development.

\textit{iii. Courses.} The full-time Diploma in Teaching Programme, the programme most relevant to this study, is jointly administered by 10 academic departments: Aesthetics (Physical Education, Visual Arts, and Music), Early Childhood Institute, Education,

\textsuperscript{24} This certificate also includes the student’s regional examination results; however, at a higher level. These examinations are also set by the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) and are administered to students in the English speaking Caribbean during the grades 12 and 13 school years. These qualifications are usually the prerequisites for admission to university.
Geography/History/Social Studies, Human Ecology (previously Home Economics), Language Arts, Mathematics, Modern Languages, Religious Education, and Science and Environmental Education. Students are required to complete a number of content and methodology based courses in their area of specialization. For example, all geography student teachers are required to complete the Introduction to Physical Geography, Geography Education 1, and other compulsory geography courses. All student teachers enrolled in the B.Ed. Programme are also required to complete compulsory foundation courses offered through the Education Department. These courses include Technology in Education I and II, Classroom Assessment, Principles of Teaching and Learning, The Emergent Teacher, The Teacher, School and Society, and Understanding the Learner. Students also complete courses offered in Music, Physical Education, and Visual Arts (Aesthetics), and, where applicable, may choose electives offered by a department other than their own. Student evaluation in these courses is usually based on a combination of course work and a final examination. Final grades are usually based on a ratio of 40/50 % for course work and 60/50 % for the final examination. Final grades are expressed as a letter and grade point average (GPA).

iv. Teaching practicum. Within the Diploma in Teaching Programme, the teaching practicum is basically offered in three stages, with each stage occurring during one of the three academic years. With the addition of the fourth academic year chances are the three stages will occur in years 2-4 or another stage of the practicum may be added. In the first stage of the practicum first-year student teachers are required to observe classes for one week at a school in the community where they live, or at a school they attended. During this visit each student completes an observation form which requires that they pay close attention to teaching strategies and classroom procedures. Students also complete a reflection which they submit to their
department on their return. In the second year, close to the middle of the first semester, students participate in the second stage of the practicum. During this stage the student teachers are organized into pairs (team teach), are assigned to a school and an Associate Teacher, and are expected to observe, learn and participate in the everyday teaching. For secondary students this is done over a three week period, while for early childhood students three days are strictly devoted to observation, and two weeks to participation in the practice of teaching.

The final stage takes place in the students’ final year of the programme, and is the longest and most rigorous of all the stages in the teaching practicum. It is during this stage that the anxiety levels of both student teachers and college faculty may rise significantly. During this stage, unlike the others, the student teacher will be assessed on their teaching ability, and will be assigned a final grade which will have a direct bearing on whether they successfully complete the programme or not. This section of the teaching practicum covers much of the second semester (January – March). Student teachers are assigned to a school and an Associate Teacher based in the corporate area, or in the vicinity. Unlike the practicum in the second year, the student teacher in year three must teach independently.

Student teachers during the year-three practicum observe teaching, prepare and implement lessons and assessment instruments, evaluate students, and participate as much as possible in activities of the school. Their teaching practice is evaluated on the following criteria: 1. A student portfolio (20%) and 2. A major school/community related project (20%) 3. Teaching (60%). Assessment of teaching is completed by: 1. A department faculty member evaluating two teaching episodes (20%) 2. A department faculty member (usually the supervisor) and a team of external examiners (usually 2) grading one teaching episode (40%). In some cases the Associate Teacher will submit an evaluation, but this is not calculated into the final grade.
The portfolio and project are evaluated by the student teacher’s college supervisor, and a rubric is used to calculate the grade for both these items.

\( v. \) Other activities. There are numerous activities that the student teachers participate in during their time at Town Teachers’ college. These activities include an orientation week for new students, daily devotional services, special religious services, scheduled meetings with the Principal (Principal’s Option), Founders’ Day Lecture, Carol Service, Environment Awareness Week, Research Day, Sports Day, Valedictory Service, Graduation, and numerous community-based fundraising and cultural events. The students also have a wide range of religious fraternities, sports teams, and clubs and societies that they can join. Students are actually expected to be a registered member in at least one club or society.

\( vi. \) The students. For much of its history Town Teachers’ college has been a teacher preparation school for female students. With the increase in the number of programmes the school has seen a significant increase in the student population over the years. For example, the student population over the ten year period from 1997 to 2007 almost doubled, increasing from a total of 529 to 954 students (Draft Strategic Plan 2008-2018, p. 11). Indications are that the college population is continuing to increase. For the full-time Diploma in Teaching Programme alone the student population was approximately 700 students in 2010 (Student Affairs Office). It will be interesting to learn how many applied and were admitted to the full-time B.Ed. in Teaching Programme which started in September 2011.

In 2001, the College admitted male students for the first time. Three male student teachers were accepted into the secondary level Modern Languages Programme at this time (Draft Strategic Plan 2008-2018, p. 11). The number of male student teachers has increased since, and several more are now enrolled in other departmental programmes. From 2007 to
present the number of male students enrolled in teacher education programmes at Town has
ranged somewhere between 35 and 50 students (p. 11). It should be noted that the male student
population is a very small proportion of the overall school population. This is not unusual given
that, for the most part, the ratio of males to females enrolled in teacher education tends to be low
internationally (Ashby, 2008; Lewin & Stewart, 2003; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Purcell et al.,
2005).

Students who apply and attend Town come from all regions of the country. However, few
come from rural and urban communities where other teachers’ colleges are located. For example,
few arrive from Manchester or St. James because teachers’ colleges, with similar programmes,
are located in these parishes. Approximately 350\(^2\) students live in the student housing which is
provided on the campus. Students whose homes are located outside the corporate area are given
preference for student housing.

Many of the students who are admitted to the full-time Diploma in Teaching Programme
have attained a secondary school diploma, and C.S.E.C. results in subjects required for
acceptance into the programme. Many of the students at Town applied immediately after
completing grade 11 and the regional examinations. For this reason, many who apply and are
admitted into the programme are in their late teens or early twenties (Evans, 1993, p. 240).
Others who apply at a later date usually do so because they were pursuing qualifications needed
to meet the requirements for teachers’ college, pursuing education or training in another field,
employed in the workforce, or undecided about what educational or occupational path to take. It
should be noted that Jamaican secondary school students have the option to continue their high
school education into grades 12 and 13 (A-Levels/C.A.P.E.). Some students who choose to
complete these grades opt to apply to teachers’ college, but many more attend university.

\(^2\) During the 2011-12 academic year a total of 351 students were living in residence.
The draft strategic plan (2008 – 2018). Town’s current strategic plan, in its draft format, is a continuation of the 1997-2007 strategic plan. Like the previous plan the current one addresses three areas which are critical to the operation of the college – academic, administrative, and financial. In the section pertaining to academics it is quite apparent what type of graduate the college hopes to produce. Interestingly, very little is said about the type of recruit or applicant they seek to admit. A sense of the vision of the graduate first appears in the introduction to the 2008-2018 plan where it states that Town’s dream is to “ignite minds which will burn with enthusiasm and go on to create forest fires in the hearts and minds of every member of society” (Draft Strategic Plan 2008-2018, p. 13). Further on, in the mission statement, it is made quite clear that the college is particularly “committed to the preparation of teachers of the highest quality, and to providing innovative and dynamic leadership to the educational sector and society” (p. 13). Some of the goals Town believes its students should achieve, if it hopes to fulfil its mission, include acquiring sound knowledge, applicable competencies and useful skills; developing service-oriented leadership qualities; making a firm commitment to the teaching profession and adherence to the highest standards of professional conduct; and, embracing cooperative education practices to serve the wider community and all stakeholders.

These plans also take into consideration the expectations of other education stakeholders in respect to the profile of the student they hope will graduate from a teacher education programme, and the profile of the teacher who will fill Jamaica’s classrooms. For example, the programmes that have been revised at Town, so that student teachers and teachers can obtain higher credentials, support the Ministry of Education’s goals for more elevated standards among teachers. Like the Ministry of Education, those who have set Town’s future goals agree that a diploma in teaching and a university degree in a specialty subject area are “no longer sufficient;
teachers must possess both the teaching certification and a degree” (p. 20). Curriculum at Town,
particularly through foundation courses such as The Emergent Teacher and the post-teaching
practice programme “Who the Teacher is” (p.6) include definitions and standards related to “the
qualities of a teacher” as stated in the Joint Board of Teacher Education’s Regulations for
Teacher Certification (pp. 3-5).

**Accessing the Site**

Gaining access to the site for this study was not an onerous challenge for a number of reasons.
First, gaining access and obtaining consent have been identified as advantages for teachers who
choose to do research in their classroom, or at the school where they teach (Punch, 2009).
Second, as Town makes the transition towards preparing student teachers to earn a B.Ed. in
teaching there has been much support and encouragement for faculty members to do research
which is relevant to teacher education, and to upgrade their qualifications in the process. Finally,
ease of access may be indirectly related to the numerous conversations I had with the school
administration and my colleagues regarding my research interests. Prior to starting my doctoral
studies, I had made it quite clear that the site for my research would be Town Teachers’ College,
and my focus would be the student teachers who chose to prepare to be teachers at this
institution.

In December 2009, I met with the Principal to gain formal permission to conduct my
research at Town. During this meeting we discussed my research interests and plans regarding
what role the college and specific students could serve in the overall study. In April 2010, a
formal letter was submitted to the Principal outlining the purpose of the research, the target
group/sample, issues related to research ethics, and a request for permission to conduct the
research at Town Teachers’ college (see Appendix A). A consent form was attached with the
letter. This consent form was signed by the Principal thereby giving me permission to invite students from the college to be participants in the study.

The Principal also recommended that I meet with the Vice-Principal since I required a large group meeting to introduce the research to the third-year student teachers who were about to graduate from the programme. This meeting was held in May 2010. At this meeting the Vice-Principal and I discussed the nature of my research and the role of student teacher participants. We also used this meeting to set a time, date, and place where I could meet the students in a large group setting. It was decided that I would meet the students in the auditorium, in a morning session, during the week that they were participating in various leadership and professional development activities.

A total of 80 students attended this meeting. I presented an overview of my research, and the role that students could serve as participants. I also discussed the ethical protocol required in order to conduct this research. It was at this time that I assured the students that the research would not pose any risks to the participants. I informed them that they did not have to participate in the survey and complete the questionnaire, and even if they decided to participate in the survey and other aspects of the study they could withdraw at any time without consequences. I assured them that confidentiality would be maintained at all times; therefore, pseudonyms would be used in place of authentic names. Time was also allotted for the students to ask questions.

**The Participants**

The participants in this study were student teachers in the Diploma in Teaching Programme at Town Teachers’ college. All third-year student teachers were invited to an information session pertaining to the research. Those who attended were invited to complete a short questionnaire for the purpose of gathering general demographic information, reasons why they entered teacher education, and responses related to their educational and occupational plans. A total of 77
student teachers completed the questionnaire. Of the 77 student teachers 31 had completed an Early Childhood Education Programme and 46 had completed a Secondary Programme. The data set resulting from the questionnaires was incorporated into the findings of the study, and was also used to identify possible participants for the interview portion of the research.

The “target population” for this study was the third-year student teachers who had recently completed their final year of the teacher education programme (approximately 150 students). Identifying the target population was largely influenced by the definition provided by Jaeger (1997) who explains the importance of the target population in relation to conducting surveys. He states that:

> The target population of a survey is the group of persons, objects, or institutions that defines the object of the investigation. An essential requirement of survey research is the explicit, unequivocal definition of the target population. In fact, the target population must be defined so well that it is possible to state with certainty whether any person, object or institution is or is not a member of that population. (p. 456)

These student teachers were identified as the “target population” because they had experienced the full three years of the teacher education programme, and were in a position where they were expected to be making the transition onto further education or employment. I believed that this group of students would provide the best responses to questions regarding their educational and occupational aspirations, and achievements.

A smaller, more purposive sample of eight student teachers were chosen from the pool of those who had completed the questionnaire, and who had given their consent to participate in the second part of the research. I referred to this pool of students as those who could potentially comprise the purposive sample, and thus participate in the interview section of the research.
There were a total of 15 students who comprised this pool of potential interviewees. It has been said that researchers develop purposive samples when they have “special knowledge or expertise about [a] group to select [participants] who represent this population” (Berg, 2004, p. 36); and when the participants they choose possess qualities which are of “relevance to the topic of the investigation” (Denscombe, 2003, p. 15). For this reason purposive sampling is also considered to be a form of “theoretical sampling”, a form of sampling which is closely associated with grounded theory research (Denscombe, 2003). The researcher who utilizes theoretical sampling usually has “some idea of the phenomenon he or she wants to study then, based on this knowledge, selects groups of individuals, an organization, or community most representative of that phenomenon” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 420). Purposive sampling, in this instance, was used to deliberately select participants whom I believed could provide the most informative responses to the question of what influenced their decision to enter teacher education in spite of their limited aspirations to teach. On the questionnaire these students were expected to provide responses indicating doubts about entering teacher education and/or limited plans or aspirations to stay in teaching for the long term.

Each student teacher in the purposive sample was invited to participate in two semi-structured interviews, each lasting approximately 60 minutes in length. The first interview was designed to follow a set of questions. The second interview included additional questions which were designed to collect data relating to the responses that the students provided during their first interview, as well as any new information that would be relevant to the study. This interview included questions about the participants’ current education and/or employment status, views pertaining to the programme and teacher education experience, and future educational and occupational aspirations. I should also mention that since the enrolment of male student teachers
in the programme was low a special effort was made to include at least one male student in the purposive sample.

**The Methodological Approach**

<i>Qualitative research</i>. The critique of qualitative research has not always been constructive or reasonable. In the broad field of research studies it has been referred to as “soft”, and qualitative researchers as being more like “journalists [who] write fiction, not science, [and] have no way of verifying their truth statements” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 8). This unfair critique may have been premised on the belief that research is more scientifically sophisticated “as the degree of quantification within a given field increases” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 106). This is further reinforced by positivism’s legacy of “mathematical propositions...that can be easily converted into precise mathematical formulas expressing functional relationships” (p. 106), and the belief that “formulaic precision has enormous utility when the aim of science is the prediction and control of natural phenomenon” (p. 106). Furthermore, there is the widespread conviction that science and its relationship to numbers implies precision (Berg, 2004), and as a result of this only quantitative data is valid and of a high quality (Sechrest, 1992 in Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Over the years the unconstructive critique has been subdued by counter arguments that mitigate the superiority of quantitative approaches, and promote the methodological worth of qualitative research. Guba and Lincoln (1994), in the chapter *Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research*, highlighted several critiques which encouraged not only a “reconsideration of the utility of qualitative data but [questioned] the very assumptions on which the putative superiority of quantification has been based” (p. 106). One critique in particular highlights how quantitative research can overlook important variables within a particular context (context
stripping) as a result of the need to be scientifically focused and precise. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is viewed as not having this limitation because consideration of context is an essential aspect of the methodology. Another critique claims that quantitative research is guilty of the “exclusion of meaning and purpose” (p. 106), particularly as this relates to fully understanding human behaviour. Conversely, qualitative research is viewed as having the capacity to offer greater meaning and purpose to social science research because one of its fundamental goals is to “provide rich insight into human behaviour” (p. 106).

Fortunately, in the best interests of research, the division between quantitative and qualitative research has been relaxed. It is no longer a case of one approach being superior to other; rather “both are needed...both have their strengths and weaknesses, and [both] can and should be combined [when] appropriate” (Punch, 2009, p. 4). It is now generally known that qualitative research is a complex, diverse effective and efficient means of obtaining comprehensive and credible social data. For instance, qualitative research enables the researcher to capture the participants’ meaning and understanding of their lived experiences by accurately and comprehensively including their voices, and describing their thoughts and patterns of behaviour (Berg, 2004; Cohen and Court, 2003; Denscombe, 2003; Delamont, 1993; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Greene, 1992; Mertens, 2007; Punch, 2009; Johnson & Turner, 2003). The data generated is usually detailed, rich and complex, and capable of being interpreted and constructed into a “thick description which...makes the familiar strange and the exotic familiar” (Delamont, 1993, p. 150). Furthermore, qualitative methodology allows for multiple and interconnected research strategies which enhance the rigour of the research process, and increase the probability of a broader understanding of the subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).
I chose qualitative methodology for many of the reasons that were just mentioned, and for reasons discussed previously in this chapter. In my opinion a qualitative approach was the best “fit” for my research questions, questions which required that “voices” of the Jamaican student teachers be the primary source of empirical data to provide a “thick” description of their reality. When conceptualizing this study, I could not envision how predominantly quantitative data would help to fully explain why they chose to enter teacher education, and how this would relate to their educational and occupational aspirations. I also chose to take a qualitative approach because it allowed me to conduct my investigation without being bound to a particular theoretical or conceptual framework. Furthermore, this methodology required that the research be done in a logical, organized, and rigorous manner in order to produce the most accurate and complete account of a particular social experience.

The purpose of this study also has much to do with my decision to take a qualitative approach. As previously mentioned much is known in regard to the reasons why student teachers in general and Jamaican student teachers in particular choose to become teachers. Interestingly, much of this knowledge is the product of primarily qualitative or mixed method approaches. My argument has been that there is a paucity of research which closely examines why student teachers in general and Jamaican student teachers in particular enter and complete teacher education. It is my belief that further research in this area, leading to new ideas and knowledge, needs to complement and expand on the current body of knowledge. In my opinion a qualitative approach to this research will yield the data needed to expand this knowledge base. I believe this because in choosing to conduct qualitative research it is expected that the participants will be essential contributors of knowledge, and that as the researcher I will be a responsible collector, interpreter and disseminator of that knowledge.
ii. Teacher-research. I also believed that a qualitative approach would work well for this study because teacher research, also known as practitioner research (Stringer, 2004 in Punch, 2009), is a form of research whereby teachers examine situations within their own classrooms or schools. Teacher researchers tend to have some advantages when they choose to undertake research in their own classrooms/schools. In considering the advantage of teacher research in comparison to general research, Anderson and colleagues (1994) acknowledge that even those from the outside, who spend years studying particular social phenomenon, cannot “acquire the tacit knowledge of the setting [as] those who must act within it daily” (p.5). For these researchers the qualitative investigation is convenient, easy to obtain access and consent, relevant, and open to insider knowledge and understanding (Punch, 2009, p. 43). Each of these was a benefit to me in terms of the planning and execution of my teacher research; however, relevance and insider knowledge and understanding have been particularly important.

Relevance can play a significant role in influencing teachers to carry out research in the space where they work. Punch (2009) states that: “some problematic, or particularly interesting or promising aspect of the professional situation may well be the springboard for [the] research” (p. 44). I probably would not have done this research had my curiosity not been sparked by what the student teachers in my classroom expressed about learning to teach, teaching, and life after college. As a teacher educator I felt that this was invaluable knowledge which should be informing and influencing my teacher educator pedagogy and current pedagogy within teacher education in Jamaica. In regard to my situation, “professional relevance” has been an important impetus for doing this research, and is very much a part of the overall research design (p. 44).

Insider knowledge and understanding has also been the impetus for and an advantage to doing research related to the classroom school where I teach. As Punch (2009) suggests:
Teacher-researchers studying their own school or classroom can bring an insider’s understanding of the research situation, including its social, cultural and micro-political aspects. This type of understanding can enrich and deepen the research, including interpretation of the results and consideration of their transferability to other situations. (p. 44)

In planning and executing this research, I saw an advantage to being on the inside conducting this investigation as opposed to approaching the research from the outside. I saw the benefit to possessing some prior knowledge and understanding of why the students I taught chose teachers’ college. For example, the students who casually spoke to me about their aspirations to pursue a university degree after completing teachers’ college were at that point providing me with simple explanations as to why teacher education was a popular higher education option. This knowledge was the impetus for wanting to explore the deeper reasons why they had made their decision. I also felt fortunate to have an awareness of the social, cultural and political dynamics of Town Teachers’ college, as this provided an awareness of the context in which the students were preparing to become teachers. In my estimation, this produced a level of familiarity which, if utilized properly, could be an advantage to producing comprehensive and accurate research.

Familiarity with student teachers and context earned me a certain degree of trust. I believe this may have reduced some inhibitions among the research participants regarding the disclosure of personal beliefs, feelings, experiences, and aspirations. Although I had not taught the students who participated in this research, introductions and sessions to get acquainted began with a certain degree of familiarity because I was a known Lecturer in the college. In many instances, the formal interviews with the participants resembled the many candid and informal conversations I had with my students before conceptualizing or initiating this study.
In contrast to the benefits and advantages of teacher-researcher there are possible limitations and disadvantages. Punch (2009) refers to the “positionality” of the teacher researcher, and how this may contribute to “the risk of subjectivity and bias” (pp. 44-45). For example, as an insider, a teacher-researcher may find it difficult to “maintain a dispassionate, objective, arm’s length approach to the research situation” (p. 44). However, this disadvantage to doing research from the inside can be mitigated if the researcher is aware of and prepared to respond to two very important factors regarding positionality. Firstly, is the awareness that all researchers have a position in regard to the research they are conducting; “there is no such thing as a position free project” (p. 45). This point is supported by Denscombe (2003) who, in reference to the role of “self” in qualitative research, states that the “researcher’s self plays a significant role in the production and interpretation of qualitative data [and] the researcher’s identity, values and beliefs cannot be entirely eliminated from the process (p. 268). Secondly, is the awareness that any researcher-position has both strengths and weaknesses. With this awareness a teacher-researcher may better understand that an “insider may bring greater understanding but less objectivity to the research; [and] the outsider may bring greater objectivity but less understanding” (Punch, 2009, p. 45).

iii. Grounded theory. As mentioned previously there is limited research which has explored why student teachers choose to enter teacher education. There is even less, if any, research which specifically addresses the issue of why Jamaican student teachers enter teacher education, and how this relates to their educational or occupational aspirations. The claim could be made that the theoretical foundation on which to base further research in this area is limited. Grounded theory is known to work well with research studies which are intent on exploring new territory in terms of subject matter (Denscombe, 2003, p. 113). This is the main reason why I
chose to use grounded theory as a research strategy for both the collection and analysis of what I believe may be new and current data. I also decided to use this approach as a means of generating ideas and theory based on the data. Grounded theory is defined as a research strategy which is used to generate theory from empirical data (Glaser & Staus, 1967; Punch, 2009). The emphasis placed on generating theory (ies) based on what the participants describe and explain is one of grounded theory’s strong points. In my opinion, theory constructed in this manner, where there is constant references being made to participant “voice”, has a greater chance of being grounded in reality (Denscombe, 2003, p. 123).

I also chose to use grounded theory as a research strategy for a number of other reasons. Firstly, based on the understanding that grounded theory is “firmly associated with qualitative research” (Denscombe, 2003, p. 113). It is a qualitative research strategy which is a direct contrast to research which follows the “theory verification model”, and its emphasis on testing hypotheses and verifying theories (Punch, 2009, p.132). Secondly, grounded theory is a suitable strategy for exploring human behaviours, interactions, and experience by focusing primarily on the participants’ understanding of their social world (emic). This focus is favoured over a predominant outsider perception (etic) of the same social world. Finally, grounded theory is neither simplistic nor easy. It has been described as a “rigorous” and “systematic” way to “construct theories that illuminate human behaviour” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Glaser; 1992 in Tuetteman, 2003 p. 10). It is also expressed as a thorough, methodical, and iterative process for guiding the analysis of data (Ryan & Bernard, 1999).

In choosing grounded theory, I firmly believed that new concepts and theories would emerge from the empirical data; however, I found it difficult to dismiss the possibility that relevant literature and established theories may still factor into the analysis and explanation of
the emerging theories. It should be noted that relevant literature is an important and necessary component of grounded theory research; however, this literature is usually introduced later in the study as additional data to be “fed into the analysis, [and] when theoretical directions have become clear” (Punch, 2009, p. 133). One of the criticisms of grounded theory is that it can be overly “empiricist”; therefore, relying “too heavily on the empirical data [and always] expecting an explanation to exist within the accumulated data” (Denscombe, 2003, p. 128). For these reasons, I used grounded theory with an open mind, expecting that the literature, aspects of post-colonial (Ashcroft, Griffith, & Tiffen, 2007), anti-colonial, social reproduction/resistance (Turner, 1997), occupational choice (Ginzburg, 1972), and other theories may augment the ideas and theory which emerged from the empirical data.

It is by no means impossible for established theory to find a way into the construction and explanation of new theory although its inclusion appears to contradict what grounded theory sets out to achieve. Ryan and Bernard (1999) indicate that grounded theory is an iterative process which guides the analysis of data, and although new concepts and theories may emerge these can, if the opportunity arises, be linked to “substantive and formal theories” (p. 782). Denscombe (2003) informs us that even Glaser and Strauss, the founders of grounded theory, to some extent, “realized that the researcher cannot be entirely free from the influence of social conditioning and previous theorizing when it comes to the analysis of their data” (p. 124). Understanding this, it is hard to imagine how grounded theory can be “blind” to the wider social, political, economical, and historical issues which may have “influences on the events it seeks to explain...or to power relations operating at a societal level” (p. 124). For this reason, I support the suggestion by Layder (1993) who, from a “realist” perspective, believes that grounded theorists “should be encouraged to look beyond what is immediately apparent towards factors that lie behind the
event [keeping in mind that] empirical data should always guide the emerging theory, but never
dictate the scope of the theory generated” (Layder, 1993 p. 69 in Denscombe, 2003, p. 124).

iv. Data collection using grounded theory. Generally speaking, I made all attempts to
follow the methodology which is prescribed for using grounded theory as a data collection and
analysis strategy. My data collection consisted of a survey where questionnaires were distributed
to 80 student teachers who were about to graduate from Town Teachers’ college. It also included
interviewing eight students twice, for approximately 60 minutes. One interview was conducted
immediately after the student teachers had finished their final year, and the other approximately
six months later. Documents relating to the College and other teacher education institutions
provided data which was used to describe the context of the study.

v. Questionnaires. Questionnaires may be used to collect data from the target population
for the purpose of describing one or more characteristics of the wider population (Jaeger, 1997).
Questionnaires, when designed well, can provide a moderately high measurement of validity,
and can support the data analysis component of the study (Johnson & Turner, 2003). In
designing and testing my questionnaire, I relied heavily on constructive feedback from my peers
and thesis supervisor. This was provided following the formal presentations I made in a doctoral
course at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). Developing the questions was not
a simple task. A determined effort was made to ensure that the questions elicited substantial
information which related to the research questions, and not be overly burdensome or time
consuming for the participant. Close attention was given to the wording of the questions so as to
minimize researcher bias or assumptions, and to achieve clarity. A minimum of two drafts were
developed with careful consideration given to factors such as the quantity, wording, and
organization of the questions.
The questionnaire used in this research consisted of nominal/ordinal (Likert) scale measurements in the first section - which specifically asked for demographic information requiring yes or no, true and false, or close-ended answers. For example, in order to answer question 8 the participants had to choose from preset items the reason(s) why they decided to enroll in teacher education (see Appendix D). This section was comprised of ten close-ended questions. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of five qualitative open-ended questions, which were intended to capture the participants’ thoughts regarding their motivation to enter teacher education, and their academic and career aspirations. The questions in this section required more descriptive answers. Therefore, in order to answer these questions, the participants had to describe or explain what their education or career aspirations were before applying to teachers’ college, and expand on the reasons why they chose to do teacher education (see Appendix D). The participants were able to complete the questionnaire within a 15 – 30 minute time frame. Interestingly, this questionnaire closely resembled what may be described as a suitable instrument for mixed-methods research (Johnson & Turner, 2003, p. 304).

I distributed the questionnaires to 80 graduating full-time Town Teachers’ college students (2010) who chose to attend a research information session. The advantage to distributing the questionnaires in this manner was that it allowed me to “stay in control of the data collection procedure, rather than leave it to others or to chance” (Punch, 2009 p. 250). To this point, other than knowing that I would be focusing on full-time students who were about to graduate from the College, I had very little idea who would participate in the survey, and no idea as to who I would invite to participate in the more intensive interview segment of the research. This is not unusual in regard to grounded theory because, “in the spirit of grounded theory it is
neither feasible nor desirable for the researcher to identify prior to the start exactly who or what will be included in the sample” (Denscombe, 2003, p. 111).

The data resulting from the questionnaires was used to create two Microsoft Excel spreadsheets – one with the quantifiable data from the completed questionnaires (77), and the other with the quantitative and qualitative data from student teachers (15) who had completed the questionnaire, and who I believed would be suitable for the more purposive sample of participants (eight). The data resulting from the questionnaires was used to reveal themes and sub-headings which were further explored during the interview segment of the data collection. The data resulting from the questionnaires also aided in substantiating the salient themes and categories which emerged during the analysis of the interview transcriptions.

vi. Interviews. I used semi-structured interviews, sometimes referred to as open-ended interviews, to collect data from a smaller, more purposive sample of eight graduating student teachers from Town Teachers’ college. I selected these student teachers based on the responses they provided on the questionnaire. These responses would have shown that a student teacher had doubts about entering teacher education and/or limited plans or aspirations to stay in teaching for the long term. For example, when these student teachers answered the question: *There are many reasons why students enroll in teacher education-Check the reason which is most applicable to you? (Q-8)* they would have checked the items which indicated that they enrolled because teacher education could be used as a “stepping-stone to university or further education”, or because they were “told/or influenced to do teacher education”. The written responses these student teachers provided would have also indicated that teacher education was not a first priority, and teaching was not a long term goal. When asked: *Why did you decide to do teacher education/training? (Q-13)* these student teachers would have responded with answers
such as, “...my mother told me to do it because of financial problems” (Staci), or “...I decided to do it as a stepping-stone, to further my education” (Mel).

I selected this form of interviewing so that structured questions could serve as a guide for obtaining information from the respondents. This interview strategy was also chosen because it allowed me to probe for further information and examples which were relevant to the study (Johnson & Turner, 2003). Unstructured or semi-structured interviews are popular among those conducting grounded theory research because they complement the general aim of grounded theory which is to “generate theories, not to test them” (Denscombe, 2003, p. 115). In developing my interview questions, as was the case with the questionnaire, I relied heavily on the constructive criticism of my peers and my thesis supervisor following the formal presentations I made in the doctoral course at O.I.S.E.

The majority of the interviews were face-to-face, and each one was audio-taped, transcribed, and member checked. I had difficulty arranging a face-to-face interview with Neka during the first session of interviews; therefore, we agreed to conduct the interview over the telephone. I organized an interview schedule which, for the most part, worked well for both the participants and me. I adopted a flexible and relaxed communicative format which I believe encouraged responses that were comprehensive and complex. The questions for the first set of interviews were organized into three categories: (1) background information (2) career plans and aspirations, and (3) the role of teacher education. These categories were developed based on the nature of the research questions, and the structure and content of the questionnaire. The questions elicited responses related to the experiences, behaviours, ideas, values, and the feelings of the students, and how these related to their motivation for wanting to enter teacher education and aspire to particular educational and occupational goals. For example, when I asked Tahira,
during the first interview, to tell me about her career plans before applying to teachers’ college (Q-8 Interview), I expected an answer that would elaborate on the one she had briefly provided on the questionnaire (Q-12 Questionnaire). The questions were also designed to capture the participants’ thoughts and feelings about the teacher education experience. I hoped that these questions would produce responses pertaining to what these student teachers gained from the teacher education programme, and how they perceived the programme being of value to their future goals and aspirations. Therefore, in order to elicit these responses, the participants were asked questions regarding how they felt about their decision to have done teacher education (Q-15) and to describe the benefits they gained from being in the programme (Q-17).

The questions I asked during the second session of interviews, which were administered approximately six months later, were designed to achieve two main purposes. First, to elicit responses that would hopefully expand on what the participants had said during the first interview session about their decision to enter teacher education, and the value of the programme. The other purpose for the second set of interviews was to provide an opportunity for the participants to reaffirm thoughts and ideas they may have expressed during the first interview. Hearing a response repeatedly is conducive to developing an iterative process which values the reoccurrence of salient and significant data, which can be essential to the formulation of categories, themes, and ultimately emerging theory. Therefore, when the participants were asked to describe their educational and occupational plans for the next two years (Q-6 Second Interview) the intention was to gather the same, new, or modified data.

The second interview also provided an opportunity to ask questions that may not have been included in the original interview schedule. These questions were important in that they were a means to collecting data that could provide greater clarity and add meaning to what the
participants were saying about their educational and occupational plans and aspirations, as well as their teacher education experience. For instance, during the first interview the majority of the participants spoke about the personal benefits to having completed the teacher education programme, but few referred to how it might specifically benefit their educational or occupational goals or aspirations. For this reason, I asked a question during the second interview which required that the participants directly respond to how the teacher education programme might be of benefit to their educational and/or career goals.

vii. Documentary data. A small portion of the data I used in this research was derived from publicly accessible documents. This data was predominantly used to help describe the context in which the study took place. These documents included such items as the Town Teachers’ College Draft Strategic Plan (2008-2018), The Joint Board of Teacher Education’s Regulations for Teacher Certification, and various college, departmental and student brochures and handbooks. Documents are reported to be both an abundant and rich source of data for those who are conducting education or social research (Denscombe, 2003; Punch, 2009). However, as researchers, we should still be cognizant of the possibility - as we would be regarding the source of any information and data – that partiality may influence the selection, interpretation and accuracy of the data which is included in the document (Denscombe, 2003, p. 215).

viii. Data analysis using grounded theory. I initiated my analysis by examining the data resulting from the questionnaire and the interview transcripts. I used a process of ‘open coding’ to identify salient words, phrases, sentences and/or paragraphs which related to the research questions and any other category or theme which appeared to be emerging. The salient words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs from the transcripts were organized into categories. These categories, in addition to the empirical data, were used to create “core categories”. These core
categories were put through the processes of “axial” and “selective coding”, which were the next phases in the development of grounded theory (ies). Throughout the coding procedure, I used memos to describe and explain relationships which existed between categories and themes. When no other data could contribute to my development of categories, core categories, and/or theory, I decided that this was the point of “theoretical saturation”. Content analysis was also used as a means to organize and present the data as findings.

ix. Coding. I would argue that reflecting, thinking, and making mental notes about what the participants have written or said in response to the questions they have been asked is where the researcher truly begins his or her analysis of the data. I found myself doing this often. I would even argue that in my case, this began after numerous conversations with students about teaching, well before I initiated the process of imagining, formally designing, and executing this research. It was during these conversations that I was made aware that teacher education may be a stepping-stone to something else, and teaching a stopgap before something else. It was during and after these conversations that I started thinking about what I had heard, and where I initiated my informal system of compiling, coding, and categorizing data. The first official stage in the analysis of the data began with “open coding”. This was where the process of data analysis assumed a more formal scientific methodology on the path to hopefully producing grounded theory. Generally speaking open coding is the stage at which the researcher begins to “fracture” or “break open” the data in order to generate more “abstract categories/concepts” (Punch, 2009, p. 183). My process of fracturing the data began with the identification of salient words which appeared in the responses to the survey and interview questions. Words such as “stepping-stone”, “backup”, “affordable”, “option”, “stressful”, and “calling” were expressed often enough during the process of open coding to be acknowledged as
significant. These words and the segment of text in which they appeared were then labeled and organized into categories. It should be noted that “labeling” is also a very important aspect of the open coding and category generation process. Labeling is usually dependent on two key criteria: (1) making comparisons and (2) asking consistent questions (Punch, 2009, p. 184). The question I chose to ask consistently when analysing the data was: What is this particular data indicating? “Memos” are another important aspect of the open coding process and, although they may begin with the open coding process they are used throughout the course of the data analysis. My notes were written and organized in order to describe relationships among categories, infer meaning, theorize, summarize, and record other matters related to the thesis.

Subsequent to open coding is the process of “axial coding”, otherwise known as “theoretical coding”. This is the stage where the categories created during open coding “[are] interconnected with each other” (Punch, 2009, p. 186). Unlike open coding, axial coding brings the categories together by looking for interrelationships between them. These interrelationships may be based on reasons such as “causes and consequences...seeing things as different aspects of a common category, [or]...parts or stages of a process” (p. 187). For example, when analysing the categories generated during this research, I could relate the “influence of others” with “financial constraints” since the inability to afford school fees of other higher education institutions (e.g. university) was usually a predicament faced by parents, guardians and relatives, and not the student teachers themselves.

The next step in the coding process involved “selective coding”. At this stage coding is at a level where data is dealt with analytically, and not simply descriptively. This is where data is deliberately selected and organized to become part of a “core category” (Punch, 2009, pp.188-189). For example, this is the point where the abstract categories I created during open coding,
such as the “affordability of teachers’ college”, “teacher education as an alternative choice”, “influence of others”, “professional development”, and “teaching as a backup occupation” were analysed and organized into core categories. As a personal preference, my core categories were expressed in the form of questions. For example, a core category consisted of the data related to the question: What responses may indicate that these student teachers do not aspire to do teacher education or teaching? I should also add that core categories, where possible, were related to one of the research questions. Therefore, the preceding question, and core category, was significant to my first research question: What accounts for Jamaican students, who indicate that teacher education and teaching are not their educational or occupational aspirations, entering and completing teacher education? Other core categories and their relevance to one of the research questions have been outlined in the appendices.

Core categories are significant to the research in that they ultimately become “the central focus of the grounded theory” (Punch, 2009, p. 188). When the point is reached where no more, or no new, data can provide new categories, core categories or theory it is assumed that “theoretical saturation” has been reached. Theoretical saturation is described as the end-stage of theoretical sampling, when no new data are showing new theoretical elements, but rather confirming what has already been found (Punch, 2009 p.360; Tuettemann, 2003, p.13).

**Content Analysis and the Presentation of Findings**

The processes of coding and categorizing provided the opportunity to be immersed and well-acquainted with the data. Content analysis was the basis for my interpretation of the data, and the presentation of meaningful insights and inferences in respect to what the participants had written or said during the course of this research. Generally speaking, content analysis is defined as “any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special
characteristics of messages” (Holsti, 1968, p. 608). For example, inferences related to “youthfulness”, as a reason why these student teachers entered teachers’ college, would have been based on what they expressed about being young, impressionable, and uncertain about their educational and occupational future.

Content analysis is considered by some scholars to be exclusive to quantitative research (Berelson, 1952, Silverman, 1993), while others argue that it is relevant for both mixed methods, and qualitative research (Abrahamson, 1983; Berg, 2004; Selltiz et al., 1959; Smith, 1975). My understanding and justification for the use of content analysis as a qualitative interpretive technique is in agreement with that of Berg (2004), who states that:

Content analysis can be effective in qualitative analysis...[it] provides a method for obtaining good access to the words of the text, or transcribed accounts offered by the [participants]. This offers, in turn, an opportunity for the investigator to learn about how the [participants] or the authors of textual materials view their social worlds. (p. 269)

In my opinion, content analysis was an effective strategy for analyzing the data which had been organized during the processes of coding and categorizing, and presenting the analysis in the form of emerging ideas and theory. Therefore, whenever I presented the actual text from the transcripts or a resource document it was usually preceded and/or followed by my interpretation or inference about what had been said or written. This approach is also supported by Berg (2004) who suggested that content analysis of data could “be accomplished either by separately presenting the findings, or by interweaving findings and analysis” (p. 308).

The Role of Literature in the Analysis of Data

Relevant literature can be used to complement and augment the analysis of the research data (Punch. 2009). Denscombe (2003) alluded to the utility of the literature in the discussion and
analysis of the research findings by stating that the researcher can make “reference to the theories and ideas, issues and problems that were noted earlier in the report” (p. 294). Reference to literature was an important aspect in the analysis of the findings in this study. For example, Evans’ (1993) and Ginzberg’s (1963) ideas pertaining to age, and its relevance to making important occupational choices, was useful in my discussion on how “youthfulness” may have been a factor in these student teachers’ decision to do teacher education. The historical, socio-cultural, and scholastic knowledge and ideas contained in the literature review were used, where appropriate, to enhance the meaning of what was observed and documented in the empirical world of the research participants.

**Limitations of the Study**

In my estimation there were two limitations associated with this study. First, there could have been a greater degree of “flexibility” in my sampling methods. Flexibility is a feature of theoretical sampling, and thus grounded theory research. Flexibility in theoretical sampling is described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) as the researcher’s ability to “pursue areas of investigation that might not have been foreseen or planned, yet appear to shed light upon or add a new perspective to one’s area of investigation” (p. 178). My purposive and theoretical sampling went as far as selecting eight student teachers who were well-suited for this research. It is their voices that are largely the basis for the concepts and theories which emerged from the research. However, a wider array of voices could have been included in the research if I had incorporated more flexibility in my sampling. For example, this research could have included the voices of parents and older siblings, participants who could have possibly enhanced and substantiated what the student teachers had articulated about their reasons for entering teacher education.
I should also add that time and space were key factors in this study, largely because of the geographical distance between where I completed a major portion of my thesis work (Toronto), and where I had gathered my data (Kingston, Jamaica). Grounded theory requires that the researcher have fairly easy access to the participants, and others who may have relevant information relevant to the study. Although technology enables us to communicate and gather information over great distances it cannot, in my opinion, entirely replace the quality of data which is gathered from a face-to-face exchange between researcher and the participant. Furthermore, face-to-face contact, I believe, is even more important as a means of off-setting the disparities and inequities of technological capacity and efficacy, which may exist between developed and developing world economies.

**Trustworthiness of the Findings**

Trustworthy qualitative research is usually of a high standard. High standard qualitative research has been described as “plausible, credible, trustworthy; and, therefore defensible” (Johnson & Turner, 2003 p. 300). In addition to these traits others stress that qualitative research will be “sound”, logical and of value if it is transferable, dependable, and confirmable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 in Marshall & Rossman, 1995 p. 143-145). It has also been stated that if qualitative research is trustworthy then it is considered to be “well-done and worthy of the readers’ attention” (Johnson & Turner, 2003 p. 300). Validity, a term commonly associated with quantitative research, may also be used when referring to the trustworthiness of a qualitative research study. In reference to qualitative research, some suggest that the terms trustworthy and validity be “treated as synonyms” (p. 300), because in this instance “reliability and validity are not statistical” (Delamont, 1992 p.158).
The trustworthiness or validity of a qualitative research study is achieved by paying close attention to certain key issues, and utilizing particular strategies. Maxwell (1996) refers to three validity issues that the researcher should pay close attention to when conducting his/her qualitative study (in Ryan & Turner, 2003 p.300). In my opinion, these are critical to the trustworthiness and validity of qualitative research, but even more so to research which intends to construct grounded theory. The first of these issues is “descriptive validity” which refers to how accurately the researcher reports or describes an account which he/she has received from the participant. A second is “interpretive validity” which is concerned with the degree to which the researcher accurately interprets and presents the participants’ sense and understanding about what is being investigated. Finally, there is theoretical validity which is concerned with the extent to which theoretical explanations developed by the researcher fit the data. In my opinion, these validity issues were both critical and relevant to this research study which was dependent upon the emic views of the Jamaican student teachers’ who played a significant role in the construction of new theoretical knowledge and understanding.

An effective strategy for enhancing the validity and trustworthiness of qualitative research is “member checking” (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). Member checking simply means to check with the participants so they can verify whether the data they provided was correctly and completely recorded and/or interpreted. This means that member checking may be done after the data has been transcribed, or during the analysis of the data (Punch, 2009). Member checking can be especially important during the data analysis, when a significant amount of conceptualizing and explaining is needed; therefore, member checking is often important in grounded theory studies (p. 316). Member checking is also associated with “internal validity” which in the context of qualitative research refers to the “extent to which the findings
faithfully represent and reflect the reality that has been studied” (p. 315) or “one’s justification in making a causal inference from one’s data” (Johnson & Turner, 2003, p.301). The participants in this study were invited to check their interview transcripts, as well as their portfolios, which are presented in Chapter Four. Some of the participants responded to the invitation by approving what had been transcribed or written, or to suggest minor changes. Revisions were made where needed.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethics should be an important consideration when conducting any form of research. Attention to ethical practices should be of even greater concern when conducting social science research which involves the participation of people, and the use of the data they provide (Punch, 2009). I believe, like others, that social science research is a “moral act” (Denscombe, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 1995) and that no researcher has a “privileged position in society that justifies them pursuing their interests at the expense of those they are studying – no matter how valuable they hope the findings might be” (Denscombe, 2003, p. 135). Social science researchers, in my opinion, have a moral duty to consider what is and what may not be ethical in regard to issues such as harm, consent, deception, privacy, and confidentiality; and that this should be done early in the project, as the project develops, and even after the project has ended (Punch, 2009).

This research project underwent an ethical review and was approved by the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board in March, 2010, and renewed in March, 2011 and 2012 (Ref: 25112). All measures were taken to ensure that no physical, economic, mental or emotional harm was inflicted on the participants or the institutions involved in this study. All prospective participants received a letter of invitation outlining the purpose of the study and their role in it. No participant was included in the study unless they gave written or signed consent, and the
Principal of Town Teachers’ college, which was used as the site for the study, also provided written permission. The participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time, without the threat of penalty or negative consequences for their actions. The authorities at Town Teachers’ college also had the right to withdraw any permission they had given to use the school as the research site.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I discussed the research methodology that I used to guide my search for a clearer and deeper understanding of why Jamaican student teachers’ enter teacher education, and how this may relate to their educational and occupational aspirations. The methodology involved accessing Town Teachers’ college in order to sample, survey, and interview student teachers who had recently completed the College’s Diploma in Teaching programme. The methodology also involved using grounded theory as a means of collecting, organizing and analysing the data collected from these students. My methodology was qualitative and I justified this methodology for the following reasons: (1) the research questions which guide this investigation are suited for a qualitative study; (2) my personal “worldview”, assumptions, or having a theoretical/conceptual framework(s) in place did not restrict me from proceeding with the study; (3) issues regarding validity, trustworthiness, and ethics are an integral aspect of this methodology; (4) teacher research, practitioner research, tends to fit well within a qualitative methodological framework; and (5) grounded theory, as a research strategy, has a close affiliation with qualitative research.

Grounded theory is a significant aspect of this study. My reasons for choosing grounded theory, as a strategy for collecting and analysing the data, were also discussed at length. I chose grounded theory in order to generate theory from empirical data I collected and analysed...
believing that a theoretical foundation on which to base my research was limited. I also believed that by using a grounded theoretical approach I was not forced to ignore or dismiss relevant literature or established theories which may complement or enhance the theories emerging from the data. Finally, I decided on grounded theory because it is rigorous and systematic way to go about doing qualitative research.
Chapter Four

Eight Student Teachers

The following are profiles of the eight student teachers who were selected, through purposive sampling, to be participants in this study: Tahira, Staci, Mel, Neka, Miguel, Adriana, Jade, and Gabriel. In this chapter, these 8 student teachers may be referred to individually as a participant or, when grouped, as participants. At times the term “purposive sample” is used, so as to distinguish this group from the “target population” of approximately 150 students who were in their final year of a teacher education programme at Town Teachers’ College, and the 77 students who participated in the survey. A questionnaire was used to capture the responses of the 77 student teachers who participated in the survey. This survey was designed to capture their reasons for entering teacher education, and their aspirations regarding future educational and occupational goals. The questionnaire was also used to obtain general information about their department and programme affiliation, teaching subjects, and level of high school completed.

The data provided by the eight student teachers who participated in the purposive sample was derived from what they included in the questionnaire, along with the content they provided during the two semi-structured interviews. Table 1 (see p.97) 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 guide this research study. This includes data related to their age at entering teachers’ college, educational background, reasons for entering teacher education, and their postsecondary and post-college educational and occupational goals and aspirations.
Table 1.

*Profile of Eight Student Teachers: Summary of Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education Pre-Teacher College</th>
<th>Reasons for entering teacher education</th>
<th>Post-secondary goals/aspirations</th>
<th>Post-college goals/aspirations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tahira</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>(7) Subjects Math (re-sit)</td>
<td>Unsure Influenced Stepping-stone</td>
<td>Nursing Pediatrics Culinary Arts Food &amp; Nutrition</td>
<td>Teach Food &amp; Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staci</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>(6) Subjects No Math.</td>
<td>Influenced Affordable</td>
<td>Law Food &amp; Nutrition</td>
<td>Teach Special Ed. Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mel</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>(5) Subjects Math</td>
<td>Unsure Influenced Stepping-stone</td>
<td>Graphic Design Journalism Accounting</td>
<td>Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>(4) Subjects Math.</td>
<td>Stepping-stone</td>
<td>Hotel Management Event Planning Human Resources</td>
<td>Teach (short term) Culinary Arts Computers Special Education Study/work Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>(7) Subjects (C.A.P.E.) Math. (C.S.E.C) Incomplete university programme</td>
<td>Influenced Stepping-stone Calling/Fate Wanted something else</td>
<td>Hospitality and Tourism Nutrition University Post-Graduate</td>
<td>Teach (short term) Degree MA. and Ph.D. Degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabriel</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>(6) Subjects Math Repeated 4th Form Incomplete assoc. degree programme</td>
<td>Calling/Fate</td>
<td>Accounting Cosmetology Employment Own Nursery</td>
<td>Teach (short term) Businessperson Own Nursery Degree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The eight student teachers I highlight in this Chapter were on the verge of completing their final year of the Diploma in Teaching Programme at Town. When I last spoke with each of the participants in December 2010 all, except for one, informed me that they had completed the requirements needed to graduate from the programme in May 2010. Miguel informed me that he still had to successfully re-sit one more examination in order to graduate. Adriana was the only participant to graduate with an honours distinction. Tahira, Staci, Neka, and Gabriel graduated with a commendable credit, while Mel and Jade were awarded passes. Both Mel and Jade were dissatisfied with their final average, and as a result they intended to query the results.

All the participants, with the exception of Adriana, attended and completed high school up to fifth form (grade 11). Adriana completed high school up to sixth form, A-Levels (grades 12-13) one year on a full-time basis, and the other part-time. All participants wrote Caribbean Secondary Examination Council (C.S.E.C.) examinations in their final year of high school. Adriana wrote these examinations as well as the C.S.E.C. Caribbean Advanced Placement Examinations (C.A.P.E.) during her two years of sixth form. Among the participants the examination results varied widely, both in terms of number of subjects passed, and final grades achieved. Most importantly, however, they all achieved the required number of subject passes and grades, which were necessary to qualify for their programmes of study.

It was my intention to include a wide yet proportional sample of students in the purposive sample. Therefore, based on the size of the various departments it seemed appropriate for the early childhood students to comprise the majority in the purposive sample. Tahira, Miguel, Mel, and Gabriel were all enrolled in the Early Childhood Education Programme. The others, Staci, Neka, Jade, and Adriana were enrolled in the Secondary Education Programme; in Social

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26 Up to the first semester of the 2011-12 academic year Miguel had not completed all the Programme requirements.
Studies/ History/ Geography, Religious Education, Language Arts, and Human Ecology (Home Economics) respectively.

As mentioned previously, the responses on the questionnaire were used to select the participants for the purposive sample. Those who were selected tended to have the same or similar responses to certain questions. For example, seven of the eight participants indicated that teacher education was not their first choice in terms of post-secondary educational aspirations. Neka indicated that teacher education was her first choice; however, a closer examination of her other responses suggested that this choice may have been made in either error or frustration. All of the participants also identified other educational aspirations as being their first choice. Unanimously, the participants indicated that they did not enter teacher education because they wanted to teach. Even Jade, did not indicate this although she is the only participant to have clearly expressed during the interviews that she wanted to be a career teacher.

In the following sections, a general profile of each of the eight participants is provided. They appear according to age, starting with the youngest and ending with the eldest. Their narratives are a means to providing greater insight into the students who were not aspiring to teach, but entered a teacher education programme. Their narratives are a means to understanding how they perceived completing a teacher education would benefit their future educational and/or occupational plans. It is also hoped that their stories will enhance the understanding of the social, academic, economic, political, and cultural context in which these participants live their lives, and formulate their educational and occupational dreams.

Tahira: “...so many things that [I] want to do”

Tahira was the youngest participant in the purposive sample. She applied and was accepted into the programme at 17, and graduated at 20 years of age. By North American standards, many
post-secondary students may just be starting or part way through tertiary studies at the age Tahira had graduated from the 3 year Diploma in Teaching Programme. Tahira entered the teacher education programme just after completing high school. At 17 years of age she had just met the minimum age required to be accepted into the teacher education programme.

Tahira completed more than the required number of subjects at the regional Caribbean Secondary Education Council (C.S.E.C.) examination level to qualify for entry. At the time of entry she had passed seven subjects at this level. However, while in her first year of the teacher education programme Tahira had to re-sit the C.S.E.C. Mathematics examination, which she did, and passed with a score of three at the general proficiency level. It should be understood that Tahira needed to pass Mathematics at the C.S.E.C. level in order to matriculate to her second year of early childhood education (ECE) studies. Frankly speaking, achieving eight C.S.E.C. subjects and a diploma in education by the age of 20 is quite impressive.

Tahira was unsure what she wanted to do in regard to future educational and occupational goals. She had also expressed an interest in a number of educational programmes and occupations prior to entering teacher education. From as far back as she can remember she wanted to be a nurse, and in her final years of high school she was aspiring to be either a chef or a pediatrician. Further, evidence of this ambiguity and indecisiveness was noticed in her responses to questions which asked why she did not pursue a path into nursing or medicine. When asked these questions, Tahira made it quite clear that as a recent high school graduate she was unsure what to do because there are “so many things that you want to do.” This was her main reason for not applying to a nursing programme in Jamaica. She also justified this ambiguity as a characteristic of one who is young, and prone to making decisions that “aren’t the
way they are supposed to be.” In her opinion youth was her trump card in the game of life, because with youth she had “time to do whatever...one step at a time.”

Her actions leading up to the start of teacher education were also a reflection of someone who seemed to be unsure about the next steps to take. After graduating from high school, Tahira went on a vacation to Florida where she applied to a nursing programme at one of the local colleges. Subsequently, she was interviewed by college administration, and offered conditional acceptance into the programme. Tahira explained that she did not accept the offer because of financial constraints, and because she had to return to Jamaica by a specified time. Tahira also considered applying to the Human Employment and Resource Training Trust (H.E.A.R.T), a national vocational training programme, possibly to train in food services. Her mother was not supportive of this option; therefore, she did not apply. Tahira applied to Town’s teacher education programme late. This development prevented her from being accepted into the programme of her choice, which at the time was Human Ecology (Home Economics). As an alternative, Tahira accepted an offer to study early childhood education.

Tahira said that she was “not too sure” why she decided to do teacher education; however, in spite of this uncertainty, there are signs which may explain what influenced her decision. First, as she stated, she “couldn’t stay at home all day doing nothing”. She had friends who were in other programmes “experiencing the world of further education.” Second, she said that she did not think that she was “prepared for the work world as yet;” therefore, seeking employment was not an option at this time. Finally, significant others may have also had an influential role to play in Tahira’s decision making. For instance, her mother, an Education/Development Officer with the Ministry of Education and Youth (M.O.E.Y), was the one who objected to her idea of applying to a basic level vocational programme (H.E.A.R.T.). It
was also her mother with whom Tahira lived, and whom she observed as “happy doing [teaching].” It was also a relative who suggested that she apply to the Town’s Human Ecology programme.

Six months after graduating from teachers’ college, Tahira still seemed uncertain what she wanted to do. At this time she was unemployed, and she kept busy by assisting her mother with her work. Tahira said that she was willing to teach, but just not “for [her] lifetime”. When asked why she would not commit to a career in teaching Tahira’s response was “because life takes you in different places, even though you say you want to do this.” If she was going to teach, as Tahira said, it would be for five - six years at the most. She also continued to speak about wanting to be a pediatrician. This was still her ideal career, and the work she saw herself doing for a long-term. But despite this aspiration, Tahira also made reference to the possibilities of working as a teacher educator, completing studies in food and nutrition at the vocational programme her mother had objected to, and doing any sort of work which involved children.

Tahira was satisfied with the teacher education programme as evidenced by her saying: “I don’t regret the three years I have done here. Not one bit.” Similar to the sentiments expressed by others she too was proud of the fact that she was able to achieve good academic results in certain aspects of the programme, and successfully complete the programme. Tahira thought that the “workload was appalling” at times, but hard work was a feature of the programme that she expected. What she seemed to find disturbing was the low recognition teachers received from the general public after having to endure all the hard work and pressure associated with learning to teach. She believed that teachers deserved better than this. The exposure “to just about everything,” learning so much about the development of the young child, and the interaction with
people who had a positive effect on her life were other features of the programme that Tahira appreciated.

Tahira also believed that the exposure gained from being in the programme contributed to her personal growth and development. She believed that she had become more mature, well-rounded, open-minded, cooperative, and better at making decisions. In her words, the programme “allowed [her] to take on the world”, and she viewed the programme as being beneficial to her future educational and occupational aspirations. She believed that what she learned about the physical and emotional needs of the child had “some links” to learning to be a pediatrician. She also believed that attending teachers’ college, in spite of having limited or no desire to be a teacher was acceptable because teachers’ college did not just focus on “teacher training, but career training also.” For this reason she believed that it was okay for students to use teachers’ college as a “stepping-stone” to other educational and occupational goals.

Tahira’s responses to the survey questions indicated that she was considering a variety of educational and occupational options. She also made it clear that teacher education was not her first choice. For these reasons, I felt that Tahira would be a suitable participant for this purposive component of the study. What struck me about Tahira was how confidently and optimistically she spoke about teaching, and pursuing her aspirations in medicine. I could only wonder how and when she would accomplish her ultimate career goal when six months after having graduated from teachers’ college she was still without a source of income, and still considering attending a basic level foods and nutrition programme. As will be seen, somewhat like Mel, Tahira’s actions did not seem to correlate with her aspirations. Maybe this is a characteristic of youthful inexperience, or as Tahira might call it, “youth.”
Staci: “I think coming here, is like, it changed the way I look on things a bit”

Staci graduated from Town Teachers’ college at the age of 21. She, like Tahira, entered the teacher education programme in the same year that she graduated from high school. Staci passed six subjects at the regional C.S.E.C. examination level, earning grades of no less than two for each. Unfortunately Staci was unable to achieve a passing grade in Mathematics and Literature. This is worth noting because Staci’s inability to pass Mathematics prevented her from qualifying for a B.Ed. programme in Special Education, a programme in which she was hoping to enrol after graduating from Town. Staci’s situation is a good example of how important regional high school examination results can be, particularly as they relate to a student’s ability to access post-secondary educational options. It would appear that even above average results in a diploma programme do not necessarily override and replace high school examination results, and do not necessarily translate into an automatic acceptance into other post-secondary programmes.

Staci entered Town although she had no desire to do teacher education, or to teach. Similar to others in this study, her first ambition was to study law and become a criminal lawyer. However, this intention was dismissed once she realized that she would not get the financial support to undertake this career aspiration. Staci’s second option was to study Food and Nutrition at H.E.A.R.T. Her Guardian, who had raised her from when she was 10 years of age, did not support this option because she believed that the programme was below Staci’s academic capabilities. As a result, Staci did not bother to submit an application. Staci’s situation is very similar to Tahira’s, who had also expressed an interest in attending this same programme, but did not receive the approval and support of her mother.

Staci made it very clear that her guardian had a significant influence on her decision to apply and enter teacher education. It was her guardian who suggested that she should apply to
two teachers’ colleges, both located in the city of Kingston. Staci’s guardian also told her that she did not have the financial resources to support seven years of university and law school, and went on to suggest that Staci was “too smart” for the H.E.A.R.T Programme. Not wanting to disappoint her guardian, and “to avoid arguments”, Staci decided to “just do whatever” she was told to do. Close to the start of the school year, she had not heard from either teachers’ college as to whether her application had been accepted or declined. Only after sharing a dream she had with her guardian, where she visualized herself in a strange school uniform, did Staci take her guardian’s advice and contact Town. She contacted the school and discovered that she had been accepted into the teacher education programme. Staci also claimed that friends had some influence on her decision to do teacher education. She received some assurance when they suggested to her that she “could use teacher education for a stepping-stone to go and do law.”

It would appear that Staci’s educational and occupational aspirations changed while at teachers’ college. An indication of this change appeared in Staci’s response to the question of how teacher education would relate to her future educational or occupational plans. She stated:

I think coming here...changed the way I look on things a bit, even though I am still planning to do law. It kind of made me stronger in a way, especially during teaching practice. So [law] doesn’t really fit so much into [my] plans even though I can still use the diploma. But, I think I am changing my mind somewhat now about what I want to do. I want to do Special Education, that’s what I am planning to do my degree in.

This response suggests that Staci no longer had the same convictions about becoming a lawyer as she did prior to teachers’ college. This change of heart seemed to have happened for basically two reasons. First, due to financial obligations, she came to the conclusion that it may not be logical, or feasible to pursue a career in law at this time. Staci indicated that she had two younger
sisters whose schooling she would be financing; therefore, it was important that she find a job in teaching so that she could earn and save the money that they would need. For this reason she realized that she would have to place studying law on hold. Second, Staci seemed to accept the fact that teaching, even though she was not totally sold on it, would be her occupation for some time. Staci alluded to the possibility of becoming a career teacher because she had a “diploma”, had distributed resumes to 34 schools, and would be pursuing further studies in Special Education. The opportunity to pursue further studies in Special Education was particularly significant to Staci’s acceptance of her teaching destiny. After indicating that she did not really want to teach Staci declared that she “searched for a part of [education] that [she] liked.” This part appeared to have been Special Education.

Staci was fortunate to find a job teaching not long after graduating from teachers’ college. She was offered an eight month contract to teach grades seven to nine with the possibility of it being extended into a clear vacancy (permanent position) if the teacher on leave decided not to return, and if her performance was up to standard. Staci made it clear that she hoped to continue working at the high school where she was temporarily employed. As mentioned previously, Staci was unable to qualify for the degree programme in Special Education; therefore, as an alternative, she decided to enroll in the B.Ed. programme in history and social studies. Staci’s aspirations to pursue a career in law had not totally vanished when last we spoke, but when she referred to it as “probably not a good idea” it was obvious that her dream was diminishing quickly.

Like several other participants, Staci referred to the teacher education programme as rewarding, and something she would do again if given the opportunity. It is somewhat surprising that Staci held these views about the teacher education programme although she could easily
have placed blame on the programme for being one of the factors inhibiting her law aspirations, and compelling her to accept teaching. Staci also spoke about two negative experiences she had during the programme. One incident involved a lecturer at the college, while the other was with a student during the teaching practicum. Staci also believed that some college rules were too strict, and the course work excessive at times. However, it would seem, that the benefits far outweighed the negatives because, for the most part, Staci spoke well of the programme.

Staci recognized that “lots of persons out there would want the opportunity to be here [at teachers’ college] and they could not.” She referred to the academic component of the programme as being very good, and she spoke highly of the wide array of courses, and the lecturers who taught them. She spoke at length about one lecturer in particular who had been a huge inspiration during her three years at college. Like others, Staci also spoke about how teacher education contributed immensely to her professional development and personal growth. Not only did she learn about theories, content, and strategies related to teaching, but also how to be a more patient and disciplined individual as well.

It seems, unlike Tahira, Staci did not appear to be as uncertain about her educational and occupational aspirations. I believe that if Staci had the financial means and the academic qualifications there is a strong possibility that she would have pursued the law degree she desired. She also did not give the impression that she was considering a wide variety of educational and occupational options. Staci made it clear that teacher education was not her first choice, studying law was. For these reasons I felt that Staci would be a suitable participant for this study. It also appears that Staci’s experience with teachers’ college had a profound effect on her post teachers’ college educational and occupational aspirations. However, her acceptance of teaching still did not seem that convincing.
**Mel: “A teaching diploma can carry me so far, and as I said it is a stepping-stone”**

Mel should have graduated from Town Teachers’ college in May 2009. However, not completing two courses in her second year of studies resulted in her having to repeat the year. Mel has since completed these courses, and she graduated from Town in May 2010 at 22 years of age. Like many Jamaican secondary school students, she completed high school at a young age. In her case she graduated from grade 11 just before turning 16. If Mel had applied to teachers’ college directly after completing high school she would not have satisfied the minimum age requirement to be accepted into the programme.

Mel completed high school with passes in five subjects at the regional C.S.E.C. level. With passes in both Mathematics and English she was qualified to enter Town’s Early Childhood Education Programme. However, due to her age, she would not have been accepted into the teacher education programme\(^\text{27}\), or several other post-secondary programmes for that matter. Technically Mel had a number of other post-secondary options to choose from. Her options included: applying to an A-Level programme and continuing her secondary education; enrolling in a private lessons institution and preparing for additional subject examinations at the C.S.E.C. level; or, seeking full or part-time employment. Access to one of these options is of course easier said than done. For example, not all students graduating from fifth form are automatically accepted into sixth form programmes; furthermore, not all high schools offer a sixth form programme. What Mel eventually did after completing high school was to travel to England where she lived with her uncle and his family. While in the U.K. she did not enroll in any school programmes, largely because she was uncertain about what she wanted to do. As Mel stated, for almost three years she was “just over there wasting time”.

\(^{27}\) Mel was 16 at the time she completed high school, and she was not turning 17 until after the start of the academic year. Students who are accepted into the college programme must be 17 before this start date.
Well before entering teachers’ college, Mel was uncertain what she wanted to do in regard to her educational and occupational aspirations. Living in an unfamiliar country for an extended period of time, and not engaging in any form of meaningful educational or occupational activity, may have been a symptom of her ambiguity. Mel’s responses to questions about what she wanted to do prior to and after teachers’ college also revealed her uncertainty. Like others in this study, she expressed aspirations of possibly working in one of a multiple number of occupational fields e.g. accounting, graphic design, and journalism. Mel applied to three different degree programmes after completing the teacher education programme. This seemed to be a further indication of the doubts she was having, and a means of keeping her options open.

Given her level of ambiguity it is not surprising that Mel was easily influenced by others to apply to teachers’ college. She mentioned that a friend, who was attending Town at the time, convinced her to apply to the teacher education programme. Considering that the friend would be there for both social and academic support Mel made the decision, on what she referred to as “a whim”, to apply to teachers’ college. She said that this decision was also based on the encouragement she received from both the uncle she had lived with in the U.K., and her parents. On a number of occasions, Mel also spoke about entering teacher education because she realized that she could use it as “a stepping-stone to something else”. This idea also seemed to be supported by others close to Mel, those she knew working in fields other than teaching, and who had first completed a teacher education programme.

For the most part, Mel spoke positively about Town’s teacher education programme. In her overall assessment she was “90 % satisfied”. According to Mel, it was hard work and stressful at times, but as time passed, she became more familiar with what was expected of her,
and as a result she managed the programme better. Mel was somewhat dissatisfied with the college because she believed that teachers’ college was too restrictive for a tertiary level education programme. As a tertiary level student, who had been out of high school for three years, she believed that she should be afforded more personal freedoms. In her own words, teachers’ college was “not as free as the university.” Regardless, she described the programme as being “very organized, strict, but organized.” She also indicated that she would not hesitate to do teacher education again if she had the opportunity.

It would appear that Mel’s teacher education experience was a benefit to her professional and personal development. She was appreciative of all she learned about teaching and child development, and she felt “good to know that she could be called a teacher.” Ironically, she felt good about having teacher certification even though she was very clear about not wanting to teach for an extended period of time. Nonetheless, she appeared to be very appreciative of how much the teacher education programme helped her to grow as a person. In her words, she was “not the same person” upon leaving as she was when she first entered the programme. She also seemed to be very optimistic about the potential she now had as the recipient of a diploma in education. Mel referred to the teacher education programme as “[having] some meaning to it,” and in the following response she expressed just how much it meant. She said:

Having a teaching diploma can further my education in anything, I guess. A teaching diploma can carry me so far, and as I said it is a stepping-stone. Most persons went to teachers’ college, and did something afterwards with their life.

Six months after our initial discussion, Mel was still referring to how good she felt about having teaching certification, and how much this would assist her in getting accepted to one of the

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28 For example, the students at Town had to wear uniforms, unlike the students who attended the university. Having to wear a uniform was viewed by many Town students as a restriction of their personal freedom.
degree programmes she had applied. Unfortunately, she graduated from Town with the minimum requirements (pass), and because of this she was a bit concerned that her chances of acceptance into other programmes might be reduced\textsuperscript{29}.

Mel’s responses to the survey questions indicated that she was uncertain what she wanted to do in regard to her educational and occupational aspirations. She also made it clear that it was not her choice to do teacher education. Unlike others who seemed to be interested in occupations with an element of human service (e.g. nursing, policing) hers covered a much wider range (e.g. graphic design, accounting). Another quite noticeable aspect about Mel was how upbeat, optimistic and confident Mel appeared to be as she spoke about her future plans and aspirations. This was a hopefulness that did not seem to correlate with the aspirations of one who was adamant about not teaching for more than 5-6 years, who had to repeat a year, and who graduated with the basic requirements. For these reasons I felt that Mel would bring an interesting and different perspective to this study. Mel’s youthful inexperience may be the reason for what might be a facade of confidence and idealism. She, like Tahira, probably believed that youth was on her side.

\textit{Neka: “I did not have anything planned out in terms of what I would do after leaving high school”}

Neka graduated from Town Teachers’ college at 22 years of age. Like Mel, she did not apply directly to teachers’ college after completing high school. Like Tahira and Staci, Neka would have been 17 years of age; therefore, she just met the minimum age requirement to be accepted into Town’s teacher education programme. However, initially, Neka did not pass the required number of subjects at the regional C.S.E.C. examination level to qualify for entry into the

\textsuperscript{29} During a brief conversation in April 2012 Mel indicated that she was enrolled in the B.Ed. Programme in Early Childhood Education that Town offered in conjunction with the University of the West Indies.
programme. She passed two subjects in grade 11, which realistically would not qualify her for entry into most higher education programmes. For this reason, she spent 2 years attending full-time high school equivalency classes at a private extra lessons institution in order to prepare to re-sit C.S.E.C. examinations. Within the two year period she was able to successfully pass an additional number of subjects making five. This number of subjects, at a passing grade of two or better, was sufficient to qualify for entry into Town’s teacher education programme. Interestingly, Neka attributed her low performance during high school to the possibility that she was uncertain about what to do in regard to furthering her education and pursuing a career. She said:

I did not have anything planned out in terms of what I would do after leaving high school. So I guess I did not perform the way I should have. [This] gave me a holdback for 2 years, I guess. [This] means I had to go and do other subjects.

Even after successfully passing and obtaining the additional subjects Neka was still uncertain what she wanted to do in regard to furthering her education, and pursuing a career. Her response to questions about what she wanted to do prior to or post teachers’ college indicated that she had aspirations of possibly working in one of a multiple number of occupational fields e.g. nursing, policing or marine biology. Her interest in nursing seemed to have waned after the first interview. This was noticed when she stated that nursing is “not something that I would do right now.” In terms of her ideal occupation it appeared that she still wanted “…to become a member of the Jamaica Constabulary Force.” After completing the teacher education programme and not securing a teaching job she applied to the constabulary, but had yet to receive a response. During the second interview she also expressed an interest in “going to the Caribbean Maritime Institute,” a tertiary level school specializing in maritime studies.
Neka’s ambiguity, combined with her own concerns about being perceived as lazy and unambitious, may have made her highly susceptible to the influence of others who believed that Teachers’ college would be her best choice for tertiary education. Realizing this, Neka’s mother and older siblings, particularly her brother with whom she was living, intervened and influenced her decision to do teacher education. Not knowing what she wanted to do, her brother intervened; he “believed that [she] had to do something” and teachers’ college was presented as basically her only option. Neka’s brother was also the one who financed much of her college tuition. Another sibling, an older sister who had been teaching for 11 years, seemed to also have some influence on Neka’s decision to enter teacher education. Unlike the direct influence received from the brother her sister’s influence was more by example. Neka believed that she too “could do the same thing” as her sister who she had observed, hesitantly enter teaching, only to become a more passionate and effective teacher as the years went by.

Interestingly, Neka spoke positively about the teacher education programme in spite of the fact that it was not really her choice. She said it was good, particularly in respect to how it was structured, and what it contributed to her personal development. Neka described teacher education at Town as comprehensive, and “a well put together programme.” In regard to what it did for her personally, she spoke about how the programme instilled in her certain principles and values related to discipline, persistence, and consistency. Probably most important was the sense of accomplishment she gained from doing well in the programme, and obtaining certification which she believed many “others would love to possess.” She also did particularly well during her teaching practicum. Before this time, Neka expressed that she felt like a failure. This is not surprising given what she had to accomplish in order to qualify for teachers’ college. However, three years of not having to repeat any courses or exams, receiving an ‘A’ for her teaching
practicum, and graduating with “credit” (3.0 GPA) seem to be reasons for her saying that “…it was 3 years well done, well spent.”

Just after completing the programme Neka appeared to be upbeat about the prospects of teaching, even if it was to be for a short period of time. Based on her recent success Neka believed that she could grow to enjoy teaching, and be an effective teacher. By putting her heart into teaching, being down to earth, and showing love to her students, she believed that she could get students to enjoy and appreciate Religious Education. At this time Neka also appeared to be enthusiastic about moving on to complete a B.Ed. in Religious Education largely because it was a subject that she had always enjoyed, and because it could provide her with the qualification she needed to enter a special branch of the Jamaican Constabulary. However, this same enthusiasm was not noticeable six months later when Neka spoke of “lost hope” caused by the inability to secure a teaching job after having sent out so many resumes. At this time Neka’s desire was to move as far away from teaching as possible. This frustration, which may also be related to her having been pushed to do teacher education, is very apparent when she states that she wanted to:

Change from teaching. To go as far as I possibly can away from that field. I would not even think about doing my first degree in anything that has to do with teaching. And do something that I love and not what my family would want me to do [but] to do something that I want, to start doing things for myself. Start living my life to please myself, and I know I’ll be a more successful person.

When last we spoke, Neka expressed that she intended to find employment in a field outside of education. She also expected to save her earnings so that she could finance her degree in an area unrelated to education.
Neka was invited to be a participant in this study because clearly it was not entirely her decision to do teacher education, and begin a path to teaching. I felt that she would be an ideal participant because she demonstrated a considerable amount of uncertainty and indecisiveness about what she wanted to do in regard to her educational and occupational aspirations. Her responses to both the questionnaire and interview questions seemed suggest that she had decided to submit to what others thought was best for her even though she believed that this was unfair. Therefore, when Neka was asked why she decided to enter teacher education she responded with “I just went ahead with what was basically on the table. This was my only option at the moment.” As a student teacher who decided to learn to teach even though teaching was not a primary occupational aspiration, it is a wonder why and how Neka managed 3 years of teachers’ college, and left declaring that it was a worthwhile experience. It was encouraging to hear Neka say, in several instances, that she had no regrets doing teacher education. It was heartening when she mentioned that teachers’ college was a benefit to her personal development, and completing was one of her proudest accomplishments. When last we spoke she expressed deep disappointment that she was not working, and her educational and occupational plans were still somewhat sketchy; however, she did sound more confident about her future. Maybe this is a message to those who may believe that there is not much more to teacher education than learning and being certified to teach.

Miguel: “You know what; let me see where teacher education takes me”

Miguel is the only male participant in this study. He entered Town’s Early Childhood Education programme at the age of 20, and he would have graduated from teachers’ college in May 2009 had he completed all the required courses. When we spoke in December 2010 Miguel indicated me that he still had to re-sit one more examination in order to meet all the programme
requirements. The outcome of that examination would have determined his graduation in June 2011. Barring any further disruptions or setbacks to his academic progress, Miguel should be 25 years of age when he officially graduates from Town.

Miguel graduated from high school with passes in four subjects at the regional C.S.E.C. level. With passes in both Mathematics and English he was qualified to enter Town’s Early Childhood Education Programme. Miguel, like Mel and Neka, did not apply to the teacher education programme immediately after graduating from high school. In the three years following his graduation, Miguel traveled to Canada where he worked as teaching assistant with a Jamaican-Canadian literacy exchange programme. He also spent some time working as a human resource assistant with Jamaica’s National Youth Service and as a wholesaler in a family member’s business. While in Canada, Miguel applied to programmes offered by two reputable community colleges, but he did not qualify for admission. He indicated that the college programmes required that he have five subjects at the C.S.E.C. level, and he only had four. In Jamaica Miguel was also involved as a tutor with a vocational barber school and with the Pathfinder Programme at his church.

Miguel’s responses to questions about what he wanted to do prior to teachers’ college indicated that he too had aspirations of possibly working in one of a number of occupational fields such as hotel management, event planning, human resources, culinary arts, computer programming, music, and the military. Among the eight participants in this study, he listed the most occupations to which he aspired. Among the occupations, he identified culinary arts as the one he most likely would have pursued had he not entered teacher education. Interestingly, unlike the other participants, he did identify teaching as one of his occupational aspirations. He

30 As of May 2012 Miguel indicated that he had completed all the requirements needed to graduate from Town’s Diploma in Teacher Education Diploma.
first indicated this in a response to the question about education and career plans before applying to teachers’ college. He wrote:

   My plans and aspirations were to pursue my degree in the culinary arts as that was my goal. But [I] found myself moving towards teaching as I was involved in literacy programmes here and abroad, and at a community center and church. [This] led to my aspiration of becoming a teacher.

Despite what appears to be a change of heart and an aspiration to teach, a number of Miguel’s other responses suggested the contrary. For example, he indicated that teacher education was not his first choice, and that it was a “stepping-stone to university or further education”. Miguel also indicated that he “may want to be a teacher for a few years,” as well as still “pursue [his] dream in the field of culinary arts.”

Before entering teachers’ college Miguel had participated in a variety of learning and work experiences. His involvement in the literacy exchange programme appears to have had the greatest influence on his decision to apply to teachers’ college. In the literacy programme he was motivated by the influence he had on others, and particularly impressed with the “impact [of] being around children”. Miguel also indicated that teaching was something that “[he] just fell into”. He also claimed that his mother, who is a teacher, and who submitted the applications for teachers’ college on his behalf while he was in Canada, had minimal influence on his decision. However, at one point Miguel mentioned that he felt like he “was doing the [diploma] for [his] parents, to make them happy.” Finally, Miguel indicated that he had doubts about entering teacher education, and he was questioning whether he should have pursued culinary arts; however, after some soul searching he said “you know what, let me see where teacher education takes me.”
Approximately six months after our initial meeting Miguel was still expressing an interest in studying culinary arts. He also expressed an interest in completing a degree in Special Education, and he had actually applied to a B.Ed. programme with the intention of achieving this. Acceptance into the programme at Town was, of course, dependent upon his completion of the diploma in teaching at Town. Miguel also indicated that he had not abandoned the idea of studying or working in Canada, or one of the other Caribbean countries. He also expressed a desire to teach for awhile, as long as employment in the teaching profession was available. When last we spoke Miguel was employed with a telecommunications agency, working as a call representative/data entry clerk. It may be assumed that this employment is temporary, and that he may seek employment in teaching once he has officially completed the diploma in education.

Miguel referred to Town’s teacher education programme as rewarding, and something he would do again if given the opportunity. He, like Stacie and Neka, was pleasantly surprised to experience a programme that was not just about learning strategies to teach children, but a programme that exposed student teachers to a broad spectrum of educational theories and topics that allowed him to gain a number of skills. Miguel spoke highly of the supportive faculty, particularly the Vice-Principal who was “somebody that [could] actually relate to how [he] felt in the teaching experience.” For the most part, Miguel spoke positively about the teacher education programme; however, he did draw attention to a few of its shortcomings. He, like many of the participants, felt that the coursework was excessive at times. Miguel believed the length of time and credits devoted to some courses needed to be reduced, and for others they needed to be expanded. He also felt that more time and resources needed to be dedicated to extracurricular activities such as sports. Miguel also described how he endured the harsh criticism of his practicum supervisor, noting that she once asked him to “consider, or re-consider if [he] wanted
to be a teacher.” Interestingly, when Miguel spoke about the “downs” associated with the teacher education programme he responsibly made reference to his own attitude and behaviours. In his words, the downs were a result of “what [I] didn’t do.”

Miguel did not perform as well academically as he would have liked; however, he admits to having “grown from the [teacher education] experience.” He described this growth as holistic, a growth stimulated not from just “chalk and talk, or...teaching method, but how [to] deal with persons on a day-to-day basis.” Miguel spoke about how the programme contributed to ethical and moral development, development of interpersonal skills, and the ability to work in a team.

He also discussed the advantage he would have in the education job market as a male early childhood educator. Miguel even attributed his recent hiring at a call center to the personal and professional skills he had developed in the teacher education programme.

Miguel’s responses to the survey questions indicated that he was considering a wide variety of educational and occupational options. Although he indicated that he may want to be a career teacher, he also indicated that he may only want to stay in teaching for awhile. These contradictory responses, plus the fact that Miguel is a male student teacher, explain why I believed that he would be an important participant for this study. Miguel was one of a population of male student teachers who account for less than 10% of the entire Town student body. Miguel also added another interesting perspective to this study because he had yet to complete the teacher education programme, which was not his first choice in terms of post-secondary education. Miguel’s enthusiasm and energy, when it came to getting involved in new and different tasks, were his other intriguing traits. I could only wonder whether this easygoing and optimistic approach to life may be the reason for his educational and occupational success, disappointment, and uncertainty.
Adriana: “...teachers’ college a good foundation when you are 18 years old, and have lots of time”

Adriana specialized in Clothing and Textiles, Food and Nutrition, and Home Management in the Human Ecology (formerly Home Economics) Programme. In addition to graduating with honours, she was the recipient of three student awards, a member of the Principal’s Honour Roll, and one of the top students in her department. At the age of 26 Adriana was one of the more mature participants in this study. After graduating from fifth form, she decided to remain in high school, and complete A-levels (sixth form). During these two years of high school she sat the Caribbean Advanced Placement Examinations (C.A.P.E.). Adriana, the only participant to have completed A-Levels, was an exemplary student who passed seven C.A.P.E. units with grades of either one or two. She received a top grade in the Caribbean for the Unit One Food and Nutrition examination, and she had the third highest grade for the Unit Two examination. Adriana was also the recipient of two national awards for her academic performance. Her entry into teacher education was also delayed because of commitments to work and school.

Adriana applied and was accepted into the Hospitality and Tourism Programme at one of the local universities in Jamaica after completing the first year of sixth form. It is not uncommon for some Jamaican sixth form students to apply to tertiary level schools after completing only the first year of the programme (grade 12). Unfortunately, her grandmother passed away the year she started the programme. She did not take this well, and as a result she withdrew from the programme after completing only the first semester. Rather than resume the hospitality programme, Adriana returned to her high school where she completed her final year of sixth form. She also worked in the school library as a library assistant – a position in which she was asked to teach classes when the school was short of teachers. In addition to working in the library
and completing her A-levels, Adriana completed a four month supervisory management course at the Management Institute for National Development (M.I.N.D.).

Teacher education was not Adriana’s first choice in terms of her post-secondary educational aspirations. She had received either full or provisional acceptance to a number of programmes in addition to teacher education an indication of this. This list included programmes such as Hospitality and Tourism, Family and Consumer Studies, Dietetics and Nutrition, and International Relations, Africa and the Diaspora. Adriana indicated that she applied to a university programme every year she worked as a library assistant. Her aspirations, or intention, at this time was “to just go to university.” Unfortunately, there was always a glitch which prevented Adriana from either starting or completing these programmes. In regard to her occupational aspirations, Adriana explained that she had always wanted to do work which involved plants, nutrition, and/or children; therefore, she was considering a career as a dietician/nutritionist or pediatric nutritionist. Like several other participants she also considered the possibility of careers in multiple fields such as journalism, political science, and library studies. However, “at the end of the day [she] knew that nutrition was really [her] love.”

Teacher education emerged as an attractive post-secondary school option once Adriana realized that it could serve as the conduit to her aforementioned aspirations. Getting accepted into a university programme was easy; her difficulty was starting and/or completing it. In Adriana’s opinion she was not going anywhere by taking the university route; therefore, she made the decision to apply to Town after she had gathered enough information about teacher education. The collaborative B.Sc. programme Human Ecology had with the University of the West Indies (U.W.I.) at the time was what attracted Adriana to teachers’ college. Unfortunately a moratorium was placed on this programme, along with other degree programmes being offered at
Town shortly after Adriana started the diploma programme. Adriana was not comfortable with the prospect of teaching; however, she convinced herself that if she was going to do teacher education and teach, then she would “teach something [she was] comfortable with, and teach something [she] loved”. This was her main reason for specializing in food and nutrition. This attitude is quite similar to the one Staci had adopted in order to cope with the prospect of teaching.

Other factors may have influenced Adriana’s decision to enter teacher education. Adriana was convinced that teacher education, as she said, “was what God wanted, this was what [I am] going to do;” especially since problems persistently prevented her from attending university, and everything concerning teachers’ college just seemed to fall into place. She, like others in this study, believed that teaching might be their “calling” or fate. Adriana also described how very rewarding and successful her short stint with teaching was during her days as a library assistant. She was particularly proud of mentoring a student at the school who was having difficulty with a School Based Assessment (final assignment for C.S.E.C.). Finally, Adriana spoke proudly of her grandmother - “her rock” - and the way she would teach her about plants and life with such enthusiasm and clarity. Adriana made it clear that if she was going to have to teach she was “going to teach [her] students with the same enthusiasm as [her] grandmother taught her.”

Adriana stated that she wanted to teach home economics for a short period of time. She made it quite clear that her ideal job would be one that she had a “passion” and “love” for; one where she could “do the things [she does] best and excel in what [she does] best.” She predicted that she would teach for five years at most because any time beyond that she would “become tired of it...just sitting there doing the same thing over and over.” When we spoke six months after our first interview, the four month contract Adriana had as home economics teacher had just
ended, or was nearing the end. Although Adriana did not sound too optimistic, there was a possibility that the position could become permanent if the teacher who was on leave, decided not to return. However, presumably not taking any chances, Adriana indicated that she was going to seek employment, outside of teaching if necessary.

Adriana hoped to earn her first degree within the five year time period she planned to spend teaching. She did not indicate whether she accomplish this as a part-time or full-time student. Adriana made it clear that the first degree did not necessarily have to be related to education. It would appear that she still had aspirations of earning a B.Sc., possibly with the intention of using it to become the dietician or nutritionist she aspired to be. It appeared that Adriana’s main concern was not so much about what degree to achieve, but how long it would take to achieve it. Learning that she would have to study at the university for another three years to earn her B.Sc. in nutrition, Adriana was quick to exclaim: “I don’t have three years!” Adriana also indicated that she still had aspirations of completing her Master’s and Doctorate degrees. Once again, these did not necessarily have to be in education; however, time was an important factor.

Adriana praised the teacher education programme for providing an “environment where you [could] explore skills learned, and find out who you are as an individual”. She referred specifically to the broad scope and quality of the Human Ecology Programme, and the supportive faculty members in whom she confided in from time to time. Adriana was most introspective and critical of the programme. For instance, she believed that there was an over-emphasis on group work to the point where it limited and masked individual capabilities. Adriana also believed that some of the college’s policies were close to being unlawful. She expressed at length her disappointment with the manner in which a pregnant student’s case was
dealt with by the college. Adriana’s criticism also included suggestions as to how the college programme may be improved. For example, she believed that allowing human ecology students the option of completing a minor teaching subject outside of their specialty area would make them more marketable and versatile teachers.

In spite of her criticisms, Adriana did recognize and was appreciative of the professional and personal benefits that the programme provided. She was thankful to have received knowledge about education theory, and education theorists. She was glad for the opportunities to hone her management skills. As a graduate of Town, Adriana believed that she could “work practically anywhere.” Her friends who had graduated from Town and who were currently working in fields other than teaching were her proof of this. Adriana also believed that the programme “doesn’t only teach you to teach, but it teaches you so much more regarding personal development.” She believed that the programme was very good for developing self worth, ambition, and interpersonal skills. Adriana appreciated the opportunity to “ground some of the values [she] had before coming” into the programme. In her opinion, the programme provided a good foundation; however, “a good foundation when you are 18 years old and have lots of time.”

I believed that Adriana would be a fitting participant for his study for the following reasons. First, she chose to enter teacher education although she had high school qualifications which would have allowed her to access a wider selection of post-secondary educational options. Second, Adriana indicated that teacher education was not her first choice, and she identified several reasons which influenced her decision to enter the programme. Finally, as a student who had completed sixth form, Adriana was an exception, since such individuals do not often apply and enter diploma education programmes. Adriana represents the unique case of an A-level graduate who did not aspire to teacher education or teaching, yet chose to enter teacher
education. In my estimation this provides another perspective and possibly different answers to the question of why teacher education.

**Jade: “...this is where I should be, in teaching”**

Jade specialized in English Language and Literature. She graduated from Town Teachers’ college at the age of 28. Jade completed the required number of subjects at the regional C.S.E.C. examination level to qualify for Town’s teacher education programme. However, she was unable to secure a passing grade in the Mathematics examination at the C.S.E.C. level. This is worth noting because of the restrictions a low grade in Mathematics at the general proficiency level can place on a student’s ability to access certain post-secondary programmes. In Jade’s case, it prevented her from qualifying for university English Language Programmes that she was hoping to enter in hopes of pursuing a career in journalism. One of the reasons behind Jade’s decision to enter Town’s Diploma in Teaching Programme was to use it as an alternative route to the university programme that she had initially hoped to enter.

Jade, like several others in this study, did not enter teachers’ college directly after completing high school. After graduating from high school, she enrolled in a privately operated business college where she received training in basic office procedures - some of which she had already learned in her high school business courses. In her words she “wasn’t learning anything new.” Jade felt that this programme was not meeting her expectations, and as a result it was not worth the tuition fees she was paying. She withdrew from the programme before completion. Following this, Jade went to work in retail for seven consecutive years. She started as an entry level clerk and worked her way up to supervisor. Jade made the decision to leave this job and apply to the teacher education programme when she became tired of the work routine, and “wanted something more challenging.”
Jade seemed to be quite focused in regard to her educational and occupational aspirations. Unlike the other participants in this study she did not express an interest in pursuing a wide variety of career options. Jade made it quite clear that her first and only career aspiration, prior to entering teachers’ college, was to become a journalist. At the time, she envisioned this being the ideal career. Jade was also focused in terms of the educational paths she would take in order to fulfill her career goal. Initially, she wanted to complete a university degree because she believed that this would offer the most direct path to journalism. Realizing that university was not an option, Jade made the decision to enter teacher education as an indirect, or stepping-stone to her career goal. It should be noted that Jade “liked” the idea of teaching, but as she stated, it was “not something, at the time, that [she] had a passion for.” If anything, she believed that teaching could serve as a “backup” if journalism did not work out.

Jade decided to enter teacher education as an alternative route into university, and the career she coveted. There were several factors which influenced her decision. First, she was disenchanted with her job in retail which she described as unchallenging. She described the latter portion of her time in retail as a time when she was “just going through the motions.” Second, she did not have the qualifications to enter university. Jade viewed teacher education as a suitable alternative, and much easier to access.

Unlike the other participants, Jade was the only one to declare that she had changed her initial occupational aspirations and was focusing on becoming a career teacher. It was apparent that aspects of the teacher education programme, particularly the teaching practicum, had a significant influence on her change of heart. However, there was also evidence to suggest that others may also have indirectly influenced her decision to embrace teacher education, and what she believed was to be her fate – teaching. These were individuals such as her high school
teacher whom she respected and viewed as an exemplary teacher. It was this teacher who advised Jade to “be the best at whatever [she did].” Another individual, her cousin and a high school mathematics teacher to whom she also admired and wished to emulate encouraged Jade to consider teaching because she believed that Jade would “do well in it.”

Jade secured a fulltime job teaching just after graduating from teachers’ college. She was hired by the school where she had completed her final year teaching practicum. Jade seemed very happy about her appointment and she was filled with the exuberance of a new teacher who wanted to do her job well and make a big difference. Six months after graduating from teachers’ college, Jade was still proudly declaring that she was going to teach for the long term because she had “grown to love the profession.” Journalism was definitely no longer her career aspiration. In regard to her future educational aspirations, Jade mentioned that she was planning to apply and complete her degree in education. Like Mel, however, Jade also graduated from the diploma in teaching programme with a pass. She felt that she was not deserving of this result, therefore it was her intention to query and appeal if necessary. As mentioned earlier, chances of acceptance into a degree programmes can be affected by a low achievement in a diploma programme. Understanding this, Jade planned to attend a private institution where she would redo C.S.E.C. Mathematics.

It would appear that the Teacher Education Programme at Town was what Jade expected. She also expressed no regrets in having to do teacher education here. Like the others, she thought the workload was heavy at times, and some of the courses seemed to be repetitive. She also believed that more practical elements should be added to the programme, and the emphasis on theory should be reduced. However, over time, Jade recognized the value of what was being taught at teachers’ college, and for this she was grateful. As she stated, the Teacher Education
Programme was “not just about academics, but [how] to be a well-rounded person, how to be a professional.”

Jade spoke specifically about how the programme, teaching practice, and some of the lecturers had a profound effect on her development as a teacher and as a person, and helped her develop a better relationship with God. In her opinion, Town was not “just about going into the classroom, it was also about building a relationship with God”. She believed that the programme helped to make her a better person and a better parent. While at Town, Jade learned to be more patient, understanding, able to “get along with people, and to accept [them] for who they are.” She described teaching practice as being very rewarding, and a life changing experience. It was during teaching practice that she believed something happened, and in a fatalistic way it was decided that “this is where [she] should be, in teaching”; and, not just teaching, particularly in special needs schools similar to those she had attended. Jade also spoke proudly about the wonderful Town lecturers who were there for the students and were willing to “make sure that [we] understood certain concepts.” She admired some of her lecturers and wanted to be like them. They were the impetus for her drive to want to do better.

Jade brings a very interesting perspective to this study. She is a participant who clearly indicated that before entering teacher education she was intent on pursuing other educational and occupational goals. This is the main reason why she was invited to be a participant. Jade wanted to be a journalist, and ideally she wanted to attend university in order to achieve this goal. However, it would appear that her experience with teachers’ college had a profound influence on her educational and occupational aspirations. What influenced this change is where I believe the intrigue lies. Simply speaking, Jade’s new outlook may be a result of a positive teaching practice,
a perceived calling, and supportive lecturers. But how much may be attributed to other factors such as experience, maturity and/or the security of full-time employment.

Gabriel: “...God wanted me to do it”

Gabriel specialized in literacy in the Early Childhood Education Programme. She, the eldest participant, graduated from the ECE Programme at the age of 30. She believed that she could have graduated with an honours distinction; however, her responsibilities as a single mother of two children and other personal issues prevented her from achieving this goal. Despite what she referred to as a “rough start” to high school, Gabriel did manage to settle in and pass six subjects at the regional C.S.E.C. level. When last we spoke Gabriel was working full-time as an early childhood educator at a privately owned early childhood facility. She was the head teacher at the school.

Gabriel, like others, did not enter teachers’ college directly after completing high school; instead she made the decision to enter the workforce. Her first job was with the National Water Commission (N.W.C.) where she worked for six years doing clerical duties. While working at N.W.C., Gabriel enrolled in a couple of educational programmes which she selected because they related to her occupational interests or duties at the time. She first enrolled in an Associate Degree Programme at the Management Institute for National Development (M.I.N.D.) because she was interested in studying accounts. Gabriel lost interest in the accounts programme, and ultimately withdrew because she felt that she “wasn’t cut out for [accounting].” She then decided to enroll in a Certified Professional Secretary course, which she believed was relevant to the work she was doing at the time. Gabriel did not complete this course because she was unable to pay the examination fee which would have allowed her to sit the final examination. She could not pay the fees because she needed the money to take care of important family issues at the
time. Finally, Gabriel started an early childhood education course at a privately owned post-secondary institution located near to N.W.C. She withdrew from this course because it was not what she expected.

When it appeared that she would be made redundant at N.W.C, Gabriel opted for voluntary redundancy and left. She then found a job at a large insurance company where she also worked in the clerical field. She worked at this company for just over a year. During the time she was with the company, Gabriel completed two of three insurance courses. “Not following through” was the reason she gave for not completing the third course. Gabriel had been out of high school for about ten years before she made the decision to enroll in the teacher education programme at Town. She had worked for approximately seven out of those ten years; therefore, some of the years prior to teachers’ college were spent at home with her family.

Gabrielle, like Jade, did not identify a wide range of occupational aspirations. Before she decided to do teacher education there were one or two occupations that interested her. The fact that she entered the workforce almost immediately after leaving high school may explain why her occupational aspirations were so few. Gabrielle, unlike those who did not know what they wanted to do after high school, was quickly engaged in employment; therefore, the need to be mulling over options and what to do may not have been as great. It is also possible that finding a job was her primary occupational aspiration at the time. It is interesting that both Gabriel and Jade followed similar paths into teacher education, and in terms of their long-term career goals, they appear to be looking at remaining in the education field.

Gabriel’s dream of owning her own early childhood facility is the main reason why she chose to enter teacher education. She believed that opening her own school would allow her to make a greater contribution to the education and development of Jamaica’s young students,
particularly among “those from really deprived conditions.” Gabriel firmly believed that early childhood education facilities, such as the one she intended to operate, would enable young children to eventually “become citizens who impact positively on Jamaica and the World.” She also felt that having her own school would provide her with more time for her family, particularly her children. Included in Gabriel’s plans was the role of teacher education, as the means to acquiring the knowledge which she needed to operate her school effectively. The other factor that influenced Gabriel’s desire to open an ECE school and enter teacher education was what she described as her calling “to become an ECE educator.” Gabriel believed that teacher education was not her choosing, but as she put it, what “God wanted [me] to do.”

Having successfully completed the teacher education programme, Gabriel still expressed a keen desire to open an early childhood facility. She felt that she could open a nursery after teaching for about five years. Gabriel was also certain that she was not going to be a career teacher. In regard to her educational aspirations, she made it clear that she needed to move beyond early childhood education. Thus, Gabriel’s educational plan for the immediate future was to earn a degree in Literacy Studies. This of course was dependent upon the availability of funds to pay tuition fees. Gabriel also viewed literacy studies as something she could use as an “expert” or consultant in the education system. Literacy could serve as a backup or supplemental to her occupational/entrepreneurial aspirations. Interestingly, regardless of all her plans and aspirations, Gabriel still firmly believed that whatever she did was dependent upon “whatever God planned for [her].”

For the most part Gabriel enjoyed the teacher education programme and her overall rating of it was good. Despite the favourable rating Gabriel was also critical of certain aspects of the programme. Similar to what others thought she too questioned the overwhelming quantity of
assigned work, and the relevance of some of the topics the students were expected to learn. She was also somewhat disappointed with teaching practice, where she felt limited resources denied her being able to do her best. Gabriel, like other participants, also expected teacher education to be a programme where she would just “learn how to teach [and] not go so deep” into many different topic areas.

The teacher education programme seemed to have benefitted Gabriel in both professional and personal ways. Professionally, in spite of her initial expectations about teacher education, she was appreciative of the knowledge she gained and the skills she developed in regard to learning, child development, and ECE teaching strategies and aids. She also believed that the credentials she earned at Town could be used as a “stepping-stone” to higher education in ECE. She was glad to have had the opportunity to develop other skills in the areas of music, visual arts, and science. Developing skills in these areas had a significant impact on Gabriel’s self confidence. She believed that her self confidence grew because “most of the things that [she] dodged while at prep or high school confronted [her] at Town.” Gabriel also believed that what she learned in teachers’ college was transferable beyond teaching. In her opinion, what she learned at Town was relevant and useful to life in general, and it was “a benefit to anybody, not just teachers [alone].”

Gabriel brings an interesting perspective to this study for a number of reasons. First, like Jade, she worked before deciding to enter teacher education. This brings up the possibility that teacher education was chosen as a means to changing careers; however, not necessarily to a career in teaching. Second, Gabriel could provide greater insight into what it means to be “called” to do teacher education. Several participants mentioned fate or calling as a factor which influenced their decision to enter teacher education. It appeared in the student responses enough
to warrant further exploration. Furthermore, it appears that Gabriel felt she was “called” to do teacher education as a means to acquiring the knowledge and skills she needed to develop and operate her own early childhood facility. This is interesting because it suggests a “calling” which goes beyond the more commonly known “calling” to teach.

**Summary**

These eight cases represent the student teachers who do not necessarily want to go into teaching, but who chose to enter teacher education as a post-secondary educational option. Their stories tell us that they entered teachers’ college because they were unsure about what else to do, they were told what to do, they could not access what they wanted to do (e.g. they did not have qualifications, or funds), or it could possibly lead to something else that they really wanted to do. Their words provide us with a sense of their uncertainty, confusion, doubt, frustration, vulnerability, disenchantment, joy, and hopefulness they felt prior to, during, and following their teacher education experience. These stories describe and explain the Jamaican student teacher experience on a small and personal level, and they are essential to a grounded theoretical approach which relies on the “voice” of the researched in order to generate new theories.

What underlies these student teacher narratives, the stories within the story, is also important to developing a deeper understanding of the Jamaican student teacher experience. What is implicit in each account should be just as intriguing as the words which have been clearly articulated. It is at this point that existing theory, and traditional frameworks and standpoints may complement and supplement what grounded theory produces. Existing theory (ies) may help us to better understand why a 19 year old may be so easily convinced to attend teachers’ college, or why teacher education is so commonly perceived to be a stepping-stone to something else. What is “something else”? What does it mean when there is no “something
else”? It is questions such as these which need to be explored if more is to be learned from what Jamaican student teachers are explicitly and implicitly telling us.
Chapter Five

Why 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 (see Figure 1, p. 260). I was not taken aback when a significant proportion of these student teachers indicated that their first choice was education related to some other profession/occupation such as nursing, medicine, journalism, accounting, or law (see Figure 1, p. 260). These results confirmed what I as a teacher educator had observed for the past 11 years. A substantial number of Jamaican student teachers at Town Teachers’ college did not aspire to enter teacher education, and they did not necessarily aspire to become teachers even as they attended teachers’ college.

In this study, 26 of the 77 (20%) participants indicated that they chose to do teacher education because it could serve as a stepping-stone to university or further education; they were influenced/told to do teacher education; or they wanted to do something else but could not (see Figure 2, p. 261). Another 12 (9%) identified a variety of other reasons to explain why they chose teacher education; including the fact that teachers’ college was an affordable option. What was not very clear was why these factors motivated these students to enter teacher education. For example, I did not fully understand why they believed that teacher education could be a stepping-stone to something else, why others were able to have such influence on their decisions, or why they could not pursue the education and profession that they truly wanted. To claim that I fully understood would have been overly presumptuous, and a potential contradiction to my methodology - grounded theory. A comprehensive examination of what motivated these students
to enter teacher education is essential to the quality and relevance of this study. An examination of what has been articulated by the student teachers at Town may best explain what accounts for their entrance into teacher education, even though it was not their primary educational aspiration.

This chapter is designed to focus on what the participants in this study had to say about choosing teacher education. The data came from the completed student teacher surveys, and what the eight students expressed during the semi-structured interviews. It should be noted that many of the findings are based on data from the comprehensive interviews. This was done with the intention of maintaining the methodological integrity of this study – which is to be a qualitative study using grounded theory. This chapter is organized to explain what may account for student teachers entering teacher education, although they did not aspire to teacher education or teaching. The question that was asked: Why teacher education? The findings in this chapter reveal the aspirations and indecisions of youth in an economic and academic environment of limited options and opportunities. For these student teachers education was one of a limited number of secondary options available to them, and possibly one of a few opportunities leading to a more desirable educational or occupational goal.

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.”

And when asked if she would do teacher education again, if given the opportunity, she said:

   Based on how things are going now, no I wouldn't...Even though I really want to be a
pediatrician. I probably would do a little bit in foods first. I am fascinated by foods, and
you can express yourself doing that. And it doesn't really take as much time as being a
doctor. So probably I would do a year in foods. Seeing that I started out so young I think I
would have time.

   Tahira’s many plans and aspirations in a context where she did not have full control over
the decisions that are made, as well as her belief that time is on your side when you are young,
are characteristics associated with youth. Evans (1993) also referred to this issue of youthfulness
when she described young Jamaican student teachers who have to make important academic and
career decisions at 18/19 years of age (p. 240). In fact, having multiple educational aspirations
was a characteristic of many participants in this study. Almost two-thirds of the student teachers
who completed the survey expressed an interest in educational programmes and occupations
other than teacher education. For example, 17 (13%) student teachers indicated that if they had
an opportunity to do something else besides teacher education they would have chosen nursing.
Furthermore, among the eight student teachers in the purposive sample, those who started
teacher education before the age of 20 expressed an interest in more educational and
occupational options than the older participants. Staci expressed an interest in pursuing law and
food and nutrition, while Neka expressed 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 as a route into journalism. Miguel provided a
good example of just how varied the educational aspirations of youth could be. When he was asked to talk about his educational and career plans before applying to teachers’ college he responded with the following:

Okay, before applying there were two things, at least there were [two] things I could see myself doing. Like once, I used to say I want to become a soldier because the uniform looks good and everybody respected persons who were soldiers. But I had a real love for culinary arts. I liked to bake and cook and things like that, and also for music and computers. Even though I don't have the subjects for [music], I have the knowledge of it. So I am always fooling around music, mixing tapes. And also computers, when it comes on to anything like computers, computer repairs, yes that's what I enjoyed. But for me, culinary arts was just something that I said, okay, I really liked, and I felt like, yes, I could do something; especially in the tourist industry. I said if I wanted to make money with something that I liked, that would be the alternative that I would take; but it didn't happen at that point in time.

The correlation between being young and multiple aspirations could not be measured based on the available survey data. However, based on the comments of one of the younger participants in this study, it may be safe to assume that multiple interests, dreams, and aspirations are a characteristic of youth.

I found Tahira’s statement intriguing, that “decisions [youth] make are not the way they are supposed to be.” In my opinion there are two messages which this statement sends. First, that a poor or wrong decision may be the result of being young, and part of their optimism associated with being at a stage of exploring how they might translate their interests into career and occupational possibilities. Indeed, as Evans (1993) noted, a number of factors, people and
circumstances play into the youth perceptions of their possible success in pursuing one goal over another. Take Mel for example. She decided to apply to teachers’ college because, as she said:

My friend was here. She was a year ahead of me and I knew that when I came in first year I would have her notes to look at. I would have it a little bit easier than everybody else. I would have prior knowledge. She would be there to help me with the assignments because she been through it before. She was here and she told me to apply. I applied and got through.

For many of us this may not appear to be the best reason for deciding to attend a three year teacher education programme, however, to a young student like Mel, the prospect of a supportive friend is a significant motivating factor in the decision to enter teacher education. This pragmatic, and in fact, practical approach to her decision, likely enabled Mel to successfully complete the programme – even though she had to repeat a year.

The other message Tahira’s statement sends is that the decision to choose a particular career path can be highly influenced by others; usually, by those who were closely related to the student. Eleven of the 77 (8%) 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. And, as the participants in the purposive sample revealed, friends – as in the case of Mel - but more importantly parents and siblings, played an influential role in their decision to enter teacher education. It appeared that uncertainty and not knowing exactly what to do or expect after completing high school caused some of the student teachers to rely on the recommendations of family members. In the case of Neka, it was her older brother who insisted that she enroll in teachers’ college. As she put it, “I did not know what I wanted to do. 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. He was the one who, and my other siblings, who helped to finance my schooling.”

Unlike Neka, Staci knew what she wanted to do after high school. However, her guardian, whom she described as being “very influential,” gave her the impression that she had options, and convinced her to apply to teachers’ college instead of law. As she explained, her mother had indicated “she couldn’t afford law so I had to come here. She made it seem like I had a choice to go elsewhere, but I think she really wanted me to become a teacher; even though it’s not so much my passion back then. But yea, it was really her who made me decide to come.” This seeming manipulation can be viewed as an attempt by Staci’s guardian to have her pursue an educational option that was not only affordable, but academically realistic. As noted in Chapter three, it is not impossible for students with C.S.E.C. subjects to be admitted to university programmes, but in Jamaica students who tend to go onto university and programmes such as medicine or law usually complete A-Levels or the required A-Level subjects. Therefore, it is quite possible that Staci’s desire to study law was not only impractical, but also idealistic as well. Holding idealistic aspirations, or idealism, is often a trait of youthfulness which sometimes might prompt an experienced significant other to feel that they need to intervene and influence – if not take responsibility for the educational decisions that the young person has to make.

Being told, as in the case of Tahira, that she had “enough time to do whatever” likely operated to reinforce Tahira’s belief that, as a young person, time was on her side. It is therefore understandable that taking time to decide and to try out different programmes and occupations would be a characteristic of these youth. Among the younger participants, this availability of time was evident in their explanation of what they would do now that they had finished the
programme. Tahira spoke about wanting to extend her teacher education. In her words she would:

Do another year.... I think I could take it on after I have been through 3 years. When I came here I thought, I cried, I thought it would never end. But when it came down to the last 3 months and teaching practice, and you [realize] after teaching practice, I am going to go. And then the friends that you met [here], they're going to leave you and I won't see them again probably for a long time. I said: ‘you know I think I can do another year.’ I thought about doing the degree though. I am still thinking about it. I had applied for it, but I am still thinking about it.

Staci described how she would take the time to:

Put [her] education on hold a bit because I have to help my sister to get some subjects. After I help [her], I have to help another one to go through high school. She's in primary school now. And after I help them to get subjects and qualify to some extent, then I will look back at my education. If during that process I [can] finance college or further my education then I will do that, but for now I have to put it on hold for now.

While Miguel - if he were not to stick with a career in teaching for 10 years or more - envisioned:

Different avenues [he could] explore. Yes, I would like to teach for a period of time, but there are other things that maybe I could try doing for a period of time. Maybe, say, computing for a period of time, maybe music, maybe to see if the culinary skills would still be there, the culinary arts would still be there. To see how well I would behave in that different environment.

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31 ‘Getting subjects’ is a colloquial term the students use to refer to passing specific subjects in their regional CSEC examinations.
In each account, there seemed to be no sense of urgency on the part of the young student teacher. Each one appeared to have plans and aspirations, but with no certainty or definite time frame within which to accomplish specified goals. The more mature student teachers also seemed to be aware that their younger participants had time on their side. Adriana believed that the teacher education programme was great as a foundational postsecondary education programme if “you’re 18 years old, and have a lot of time;” while, Jade, in reference to her young classmates who revealed to her that they did not want to attend teachers college and were not planning to be career teachers, believed that “they [were] young so they have the time to do that.”

**Limited Options**

Evans and Burke (2006) inform us that the evolution of higher education in Jamaica can be linked to three major sectors, “teacher education institutions for the training of teachers for the primary level of education, seminaries for the training of ministers of religion, and university/college for a general/liberal education.” (p.6) The evolution can also be described within three distinct time periods. The first of these periods occurred just after emancipation in 1834 when there was a need for local teachers to educate the children of the ex-slave population. This period also included the establishment of the University College of the West Indies in 1948, a satellite of the University of London. The second period occurred just after independence in 1962 when the University College of the West Indies was granted a Royal Charter allowing it to operate as an autonomous degree granting institution. This stage of development also included the beginning or the creation of community colleges in 1974. These colleges were developed to:

- Provide continuing education after grade 11, to provide training for various middle level occupations and continuing education for persons who had not successfully completed
high school, to prepare young people for entry into certain professions, occupations, higher education institutions or the world of work, to prepare persons for university study, and to respond to the needs of the community....(Walsh, 2005 in Evans & Burke, p.12)

The third period began around 1987 when the government realized that there was a need for policy frameworks and guidelines to regulate the tertiary education sector. This period saw the establishment of the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ) in 1987. The UCJ was formed with the responsibility for:

- Registering all public and private higher education institutions, and to accredit the programmes of local and foreign based institutions on their request. Its aim is to increase the availability of University-level training in Jamaica, through accreditation of institutions, courses and programmes for recognition and acceptance. (London, 2005 in Evans & Burke, p.13)

In 1995, the College of Arts Science and Technology (CAST) was upgraded to become the University of Technology (UTECH), and the privately owned West Indies College in 1999 became Northern Caribbean University (NCU). It was also during this time that the World Trade Organization (WTO) administered the General Agreement on Trade in Services, of which Jamaica is a signatory, thus paving the way for an increased number of offshore tertiary institutions to offer educational services in Jamaica.

Access to higher education in Jamaica is particularly important given the substantial size of its 18-24 age cohort in relation to the overall population. This group of Jamaican citizens is vital to the development of a nation. They are the ones who will become the future in terms of skilled and professional leaders of the country. In 2010, Jamaicans aged 18-24 comprised
approximately 17% of the population of 2.7 million, and had 52 publically or privately funded accredited higher education institutions from which to choose. In a comparable economy such as Mauritius, another small island developing state, approximately 15% of its population of 1.3 million people, had 61 publically or privately funded accredited higher education institutions from which to choose (Source: www.gov.mu, www.tec.intnet.mu retrieved 06/21/2011). And, in comparison to a highly developed country such as Canada, with an aging population, the 18-24 year age cohort represents only about 13% of a population of 34.1 million people, yet have 83 publically funded, 31 privately funded universities, and over 150 community colleges available to choose from (Source: www.statscan.gc.ca retrieved 06/21/2011). Given these references, it may be argued that Jamaica has a relatively sizable 18-24 age cohort for whom there are a limited number of post-secondary options.

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 development, and another eight (12%) specialize in theology (Source: www. http://www.ucj.org.jm retrieved 25/05/2012). 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, p.42).
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).

Student access to higher education programmes has been a concern in Jamaica for some time. Evans and Burke (2006), revealed in their research, that prior to 1997 only about seven percent of Jamaicans in the 18-24 age cohort accessed higher education, and among those close to two percent accessed university (p.29). Evans and Burke go on to say that since 1997 Jamaica has met and slightly surpassed the target set by The Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and that 15 percent of its 18-24 age cohort gain access to tertiary education. In spite of reaching this modest target Evans and Burke state that unfortunately the “the demand for tertiary education is still not completely filled” (p.16). Therefore, as a result, Jamaica is “still behind the level of access that exists in other middle income countries” (p.58). In all fairness, these authors acknowledge that this inability to meet the demand for tertiary education is partly a result of many of Jamaica’s higher education institutions inability to “accept all the students who apply” (p.58). The inability to accommodate a large majority of the post-secondary student population, in higher education in a small developing state, is an issue which I believe requires greater attention. This inability to accept the majority of those who apply may not be due to limited institutional capacity alone. In addition, the inability of many applicants to satisfy admission requirements may compound the problem of limited access and options.
Number of High School Credentials

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

The quantity and quality of the credentials of the Jamaican high school graduates can also restrict their options to access higher education. Fifty-six students who participated in this 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 C.S.E.C. level which, along with other admission criteria, would have qualified them for Town’s 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. On the other hand, the 13 participants who had completed high school up to A-Levels, or advanced level C.A.P.E. subjects, may have had more post-secondary options available to them. For instance, these students would have been eligible for University of the West Indies three year degree programme as long as they possessed five subjects, of which one was English Language at the C.S.E.C. level, and two were at the advanced C.A.P.E. (Source: www.mona.uwi.edu/admissions/firsttime.php retrieved 12/06/2011).

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 participant among the purposive sample of eight students to complete high school up to C.A.P.E. level, clearly had more post-secondary options from which to choose. When she was asked to
discuss what education programmes she applied to before accepting the invitation to attend

Town, Adriana said:

Every year that I have been at [my high school], working as the Librarian, I have applied to university [and] to just about every programme relating to food and nutrition, like Family and Consumer Studies, Dietetics and Nutrition. For [university] I have applied to every single programme [and] I've been accepted for every programme, except Science, Medicine [and] Pure and Applied Science. So for Social Sciences and Humanities....I remember one year being accepted at UWI for International Relations and African and Diaspora Studies....I’ve applied every year because it was my intention to just go to University.

Miguel and Neka, participants who had completed high school up to fifth form, clearly did not have the same array of options. In Miguel’s case, a lack of C.S.E.C. subjects mitigated his eligibility for a college programme in Canada. He described this disappointing shortfall in the following way:

I was in Canada for six months and I was trying to get into [college], but because of the stay and my papers, [acceptance] didn't come through at the time. To go to [college] I needed to have five subjects [C.S.E.C.] or more, and I only had four. So I wasn't enrolled there. They said I could do another programme in which I could maybe study there for a while, [and] do like what they call their high school level first, before I would be accepted into the college. But the time expired and I wasn't able to complete it. So I came back here and started working.

Neka’s lack of C.S.E.C. subjects not only mitigated her eligibility for the teacher education programme, but forced her to spend additional time acquiring the minimum number of subjects
required to be eligible for most post-secondary programmes. She alluded to the significance of having a limited number of C.S.E.C. subjects when describing her experiences as an unsettled and doubtful high school student. According to Neka:

Secondary school, it was a bit hectic for me. I guess [I] wasn't settled. (Sigh) I did not have anything planned out in terms of what I would do after leaving high school. So I guess I did not perform the way I should have; which gave me a holdback for 2 years, I guess. [This] means I had to go and do other subjects.

Based on Neka’s comments, it would appear that the number of C.S.E.C. and C.A.P.E. subjects a student successfully passed in high school was a significant factor in determining their eligibility for a wider range of higher education programmes. Although this may be the case it is by no means the only factor. What other student teachers had to say, would suggest that acquiring specific subjects, and quality passes in these subjects, are also significant to expanding one’s range of higher education options.

‘Dreaded’ Mathematics

“The courses they have at U.W.I. you have to have math in order to get in” - Jade

Several of the student teachers in this study indicated that mathematics was a subject that they were uncomfortable with, and not very competent at. Tahira explained that she had to re-sit the C.S.E.C. mathematics examination in order to attain a level three grade, which was the standard needed to satisfy all the requirements for Town’s Early Childhood Education Programme. Jade explained that she had failed mathematics at the C.S.E.C. level, but was intent on attending extra lessons and re-sitting the examination at a later date in order to achieve a passing grade. Miguel, referred to mathematics as a subject in which he did not do well, and Gabriel referred to it as subject she understood better while at College. Mathematics is a significant subject to have and
be proficient in, 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. Many programmes at the University of the West Indies, the University of Technology, the Caribbean Maritime Institute, Community College Programmes, and the Early Childhood Education Programme at Town Teachers’ College require that applicants seeking admission pass mathematics with a grade of level three or higher at the C.S.E.C. general proficiency level (some require A-Level Mathematics). English Language is the other C.S.E.C. subject that most Jamaican higher education programmes list as an admission requirement. Without passes in English Language and Mathematics the post-secondary education options for a many Jamaican high school graduates are considerably reduced.

What Adriana, Staci, Tahira, and Jade had to say in relation to mathematics helps us to better understand the fear, discomfort, and importance many Jamaican students associate with the subject. Mathematics appears to be highly valued among Jamaican students because it is a requirement for so many post-secondary education programmes. Why there is so much ineptitude and trepidation associated with this discipline is a topic which may be best addressed in another forum. Adriana, the participant with the most high school credentials, was very animated when she explained that:

I have never really been good at Math. I mean whenever I think of Math, [it] is like a disease to me! When I think of Mathematics, logarithms, formula, I have a bloody nose - literally! Seriously! [The] Agricultural Science teacher, Mr. J., was like, "Adriana you're the Head Girl, you can't fail this subject. You need to do Math." I said I can't do Math. So he tried another approach. He said I could go to his Math class, [and] I wouldn't have to
pay for it....So I went to the Math class and tried, and based on his help I passed. I got a grade 3 in Math.

Interestingly, a grade of three at the general proficiency level is what many programmes requiring mathematics would consider the minimum grade requirement. Students who score 1 and 2 are at an advantage in terms of admission to many programmes requiring mathematics. However, to Adriana, a three appeared to be a major accomplishment. Staci was also uncomfortable with mathematics, and like Adriana she also took measures to raise her grade to what she considered a respectable level. Staci said:

I never used to get good grades in Maths; I mean low, really low grades, like 10, 11-those types of grades. So I said, "You know what? I am going to try my best to move up and get a higher grade in Math.” And, I moved up. I started getting 50, 60 and so forth. I was proud of myself, even though it was not the pass mark of the school.

Jade’s and Tahira’s responses specifically addressed how mathematics was important in order to satisfy the requirements for accessing or completing certain tertiary education programmes. Their responses explained how not being competent in mathematics or having mathematics as a C.S.E.C. subject could limit one’s higher education options and achievements.

When asked why she did not pursue journalism via the university route Jade’s response was:

For U.W.I., I always have a problem with math. As I said earlier on, and most of the courses they have at UWI, you have to have math in order to get in there, and it was a challenge; even the University of Technology. So, basically I didn't bother to apply.

When asked to explain why she decided to apply to Town’s Language Arts programme in order to pursue her aspirations for journalism, Jade explained that:
In applying [to Town] there is a possibility that you will get through. Because if you look at something that says you have to have English, you have to have Math, and you know you don't have Math, and you know you are not going to get it (Math) right now, then you are not going to feel the zeal or the zest to apply because (sighs) boy it’s a fifty-fifty chance you will get through....I was prompted by persons, ‘Oh, do Double English and you can branch off into journalism.’ And, because going into teaching was not that difficult, based on the fact that I didn't have Maths. I decided why not do it. If they say I can have a diploma and probably apply for UWI or whatever, to go into Journalism, why not do it. Three years in College, probably another three years somewhere else, fine. Jade may not have needed mathematics in order to be admitted to the double English language arts programme at Town, but Tahira did need mathematics at a level three in order to complete the requirements for the Early Childhood Education Programme. She recalls how not passing mathematics at a level three may have prevented her from completing all the programme requirements. She stated:

I did eight [subjects], but I didn't get the maths. I went back for it after I was in Town, and I got it....At the time, when I applied, you didn't need maths, so to say, but after we applied they said okay in order to go to second year you need maths. So, you have to work on it and get it before graduation, and so forth. So, I did it while I was in first year. The preceding responses speak explicitly to the fear, lack of skill, and educational value associated with mathematics. However, with each student teacher’s explicit response there is an implicit message that should not go unnoticed. First, these student teachers’ fears should motivate those in education to want to know why so many Jamaican students are particularly terrified of mathematics. Their lack of skill should encourage educators to question whether the
subject is being taught as best as it can, and if not what needs to be done to improve learning and ability. And, finally, since not having mathematics as a subject can be an impediment to accessing so many higher education programmes, educators need to question its rationality as a predominant prerequisite for so many higher education opportunities. If it only serves to be a deterrent to access, then maybe it is serving the wrong purpose.

**Finding the Funds for School**

“I was always thinking about where the money would be come from” - Gabriel

Several of the student teachers in this study indicated that the cost of financing their post-secondary education was a significant 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 don’t think I would be able to. So that’s why I’m currently seeking a job [and if I get a job], I was planning on going to the [Caribbean] Maritime Institute. I am not sure of what I would do, but that’s my plan for now, short term.
Seeing that these students had ultimately entered and completed teachers’ college a simple explanation would suggest that teachers’ college was an affordable option. However, on closer examination, it may also suggest that teachers’ college was one of a few, if not the only option.

This should not be startling because the teachers’ college has been one of a limited number of higher education options available to Jamaica’s Black and poor working class population since the establishment of the secondary school system in 1879 (King, 1998; Miller, 1987; Whyte, 1983). The teachers’ college was created so that the colonial government at the time could train teachers to implement a curriculum which was designed to suppress, conform, and control the recently emancipated slave population (Turner, 1987). During other periods in Jamaica’s history there is evidence of initiatives to amass trained teachers in order to meet the demands of schooling a substantial Black working-class population (D’Oyley, 1963; Gentles, 2003).

In more recent times the teachers’ college continues to be an affordable option for a large segment of Jamaica’s population. Gentles (2003) inform us that “teachers colleges are subsidized by government and are the cheapest form of tertiary level education available. They are thus heavily subscribed by the poorest students. Teachers colleges are seen therefore as the domain of working class students.” (p.132). Rarely is teachers’ college - which is sometimes colloquially referred to as the poor man’s university - an option for the less populous, yet more affluent young White and Brown Jamaicans. Gentles claims that the more affluent Jamaicans do not choose teacher education because:

the low-income expectations for graduates of teachers’ colleges are a disincentive for children from affluent backgrounds. Hence, most middle class parents do not encourage their offspring to go to teachers’ college or to become teachers. Those few who want to
pursue education as a career usually opt to do a degree in education at either a local or foreign university. (p.132)

The participants in this study tend to fit the profile of the Black, working-class Jamaican student teacher to which Gentles alludes. In fact, many of the student teachers at Town are of African ancestry, and come from rural and urban working class backgrounds where a great deal of effort and sacrifice is made to find the financial resources to cover the cost of tuition, books, transportation, and uniforms. For those student teachers who live in residence, there are additional funds which must be secured to cover the cost of food and accommodation.

Student teachers such as Gabriel and Jade indicated that they were from humble backgrounds. The questions I asked in regard to the challenges and disadvantages of doing teacher education yielded responses which revealed the types of financial dilemmas these student teachers at Town faced. Gabriel indicated that paying her tuition was a challenge while she was at teachers’ college. She described this as:

The most challenging experience for me was my tuition....that was the most challenging for me....I did not go the student loan way, and I had to ask for assistance from family and friends....It was very challenging for me, so challenging that I still owe some money on my tuition. Still a challenge, but despite the challenges I am finished. So you know once I get a job and so on, I can clear up that amount.

Gabriel also believed that having to be concerned about tuition fees affected her school performance because:

Sometimes I was thinking [about] where my tuition would be coming from, and so on. So that kind of, you know, hindered me a lot, and did not allow me to achieve my full
potential, [as] I could have with a free mind. I was always thinking about where the money would be come from, as well as I had other issues.

Jade also believed the financial sacrifice she had to make in order to complete her teacher education was a challenge and a disadvantage. She described this as:

The only disadvantage I saw, was that I was not earning and I have been earning from I was about 19, 20 years old. I have had a job for the longest while, earning my own money. I had to give [up] my apartment when I started going to college because I couldn't afford the rent anymore. [I] had to [move] back to mommy's house, worse thing ever. [I] had to live with my siblings....The disadvantage would be the fact that I was not earning, and there were nights when I could not find food. Because I decided that: ‘oh, I am going to board.’ The last year I boarded at college, and I had my son, so when I got his allowance from his Daddy, that was basically to take care of [him]. So there was not much for me in terms of money to print my work and stuff.

Based on what Adriana, Staci, Neka, Gabriel, and Jade have said in regard to their financial challenges, it may be fair to say that the cost of higher education can have a profound effect on educational aspirations, options, and academic success. There is a distinct difference between the cost of attending teachers college and the cost of attending other tertiary education institutions, particularly degree granting institutions. At the time these student teachers entered teachers’ college they would have paid an annual fulltime tuition of approximately $140,000 jmd. Had they the qualifications at the time to enter the University of the West Indies three year degree programme, the participants in this study would have had to find almost double this amount to cover fulltime tuition. Those who indicated that teachers’ college would be a stepping-stone to something else like a university degree had to come to terms with the exorbitant amount.

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32 The exchange rate at the time of writing was approximately $86.00 jmd. equivalent to $1.00 cdn.
of money they would ultimately have to pay in order to cover the cost of earning a degree via this route. In the absence of government sponsored upgrading programmes and/or scholarships these student teachers could easily spend more money and time taking the stepping-stone path as compared to enrolling in a three year degree programme from the onset.

**Teachers’ College the More Acceptable Option**

“I wanted to go to HEART, she said I can't go there because I am too smart” - Staci

In addition to what the students have said about lacking subjects, difficulty with mathematics, and financing post-secondary education, there are other reasons which may help us to better understand why their post-secondary options were limited. The first would be to acknowledge that youthfulness and particularly the susceptibility to the influence of significant others may also have suppressed educational and occupational aspirations. Staci and Tahira, two of the younger student teachers, had their list of options reduced by their 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 resistance she received to her aspiration by stating that:

I wanted to do Food and Nutrition, and [my guardian] said that I was too smart for that.

One of my other teachers told me that as well. When I told my guardian that I wanted to go to Human Employment and Resource Training (HEART), she said I can't go there because I am too smart...So I asked her if its only dunce [dumb] people go to H.E.A.R.T., and she said no that’s not what she was saying. I don't think you are there. I don't see you there. I felt a bit discouraged.
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 at H.E.A.R.T. was also frowned upon. However, during our second meeting Tahira expressed that she was still considering the programme. She said:

[High] school came to an end and I hadn't decided what I really wanted to do yet. Then I said I am going to apply for H.E.A.R.T, which my mommy said she is not in full agreement with that...[and in the next year or two] if am not working - I really love foods and nutrition - I am going to go to H.E.A.R.T., popularly known as H.E.A.R.T. Trust NTA and further my studies. I already have a level one certificate in Food Preparation, and I am going to try to get a level two, if am not working at that time.

Clearly, the parents of these two student teachers believed that teacher education was a more appropriate option for their children. Why they believe this is both intriguing and perplexing. It would seem that Staci’s guardian believed she was underachieving, selling herself short by considering enrolment in a programme that may not even require completion of high school in order to be admitted. This may have been her way of motivating Staci to strive for loftier goals, ironically, within financial reason; after all, among working class Jamaicans, there is a significant amount of respect and prestige associated with teacher education and teaching. It is also possible that the insistence to attend teachers’ college over a vocational programme was intended to avoid an educational path that may not offer the same social respect and mobility as that which could be gained from becoming a teacher. Furthermore, what these parents thought about the possibility of their children enrolling in the H.E.A.R.T. Programme might also be related to elitism - one similar to that demonstrated by more affluent Jamaicans who tend to think of teachers’ college as an inferior brand of higher education.
Adhering to common, traditional educational and occupational aspirations may be another reason why the higher education options for many of these students are limited. When they were asked to identify their first choice for post-secondary education (Q-6), many of the student teachers who participated in the survey identified what may be considered common educational and occupational options. The 45 student teachers who indicated that teacher education was not their first post-secondary option did identify familiar programmes such as nursing, medicine, journalism, accounting, and law. This finding, in my estimation, indicates that there is the possibility that many Jamaican high school students, prior to entering teacher education, aspire to a limited range of educational programmes and professions. For this reason their knowledge of what is available in Jamaica’s tertiary education system is limited. Did these student teachers know that the community colleges offered a fairly wide array of certificate, diploma, and associate degree programmes? Did they know that these programmes required basically the same credentials for admission as the teachers college, and offered matriculation options with university programmes? Did they know that many of these programmes offered education in the fields of architectural design and construction, environmental studies, and information technology; fields which could be vital to a developing nation such as Jamaica? Or, did these student teachers possess this knowledge and information, yet believe or were persuaded to believe that teacher education offered them their best or only option.

Summary

It would be reasonable to say that youthfulness and limited options for higher education do influence the decisions some Jamaican student teachers make in regard to entering teacher education and a path into teaching. However, as the findings and the ensuing analysis suggest, these are not the complete answers to the question: why teacher education? It would appear that
the answer to this question is far more complex. The more complex answer takes into account the political, class, race, gender, and cultural issues which influence the availability and accessibility of higher education options for predominantly young, Black, working class, female Jamaicans. The more complex answer recognizes that some student teachers may not have been aware of all the options that were available to them after completing high school. It also takes into consideration the possibility that some student teachers could not imagine higher education possibilities beyond the realm of the common and familiar educational and occupational paths. And, finally the multifaceted answer acknowledges that teacher education is an option because it is hopefully a stepping-stone to fulfilling an educational or occupational aspiration, or possibly to something else.
Chapter Six

The Teacher Education Experience

For the past 11 years that I have been teaching at Town I have observed that individuals, who enter teacher education, even though it may not be their first choice, usually complete the programme. This happens in spite of their persistent complaints of being overworked, over-monitored, and disrespected. I presume that the majority, if not all, of the 77 third year student teachers who completed the participant survey, as well as those who did not, graduated from Town Teachers’ college. Miguel is the only student teacher who had not as yet completed the programme; however, he was one examination away from meeting all the necessary requirements. I believe that a deeper understanding of why the student teachers at Town complete the teacher education programme, although they may not have aspired to teacher education or teaching, is also essential and relevant to this study. Understanding why they complete the programme may further explain why they chose teacher education. Perhaps, the programme had to be completed if it was to truly serve its purpose as a “stepping-stone to do something else.” Developing a deeper understanding of why these student teachers complete the programme should also reveal what they experienced within it and particularly how they viewed this experience as a component of, or benefit to, their educational and occupational aspirations. In this case, what was learned and accomplished within the teacher education programme may be what the student believed was valuable to accessing university, or a job in a field other than teaching.
In this chapter I focus on the experiences of the Town student teachers. I highlight what they believed were the notable, memorable, and not so pleasant experiences associated with the teacher education programme they had recently completed. The value or benefits of these experiences in regard to their personal and/or professional development are also explored. The data informing this chapter was primarily taken from what the eight students discussed during both semi-structured interviews. In the first section of this chapter, I discuss their experiences in respect to courses, coursework, teaching practice, and other noteworthy aspects of the programme. In this section, I describe what the students said about the comprehensiveness of the programme, its challenges, their moments of success, and teaching practice. The following section focuses on what these student teachers believed were the value and benefits from the teacher education experience. In this section I highlight what these student teachers were currently doing or planned to do in regard to furthering their education or pursuing a career. Following this discussion, the responses of these student teachers are examined closely in order to develop a deeper understanding of how teacher education may specifically benefit their educational and/or occupational aspirations.

A Comprehensive and Challenging Programme

“I didn't know early childhood education was so deep” - Gabriel

When these student teachers were asked to talk about what they experienced in the teacher education programme they generally spoke about the courses, coursework, examinations, teaching practice, school functions, rules and regulations, and friends and lecturers. The experiences which they discussed the most were those related to the comprehensiveness of the programme, the quantity of coursework they were required to do, successful moments they had
as a student, teaching practice, and supportive staff/students. Only a few spoke about what they actually learned in the courses that they were required to complete. Understandably, more may have been said about educational content, theory, and pedagogy had there been more questions specifically designed to obtain this information. Nonetheless, there were a few students, such as Adriana, who spoke about the teacher education programme as an opportunity to “learn how to write a lesson plan” and be “exposed to theorists who say if you teach it like this, this will happen;” and, Miguel who stated that he “learned about the education of teaching.”

Several of the student teachers indicated that the teacher education programme at Town was comprehensive. This was evident in their responses to questions which asked them to describe what surprised them about the programme, what they did not expect, and what they found to be the advantages or disadvantages to having completed teacher education. Tahira suggested that Early Childhood Education, in particular, was a comprehensive and inclusive programme. She even alluded to the possibility that it was more inclusive and comprehensive than the secondary teacher education programmes when she stated:

I learned so much. You're exposed to just about everything….If I should go in another department, or be put in contest with another student from probably secondary, and they ask me a question based on a secondary course, I can answer that question. But if you should ask a secondary student something about ECE, they cannot tell you. So Early Childhood Education caters to just about everything, you know, just about everything.

However, when student teachers such as Neka referred to her secondary teacher education programme as one which “covered a lot of areas,” there was reason to believe that both early childhood and secondary education were equally comprehensive programmes.
Gabriel, Miguel, and Staci also alluded to the depth of the teacher education programme. Gabriel clearly did not expect such a wide array of courses in the Early Childhood Education programme when she claimed that:

I didn't know early childhood education was so deep. I didn't know we would have to learn to play music, to do movement, because you have physical education teachers. I would think that physical education teachers would be the ones to teach physical education and movement. But, you had to know all these things, music, movement, science…all of these things you had to have the knowledge….I didn't expect that at all. I just thought that you would learn how to teach, you know, not go so deep.

She also did not expect to do:

Things like Personal Development, I didn't expect things like Ethics, and things like the education courses we did, and, you know, Teacher and Society. I didn't expect some of those things. Those were surprises for me (Laugh). I just came to learn how to teach students basically, and to learn how they develop.

Miguel was also surprised by the variety of courses he was expected to take in the early childhood education programme when he said:

I expected, actually, just to come and learn about being in the classroom. Maybe know Math, English, but there was nothing about College English, and everything. [There was] nothing about teacher education, theorists, psychology, and the things that you learn overall. You just think that, okay, I am in a classroom; so basic things you would need to know. But there was a lot more!
Likewise, Staci expressed her surprise at the courses she was expected to take and the skills she was required to use as a secondary education History and Social Studies student. She expressed this surprise when she stated:

I did not expect to have College English and education courses. [Also] I don't do Geography, so sometimes when I have to do Geography in the Social Studies class, or in History class, like map work and so, that was hard.

That these student teachers were surprised at the variety and amount of courses they were expected to do, and the pedagogical knowledge and skills they would have to learn while in the teacher education programme speak to what they expected to learn as student teachers. If it were up to Gabriel or Miguel student teachers would learn only what was necessary to teach in the classroom. On the surface these participants’ responses appear somewhat limited and naïve; however, their responses may be a reflection of a much deeper and widespread public perception of what teacher preparation entails. Darling-Hammond (2006) similarly found that among the general public in the U.S. there was the belief that teaching is easy, and that one can teach by simply “knowing something about a subject” and picking up the other “tricks of the trade” while on the job” (p.301). In the Jamaican context, Evans (2001) has made similar observations by noting that much of the harsh criticism directed at teachers may be coming from the public who also perceive teaching to be “easy”, and an occupation that does not “require any special knowledge.”(p.31).

The responses from these student teachers may also be an indication of how prior education experience had a significant influence on their system of beliefs and values regarding teacher preparation and teaching. These would be views formed as a result of each students’ “apprenticeship of observation”, the years upon years they spent watching and learning about
teaching from those who taught them (Lortie, 1975). Therefore, as students who may have been educated in classrooms where the “culture of teacher-centered pedagogy” was prevalent (Gentles, 2003), it is plausible that they may have believed that teacher education should be primarily about how to transmit knowledge to students so that they can pass examinations, and maintain discipline in the classroom.

**Demanding Coursework**

“When we finish one coursework we have another one to hand in” - Jade

Several of these student teachers were also overwhelmed and challenged by the amount of coursework they were assigned to complete over the course of the three year programme. Gabriel made this clear when she declared that “It was a lot of work; I didn't really expect so much out of the course. [The work] wasn't difficult. I wouldn't say it's difficult, you know, but it was the amount.” Others also believed the quantity of the work was excessive, because so much had to be completed in a limited space of time. Adriana believed that the amount of work was acceptable for a university degree programme, but for a teachers’ college it was “a lot of work in limited time.” Jade also believed that too much was required in a limited space of time. She felt that this placed a great deal of pressure on them as students, and presented them with a “no win” situation. Jade described this stressful no win situation by saying:

When we finish one coursework we have another one to hand in. We didn't get any time to breathe, to exhale, and by the time we finished our coursework it was exam time. We didn't even get time to prepare for exams, you know. We were under pressure, we were always under pressure, you know. And in my opinion I think that it was like giving us a “basket to carry water”. In terms of workload, I think it was important, but the time that was made for us to complete the work was...sometimes it seemed impossible.
The seemingly excessive coursework was doubly taxing for a student like Jade who was a single parent. In the following response she describes how difficult it was to complete the coursework on time, and still fulfill her parental duties:

There were a lot of challenges, but the most challenging was probably completing the coursework on time [and] meeting the deadlines for the coursework. Because for me I had a son, and we were living together before I started college. So what I used to do, even though I am boarding here, I would still go home every evening just to make sure that he is okay. When he is asleep I would be back to college by 8 pm. I’ll be back here, so by that time I would probably start doing some school work, and so forth. So for me that was one of the most difficult things that I faced when I was here, overall.

Neka, Mel, and Miguel also made reference to the challenging workload they had to contend with at teachers’ college, particularly as this related to the distribution and timing of assignments. They believed that this may have contributed to the burden being placed on them as student teachers. Neka indicated that she expected the workload to be great, but she believed that:

It was a lot for a year, too much for a year. For one semester you are doing like too much, and then like the next semester is free. You have work to do, but it is not as tiresome as in the first semester. So I am wondering why not make it more even, more balanced, both semesters.

Mel also referred to the programme and course workload which she believed was not evenly distributed. She said:

The first year was hard. We got a lot of things to do in the first year. I didn't know if I could make it into second year, but as the year passed it got easier and easier. After, you
got to understand what you were doing....I guess because we had the majority of our courses in first year, and then course work assignments and pressure. So, I guess that was hard.

Miguel did not specifically express displeasure with the distribution and timing of programme assignments, but his concern about the ubiquitous and challenging coursework interfering with family time, sleep and coping may have been a reference to it. He stated that:

The coursework and sleepless nights, you know! Christmas time, so you’re supposed to be having that with your family; and you have to be planning other things, planning what you're going to do, how you're going to present. And, you have a lot of sleepless nights. Persons might feel that they cannot handle all of this, so at that point you feel it is really challenging to do what you're doing.

Should there be any surprise that these students were taken aback by the quantity of work they were assigned? I was of two minds in terms of the possible answers to this question. As a Lecturer, who also contributed to the assignment workload, I was aware of the substantial amount of coursework these student teachers were expected to complete, and for this reason I could sympathize with their concerns. However, after careful thought, I had to question whether the concerns could be entirely attributed to what they perceived to be an unfair and excessive demand on them as student teachers. I also believed that a heavy assignment workload could be managed with efficient prioritizing and organization. It was at this point that I began to question whether some of the difficulties that these student teachers’ experienced may be attributed to their own scholarly abilities and capacity. Several of these students described themselves as being average students, who believed they could have performed better academically in high school. Therefore, these student teachers may have experienced similar difficulties in secondary
school, where they would have also been expected to manage large quantities of homework, study time, extra lessons, and assignments in order to prepare for school-based and regional examinations. Alternatively, these students may have attended secondary schools where there was not a great need to manage large quantities of homework, study time, extra lessons, and assignments. Thus, being asked to manage assignments in a challenging teacher education programme would have seemed a daunting task. Finally, there is also the possibility that a lack of motivation and desire to enter teacher education may have made the academic requirements of the programme seem that much more onerous, stressful, and unimportant.

**Moments of Success**

“I felt very proud of myself, at the time” - Tahira

Having described the challenges they faced during the programme, I could easily understand why these student teachers relished the moments when they excelled academically. When these student teachers were asked what was the most rewarding experience they had during the teacher education programme, the majority described situations when they performed well academically. In several cases, the rewarding experience was connected to an outstanding grade for a course they completed, or coursework they had submitted. This response seemed reasonable for students who seemed unaccustomed to achieving high grades. Gabriel, who had expressed concerns earlier about the amount of work she was required to complete, felt rewarded when she received excellent grades at teachers’ college. She indicated that she did not achieve such grades in high school. Gabriel described this rewarding experience as the time when she was assigned:

A Strategies in Early Childhood Education essay on “Play” to do, and I got the highest grade on that assignment. It was an essay, so that was a rewarding [grade] for me to get.
Because back in high school, I probably got C's and D's, and, you know, I was getting B's and A's here. So that was rewarding in itself for me.

Staci was also proud to have achieved a very good grade on an assignment from a teacher whom she believed did not usually award high marks. As she put it, getting “an ‘A’ from Miss McFarlane and Miss McFarlane doesn't give A's!” was quite an accomplishment. Stacie also said receiving a passing final grade for College English, a course she “didn't expect to pass,” was rewarding as well. Mel and Tahira also spoke about achieving a high final course grade as one of their rewarding teacher education experiences. Mel, who had actually repeated some courses, spoke about passing a course with a high grade, and the excitement she felt knowing that she would not have to repeat the course. This was apparent when she spoke about “getting an ‘A’ in certain courses that you think you'd have failed, or even just passed, [and] knowing you don't have to do over the course.” Tahira was also proud to have received a high final grade for a course that she suspected she may have possibly failed. This was revealed when she said:

I remember my education course. I have to talk about it. When I did the exam, I was like: ‘This is an exam that I am going to do next year’, because it was so challenging. And then when I got my transcript and saw I got an A in that course, I was like, is this really true? Because I was almost at the bottom; yea, [I believed] failed the course, I am doing this next year. So, I was all preparing myself. I said, ‘okay, I am going to put up this paper, I am going to put it back, because I am going to do them next year’....I felt so proud of myself, even though I doubted it. I felt very proud of myself at the time.

Why were these students surprised and so elated about achieving high grades? Were their assessors possibly too lenient, or did these students truly work hard in order to produce exemplary assignments and examinations? The responses these students provided in regard to

33 Pseudonym
their positive experiences were instructive, but equally instructive were their expressions of self-doubt and low confidence in their academic capabilities and achievements. I was intrigued by how many did not believe that they were capable of achieving good grades, or completing what they perceived to be challenging courses. The fact that all these students had graduated from the teacher education programme was an indication that they were capable of successfully completing what may be described as a challenging and comprehensive higher education programme. What may have been manifested here were the symptoms of low self-esteem resulting from years of some academic failure, modest academic success, and limited praise for achievement. For this reason I believe that these student teachers’ expressions of “feeling proud” and “excited” about their abilities and accomplishments are worth noting, especially as they relate to the value of developing self-confidence, self-esteem and success. To know and understand what personal benefits the student teacher can derive from teacher education should serve to increase the value and enhance the quality of the programme.

**Teaching Practice**

“There were days when I got up, and I was like I am not going in” - Staci

The teaching practicum was a bitter and sweet experience for these student teachers. Some described it as their most rewarding experience, while others described it as a challenging and difficult period in the programme. Mel said that she did well on teaching practice, and as a result she believed that she would be an “effective” teacher. Neka and Jade also spoke about the teaching practicum as a rewarding experience. Neka, who had expressed doubts about her abilities as a student teacher, described teaching practice as an experience which she “successfully completed [because the students] loved her, and didn't want her to leave.” Jade described teaching practice as a gratifying because:
I wasn't the bright one in the class. It was about 20 of us and I was not the bright one, far from it. When I get a ‘B’ someone gets ‘B+’. I never can top them. When I was out on teaching practice it was shocking because, in my group, I think I got one of the highest grades, or even the highest grade.

Once again, the value placed on high grades should be noted. As was the case with courses and coursework, achieving high grades for the teaching practicum signified success and academic competence. I wondered whether Jade would have identified this as a successful teacher education moment had she merely met the minimum requirements to pass the practicum. Further in our discussion Jade did indicate that teaching practice was rewarding for reasons other than the achievement of a high grade. She, like Neka, also believed that her ability to relate to the socio-economic class and experiences of the students she was teaching contributed to her success and enjoyment. Jade described her rewarding experience and explained how it influenced her aspirations to pursue teaching as a career. She said:

When I went out on second year teaching practice the students basically gravitated to me, and I realized there is this chemistry. Whenever I met certain students there is this chemistry between us. Then when I am there, based on the relationship that we had, I realized that I am able to relate to them based on my experience in the past. Being out on teaching practice in second year, being out on 3rd year teaching practice, I've come to the realization that this is where I should be, in teaching, in education. That’s where I want to be, and that’s where I want to stay.

Teaching practice, or aspects of it, was not as pleasant and as rewarding for Tahira, Staci and Gabriel. Tahira said:
I think the most challenging part of being here [Town] was 3rd year teaching practice. I have been in the classroom setting where I helped out with teaching, and I worked with children; [and] back home, when I visit schools I will sometimes help out with the children. But, knowing that you are going into the classroom, you're new, and having a class of twenty-six 5 year olds isn't too easy. And then you are being graded for it. I think that was one of my most challenging times here at college.

Stacie referred to one incident in particular that made teaching practice very difficult. She said:

Third year teaching practice, it was very hard. There were days when I got up, and I was like I am not going in. A student hit me with an eraser, a big Helix eraser. I sat down in the class, and I told the teacher of the class. I reported it to her and she was like, ‘students you need to behave yourself, she's trying to teach; and one day you are going to be in the same position’, and that was it! I sat down and I was like, really? I mean I was on the verge of crying. It was just for the tears to roll down my face.

When Gabriel was asked about her aspirations to be a classroom teacher she made reference to an unpleasant teaching practicum. She stated:

I don't know about the classroom (Laugh). I am really not sure about the classroom. I don't know if I will change, but I think teaching practice was kind of scary for me. It was kind of traumatic for me in a way because I didn't really have the resources that I needed to, you know, do as well as I could have.

The teaching practicum was undoubtedly a significant component of the teacher education programme. This was the point at which these student teachers were required to plan and implement the actual act of teaching. For these student teachers, who initially indicated they were not keen on the prospects of doing teacher education or teaching, this experience could
easily have served to either alleviate or reinforce their reservations about learning to teach and teaching. Jade was well-aware of the extent to which teaching practice could motivate or deter other student teachers. She provided evidence of this by relating what some of her peers said about the effect of the teaching practicum on their aspirations to teach. She said:

Being in the programme and going out on teaching practice kind of steered them or turned them to say, ‘well I am going to stay in teaching, it’s not a bad profession, after all’. But teaching practice can also deter people as well, because a lot of my classmates, after going on teaching practice, said they don't want to teach. They would say, ‘Mi? Dem bad breed pickney deh? Mi nuh waan teach! [Who me? Teach those poorly behaved children? I do not want to teach!]

It would appear that the most prominent experiences among these student teachers were those regarding the comprehensiveness of the programme, the quantity of coursework which they were required to complete, achieving high grades, and the teaching practicum. There were other positive teacher education experiences worth noting. Adriana spoke about being ‘one of those persons that found herself on the Principal's honour roll’; Jade praised the ‘wonderful lecturers who went out of their way to assist and make sure that [students] understand certain concepts’; and, Miguel had only good things to say about a male educator in particular who could “relate to how he [as a male early childhood student teacher] felt in the teaching experience”. I believe it is important to note these particular experiences, and recognize the potential they pose for further scholarly exploration.

**The Value of Teacher Education**

The value of teacher education arose when the student teachers were asked to describe the benefits, advantages, disadvantages, rewarding experiences, or general feelings associated with
the teacher education programme at Town. Generally speaking, the student teachers placed positive value on the programme in spite of their limited desire to have entered teacher education initially. These positive sentiments may have been a result of the experiences they had at Town - experiences which they believed were of benefit primarily to their personal development. For instance, several students expressed that the teacher education programme made them a better person than they were prior to entering. I was somewhat surprised that more was not said about the benefit of the programme in regard to their development as teachers. Maybe this should not be startling given the level of uncertainty several of these student teachers had regarding the prospects of teaching for the long term. For these student teachers the benefits of learning strategies related to teaching, assessment, and classroom management may not have been as significant as compared to what they learned about life in general and the world of work in particular.

The Status of Being a Teacher

“So it actually feels great to be a teacher, a trained teacher.” - Tahira

Those who spoke about the benefits of teacher education described how they felt to have attained post-secondary qualifications, or tertiary education as it was more popularly called. Mel expressed her satisfaction by stating that she was glad to “have some tertiary education”. Adriana said she was pleased to have accomplished something by “gaining tertiary level education”. This accomplishment, she stated, made her “a professional…not a seasoned professional yet, but a professional nonetheless.” Neka was also pleased to have earned a Diploma in Education although she had serious doubts about entering teacher education, and had yet to secure employment as a teacher. Her sense of accomplishment and hope pertaining to achieving this educational goal was evident when she said:
To be honest, I don’t want to say I made a mistake, but at least at the end of the day I can say I have a Diploma in Teacher Education, which is something many people would want to have. Even though I am not working at the moment I feel I accomplished at least something that I can work with later on in life. Maybe not now, but it will do me some good later on.

There were others who also indicated that the status associated with being a qualified teacher was a benefit to having done teacher education. Mel said that it felt good to be “called a teacher”, who was qualified to “go out there and teach young children.” Staci was also happy that she was now a “trained teacher,” but her feelings were mixed because teacher education was “not what [she] really wanted to do.” Tahira also expressed satisfaction about becoming a qualified teacher.

She explained why this status was a benefit by stating:

I feel great to be a qualified teacher because you know it always said the teacher determines who you become. It’s good to know that I have such an influence on a child, or even a parent, because parents do look up to you as a teacher, and even in your community. Also, when you have a certain level of qualification, persons respect you more, or look up to you, or have so many expectations. This helps you to be a better person because you know that you have to live up to their expectations. So it actually feels great to be a teacher, a trained teacher.

Tahira’s response suggests that teachers and others with advanced education qualifications are held in high esteem in Jamaican society, by the parents of school children, and members of the community where the teacher resides. Interestingly, a similar form of “localized” respect was shown towards Black Jamaicans who, during the post-emancipation period, chose to become elementary teachers; teachers who would assume the important responsibility of educating
citizens of the same racial and socio-economic class. Within the communities and social circles of these individuals recognition was demonstrated by the way they were addressed, by being given the title of teacher with the same veneration as that given to the doctor or pastor (see also Hall and Bryan, 1997).

Learning Skills for Teaching

“I know how to deal with children more” - Mel

Tahira, Mel, and Staci also referred to the pedagogical benefits associated with learning to teach. These benefits were described as the educational strategies they were taught, and which they could use if they were to become classroom teachers. In regard to child development Tahira said that she learned about “things that [she] didn’t know or didn’t really see as important, as it pertained to child development, and how the child should be grown.” Mel also learned much about young children and how they should be taught. This was evident when she said:

I know how to deal with children more. I know I have to have patience with them. I learned that you have to take your time with them and you have to teach and plan to their learning ability. Everybody doesn't learn one way. Everybody have different ways in how they learn so that's what I learnt [at Town].

Staci, like Adriana, also believed that one of the benefits to having completed teacher education was learning skills, such as how to prepare lesson plans. During our second interview, at a time when she was employed in a high school teaching social studies, she explained how practical and relevant what she had learned in her methodology courses were to her current and future responsibilities as a teacher. She said:

The methods part of my teacher education will help me again next year, as well as it is helping me now, because I know how to write my plans and so forth. Yes, it will be a lot
of help next year, mostly next year. I think next year will be a bit of a challenge because I’ll be having more classes, and they’re older students and so forth.

Miguel and Jade also believed that a benefit to having done teacher education was learning about what to do in the classroom or school environment. They believed that what they learned in the programme prepared them for the classroom as well as the social aspects of work. This was apparent when Miguel said:

[The teacher education programme] benefits you in that you understand certain things which are recommended to do within the classroom, within the situation of being in a school setting, and in the work environment; like how you attire yourself, and how you speak to persons around you.

This was also evident when Jade described how the teacher education programme was more than academics, and how it prepared her for the workplace. She said:

Town, yes, it was a good stay. It was not just about the academics, but to be a well-rounded person, how to be professional, and all of that; and being here at [High School] I just fit right in with the other teachers. The senior teachers, everybody and I have a good relationship. And I know it’s based on what I was taught at College that helped me to have this kind of attribute or skill per say.

I believe that Miguel’s and Jade’s reference to the benefits of teacher education hint at what could be interpreted as the holistic nature of teacher development. I thought this was intriguing because a fair amount has been discussed and written about holistic approaches to teacher education (Beattie, 2006; Alsup, 2006). These approaches suggest that the personal and professional aspects of the student teacher “are intimately intertwined” (Beattie, 2006, p.23) and should be explored so that a “multiple sense of self” [of teacher] can be created” (Alsup, 2006,
p.36). The notion of a holistic brand of teacher education is a reasonable one, particularly if teacher education is to be valued for more than learning what and how to teach.

**Personal Development**

"*Teacher education doesn’t only teach you to teach, it teaches you so much more*” - Adriana

The student teachers commented on different elements of personal development that resulted from their involvement in the teacher education program. These elements included professionalism, maturation, interpersonal skills, and creativity.

1. **Professionalism.** Several of the student teachers discussed how the teacher education programme was a benefit to their professional development. During both the preliminary and follow-up interviews they spoke extensively about the benefits which they derived from Town’s teacher education programme. During the follow-up interview Adriana made it known that:

   Teacher education doesn’t only teach you to teach, it teaches you so much more regarding personal development....It helps you as an individual to become rounded, and to become a professional, even if you’re not one you actually act like one.

Miguel also expressed that the programme helped him to be more professional. He, for one, believed that not all the teacher education courses were designed to merely prepare the student for teaching. He believed that certain courses were specifically designed to develop the individual in a variety of positive ways. These were the teacher education courses that he claimed helped him to become more focused, responsible, and professional. He expressed this by saying:

You have courses which you do at college that are not for the teaching profession, but are to mould you as an individual. Preferable courses like Home and Family Life Education, or something like that. I don’t remember [the titles] exactly. And you also have Personal
Development, which you learn in first year, and that shows you how you’re supposed to act within a certain environment....And it helps you in the working world. It helps you to be more professional, right. You might come here and everybody might see you as a type of person that, you know, gallivants and everything, but its helps you to be more grounded in many ways.

Tahira also made it known that the teacher education programme was more than just about learning to teach. It would seem that life as a residential student had a great deal of influence on her understanding of what it meant to work with others, manage her time, and make good decisions. She believed that the teacher education programme contributed to the development of these professional skills when she said:

It's not only about teaching. [It’s] exposure to also working with others, how to cope with others, and being out of your environment. Because I was a residential student, leaving my environment and coming to work with others, having to work with persons who are at college just like me, and they don't know the first thing about being here. And [their] parents just tell them to come to college, they just come here; so when you have work and assignments to do, and they are nowhere to be found, you are left with the pressure. It helped me also to manage time and how to make some decisions. Coming out of high school, where I had my parents making all the decisions, and coming here being by myself, they're in Westmoreland and I am here, and we hardly even communicate, helped me to make decisions also. So coming here was a great day for me.

Tahira’s reference to peers who were influential and how they may have contributed indirectly to her personal development. Her response indicates that some of these individuals were a negative influence; nevertheless, they were the motivation behind the improvement of her interpersonal,
time management, and decision making skills. This appears to be another paradox associated with teacher education at Town; one whereby a situation appears to be problematic, but at the same time may lead to favourable outcomes.

**ii. Maturation.** Mel did not refer to any courses in particular, but she also believed that the programme was a benefit to her personal development. Like Miguel she felt that the programme helped her to become more focused and responsible. Mel’s use of the term “grown” suggests that she thought the programme helped her to mature. This was affirmed when she stated that:

> I have become a better person, you could say that. I am not the same person as I was coming in, and leaving I have grown. I have grown. Coming in I would probably just waste time, but now, having been through the programme, I see the seriousness to it. I have to stick to something. I can't be going about the place.

I was not totally surprised when Miguel and Mel spoke about how they became more focused and responsible as a result of what they experienced in the programme. After all, these were the only students out of the eight who had to repeat courses and an academic year in order to graduate. Terms such as “gallivants” or “time waster” could probably have been used to describe them at the start of the programme. For these students failure, embarrassment, and additional tuition expenses motivated them to become more responsible which led to their personal development, as did the courses and other aspects of the teacher education programme.

**iii. Interpersonal skills.** Staci mentioned that she became a more patient person as result of her teacher education experience. This may have resulted from the interactions she had with others regarding contentious issues. I sensed this when she said:
I was patient, but now I think I have a whole heap more patience; because to deal with some persons, as a student, you have to have patience. Yes, you have to. [Being] here I learned to just let certain things be, and don't try to argue with anybody. I guess that would still come under patience.

Jade also indicated that she became a more tolerant and patient person while enrolled in the teacher education programme. However, what appeared to be a greater benefit to having done teacher education was the spiritual growth she made. She made this very clear when she stated:

For me, being at Town, it’s like I have a better relationship with God. Because being here, you know, was not just teaching us about going out into the classroom, it was also about building a relationship with God. You know, to me, it has made me a better person. Coming into this [programme], the way I used to look at things years ago, I look on [them] very different now. [The programme] has taught me to be more tolerant, patient. It has taught me a lot.

**iv. Creativity.** For students like Gabriel, teacher education provided the opportunity to come face-to-face with subjects that she had feared as a high school student, and to discover academic abilities and creative talents that she did not know she possessed. These were given recognition when she mentioned that:

Most of the things that I dodged while at probably prep school or high school, confronted me here [at Town]. I had to do some things in science. Science was one of the subjects that I really didn't like in school. Math, you know, I realized here that Math is not so hard; once you put your mind to it you will be able to do it. Essay writing, I had to do it here and. you know, I got good grades when I did that; creating the different activities for the
children, creating the different things, games and so on. You know, it brought out a lot of creativity that I probably didn’t know was inside of me.

These student teachers clearly valued the teacher education programme for a variety of reasons. They spoke at length about the professional and personal benefits they gained from both the formal (academic) and informal (interpersonal) experiences they had during the programme. Remarkably, they seemed to benefit from the programme more than one might expect of students who did not aspire to enter teacher education. This suggests that the value of teacher education and all the experiences associated with it extends well beyond the realms of merely learning to teach. Others have recognized this attribute and have argued fervently that all the experiences that occur within a teacher education programme can and should be important to the process of learning to teach (Miller & Sellers, 1990; Zais, 1981). Based on what these student teachers have described, it would suit teacher education to promote itself as much more than just learning objectives documented in formal teacher education curriculum.

Activities and Aspirations

“I can’t say that I am going to stay in education for this amount of time” - Miguel

In this section, I highlight what these student teachers were doing, or planned to do, now that they had completed the programme. The focus is on who is unemployed, working, teaching, or going to school. What these students were aspiring to in respect to future employment and continuing education is also presented. Generally speaking, the students spoke about finding employment, preferably as a teacher for the short term, and continuing their education so as to earn a university degree.

Adriana, Staci, Gabriel, and Jade were employed as teachers soon after graduating from teachers’ college. Gabriel was the only one among the four who was teaching at the early
childhood level. She and Jade were the only teachers who were employed in permanent teaching positions. Adriana and Staci were employed fulltime in high schools for teachers who were on leave. Miguel was also employed, but not in the field of education. Mel, Neka and Tahira were not employed at the time, but claimed to be actively seeking employment in education or elsewhere.

Among the 77 student teachers who responded to the survey question related to becoming a teacher (Q-9) 34 (45%) indicated they either wanted to teach for a few years, or not at all (see Appendix D). Thirty-one of the 34 specified that they wanted to teach for at least a few years, while only three expressed that they did not want to teach at all. This finding is interesting in that it suggests that although many Jamaican student teachers may not be keen about teaching they still expect to work in the classroom for at least a short period of time. During conversations with my student teachers, prior to doing this research, several referred to this short term commitment to teaching as the least they could do to show appreciation for having received the education, and teaching as their way of somehow giving back to Jamaican society in a positive and meaningful way.

Among the eight student teachers who were interviewed several signified that teaching would not be a long-term occupation. The responses of these students to Q-9, with the exception of Jade and Miguel, indicated that they did not see themselves becoming career teachers. During the interviews Adriana, Mel, and Tahira stated that they would teach for about five years. Mel altruistically said that she intended to teach for no more than five years. She also believed that this would be a way of giving back to her country with the education she had the privilege to have received. She indicated these intentions when she said “I don't really see it in myself to teach for more than five years. I don't see myself doing that. I guess, because I can give back to
my country. I got the education for [teaching], so I might as well give back.” Mel was also seeking employment – not necessarily in teaching – and hoped to start a degree programme in “something” by September 2011. This plan was revealed when she said that she would “...go back to school come September. I’ve sent in the applications so I am just waiting. Actually I am waiting on this diploma to submit it also. And, then I will know by March if I am accepted... my future is to get a degree in something, and get a job to help my parents.” The last correspondence I received by electronic mail from Mel was a reply confirming that she had checked her interview transcript. In this email she also provided an update regarding her school and employment situation. The correspondence revealed the following:

I am awaiting word from [University] to see if I was accepted in the Education programme. Other persons that I know of are waiting as well, so I am not too worried...yet. As for now, I am working with/for a friend who owns a car dealership and haulage place...doing payroll and taxes for the employees (27/05/2011).

Adriana planned to commit herself to the classroom for only 5 years because she hoped to branch off into other aspects of education, and to complete her educational qualifications up to the doctorate level. This desire was revealed when she said:

I think am going to stay in the class room for five years, teaching secondary level for five years. Within those five years, because I am being realistic now, I should finish my degree. That’s education wise and professional wise, I should finish my degree. I should [also] have contributed significantly to the development of a school, or a child, or a foundation, somehow, within those five years. After those five years I would move on to do my Masters, unless something happens to change my mind. I don’t see myself in the classroom teaching students, I want to move out of that and probably go out in the field to
influence other teachers or something at another level, right. And, I hope to do my Ph.D. within, like, the second five years which would be in the ten years.

What is fascinating about Adriana’s response is how much she hoped to accomplish within a ten year period. This appeared to be a huge undertaking for someone who had yet to secure a permanent position in teaching, and who was concerned about being 36 years of age by the time these targets were to be met. Adriana seemed to believe that her plans were realistic; however, the dialogue prior to this response revealed elements of uncertainty and idealism regarding these aspirations. When I asked Adriana about completing her undergraduate and post-graduate degrees the following conversation ensued:

A - Yes, but I don’t want to spend three years doing a degree and the two more years doing a Masters. I want to do both of them in three years.

EC - That would be a Master's in Education?

A - It’s something.

EC - It’s something?

A - Right. Now, I can’t say, I don’t know. It could be Masters in Educational Research. It depends.

EC - Would you do a Ph.D.?

A - I think I would do my Ph.D. in either Psychology or Research. I love to do research. I prefer to get paid to do research than to teach. I prefer to get paid to do work, book work, than to teach book work. So pay me to go study rather than pay me to teach you. Yeah, so I like to do research.

The post teacher education plans and aspirations that both Adriana and Mel expressed expose elements of uncertainty and idealism regarding how they envision their future as teachers
and/or students. In both cases this ambiguity and idealistic optimism may result from a lack of knowledge and understanding about undergraduate and post-graduate degree programmes, and the time, resources, qualifications, and commitment one needs in order to complete education programmes such as these, while working full-time as teachers. It is also possible that both Mel’s and Adriana’s aspirations regarding teaching and upgrading qualifications are a response to those societal and personal expectations that influence the young citizen to believe that they must show gratitude by giving back, reach for the stars when setting personal goals, and be the best that he or she can be in whatever they do. These expectations are wonderful motivational maxims, but not always practical especially when faced with daunting personal, social and economic challenges.

Tahira also indicated that she would teach for about five or six years. Unlike Adriana and Mel, her uncertainty and idealistic outlook was manifested in a different way. Six months after graduating from Town Tahira indicated that she was seeking employment as a teacher; however, she was still entertaining the possibility of entering the Food and Nutrition Programme at H.E.A.R.T. Furthermore, she still had aspirations of becoming a pediatrician, a goal which she mentioned was “going to take some time”. During our follow-up interview she revealed these aspirations by stating what she would do if she was not working as a teacher. She said:

I really love Foods and Nutrition. So, if I am not working, I am going to go to H.E.A.R.T. and further my studies. I already have a level one certificate in Food Preparation, and I am going to try to get a level two. If am not working at that time… [As for] being a teacher, I said it before in the previous interview, I really don’t plan to stay in teaching. But I want to do it for a few years, before I really move on; probably five or six years.
Five years from now I will be young enough to move on; [I will have] a little bit more economical strength too.

What is interesting about Tahira’s response was the reference she made, once again, to her youthfulness and how this could be a factor in determining what she decided to do in the future. This is significant because it brings in to question the extent to which maturation, growth and development occurred during the 3 years that the young student teacher was enrolled in the teacher education programme. Tahira’s response suggested that, even after completing a 3 year teacher education programme, one is still young enough to pursue the educational and occupational aspirations of his or her choice.

During the interview Miguel, did not specifically say how long he would teach, but he did allude to the possibility that it may not be for a long period of time. Miguel, who was employed as a Data Entry Clerk, was asked how long he would remain in education to upgrade his teacher qualifications, and work as a teacher. He could not provide a definitive answer to this question because job security and a steady income seemed to be his major priorities. This was apparent when he said:

It’s hard to really pinpoint and say I am going to go back to education, and stay this amount of time. Because if there aren’t any jobs available then I have to just stay where I am until something comes up. So, at this point, I can’t say that I am going to stay in education for this amount of time, but if I have the option, as long as it is available, then I will stay.

Miguel’s responses to questions regarding educational and occupational aspirations also showed signs of uncertainty. For instance, he expressed an interest in pursuing so many different educational/career programmes such as the one in Special Education at another teachers’ college.
The ambiguity of Miguel’s plans and aspirations was even more apparent when he mentioned
that he was still considering the prospects of schooling and teaching in Canada. Miguel’s
aspirations are summarized below in an excerpt I constructed from our lengthy conversation
about his educational and occupational plans for the next year or two. He said:

I wanted to do a course in Special Education, [a subject area] in which you have persons
who might have different needs, and also Guidance and Counseling. I have been looking
in those areas to see what else I can branch off to....I think that those are two of the areas
that I have been looking at overall, apart from educational, apart from Resource
Management, those are the other two....I have applied to [Teachers’ college] to do the
Special Education. I would start not this semester, but next semester. I am waiting on
that, and trying to get the money sorted out. I [also] see myself maybe having a degree in
Child Psychology. I mean within the next 2 to 3 years, and if it doesn’t work out here I’ll
try Canada.

Miguel’s responses, like others, also seemed somewhat idealistic; particularly when he spoke
about wanting to do so much in such a short space of time, and over a wide expanse of space
(Jamaica to Canada). He was also aspiring to achieve these goals at a time when he had not yet
completed all the requirements to graduate, nor had he secured the funds he would need to
finance further education.

Gabriel also showed signs of uncertainty about her educational and occupational
aspirations. Gabriel, who spoke at length about owning an early childhood center, made little
mention of this during our secondary meeting. She spoke much more about staying in teaching at
the early childhood center where she was currently employed, and completing a degree in
Literacy Studies within the next 2 years. Gabriel was also uncertain about what she would do after completing a degree in Literacy Studies. This uncertainty was revealed when she said:

I was thinking to apply to [teachers’ college] or [university] it depends, to do Literacy Studies. That’s what I did at Shortwood. I specialized in reading. So I would like to further that, and then, I don’t know what will happen after that. But that’s what I want to do, get a degree in Literacy Studies.

Gabriel’s aspirations, at times, also appeared to be somewhat idealistic. This was most noticeable when she was asked how completing Literacy Studies would assist her in fulfilling her future aspirations. The answer to this question suggested that Gabriel planned to teach literacy privately, open a nursery, and teach fulltime. I considered this a tremendous undertaking for an early childhood teacher, and single mother of two young children. During our conversation she said:

EC - How is a degree in Literacy Studies going to help you?

G - Well with that I can freelance because a lot of persons are having difficulties where reading is concerned. I could freelance, as well as, at whatever time I decide to operate my own nursery, I can probably have a steady job at a school, and then still manage.

EC - So you still see it being a benefit to those long term plans; which is to own your nursery?

G - Yes, because then that’s more money coming in; [money] that I can put into my business.

EC - What, if any, are your occupational plans for the next year or two?

G - Teaching.
Neka surprised me when she revealed during our second meeting that she was interested in studying at the Caribbean Maritime Institute which is located in Jamaica. She had never mentioned the prospect of doing this during the first interview. Furthermore, she seemed uncertain about what programme she would enroll in at the institute. Neka was not pleased that she was unable to find a job after graduating from teachers’ college; therefore, as a result, she was frustrated and disenchanted with the prospect of teaching. I believe this may have also contributed to her uncertainty about what to do next in terms of her educational aspirations. The following exchange highlights what Neka was planning, and how she was feeling:

EC - What, if any, are your educational plans for the next year or two?

N - I wanted to change my area of study, but due to financial difficulties I don’t think I would be able to. So that’s why am currently seeking a job.

EC - Do you have any educational plans once you get a job?

N - Yes I do.

EC - What do you want to do?

N - I was planning on going to the [Caribbean] Maritime Institute. I am not sure of what I would do, but that’s my plan for now, short term.

EC - Why the [Caribbean] Maritime Institute that seems like a big change?

N: Trying to go as far away from teaching as I possibly can, to be honest.

Staci and Jade seemed more certain and practical about their future educational and occupational aspirations. Both were teaching when we met for the second time. Although their aspirations to teach for the long-term differed, they both spoke about teaching and achieving qualifications specifically related to teaching, within a reasonable period of time. Jade, during the second interview, expressed that she would “definitely” be a career teacher. She had articulated
this desire from the first time we met. Jade also wanted to complete a Bachelor of Education degree in Language Arts; hopefully in the degree programme offered at Town. These plans were expressed when she said:

I am going to retire teaching. This is what I am going to do. I don’t see just upgrading myself because I know I am not at the pace I want to be, but I will always try to upgrade myself in terms of being equipped for the classroom. But this is where I am going to be, teaching.

When I asked Staci how long she planned to stay in teaching she indicated that it would not be indefinitely. Her intentions were to teach for no more than “ten years” in the public school system, and possibly move into lecturing at the college level. This was revealed when she said:

Teaching in a high school, honestly, in a high school, I don’t really want to do it past 10 years. I want to lecture. I said that if I am supposed to stay in the teaching profession it should be lecturing, and not teaching.

Interestingly, Staci’s aspirations to become a lawyer seemed to have diminished. This appeared to be the case when she mentioned during the follow-up interview that “[law is] going to take a whole lot of years. So that’s probably not a good idea.” Staci also hoped to complete a Bachelor of Education degree in History and Social Studies. This she hoped to complete part-time within the next few years. Staci, like Adriana, also expressed a desire to achieve qualifications up to the doctorate level; however, she envisioned this happening at some time before she reached 40 years of age. Her educational and occupational aspirations for the next couple of years and beyond were revealed when she stated:

I’m going to start History and Social Studies at [teachers’ college] for September, part-time, in order to get my first degree. Because, like you, I want to have my Doctorate
before I am 40. Seriously...so hopefully for the next two years I’ll be still here [teaching at high school] hopefully.

I was curious as to why Jade’s and Staci’s aspirations were different from the others. I wondered if their relatively quick employment as fulltime teachers had any influence on their desire to remain in education for at least ten years. However, after further consideration, I realized this could not be a justifiable answer. After all, Jade had expressed well before being employed as a teacher that teaching was her career choice. Also, Gabriel and Adriana were employed as teachers soon after graduating from Town; however, they did not seem as committed to pursuing education related qualifications and classroom teaching.

**Benefits to Educational and Occupational Aspirations**

“... this is a stepping-stone to help me to move on to higher heights” – Gabriel

In this section I explore what the student teachers believed were the benefits of teacher education for their future educational and occupational plans and aspirations. The emphasis is on what the students had to say in regard to how teacher education may have contributed to the continuation of their education, or to their occupational or career goals. For student teachers such as Jade, teacher education seemed to have a significant influence on her decision to teach for the long-term. It may also have had some influence on her desire to pursue further qualifications in education. For these reasons it is reasonable to infer that teacher education benefitted Jade in respect to helping her set more concrete educational and occupational plans. Jade did not directly say that teacher education was the reason why she would be seeking entry to a Bachelor of Education programme in language arts, but she did allude to how it helped to influence her decision to become a career teacher. When she was asked to describe the most rewarding
experiences in the teacher education programme she revealed how beneficial teacher education was to her self-esteem and her commitment to teaching. She said:

I felt good about myself, knowing that everybody in the department was talking about [my teaching practicum]. And, not just about my academic grades, but the relationship I had with the students. I felt on top of the world, you know. And that even motivated me more to say: ‘Jade this is where you should be [teaching] because you can relate to them, so stay here.’

The responses among the eight student teachers show that views of the value and benefits of teacher education varied widely, especially in regard to future aspirations. There was, however, one particular educational aspiration which all the students seemed to share. This was the desire to achieve additional academic qualifications, specifically a university degree in education or some other field. This common desire is significant and deserving of special attention because of its relevance to the notion of teacher education as a “stepping-stone to do something else.”

Among those who had completed the research questionnaire 10 of the 77 (13%) indicated that they enrolled in the teacher education programme so that they could use it as a stepping-stone to university or further education. It should also be noted that six of these 10 were student teachers who participated in the in-depth interview segment of this study. These student teachers frequently referred to teacher education as a possible stepping-stone to obtaining a university degree. Therefore, it may be reasonable to infer that one of the perceived benefits of teacher education was the purpose it could potentially serve as a stepping-stone to fulfilling educational and occupational aspirations.
Tahira was one of the student teachers who indicated on the questionnaire that teacher education would serve as a stepping-stone to furthering her education. During our initial interview she also made reference to teacher education serving this purpose. In this session she spoke more specifically about what teacher education provided in order for it to serve as springboard to future goals. She also indicated that choosing to enter teacher education was not a mistake because of its benefits to career development and decision-making. When she was asked to express her thoughts about teachers who chose teacher education but did not necessarily want to be career teachers she said:

Coming to teachers’ college was not a mistake so much because when you come here it acts as a stepping-stone. You get training in not only teacher training, but career training also. Because they help to mould you and help you to think on the straight that you would want to think. So coming here I don’t think it is so much of a mistake because it might probably better able you to make the decision of who you really want to be. Coming here would help them to realize, yes, I am in the wrong place; I need to get to where I really want to be.

Tahira also believed that the teacher education programme she had just completed was a good “foundation” a starting point, and “push” toward achieving future goals. This was revealed when she said:

[Teacher education] taught me a lot seeing that I want to stay in the field of working with children and young ones. It’s just that, the base. It’s like the beginning of a brighter tomorrow to say. It will help me because I have laid the foundation, and that is the best part or the most important part of starting. So doing this course now, doing the early childhood course, it helps me to see. It just gave me the push or the beginning or
somewhere that I know that I can start, or I know where I am going. So it’s my guide to get there, or my direction to get there.

Tahira’s responses signify that the teachers’ college may serve as the starting point for one who wishes to assess his/her identity, and decide on what future education or employment goals they truly want to pursue. Similarly the students in Ginzberg’s (1963) study believed that the right time for making realistic decisions about occupations was during their time at college. Her responses also indicate that teacher education can serve a utilitarian purpose as a stepping-stone to do something else. Tahira’s responses raise a number of questions. First, what might be the negative consequences for teacher education programmes, the teaching profession and schooling if a substantial number of students are using teacher education as a starting point, and a stepping-stone to other educational and occupational goals? Does the teachers’ college need to devote more attention to aspects of the college programme such as admissions in order to reduce the intake of students who may be using the college for this purpose? In regard to teacher education programmes there has been significant discussion which has focused on admissions as an important aspect of teacher education programmes; an aspect which should be considered as essential to curriculum as it is to administration (Doyle, 1990; Evans, 2000; Howey & Strom, 1987; Howey & Zimpher, 1996). Or, given the reasons why many of these students are choosing to enter teacher education, should the college programme adjust or enhance what is already in practice so as to support these students with their development of identity, and educational and occupational planning? A case could be made for a teacher education programme which assists students such as those who Tahira alluded to, those who want to use teachers’ college as a point to start discovering “who [they] really want to be” and “where they really want to go.”
Gabriel also expressed that teacher education was her stepping-stone to higher academic achievement, and knowledge of early childhood pedagogy. During our first interview, when she was asked how teacher education would help her in the future, she said:

Well, this is the first step. Because I want to further myself academically and if I had not been to Town then I would not be able to move on to higher heights. So this is a stepping-stone to help me to move on to higher heights, to get more knowledge on early childhood education, and other things that relate to early childhood education.

She also indicated that teacher education had influenced her occupational/entrepreneurial aspirations. Although somewhat vague and uncertain she believed that teacher education could help her to establish and operate her early childhood facility. This was evident when she stated:

In opening my facility then I will be employing people, I suppose, and I’ll know what to do; I’ll know what to expect from my employees and all of that. So the course here was really good for me, educational and informative.

Interestingly, Gabriel spoke about this goal frequently during our first meeting. However, very little was said during the second interview about teacher education and the benefits it offered for owning an early childhood center. Therefore, I came to the conclusion that owning an early childhood center was no longer a primary aspiration.

Staci, Mel, and Neka also made reference to the notion of stepping-stone, and how teacher education could serve as a springboard to future educational and occupational goals and aspirations. Staci mentioned that “…persons told [her she] could use teacher education as a stepping-stone to go and study law.” Mel, who had referred to teachers college as a “stepping-stone to do something else,” indicated that teacher education qualifications could assist to get a
degree in fields other than education. When she was asked to describe how she felt about her decision to have done teacher education she said:

Well, now I see that [teacher education] is going to help me in some way because I am applying to school [university]. So [teacher education] will help me. It doesn’t necessarily mean that I would be applying for an education degree, but it will still help me.

Neka, like Tahira, also believed that the Diploma in Education was a significant “starting point” on the path to fulfilling other educational or occupational aspirations. When asked about the benefits of teacher education to her future aspirations she replied that teacher education was “a major start for me…a stepping-stone to other areas that I may want to be entering to.”

Although these student teachers believed that teacher education could be utilized as a stepping-stone to future educational and occupational goals there were elements in their responses which suggested that they were not quite certain how this may be achieved. Just the mention of it being an avenue to something else is an indication of uncertainty. In my opinion this strengthens the argument for a teacher education programme which assists students in terms of who they are, what they become, and where they want to be. These programmes could provide and facilitate student teachers with the opportunities to critically assess why they chose teacher education, while at the same time provide them with information and guidance which enables them to chart their future educational and occupational plans. A programme of this nature may help to mitigate or avoid distressing situations such as the one described by Adriana. Had she been more informed about the prospects of teaching in her subject area, and guided in terms of alternative educational or career paths she may not have commented:

I am having a bit of a difficulty obtaining jobs, employment. What I have realized is that Human Ecology teachers, they hardly get jobs. It is very difficult for a Human Ecology
teacher to get a job because the Human Ecology teachers out there stay in their positions, they don't leave....I mean they just don't leave. They either die or retire. So you have to wait until a Human Ecology teacher dies or retires.

Certainly few educational/training programmes can guarantee employment for its graduates; however, if it is known to serve as a “stepping-stone to do something else” it might as well try to be as supportive and surefooted as possible.

Summary

This chapter presented what Jamaican student teachers, who did not aspire to enter teacher education, perceived to be significant experiences within a teacher education programme. It can be said that they found the comprehensiveness of the programme, contending with the academic workload, moments when they achieved success, and the teaching practicum to be significant experiences. Some reference was made to how the experience contributed to their development as teachers, but much more was said in regard to how teachers’ college contributed to their personal development. Maybe the limited reference to teacher development should not come as a surprise, since these student teachers did not aspire to enter teacher education initially. We should remember that these student teachers entered teacher education largely for reasons related to their youthful impressionability and indecisiveness, the affordability and accessibility of the programme, and limited options and opportunities. Understanding this, why should we expect them to view teacher education as having much value to their future goals and aspirations as teachers? However, as disheartening as the tone of this question may seem to those of us in the teaching profession, clearly these student teachers gained in several and different ways after having completed the programme. For instance, they believed that teachers’ college could serve a useful purpose as a “stepping-stone” to future personal and professional goals and aspirations.
In my opinion, it is this optimism which those of us in teacher education should focus our attention on. It is this optimism that we should be using to build on and enhance a commendable teacher education programme that has prepared many outstanding Jamaican teachers and citizens.
Chapter Seven

The Value of Student Teacher Voices to Teacher Education

These student teachers, now qualified teachers, openly expressed why they entered teacher education although their aspirations to learn to teach were limited or non-existent. This could be perceived as a courageous undertaking given that prior to starting the program they probably would have had to give the impression that they wanted to learn to teach in order to be admitted. Sharing their innermost thoughts and feelings about a teacher education programme that they were initially not eager to enter must have involved some element of risk. For this reason, the interviews, guided by the principles of grounded theory, were a useful methodological data collection strategy in that they created a suitable climate for the participants to freely discuss their most genuine thoughts about deciding to learn to teach, and completing the teacher education programme. The interview appeared to be a prime opportunity for these student teachers to openly express how they felt about having had to enroll in teacher education. They also seemed to view this as an opportunity to reveal what they believed were deficiencies in the programme, and to identify areas in need of improvement. During qualitative research the interview may provide the right environment for the respondents to express themselves more “frankly” as compared to what they might say in an anonymous questionnaire (Evans, 1993).

These student teachers provided a wealth of invaluable information, not only pertaining to their reasons for entering teacher education, but also regarding the knowledge, skills, and values they gained from the experience, and their educational plans and aspirations. Several significant and relevant points for discussion emerged from what they said. These were points which I believe warranted further attention because of the implications for post-secondary,
tertiary, and teacher education in general and a deeper understanding of these Jamaican student teachers in particular. Basically, two questions provide structure and guidance to this discussion. They are: (1) what have we learned from these student teachers about the role and purpose of teacher education for individuals who do not aspire to learn to teach or become teachers? (2) what might we enhance, or do differently, within our teacher education programmes/curriculum since we now know that teacher education serves different purposes for different individuals? In response to the first question I discuss issues related to the accessibility of teacher education, and explore reasons why teacher education should continue to be a viable tertiary education option even for those who may not have strong aspirations to teach. In response to the second question I discuss teacher education curricula in Jamaica, with a focus on issues related to holistic teacher education curricula, the course *The Emergent Teacher*,\(^{34}\) and career planning.

**What Can We Learn From Student Teachers Who Did Not Aspire To Teacher Education?**

1. *Maintain teacher education as an accessible higher education option.* A substantial number of the student teachers who participated in this study—survey and interview—indicated that teacher education was not their first choice for post-secondary schooling. Many aspired to pursue their education and careers in fields other than education. For example, more than half of the respondents (58\%) to the questionnaire indicated that teacher education was not their first choice for post secondary schooling; and, if they could have pursued their first choice it would have been in fields such as nursing, medicine, or law. Among those who enter teacher education programmes there are those for whom teaching is not necessarily their first career choice (Book, 34

\(^{34}\) The Emergent Teacher has undergone some revisions and is now a course which is taught in the new B.Ed. Programme as the Emergent Professional.
1983; Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Coultas & Lewin, 2003; Hobson et al., 2006; Lewin & Stewart, 2003; Manual & Hughes, 2006; Su et al., 2001).

However, after closely examining these student teachers’ reasons for entering 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. Teacher education for these student teachers was one of a few, possibly the only, post-secondary educational choice available after high school. Evan’s (2001) has made a similar observation, noting that numerous Jamaican teachers decide to “…enter the profession, or at least go to Teachers’ College, because of limited opportunities that were at the tertiary level.” (p.31).

For these reasons, I can only imagine how many would not have received a tertiary level education had Town teachers’ college been inaccessible to those with limited post-secondary credentials and financial resources. It is no wonder that students such as Adriana, Mel, Neka, Staci, and Tahira expressed such pride in announcing that they had achieved tertiary education qualifications, or had earned the title of qualified teacher. A lesson to be learned from this is that accessibility to higher education for young and ambitious Jamaicans with limited options is a good reason for teacher education at the teachers’ college to remain an attainable tertiary education option for a broader segment of Jamaica’s youth population. It is even a better reason if this accessibility provides young Black Jamaicans, who may be disadvantaged as a result of social, economic, or political factors, with an opportunity to overcome certain obstacles which may be a hindrance to a better quality of life. Interestingly, keeping teacher education accessible would maintain its historical track record and significance as an avenue to higher education, and
a means to upward social mobility for many marginalized Jamaicans (King, 1998; Hall & Bryan, 1997; Evans, 1993; Gentles, 2004).

**ii. Teacher education: More than just learning to teach.** Another lesson we might learn from the comments of these student teachers is that teacher education in Jamaica has constructive value which goes beyond just learning to teach. Teacher education offers a wide array of benefits to those who complete the programme. All of the students in the purposive sample indicated that the teacher education programme benefitted their personal and/or professional growth and development, even more strongly in some cases than their development as teachers. This is significant because in addition to acquiring a locally and globally marketable skill such as teaching, these student teachers were given the opportunity to develop other useful interpersonal, communication, and organizational skills which could eventually be transferable to future educational programmes, and/or other occupational fields. Furthermore, some also indicated that three years in a comprehensive and rigorous teacher education programme had a considerable influence on raising their level of maturity, sense of responsibility, self-discipline, self-confidence, and self-esteem. These personal attributes are not only useful in education and teaching, but in the wider world of work and life.

These student teachers also reminded us that teacher education may be used as a stepping-stone, a springboard primarily to other educational or university degree programmes, and possibly other occupational fields. This may be viewed as positive for two reasons. First, simply stated, it supports the principle of “lifelong learning”. Therefore, we should be supportive of a student teacher’s desire to upgrade and better him or herself academically, even if this will be achieved outside the realm of education and teaching. For this reason we might consider teacher education to be a component of a broader and more complex career plan, one which may
eventually lead a young student teacher (teacher) such as Tahira into a career in medicine. Secondly, it supports “continuing education”. The stepping-stone concept implies that the young 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 three year Diploma in Teaching. This can be viewed as a positive 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 available employment opportunities in teaching.

iii. Modify the teacher education programme. The support for lifelong learning and continuing education are two positive reasons for utilizing teacher education as a “stepping-stone to do something else.” However, it will be interesting to see how long the phenomenon continues in light of the recent educational reforms which have transformed teacher education in the teachers’ colleges into four year Bachelor of Education in Teaching Programmes. I suspect that this major reform may have some influence regarding who chooses to enter teacher education, and for what purpose. I suspect it may also push the teachers’ college to examine carefully who they choose to admit to the programme. For this reason, it may be wise for teachers’ colleges such as Town to look closely at specific aspects of the teacher education programme/curriculum, and make modifications which will complement this reform.

Modifications to consider may relate to aspects such as the admissions process. Although changes to admissions seem inevitable it is my hope that admission requirements will accommodate the applicant who intends to complete a four year education degree programme in
order to teach; while, at the same time, not undermine the teachers’ college as an accessible higher education option for those whose options may be limited as a result of their academic credentials or economic capacity. I believe it would be an unfortunate loss if the teachers’ college were to become so inaccessible and unattainable that students such as Jade, who grew committed to teaching while in the programme, would have missed the opportunity to capitalize on the benefits it had to offer.

I also foresee the need for the teachers’ college to closely examine what it does in regard to preparing the student teacher for their departure from teachers’ college. During this phase of the teacher education process, the teachers’ college could be more concerned with the support that is offered to the student teacher who has recently graduated. In the true spirit of “lifelong learning” and “continuing education” it would remiss of us in teacher education to take for granted that even the four year degree will become the “be-all-to-end-all” as far as the novice teacher’s educational and career aspirations. For this reason I imagine the teachers’ college providing a comprehensive career development programme; one which might embrace the stepping-stone concept, and support student teachers in formulating and implementing comprehensive career plans.

Although I am advocating for teacher education to remain an accessible post-secondary option for many, I do foresee the teachers’ college becoming more selective in terms of who is admitted into the programme. After all, it would be naive to think that the expectations and requirements for a student entering a four year tertiary level programme would remain the same as it was for those who entered a three year diploma programme. This is where I envision committed leadership and support from government and non-government entities that have a
stake in education assisting various facets of the education system to widen the post-secondary options for young motivated Jamaican students.

With this in mind, I believe there should be continued push within the Jamaican public education system to find strategies and initiatives which enhance student success in high schools, particularly in core subjects like Mathematics and English Language. At the same time, tertiary level institutions should closely examine the value and relevancy of these subjects as prerequisites for admission to certain programmes. High schools, specifically, 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.

Jamaica’s high schools, as I 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, HIV/AIDS, values & attitudes, environmental education, and gender [themes which] are not always given the level of prominence necessary for the holistic development of the child.” (p.100).

Finally, as noted elsewhere, Jamaica is behind other middle income countries in regard to access to higher education (Evans & Burke, 2006). Access to higher education may be viewed as vital to the progressive and sustainable development of any nation because educational levels in
a country are usually directly proportional to its level of growth and development. An educated population is more likely to contribute positively to social and economic development as professionals, skilled labourers, innovative entrepreneurs, and responsible citizens. For this reason education and opportunities to access quality higher education should be viewed as essential mechanisms for economic growth and sustainability. In small developing nations such as Jamaica there should be a commitment of resources and a political will which supports these mechanisms. It is my belief 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. Therefore, an expanded community college sector might provide many more post-secondary options for Jamaican high school graduates. Restructuring and redefining what appears to be an overrepresentation of teachers’ colleges may also be considered in this reform.

What Can Be Done If Teacher Education is Useful for Different Reasons?

In considering the way forward I have suggested that national initiatives or strategies could provide additional support to young Jamaican high school graduates. These actions might hopefully assist the young graduates with their preparation for post-secondary education, while simultaneously widening the range of available options following fifth form. In the following sections I offer suggestions which the teachers’ college might consider in order to be more holistic and supportive of student teachers with the development of their professional identities and career plans. These suggestions were derived from the student teachers’ comments about teacher education being a benefit to their personal and professional development beyond, in some cases, learning how to teach. My ideas were also based on what a number of them had to say about one education course in particular – The Emergent Teacher. In my opinion this course in particular, is critical to a holistic teacher education programme because of the opportunity it
provides for novice student teachers to bring their values, beliefs, and experiences into the
dialogue about becoming a teacher in Jamaica. Added to this are my thoughts and ideas
pertaining to career development and support within the teacher education programme. These are
thoughts which have been on my mind from early in my capacity as a teacher educator, have
continued through the process of doctoral studies, and into the construction of this thesis study.

i. Envision and create more holistic teacher education. I believe that teacher education
curriculum should be conceptualized in broad and more complex terms. For the sake of clarity,
in my discussion I am using the terms teacher education curriculum and teacher education
programme interchangeably. The programme should no longer be considered merely the
document which sets out educational aims, objectives, activities, theory and practical
experiences. In exemplary teacher education programmes these features are fundamental, and are
usually of a high standard and quality (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Neither should a teacher
education curriculum be just about a technocratic transmission of knowledge. The programme
must resist the pressure from internal and external sources which advocate this as the sole
purpose of teacher education. In my opinion a teacher education curriculum which places too
much emphasis on practices such as the transmission of knowledge and paper and pencil
assessment can be educationally and pedagogically deficient. Students who are guided by
curriculum of this nature run the risk of becoming passive participants in the educational process,
participants who are required to primarily “memorize and repeat” (Freire, 1970).

I envision a teacher education curriculum as being holistic; one which is experiential and
liberating. As holistic education it could “integrate education, schooling, curriculum, and
community into a seamless whole” (Doll, 2002 p.36). Under the framework of a holistic teacher
education curriculum all of the experiences of student teachers, whether planned or not, formal
or hidden, could be acknowledged and viewed as important to learning to teach (Miller & Sellers, 1990; Zais, 1981). This approach to curriculum could also be liberating in that the students are prepared to “develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves.” (Freire, 1970, p.83). Teacher education curriculum of this nature could 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 could 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.

This broad notion of teacher education curriculum could include the values, beliefs, and experiences of the student teacher prior to entering teacher education (Alsup, 2006). Interestingly, there have been calls for more attention to the “pre-training”, or admissions phase of teacher education programmes (Evans, 2000; Zeichner & Conklin, 2008). Understanding this, the students’ reasons for entering teacher education, whether definite or nebulous, could receive due recognition, and opportunities could be created for them to explore what led them to entering the programme. A holistic teacher education programme of this nature could create space to explore issues such as teachers’ college serving as a “stepping-stone” to other academic and career goals. No longer would the reasons applicants gave for entering teacher education be simply criteria that got them admitted to the programme. In the following subsections I discuss where this space in the current teacher education curriculum possibly exists.

ii. Enhance The Emergent Teacher/Professional course. In 2002, changes to the national primary and secondary curricula led to the reform of teacher education curriculum. A Steering Committee, comprised of representatives from the Teachers’ colleges, Ministry of Education and
Youth, and the Institute of Education [UWI], was created to direct the development of an innovative education curriculum. This new curriculum included 5 courses, which were developed with the intention of preparing Jamaican student teachers to be pedagogically more student-centered. *The Emergent Teacher* course became a required foundation course. The course is comprised of three units: i) Understanding self; ii) Understanding gender; iii) Beliefs/assumptions about teaching and the role of teachers. These units are taught over 30 hours of instructional time, during one semester. The course is compulsory for first-year student teachers.

I believe *The Emergent Teacher* course could be critical to a holistic teacher education curriculum because of the space it allows for new student teachers to explore their perceptions of teaching, examine the experiences and characteristics that have shaped their lives, and develop a better understanding of their own identity (The Emergent Teacher Syllabus, January 2004). This is achieved by providing the opportunity for students to examine their personal biography and how this may influence the development of their identity as teachers, and their relationship to others (p.2). It also allows students a space to reflect and critically examine their beliefs and assumptions about teaching in order to understand how these will direct their practice and affect student learning (p.2). Finally, students are given the opportunity to develop strategies which they can use to continue their learning on the job and create learning communities (p.2). The course is also intended to provide opportunities for student teachers to engage in meaningful activities such as observational and service learning activities in community-based projects; projects which may help them to “develop a socio-cultural consciousness, caring and affirming attitude towards all [their] students, and an ability and commitment to work for their development.” (Evans, 2007 p.157).
The Emergent Teacher course further supports the principles of a holistic teacher education by aiming to extend the student teachers’ development beyond the realm of teaching, and into the realm of what it means to be a professional and productive citizen of Jamaican society. However, like other innovative educational initiatives and strategies, there may be challenges during the transition from conceptualization to implementation. In the Jamaican context these challenges may spring from the culture of teacher education which can be a culture which may perpetuate a “resistance to new ways of conceiving and transmitting knowledge” (Evans, 2007, p.158). It is this resistance to new ideas and doing things differently which may be the reason for the off-putting criticisms Miguel, Neka, and Tahira directed at the course. Tahira expected *The Emergent Teacher* to be an education course which would “help the person [student] to find the teacher that is within”. This expectation was probably a true reflection of what the course aimed to do; however, this was not always practiced or achieved. It would seem, as the following responses indicate, that too often the students’ true feelings about teacher education and teaching were not given the recognition that was deserved; rather, predetermined answers were expected, and apparently well-rewarded. Tahira alluded to this when she said:

You do a profile about yourself, you write poems about yourself, [but] they [Lecturers] are looking for something there. If you say you probably didn’t want to be a teacher, you wanted to be probably a bus driver, or just wanted to be an ordinary business person, they don’t want to see that coming out. They want you to be this perfect teacher, and this teacher doing this or this teacher doing that. So persons [students] tend to, even though they didn’t dream of being a teacher, write I wanted to be this teacher, and by this age. I want to have my own school, or whatever; and that wasn’t really in their thoughts.

Miguel said:
In The Emergent Teacher, when you stated exactly what you felt, it is like that’s not what they want, that’s not the criteria that they were working with. I know some people [students] just gave them what they needed to hear. It’s not exactly what happened, but they gave them, and they got a good grade for it.

Neka said:

I don’t see the sense in that course, especially the course work. We were required to write an essay stating four factors that influence our life. I thought that since you were to state four factors, it should be your four factors, not factors that were given to you by the Lecturer. So when I wrote my four factors I was told to do it over, and I eventually got a C+ because I had to do it over because I stated four factors that influenced my life. I guess I misinterpreted what was asked of me.

It is unfortunate if a course such as this was used merely to impart preset educational knowledge and theory or information which student teachers were expected to reiterate in order to receive a successful passing grade. In my opinion the course should be much more than this limited and rigid learning experience. It is an educational space such as this that young Jamaican student teachers need to use to thoroughly examine who they are, why they are in teacher education, and where they want to go academically and occupationally. Furthermore, while examining these personal issues, they may develop a deeper knowledge and understanding of what it means to teach and learn to teach in a postcolonial/neocolonial context; and, hopefully begin to recognize the direct and indirect role they can play in resisting and reversing the inequitable and oppressive purpose education can serve in a small island developing state (Turner, 1987).
In all fairness it would be irresponsible to place full blame for any shortcomings expressed about *The Emergent Teacher* on those who taught it. After all, as I have observed, those who are required to teach new courses may have limited time for orientation, professional development, and collaboration with others who have a stake in its delivery. I also questioned why a course of this nature was designed for only 30 instructional hours, in one semester, in only the first year of the teacher education programme. What message does this send about teacher education and its commitment to developing a deeper understanding of those who appear to be aspiring teachers? What message is sent in regard to teacher education, and its commitment to student-centered pedagogy and holistic educational practices?

**iii. Provide educational and career knowledge and planning.** As I listened to these students speak about their future educational and occupational plans I sensed that maybe more could have been done during the three years at teachers’ college to inform, guide, and support their plans and aspirations. I truly believed more could 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 supportive Lecturers. Maybe follow-up courses, designed to specifically address these issues, would have provided this additional support. Imagine a course entitled The Developing Teacher/Professional, a continuation of The Emergent Teacher/Professional, as the educational space where student teachers could explore issues related to life after teachers’ college. The uncertainty about their future 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 during the programme for these students to deeply explore the educational and occupational options available to them following teachers’ college. I
believed forthrightness and practicality, in regard to what could be done with a diploma in teacher education, would have been of great value to these student teachers.

This support may have revealed to students like Adriana, who was aspiring to complete undergraduate, masters, and doctorate degrees within 10 years, how much time, funds, and personal sacrifices would have to be made in order to achieve her goals. The relationship, if any, between teacher education and pediatrics and/or law could have been investigated and thoroughly explained to students like Tahira and Staci. More entrepreneurial-minded students, such as Gabrielle, may have benefitted from knowing what regulations, standards, or finances had to be met in order to start up a school for early childhood students. She may also have benefitted from knowing what the current demand was for schools of this nature. Exploring educational and occupational opportunities thoroughly is the least that could be done for teacher graduates living in a small middle income economy, which at the time was unable to accommodate all the new graduates from the various teacher education programmes in Jamaica. It was probably this oversupply which caused Miguel to declare that Jamaica was “one of the hardest places to get a job.”

During my conversations with these newly qualified teachers I also 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 overseas. Miguel and Tahira were probably the only students who alluded to the possibility of studying or working abroad; a desire which may have been fuelled by the fact that they had recently experienced contact with colleges overseas.

I would suggest that the discourse related to educational and occupational plans and aspirations be broadened within the context of a holistic Jamaican teacher education curriculum. I offer this suggestion cognizant of the challenges and limitations which may besiege the ambitious young Jamaicans who may be eager to study or work outside of their homeland. Issues related to travel, 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. I am also aware of the seriousness of “brain drain” in the Jamaican context; 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. However, as the Right Honourable Percival J. Patterson (2011) stated during a keynote address to the students of Town Teachers’ College there is the possibility of a major teacher preparation industry for Jamaica; one which “properly organised could repay itself in relatively short order by increasing the skill/productivity level in the economy, and increasing the number of graduates who could be deployed in the global economy.”

To take this gigantic step is not easy; however, I feel that this should not preclude these individuals from being informed about what is available, what their options are, and how they

35 P.J. Patterson is a past Prime Minister of Jamaica. He was speaking at the College’s Annual lecture series on the topic of “Migration and Development: Managing the Flow of Human Capital.” September 29, 2011.
might go about capitalizing on these options in order to achieve educational and occupational aspirations that are of importance to them. The common adage, “nothing tried, nothing gained” seems applicable to this situation. I am of the firm belief that more could be done within the teacher education programme to widen these students’ horizons and support their ambitions regarding what is possible; particularly if teacher education is to serve as a “stepping-stone to do something else.”

**Summary**

In the preceding discussion I have argued that teacher education, in the context of the teachers’ college, is an essential component of Jamaica’s higher education sector. This argument has been based on what the student teachers in this study expressed about their reasons for entering teacher education, and their experiences within the programme. For these reasons, I advocate that it is critical that teacher education be maintained as an accessible post-secondary option for the Jamaican citizenry, particularly for those whose post-secondary options may be limited for reasons related to their high school academic credentials, or socio-economic status. However, in support for moving forward, I have also argued that certain reforms at the secondary and post-secondary levels of Jamaica’s education system may support or enhance the existing programme. The suggested reforms support improving the academic performance of high school students, providing extensive career education at both the high school and college levels, implementing more holistic approaches in teacher education, capitalizing on courses such as *The Emergent Teacher* in order to address the whole student and issues of identity; and working with the notion that the teachers’ college serves a role as stepping-stone to lifelong learning, continuing education, and possibly something else. These initiatives, of course, rely on an acceptance,
willingness and commitment to change among various stakeholders at different levels of the Jamaican education system.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

Reflecting on the Past and Future

Early in my career as teacher educator at Town I discovered that a substantial number of my students had entered the teachers’ college although they did not intend to be teachers. Many of these student teachers informed me that teachers’ college was primarily their stepping-stone to further postsecondary schooling, and another desired career or occupation. This puzzled me for some time, until ultimately the perplexity became the incentive for this postgraduate doctoral research. In retrospect, a similar curiosity had inspired me to complete my Masters in Education thesis, a study which focused on developing a better understanding of the career aspirations of Black male middle school students within the Canadian context. Wanting to know why individuals aspire to and ultimately choose certain educational and occupational paths has clearly been social phenomenon which I find intriguing.

The knowledge provided by the Jamaican student teachers who participated in this research has confirmed what I learned early during informal conversations with my past students; that is, teacher education may serve as a means to do something else other than teaching. 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, and available 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 a
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.

This research has had a profound influence on my thinking about teacher education and teaching in general, and particularly about becoming and being a student teacher in the Jamaican context. Through this process of exploratory and iterative research my thoughts have shifted from concern about the number of non-aspiring teachers who could ultimately find their way into the classrooms of Jamaica’s public education system. Admittedly, this concern still lingers in the back of my mind largely because it is my belief that the ideal teacher for any classroom situation should be one who has a passion and commitment to teaching. Nevertheless, having acquired this enhanced deeper consciousness my thinking is no longer dominated by these concerns and reservations.

What these Jamaican student teachers have voiced during the course of this research has opened my eyes, ears and mind to what is unquestionably a complex social phenomenon which may lead to just as many, if not more, positive outcomes as potentially negative ones. My current impression is that teachers’ college, with a tweak here and there, is a very viable higher education option within the Jamaican educational context; and, in regard to those who will graduate from its programmes, responsible and productive professionals and citizens of Jamaica can emerge. I am more convinced than ever that what we in teacher education do is more than just prepare teachers for Jamaica’s schools. Teacher preparation is our primary aim; however, if
we listened carefully to what these student teachers said we will learn that they benefit personally, professionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually during their time at college. Furthermore, we should recognize that we provide a higher education to a disadvantaged, yet very significant socio-economic sector of Jamaica’s citizenry.

This research study has heightened my awareness to the external forces which, in small developing post-colonial states such as Jamaica, seem to have a considerable impact on the socio-economic options available and accessible to the marginalized citizens of the society. As I have discovered a significant number of predominantly young, black, female Jamaican student teachers, from working class backgrounds, choose teachers’ college although they are not keen on teacher education and/or teaching. Occupational choice theory would suggest that it is not unusual for this to be the case among late adolescents/young adults who are subjectively oriented in regard to their educational and occupational plans, and hesitant to “shape” these plans in terms of “firm occupational objectives.” (Ginzberg, 1963, p. 97). An occupational choice interpretation, however, in a postcolonial context, does not fully explain why these young student teachers would choose a postsecondary college programme which was designed specifically for learning to teach. The question that may be asked is why did they choose teachers’ college and not another postsecondary programme?

At this point postcolonial perspectives become useful, in that they provide an additional framework for thinking deeply about the factors which may have a profound effect on the educational and occupational choices late adolescent/young adult students living in a postcolonial society are forced to make. For example, a significant number of Jamaican high school graduates possess the basic qualifications that are required to enter any one of ten available teachers’ colleges, four within the densely populated city of Kingston alone. This is
interesting, when compared to the existence of a limited number of community colleges, which offer a wider range of educational/career programmes. These graduates also face a university system which they cannot easily access, largely because their high school qualifications do not meet the admission requirements of a degree programme. A postcolonial framework helps us to understand this dilemma by encouraging us to critically examine the legacy of Britain’s education system in Jamaica, a system which was designed to suppress and manipulate the actions, thoughts, and values of an emancipated slave population. This system, in order to work effectively, put in place a dense system of teacher training institutions for the purpose of training/indoctrinating the colonized to learn and implement an imperialist curriculum. The interesting by-product of this oppressive socializing intention, however, was a propensity of teacher training/education institutions which, historically, have provided an opportunity for Jamaica’s marginalized citizens to advance their education in a society of limited educational/occupational options.

In a small economy of 68 U.C.J.\textsuperscript{36} accredited tertiary institutions there should be a sufficient selection of postsecondary options available to the substantial annual cohort of Jamaican high school leavers. However, it appears this is not the case considering that of the 68, a noticeable proportion is limited to areas such as teacher preparation, theology, nursing, or a university education. This narrows the availability of postsecondary options; which, in turn, may be narrowed even further due to factors such as student inability to secure C.S.E.C. Mathematics results needed for admission to postsecondary programmes, and partiality for academic based programmes and traditional occupations/careers. Furthermore, the global recession, a result of Western neo-liberal economic irresponsibility, has placed added pressure on a vulnerable, inextricably linked developing economy such as Jamaica, where the majority poor and working

\textsuperscript{36} University Council of Jamaica
class citizenry must struggle to contend with the spiraling costs of goods and services (education included) and high unemployment rates. It is this reduction of higher education options which I believe deserves our attention and action at both the secondary and postsecondary levels of Jamaica’s education system. What I believe is necessary is to find ways to expand postsecondary possibilities, against the odds, so that a wider cross-section of Jamaica’s postsecondary student population can enroll in programmes which are more aligned with their passions, goals and aspirations.

This research is an addition to the limited but imperative body of scholarly work that has addressed the reasons why individuals choose teacher education. It was an intentional attempt to go beyond the plethora of research which has explored why individuals choose to become teachers. More information about the Jamaican student teacher and a better understanding of their experiences, prior to and during the teacher education programme, should help to further explain what is taking place in the teaching profession. For example, a more comprehensive understanding of the Jamaican student teacher experience might help to explain what is happening in respect to teacher motivation, competence, and level of morale. This, in turn, may encourage teacher educators and education officials to pay closer attention and think more strategically about who enters teacher education, and what he/she will gain from completing four years of teachers’ college. Finally, and probably most importantly, I hope that the findings from this research will contribute to the enhancement of teacher education programmes in ways that, given the limitations of alternative postsecondary educational opportunities, will meet the educational needs, interests and expectations of both aspiring and non-aspiring teachers.

Evidently there is much more to know in addition to what I have already come to better understand. I can only imagine what greater insight might be gleaned from a study which
concentrates on a wider sample of Jamaican student teachers. A study of this nature could possibly reveal discrepancies and differences which may exist among those who attend rural colleges as opposed to urban ones such as Town, or among those who attend colleges with distinct specialization in areas such as information technology or the creative arts. This inspires the question: do aspirations to enter teacher education and teach vary among a more diverse cross-section of Jamaican student teachers?

Further research may also focus specifically on the educational and occupational aspirations of male student teachers. In respect to this study Miguel was one voice representing approximately 25% of Jamaica’s student teacher population. I can only hypothesize about what the findings from research of this nature may reveal, and the ideas they might generate regarding how more males may be attracted into teaching. I also believe that further research might be useful if it specifically examines the reasons why mature student teachers enter teacher education. Applicants such as Jade and Gabrielle who had work experience seemed somewhat more focused and practical than their younger peers about the purpose and role of teacher education. It would be fascinating to explore how others in similar situations, with similar experiences view teacher education in relation to their educational and occupational plans and aspirations.

Finally, in light of the significant changes to teacher education which are now in effect, it may be useful to focus on those student teachers who choose to enter a teacher education programme which leads directly to a Bachelor of Education Degree. Now, for the first time, the Jamaican student teacher has the opportunity to do teacher preparation, and earn a higher education degree in one concurrent programme. This provokes the following questions: (1) will teachers’ colleges continue, or cease to be a stepping-stone to something else? (2) Will teachers’
colleges be more or less accessible to Jamaica’s Black working class majority? (3) Will teachers
colleges become a primary and/or popular means of acquiring the coveted higher education
degree? (4) Will the opportunity to earn a degree in education attract more who plan and aspire
to teach? Whether student teachers are more inclined to enter teacher education as a means to
earning a degree and/or become a teacher are issues I believe are worth focusing on for the
future.

What I know and what I believe needs to be known about Jamaican student teachers
certainly has implications for what I envision exploring further and engaging with as teacher
educator and researcher. First and foremost I hope to continue making a contribution to the
education and personal and professional preparation of the students whom I teach. I cannot
imagine working in education without the face-to-face interaction between teacher and pupil.
However, if given the opportunity to introduce new ideas and initiatives into the current teacher
education programme at Town I would consider the following. First, I would suggest that more
value and importance be placed on a course such as *The Emergent Teacher/Professional*. As I
said previously this course provides a fantastic opportunity for students to explore their values,
beliefs, and attitudes early in their development as teachers and professionals, and as they
continue their progress to becoming productive citizens of Jamaica. It is within a course such as
this that students should be encouraged to thoroughly examine who they are and, based on this
self knowledge determine their most suitable educational and occupational goals and aspirations.
Secondly, I believe that admission and exit processes should be viewed as essential aspects of the
teacher education programme/ curriculum. Therefore, the current process of recruiting, selecting,
and admitting applicants should be re/evaluated, and recommendations made regarding ways to
enhance the process if deemed necessary. I believe a similar assessment could be done in regard
to what the teachers’ college provides for those who will be leaving or graduating from the programme. I have admired Town’s effort in the past to assist graduates in finding jobs as teachers. However, I have also felt that more could be done in regard to providing support and guidance to those who wish to teach, as well as those who are not quite certain about the “something else”.
References


The Joint Board of Teacher Education (2010). *Regulations for Teacher Certification.* University of the West Indies, Mona Campus: Jamaica. JBTE Project Office.


Appendix A – Request for permission to Conduct Research Letter

252 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 1V6 CANADA

Monday April 19, 2010

Dear Dr. Clarke,

While I am on leave from Shortwood Teachers’ College I am completing my Ph.D. at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. As a follow-up to our conversation about my research, I would like to take this opportunity to outline the project and formally request permission to conduct the study *Exploring why Jamaican student teachers complete a teacher education programme* at Shortwood Teachers’ College. The study is a component of my dissertation research which focuses on Jamaican student teachers, particularly their reasons for choosing teacher education. In my experience as a teacher/teacher educator I have come to realize that people enter the teaching profession for many different reasons. The goals of the research are:

1. *Why do Jamaican student teachers enter teacher education?*

2. *Why do some Jamaican student teachers, for whom teaching is not a priority in their career plans and aspirations, complete a teacher education?*

3. *How do Jamaican student teachers, for whom teaching is not a priority in their career plans and aspirations, experience the teacher education programme?*

The information I gain from this research will contribute to a better understanding of the many reasons why Jamaican student teachers enroll in a teacher education programme. I also
expect the research will provide greater awareness and increased knowledge of the academic and career goals and aspirations of Jamaican student teachers, as well as provide a rich account of their experiences in the teacher education programme. I am seeking participants for this research. I would like to invite all year (3) student teachers to complete a short survey I have prepared.

The research has two parts: one part is the survey (all year 3 students would be invited to participate in it) and the other part is two interviews. I will select eight (8) student teachers to be part of more detailed research – two interviews. I will choose participants based on the responses to the survey (which is attached to this letter), and completion of a consent form indicating a willingness to be involved in the research. These (8) participants will be involved in two interviews, which will be scheduled at times and in locations that are convenient to them. The interviews will provide a means to collecting important information related to each participant’s reasons for choosing teacher education, their academic and career goals and aspirations, and their experiences as they relate to the teacher education programme. Each interview will take approximately 1 hour. I will tape-record the interview and make notes. Each recorded interview will be transcribed into a written format and presented to the participant who will check, correct and approve the accuracy of the transcription. Recorded tapes/digital recordings will be securely locked in storage cabinet, in my department office at STC or my student office at OISE/UT. The transcripts and tapes will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study. No one other than the researcher will have access to the data.

I do not anticipate any disruption in instruction arising from the study. I think this study will enable us to improve our teacher education programme to a significant degree. I will accommodate the student teachers in every way, and if the timing of the survey needs to be changed I will re-schedule immediately.
I will write a report of this study and submit it to OISE/UT to complete the requirements of my doctoral dissertation. I will also use the data from this study to write scholarly papers on student teachers. These papers will be submitted to academic journals for publication and to academic conferences for presentation. I would like to use the data from this study for my future writings on student teachers and teacher education. In the report and papers, pseudonyms will be used and participants and their institutions will not be identified in any way.

Involvement in this research study will not pose any risks for the students. They can choose to ignore any question when being interviewed. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Pseudonyms will be used. The College and the participants will not be identified in any way. Participants have the right to refuse to participate without having to give a reason and without any adverse consequence. They have the right to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. There will be no compensation for agreeing to participate. Anyone who agrees to participate in both parts of the research (survey and interviews) will have the following commitments:

- Complete the survey
- Complete the consent form
- Be interviewed twice by the researcher
- Check summary of interview for accuracy

In order to go forward with the research, I need you to complete the attached consent form. (You may keep a copy for yourself.) I have included the survey and the interview questions on the consent form. If you have any questions, contact Everton Cummings at everton.cummings@utoronto.ca or (876-924-1095/ 931-9999) or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Clare Kosnik at ckosnik@oise.utoronto.ca or (416-978-0227).
Sincerely,

Everton Cummings  
Ph.D. Candidate OISE/UT

Clare Kosnik  
Professor at OISE/UT and Doctoral Dissertation Supervisor
Dear Student Teachers,

I am a Ph.D. student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, who is conducting a research project titled Exploring why Jamaican student teachers complete a teacher education programme. I am also a member of Shortwood Teachers’ College academic staff in the Department of Geography/History /Social Studies (on leave until September 2011).

The study is a component of my dissertation research which focuses on Jamaican student teachers, particularly their reasons for choosing teacher education. In my experience as a teacher/teacher educator I have come to realize that people enter the teaching profession for many different reasons. The information I gain from this research will contribute to a better understanding of the many reasons why Jamaican student teachers enroll in a teacher education programme. I also expect the research will provide greater awareness and increased knowledge of the academic and career goals and aspirations of Jamaican student teachers, as well as provide a rich account of their experiences in the teacher education programme.

I am seeking participants for this research. I am inviting all year (3) student teachers to complete a short survey I have prepared. Even though you have received a copy of this letter you
are not obligated to complete the survey or consent. The research has two parts: one part is the survey (all year 3 students are invited to participate in it) and the other part is two interviews.

I will select eight (8) student teachers to be part of more detailed research – two interviews. I will choose participants based on the responses to the survey attached to this letter, and completion of a consent form indicating a willingness to be involved in the research. These (8) participants will be involved in two interviews, which will be scheduled at times and in locations that are convenient to them. The interviews will provide a means to collecting important information related to each participant’s reasons for choosing teacher education, their academic and career goals and aspirations, and their experiences as they relate to the teacher education programme. Each interview will take approximately 1 hour. I will tape-record the interview and make notes. Each recorded interview will be transcribed into a written format and presented to the participant who will check, correct and approve the accuracy of the transcription. Recorded tapes/digital recordings will be securely locked in storage cabinet, in my department office at STC or my student office at OISE/UT. The transcripts and tapes will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study. No one other than the researcher will have access to the data.

I will write a report of this study and submit it to OISE/UT to complete the requirements of my doctoral dissertation. I will also use the data from this study to write scholarly papers on student teachers. These papers will be submitted to academic journals for publication and to academic conferences for presentation. I would like to use the data from this study for my future writings on student teachers and teacher education. In the report and papers, pseudonyms will be used and participants and their institutions will not be identified in any way.

Involvement in this research study will not pose any risks for you. You can choose to ignore any question when being interviewed. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.
Pseudonyms will be used. You and the school will not be identified in any way. You have the right to refuse to participate without having to give a reason and without any adverse consequence. You have the right to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. There will be no compensation for agreeing to participate. You may keep a copy of this consent letter.

Anyone who agrees to participate in both parts of the research (survey and interviews) will have the following commitments:

- Complete the survey
- Complete the consent form
- Be interviewed twice by the researcher
- Check summary of interview for accuracy

Please complete the student teacher survey. If you wish to be interviewed for this research please sign and return the attached consent form. Please return the survey and consent form (whether completed or not), in the envelope provided, to me directly or to the Geography, History and Social Studies Department. Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, contact Everton Cummings at everton.cummings@utoronto.ca or (876-924-1095/931-9999) or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Clare Kosnik at ckosnik@oise.utoronto.ca or (416-978-0227).

Sincerely,

Everton Cummings
Ph.D. Candidate OISE/UT

Clare Kosnik
Professor at OISE/UT and Doctoral Dissertation Supervisor
Appendix C – Participant Consent Form

252 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 1V6 CANADA

Consent Form

I _________________________________ have read the attached letter and agree to be part of the research study, Exploring why Jamaican student teachers complete a teacher education programme.

I agree to let Everton Cummings use the data I have provided for purposes of research and to quote from the interviews I may participate in. I also agree to let him refer to the research data gathered in this project for future work on student teachers and/or teacher education. I am also aware that I have the right to withdraw from the research study at any time without having to give reason and without personal consequences to me.

I am willing to participate in the interviews. ☐

Signature: .................................

Date: .................................

Please indicate the email address (if any) you would like me to use.

Email address: .................................

Please indicate phone number (if any) you would like me to use.

Phone Number: .................................

Please include an address where the transcript and final report can be sent.

Address: .................................
Would you like to receive a copy of the research findings when the study is complete? Yes ☐ No ☐

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant these may be addressed by contacting the Office of Research Ethics (ethics.review@utoronto.ca, 416-946-3273)
Appendix D – Student Teacher Survey

Thank you so much for agreeing to complete this survey. It should take approximately 15-20 minutes, including the open-ended final section. Your course instructor(s) or the College administration will not know about your participation. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

Student Teacher Survey

A. Background

1. Your Department: _______________________________
2. Your Programme: Early Childhood Education___ Primary___ Secondary___
3. Your Teaching Subjects: ___________________________
4. Your Level of Schooling Completed: High School (CSEC)___ High School (CAPE)___ University Degree___ Other_____________________
5. Was teacher education your first choice in terms of a post high school programme?
   a. ___ yes
   b. ___ no
6. If no, what was your first choice?
   ________________________________________________
7. If you had had an opportunity to do something else besides teacher education what would it be?
   ________________________________________________
8. There are many reasons why students choose to enroll in teacher education. Check the reason which is most applicable to you:
   a. ___ I want to teach
   b. ___ I want teacher education to be a stepping stone to university or further education
   c. ___ I wanted to do something else but couldn’t
   d. ___ I was told/influenced to do teacher education
   e. ___ Other (please specify)________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________
9. How would you describe your attitude towards becoming a teacher:
   a. ___ I definitely want to be a teacher.
   b. ___ I may want to be a teacher for a few years.
   c. ___ I seriously doubt I want to be a teacher.
   d. ___ I never intend to be a teacher.

10. Do you see yourself as a career teacher (teaching for at least 10 years)?
    a. ___ yes
    b. ___ no
    Why/ Why not? __________________________________________________________
                    __________________________________________________________

11. Where do you see yourself five years from now? ____________________________
    ______________________________________________________________________

B. Plans and Aspirations

12. What were your education and/or career plans before you applied to Teachers’ College?

13. Why did you decide to do teacher education/training?

14. What do you plan to do when you finish Teachers’ College?

15. Is there anything further you would like to add?

    THANK YOU
Appendix E – Interview Questions (Part 2 of Research)

Student Teacher Interviews

BACKGROUND

1. What is your programme of study?
2. What are your teaching subjects?
3. What level of schooling did you complete before entering teachers’ college?
4. How would you describe your experience as a student in elementary school?
5. How would you describe your experience as a student in secondary school?
6. What other, if any, tertiary level education programmes did you apply to before accepting a placement at Shortwood Teachers’ College? (e.g. Community College, Nursing School)
7. What other, if any, forms of employment were you involved in before accepting a placement at Shortwood Teachers’ College?

CAREER PLANS AND ASPIRATIONS

8. Tell me about your education and/or career plans before you applied to Teachers’ College.
9. How does the current teacher education programme relate to these plans and aspirations?
10. What do you plan to do when you finish the teacher education programme?
11. Describe how effective you think you would be as a teacher.
12. What is your ideal job? Why did you not pursue education and training that would lead to a job in this field?
13. If you had an opportunity to start post-secondary education all over would you choose teacher education?
THE ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION

14. Why did you decide to do teacher education/training? Do you have any family members or close friends who were/are teachers? How much influence did they have on your decision to do teacher education?

15. How do you feel about your decision to do teacher education?

16. Describe how the teacher education programme is helping you reach your career goals.

17. Describe any other benefits you may have gained from the teacher education programme.

18. What, if any, do you think is the greatest disadvantage to doing teacher education?

MANAGING IN THE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

19. How do feel about the teacher education programme so far?

20. Has the programme been what you expected?

21. What has surprised you the most about the programme?

22. How do you feel now that the teacher education programme is almost over?

23. Describe the most rewarding experiences you have had in the teacher education programme. Why were these rewarding?

24. Describe the most challenging experiences you have had in the teacher education programme. Why were these challenges?

25. How have you addressed these challenges?

26. How would you describe yourself as a student teacher? How well do you relate with other students in the programme? How well do you relate with your teachers/lecturers?

27. Have you revealed to others that you do not want to be a career teacher? If yes, who? If yes, when? How did the conversation come about?
28. What are your thoughts about students doing teacher education even though they may not want to become career teachers?

29. Do you have any else you would like to say?
Appendix F – Second Interview Questions (Six months after first interview)

1. Did you complete all the requirements to graduate from the teacher education programme? How well did you do? How do feel about your achievement? How satisfied were you with the programme? Are there any changes you would like to see made to the programme?

2. Describe how you feel now about your decision to do teacher education. Have your views or attitudes related to teaching changed since completing the teacher education programme? If so, what do you think has influenced this change? If not, do you think they will ever change?

3. Are you currently employed as a teacher? If yes, where and what are you teaching? If no, what are you currently doing? How do you feel about what you are currently doing?

4. How do you feel about being a qualified teacher? How do you feel about being qualified to teach, but not currently teaching? Do you think these feelings may change over time? What would influence your feelings to change?

5. What, if any, are your educational plans for the next year or two? What, if any, are your occupational plans for the next year or two? What are your future plans in regards to teaching? What are your future plans?

6. Do you have anything else you would like to say?
Appendix G – Selective Coding Related to Research Questions and Core Categories

Responses related to Research Question #1

1. What accounts for Jamaican student teachers, who indicate that teacher education and teaching are not their educational or occupational aspirations, entering and completing teacher education?

a) What responses may indicate that these student teachers do not aspire to do teacher education or teaching?

i. They wanted to do something else instead of teacher education [Q1-6, Q1-8, Q1-13, Q1-20]

ii. They started doing something else before teacher education [Q1-6]

iii. They wanted to do something else instead of teaching [Q1-8, Q1-9, Q1-12]

iv. They want to teach but for only a short term or no specified time [Q1-10, Q1-12]

Did not aspire to do teacher education/teaching – evidence that student did not necessarily want to attend teachers’ college or pursue career in teaching. [i., ii. iii.]

Aspire to teach - indicate they plan to teach but do not state that it will be long term occupation or career. Several are indicating that they still plan to pursue another education/occupational goal. For some this may be in education but not necessarily as a classroom teacher. [iv.]

b) What may account for these students entering teacher education?

i. It was an alternative choice [Q1-6, Q1-8, Q1-9, Q1-13, Q1-14]

ii. It was an affordable choice [Q1-6, Q1-8]

iii. It was an influenced choice [Q1-6, Q1-8, Q1-13, Q1-14, Q1-14b/c, Q1-26b]

iv. It was a response to a “calling” [Q1-6, Q1-13, Q1-14, Q1-14b/c, Q2-2]

v. It was a stepping-stone to something else [Q1-8, Q1-9, Q1-14, Q1-26b, Q1-28, Q2-3]
vi. It was the means to a backup career/occupational aspiration to teaching [Q1-9]

vii. It was easy to access [Q1-14]

Teacher education an alternative choice – having not been accepted into other programmes, becoming discontented with other programmes, not being able to afford other programmes, or failing other programmes may account for why these student teachers chose to enter teacher education as an alternative post-secondary educational programme. [i]

Teacher education the affordable choice – students referred to programmes they wanted to get into or got into, for a short space of time, as not being affordable, or not being worth the money. We may assume that this accounts for why they chose teacher education, because it is affordable, or because they will get value for what they pay. [ii]

Teacher education the influenced choice – students were influenced by significant others to apply to teachers’ college. In some cases this was due to unaffordable programmes, the affordability of teacher education, a desire for the student to teach, or a desire for the student to be engaged in some form of reasonable post-secondary schooling (not vocational programmes). [iii]

Teacher education the response to a “calling” – some students said that they felt that fate or God was leading them into teaching. As a result they chose to enter teacher education as a means to responding to this spiritual calling. This is an altruistic reason for choosing to enter teacher education/teaching. [iv]

Teacher education the stepping-stone – students saw teacher education as the means to furthering education and achieving a higher degree or another occupation/career. In some cases the education and higher degree were related to the student’s original career aspirations. [v]
Teacher education the means to a backup career/occupation – some students chose teacher education so that they could prepare to be teachers, but to be teachers until they could do something else or if they were unable to find something else. [vi]

Teacher education as easy to access – some students mentioned that it was not difficult to access teacher education, especially when compared to other programmes. Ease of access was usually related to matriculation issues (e.g. not requiring mathematics) or financial issues. [vii]

c) What may have been the potential challenges to these students completing the teacher education programme?

i. The course workload [Q1-18, Q1-20, Q1-24]

ii. The programme, or aspects of it, not what was expected [Q1-20, Q1-21]

iii. The rules and regulations of the programme [Q1-20, Q1-21, Q1-24]

iv. The financial requirements [Q1-15, Q1-18, Q1-21, Q1-24]

v. Their low self esteem/confidence [Q1-24]

vi. The teaching practicum [Q1-24]

Experienced challenges with the course workload – students found the quantity of work they were assigned excessive (difficulty of the work was not usually an issue). This could be considered a challenge which may discourage any student from completing an academic programme, particularly one who did not have strong aspirations to be in the programme. [i]

Programme or aspects of it, not what was expected – students expressed that they expected the teacher education to be different from what they experienced. One in particular expected to be enrolled in a degree programme (or at least a programme leading to a degree...Adriana). Others did not expect to have to take certain courses, and believed all they would be doing is
learning to teach. This could be considered a challenge which may discourage any student from completing an academic programme, particularly one who did not have strong aspirations to be in the programme. [ii]

**Not supportive of certain programme rules and regulations** – students expressed their disagreement with some of the rules and regulations of the Teachers’ College. They believed that these rules were either unfair to them or to the student population in general. Having to support and abide to institutional rules and policies could be considered a challenge and source of discouragement to a student who is completing an academic programme which they did not have strong desires to be enrolled in. [iii]

**Experienced challenges meeting financial requirements** – students expressed concerns about not having enough money to pay tuition fees or other fiscal requirements (e.g. rent). They also expressed concerns/doubts about whether they would have been better off having continued working instead of deciding to attend school fulltime. Difficulty meeting financial obligations could be considered a challenge which may discourage any student from completing an academic programme, particularly one who did not have strong aspirations to be in the programme. [iv]

**Low self esteem/ confidence regarding completing programme** – students doubted their ability to complete the teacher education programme. These students were also easily influenced by others to do teacher education. [v]

**Experienced challenges during the teaching practicum** – students had negative experiences during the practicum. In some cases the students expressed that the amount of work required during the practicum was challenging, while others referred to a specific negative incident that cast doubts as to why they were going into teaching. [vi]
d) **What may account for these students completing teacher education?**

i. They are average to above average students to begin with [Q1-4/5]

ii. Learned a great deal [Q1-13, Q1-15]

iii. Need teacher education to fulfill other aspiration [Q1-14]

iv. Personal growth/development [Q1-17, Q1-22, Q2-2, Q2-3, Q2-5]

v. Professional development [Q1-17, Q2-1, Q2-2, Q2-3]

vi. Moments of excellence (high grades) [Q1-23]

vii. Support of peers [Q1-24, Q1-26]

**Learned a great deal** – Students may have stayed in programme because they realized they were learning a great deal. Some had mentioned attending programmes which did not seem to be providing information that was of any value; in some cases they were just repeating what they had taken in high school. [ii]

**Need teacher education to fulfill other aspiration** - some students needed to complete teacher education so that they could achieve other goals. In this case teacher education was serving as a “stepping-stone” to an identified goal/objective, as opposed to one which the student was aspiring to. [iii]

**Personal growth and development** – some students may have stayed in the programme because they saw where it was benefitting their development not only as a teacher, but as a person as well. [iv]

**Professional development** - some students may have stayed in the programme because they saw where it was benefitting their development as a teacher and as a professional in general. [v]

**Moments of Excellence** – some students experienced proud moments during the programme where they were successful, and developed a motivating sense of accomplishment. [vi]
Support of peers/family – some students spoke of the welcomed assistance and support they received from friends and when it came to completing course work, managing during TP etc.

[vii]

Responses related to Research Question #2

1. What do these Jamaican student teachers experience within the teacher education programme that contributes to their belief that such a programme is of benefit to their educational and/or occupational plans?

a) What are the student teachers’ educational aspirations?
   i. Wanted to attend teacher education programme [Q1-8, Q1-14, Q2-3,]
   ii. Wanted to attend other post-secondary programme [Q1-6, Q1-8, Q2-6]
   iii. Wanted to attend other post-secondary programme (abroad) [Q1-6, Q2-6]
   iv. Wanted to attend university to complete first degree [Q1-6, Q1-8, Q2-6]
   v. Wanted to attend university to complete post graduate degree(s) [Q1-12, Q2-6]
   vi. No indication of educational aspirations [Q1-6, Q1-8]

Wanted to attend teacher education programme – student indicated that they wanted to attend teachers’ college because it was a route to another goal – not necessarily teaching. This is could be viewed as another form of stepping-stone function that teacher education serves. [i]

Wanted to attend other post-secondary programme - student indicated that they wanted to attend another post-secondary programme to earn qualifications for another field; either before they entered teacher education or six months after they had graduated from programme. [ii]

Wanted to attend other post-secondary programme – student indicated that they wanted to attend another post-secondary programme abroad to earn qualifications for another field; either
before they entered teacher education or six months after they had graduated from programme.

[iii]  
**Wanted to attend university to complete first degree** – student indicated that they wanted to attend university to earn first degree, either before they entered teacher education or six months after they had graduated from programme. [iv]  
**Wanted to attend university to complete post graduate degree(s)** – student indicated that they wanted to attend university to earn higher degrees such as MA, M.Ed., or Ph.D. Degrees not necessarily related to education. [v]  
**No indication of educational aspirations** – student indicated that they had little if any post-secondary school aspirations. In many cases these were the students that were influenced by others to enter teacher education. [vi]  

b) **What are the student teachers’ occupational aspirations?**

i. **Wanted to teach as an occupation** [Q1-10, Q1-26b, Q2-6]  

ii. **Wanted to do another particular occupation** [Q1-8, Q1-9, Q1-12, Q2-6]  

iii. **Wanted to do a number of other occupations** [Q1-8, Q1-12, Q1-26b]  

iv. **No indication of occupational aspirations** [Q2-6]  

**Wanted to teach as an occupation** – student indicated that they wanted to teach. They expressed an interest in teaching for either or short or long term (in most cases it was short). This was their aspirations either before they had entered teacher education, after they had completed, or six months after having completed. [i]  

**Wanted to do another particular occupation** – student indicated that they wanted to do a particular occupation other than teaching i.e. nursing, law, medicine, scientist etc. This was their
aspirations either before they had entered teacher education, after they had completed, or six months after having completed. [ii]

**Wanted to do a number of other occupations** – student indicated that they wanted to do a number of occupations other than teaching i.e. nursing, law, medicine, scientist etc. This was their aspirations either before they had entered teacher education, after they had completed, or six months after having completed. [iii]

**No indication of occupational aspirations** – student indicated that they had little if any occupational aspirations. In many cases these were the student s who were uncertain/confused about what to do. [iv]

c) **What do they experience within the teacher education programme?**
   i. Experiences related to development as a teacher [Q1-17, Q1-23, Q1-24, Q2-1, Q2-2, Q2-3]
   ii. Experiences related to development as a student/educational development [Q1-23, Q1-24]
   iii. Experiences related to development as a professional [Q1-17, Q1-18, Q1-24, Q2-3]
   iv. Experiences related to personal development [Q1-17, Q1-18, Q1-23, Q1-24, Q2-3]

**Experiences related to development as a teacher** – These students spoke of some of the College experiences related to their development as a teacher; such as, the courses they took and the teaching practicum. [i]

**Experiences related to development as a student/educational development** - These students spoke of some of the College experiences related to their development as a student; such as, recognition for excellent performance, and high grades for assignments. [ii]
Experiences related to development as a professional – These students mentioned some of the College experiences related to their development as professionals in general; such as courses they took, managing time, prioritizing and organizing course work, working with others, problem solving, and making decisions. [iii]

Experiences related to personal development - These students spoke of some of the College experiences related to their personal development; such as, the courses they took, religious activities, extracurricular activities, having to live on their own, interacting with staff, interacting with peers, following rules and regulations. [iv]

d) How do these experiences benefit their educational/occupational plans?

i. Benefits related to education [Q1-17, Q1-22, Q2-2, Q2-3, Q2-5]

ii. Benefits related to occupation/professionalism [Q1-17, Q1-22, Q1-23, Q2-1, Q2-2, Q2-3, Q2-5]

iii. Benefits related to personal growth and development [Q1-17, Q1-18, Q1-22, Q1-23, Q1-24, Q2-2, Q2-3, Q2-5]

Benefits related to education – These students indicated that the College experience was a benefit to their educational plans or aspirations. Completing teacher education would assist in accessing other educational programmes (stepping-stone). [i]

Benefits related to occupation/professionalism – These students indicated that the College experience was a benefit to their development as a teacher and/or as a professional. They now were more knowledgeable about education, teaching, and what it means to be a professional. [ii]

Benefits related to personal growth and development - These students indicated that the College experience was a benefit to their personal growth and development. They were now more patient, a better team player, problem solver, decision maker, and they were more self
confident, spiritual, and independent. These students were proud of their accomplishment, several because they did not know that they would do it. [iii]
**POST-SECONDARY ASPIRATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was your first choice in terms of post high school schooling, if teacher education was not your first choice? (Q-6)</th>
<th>If you had an opportunity to do something else beside teacher education what would it be? (Q-7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nursing – 12</td>
<td>Nursing – 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine – 3</td>
<td>Medicine – 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism – 4</td>
<td>Journalism – 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting – 3</td>
<td>Accounting – 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law – 3</td>
<td>Law – 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other – 20</td>
<td>Other – 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL - 45</strong></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL - 70</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2.

*Reasons for Enrolling in Teacher Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REASONS FOR ENROLLING IN TEACHER EDUCATION</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are many reasons why students enroll in teacher education, what is most applicable to you? (Q-8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to teach.</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want teacher education to be a stepping-stone to university or further education.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to do something else but couldn’t.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was told/ influenced to do teacher education.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (e.g. It was a calling, I was undecided, altruistic reasons)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>