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Stakeholders' Perceptions of an Undergraduate Teacher Preparation Program in Special Education in Jamaica

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Stakeholders' Perceptions of an Undergraduate
Teacher Preparation Program in Special Education in Jamaica

by
Keitha A. M. Osborne

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice
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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Keitha A. M. Osborne under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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Statement of Original Work

I declare the following:

I have read the Code of Student Conduct and Academic Responsibility as described in the *Student Handbook* of Nova Southeastern University. This applied dissertation represents my original work, except where I have acknowledged the ideas, words, or material of other authors.

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Keitha A. M. Osborne
Name

May 31, 2019
Date

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge and thank numerous people as I complete this chapter in my life journey. It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. I can say that it takes a village for the completion of this dissertation study. Today, I am shouting from the mountaintop, "It is finished, and we made it"! Please note I said we because I am indeed indebted to everyone who helped me in this journey. I would like to express sincere appreciation to Suzette Wood and Merlene Blake on whom I depended throughout my study to proofread my paper and give nonjudgemental feedback, sometimes at the last minute. To a few of my past students who assisted through my journey, I salute you: Tiffany, Jacqueline, and Kentish. Your assistance is a testimony that the teaching and learning process is a partnership and we all learn from each another

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Abstract

Stakeholders' Perceptions of an Undergraduate Teacher Preparation Program in Special Education in Jamaica. Keitha A. M. Osborne, 2019: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. Keywords: teacher education programs, teacher attitudes, special education teachers, mentors, beginning teachers

The problem addressed in this study was that stakeholders (i.e., graduates, cooperating teachers, principals, and heads of special education departments) of a teacher preparation program in special education at a teachers' college in western Jamaica had not been asked their perceptions of the effectiveness of the undergraduate program that was started in 2011. The purpose of the study was to determine stakeholders' perceptions of the preparedness and effectiveness of graduates of a teacher preparation program in special education at a teachers' college in western Jamaica. The stakeholders were the recent full-time graduates of the program, cooperating teachers, principals, and heads of departments. In addition, information regarding the perceptions of graduates, principals, and heads of departments of the mentorship system for beginning teachers, which was designed to help them transition from the teachers' college to work, was gathered and analyzed. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the graduates' perceptions of the bachelor of education degree program in special education?
2. What are the graduates' perceptions of their effectiveness as special educators?
3. What are the perceptions of principals, heads of departments, and cooperating teachers of beginning teachers who graduated from the bachelor of education degree program in special education?
4. Are there any differences in perceptions of graduates and other stakeholders of the graduates' effectiveness as teachers?
5. To what extent do mentorship programs for beginning teachers provide the necessary support?

A nonexperimental, quantitative approach, using a survey research design, was employed in this study to gather data to answer the research questions. The results of this study show that graduates and other stakeholders believe that the undergraduate program in special education adequately prepares graduates to become effective special educators. In addition, mentorship is a crucial component of any beginning teacher's development, as mentorship helps to support beginning teachers as they transition from college to the workplace. However, there are some areas, such as enhancing and expanding the mentorship program and improving the information and communications technology course of studies, that need to be addressed. Implications of the study and future research are discussed.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

    The topic. The topic of this study involved the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs and their alignment with the needs of various stakeholders. Worrell et al. (2014) argued, "Institutions and programs that prepare teachers should commit to a system of continuous improvement based on examination of data about their programs" (p. 4). In addition, Coggshall, Bivona, and Reschly (2012) reported that calls for accountability of teacher preparation programs have been amplified as teacher accountability for student performance has increased. Jamaica's National Education Strategic Plan: 2011-2020 (Ministry of Education, 2012) outlined a comprehensive plan for the educational sector for the period of 2011 to 2020 to ensure that quality education is provided.

    One of the objectives of this plan is to "attract and retain well-qualified, certified, and licensed teachers to fill the requirement of all educational institutions at all levels of the system by 2020" (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 24). Therefore, it is important to evaluate teacher preparation programs to ensure that Jamaican students can be exposed to the best teaching approaches. Darling-Hammond (2014) observed that improvement of teacher preparation programs has become progressively more important "as the demands on teachers to teach ever more challenging curriculum to ever more diverse learners continue to increase exponentially" (p. 547).

    The research problem. The problem addressed in this study was that stakeholders (i.e., graduates, cooperating teachers, principals, and heads of special education departments) of the target teacher preparation program in special education at a teachers' college in western Jamaica were not asked about their perceptions of the

effectiveness of the undergraduate program that was started in 2011. The college, in collaboration with the Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica and the Joint Board of Teacher Education, was currently conducting a curriculum program review. The curriculum program review required present lecturers, with the assistance of subject area specialists, to make the necessary corrections and changes to the course syllabi, the structure of the program design, and the number of credits offered, as well as to adjust the program's course content and structure. The accrediting body for the undergraduate program was seeking to ensure that all bachelor of education programs had a maximum of 135 credit hours.

The target program had 147 credits. After the program had been reviewed at the college level, the program's external examiners would also have an input in the review process. The proposed changes would then be reviewed by subject area specialists to determine which of the amendments were necessary. The subsequent changes would then be reviewed by the Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica's Curriculum Committee, Academic Board, and the Principal Board. The final amendments would then be submitted to the University of the West Indies, which served as the accreditation body, for approval (Dawkins, 2015). The program review model being used involved a combination of the expertise-oriented approach and accreditation model approach (Dawkins, 2015).

The program review was being done to ensure that graduates were provided with the quality instruction and pedagogical content that they needed to deliver effective and evidence-based instruction to their students. The review would also ensure that the program met the educational standards for both local and international accrediting bodies. It was essential that the program review included all the stakeholders' perceptions of the preparedness and effectiveness of the program's graduates, and it was the intent of the

current study to address this need. Worrell et al. (2014) indicated that incorporating a variety of data informants would enhance the ability to make valid judgments regarding program quality.

Background and Justification

As Jamaica embraces an inclusive approach to teaching children with special needs, more children are being identified and diagnosed with special needs at the primary and secondary levels (Ministry of Education, 2016). Depending on the severity of their disabilities, the children identified with special needs are required to sit and pass the mandatory national examinations at the various grade levels at the primary level, and regional examinations at the secondary level. The Ministry of Education allows for the accommodation of children with special needs once the appropriate psychoeducational assessment, other documents, or both are submitted within the prescribed time to the Special Education Unit in the ministry (Ministry of Education, 2016). Therefore, for children with special needs to perform well on local and regional standardized examinations, specialized programs and special education teachers must be in place to help them.

Special education teacher preparation programs must, therefore, ensure that competent, efficient, and quality teachers are trained to bridge the gap to cater to children with special needs. Teachers are the critical facilitators who impart knowledge and skills to their students to help them be better citizens (Prachagool, Nuangchalerm, Subramaniam, & Dostal, 2016). Teacher preparation programs must equip beginning teachers with skills and knowledge to raise students' achievement to the standard that is needed to ensure that students are successful in the information age and the global economy (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Moreover, such programs must be regularly

assessed (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2013; Guerriero, 2015).

Guerriero (2015) postulated that there is a complicated link between student performance, quality of teaching, and teacher preparation. Therefore, 21st-century teacher preparation programs must prepare qualified and competent teachers so that they can effectively educate future leaders. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (2013) calculated that, to achieve universal, inclusive education for children at the primary and secondary levels, often referred to as Sustainable Development Goal 4, there will be a worldwide need for "68.6 million quality trained teachers by 2030" (p. 1). Hightower et al. (2011), DeMonte (2015), and the Council for Exceptional Children (2015) argued that there is a close correlation between teacher preparedness and student achievement and that teacher preparation institutions need to ensure this correlation is a positive one.

Kennedy, Alves, and Rodgers (2015) proposed that teacher preparation programs must provide their students with strategies so that they, in turn, can meet the needs of the children they will teach. Hence, teacher preparation programs have the challenge of offering the best combination of coursework and field experience that will allow the student teachers to gain all the knowledge they will need. Therefore, it is the role of teacher preparation programs to ensure their graduates are equipped with the prerequisite skills for the teaching profession so that the graduates are confident in performing their professional duties as highly trained individuals. However, by extension, the Ministry of Education and the schools at which these teachers are employed should have a mentorship program to nurture the beginning teachers into the demanding and challenging teaching profession.

Deficiencies in the evidence. Despite numerous reports, strategic plans, and

public discourse regarding the quality of teacher education and specifically preservice teacher preparation in Jamaica, little published research has been completed in this area (Darling-Hammond, 2016; Smith-Sherwood, 2018). There is a need for more published research on the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs in Jamaica that will incorporate various stakeholders because the information to be gained can impact the teaching and learning process (Roofe & Miller, 2013). Jamaica, like other countries, is faced with concerns regarding this sector. Highlighting the need for improved teacher education programs, Gentiles (2016) stated that Jamaican teachers are "well-intentioned, passionate, caring, and committed to going beyond the call of duty, unfortunately, however, they are not teaching in ways that will produce the learning outcomes students need to be ready for the job market, both locally and abroad" (p. 3).

Mayer et al. (2017) argued, "It remains that teacher education is still not able to speak back with authority and confidence to questions about the effectiveness of teacher preparation" (p. 23). Therefore, what is needed is for more research to be conducted in teacher education. In the University Council of Jamaica's special education reviewer report, regarding a proposal for the target bachelor of education program in special education, Hall and Dixon (1995) and Hall and Figueroa (1998) indicated that the program should be reviewed every 4 years. This review was considered necessary to ensure that the program standards and development are being maintained.

Mayer et al. (2017), who supported the recommendation of Hall and Dixon (1995), postulated that all new programs introduced at any educational organization should be reviewed after the first cohort has finished its program. The first cohort of the target special education program graduated in 2015, after completing its 4 years of full-time studies. Therefore, a review of the program was overdue. The current curriculum

program review process overlooked the perceptions of various stakeholders about what should be changed. It was important to determine stakeholders' perceptions of the preparedness and effectiveness of the program's graduates. Moreover, Mayer et al. (2017) argued, "Education continues well after students graduate from university and questions about the 'quality' and 'outcomes' from teacher preparation must, therefore, be addressed from multiple standpoints, including stakeholders in universities, schools, and the wider educational community" (p. 16).

Audience. The findings of this research will be of interest to the policy makers at the Ministry of Education, the University of West Indies, the Jamaica Teaching Council, Joint Board of Teacher Education, the Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission, University Council of Jamaica, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Jamaica (2000). These administrators have a vested interest in the development of teacher preparation programs in Jamaica, as they are responsible for formulating policies and providing accreditation or technical support to teacher preparation programs. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Jamaica is responsible for persons with disabilities in Jamaica through the agency, the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities, which oversees the occupational training and placement of persons with disabilities in Jamaica.

Therefore, these members would also benefit from knowing the perceptions of graduates, principals, heads of departments, and cooperating teachers of the preparedness of beginning teachers. The special education departments at teachers' colleges and universities, both local and international, parents of children with special needs, and children with special needs will benefit because the findings of the study may be used to maintain or improve the quality of instruction at the college. The findings can also be

used as a catalyst for other departments at other teachers' colleges to investigate the quality and effectiveness of their teacher preparation programs.

The findings will also benefit the college administrators because informed decisions about how to improve the program will be obtained. Also, Worrell et al. (2014) postulated that the performance of a program will determine if prospective students will attend the institution. Prospective students to the college will also benefit from the findings, as the results could lead to better program offerings, which will help to enhance their pedagogical and professional practices when they become teachers. Program improvements may result in the college being able to market the program locally and regionally as the only teacher preparation program in the western area of Jamaica that offers this course.

In addition, the Ministry of Education and Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica will be provided with needed feedback by the graduates, principals, and heads of departments regarding support systems that are necessary for beginning teachers to better function after leaving teachers college. The study will help to sensitize stakeholders to the growing need for trained special education teachers in the Jamaican classroom. Unfortunately, at the college, only four full-time student teachers completed the program in May 2018. As a result, the number of trained special educators was inadequate to meet the demand for trained special education teachers in the classroom for the 2018-2019 academic school year.

Role of the researcher. The researcher was one of four program developers who worked on creating the program design and course syllabi for the teacher preparation program in special education. The researcher teaches most of the specialized courses associated with one of the program's concentration areas and some general courses.

Currently, the researcher is the lone developer still employed at the college. Two full-time lecturers have joined the department and are assisting with the program review. The researcher serves as the chairperson of the board of study for the program and as the program head. This relationship makes the findings from this research beneficial to the researcher, as this information will assist in future planning for the department and the program.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this applied dissertation, the following terms are defined.

Beginning teachers. This term refers to teachers who have just completed an approved teacher preparation program and are in their first 2 years in the teaching profession in early childhood, primary, or high school (Clark & Newberry, 2019; Down, 2011; Marzano, 2000; McKinsey & Company, 2009; Meister & Melnick, 2003; Melnick & Meister, 2008; Rees, 2015; Reynolds-Baker, 2013; Scherer, 2012).

Council for Exceptional Children. This term refers to the largest international professional organization in exceptional education. The Council is also an advocacy group that seeks to ensure appropriate governmental policies, professional standards, and professional development are maintained (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015; Weintraub, 2012).

Graduates. This term refers to those students who have graduated from the bachelor of special education program at the college under review.

Induction. This term refers to programs that are designed using the Zey (1984) mutual benefits induction model. It is the umbrella term used to describe support services to preservice teachers as a means of introducing them into the teaching profession (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The term induction is sometimes used interchangeably with

mentorship (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Mentorship. This term refers to an integral component of an induction program (Kutsyuruba, 2012). Mentorship is the support given to a beginning teacher by a more experienced practitioner (i.e., mentor). The process of mentoring helps to develop the beginning teacher's abilities as he or she is inducted into the teaching profession (Hallam, Chou, Hite, & Hite, 2012).

Practicum. This term refers to the time when a student teacher participates in practical experience in the classroom (Wyss, Siebert, & Dowing, 2012). Practicum is commonly known in Jamaica as teaching practice.

Preservice teachers. Preservice teachers are the same as student teachers. They are referred to as preservice teachers when they are participating in practicum teaching experiences because they receive guidance and mentoring by a cooperating teacher and a college supervisor (Baum & Ma, 2007; Farrish, 2017; Pendergast, Garvis, & Keogh, 2011).

Student teachers. This term refers to the students presently enrolled in the bachelor of special education program who have completed Practicums 1 to 4.

Teacher efficacy. Teacher efficacy is based on Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which speaks to one's perceived ability to succeed in doing a task. Therefore, a teacher's efficacy is dependent on one's belief in his or her level of preparedness and how this belief impacts his or her capabilities to function effectively in the teaching profession (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1994; Berkant & Baysal, 2018; Brown, Lee, & Collins, 2015; Fives & Buehl, 2010; Savas, Bozgeyik, & Eser, 2014).

Teacher preparation programs. This term refers to approved educational programs that prepare individuals to become teachers (Boe, Shin, & Cook, 2007; Council

for Exceptional Children, 2004; Dinkelman, Margolis, & Sikkenga, 2006; Donaldson & Peske, 2010; Kantor, 2011; Miller, 2018; Wright, 2017). According to Feuer, Floden, Chudowsky, and Ahn (2013), teacher preparation programs are "where prospective teachers gain a foundation of knowledge about pedagogy and subject matter, as well as early exposure to practical classroom experience" (p. 1).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine stakeholders' perceptions of the preparedness and effectiveness of graduates of a teacher preparation program in special education at a teachers' college in western Jamaica. The stakeholders were the recent full-time graduates of the program, cooperating teachers, principals, and heads of departments. In addition, information regarding the perceptions of graduates, principals, and heads of departments of the mentorship system for beginning teachers to help them transition from the teachers' college to work were gathered and analyzed.

The information gained will provide policy makers with data to make informed decisions about whether to continue the program, adjust it, or discontinue it (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011). Apart from providing information to make these decisions, this study may encourage informed input to be made by other stakeholders, such as program managers, program staff, and program consumers (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). Additionally, the perceptions of stakeholders will give the program developers data-driven information that will allow them to make informed decisions about any changes to the program.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine stakeholders' perceptions of the effectiveness of a college program in providing preservice teachers with the content knowledge and pedagogical skills to meet the learning needs of students. The program is a teacher preparation program in special education at a teachers' college in western Jamaica. The relevant topics discussed in this review of the literature include the theoretical framework, education in Jamaica, special education in Jamaica, teacher preparation programs, performance standards for teachers, the target teacher preparation program, program effectiveness, quality teacher preparation, alternative content delivery, induction and mentorship programs, and preparation of special educators. The research questions are also included.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical basis for this study involved the self-efficacy theory of Bandura (1997, 1982). Bandura (1994) stated that, if individuals believe they are adequately prepared for a task, the persons will be better able to face the challenges associated with the task and work to the best of their abilities. Self-efficacy in layman terms refers to ones' self-confidence. The understanding of Bandura's self-efficacy theory will help higher education policy makers to better understand some essential components needed to ensure a teacher preparation program is useful. These programs should provide graduates with the self-confidence that they have acquired the necessary skills required to compete in their area of specialization.

An essential component of Bandura's (1994) self-efficacy theory is dependent on one's belief in one's level of preparedness and how this belief impacts one's capabilities

to function effectively in the teaching profession. Bandura (1977) wrote extensively on the theory of self-efficacy as it interrelates with cognition and its impact on behavioral changes in a person. Bandura's self-efficacy theory is based upon the assumption that one's personal confidence (i.e., efficacy) with dealing with difficulties will influence how one copes with challenges one will face in one's social or emotional life.

Bandura (1977) postulated, "Theoretical formulation emphasizing peripheral mechanisms began to give way to cognitively oriented theories that explained behavior in terms of central processing of direct, vicarious, and symbolic sources of information" (p. 192). These cognitively oriented theories explain how one acquires and regulates behaviors in one's schema, thus helping to determine how to effectively impact behavioral changes. Because transitory experiences leave a memorable representation of the individual during the acquisition process, they are linked to observation through modeling conducted by others. This results in a change in one's cognitive imprinting by some stimuli of how behavior affects change. Therefore, changing one's behavior is a cognitive process that intertwines stimulus (e.g., personal, behavioral, and environment) and consequences, resulting in an outcome (Bandura, 1977, 1994).

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is a significant factor that determines how one views oneself and the steps one will take to effect change in attitude toward any task or goal. Self-efficacy can be seen in cognitive and behavioral terms. As it relates to teachers, self-efficacy will determine the confidence levels of individuals and their zest to excel and overcome any difficulties in the classroom or work environment. Bandura (1994) articulated that persons with a high level of self-efficacy tend to have better cognitive resourcefulness, are strategic, have more flexibility, are effective in managing their environment, and set motivating goals for themselves that they customarily achieve.

On the other hand, persons who have a low level of self-efficacy tend to be reactive individuals and tasks overburden them. Malinauskas (2017) and Schwarzer and Hallum (2008), who conducted studies on the self-efficacy of teachers, revealed that teachers with a high level of self-efficacy have no challenges completing arduous tasks.

In addition, Bandura (1982) also examined the role that motivation and self-reflection play in one's cognitive beliefs about themselves. The author explained, "An important cognitively based source of motivation operates through the intervening influences of goal setting and self-evaluative reactions" (Bandura, 1982, p. 134). Bandura (1977) also stated that people make behavioral and degree of effort decisions based on information they receive about their competence. According to Bandura, there are four sources of self-efficacy belief: mastery experiences, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, and psychological and affective states. The author concluded, "The more dependable the experiential sources, the greater are the changes in perceived self-efficacy" (Bandura, 1977, p. 191).

Malinauskas (2017) developed a training module to boost the self-efficacy among teacher education students with the goal to improve them individually and help with their integration. The author argued that, although there is some research related to teachers' self-efficacy, there are few studies regarding "change in teacher education students' self-efficacy over time and under the influence of training modules for enhancing self-efficacy" (Malinauskas, 2017, p. 732). In the study conducted by Malinauskas, the 36 teacher education students who completed a 26-hour course to enhance their self-efficacy had statistically significantly improved self-efficacy on the posttest than on the pretest. Chao, Sze, Chow, Forlin, and Ho (2017) also conducted a study with 322 Hong Kong teachers who participated in a 1-week course to improve their self-efficacy in teaching

students with special educational needs. The pretest and posttest results of the Chinese Teacher Sense of Efficacy scale (Kennedy & Hui, 2004; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001, 2007) showed that the teachers' self-efficacy increased statistically significantly for their knowledge and skills related to classroom management, teaching, learning, and inclusive classrooms.

Montgomery and Mirenda (2014) surveyed 100 kindergarten to Grade 7 Canadian teachers regarding their attitudes related to the inclusion of developmental disabilities in general education using the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices scale (Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2011) and the revised version of the Sentiments, Attitudes, and Concerns About Inclusive Education scale (Forlin, Earle, Loreman, & Sharma, 2011). The results showed that teachers with the highest self-efficacy for collaboration also had the most positive attitudes and the fewest apprehensions about inclusive classrooms. Montgomery and Mirenda emphasized the importance of teachers acquiring collaborative skills.

Education in Jamaica

The Task Force Report on Education Reform was commissioned by then Prime Minister Patterson of Jamaica in 2004 in response to poor students' performance in local and regional examinations and the high cost of education. The 14-member collaborative National Task Force on Education consisted of stakeholders associated with various sectors of the educational system. The members were asked to report on the educational system regarding (a) 2010 performance targets; (b) the state of education in Jamaica; (c) the contextual framework for transforming education; (d) key issues affecting the realization of the vision for education and recommendations to address these issues; (e) short-, medium-, and long-term action plans; and (f) the financial investment required to

implement the recommendations and to achieve the vision (Davis, 2004).

The report produced was entitled *Task Force on Education Reform* (Davis, 2004). The report highlighted the poor performance of students on the Grade 4 Literacy and Numeracy Tests, Grade 6 Achievement Test, and the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate examination, especially in English language and mathematics (Davis, 2004). Additionally, the task force report investigated the generally low performance of students at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, as well as the institutions that catered to the needs of these students. The members of the task force believed that these institutions should be held more accountable for the performance of their students. The report of the task force (Davis, 2004) recommended that there was a need for a child find to locate the forgotten students, between the ages of birth and 18 years old, who were undiagnosed with special needs within the regular classroom, special education classroom, and in residential facilities, including government-owned and community-based programs. The child find was also to locate students who were gifted (Davis, 2004).

The task force used a collaborative approach to investigate the educational sector needs and shortfalls (Davis, 2004). One of the steps the task force completed through collaboration with various stakeholders associated with the education system was to develop a shared national vision for education. The national vision for education is a common framework that stakeholders would use as a shared vision that would set the context for the way forward in planning and implementing strategies to improve the educational sector (Ministry of Education, 2012). The national shared vision of education indicated the following:

Each learner will maximize his or her potential in an enriching learner-centered education environment with the maximum use of learning technologies supported

by committed, qualified, competent, effective and professional educators and staff. The education system will be equitable and accessible with full attendance to Grade 11. Accountability, transparency, and performance are the hallmarks of a system that is excellent, self-sustaining, resourced and welcomes full stakeholder participation. (Davis, 2004, p. 11)

Another of the recommendations from the task force was to develop an educational transformation team. In 2005, the Ministry of Education established the Education Transformation Team, the purpose of which was to revamp and streamline the troubled educational system (Ministry of Education, 2012). The team was given the task to apply the recommendations by the task force in six areas: "school's infrastructure and facilities; school leadership and management; curriculum, teaching and learning; behaviour and communities; communications and stakeholder involvement and modernization of the ministry" (Ministry of Education, 2012, p. 6). In 2009, the Education System Transformation Programme replaced the Education Transformation Team, and it also has the mandate to keep the educational sector abreast of cutting-edge technology and methodology (Ministry of Education, 2012). Six education agencies were established to further the transformation of education, and three of them have a direct connection to the operation of teacher preparation programs: the National Education Inspectorate, the Jamaica Teaching Council, and the Jamaica Tertiary Commission (Ministry of Education, 2012).

Furthermore, several initiatives were implemented to improve student performance on the standardized examinations. One of the examinations targeted was the Grade 4 Literacy and Numeracy Tests, which scrutinize mastery of literacy and numeracy skills of students at Grade 4. Even though there had been steady growth in students'

performance in the Grade 4 Literacy Tests, the Ministry of Education, in 2007, launched the National Comprehensive Literacy Programme, which was also a recommendation of the 2004 Task Force Report on Educational Reform (Davis, 2004). This program was intended to address what the then Minister of Education referred to as the "inability of some teachers to effectively impart aspects of the curricula" (Thwaites, 2015, p. 2). The National Comprehensive Literacy Programme was born out of the need to implement several initiatives to address the "ongoing development of teachers through teacher training" (Thwaites, 2015, p. 2).

Teacher preparation programs in Jamaica have come under national scrutiny because this is where beginning teachers receive their initial training. Teacher preparation programs are given the task of preparing student teachers with the prerequisite pedagogical skills, strategies, and methodologies regarding content knowledge and management skills that they will need in the classroom. In 2009, the Prime Minister of Jamaica commissioned the Vision 2030: Jamaica National Development Plan based on this shared vision statement: "Jamaica, the place of choice to live, work, raise families, and do business" (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2009, p. 1). To accomplish this vision, the strategic plan consists of these four major goals: "Jamaicans are empowered to achieve their fullest potential; the Jamaican society is secure, cohesive and just; Jamaica's economy is prosperous; and Jamaica has a healthy natural environment" (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2009, p. 1). For each national goal, there are several national outcomes. One national outcome is world-class education and training for all students to achieve the national goal of empowering Jamaicans to achieve their fullest potential (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2009).

The plan proposed that, "by 2030, more than 98% of our population who are 15

years and older will be fully literate" (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2009, p. xxvi). Subsequently, the Ministry of Education (2015) outlined in the Education for All 2015 National Review Report: Jamaica various initiatives the Ministry of Education has in place to ensure Jamaicans receive a first-class education and increase in literacy. A targeted goal of 85% mastery in literacy for primary school students taking the Grade 4 Literacy Test in 2015 was incorporated in the National Education Strategic Plan 2011-2020 (Dennis, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2014; Thwaites, 2015). The overall average score was achieved for the 2015 cohort of students who sat the examination. However, a careful examination of the scores by gender revealed the boys achieved only 80.0% mastery, whereas the girls achieved 92.5% mastery (Ministry of Education, 2015).

Furthermore, the percentage of the 2016 cohort of students who sat the Grade 4 literacy examination who achieved literacy mastery decreased. The Ministry of Education (2016) reported the following: "Approximately 80.0% of the 37,131 students from public and private schools achieved mastery, 16.4% achieved almost mastery and 3.4% non-mastery" (p. 1). This marks a 6% decline in the overall percentage of the students achieving mastery in literacy between the 2015 and 2016 examination (see Table 1). However, there was an increase in the 2017 examination result. This increase could be due to several educational initiatives implemented by the Ministry of Education to improve teacher preparation programs. There was a mandatory requirement for additional mathematics methodology courses to be included in the undergraduate program and workshops and seminars for practicing teachers in the educational system.

The most recent baseline report of the Chief Inspector (Ministry of Education, 2015) showed that there was still need for improvement so that the Vision 2030 Jamaica goals for education would be met. The aim of the Chief Inspector's baseline report was to

"establish a baseline of the quality of educational inputs and outputs in the schools

inspected" (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 7). The report revealed that, of the 953

government schools inspected for the period of 2010 to 2015, in 6% of the schools,

student performance was above target. In 16% of the schools, student performance was

on target. In 78% of the schools, student performance was below target for English and

mathematics.

Table 1

Percentage of Students Achieving Mastery in Literacy, 2010-2016

Item	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
National	80	86	77	76	74	71	67
Public	79	85	75	74	72	69	65
Private	94	97	95	96	94	93	88

Other data obtained from the report disclosed that, regarding student progress at

the schools inspected, only 1% of schools were rated as being exceptionally high, 4%

were rated as being good, 42% were rated as being satisfactory, 51% were rated as being

unsatisfactory, and 2% of schools needed immediate support. These figures indicate that

less than half of the students are experiencing academic success and show that there is a

need for reflection on how to improve student progress. Additional data in the report

regarding the impact of teaching on student learning revealed that 6% of the schools

inspected were rated as being good, 49% were rated as being satisfactory, 44% were rated

as being unsatisfactory, and 1% of schools needed immediate support.

Between 2011 and 2014, Jamaica's Child Find, which was recommended in the

Task Force on Education Reform (Davis, 2004), was conducted. The Child Find was

done in three phases. The first phase identified 4,212 children with special needs by using the data collected through the annual Census (Thwaites, 2015). These children were in 66 institutions that cater to children with special needs (Thwaites, 2015). The second phase of the Child Find targeted children with special needs within the state facilities, and the data revealed that an estimated 1,500 children in community-based programs, about 612 children in state care facilities, and 15 children in hospitals had special needs (Thwaites, 2015).

The final phase of the Child Find focused on finding children with special needs in the general classroom. Students who were selected to be assessed were chosen based on their poor performance on the Grade 4 Literacy Test or their poor performance in Grades 1 to 6 (Thwaites, 2015). There were 7,628 children assessed from 302 primary schools in Jamaica. Of that sample, 4,323 were boys and 3,305 were girls (Thwaites, 2015). The findings revealed that most of the children assessed were classified as slow learners and had mild to moderate intellectual disabilities (Thwaites, 2015).

Consequently, the then education minister projected plans to have the "assignment of one special education teacher in at least 60 secondary-level institutions by the end of 2017" (Thwaites, 2015, p. 8). In addition, 30 special education teachers were redeployed to schools that needed intervention support, and more special education units and classrooms were established (Thwaites, 2015). Well-managed intervention programs with competent trained teachers are needed to assist students who are failing in the classroom. These students must first be assessed, and then evidence-based teaching strategies and intervention plans for students with exceptionalities must be employed. Hence, appropriately trained special education teachers are needed in general and special education classrooms (Brownell, Leko, Kamman, & King, 2008; Brownell, Ross, Colón,

& McCallum, 2005).

Like Jamaica, which has been undergoing strategic changes to the Jamaican educational system, other countries have also been faced with challenges in their educational systems. One of these countries is the United States. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education produced a monumental document called *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* as a result of various concerns regarding the country's quality of education. The report outlined the state of the educational system in both public and private institutions and compared them to those in other counties. The Commission stated, "The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people" (p. 5). Among the findings of the commission were the following:

> (1) Compared to other nations, American students spend much less time on
> schoolwork; (2) time spent in the classroom and on homework is often used
> ineffectively; and (3) schools are not doing enough to help students develop either
> the study skills required to use time well or the willingness to spend more time on
> schoolwork. (p. 21)

The Commission's report called for teachers to be better prepared to provide instruction, secondary school curricula to be more rigorous, more time to be given to academic instruction academic instruction, and examinations to be more challenging.

Later U.S. educational reform legislation included the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which increased the accountability for schools by calling for advanced academic standards, highly qualified teachers, and annual state testing of students in mathematics and reading. A revision of the law was the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, which focused on ensuring that all students, including those who have special needs or are

economically disadvantaged, have an opportunity to succeed. This law also highlighted the need to prepare students to be successful in their college studies and chosen careers. Just as the United States, a first world country, has made and continues to make changes in an attempt to ensure that all students succeed, Jamaica also has made and continues to make changes to meet the same objective. Likewise, the Jamaican Ministry of Education mantra is "Every child can learn, every child must learn," which encompasses the Ministry's aim to ensure that all children are given the opportunity to excel (Linton, 2018; Ministry of Education, 2017a).

The Jamaica Teaching Council was created in 2008 due to recommendations made by the Task Force on Education Reform (Davis, 2004) as part of the goal to assist in the transformation of the educational sector by decentralizing responsibilities of the Ministry of Education. The Task Force on Education Reform proposed that this council would regularize and improve the quality of education, which was characterized by "chronic underachievement of students" (Davis, 2004, p. 95). Under the Ministry of Education's Education System Transformation Programme, the Jamaica Teaching Council was established as the education agency that regulates teachers, provides professional development and promotes the strategic direction to ensure the educational goals of Vision 2030 are met (Jamaica Teaching Council, 2016). Also, the Jamaica Teaching Council furthers greater accountability of all teacher practitioners by registering and licensing teachers, determining conditions of service, and developing quality assurance among the teaching profession including teacher education (Jamaica Teaching Council, 2016).

The mission of the Jamaica Teaching Council is "to cause the teaching profession to continuously strive for excellence in raising aspirations and achievements that lead to

beneficial educational outcomes for all learners" (Jamaica Teaching Council, 2016, p. 1).The Jamaica Teaching Council works in close collaboration with several stakeholders associated with the educational sector, including the Ministry of Education, Joint Board of Teacher Education, and University Council of Jamaica (Jamaica Teaching Council, 2016). Moreover, the Jamaica Teaching Council, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the teachers' colleges, conducts yearly workshops for preservice teachers to learn about teacher mentorship and induction.

Special Education in Jamaica

The Jamaican Ministry of Education's definition of special education is as follows:

Educational programmes and practices designed for students with exceptionalities (the range of severe deficits to superior abilities or giftedness), whose cognitive ability, physical ability, emotional or social functioning requires special teaching approaches, equipment, or care within or outside a regular classroom. (Meredith, 2014, p. 42)

The Ministry of Education also reported that a student classified as having special needs has "significantly greater difficulty with learning experiences than age or grade peers; or presence of a disability which prevents or hinders a child from making use of educational facilities generally provided for children of the same age" (Meredith, 2014, p. 42). The exceptionalities most commonly seen in the Jamaican classrooms are the following: autism, deafness or hearing impairment, visual impairment, intellectual disability, specific learning disabilities, attention deficit or hyperactivity disorder, gifted and talented, emotional disturbance, speech and language impairment, physical impairments, and other health impairments (Meredith, 2014).

In the United States, the federal law that protects individuals with disabilities is the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, which refers to special education as follows:

> (a) *General*. (1) *Special education* means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including (i) Instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and (ii) Instruction in physical education. (Center for Parent Information and Resources, 2017, p. 17)

The legislation specifies that students with the following 13 categories of disabilities are eligible for special education and related services: autism spectrum disorder, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech and language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment including blindness (Lee, 2018).

The offer of a formal special education program in Jamaica was made in the mid-20th century due to parental concerns for their children not receiving an education suitable for their developmental needs (Anderson, 2014). Anderson (2014) stated that the growth of special education could be divided into three eras: (a) postindependence period (1962-1977), (b) middle years (1978-1988), and (c) current period (1989 to present). During the postindependence period, developments spearheaded by nongovernmental bodies and private interest groups were made for the most visible disabilities, such as deafness and intellectual and visual disabilities. In 1975, the Jamaican government, in partnership with the Dutch government, funded a formal special education program in Jamaica. From this partnership, the first special education teacher training was

implemented, and an assessment and research center was opened (Anderson, 2014).

In 2014, the then Minister of Education of Jamaica stated that the growth of special education teacher training in Jamaica was a priority, and there needed to be more special educators in the classroom. His goal was to have at least one qualified special education teacher in every school in Jamaica by 2016 (Thwaites, 2015). This goal was not achieved for 2016, but the current Minister of Education promised that this goal would be realized by 2018 (Ministry of Education, 2017a). The present Minister of Education also understands that it is necessary for additional teachers to be prepared to teach in the special education field (Ministry of Education, 2017a). The former Minister of Education reiterated this statement during the opening ceremony of the International Council on Education for Teaching 60th World Assembly in Jamaica (Ministry of Education, 2017b; University of the West Indies, 2018).

Ardent steps have been taken to meet the goal to have at least one qualified special education teacher in every school. In September 2018, another teachers' college began offering a bachelor's degree in the special education program. The teachers' college will train special education teachers in mild to moderate disabilities. This program is being implemented to encourage more special education teachers to join the teaching profession to assist with struggling students. The former Minister of Education stated that 70% of Jamaica's school-age children have some special needs; therefore, it is imperative to have highly qualified special education teachers in the classroom (Ministry of Education, 2017b; National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, 2009).

In September 2016, the Alternative Pathways to Secondary Education was launched, and Pathway coaches, as well as Pathway teachers for the program, are being employed. This program aims to ensure all students at the secondary level are given the

opportunity to maximize their potential to have success in life. The program is divided into three pathways that are referred to as Secondary Pathways I, II, and III (Ministry of Education, 2012). The Ministry of Education (2017a) reported, "Instruction will be based on tailored curricula, enabling each learner to perform to his/her fullest potential, based on aptitude, interest and ability" (p. 11). The five main goals of the Alternative Pathways to Secondary Education include the use of differentiated instruction and the development of student individualized intervention plan (Ministry of Education, 2017a).

Teacher Preparation Programs

High-quality teacher preparation programs are essential to the continued development and success of a country. Teacher preparation programs are the gateway to ensure that the education sector is kept current and the needs of the people are met (Feuer et al., 2013). Therefore, it is essential to have competent, trained beginning teachers who are equipped with a repertoire of evidence-based practices and whose preparation is guided by local and international educational standards. A sound education program is vital so a culture can endure and flourish (Serdyukov, 2017). Serdyukov (2017) stated, "It should be not only comprehensive, sustainable, and superb, but must continuously evolve to meet the challenges of the fast-changing and unpredictable globalized world" (p. 4).

The role of special education teachers in Jamaica is changing with the inception of the Alternative Pathways to Secondary Education, and there is a need for special educators to be sensitized to their new roles and responsibilities. Jamaican teacher preparation programs need to ensure that graduates are equipped to deal with their enhanced responsibilities. Mulrine and Huckvale (2014) stated that changing roles and responsibilities is often a result of new educational policies. It is prudent that the changes in expectations be reflected at the teacher preparation level.

Worrell et al. (2014) argued, "The desire for evidence of program impact arises primarily from the acknowledged ethical and professional responsibility of teacher education programs to assure the public that they are preparing effective teachers" (p. 3). Darling-Hammond (2010) postulated that parents, teachers, and other stakeholders associated with education systems agree the major factor needed to improve public education is having "highly skilled and effective teachers in all classrooms" (p. 1). Other researchers have also shared the same view regarding the close positive correlation between students' performance and the quality of their teachers (Hightower et al., 2011; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007).

A landmark study related to the outcomes of teacher preparation programs was conducted by Darling-Hammond (2006), who reviewed various productive strategies to determine the effectiveness of the Stanford Teacher Education Program. Some of the productive strategies reviewed in the study included the use of surveys and interviews, data from pretests and posttests, performance appraisals, and work samples. Darling-Hammond and several other researchers also conducted other research on the importance of evaluating teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, Newton, & Wei, 2010; Darling-Hammond, Wei, & Johnson, 2009). The underlying findings from these researchers are that a beginning teacher education program should equip teachers for their jobs and the myriad of challenges new teachers will face in the classroom.

The Caribbean community has seen the need for greater uniformity, commonality, and standards in education among its member communities because a Caribbean community citizen should be able to coexist in the world and well in the community. The need for common standards of practice for the teaching profession within the Caribbean is evident, and this has led to the establishment of the Caribbean Community Council for

Teaching and Teacher Education (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013). The Council aims to establish common performance standards for the teaching profession within the Caribbean (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013). According to the Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, (2013), these "professional standards provide a point of reference for maintaining quality in educational practice" (p. 4).

These professional standards could also establish an atmosphere of accountability, harmony, and quality to ensure teacher competence in the profession. Moreover, the standards would allow teachers ease of movement within Caribbean single market and economy (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013). These standards will not only allow the teaching professional to move among the Caribbean, but the standards would also be in line with international standards, which would give the Caribbean trained teacher global acceptance. The Regional Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession propose to have four professional hierarchical performance standards for teaching. These four stages are as follows: entry level, regular level, advanced classroom, and master teaching (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013). The seven agreed-on academic standards of practice for the teaching profession in the Caribbean community, in addition to a sample indicator that gives more depth to better understand each component, are as follows:

1. Curriculum Design and Planning: "Curriculum and teaching provide for the acquisitioning of sound knowledge and understanding of the content that students are being prepared to teach" (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013, p. 27).

2. Curriculum Delivery and Evaluation: "Curricular activities interconnectedness among the various components of the programme to ensure a holistic educational experience" (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013, p. 29).

3. Field Experiences and Teaching Practicum: "Adequate and appropriate preparation for teaching is provided through various simulated and real-world experiences" (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013, p. 31).

4. Faculty: "Faculty provide a positive model for students at both personal and professional levels and function as mentors to the student teacher" (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013, p. 33).

5. Student support and progression: "There is a well-structured, organized, proactive guidance and counseling unit which is accessible to all students-teachers" (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013, p. 35).

6. Governance and management: "There is an active policy-making body. This body will be guided by national needs and national policies as appropriate" (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013, p. 37).

7. Physical infrastructure: "The physical infrastructure of the institute is suitable and adequate for effective implementation of the programmes" (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013, p. 39).

Performance Standards for Teachers

The Jamaica teaching council. The Jamaica Teaching Council is the regulatory body that formulates and implements the teaching standards for the teaching profession in Jamaica (Jamaica Teaching Council, 2016). The Jamaica Teaching Council was implemented based on a recommendation from the Task Force on Educational Reform Report (Davis, 2004). The Task Force specified that because of the valuable influence teachers have on students' performance; more accountability was needed by personnel in the educational system (Jamaica Teaching Council, 2016). Therefore, the Ministry of Education gave the Jamaica Teaching Council the following responsibilities:

(a) Regulating the teaching profession, (b) building and maintaining competences

of teachers, and (c) raising the public profile of the profession as a change agent

to societal reform and development in the context of the Social Policy vision for

Jamaica. (Jamaica Teaching Council, 2016, p. 3)

The Jamaica Teaching Council (2016) stated that six principles of teaching govern

the professional standards and beginning standards for teachers (see Item 1 in Appendix

A). These standards are used to assess the beginning teacher performance. The Jamaica

Teaching Council principles are adapted from Caribbean community's Regional

Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher

Education, 2013), feedback gained from the National Mentorship Programme (Ministry

of Education, 2014), and collaboration with other stakeholders, including lecturers from

teachers' colleges. The development of these regional standards is intended to standardize

teacher practice and preparation in the Caribbean community by providing a framework

for countries to establish national standards (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher

Education, 2013). The Caribbean Community Generic Teacher Performance Standards

for Entry-Level and Induction-Level Teachers are shown in Item 2 in Appendix A. The

teaching performance standards describe the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for

teachers at these stages of their professional career: entry and induction, professional

practice, advanced professional practice, and master practice.

The Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica support the standards proposed by the Jamaica

Teaching Council and the *Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica Handbook of Regulations:*

Bachelor of Education (Jamaica Teaching Council, 2016). The standards for teachers in

training are included within the principle of knowledge and understanding, skills and

abilities, and personal qualities. However, to date, only a draft document for the

professional and beginning teachers' standards has been produced by the Jamaica Teaching Council.

The council for exceptional children. Professional and preparation standards for special education teachers have also been developed by the Council for Exceptional Children (2015). These standards serve as guides of ethical and professional conduct for teachers. The Council for Exceptional Children, from its first meeting convened in 1922 in the United States, accepted the mandate for formulating professional standards for special educators (Council for Exceptional Children, 2017b). The Council's board of directors also supported the continuous link between initial special education teacher preparation, induction, and mentorship and ongoing professional growth as an integral process in the professional life of a special educator (Council for Exceptional Children, 2017b).

Therefore, the Council saw the need to address not only professional ethics and standards for special education professionals, but also standards for initial and advanced teacher preparation (Council for Exceptional Children, 2017a). In 2002, the Council developed a policy that guided teacher preparation, whether traditional or alternative. Subsequently, in 2012, the Council reviewed initial and advanced standards for the preparation of special educators to ensure that, at each level, they are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed (Council for Exceptional Children, 2017a). To do this, the Council's board members solicited the input of stakeholders to assist them.

The standards of the Council for Exceptional Children (2015) and the Jamaica Teaching Council (2016) have overlapping requirements for a beginning teacher. Both standards address areas relating to ethical and professional conduct for an individual becoming a professional highly competence teacher. Both standards emphasize that a

beginning and professional teacher should be knowledgeable of the content to be taught, act professionally, work collaboratively with others, and take part in continuous education. However, the standards of the Council for Exceptional Children have a category for assessment stating that the beginning teachers must be exposed to various assessment methodology and the ability to use these techniques (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015). This requirement is not explicitly stated in the Jamaica Teaching Council's standards.

The standards criteria of the Council for Exceptional Children (2015) and the Jamaica Teaching Council (2016) reflect the qualities of an effective teacher. The standards of the Council for Exceptional Children also include specific skill sets needed for teachers specializing in teaching children with disabilities (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015). The requirement for beginning teachers is to know a myriad of information so that they are best able to cope with the diverse needs of children with disabilities (Maheady, Smith, & Jabot, 2013).

A summary of the initial teacher preparation standards (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015) for special education teachers approved by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education in 2012 is shown in Item 3 in Appendix A. These standards describe the knowledge and skills needed by preservice teachers in order to teach students. It is expected that these standards will be used by preparation programs for special education teachers. A summary of the advanced teacher preparation standards for practicing special education teachers is shown in Item 4 in Appendix A (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015). These standards are intended for preparation programs designed for teachers who have a valid special education qualification.

The Target Teacher Preparation Program

The program studied in this research involved a 4-year bachelor of education program in special education at a teachers' college in western Jamaica. The 4-year program was created to train teachers to work with children with exceptionalities in the general and special education classroom. The program supports special education teachers working in a diverse and inclusive setting. In addition, the program assists the graduates to tackle the issues of students with poor performance in literacy and numeracy, as well as those with behavioral problems in early childhood at the primary and secondary levels. The student teachers learn the importance of catering to the varying needs of children with special needs and how to effectively apply needed differentiation into the teaching and learning process.

The target college's academic year is divided into two semesters. The first semester begins in the latter part of August and finishes in the latter part of December, and the second semester runs from early January to the end of April. Each semester culminates with the end-of-semester examination managed by the two overseeing bodies associated with teachers' colleges in Jamaica: Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica and Joint Board of Teachers Education. The first cohort of the program at the college started the program in 2011, and those students graduated in November 2015. The second cohort started in 2012, and those students graduated in November 2016.

The third cohort started in 2013, and those students graduated in November 2017, with seven of the graduates obtaining first-class honors degrees. The fourth cohort started in 2014 and graduated in November 2018. The students enrolled in the program can specialize in one of three areas: deaf and hard of hearing, mild to moderate disabilities, and multiple and severe disabilities. After graduates have completed the bachelor's

program in special education, they will be able to find employment at educational institutions that serve students with exceptionalities or students classified as having special needs or developing as slow learners.

Program Effectiveness

It is prudent in the era of educational and organizational accountability that teacher preparation programs use evidence-based data to ensure these institutions are meeting local and international standards (Feuer et al., 2013). It is important that all institutions that offer teacher preparation programs ensure that their programs comply with accreditation guidelines, as well as national and international standards, to meet the needs of learners and the various stakeholders involved (Meyer, Brodersen, & Linick, 2014). Fitzpatrick et al. (2011) stated that all program managers need to know how effective their programs are. This informed knowledge will help them determine which areas that are working effectively and areas that need to be addressed. A good teacher preparation program that produces highly qualified and effective graduates is also key. Therefore, evaluation of these programs to ensure they are effective is imperative so that the graduates will be effective (Feuer et al., 2013).

According to Feuer et al. (2013) and Koedel, Parsons, Podgursky, and Ehlert (2012), evaluating the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs will lead to better teaching and learning. Feuer et al. further indicated that the primary reasons to evaluate teacher preparation programs are "ensuring accountability, providing consumer information, and enabling self-improvement of teacher preparation programs" (p. 61). Deans for Impact (2018) shared the interest of Feuer et al. in the evaluation of teacher preparation programs. Deans for Impact is a nonprofit organization in the United States that has a mission to give "support to teacher educators programs through a collaborative

effort to ensure quality and effective teacher preparation programs are using transformational ways to adequately prepare teachers" (p. 1). Deans for Impact indicated that teacher education programs are "data-informed, outcomes-focused, empirically tested, and transparent and accountable" (p. 1).

Koedel et al. (2012) argued that it does not matter if the teacher preparation program is traditional or nontraditional, but it is important that all teacher preparation programs should have some built-in measure to determine the effectiveness of their programs for purposes of accountability. Teacher preparation programs need to examine their effectiveness to provide the best-trained teachers who can meet the demands of the educational society, and they must comply with noted professional standards (Henry, Kershaw, Smith, & Zulli, 2012). It is important to evaluate these programs to determine if they meet the desired outcomes, as stated by the associating accrediting bodies and the purpose for which the program was established. Therefore, a process of systematic program evaluation is necessary (Chen, 2005).

Quality Teacher Preparation

Children of the 21st century must be equipped with the necessary skills to develop academically and socially to meet the needs of the global workforce (Kulshrestha & Pandey, 2013). Therefore, the quality of teachers and teacher education is imperative to meet the needs of all students. The U.S. Department of Education developed teacher preparation regulations that are intended to bring transparency to the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs, provide programs with ongoing feedback to help them improve continuously, and respond to educators across the country who do not feel ready to enter the classroom. States must report on each program every year describing, for example, novice teachers' retention and placement rates and employers' and graduates'

perceptions of the teacher preparation programs.

Koedel et al. (2012), in a study that included 1,309 Grade 4, 5, and 6 teachers in Missouri, found that there were no statistically significant differences in the effectiveness of teachers who attended different teacher preparation programs. The researchers used a value-added model based on student achievement. Rothstein (2016) explained, "If a teacher's students perform better than predicted based on their prior scores and other characteristics, the teacher is given a high value-added score; if they perform worse than expected, her score is low" (p. 2). Koedel et al. noted that teacher preparation programs may be very similar because they have failed to develop innovative programs, which may be due, in part, to the lack of instruments to evaluate them. The researchers suggested that evaluations that are outcome based should continue to be used to determine the quality of teacher preparation programs.

Koedel et al. (2012) agreed with other researchers (Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, 2014) that the introduction of an instrument to evaluate teacher preparation programs may encourage the programs to implement innovative improvements. Brady, Heiser, McCormick, and Forgan (2016) explained that value-added model evaluations of teacher preparation programs ask the following questions:

1. Did the program deliver measurably high-quality instruction to teacher candidates?

2. Is there evidence that the candidates learned to perform as teachers?

3. Did the teachers who completed the program deliver measurably high-quality instruction to prekindergarten to Grade 12 students as an outcome of participating in the teacher preparation program?

4. Did the prekindergarten to Grade 12 students of these teachers show adequate

or better academic achievement gains because of their teachers' instruction?

Ronfeldt and Campbell (2016) stated that the evaluation of teacher preparation programs uses either the input approach (i.e., qualities of the teacher preparation program) or output approach (i.e., evaluation of the program's graduates). The authors proposed the use of observations of teachers versus the other methods. They gathered data from approximately 9,500 graduates of 183 teacher preparation programs in Tennessee over a 3-year period. Unlike the Koedel et al. (2012) study, Ronfeldt and Campbell found that there was a significant difference in the quality of graduates from the various teacher preparation programs. Moreover, the findings also indicated that teacher observation could be used to evaluate the teacher preparation programs and serve as a complement to the value-added model evaluation of student achievement. Regardless of which method is used, some standardized measure must be implemented to determine the quality of teacher preparation programs (Gansle et al., 2015; Worrell et al., 2014).

Barrett, Hovde, Hahn, and Rosqueta (2016) expressed concern regarding the low graduation rate of students in poverty areas in the United States and its impact on the quality of the workforce. Because teachers are essential to meeting the needs of these students, the authors maintained that there is a need to increase the number of quality teachers who have "a positive effect on student learning and development through a combination of content mastery, command of a broad set of pedagogic skills, and excellent communication and interpersonal skills" (Barrett et al., 2016, p. 7). The researchers argued that the primary step to increase the number of quality teachers is to improve teacher preparation programs. Furthermore, these programs should accept applicants based on appraisals of their academic qualifications and personal qualities using a variety of assessments, offer pragmatic course work, require a 1-year

apprenticeship program, and collaborate with school districts (Barrett et al., 2016; Center for High-Impact Philanthropy, 2011).

Alternative Content Delivery

Kennedy et al. (2015) stated that it is challenging for educators who prepare special education teachers to meet all the possible needs of the preservice teachers. The researchers suggested that more innovative ways are needed to address preservice teachers needs without fatiguing them. Kennedy et al. based this premise on the fact that teaching children from a diverse population requires the preservice teacher to be prepared with content and practice. The authors argued that teacher preparation programs need to equip preservice teachers with the knowledge and content to deal with the challenges in the classroom. Kennedy et al. advocated for the use of interteaching, video-based reflection, and content acquisition podcasts in teacher preparation programs.

Interteaching. Interteaching is an interactive teaching approach that uses a combination of behavioral models and strategies, such as precision teaching and discussion (Kennedy et al., 2015). Two students use discussion instructions prepared by the teacher to direct a discussion, which is followed by a lecture to explain any outstanding issues. It is a more student-centered method than the traditional lecture method, as the interteaching allows the students to have more control and to actively participate in their learning.

Video-based reflection. Video-based reflection is a technique by which students reflect on their video-recorded lesson with an instructor or proficient teacher (Kennedy et al., 2015). This method can promote authentic and constructive reflection that can improve the preservice teachers' instructional skills (Kennedy et al., 2015).

Content acquisition podcasts. Content acquisition podcasts are "short,

multimedia-based instructional materials" (Kennedy et al., 2015, p. 78) used as a medium for imparting content. Podcast uses multimedia platform, thus allowing for a variety of modalities to present content to students in line with 21st-century technology development that is readily available at all times. These three methods have been shown by empirical data to be effective and should be incorporated in special education teacher preparation programs (Kennedy et al., 2015).

Induction and Mentorship Programs

Support programs are needed for beginning teachers because half of beginning teachers typically leave within their first 5 years of teaching, and approximately one third of beginning teachers leave after the first year (Gourneau, 2014). Barrett et al. (2016) and Spooner-Lane (2017) supported the need for having an efficient support system for beginning teachers because this helps with the attrition rate and makes the profession more appealing. Moreover, Barrett et al. argued that some preservice teachers were not given sufficient training to effectively manage learning for students with diverse needs. Beginning teachers may be faced with challenges of (a) mounting school responsibility; (b) diverse students; (c) students with behavior issues; (d) lack of support from parents, community, and administrators; (e) low wages; and (f) stressful working conditions (Du Plessis & Sunde, 2017; Gourneau, 2014).

Therefore, it is critical that beginning teachers be given the necessary support so that they can withstand the emotional and psychological pressure associated with the profession. Support services for beginning teachers usually start with a comprehensive induction program which would include areas such as personal and emotional support, problem-solving techniques, reflective practices methodology, and professional development and appraisal (Gourneau, 2014; Hudson, 2012; Tondeur et al., 2012). This

would then lead to a teacher development program that would involve a mentorship program, orientation to the job site, professional development, shadowing, and coaching (Hudson, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Tondeur et al., 2012).

Not only will active support programs help the beginning teachers to overcome the hurdles of their new environment, but they can help them develop a professional identity. The development of a professional identity can facilitate the management of the conflicts and demands associated with the transition the beginning teacher faces from college to their classroom. The Caribbean community's Regional Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession also advocated that beginning teachers should participate in an induction program and refers to beginning teachers as "interns, i.e., on-the-job trainees" (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013, p. 19).

Teacher preparation programs provide the initial knowledge skills required for graduates to teach. However, the reality is that the real world of teaching comes with a myriad of other challenges. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) stated that induction and mentorship programs were established to help beginning teachers transition into the classroom. Therefore, a good mentorship program is necessary to help beginning teachers. Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, and Tomlinson (2009) reported that, in the 1980s, many countries started formal mentorship programs for beginning teachers so that novice teachers would be given support to better understand their working environment. It also improved teacher retention by easing the beginning teachers' transition to the classroom by providing an avenue for expert teachers to mentor them.

This allows best practices to be passed on to the beginning teachers (Gourneau, 2014). Gourneau (2014) concluded that beginning teachers who participate in an induction program are better able to transition to the workplace because the program

builds self-efficacy and confidence. Ingersoll and Strong (2011), who reviewed 15 empirical studies on induction and mentorship, reported that the findings showed most induction and mentorship programs "have a positive impact on three sets of outcomes: teacher commitment and retention, classroom instructional practice, and student achievement" (p. 201).

Kutsyuruba (2012) also examined the benefits of teacher retention due to mentorship programs, and his study found it benefited beginning teachers who, without this guidance, might become frustrated and want to leave the profession prematurely. In addition, Guha, Hyler, and Darling-Hammond (2016) supported the findings of Kutsyuruba. Guha et al. stated, "Teachers who are left to sink or swim on their own leave teaching at much higher rates than those who receive supportive mentoring in their first years on the job (p. 1). These researchers indicated that this problem can have rippling effects in the educational and national arena. Therefore, Guha et al. asserted that teacher retention can be improved with a mentoring model that is an alternative way of certifying teachers.

The program is a residency program that has a prospective teacher working as an apprentice of an expert mentor teacher for a school year. The apprentice teacher also takes courses from a cooperating university and after the year in residency earn a master's degree and a teaching credential (Guha et al., 2016). The apprentice agrees to teach in the school district for a specified number of years in return for the financial support received during the residency. In addition to increased teacher retention, Guha et al. (2016) reported that the most significant benefits of the program are enhanced outcomes for students and the diversity of the apprentice teachers. Barrett et al. (2016) also promoted the benefits of residency programs to give students the practical clinical

experience that they need before they take on the responsibility of full-time teaching on their own.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education formulated the Mentorship and Beginning Teachers Induction Programme. After the decentralization of the Ministry of Education, the Jamaica Teaching Council (2016) was given the mandate to implement and monitor the mentorship and induction program. The program consists of two main parts. The first part is the mandatory Induction of Beginning Teachers' Workshop; this 2-day workshop is organized by the Jamaica Teaching Council and the Ministry of Education. The workshop is a part of a zero-credit professional seminar for the final year student teachers. Even though the professional seminar is a zero-credit course, failure by the student teacher to attend this seminar organized by the college and other stakeholders will result in the student teacher not matriculating for graduation.

The workshop is an orientation to the mentorship program that trains and sensitizes the preservice teachers to professional and day-to-day operations of the educational system. The Jamaica Teaching Council (2016) stated the aim of the mentorship program is to help beginning teachers "transition into the profession and the responsibilities of teaching" (p. 2). The main objectives entail providing the preservice teachers with relevant information to help them transition into the profession and sensitize them to the professional standards and appraisal that guide the profession. The participants are exposed to topics such as the role of the Ministry of Education's regional office, behavior management and character development, reflective practice, and using data to obtain information. Other important information explained at the induction workshop are the roles of the mentor, the mentee, and the principal in the mentorship program (Jamaica Teaching Council, 2016).

The Jamaica Teaching Council (2016) compiled a comprehensive compact disc that is also given to the participants. Included are copies of various educational acts, manuals such as the *Manual, Hazardous Waste, Safety Guidelines for Contact Sport*, and the role and functions of Teachers' Service Commission, a 12-page document that outlines the beginning teacher (i.e., mentee) and the experienced teacher (i.e., mentor) roles and responsibilities. Also included are guidelines and expectations for implementing and sustaining the mentorship aspect of the program (Jamaica Teaching Council, 2016). This document has a mentor's log sheet and rubric to be used by the mentor during observation of the mentee's classroom (Jamaica Teaching Council, 2016). It is unfortunate that the mentorship aspect of the program, which would pair a beginning teacher with an experienced teacher for dialogue, observation, coaching, and mentorship, is not fully implemented in all schools.

Preparation of Special Educators

In the United States, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 had a component that stated students should be taught by a highly qualified teacher (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). A highly qualified teacher is a teacher with specialized training in the subject area being taught (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). This is very important because, in some areas, such as special education, there is a shortage of teachers. In the United States, there are several routes to becoming certified to teach special education. This can be done either by a traditional university education program or alternative methods that often require no formal teaching instruction. Although the traditional method is the more common method in Jamaica, there is another way for individuals to become qualified to teach as a special educator in Jamaica.

This alternative method is the bachelor of education program in special education.

Before the bachelor's program, all teachers' colleges offered a 3-year full-time diploma program. In 2010, the Joint Board of Teacher Education, with the Ministry of Education, as guided by the 2004 Task Force on Education Report and the University Council of Jamaica, recommended the entry requirement qualification of teachers at the primary and secondary level be moved to a bachelor degree. A bachelor's degree is a more universally accepted entry-level qualification to become a teacher (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2012). With this change, teachers with a diploma in other areas could obtain a bachelor of education degree in special education from the college. The additional credits needed would depend on the course of study previously taken, and the teacher would be required to engage in a 15-week practicum experience.

Research Questions

The following research questions were established to guide this study:

1. What are the graduates' perceptions of the bachelor of education degree program in special education?

2. What are the graduates' perceptions of their effectiveness as special educators?

3. What are the perceptions of principals, heads of departments, and cooperating teachers of beginning teachers who graduated from the bachelor of education degree program in special education?

4. Are there any differences in perceptions of graduates and other stakeholders of the graduates' effectiveness as teachers?

5. To what extent do mentorship programs for beginning teachers provide the necessary support?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine stakeholders' perceptions of the preparedness and effectiveness of graduates of a teacher preparation program in special education at a teachers' college in western Jamaica. The stakeholders included the recent full-time graduates of the program, cooperating teachers, principals, and heads of special education departments. It is imperative to look at the holistic program model to determine the effectiveness of any program. Hence, the researcher also investigated other stakeholders' perceptions of the support system for beginning teachers to help them transition from teachers' college to work. Students in the program are required to attend a mandatory 2-day induction and mentorship workshop during their final year. This chapter contains a description of the research design, participants, procedures, data analysis, and limitations.

Research Design

A nonexperimental, quantitative approach was used to answer the research questions in order to gain the perceptions of a variety of stakeholders about the preparedness and effectiveness of the program graduates. Nonexperimental research is research that lacks the manipulation of an independent variable and random assignment of participants of the study (Creswell, 2015). There are research conditions in which independent variables cannot be manipulated because it is impractical, unethical, or impossible (Bryman & Liao, 2004; Weathington, Cunningham, & Pittenger, 2010). Because numerical data that can be statistically analyzed were gathered to answer the research questions, the research design for this study was also quantitative (McLeod, 2017; Mitchell & Jolley, 2013; Simpson, 2015).

The type of quantitative approach used was a cross-sectional survey research design, which is a type of descriptive survey that gathers information, such as characteristics or perceptions, from a group of people at precise time (Agarwal, Guyatt, & Busse, 2011; Brace, 2013; Cherry, 2018). Mertler (2018) explained that descriptive research can describe present condition of a group of people. Moreover, as noted by Grand Canyon University (2012), "it can provide a rich data set that often brings to light new knowledge or awareness that may have otherwise gone unnoticed or encountered" (p. 3). Researchers (Creswell, 2015; McLeod, 2017; Trochim, 2006) have asserted that there is widespread use of the survey approach educational and social science research. Creswell (2015) declared, "A survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (p. 249).

According to Creswell (2015), the survey approach is best suited research when the researcher is interested in getting the opinions of the participants. Creswell further explained that the survey approach can help to identify participants' beliefs as well as attitudes. Moreover, Bastian, Patterson, and Pan (2017) determined that surveying graduates of teacher preparation programs can provide useful information for that can be used to improve the programs. In addition, surveys are inexpensive to administer and have a wide range of coverage (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2014). Another advantage of using surveys is that they can be administered online, face to face, or via email, telephone, or mail, which allows for enhanced participation (Szolnoki & Hoffmann, 2013). Surveys can be written to include both open-ended questions that give respondents the opportunity to answer questions in their own words and closed-ended questions that require respondents to choose from a specific set of answers (Colorado State University, 2018).

This study was also applied research because it was intended to "provide information that can be used and applied in an effort to help people understand and control their environment" (Grand Canyon University, 2012, p. 6). The practical application in this study is that groups who have vested interest in the development of the teacher preparation program in special education will know stakeholders' perceptions of the preparedness and effectiveness of graduates of the program, and, as suggested by Roll-Hansen (2017), they can use this information to improve the program.

Participants

There were two groups of participants in this study. The first group consisted of the 32 graduates from the undergraduate program who completed the bachelor of education in special education and have worked as a teacher for at least 3 months after completing the program. To determine how graduates perceived the effectiveness of the program, it is important that they have worked as a teacher after completing college. The second group consisted of 36 other stakeholders with whom the graduates have worked during their practicum or as beginning teachers. However, 70 other stakeholders were invited to complete the survey online. All members of this cohort had knowledge of the graduates as a result of their work with them in the program. This group of stakeholders also had practical experience regarding the knowledge and skills needed for a beginning teacher to survive in the classroom. Therefore, their opinions regarding the preparedness of beginning teachers were critical because they have worked with them closely and are able to give comprehensive feedback.

The inclusion of the perceptions of these personnel at the school level was valuable. Orphanos (2014) conducted a research study with 80 school principals to determine if they were able to conduct valid and reliable teacher evaluations.

Principals appraised teachers on a variety of teaching aspects, and then multiple regression was used to analyze the data. The results showed that principals were able to differentiate between teachers who are effective and those who are not and are, therefore, able to provide constructive evaluations. A nonprobability purposive sampling method was used to select participants from the population. Creswell (2015) explained that purposeful sampling requires researchers to "intentionally select individuals" (p. 206) who have characteristics that enable them to provide data to answer the research questions. The selection is based on the judgment of the researcher and the purpose of the study (Lund Research, 2012a). Lund Research (2012a) suggested that this is a particularly useful method for quantitative studies.

The specific type of nonprobability purposive sampling used was total population sampling, which involves including the total population of people with the specific characteristics being studied (Lund Research, 2012b). The purpose of the study was to determine perceptions of the effectiveness of the target teacher preparation program, and there have only been 32 graduates with teaching experience. Therefore, as suggested by Lohr (2010), it is appropriate to survey everyone in the population. Although the second group is larger than that of the graduates, these individuals are the total population of people who have overseen the graduates in a school setting. The researcher followed Lund Research's (2012b) steps to create a total population sample. Step 2 was to define the population characteristics, and Step 2 was to make a list of the people in the population. After Institutional Review Board and Ministry of Education approval, Step 3 was to contact the population.

Instruments

Two questionnaires were used to collect data for this study. One questionnaire was

completed by the beginning teachers (see Appendix B), and the other was completed by the other stakeholders (see Appendix C). Both questionnaires are modified versions of the questionnaires for graduate teachers and principals developed by researchers in the Studying the Effectiveness of Teacher Education Linkage Project (Australian Research Council, 2011) and used in their research (Mayer et al., 2017). Permission was received from the developers to modify the questionnaires. In addition, the questionnaires incorporate the professional and preparation standards for special education teachers developed by the Council for Exceptional Children (2015) and the Caribbean community generic teacher performance standards for entry-level and induction-level teachers developed by the Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education (2013).

Development of the questionnaires "was based upon a review of the relevant literature, discussions with experts in the field, and previous research and surveys used to investigate graduate teachers early career experiences as well as their perceptions of their teacher education programs" (Mayer et al., 2017, p. 27). Regarding reliability of the questionnaire, the Australian Research Council (2011) reported that Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal consistency reliability, was 0.969 for the preparation for teaching question, and 0.766 for the support questions. A reliability coefficient over 0.90 is considered excellent and between 0.70 and 0.80 is considered acceptable (Cronbach, 1951). In order to establish content validity for the items, as suggested by Norman (2010) and Creswell (2015), the researcher asked a panel of five educators to review the questionnaires for content and clarity. Minor revisions suggested by the reviewers were incorporated in the questionnaire.

The Questionnaire on Beginning Teachers' Perceptions of Preparedness and Mentorship consists of 71 questions that are organized into four sections. Part A has six

questions related to the demographic information of the respondents, Part B has 34 questions associated with professional standards that require the graduates to rate the extent to which the teacher education prepared them and their current effectiveness in relation to the mentorship program, Part C has nine questions about the bachelor's degree program, and Part D has 22 questions related to beginning teaching and the beginning teacher mentorship program. The questions are both open-ended and closed-ended Likert questions. Open-ended questions were used to allow respondents to express their personal perceptions in detail.

The Questionnaire on Perceptions of Principals, Cooperating Teachers, and Heads of Department of Readiness of Graduates has 30 questions organized into three sections. The first five questions are demographic questions, and the other 25 questions used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 4 and open-ended questions. These questions were intended to obtain these stakeholders' perceptions of how effectively the beginning teachers are prepared by the special education program and the impact of the Jamaican Mentorship and Beginning Teachers Induction Programme. What are graduates' perceptions of their effectiveness as special educators? Researchers used Likert-type items in surveys to obtain statistical data that result in the weighted average and standard deviation scale. Johnson and Christensen (2014) stated, "Likert scales are commonly used to measure attitude, providing a range of responses to a given question or statement" (p. 217).

Procedures

Data collection. After approval from the university's Institutional Review Board and the Jamaica Ministry of Education was granted, an introductory email was sent to the potential participants. The introductory email included a participation consent letter that

provided an explanation of the survey research purpose and importance, as well as a secure link and password to the online questionnaire on Survey Monkey. Participants were asked to complete the survey within 1 week. A participation consent letter is used when the primary risk to participants is a possible loss of confidentiality and a signed consent form would be the only record that would connect participants to the study. A participation consent letter was appropriate because this survey research meets the requirements specified by Nova Southeastern University.

Survey Monkey is an online tool for gathering survey information. Symonds (2011) explained that Survey Monkey is a low-cost, web-based, asynchronous, data-gathering software, which is effective when used to gather information. Collins (2018) emphasized the effectiveness of Survey Monkey and highlighted the benefit of having the software rapidly organize the participants' responses. Survey Monkey allows responses to be collected anonymously, and access to the survey was password protected (Symonds, 2011). Symonds explained that online surveys are cost efficient, time saving, flexible, objective, accessible and convenient. To ensure participants were kept aware of the need to respond to the survey, two reminder emails were sent. One week, after the first email, a second email was sent to repeat the information in the first email, thank those who had already participated, and again provided a link to the questionnaire. After 2 weeks, another reminder and thank-you email was sent to participants. After 3 weeks, the anonymous questionnaire data were obtained from the online Survey Monkey system.

Data analysis. The data-analysis procedures were the same for the questionnaires completed by both groups of participants. The response rates and demographics of respondents were recorded and presented in tables. Then the Likert-item categories ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* were numerically coded. In addition,

percentages were utilized to present the responses for each research question. Percentages that show the relative frequency of survey responses enable comparisons among respondents (Collins, 2018). A univariate analysis using Microsoft Excel consisted of the computation of mean and median central tendency measures, frequencies, and standard deviations for each questionnaire item. A *t* test was performed using GraphPad QuickCalcs to compare the Likert-item responses of the graduates and the principals, cooperating teachers, and heads of departments in order to determine if they were statistically significantly different.

Researchers have suggested that this is an appropriate test for this calculation (De Winter & Dodou, 2010; Norman, 2010). The data from the open-ended questions were analyzed for themes, which describe the perceptions and experiences of the respondents, using the analyze tool and categorize feature in Survey Monkey (Cho, 2018). These steps suggested by Cho (2018) were followed:

1. Read through a couple of responses to get a sense of what folks are saying.

2. Map out a few general categories to put each of the responses in.

3. Create subcategories underneath your general ones to provide even richer detail.

4. Double check and recategorize.

Reduction of Researcher Bias

The researcher has a personal affiliation with the college, as she was one of the four program developers who worked on creating the program and course syllabi. The researcher is now the only developer still employed with the college and is now the Board of Study Chairperson for the program for the Teachers' College of Jamaica and the Programme Head. Given the researcher's position, it was important for the researcher to

be aware of the potential for researcher bias. The researcher followed the advice of Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013), who suggested that, to reduce possible bias, researchers should "put aside their repertoires of knowledge, beliefs, values and experiences" (p. 2). This was particularly important when the researcher analyzed the open-ended questions.

Confirmation bias happens when researchers interpret data and form conclusions based on their predetermined opinions (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007; University of Saskatchewan, 2013). To reduce this bias, the members of the researcher's dissertation committee reviewed the interpretation of all data collected. Selection bias occurs when the sample chosen does not represent the intended population (Creswell, 2015). This was not an issue in the current study because the participants are the total population of interest. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) maintained that researcher bias can be reduced with the use of accepted research tools. In this study, almost all of the Likert items came from the questionnaire developed by the Australian Research Council (2011).

Protection of Participants' Rights

Participants' rights for this research were ensured by anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent. All participants for the research were informed in the participation letter that their completion of the survey was solely on a voluntary basis and that no participant was paid to be a part of the research. Participants were free to respond to the questionnaires or decline to respond. Included in the participation letter was information regarding communication with the principal investigator, the coinvestigator, and the university's Institutional Review Board if the participants had any questions or concerns. Information obtained in this study was anonymous and confidential, and participants' name were not used in the reporting of information in publications or conference presentations.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine stakeholders' perceptions of the preparedness and effectiveness of an undergraduate teacher preparation program in special education at a teachers' college in western Jamaica. The stakeholders were graduates of the bachelor of education program in special education, cooperating teachers, mentor teachers, work supervisors, principals, and vice principals. In addition, the study investigated the stakeholders' perceptions of the importance of having a mentorship system for beginning teachers.

Data were collected and analyzed using two questionnaires: (a) Questionnaire on Beginning Teachers' Perceptions of Preparedness and Mentorship and (b) Questionnaire on Perceptions of Principals, Cooperating Teachers, and Heads of Departments on Readiness of Graduates. Both questionnaires were modified from the Australian Research Council's Linkage Project and used by Mayer et al. (2017). The participants completed the survey via Survey Monkey, which is an online secure data collection platform. The purpose of this chapter is to present the data analysis of the responses on these questionnaires in order to address the five research questions posed in this study.

Sample Description

The participants were selected using purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was the most appropriate sampling strategy because it was necessary that the graduates had to be teaching for at least a single semester and that the other stakeholders worked with the graduates in a school setting. The sample for this research consisted of these two population groups.

Graduates. Thirty-two graduates completed the first questionnaire. All the

graduates were female, 64.5% of the graduates were between 20 and 30 years old, 29% were between 31 and 40 years old, and 6.5% were between 41 and 50 years old. The largest group of graduates (37.5%) completed their bachelor of education program in special education in 2017, 25% completed in 2016, 18.7% completed in 2015, and 18.7% completed in 2018. Most of the graduates (56%) completed their undergraduate degree specializing in mild to moderate disabilities. The other areas of specialization were deaf and hard of hearing (28%) and multiple to severe disabilities (16%).

Table 2 shows that the largest group of graduates (47%) were employed at the secondary level working in the Alternative Pathway to Secondary Education program. The graduates in the Others category were employed in an inclusive school, in an inclusive classroom, and in the provision of private lessons. Most of the graduates (56.3%) were employed as full-time contract teachers, and others were employed as full-time permanent teachers (25.0%), part-time contract teachers (15.6%), part-time permanent teachers (3.0%), and provisional teachers in a clear vacancy position (3.0%).

Table 2

Graduates' Employment Settings

Location	No.	%
Resource room	1	0
Special education unit	1	3
Special education school	3	9
Secondary school	15	47
Associations for persons with disabilities	0	0
Regular classroom	9	28
Intervention classroom	3	9
Others	3	9

Other stakeholders. Thirty-six other stakeholders responded to the second

questionnaire. Most of the respondents were female (94.4%), and 5.6% were male. The positions held by these respondents included cooperating teachers (38.9%), work supervisors (38.9%), principals (30.6%), mentor teachers (25.0%), and vice principals (5.6%). Regarding the respondents' years of teaching experience, 5.6% had over 31 years of experience, 27.8% had 21 to 30 years of experience, 36.0% had 11 to 20 years of experience, 27.8% had 21 to 30 years of experience, 13.9% had 6 to 10 years of experience, and 7.0% had 0 to 5 years of experience. Concerning age, 25.0% were between 46 and 65 years old, 47.2% were between 36 and 45 years old, and 28.0% were between 26 and 35 years old. The largest group of respondents (38.9%) were employed at the primary schools, 22.2% were in secondary schools, 22.2% were in special education schools, 13.9% worked at special education units, 2.8% were at inclusive early childhood institutions, and 2.8% were at schools associated with persons with disabilities.

Results for Research Question 1

What are the graduates' perceptions of the bachelor of education degree program in special education? To answer the first research question, graduates' responses to statements from the first section of Part B: Professional Standards and Part C: The Bachelor of Education Degree Program in Special Education on the first questionnaire were analyzed. These questions are related to the beginning teacher performance standards of the Council for Exceptional Children and the Caribbean community. Tables 3 and 4 show the graduates' responses to Statements 1 to 17 from Part B: Professional Standards, which asked them to rate their agreement with statements related to their preparation by the bachelor of education degree program. The tables show the percentage of respondents choosing each response option. The numerical values for the ordered response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Table 3

Graduates' Perceptions of Their Preparation, Items 1 to 9

_____

Item	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	*SD*
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Know students and how they learn	2	6.5	1	3.2	1	3.2	13	42.0	14	45.0	4.16	1.08
Know students and manage diversity to promote inclusive class	3	9.7	0	0.0	1	3.2	14	45.0	13	42.0	4.10	1.15
Planning for and implementing effective teaching and learning	1	3.3	2	6.7	2	6.7	12	40.0	13	43.3	4.13	1.02
Know the content and how to teach it	0	0.0	2	6.5	1	3.2	18	58.0	10	32.3	4.16	0.77
Teaching culturally, linguistically and socioeconomically diverse learners	1	3.3	1	3.3	1	3.3	19	63.0	8	26.7	4.07	0.85
Modifications and implements the curriculum	1	3.2	1	3.2	3	9.7	15	48.4	11	35.5	4.10	0.93
Assessment and the provision of feedback and reporting on student learning	1	3.3	0	0.0	2	6.5	18	58.1	10	32.3	4.16	0.81
Discipline-based expertise	0	0.0	2	6.5	1	3.2	21	67.7	7	22.6	4.06	0.72
Use of ICT	0	0.0	4	13.8	3	10.3	17	58.6	5	17.2	3.79	0.89

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Note. SD = Strongly disagree. D = Disagree. N = Neither agree nor disagree. A = Agree. SA = Strongly agree. ICT = Information and communication technology.

The mean score for each question, which is based on the numerical values for the ordered response options, is also shown in the tables. A mean value of 2.40 or less suggests disagreement, mean values between 2.50 and of 3.90 suggest indecision, and a mean value of 4.00 or greater suggests agreement. For 15 of the 17 statements, the weighted means indicated the graduates agreed or strongly agreed with the statements. They mostly strongly agreed that they were prepared in the areas of classroom

management and professional ethics. However, the weighted mean indicated that the graduates were undecided about their preparation in the areas of the use of information and communication technology and collegiality.

Table 4

Graduates' Perceptions of Their Preparation, Items 10 to 17

Item	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	*SD*
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Literacy and numeracy	0	0.0	1	3.3	4	13.3	16	53.3	9	30.0	4.10	0.75
Pedagogy skills	1	3.2	0	0.0	4	12.9	19	61.3	7	22.6	4.00	0.80
Creation and maintenance of a supportive and safe learning environment	2	6.5	0	0.0	3	9.7	16	51.6	10	32.3	4.03	1.00
Classroom management	0	0.0	1	3.2	2	6.5	14	45.2	14	45.2	4.32	0.74
Professional engagement with parents-caregiver and the community	1	3.2	0	0.0	5	16.1	14	45.2	11	35.5	4.10	0.89
Collegiality	0	0.0	1	3.5	9	31.0	15	51.7	4	13.8	3.76	0.73
Professional ethics	1	3.2	1	3.2	1	3.2	12	40.0	15	50.0	4.30	0.94
Engagement with ongoing professional development	1	3.5	1	3.5	2	6.9	13	44.8	12	41.4	4.17	0.95

Note. SD = Strongly disagree. D = Disagree. N = Neither agree nor disagree. A = Agree. SA = Strongly agree.

Table 5 shows the graduates' responses to Statements 1 to 6 from Part C, which asked them to rate their agreement with statements related to the program. Again, the table shows the percentage of respondents choosing each response option. The numerical values for the ordered response options ranged from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). The mean score for each question is also shown in the tables. A mean value of 2.40 or less suggests agreement, mean values between 2.50 and of 3.90 suggest

indecision, and a mean value of 4.00 or greater suggests disagreement. Graduates agreed or strongly agreed with all of the statements. They mostly strongly agreed that the program effectively prepared them to work with children with special needs and that they would recommend the special education program to someone wishing to qualify as a teacher of special education.

Table 5

Graduates' Perceptions of the Bachelor of Education Program in Special Education

Item	SA		A		N		D		SD		Mean	SD
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
1. The skills I gained during the practicum components of my teacher education program were important.	8	26.7	16	53.3	1	3.3	0	0.0	5	16.7	2.27	1.31
2. The knowledge for teaching I gained through my specialization courses was important.	15	50.0	10	33.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	16.7	2.00	1.41
3. The practicum components of my teacher education program helped prepare me for my current teaching context.	7	24.1	15	51.7	4	13.8	0	0.0	3	10.3	2.21	1.13
4. The specialized, professional, and elective courses of my teacher education program helped prepare me for my current teaching context.	6	20.0	18	60.0	2	6.7	1	3.3	3	10.0	2.23	1.12
5. The special education undergraduate program effectively prepared me to work with children with special needs.	13	46.4	11	39.3	0	0.0	1	3.6	3	10.7	1.93	1.25
6. I would recommend the special education program to someone wishing to qualify as a teacher of special education.	4	13.8	0	0.0	1	3.5	6	20.7	18	62.1	1.83	1.37

Note. SA = Strongly agree. A = Agree. N = Neither agree nor disagree. D = Disagree. SD = Strongly disagree.

Question 7 in Part C of the questionnaire was an open-ended question that asked the graduates to state two strengths of the bachelor of education program in special education. Twenty-seven graduates responded to this item. The themes in the responses included gaining a recognition of the diversity of learners (38%) and knowledge of how to meet their needs (22%), including specific strategies (22%), learning how to teach in an inclusive setting (7%), and the supportive faculty (11%).

Results for Research Question 2

What are the graduates' perceptions of their effectiveness as special educators? To answer the second research question, graduates' responses to statements from the second section of Part B and Part D of the questionnaire were analyzed. These questions are also related to the beginning teacher performance standards of the Council for Exceptional Children and the Caribbean community. The tables show the percentage of respondents choosing each response option. The numerical values for the ordered response options ranged from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). The weighted average (i.e., mean) score calculated for each question is also shown in the tables. A mean value of 2.40 or less suggests disagreement, mean values between 2.50 and of 3.90 suggest indecision, and a mean value of 4.00 or greater suggests agreement.

Tables 6 and 7 show the graduates' responses to Statements 1 to 17 from Part B: Professional Standards, which asked them to indicate on the scale provided how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement as it related to them as student teachers and during their first year of being a teacher. The table shows the percentage of respondents choosing each response option. The statements are the same as those in the first section of Part B. The weighted means indicated the graduates agreed or strongly agreed with all of the statements.

Table 6

Graduates' Perceptions of Their Effectiveness As Special Educators, Items 1 to 9

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Item	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	*SD*
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Know students and how they learn	0	0.0	2	7.1	9	0.0	12	42.9	14	50.0	4.36	0.81
Know students and manage diversity to promote inclusive class	1	3.6	0	0.0	1	3.6	15	53.6	11	39.3	4.25	0.83
Planning for and implementing effective teaching and learning	1	3.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	17	60.7	10	35.7	4.25	0.78
Know the content and how to teach it	0	0.0	1	3.6	1	3.6	16	57.1	10	35.7	4.25	0.69
Teaching culturally, linguistically and socioeconomically diverse learners	1	3.6	0	0.0	1	3.6	16	57.1	10	35.7	4.21	0.82
Modifications and implements the curriculum	0	0.0	1	3.6	0	0.0	15	53.6	12	42.9	4.36	0.67
Assessment and the provision of feedback and reporting on student learning	1	3.6	0	0.0	1	3.6	12	42.9	14	50.0	4.36	0.85
Discipline-based expertise	0	0.0	1	3.6	1	3.6	17	60.7	9	32.1	4.21	0.67
Use of ICT	0	0.0	2	7.4	2	7.4	15	55.6	8	29.6	4.07	0.81

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Note. SD = Strongly disagree. D = Disagree. N = Neither agree nor disagree. A = Agree. SA = Strongly agree. ICT = Information and communication technology.

The graduate participants mostly strongly agreed with statements that were related to how they were prepared in the following areas of classroom instruction: (a) knowing students and how they learn, (b) modifying and implementing the curriculum, (c) assessing, (d) providing of feedback, (e) reporting on student learning, (f) teaching literacy and numeracy, and (g) creating and maintaining a supportive and safe learning environment. The questions in Part D asked the graduates to indicate how much they

agreed or disagreed with each statement as it related to their success in their current teaching position. The weighted means indicated the graduates agreed or strongly agreed with all the statements. They mostly strongly agreed that they were enhancing student wellbeing, improving student skills, and improving student understanding. The results are shown in Table 8.

Table 7

Graduates' Perceptions of Their Effectiveness As Special Educators, Items 10 to 17

Item	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	*SD*
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Literacy and numeracy	0	0.0	1	3.6	1	3.6	13	46.4	13	46.4	4.36	0.72
Pedagogy skills	1	3.6	0	0.0	2	7.4	16	57.1	9	32.1	4.14	0.83
Creation and maintenance of a supportive and safe learning environment	0	0.0	1	3.6	1	3.6	11	39.3	15	53.6	4.43	0.73
Classroom management	1	3.6	1	3.6	0	0.0	12	42.9	14	50.0	4.32	0.93
Professional engagement with parents-caregivers and the community	1	3.6	0	0.0	2	7.1	12	42.9	13	46.4	4.29	0.88
Collegiality	0	0.0	1	3.6	2	7.1	16	57.1	9	32.1	4.18	0.71
Professional ethics	1	3.6	0	0.0	1	3.6	15	53.6	11	39.3	4.32	0.85
Engagement with ongoing professional development	1	3.6	0	0.0	1	3.6	14	50.0	12	42.9	4.29	0.84

Note. SD = Strongly disagree. D = Disagree. N = Neither agree nor disagree. A = Agree. SA = Strongly agree.

Question 14 from Part D asked graduates to identify the two areas in which they have had the most success as a beginning teacher. Twenty-four respondents answered this question. The areas that the graduates identified were classroom management, catering to diverse learners, engagement with parents and the community, and professional ethics.

Table 8

Graduates' Perceptions of Their Success in Teaching and Student Engagement

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Item	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	*SD*
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
1. Enhancing student well-being	1	3.5	0	0.0	1	3.5	18	62.1	9	31.0	4.17	0.79
2. Increasing student engagement	1	3.5	0	0.0	3	10.3	17	58.6	8	27.6	4.07	0.83
3. Improving student school-based assessment data	1	3.5	0	0.0	4	13.8	15	51.7	9	31.0	4.07	0.87
4. Improving student performance on standardized tests	1	3.6	0	0.0	2	7.1	16	57.1	9	32.0	4.14	0.83
5. Improving student subject-matter knowledge	1	3.5	0	0.0	3	10.3	18	62.1	7	24.1	4.03	0.81
6. Improving student skills	1	3.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	20	69.0	8	27.6	4.17	0.75
7. Improving student understanding	1	3.5	0	0.0	1	3.5	18	62.1	9	31.0	4.17	0.79

Note. SD = Strongly disagree. D = Disagree. N = Neither agree nor disagree. A = Agree. SA = Strongly agree.

Results for Research Question 3

What are the perceptions of principals, heads of departments, and cooperating teachers of beginning teachers who graduated from the bachelor of education degree program in special education? To answer the third research question, data from Part B: Perceptions of Beginning Teacher and Question 1 and Questions 6 to 8 from Part C: Perceptions of the Bachelor program in Special Education and a Mentorship Program in the second questionnaire were analyzed. These statements are also related to the beginning teacher performance standards of the Council for Exceptional Children and the Caribbean community. Tables 9 and 10 show the other stakeholders' agreement with statements related to the graduates who are beginning teachers they have worked with.

Table 9

Other Stakeholders' Perceptions of Beginning Teachers, Items 1 to 9

	SD		D		N		A		SA			
Item	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	Mean	*SD*
Know students and how they learn	1	2.8	1	2.8	4	11.1	26	72.2	4	11.1	3.86	0.75
Know students and manage diversity to promote inclusive class	1	2.8	2	5.6	2	5.6	24	66.7	7	19.4	3.94	0.85
Planning for and implementing effective teaching and learning	0	0.0	2	5.8	3	8.6	22	62.9	8	22.9	4.03	0.74
Know the content and how to teach it	0	0.0	2	5.7	3	8.6	24	68.6	6	17.6	3.97	0.70
Teaching culturally, linguistically and socioeconomically diverse learners	1	2.9	2	5.9	4	11.8	21	61.9	6	17.7	3.85	0.88
Modifications and implements the curriculum	0	0.0	2	5.8	4	11.4	22	62.9	7	20.0	3.97	0.74
Assessment and the provision of feedback and reporting on student learning	1	2.9	0	0.0	4	11.4	22	62.9	8	22.9	4.03	0.77
Discipline-based expertise	1	2.9	0	0.0	7	20.0	24	68.6	3	8.6	3.80	0.71
Use of ICT	1	2.9	3	8.6	4	11.4	21	60.0	6	17.1	3.80	0.92

Note. SD = Strongly disagree. D = Disagree. N = Neither agree nor disagree. A = Agree. SA = Strongly agree. ICT = Information and communication technology.

The tables show the percentage of respondents choosing each response option. The numerical values for the ordered response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The weighted average (i.e., mean) score for each question, which is based on the numerical values for the ordered response options, is also shown in the tables. A mean value of 2.40 or less suggests disagreement, mean values between 2.50 and of 3.90 suggest indecision, and a mean value of 4.00 or greater suggests agreement.

For these three statements, the weighted means indicated the other stakeholders agreed or strongly agreed that graduates know the content and how to teach it, have discipline-based expertise, and are knowledgeable in pedagogy skills. For all of the other areas, the weighted means were in the undecided category, but they were close to agreement as they were between 3.77 and 3.97.

Table 10

Other Stakeholders' Perceptions of Beginning Teachers, Items 10 to 17

Item	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	*SD*
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Literacy and numeracy	0	0.0	2	5.7	4	11.4	21	60.0	8	22.9	4.00	0.76
Pedagogy skills	0	0.0	2	5.7	6	17.1	25	71.4	2	5.7	3.77	0.64
Creation and maintenance of a supportive and safe learning environment	1	2.9	1	2.9	2	5.7	25	71.4	6	17.1	3.97	0.77
Classroom management	1	2.9	0	0.0	6	17.1	22	62.9	6	17.1	3.91	0.77
Professional engagement with parents-caregivers and the community	1	2.9	0	0.0	5	14.3	23	65.7	6	17.1	3.94	0.75
Collegiality	1	2.9	0	0.0	6	17.6	24	70.6	3	8.8	3.82	0.71
Professional ethics	2	5.7	0	0.0	4	11.4	23	65.7	6	17.1	3.89	0.89
Engagement with ongoing professional development	1	2.9	2	5.7	5	14.3	23	65.7	4	11.4	3.77	0.83

Note. SD = Strongly disagree. D = Disagree. N = Neither agree nor disagree. A = Agree. SA = Strongly agree.

Question 6 was an open-ended question that asked the other stakeholders to state two major strengths of the bachelor of education degree program in special education based on their interactions with the graduates of the program. The overall areas stated by the stakeholders included practicum component, allowing students real-life teaching

experience, high-quality content, pedagogical skills, admirable quality of graduates, awareness and understanding of faculty members, marketable graduates, and that graduates are equipped to teach students with varying disabilities. Question 7 was an open-ended question that asked the other stakeholders to state two changes that should be made to the special education program. Twenty-five other stakeholders responded to this question. The prominent themes included more field experience interacting with various types and ages of children with special needs, the opportunity for student teachers to develop management skills, more emphasis on lesson plan development, and more sign language exposure for student teachers not specializing in deaf education.

Results for Research Question 4

Are there any differences in perceptions of graduates and other stakeholders of the graduates' effectiveness as teachers? Fisher's exact test was conducted to determine if any statistically significant differences existed between the percentage of graduates and other stakeholders who strongly agreed and agreed with statements regarding the graduates' effectiveness as teachers (see Tables 11 and 12). For nine of the 17 statements, there was a statistically significant difference in the percentage of respondents agreeing with the statement. In all nine instances of disagreement, more graduates than other stakeholders agreed with the statement.

The three statements with the greatest difference in perceptions were making modifications and implementing the curriculum, having discipline-based expertise, and engaging with ongoing professional development. In addition, an independent-samples t test was conducted to compare the overall perceptions of graduates and other stakeholders regarding the graduates' effectiveness as teachers. There was a significant difference in the perceptions of graduates ($M = 92.29$, $SD = 2.76$) and other stakeholders

(M = 82.71, SD = 8.54), $t(17)$ = 8.8253, p = .0001. More graduates than other

stakeholders indicated overall agreement with the statements.

Table 11

Perceptions by Percentage of Graduates and Other Stakeholders of the Graduates, Items 1 to 9

	SA and A		
Item	Graduates	Other stakeholders	p
Know students and how they learn	93	83	.0484*
Know students and manage diversity to promote inclusive class	93	86	.1652
Planning for and implementing effective teaching and learning	97	86	.0093*
Know the content and how to teach it	93	86	.1652
Teaching culturally, linguistically and socioeconomically diverse learners	93	80	.0119*
Makes modifications and implements the curriculum	97	83	.0015*
Assessment and the provision of feedback and reporting on student learning	93	86	.1652
Has discipline-based expertise	93	78	.0043*
Uses ICT	86	87	1.0000

Note. SA = Strongly agree. A = Agree. ICT = Information and communication technology.
*p < .05.

Results for Research Question 5

To what extent do mentorship programs for beginning teachers provide the

necessary support? To answer the fifth research question, data were analyzed from Items

2 to 5 from Part C: Perceptions of the Bachelor Program in Special Education and a

Mentorship Program of the second questionnaire for other stakeholders and Items 16 to

22 from Part D: Beginning Teaching and Beginning Teacher Mentorship Program of the

first questionnaire for graduates.

Other stakeholder responses. Item 2 on the second questionnaire for other stakeholders asked if they believed having a mentorship program was an excellent way to help the beginning teachers transition from college to work life. There were 73% who strongly agreed, 24% who agreed, and 3% who strongly disagreed. When the other stakeholders were asked if their workplace participates in the Jamaican Ministry of Education's Mentorship and Beginning Teacher Induction Program, 58% of the other stakeholders indicated they do participate in the program.

Table 12

Perceptions by Percentage of Graduates and Other Stakeholders of the Graduates, Items 10 to 17

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	SA and A		
Item	Graduates	Other stakeholders	*p*
Literacy and numeracy	92	83	.0856
Pedagogy skills	89	77	.0373*
Creation and maintenance of a supportive and safe learning environment	93	88	.3350
Classroom management	93	80	.0119*
Professional engagement with parents or caregivers and the community	89	83	.1170
Collegiality	89	80	.1170
Professional ethics	93	83	.0484*
Engagement with ongoing professional development	93	77	.0025*

Note. SA = Strongly agree. A = Agree.
*$p < .05$.

The other stakeholders who indicated their workplace participate in the Jamaican Mentorship and Beginning Teachers Induction Program rated the effectiveness of the

program. Eleven percent of the respondents perceived that it is extremely effective, 44%
considered it to be very effective, 33% indicated it was moderately effective, and 11%
rated it as only slightly effective. When the other stakeholders who did not have the
program were asked why it was not offered at their workplace, the reasons given were
that they either had no training or they had no knowledge of the program.

     Graduate responses. Item 18 on the first questionnaire for graduates asked if
they were part of a mentorship program at their workplace; 15% responded affirmatively
to this item, and 85% responded that they were not part of a program. Of the graduates
who participate in a mentorship program, 28% rated it as being extremely effective, 14%
rated it as being very effective, 42.9% rated it as being somewhat effective, and 14%
rated it as being not at all effective. Item 21 asked the graduates to list five important
components of a mentorship program. The graduates suggested that mentors should be
excellent teachers, trained in mentoring, dedicated to the mentoring relationship, willing
to meet regularly, and able to respond to mentees' needs. Mentees should be able to
enhance their skills in areas such as lesson planning, instructional strategies, developing
the curriculum, resolving conflicts, and pedagogy. The mentoring relationship should
involve coaching, collaboration, interactive sessions, visits to schools to observe teachers,
and addressing teachers' challenges. A handbook for beginning teachers that includes
information about best practice ideas for mentees would be welcome.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine stakeholders' perceptions of the preparedness and effectiveness of graduates of a teacher preparation program in special education at a teachers' college in western Jamaica. The participants were the recent full-time graduates of the program and other stakeholders (i.e., cooperating teachers, principals, and heads of departments). In addition, information was gathered and analyzed regarding the perceptions of graduates and other stakeholders of the mentorship program for beginning teachers to help them transition from the teachers' college to work.

The participants of the study included 32 graduates from the program, 14 work supervisors, 14 cooperating teachers, 11 principals, nine mentor teachers, and two vice principals. The data were gathered from two questionnaires: one for graduates and one for other stakeholders. Both questionnaires were modified from the Australian Research Council's Linkage Project and used by Mayer et al. (2017). The questionnaires were administered via Survey Monkey, which is an online software program that collects data and completes statistical analysis while maintaining the participant's confidentiality and anonymity.

As teacher preparation programs are required to provide high-quality programs, they are under scrutiny and are being held more accountable, and, in some cases, varying government policies and mandates have been issued (Davis, 2004; Henry et al., 2012). Henry et al. (2012) explained that teacher preparation programs are to "be held accountable for producing effective teachers" (p. 337). Stakeholders' perceptions of the effectiveness and preparedness of teacher preparation programs are valuable because

these responses speak to the programs' worth, value, marketability, and longevity. In addition, how beginning teachers perceive the quality of training they received during college will provide valuable information to the teachers' colleges (Brown et al., 2015; Wasonga, Wanzare, & Dawo, 2015).

It is equally important for beginning teachers to be part of a mentorship program. Research on novice teachers' transition and socialization into the classroom shows that induction and mentorship programs are essential for the survival of beginning teachers (Kutsyuruba, Walker, Stasel, & Al Makhamreh, 2019). Other researchers posited that induction and mentorship programs represented a means to overcome any disconnect in the curriculum between teacher preparation programs and the reality of work (Wasonga et al., 2015). The theoretical framework for the study was based on the social cognitive theory of Bandura (1977, 1982). The underlying notion of social cognitive theory is the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy speaks to one's perceived ability to succeed in doing a task (Bandura, 1977). Several studies have been conducted to investigate the self-efficacy of teachers and the link to teacher effectiveness (Clark & Newberry, 2018; Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Discussion of Results

Research Question 1. What are the graduates' perceptions of the bachelor of education degree program in special education? The weighted average results calculated from the 17 items regarding their opinions of their teacher education program preparation show that the graduates were in agreement that they were prepared in 15 of the 17 areas. They were undecided about whether they had been prepared in for the use of information and communication technology and in collegiality. The overall average shows agreement. The graduates also agreed with the six statements about their special education program,

including that the program effectively prepared them to be special educators and that they would highly recommend the program to proposed candidates. Of the graduates who responded to the open-ended question about the strengths of the program, the highest percentage indicated that gaining recognition of the diversity of learners was a strength.

These findings are in keeping with the study conducted by Mayer et al. (2017) with 5,000 Australian education program graduates and 1,000 school principals. The authors reported that, overall, the graduates of the program believed their teacher education program effectively prepared them, in nine key areas, to be beginning teachers. Over 75% of them indicated that they were well prepared in pedagogy and professional ethics. The current findings are also consistent with those of Calzada (2018), who conducted a study to see if graduates from a general teacher preparation program found that their program of study was useful in preparing them to teach children with special needs. The results of the study revealed that the graduates thought that they received adequate training in the skills needed to cater to the needs of children in inclusive classrooms.

The study conducted by Lebsock (2016) did not support the findings of the current study. The study conducted by Lebsock used a qualitative approach consisting of a survey and focus groups. Teachers participated in the study that "examined the influence a teacher education reading course on teacher actual classroom reading instruction" (p. ii). The results of the study revealed that, although the reading course had some strengths, the beginning teachers had difficulties implementing the strategies taught (Lebsock, 2016).

Research Question 2. What are graduates' perceptions of their effectiveness as special educators? The weighted average results calculated from the 17 items in Part B of

the survey, regarding their perceived effectiveness of themselves as special educators, were used to answer this question. The findings show that the graduates agreed that they are effective special educators based on the standards of beginning teachers set out by the Council for Exceptional Children (2015) and the Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education (2013). The lowest of the agreement scores involved the use of information and communication technology.

There are limited studies examining how special education teachers perceive their effectiveness as special educators. However, a study by Melnick and Meister (2008), with teachers of special need students, supports the results in the current study. These researchers conducted a panel survey design that monitored the perceived level of self-efficacy of beginning teachers working with special needs children in an inclusion-enhancement program. To a large extent, teacher self-perceptions of effectiveness and self-efficacy are the same. The results in the current study, regarding graduates' positive perceived effectiveness, are consistent with the study conducted by Mayer et al. (2017).

Self-efficacy is important, as this belief helps to determine one's confidence in personal effectiveness. The study conducted by Savas et al. (2014) examined the relationship of 163 primary and secondary teachers between their self-efficacy and burnout. The findings showed that there was a "significant, negative correlation between teacher self-efficacy and burnout levels of the participants" (Savas et al., 2014, p. 162). Those teachers who had low self-efficacy levels were more likely to suffer burnout than those with higher self-efficacy levels. Therefore, it is paramount to look at teacher self-efficacy. Melnick and Meister (2008) conducted a study with a panel survey design that monitored the changes of 67 beginning teachers working with special needs children in an inclusion-enhancement program and their perceived level of self-efficacy from their

preservice training to be beginning teachers. The findings revealed that the beginning teachers perceived a sense of increase self-efficacy during each stage of their teacher development. This finding is consistent with the current study.

The current findings are also consistent with those of the Montoya (2018) study, which used a mixed-method approach to investigate the self-efficacy of 67 novice and experienced special education teachers who had been faced with difficulties task of teaching students with disabilities who are English-language learners. Montoya's study, like the current study, is based on Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, and the researcher compared the perceived sense of self-efficacy between novice and experienced special education teachers. The findings showed that there were no statistically significant differences in perceived self-efficacy between the two groups of teachers when working with students with disabilities who were English-language learners. Montoya also noted that both groups of teachers said they would have benefited if mentorship was included in their beginning years of teaching.

Gavish, Bar-On and Shein-Kahalon (2016) conducted a study that examined the perceptions of 93 Israeli beginning special education teachers of their self-efficacy in educational roles and responsibilities. These findings were similar to the current study and to those of Mayer et al. (2017), in that the graduates' perceived levels of self-efficacy as teachers were not consistent across all of their job responsibilities. For example, although a large percentage of the graduates believed that they were able to successfully manage student crises, a smaller percentage believed that they could effectively work together with parents and other members of the faculty.

Research Question 3. What are the perceptions of principals, heads of departments, and cooperating teachers of beginning teachers who graduated from the

bachelor of education degree program in special education? The results calculated from the 17 items in Part B, regarding their perceived effectiveness of the graduates as beginning teachers, show that the other stakeholders agreed that the beginning teachers know the content and how to teach it, have discipline-based expertise, and are knowledgeable in pedagogy skills. However, for the remaining items, the other stakeholders neither agreed nor disagreed with the statements as they applied to the graduates.

The results in the current study do not support the findings of Mayer et al. (2017), whose findings showed that the principals agreed that all of the statements, except one, applied to the graduates. The only statement that they were undecided about was that the graduates were teaching culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse learners. In addition, the principals from Mayer et al. study perceived that the areas in which the graduates were more effective included engaging in professional learning, professional ethics, and collegiality. However, in the current study, those areas in which the graduates were perceived to be less effective by the other stakeholders were in creating and maintaining a supportive and safe learning environment and engaging in professional learning.

On the other hand, the current study results support some of the findings of Shepherd and Devers (2017) in their survey of 423 principals regarding their perceptions of beginning teachers. Like the other stakeholders in the current study, the principals were satisfied with the general instructional abilities and content knowledge of the teachers. However, also like the other stakeholders, the principals were less satisfied with the teacher's differentiated instruction, professional development and classroom management.

Research Question 4. Are there any differences in perceptions of graduates and other stakeholders of the graduates' effectiveness as teachers? In a comparison of the perceptions of graduates and other stakeholders, the overall results indicated that the difference in their perceptions was statistically significant. A higher percentage of graduates than other stakeholders perceived that the graduates were effective. This finding did not support the results of the Mayer et al. (2017) study, in which a higher percentage of principals than graduates perceived that the teachers were effective. The current study also does not support the findings of Wright (2017), who conducted a study regarding the preparedness readiness of beginning teachers. When the beginning teachers' perceptions and their principals' perceptions of readiness were compared, the results showed that there was not a significant difference between their perceptions in the areas of classroom management, professionalism, curriculum and assessment, and content knowledge and instruction. Although there was no statistically significant difference between the groups, the score for the graduates was usually the higher one than the principals.

Implications of Findings

Mentorship programs. The findings of this study show that 73% of the other stakeholders surveyed believe mentorship programs are important. However, only 58% of them indicated that their workplace participates in one, and 85% of the graduates indicated that they were not part of a mentorship program where they work. The graduates rated the effectiveness of their workplace mentorship program as 28% extremely effective, 14% very effective, 43% somewhat effective, and 14% not at all effective. Therefore, there needs to be a reexamination of the Beginning Teacher Mentorship Program by the Ministry of Education at the teachers' college. The students

are required to attend a mandatory 2-day induction workshop, and the intention is there

will be continuity of program at the workplace. Other research highlighted the

importance of having an effective mentorship program for beginning teachers to increase

teacher retention. If beginning teachers are not adequately mentored, within the first 3 to

5 years of teaching, at least 25% will leave the workforce. It is the view of researchers

(Ingersoll & Strong, 2011) that the induction period of a beginning teacher's introduction

into the teaching profession must be memorable and make an impact on their lives.

According to Wasonga et al. (2015), any gaps in the teacher preparation program can be

addressed by these teachers participating in a mentorship program.

Additionally, Hudson's (2012) findings verified the need for more support to be

given the beginning teacher in an induction program. Hudson stressed the importance of

induction programs where the beginning teachers are introduced to the school culture and

the operational aspect of teaching. However, the mentorship aspect is where the

beginning teacher will get support to develop their teaching practices in areas such as

"pedagogical knowledge development and behaviour management" (Hudson, 2012, p.

71). Mentorship programs also help to alleviate any shortfall between the beginning

teachers' preparation and what the teachers are required to do in the classroom. When

beginning teachers are in the classroom, they are expected to accomplish the same tasks

as an experienced teacher (Hudson, 2012).

Hudson (2012) stated, "Beginning teachers are, on average, less effective than

more experienced ones. High-quality induction programs accelerate new teachers'

professional growth, making them more effective faster" (p. 71). Hudson also postulated,

"Understanding how to support beginning teachers must include beginning teachers'

views on how they experience support within their schools. These viewpoints may help to

devise strategies for supporting them in their early careers" (p. 72). DeAngelis, Wall, and Che (2013) reinforced the suggestion made by Hudson, indicating that a collaborative approach between teacher preparation programs and beginning teachers' workplaces would better help beginning teachers because both parties would take more responsibility for the nurturing of the beginning teachers.

Other areas of improvement. Although the other stakeholders have a positive perception of beginning teachers, who graduated from the Bachelor of Education Degree Program in Special Education, the data showed some areas where improvement can be made. These areas included the use of information technology, knowledge in pedagogy, a collegial workplace and graduates' participation in professional development. The Special Education Department, the Boards of Studies, and Curriculum Board at Teachers College of Jamaica need to cooperate to develop strategies to overcome any shortfall in these areas. A culture of excellence must be instilled and developed during the teacher preparation period at college. The college offers a professional-development seminar to the fourth-year students, and, in the first 3 years of the program, there is a Principal's Hour, where program students can meet with principals. These two interactive sessions can be strengthened and utilized to meet any shortfalls expressed by these stakeholders.

In particular, Tondeur et al. (2012) offered suggestions for ways that this can be accomplished in the area of technology integration. The Tondeur et al. meta-ethnography study evaluated strategies used to help preservice teachers integrate technology into their instructional time. The researchers identified these key themes related to the preparation of preservice teachers to integrate technology:

1. Aligning theory and practice.

2. Using teacher educators as role models possible reasons for the lack of

knowledge, skills, and resources with regards to technology may be due, in part, to a lack of teacher educators as role models using technology.

3. Reflecting on attitudes about the role of technology in education.

4. Learning technology by design.

5. Collaborating with peers.

6. Scaffolding authentic technology experiences.

7. Moving from traditional assessment to continuous feedback in the pre-service classroom.

8. Policies at the institutional level.

9. Technology planning and leadership.

10. Cooperation within and between institutions.

11. Staff development.

12. Access to resources.

13. Systematic and systemic change efforts.

Limitations

There are several limitations associated with this study. Because only 32 students have graduated from the 4-year full-time bachelor's program and have worked as a teacher for at least 3 months, the number of graduate participants was small. However, because this is the total population of graduates of interest for this study, Lund Research (2012b) suggested that it is appropriate. Moreover, only half of the possible number of invited other stakeholders (i.e., principals, head of departments, cooperating teachers and mentorship teachers) completed the survey. The small number of participants limits the generalizability of the results (Gall et al., 2014). Also, because the participants were not randomly selected, there is an internal validity threat of selection bias (Creswell, 2015).

In addition, the responses in term of the program effectiveness are limited to the views of the participating stakeholders polled in the research and may not be generalized to stakeholders of other programs (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Mitchell & Jolley, 2013). Respondent bias, which is "any error in a study that is a result of participants' inability or unwillingness to provide accurate or honest answers to a survey" (University of Saskatchewan, 2013, p. 2), could have occurred in this study. Another limitation of using a survey design is that the researcher cannot ask for more details about the respondents' answers (Birmingham City University, 2011). Using an online survey platform also had an additional limitation, as possible respondents' ability to respond could have been affected due to Internet connectivity, time, and interest. Also, the researcher cannot ensure that the participants answer all the questions on the questionnaire.

Recommendation for Future Research

Based on the findings of this applied dissertation, the researcher makes the following recommendations for future research:

1. A study using a large number of participants would allow for greater generalizability of the results. Also, surveying parents, lecturers, and external assessors would allow for a wider range of perceptions of the effectiveness of the graduates as beginning teachers.

2. This research study could be replicatedwith graduates from another teachers' college offering an undergraduate degree in special education using the same curriculum.

3. A longitudinal study could be done to follow the graduates of the special education undergraduate program. The results can be used by the college to develop professional development courses that would be beneficial to graduates.

4. Having targeted professional-development courses will also help the beginning teachers transition into the classroom from the undergraduate program, and the reality of the classroom can be addressed.

5. The study could also be replicated by other specialization programs under the Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica to have graduates' and other stakeholders' perception of their programs. Also, the findings from each program can be compared, thus giving Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica the perceptions of other various stakeholders of all programs being offered. This information would allow college administrators to make necessary modifications and adjustments.

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Appendix A

Standards

Standards

Item 1: Jamaica Teaching Council Principles of Teaching for Beginning Teachers

Standards	Sample indicator for entry/induction (beginning) teachers
1. Knows the subject(s) that he or she teaches	"Demonstrates sound knowledge of content relevant to curriculum areas" (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 58).
2. Knows how to teach the subject for which he or she is responsible	"Uses strategies and approaches, methodologies, modern technologies and resources suitable for teaching the subject" (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 58).
3. Knows his or her students – effectively manages diversity to promote inclusive classes	"Demonstrates knowledge of the stages of expectation intellectual, physical, and social development" (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 59).
4. Sharpens his or her professional skills	"Is up-to-date with knowledge and developments in the subject area" (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 61).
5. Interact with parents and communities	"Communicates with parents/guardians and other caregivers to stimulate interest in student progress" (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 62).
6. Conducts himself or herself in a manner that will uplift the profession	"Teacher acts with the knowledge that teaching is a public activity and his or her behavior should not bring the profession into disrepute" (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 62).

Item 2: Caribbean Community Generic Teacher Performance Standards for Entry-Level

or Induction-Level Teachers

Domain 1: Professional knowledge – "what a teacher is expected to know and understand in order to function effectively at each career stage" (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013, p .42). "1.1 Their subject content and how to teach it 1.2 Their students' characteristics 1.3 How students learn and the factors that affect learning 1.4 The official curriculum 1.5 Information and communication technologies and how to use them" (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013, p. 41).
Domain 2: Professional practice – "what a teacher is expected to be able to do effectively in applying professional knowledge at each career stage" (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013, p. 41). "2.1 Plan for and assess student learning 2.2 Create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments 2.3 Monitor, record and report on student performance 2.4 Communicate effectively with students" (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013, p. 41).
Domain 3: Professional attitudes – "the dispositions and attitudes that a teacher is expected to manifest at each career stage" (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013, p. 41). "3.1 Continually seek to improve their professional knowledge and practice 3.2 Are active members of their professional communities and the wider community." (Caribbean Task Force for Teacher Education, 2013, p. 41).

Item 3: Summary of CEC Initial Preparation Standards

1. Learner Development and Individual Learning Differences The beginning special education teacher must understand how exceptionalities impact the learning of an individual with exceptionalities (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015).
2. Learning Environments The beginning special education teacher creates or modifies a learning space to ensure that the learning environment of students is safe and nurturing, thus allowing students to be empowered to learn (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015).
3. Curricular Content Knowledge The beginning special education teacher should be exposed to the curriculum of both primary and special education and should be able to make modifications to those curricula for students (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015).
4. Assessment The beginning special education teacher should be able to use various assessment forms and data sources to monitor students' performance with the aim of improving instruction and learning (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015).
5. Instructional Planning and Strategies The beginning special education teacher should select various suitable instructional methods and strategies to cater to individualized needs of students based on variables such as interest, needs, and environment. The use of assistive technology must also be incorporated when needed, in addition to the use of varying collaborative strategies (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015).
6. Professional Learning and Ethical Practice The beginning special education teacher should be aware of the knowledge foundation for special education and be aware of the guiding standards and principles that guide professional and ethical practice (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015).
7. Collaboration The beginning special education teacher should be equipped with the prerequisite skills to work collaboratively with various stakeholders within in order to effectively serve students (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015).

Item 4: Summary of CEC Advanced Preparation Standards

1. Assessment   "Special education specialists use valid and reliable assessment practices to minimize bias" (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015, p. 1).
2. Curricular Content Knowledge "Special education specialists use their knowledge of general and specialized curricula to improve programs, supports, and services at classroom, school, community, and system levels" (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015, p. 2).
3. Programs, Services, and Outcomes "Special education specialists facilitate the continuous improvement of general and special education programs, supports, and services at the classroom, school, and system levels for individuals with exceptionalities" (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015, p. 3).
4. Research and Inquiry "Special education specialists conduct, evaluate, and use inquiry to guide professional practice" (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015, p. 4).
5. Leadership and Policy "Special education specialists provide leadership to formulate goals, set and meet high professional expectations, advocate for effective policies and evidence-based practices, and create positive and productive work environments." (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015, p. 5).
6. Professional and Ethical Practice "Special education specialists use foundational knowledge of the field and professional ethical principles and practice standards to inform special education practice, engage in lifelong learning, advance the profession, and perform leadership responsibilities to promote the success of professional colleagues and individuals with exceptionalities" (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015, p. 6).
7. Collaboration "Special education specialists collaborate with stakeholders to improve programs, services, and outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities and their families" (Council for Exceptional Children, 2015, p. 7).

Appendix B

Questionnaire on Beginning Teachers' Perceptions of Preparedness and Mentorship

Questionnaire on Beginning Teachers' Perceptions of Preparedness and Mentorship

This questionnaire is designed to collect information on graduates' perception of the Bachelor of Education Degree Program in Special Education. The questionnaire is divided into four sections. Read each item carefully, then answer as accurately as possible. Responses to this questionnaire are confidential and anonymous. Thank you for participating.

Instructions: Please check your answer and type your response in the space provided where appropriate.

Part A: Demographic Profile

1. Gender: ___ Male   ___ Female
2. Age:
      ___19- 30   ___31- 40
      ___41- 50   ___51- 60

3. Which year did you complete the Bachelor of Education Degree Program in Special Education?
      ___2015
      ___2016
      ___2017
      ___2018
4. In which area did you specialize for your Special Education degree
      ___Deaf and Hard of Hearing
      ___Multiple Disabilities
      ___Mild to Moderate Disabilities
5. Where are you currently teaching?
      ___Resource room
      ___Special Education Unit
      ___Special Education School
      ___Secondary School (APSE)
      ___Associations for persons with disabilities
      ___Regular classroom
      ___Intervention classroom
      ___Other (please specify) _____
6. What is your employment type?
      ___Full time - Permanent
      ___Full time - Contract
      ___ Part time - Permanent
      ___Part time - Contract
      ____Other (please specify) ____

Part B   Professional Standards
Now that you have been in the teaching profession for some time, think about your

effectiveness as a teacher now AND think back to your teacher education program. Indicate on the scale provided how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements as it relates to you as student teacher and during the first year of your being a teacher. Please select one answer for every choice.

My teacher education program prepared me in the following area…	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Know students and how they learn					
2. Know students and manage diversity to promote an inclusive class					
3. Planning for and implementing effective teaching and learning					
4. Know the content and how to teach it					
5. Teaching culturally, linguistically and socio-economically diverse learners					
6. Modifications and implements of the curriculum					
7. Assessment and the provision of feedback and reporting on student learning					
8. Discipline-based expertise					
9. Use of ICT					
10. Literacy and numeracy					
11. Pedagogy skill					

12. Creation and maintenance of a supportive and safe learning environment					
13. Classroom management					
14. Professional engagement with parents/caregivers and the community					
15. Collegiality					
16. Professional ethics					
17. Engagement with ongoing professional development					

I am effective in the following area now...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Know students and how they learn					
2. Know students and manage diversity to promote inclusive class					
3. Planning for and implementing effective teaching and learning					
4. Know the content and how to teach it					
5. Teaching culturally, linguistically and socio-economically diverse learners					

6. Modifications and implements of the curriculum				
7. Assessment and the provision of feedback and reporting on student learning				
8. Discipline-based expertise				
9. Use of ICT				
10. Literacy and numeracy				
11. Pedagogy skill				
12. Creation and maintenance of a supportive and safe learning environment				
13. Classroom management				
14. Professional engagement with parents/caregivers and the community				
15. Collegiality				
16. Professional ethics				
17. Engagement with ongoing professional development				

Part C The Bachelor of Education Degree Program in Special Education

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The skills I gained during the practicum components of my teacher education program were important.					
2. The knowledge for teaching I gained through my specialization courses were important.					
3. The practicum components of my teacher education program helped prepare me for my current teaching context.					
4. The specialized, professional and elective courses of my teacher education program helped prepare me for my current teaching context.					
5. The special education undergraduate program effectively prepared me to work with children with special needs.					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6. I would recommend the special education program to someone wishing to qualify as a teacher of special education.					

7. List two strengths of the special education program.
    Strength 1_____
    Strength 2 _____

8. List two changes that should be made to the special education program.
    Change 1 _____
    Change 2 _____

9. Do you have any additional comments about the special education teacher education program?

_____

Part D Beginning Teaching and Beginning Teacher Mentorship Program

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
In my current teaching position, I have been successful in . . .					
1. Enhancing student wellbeing					
2. Increasing student engagement (i.e., attendance and/or participation)					
3. Improving student school-based assessment data					

4. Improving student performance on standardized tests				
5. Improving student subject-matter knowledge				
6. Improving student skills				
7. Improving student understanding				
These supports are available and effective for me as a beginning teacher…				
8. Induction program				
9. Formal mentor arrangement				
10. Informal mentor arrangement				
11. Ongoing networking with other beginning teachers				
12. Guidance on curriculum and classroom planning				
13. Ongoing professional development opportunities				

14. Identify the two areas in which you have had the most success as a beginning teacher. For example, success in the area of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, classroom management, engagement with parents and the local community, catering for diverse learners, professional learning, professional ethics, and/or collegiality.
    Area 1 _____   Area 2 _____

15. Identify two key challenges you have faced as a beginning teacher. For example, challenges in the area of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, classroom management, engagement with parents and the local community, catering for diverse learners, professional learning, professional ethics, and/or collegiality.
    1. Challenge 1 _____   2. Challenge 2 _____

16. Did you attend the two days Induction of Beginning Teachers' Workshop while you were in college?

_____Yes   _____ No

17. Did the Induction of Beginning Teachers' Workshop effectively prepare you to transition from the classroom to workplace?

_____ Extremely effective
_____ Very Effective
_____ Moderately Effective
_____ Slightly Effective
_____ Not at all Effective

18. Are you a part of a mentorship program at your workplace?

_____Yes   _____ No

19. If the answer to 18 is *yes*, how would you rate the program 's effectiveness?

_____ Extremely effective
_____ Very Effective
_____ Moderately Effective
_____ Slightly Effective
_____ Not at all Effective

20. If the answer to question 18, is *no* do you think you would benefit from being a part of a mentorship program at your workplace?

_____Yes   _____ No

21. List what you consider to be five (5) important components of a mentorship program.

1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____
5) _____

22. Do you have any other comments about the mentorship program?

_____

THE END. **THANKS FOR PARTICIPATING**.

Appendix C

Questionnaire on Perceptions of Principals, Cooperating Teachers, and Heads of

Departments of Readiness of Graduates

Questionnaire on Perceptions of Principals, Cooperating Teachers, and Heads of

Departments of Readiness of Graduates

This questionnaire is designed to collect information on your perceptions of beginning teachers who graduated from the Bachelor of Education Degree Program in Special Education at a teachers college in western Jamaica. The questionnaire is divided into three sections. Please read each item carefully and then answer as accurately as possible. Responses to this questionnaire are confidential and anonymous. Thank you for participating.

Instructions: *Instructions: Please check your answer and type your response in the space provided where appropriate.*

Part A: Demographic Profile

1. Gender   ___Male   ___ Female
2. Age:
      ___ 20-25 years   ___ 26-35 years
      ___ 37- 45 years   ___ 46- 65 years

3. Employed at:
      ___Primary School
      ___Secondary School
      ___Special Education Unit
      ___Special Education School
      ___Associations for persons with disabilities
      ___ Other (please specify) _____

4. How long have you been teaching?

   _____ 0- 5 years   _____ 6- 10 years
   _____ 11-20 years   _____ 21- 30 years
   _____ over 31 years

5. In which position(s) have you worked with graduates from the Bachelor of Education Degree Program in Special Education? Select all that apply.
   ___Mentor teacher
   ___Work supervisor
   ___Principal
   ___Vice-Principal
   ___Cooperating teacher
   ___Other (please specify) _____

Part B: Perceptions of a Beginning Teacher
Think specifically about a beginning teacher who graduated from the Bachelor of

Education Degree Program in Special Education. Indicate on the scale provided how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Select one answer for every choice.

The teacher:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Knows students and how they learn					
2. Plans for and implements effective teaching and learning					
3. Knows the content and how to teach it					
4. Teaches culturally, linguistically and socio-economically diverse learners					
5. Makes modification and implements the curriculum					
6. Assesses and provides feedback and reporting on student learning					
7. Has discipline-based expertise					
8. Uses ICT					
9. Is knowledgeable in literacy and numeracy					
10. Is knowledgeable in pedagogy skills Check					

11. Creates and maintains a supportive and safe learning environment					
12. Has good classroom management					
13. Maintains a professional relationship with parents, caregivers, and the community					
14. Is collegial					
15. Adheres to professional ethics					
16. Engages with ongoing professional development					

Part C: Perceptions of the Bachelor program in Special Education and a Mentorship Program

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I would recommend the special education program to someone wishing to qualify as a teacher of special education.					
2. Having a mentorship program is an excellent way to help beginning teachers transition from college to the real					

world.					

3. Does your institution/place of work participate in the Mentorship and Beginning
   Teachers Induction Programme?

          ___Yes   ___No

4. If *yes,* to question 3 above, how do you rate the effectiveness of the program?

         _____ Extremely effective
         _____ Very Effective
         _____ Moderately Effective
         _____ Slightly Effective
         _____ Not at all Effective

5. If *no,* to question 3, why is the program not offered at your school?

6. Overall, what are two major strengths of the Bachelor program in Special Education?
        Strength 1_____
        Strength 2 _____

7. List two changes that should be made to the special education program

        Change 1 _____
        Change 2 _____

8. Do you have any other comments about the special education degree and mentorship
program?

THE END

THANKS FOR PARTICIPATING