

PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN JAMAICA:  
EXPANDING ACCESS IN PURSUIT OF VISION 2030

Chad Orlando Coates

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Committee:

Dr. Patricia K. Kubow, Advisor

Dr. Candace Archer  
Graduate Faculty Representative

Dr. Michael D. Coomes

Dr. Robert DeBard

Dr. Gary St. C. Oates

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## ABSTRACT

Patricia Kubow, Advisor

The purpose of this study was to gain insight on why private higher education institutions have flourished as key providers of higher education in Jamaica, how these institutions facilitate access to higher education, and to what extent private higher education institutions contribute to the achievement of Jamaica's national higher education goals. The researcher also examined the extent to which the neo-liberal framework, which supports the notion of education as a tool for economic development, is appropriate for understanding how higher education is unfolding in Jamaica. Although the neo-liberal principles are evident within the Jamaican higher education system the neo-liberal framework alone is insufficient in providing a full understanding of how private higher education is unfolding in Jamaica. The findings of the study suggest that local private higher education institutions in Jamaica serve to challenge the status quo by making higher education accessible to members of the society who have been previously marginalized and underserved by the public higher education system. Local private higher education institutions in Jamaica have emerged in response to excess demand for higher education that the government was unable and unwilling to supply.

To Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to His power that is at work within us.

- Ephesians 3:20

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The role of higher education in the economic growth and development of small nation-states, like Jamaica, is of vital importance if they are to become competitive participants within the global marketplace. For many developing countries, the demand for relevant, convenient, cost effective, quality higher education has outstripped the capacity of governments to meet such demands. In Jamaica, as in many other societies, higher education has traditionally been an activity engaged in by elite members of the society. The evidence in the literature (Cogan, 1983; Evans, 2001; Jules, 2010; Roberts, 2003a; Williams, 1968) suggests that tertiary education is socially biased, favoring students from the higher socio-economic groups (Asplund, Abdelkarim, & Skilli, 2008; Ziderman, 2005), as these students are better able to access the necessary financial resources and possess the social capital needed to obtain a higher quality of education at the primary and secondary levels. Hence, students from higher socio-economic classes tend to be better prepared to meet entry requirements – such as qualifying exams and the academic rigor of tertiary education.

Howe (2003) posited that one of the primary challenges of nations within the English-speaking Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is that of providing opportunities for greater access to tertiary education for a wider cross-section of students. The expansion of access to tertiary education has implications for public policy as well as education policy initiatives at the institutional level. Higher education policies are largely influenced by the perceived benefits higher education provides both the individual and the society as a whole. The benefits of higher education are many and varied. At the individual level, when faced with the choice of whether or not to engage in higher

education, students make their decision based on social attitudes toward higher education and an analysis of the perceived benefits to be gained from higher education (Helmfrid, 1996). Private gains attributed to higher education include: more opportunities for higher levels of employment, greater lifetime earnings, increased likelihood of more rewarding careers, a greater sense of self-actualization, a greater appreciation of literature and the arts, and an increased capacity to be more informed and socially engaged as citizens (Harris, 2007). For most Jamaicans, higher education has historically afforded opportunities for social mobility (Cogan, 1983; Evans, 2001) by providing access to better paying jobs and career opportunities. Assessing the benefits of higher education solely in terms of its perceived economic effects on future income earnings and improvements in individual wellbeing are oversimplified (Hansen & Weisbrod, 1969), as individual participation in higher education inevitably confers positive effects upon the society in which the individual resides.

### **National Objectives of Higher Education in Jamaica**

At the national level, as Jamaica strives towards its goal of achieving developed country status by 2030 (Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), 2009a), the economic value of higher education is often highlighted and is a key component of national discussions on higher education policy (Holding & Burke, 2005). In light of this national goal, Leorhynie (2007) suggested that higher education in Jamaica and the Caribbean ought to be measured by international benchmarks and that qualifications must reflect international standards. While some of the most prevalent purposes and social benefits attributed to higher education (e.g., preparing leaders, creating an engaged citizenry, facilitating the preservation and transmission of national culture, developing students' ability to think

critically, creating a skilled workforce) hold true for Jamaica, there continue to be debates on how national objectives for higher education should be prioritized (Holding & Burke, 2005).

Jamaican scholars and stakeholders in higher education argue that within the context of *Vision 2030 Jamaica* – the island’s national development plan, and in light of the globalization phenomenon, higher education must fulfill several critical functions in duty to the society. Miller (2005) suggested that in addition to meeting the needs of the individual, the core purpose of higher education is to facilitate an awareness of societal needs and to address issues of social vision, national values, and virtues. Robinson (2005) posited that the benefits of higher education extend beyond economic returns to the individual, contributing to the “social engineering of the country” (p. 314). Nettleford (2005) and Leo-Rhynie (2005) have emphasized the importance of higher education in equipping students with the critical thinking skills necessary to adapt to change and to mobilize resources in solving national and regional problems.

Highlighting the importance of higher education in the preservation and transmission of indigenous knowledge, Evans (2001) insisted that some of the major goals of education in Jamaica include the promotion of “cultural, aesthetic, and spiritual awareness, commitment to moral principles, self-esteem and quality education” (p. 145), while Clarke (2005) argued that higher education has a responsibility to ensure that the values and ideals of peace are preserved. Other Jamaican scholars and higher education stakeholders (Barrett, 2005; Davis, 2005; Lewis 2005; London, 2005; Irvine, 2005) stress the importance of higher education as a tool for enhancing local productivity, national standard of living, economic development, and competitiveness within the international

marketplace. These authors maintained that higher education is key to improving Jamaica's productive capacity and moving the country closer to achieving its goals of economic development by providing opportunities for competitive advantage within the global marketplace.

### **Classical Liberalism**

The focus on higher education as a tool for enhancing competitiveness within the global marketplace is rooted in the philosophies of classical liberalism. Liberalism may be described as a complex tradition concerning individual freedoms that dates back to the end of the Middle Ages (Adams, 2001; Meriquior, 1991). Ross and Gibson (2007) suggested that liberalism comprises a range of political, religious, and economic ideas concerned with civil liberties. The core ideas of liberalism emerged in response to the development of centralized governance. Following the British civil war in the mid-seventeenth century, which was due to power conflicts between the British parliament and the King of England, there was much debate about how society was to be best organized and governed (Adams, 2001). In 1690, John Locke wrote his *Two Treatise of Government* in which he argued that God had bestowed upon all individuals reason by which they were able to discern for themselves how to live amicably within society without government intervention (Adams, 2001). Locke maintained that government should only be appointed based on a social contract between the government and the people being governed in which the people had the right to remove the government if the government did not perform its role adequately (Adams, 2001).

Political liberalism expanded to the economic realm with the 1776 publication of *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith. In his thesis, Smith argued that a nation's

prosperity could be maximized if government did not intervene in economic affairs and the free market was allowed to thrive (Adams, 2001). Free market implied the unrestricted movement of goods and services, labor and capital, among buyers and sellers within the marketplace. The connections between market and individual freedom, and market freedom and productive efficiency, are central tenets of classic liberalism (Satz, 2007) from which neo-liberalism has emerged. Satz (2007) contended that many supporters of liberalism assumed that the market provides individuals with the opportunity to choose among many alternatives, limits social coercion, and decentralizes decision-making processes, thereby empowering individuals. These ideas of individual rights, political freedoms, and economic empowerment were widespread in Europe and the American colonies during the eighteenth century (Adams, 2001).

A major critique of the liberal perspective is that the free market mechanism promotes inequalities, as economic resources are not equally distributed (Cohn, 2010). As Fulton (1981) argued, “market mechanisms are untidy and unpredictable” (p. 20), and, if left on their own, market forces may lead to vast inequalities that marginalize some members of the society while benefiting a few (Fulton, 1981; Satz, 2007). Additionally, Satz (2007) maintained that intervention in the market is necessary, as there may be negative spillover effects associated with individual market transactions, and that perfect information, which is an underlying premise of economic liberalism, is non-existent in reality. Fulton (1981) asserted that, within the context of the free market, competition taken to the extremes might produce highly problematic results. Jamaica’s experience with the liberalization process serves as an exemplar of some of the inherent challenges

associated with the adoption of classical liberalism and the transition to neo-liberal economic policies.

### **Liberalization in Jamaica**

In Jamaica, classical liberalism began to take root in the 1970s with the introduction of structural adjustment loan programs by international organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, that strongly recommended changes in Jamaica's political and economic infrastructure (Garrity, 1996; Nkrumah-Young, Huisman, & Powell, 2008; Sampson, 1996; Sylvester, 2008). Structural adjustment refers to changes in economic and monetary policies within a nation that require reductions in the size and role of the public sector, the privatization of state owned property, services, and companies, and the move toward an open market economy emphasizing international trade and global competitiveness (Sampson, 1996; Varghese, 2007; Nkrumah-Young, Huisman, & Powell, 2008). Structural adjustment for Jamaica, as with other Caribbean states, was a precondition for obtaining development loans from the IMF and the World Bank (Picard, 1996).

Beginning in 1977, as a result of successive IMF and World Bank structural adjustment requirements, Jamaica moved progressively towards a free market economy model (Sampson, 1996). One of the major structural changes that occurred in Jamaica between 1977 and 1992 was the opening up of domestic markets to international competition as a tool to stimulate the economy (Sampson, 1996). According to Sampson (1996), "privatization was promoted in Jamaica as part of a program to improve competition in the economy and to provide for more players in the market through wider share ownership" (p. 32). In 1990, the Jamaican government fully adopted the free

market or neo-liberal economic reforms that transformed its role from the orchestrator of economic development to facilitator (Garrity, 1996). This political economic transformation placed greater responsibilities for economic development within the hands of private enterprise. As Sylvester (2008) has suggested, within the neo-liberal economic environment, education policy and practice ultimately became a component of economic policy and practice.

The shift towards the neo-liberal perspective has directed the focus of education policy reforms toward emphasizing economic efficiency, diversity in choice, and market mechanisms (Adolino & Blake, 2011). As a result, issues concerning access, particularly in the area of higher education, are de-emphasized (Adolino & Blake, 2011) and gradually pushed to the periphery. In a review of education policies in six industrialized countries, namely Japan, Italy, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States, Adolino and Blake (2011) affirmed that there has been a shift in the prevailing educational ideology towards that of the “classic liberal ideology – favoring deregulation, decentralization, and varying degrees of privatization” (p. 326). National attitudes toward higher education, and the extent to which the purposes of higher education are defined in economic terms, inevitably influence the higher education policy environment and the propensity toward the private provision of higher education.

As an extension of classical liberalism, a neo-liberal perspective on higher education suggests that private institutions will emerge to meet excess demand for higher education within a free market economy. The neo-liberal framework assumes that the market mechanism of demand and supply will efficiently allocate scarce resources to meet consumer demand, that consumers are rational and self-interested, that market

mechanisms are self-correcting, and that the role of government should be minimal and regulatory in nature (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Within the neo-liberal framework, private higher education allows for greater consumer choices, cost effectiveness, institutional diversity, accountability, and efficiencies, as institutions must compete to meet the diverse academic needs of student-consumers and the needs of the labor market. Private higher education is viewed as an opportunity to expand access to higher education, as developing countries strive towards achieving national development goals (Hosein, Chen, & Singh, 2004). This view of higher education has contributed to the rise of private tertiary institutions around the world. Levy (2010) highlighted the fact that only a few decades ago there were many countries around the world that did not allow for the provision of private higher education. Today, there are very few countries where this is still the case.

### **The Private Higher Education Phenomenon**

Although many private higher education institutions are profit-making, the term private within the context of higher education is not synonymous with for-profit. Within the private higher education sector an institution may be categorized as either private for-profit or private nonprofit. Private for-profit institutions are typically viewed as corporate entities that are “subject to pure market mechanisms and corporate tax laws” (World Bank, 2002, p. 74). By contrast private nonprofit institutions typically “operate under a special financial requirement forbidding them to distribute surplus revenue or profits to shareholders or individuals” (World Bank, 2002, p. 74). Surplus revenues earned by private nonprofit higher education institutions must be retained within the institution and may be used for future operating expenses, endowments, or capital

investments such as the construction of new buildings and improvements to existing facilities (World Bank, 2002).

Private higher education has become a global phenomenon (Portnoi, Bagley, & Rust, 2010) with the current enrollment estimate standing at approximately 31% of total enrollment in higher education worldwide (Levy, 2010). Levy (2010) posited that the two regions that have experienced the highest growth in the private tertiary education sector are Latin America, where private higher education accounts for 49% of total enrollment, and Asia where private higher education accounts for 36% of total enrollment. In other regions of the world, enrollment in private higher education as a percentage of total higher education enrollment are as follows: Africa – 15%, Europe – 16%, and the United States – 26% (Levy, 2010). Within Jamaica, the private higher education phenomenon has played a key historical role in the educational development and transformation of the nation-state as education in Jamaica, and higher education in particular, began within the private sector.

Private higher education was first introduced to Jamaica in the early 1830s with the founding of private non-profit religiously affiliated institutions of higher learning for the training of pastors and ministers of religion (Gordon, 1963; Evans & Burke, 2006; Miller, 2000). Colleges and universities have traditionally been nonprofit institutions that operate legally under the authority of a nation-state (Altbach, 2000). Historically, in Jamaica, nonprofit higher education institutions have been owned and operated by religious organizations. Altbach (2000) contended that “in some countries individuals or limited groups through boards of trustees” (p. 6) may be allowed to establish institutions of higher learning. In such cases the “academic institutions remain legally nonprofit, but

the border between nonprofit and profit making is sometimes difficult to discern” (Altbach, 2000, p. 6). This situation also holds true in the case of Jamaica. Today Jamaica’s private higher education sector consists of a blend of private non-profits and for-profit institutions.

Scholars within the field of international and comparative higher education (e.g., Altbach, 2000; Geiger, 1989; Kinsner, 2010; Levy, 1986) have advanced several explanations for the growth of private higher education within nation states like Jamaica that have predominantly public higher education systems. Two of the most prominent explanations are that: (a) private tertiary institutions offer features that are distinctively different than those provided by public tertiary institutions, and (b) private tertiary institutions provide additional access to higher education for students who may be otherwise excluded from state provisions due to issues relating to capacity or geography (Altbach, 2000; Geiger, 1989; Kinsner, 2010; Levy, 1986). It has been noted in *Vision 2030 Jamaica* that the nation’s premier university, The University of the West Indies (UWI), has been slow to respond to the specialized training needs required to equip individuals for some of the most critical areas of the labor market (PIOJ, 2009a).

### **Challenges at the University of the West Indies**

The University of the West Indies (UWI) is a regional university serving members of the Caribbean community at three campuses located in Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad. The University was founded in 1948 as the University College of the West Indies (UCWI) in Kingston, Jamaica, with a mission to meet the higher education needs of the Anglophone-Caribbean and to promote regional identity (Cobley, 2000). At the time the UCWI was founded, the chief purpose of higher education within the British

Caribbean region was “to cultivate skills, dispositions and social identities consistent with the imperatives of [a] nationalistic ethic” (Sylvester, 2008, p. 273). At that time, the higher education system within the English-speaking Caribbean was based on the elitist British academic traditions and was therefore not readily available to all members of the West Indian society (Hunte, 1976). Cobley (2000) reported that, in the early history of the University, many qualified students were not admitted due to entry requirements that were too high for the majority of students who had completed secondary school within the region. The author noted that many qualified students were denied admission due to a lack of financial support to meet the cost associated with tertiary studies. Cobley (2000) highlighted the irony of the elitist nature of the University’s access policy:

The most worrying aspect for the university was the fact that many of those students who did not meet its exacting standards and so had been refused admission, or who later dropped out, went on to complete degrees successfully in other institutions in Britain, Canada, or the United States. (pp. 15-16)

Although the UWI has evolved immensely since its founding, many aspects of the British academic traditions have remained, as the UWI is regarded as highly selective and its admission process highly competitive (Hunte, 1976). UWI accounts for approximately a quarter of the total higher education enrollment within the region, and has roughly three times more qualified applicants than it can accommodate (Williams, 2004). Similarly, Hamilton and Severin (2005) acknowledged that many publicly funded tertiary institutions, like the UWI, currently lack the capacity to expand access in the short term.

The demand for higher education in Jamaica has exceeded the capacity of existing publicly funded tertiary institutions and has slowed their response to meeting the

specialized labor needs of local industry. Government funding available for financing higher education is limited due to debt servicing, the demands placed on public funds by other social service sectors (e.g., health), and external pressures to reduce public sector expenditures. In the 2010-2011 fiscal year the Jamaican government reduced the portion of the national budget allocated to education to 13% (PIOJ, 2010). The portion of the overall education budget allocated to tertiary education was also reduced to 17% (PIOJ, 2010). The fiscal challenges associated with financing higher education in Jamaica have significantly impacted UWI. During the 2009-2010 academic year, UWI experienced a J\$1.0 billion reduction in its budget, and a reduction in student revenues as a result of an increase in the number of delinquencies among students with outstanding tuition fees (PIOJ, 2010). The combination of these realities has provided an opportunity for more private tertiary institutions to enter the Jamaican higher education sector.

### **Jamaica's Social Context**

With an annual growth rate of 1%, the total estimated population of Jamaica in 2010 was 2.7 million – with males accounting for 49.3% and females 50.7% (PIOJ, 2010). Jamaica is considered to be in the intermediate stage of the demographic transition (PIOJ, 2010). Countries at this stage exhibit the following demographic attributes: a declining 0-14 age group; and increases in both the proportion of the working age group (15-64) and the dependent elderly age group (65 and over) (PIOJ, 2010). In 2010 the 0-14 age group accounted for 27.4% of the total population (PIOJ, 2010). The working aged group accounted for 64.1% with individuals aged 15-39 accounting for the largest proportion within this category (PIOJ, 2010).

The total enrollment in higher education in Jamaica for 2009-2010 was estimated at 68,471 (PIOJ, 2010) up from 64,034 in the 2008-2009 academic year (PIOJ, 2009b). During the 2009-2010 academic year Jamaica's tertiary education cohort (population aged 20-24 years) was estimated at 208,500, with females accounting for 51% and males 49% (PIOJ, 2010). However, the gross enrollment rate for tertiary education was significantly higher among females (43.7%) than among males (21.3%) (PIOJ, 2010).

Figure 1. Total Enrollment in Jamaican Higher Education Compared to Public Sector Enrollment

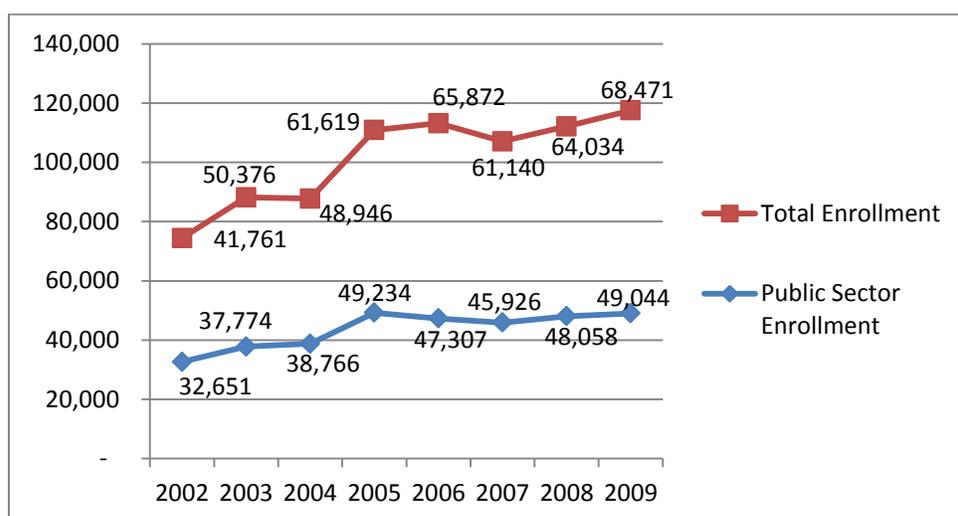


Figure 1 provides a general overview of Jamaica's estimated national and public sector higher education enrollment trends for the academic years 2002 to 2009.

Throughout the period 2002 to 2009, there was a relatively steady increase in the total national enrollment in Jamaican higher education. Within the public higher education sector, which accounts for the largest portion of enrollment, an upward trend in student enrollment was also observed. As an aggregate the gross tertiary enrollment rate continues to increase steadily. The total gross enrollment grew to 32.8% in 2010 (PIOJ, 2010) up from 30.8% in 2009 (PIOJ, 2009b). This marks a significant improvement in

the higher education participation rate when compared with the 18.1% gross enrollment rate reported in 2003 (PIOJ, 2009c).

Jamaica has also experienced significant growth in its private tertiary enrollment. The Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) stated that in 2003, the total private enrollment at tertiary institutions was estimated to be 6,755 (70.9% of these students were females), while in 2007 the total estimated number of private enrollment in tertiary institutions more than doubled to 17,389 (72.9% of these students were females) (PIOJ, 2009c). Within a five-year period, the overall market share for private tertiary enrollment in Jamaica jumped to 26.4% in 2007 from 17.1% in 2003 (PIOJ, 2009c). Therefore, it is essential that educational policies include clear provisions regarding the role of private tertiary institutions within Jamaica's higher education environment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Education policymakers within many countries have historically neglected to include provisions for private delivery of higher education, which has raised concerns about the legitimacy of private tertiary institutions (Kisner, 2010). A nation's tertiary education policy must encompass expressed national objectives, as they relate to the goals of higher education, inputs into higher education, processes used in higher education, and intended outcomes of higher education (Beckles, Perry, & Whiteley, 2002). Given the increased enrollment in private higher education in Jamaica (PIOJ, 2009b; 2009c), and the extent to which private higher education institutions possess the capacity to affect the processes used in higher education as well as the outputs of Jamaican higher education, research on the nature of the private higher education sector is relevant to local education policymakers and stakeholders. Failure to give due

consideration to the private higher education sector in the formulation of national education policies can result in a relatively under-regulated or unregulated private higher education sector.

Jamaica does not currently have in place a comprehensive education policy or framework for tertiary education (Foster-Allen, 2007). This is particularly problematic for Jamaica, as its government has signed onto the World Trade Organization's (WTO) General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) which identifies education, and higher education in particular, as a tradable commodity (Knight, 2003). The GATS is a set of multilateral rules that govern international trade in services (Knight, 2002; Varghese, 2007). Under GATS, the trade in education may occur in four modes: Mode 1 - cross-border supply of education services – i.e., neither provider nor student physically leaves the country of origin (e.g. on-line degree and training programs); Mode 2 - consumption abroad – i.e., where student-consumers travel abroad to be educated; Mode 3 - commercial presence education provider in other countries – i.e., branch campuses or franchising arrangements; Mode 4 - presence of natural person – i.e., the service provider travels to another country (e.g., hiring international faculty/administrators from overseas or contracted educational consultants) (Knight, 2002). Jamaica is one of three CARICOM nations that have made a commitment to trade in educational services and its commitment is the most unconditional (Hosein, Chen, and Singh, 2004), which means it must offer equal opportunity and treatment to all 145 member-nations of the WTO and may not restrict or limit trading partners (Varghese, 2007).

The Jamaican private higher education sector, which includes offshore and local institutions, contributes to the diversity of the overall higher education system and plays a

role in the expansion of access. There is currently a void in the research documenting trends in Jamaican higher education, as a whole, and the role and contributions of private higher education institutions, in particular, in the achievement of national goals. Voids in the research documenting the development in higher education is not unique to Jamaica, Altbach (1997) explained that,

In many countries, analysis of higher education is almost entirely absent. For others, it is quite limited. Even for countries with large research communities and [a] tradition of analysis in the field of education, the literature on higher education is surprisingly limited. It is clear that the need for data collection and research on higher education is substantial. (p. 4)

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to gain insight on why private higher education institutions have flourished in Jamaica, how these institutions facilitate access to higher education, and to what extent private higher education institutions contribute to the achievement of Jamaica's national higher education goals. The study identified and described institutional initiatives concerning access to higher education at four private higher education institutions in Jamaica. As an essential component of the study the researcher examined through the neo-liberal lens of human capital theory, which supports the notion of education as a tool for economic development, the extent to which Jamaica's higher education sector is market-driven. This exploratory qualitative study utilized a holistic, multiple-case study design (Yin, 2003) and focused specifically on local (as opposed to offshore) private higher education institutions in Jamaica.

## Research Questions

The research questions provided a parameter for guided inquiry in relation to four core areas: (a) the nature of Jamaica's higher education landscape; (b) the role of private higher education institutions in expanding access to higher education in light of Jamaica's national higher education goals; (c) the role of accreditation in assuring the quality of Jamaican higher education; and, (d) the extent to which the higher education sector in Jamaica reflect the neo-liberal economic priorities as expressed in the higher education policy recommendations of the World Bank. The present study addressed the following overarching and sub-level research questions:

1. Why have private tertiary education institutions emerged as key providers of higher education in Jamaica?
  - a. What are the primary factors that impact the growth of private tertiary education institutions?
  - b. How does institutional mission and vision differ among private higher education institutions in Jamaica?
  - c. How diverse is the higher education curriculum available through private tertiary institutions?
2. How do local private tertiary education institutions contribute to Jamaica's national higher education goals?
  - a. Is there a conscious attempt by private tertiary education institutions to align institutional goals and outcomes with the national goals for higher education?

- b. How do admissions policies and entry requirements of private tertiary education institutions facilitate access?
  - c. How do private tertiary education institutions address access barriers such as finance, geography, flexibility of course schedule, program relevance, and mode of delivery?
3. How does the UCJ's national accreditation process help to facilitate quality outputs from private tertiary institutions?
  - a. Why is accreditation relevant to the higher education sector in Jamaica?
  - b. What are the procedures involved in obtaining and maintaining UCJ accreditation?
  - c. Is the UCJ accreditation process a conduit for aligning the mission of private tertiary institution with the national goals for higher education?
4. How has the role of government evolved within Jamaica's higher education sector?
  - a. To what extent is the higher education sector in Jamaica market-driven?
  - b. To what extent does the tertiary education sector in Jamaica reflect the neo-liberal economic priorities as expressed in higher education policy recommendations of multilateral lending agencies such as the World Bank?
  - c. To what extent is the neo-liberal framework an appropriate fit for achieving Jamaica's national goals for higher education?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study was significant to the field of higher education as it provided new insights on higher education in Jamaica and how that country is navigating the education policy process with regards to the growing phenomenon of private higher education in light of globalization and the commoditization of higher education. In this regard, the study adds to the body of literature on international higher education.

Although Jamaica's Ministry of Education issued a strategic plan for the Jamaican tertiary education sector in 2006, the authors of the 2008 Jamaica Social Policy Evaluation (JASPEV) report stated that there is need for "a national tertiary education plan" that focuses on "post-secondary education and training to meet current and emerging needs" of the Jamaican society (JASPEV, 2008, p. 174). Thus, this study may serve as a catalyst for continued national dialogue on the relevance of creating a national educational policy framework that adequately addresses private sector provisions of tertiary education in Jamaica.

The growing acceptance of neo-liberal economic principles among governments around the world has resulted in reductions in nation-states' investments in higher education and has promoted greater competition among national and cross-border higher education providers (Portnoi, Bagley, & Rust, 2010). The present study on Jamaica may inform local administrators at private tertiary education institutions about the extent to which the adoption of neo-liberal principles within the Jamaican higher education sector bears relevance for the attainment of national higher education objectives. This study, therefore, contributes to the small available body of knowledge on higher education in Jamaica.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study was limited to 1999 to the present period in Jamaica, as 1999 marks the year in which the first private university in Jamaica received national accreditation from the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), a statutory arm of the Ministry of Education and Youth in Jamaica, the national accrediting body for tertiary institutions and programs. The selection of the cases in this study was further limited to local private tertiary institutions (as opposed to offshore or non-Jamaican institutions) that offer bachelor degree programs, and are accredited by the UCJ. The time spent in the field was limited due to proximity of research sites, time and financial constraints, and accessibility issues related to data collection and participant availability. Another limitation of the study was that no previous work documenting the private higher education sector in Jamaica has been located. Thus, in this regard, the present study is largely exploratory and will contribute to the small body of literature that is currently available.

There is currently no central clearing house for higher education enrollment data for private institutions in Jamaica. This makes it difficult to authenticate the actual enrollment in Jamaican private higher education. The Ministry of Education and Youth (MEOY) and the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) consistently track and report enrollment data for public higher education institutions, however; data for private higher education institutions are not systematically collected. And although the PIOJ does report enrollment data for some private higher education institutions, the reported data is limited primarily to those private institutions that are registered with the UCJ. These data are further limiting as not all registered private institutions are represented in the data. Additionally, there are inconsistencies in the available data. For example, there were

some institutions that had their enrollment data included in some annual reports but were excluded from others. Thus, the enrollment figures for private higher education in Jamaica as reported by the PIOJ in the annual Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica (ESSJ) report may at best be regarded as conservative estimates due to inconsistent reporting of enrollment numbers for registered private higher education institutions and the absence of enrollment figures for private institutions that are not registered with the UCJ. To further complicate matters no clear distinction is made in the ESSJ report as to which higher education institutions are private and which ones are public.

Within higher education, quality is multidimensional. Thus, the quality of the outcomes from higher education institutions can be measured in a variety of ways. These include faculty qualifications (e.g., the number of faculty with terminal degrees), employable skills of graduates, labor market placement, transferability of credits, income generated per capita by graduates, student appraisals of the quality of the programs in which they enroll, appraisals from the employer who hires these graduates, and indicators of where graduates end up after completing their degree programs. The UCJ maintains that several of these measures of quality are taken into consideration as part of its accreditation process for private higher education institutions in Jamaica. However, the researcher was unable to assess how each of the four private institutions in the present study measured against selected quality indicators, as the UCJ's accreditation evaluative reports are not publicly accessible and were unavailable to the researcher. Attempts to access information from the UCJ regarding the extent to which the four registered private institutions within the study measured against the UCJ's quality benchmark (e.g., quality of faculty, student support services, student satisfaction, etc.) were unsuccessful. The

information that was publicly available regarding institutions' accreditation status simply indicated whether or not institutions had met the minimum requirements for registration and accreditation of the submitted programs, and were in compliance.

Another limitation of the study was that study participants were interviewed only once. The length of the interviews conducted as part of this study ranged from 20 minutes to 70 minutes. Only one of the interviews was 20 minutes. This was the last of the 10 interviews conducted and was with the second participant from one of the secular private institutions. The longest interview lasted for approximately 70 minutes and was with the participant from the UCJ. All other interviews were approximately 50 minutes. Although there were at least two study participants from each of the four private institutions in the study, only one high level administrator from the UCJ was interviewed as part of this study. During the data analysis, attempts to reach some participants for clarification were unsuccessful. The inability to gain further feedback from all participants upon review of the audio recordings and interview transcripts was a limiting factor. The researcher received participant feedback from only one study participant.

The study participants asserted that the four private higher education institutions in the study offered affordable, accessible, quality higher education. Whereas the institutions' claims of affordability and accessibility could be assessed by comparing tuition costs, the number and location of academic centers, and the flexibility of courses and programs offered, assessing the claims for quality education proved challenging given the parameters of the present study. Participants offered that meeting and maintaining the UCJ's quality assurance benchmark through the accreditation process meant that their programs were relevant to the needs of students and the Jamaican society

as a whole, and were therefore of good quality. However, this is only one of the multi-dimensional components of quality. Study participants from all four private institutions reported that their students were satisfied with the quality of their education and educational experiences at the respective institutions. In addition, they noted that employers of their graduates were also pleased with the quality of the graduates they employed. Some participants recalled specific examples of employer feedback to reinforce their assertions. However, a more objective assessment of these claims for quality education would require gaining direct feedback from the students, and employers of graduates from private higher education institutions, which was well beyond the scope of the present study.

The absence of an office or department of institutional research at higher education institutions in Jamaica is also a limiting factor. For many Jamaican higher education institutions, data regarding student and program enrollment, student demographics, and course scheduling are often the responsibility of the registrar's office. In most cases, particularly at smaller institutions, these functions are carried out by a single individual who is also responsible for a multiplicity of tasks in addition to these functions. This reality, particularly within the context of conducting higher education research in Jamaica, makes data gathering extremely challenging. The absence of an office of institutional research that is solely dedicated to facilitating the collection, analysis, and interpretation of institutional data is therefore a limitation of this study.

### **Organization of the Study**

The study is organized in five chapters. Chapter one presents a background for the study highlighting the relevance of private higher education in developing countries, and

in Jamaica in particular. Chapter two provides a review of relevant literature along with the key theoretical concepts and framework that guides the study. Chapter three outlines the methodology and methods chosen for the study. Chapter four provides a presentation and analysis of the research findings. Chapter five offers discussion, conclusions, and recommendations based on the study's findings.

### **Summary**

This study was concerned with why private higher education institutions have flourished in Jamaica and how these institutions help facilitate access to higher education and the achievement of Jamaica's national higher education goals. The following chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to the topic. It includes an analysis of the neo-liberal framework and its application to higher education policy, a critical review of multilateral organizations that influence global higher education policy, and a detailed examination of higher education in Jamaica within the local and regional context.

### **Definition of Terms**

**CARICOM** – Caribbean Community refers to the Anglophone Caribbean, which consists of a grouping of democratic states located in the Caribbean Sea. These countries include: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Turks and Caicos Islands (Roberts, 2003a, 2003b).

**CSEC** – The Certificate of Secondary Education is awarded by the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) that administers the CXC examination. “This regional examination was first introduced in 1979, when CSEC was developed by CXC to replace the University of Cambridge GCE ‘O’ Level examination” (Cévaër, 2002, p. 152). At the end of the senior year of high school, students within the Caribbean take the CXC examinations. On average, students take five subject specific exams, including Mathematics and English Language, which are considered to be compulsory. The exams are graded on a scale of one to five; grades 1, 2, and 3 are acceptable passes, with a grade of one being the highest score. The CSEC certificate is awarded by the Caribbean Examination Council to students after the examinations have been graded (Cévaër, 2002).

**CSME** – The CARICOM Single Market is a Caribbean initiative intended to “create one large market among the participating member states. The main objectives of the CSME are: full use of labor (full employment) and full exploitation of the other factors of production (natural resources and capital); competitive production leading to greater variety and quantity of products and services to trade with other countries. It is

expected that these objectives will in turn provide improved standards of living and sustained economic development” (CARICOM, 2009b, pp. 2-3).

**Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** – A measure of the market value of all goods and services produced within a nation’s borders.

**Gross Enrollment Rate** – “All students enrolled at a particular level of the education system expressed as a percentage of the age cohort for that educational level” (PIOJ, 2009c, p. 6).

**Neo-liberal Framework** – Neo-liberalism is an outgrowth of the liberal school of thought concerning forms of political-economic governance that privileges market relationships (Cohn, 2010). The neo-liberal model focuses on reducing the role of government, creating a free market environment in which private individuals are able to choose from a variety of service providers, and where service providers compete with each other to meet the demands and needs of the consumers. It is assumed that free market competition ultimately leads to efficient allocation of scarce resources, as priority is given to producing those products with highest consumer demand (Adams, 2001).

**Private** is used to refer to those institutions that do not receive direct fiscal funding from the government. These institutions rely primarily on student tuition and fees to support their operations. Private within the context of this dissertation refers to both non-profit and for profit institutions.

**Structural Adjustment** refers to economic and fiscal policies that a developing nation must agree to as a prerequisite for obtaining medium-term balance of payment loans or project funding from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. The policies typically call for reduction in government expenditure within the social

sectors, greater levels of privatization and opening up of the local economy to international markets (Nkrumah-Young, Huisman, & Powell, 2008).

**Tertiary education and higher education** are used synonymously within the dissertation. Higher education may be defined as formal academic study or training that occurs at the post-secondary level through universities and other institutions approved by state authorities to offer higher education (UNESCO, 1998).

**The World Bank** is a multilateral development agency located in Washington D.C. and the world's largest funder of education (Spring, 2009). The World Bank aims to reduce poverty in middle-income and credit worthy poorer countries (Spring, 2009; World Bank, 2010).

**University Council of Jamaica (UCJ)** is a statutory body under the Ministry of Education and Youth. It functions as the national accreditation body for tertiary institutions and programs in Jamaica (UCJ, 2010).

### List of Acronyms

CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CSME	CARICOM Single Market Economy
CXC	Caribbean Examination Council
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOJ	The Government of Jamaica
JLP	Jamaica Labour Party
MOEY	Ministry of Education and Youth
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
PIOJ	Planning Institute of Jamaica
PNP	People's National Party
UCJ	University Council of Jamaica
UNESCO	United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UWI	University of the West Indies
WTO	World Trade Organization

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of the literature begins with an examination of the macro environment highlighting the relevant theoretical framework, key concepts, and higher education trends within the international community that ultimately impact the nature of higher education within a developing nation such as Jamaica. The literature review concerning the macro environment is organized in two sections. The first section provides an overview of the neo-liberal framework, human capital theory, and international organizations that influence the higher education policy environment within developing countries. Specific focus is placed on the World Bank, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), two of the largest and most influential international organizations that drive and set the tone for education policy and practice within the developing world. The second section of the chapter provides an overview of the Caribbean region and describes how higher education has evolved within the region as a major component for economic growth and development.

The chapter culminates with an examination of Jamaica's micro environment, a description of Jamaica's unique position within the Caribbean, as well as local trends in higher education. Also presented within this section of the literature review is an overview of Jamaica's political economic environment, its social and economic indicators, the island's first nation development plan – *Vision 2030 Jamaica*, and the upward trends in local demand for higher education. Additionally, issues concerning access to Jamaican higher education and the emerging phenomenon of private higher education institutions in response to excess demand are also discussed.

### **Neo-liberalism as a Theoretical Lens**

Neo-liberalism is an outgrowth of the liberal school of thought concerning forms of political-economic governance that privilege market relationships (Cohn, 2010). Liberalism places emphasis on opening local economies to foreign investment and competition with a view to enhance efficient use of resources within the economic, social, and public sphere (Mok, 2005). Neo-liberalism emerged in the 1980s as a political-economic doctrine following the demise of the Keynesian economic consensus (Sylvester, 2008). Since the 1980s, neo-liberalism has rapidly evolved from a theory of economic behavior to a framework applicable to a wide cross-section of social interactions, including higher education (Naidoo, 2010). Naidoo (2010) posited that “deregulation, competitiveness and privatization feature prominently in the transition towards neo-liberalism” (p. 70). Neo-liberals maintain that government’s involvement in economic affairs should be limited to facilitating the efficient workings of the market (Cohn, 2010; Frieden & Lake 2003; Naidoo, 2010) and “developing institutions and individuals that are responsive to market forces” (Naidoo, 2010, p. 70). The primary function of the state within this neo-liberal framework is to foster a competitive local economy (Naidoo, 2010).

Within the higher education context, the neo-liberal model calls for higher levels of competition among educational institutions, less government intervention, increased non-government sources of funding (particularly for higher education), decentralization of management away from the state and in favor of individual institutions, and the introduction of performance indicators to analyze the productivity of institutions (George, 2006). Mok (2005) asserted that the use of business strategies to manage public policies,

giving precedence to the private sector provision of social services such as education, and emphasizing the use of market forces to promote efficiency and effectiveness, are some of the most striking features of neo-liberalism. Neo-liberalism gives superiority to the market and assumes that the main purposes and functions of higher education are motivated by national economic development objectives, the desire to achieve competitive advantage within the international arena, and that through innovation and training knowledge workers are created to meet the national goals for economic development (Sylvester, 2008).

Economic development within developing countries depends heavily on the ability to educate, train, and mobilize human resources, a primary component in charting economic productivity and growth. In an effort to improve the quality of human resources, small nations are faced with the challenges associated with improving the quality of and access to higher education within the context of demographic, economic, socio-cultural, and political constraints (Bacchus, 2010). The prominent use of the human development index by the international community as a measurement of economic development reinforces the need for small countries, like Jamaica, to focus on providing opportunities for the development of human resources by facilitating greater access to higher education. Bacchus (2010) posited “the success of small states, in coping with the economic and social challenges that they are likely to face in the twenty-first century to a large extent depends on the quality of their human resources” (p. 22). This situation calls for the development of education systems within small states that are able to equip them to survive both culturally and economically in a changing global environment. The notion of higher education as an investment in human capital is

therefore essential if small nations are to become competitive participants within the knowledge economy.

### **Human Capital Theory**

Human capital theory is an economic theory that can be applied to the allocation of resources to education. At the most basic level human capital theory states that investment in education allows individuals to become more productive; returns to educational investment is accrued both to the individual and the society through future economic gains, increased productivity, and improvements in social conditions (Psacharopoulos, 1996). A major assumption embedded within the theory is the notion that “education, beyond its many cognitive and cultural effects, also creates capital that is embodied in the person who receives it” (Psacharopoulos, 1996, p. 278). Within the Caribbean there is a strong link between higher education and occupational objectives (Tedesco, 1983). Thus, higher education institutions are urged to respond to the dominant social pressures and the demands of capitalism (Sylvester, 2008).

Within the context of globalization many societies embrace the view that one of the main purposes of higher education is the transmission of practical knowledge and specialized skill sets to individuals who are destined for the workforce. Naidoo (2010) asserted that neo-liberal ideology is transferred to developing countries through various forms of policy diffusion. The author noted that, “international organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund contribute to the transmission of neo-liberalism through structural adjustment programs, austerity packages and conditions attached to loans” (Naidoo, 2010, p. 70). However, Mayer (1996) cautioned that higher education should not be viewed purely in terms of investment in human capital as higher

education also has an important role in development, preservation, and transmission of indigenous culture, capacities, and history. Similarly, Teichler (1996) asserted that, “higher education aims to provide a general enhancement of knowledge for students, and possibly a cultivation of values, attitudes and development of the personality” (p. 96).

### **The Impact of International Organizations on Higher Education**

Within many developing countries the educational agenda is to a large extent influenced by the imperatives of international organizations by virtue of their capacity to determine education policies, to decide what constitutes best practices, and to set normative trends (Jules, 2010). Organizations such as the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank promote the use of policy borrowing by identifying and recommending international best practices and through publishing benchmarks and indicators that serve as resources for local decision-makers (Beerrens, 2008). The use of benchmarks established by international organization serve as a mechanism for obtaining legitimacy within the international community as adopting specific models and embracing certain ideological perspectives increases the likelihood of global recognition and acceptance (Beerrens, 2008).

Developing countries across the globe are often compelled to incorporate recommendations and best practices for higher education put forward by UNESCO and the World Bank as part of their national development agenda. Bennett (1991) maintained that the transfer of policy goals, content, and instruments are often adopted out of “fear of being left behind” and that “the cumulative effect of action elsewhere [within the global community] may translate into feelings of insecurity and being the odd man out” (Bennett, 1991, p.43). Given the economic impact of globalization, the growing

recognition of knowledge as an economic force, and current advances in technology, there is a press for Caribbean governments to “embrace democratic and egalitarian ideals” (Peters, 2001, p. 48) as part of their values for national development. Thus, both local and external influences conspire to drive the demand for tertiary education (Peters, 2001) and influence how tertiary education is valued, assessed, and delivered.

As an education focused international organization, UNESCO impacts how higher education is valued, assessed, and delivered within many developing countries by highlighting and addressing key issues relevant to higher education in the *World Declaration on Higher Education in the Twenty First Century: Vision and Action*. This document serves as an important resource in guiding the development and revision of higher education policies throughout the world as it addresses a wide cross-section of issues in higher education such as mission, value, and purpose of higher education, access and equality, diversification, quality assurance, and innovative educational approaches.

## **UNESCO**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was founded in 1945, after the Second World War. Its mission is “to contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information” (UNESCO, 2010b, 3). Headquartered in Paris, France, UNESCO’s membership consists of 193 member states and seven associate member states (UNESCO, 2010b). Although UNESCO is a global organization, many of the key aspects of its mission are executed at the regional level (Daniel, 2003). Through its Division of Higher Education, UNESCO addresses major issues related to higher education reform, teacher education, innovation

and quality assurance, as well as regional and international co-operation within higher education (UNESCO, 2010c). Rather than imposing educational policy mandates upon its members, UNESCO seeks to provide diverse and inclusive, non-prescriptive knowledge services, encouraging its constituents to employ various types of knowledge sharing processes by adopting an active role in information and knowledge gathering (UNESCO, 2008). Some of the core objectives of UNESCO's Education Sector are to provide international leadership, to create learning societies with educational opportunities for all populations, to serve as a broker and clearinghouse for ideas, and to facilitate the development of partnerships (UNESCO, 2010c).

Education has been an integral part of the activities of UNESCO since the organization's founding in 1946. Since then, the organization has become increasingly involved in higher education through its sectoral activities in the sciences, the social sciences, culture, and through its work in many other areas of education (Daniel, 2003). UNESCO influences the higher educational policy agenda within developing countries through educational standard setting, its global networks and educational conferences, and by challenging governments to renew investments in adult education (Omolewa, 2007). The positions UNESCO takes on education, and on higher education in particular, have direct implications for national policy within many developing nations primarily because UNESCO focuses on contemporary issues concerning education, science, and culture (Omolewa, 2007).

Nettleford (2007) asserted that UNESCO's role, concerning higher education within the Caribbean, has been to keep CARICOM nation-states "on track by distilling from its strategic location the problems and possibilities of higher education in a rapidly

changing world” (p.25). UNESCO in its approach to higher education has placed great emphasis on the role and significance of preserving indigenous culture and ways of knowing as a necessary element of local education systems. By contrast, the World Bank, which functions as a multilateral lending agency, sees higher education primarily in terms of its economic value. Therefore, the World Bank has adopted a vastly different approach to higher education than that of UNESCO.

### **The World Bank**

The World Bank (the Bank), headquartered in Washington, D.C., was established in 1944. The World Bank is made up of two institutions, the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) – which aims to reduce poverty in middle-income and creditworthy poorer countries, and the International Development Association (IDA) – which focuses on the world's poorest countries (Spring, 2009; Cohn, 2010; World Bank, 2010). The World Bank is a part of the five-member World Bank Group, which is the largest international investor in education in the world. The Bank first began issuing educational loans in 1963 (Psacharopoulos, 2006). The Bank carries out its operations through over 10,000 employees in more than 100 offices worldwide and a vast network of partnerships with international organizations across the globe (Spring, 2009). A primary function of The World Bank Group is to provide development financing to developing countries and transitional economies (Cohn, 2010). Other members of the World Bank Group include the International Finance Corporation (IFC), International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) (Cohn, 2010; World Bank, 2010).

The following section examines the Bank's approach to higher education policy development and dissemination.

### **The Bank's Higher Education Policy Recommendations**

Psacharopoulos, who served for 17 years as an Education Research Manager at the World Bank, asserted it is "very difficult to pinpoint a concrete and clear-cut World Bank policy on education" (2006, p. 330). Any attempt to ascertain the Bank's policies on higher education must therefore take into consideration both the officially stated policies as expressed in written documents as well as *de facto* policies inherent in how the Bank operates (Psacharopoulos, 2006). Research on the rates of return on investment in education, conducted in the 1970s, influenced the Bank's overall educational policies during the 1980s with significant implications for higher education (Psacharopoulos, 2006). The findings of the research on rates of return in education stated that "the returns to primary education were higher than those of investing in vocational or tertiary education, and also that the returns to investing in women's education were higher than the corresponding returns to men" (Psacharopoulos, 2006, p. 332).

Embracing the rate of return analysis as a valid guide for its lending policies, the Bank stated that it would continue to give priority to those countries that were "prepared to adopt a higher education policy framework that stresses a differentiated institutional structure and diversified resource base, with greater emphasis on private providers and private funding" (World Bank, 1994, p. 13). The Bank's rationale for this policy was that publicly financed higher education systems within developing countries had a "regressive fiscal impact" (World Bank, 1994, p. 23), as the costs were borne by the entire population and the benefits were afforded only to a few. The authors of the World Bank report,

*Promise and Peril*, pointed to the importance of diversification within the higher education system, and stated that diversification was necessary as “it promises increased competition and, ultimately, improved quality” (World Bank, 2000, p. 11). The rate of returns analysis would later be criticized by the Bank as “consistently failing to reflect that the benefits of higher education extend well beyond the incremental earnings accruing to those individuals who receive it” (World Bank, 2000, p. 40).

According to the Bank, the ideal higher education system is characterized by four “core qualities” (World Bank, 2000, p. 11): (a) increased institutional autonomy from government interference; (b) clear stratification of institutions with an emphasis on competition for students, faculty, and funding; (c) competition and cooperation that facilitates the profitable sharing of knowledge, human and physical capital; and, (d) greater openness to facilitate institutional partnerships between tertiary institutions and businesses through knowledge and revenue sharing links. These core qualities clearly highlight the neo-liberal philosophy that underscores the Bank’s recommendations for higher education in developing countries. Within this model the role of government is reduced to that of “supervisors, rather than directors of higher education” (p. 11). This supervisory role of government is emphasized as being a highly important one, as “markets require profit and this can crowd out important educational duties and opportunities” (p.11). A large part of the government’s role in the provision of higher education is to ensure that those aspects of higher education that may not be profitable for the market to provide, but are necessary for the social wellbeing of society and the nation as a whole, will be made available.

Critics of the Bank's educational policies are typically most concerned about three key areas (Collins & Rhodes, 2008): (a) policies that require an exclusive primary and secondary education focus at the expense of higher education; (b) structural adjustment programs that emphasize expansion of the private sector and reductions in public expenditure; and, (c) the notion that the Bank's policies have an overall effect of inhibiting developing nations from engaging in the knowledge economy in "culturally appropriate ways" (Collins & Rhodes, 2008, p. 191). The influence and power that the Bank possesses through its financial dominance and its vast network of international partners cannot be understated. In fact, the Bank is very aware of this, as it explicitly acknowledged that "the Bank can use its position as the largest external source of funds in most developing countries to encourage other partners to contribute to priority activities" (World Bank, 1999, p. 21). Klees (2002) has noted that the Bank "wants to be the clearing house for best-practice knowledge" (p. 459) but continues to emphasize a unidirectional flow of knowledge from developed countries to developing countries. Recipients of aid become even less able to follow their own policy agendas and often adopt the various agendas of donors (Klees, 2002).

### **Navigating the Policy Process**

Attempts by developing nations to adopt new external policy frameworks may not always be voluntary, as countries can be coerced into embracing policy transfers if political actors perceive their country will fall behind its neighbors or competitors (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996). The growing international consensus surrounding higher education, and its contribution towards economic development, particularly within developing countries, may act as a push factor in this regard. The ways in which

international organizations and the wider international community define and address problems related to the expansion of and access to higher education may place increased pressure on developing countries to implement higher education policies that are in congruence with those recommendations of international organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank. Countries within the Caribbean have often consulted these international organizations for assistance in developing guidelines for education policies. In fact, during the 2004 national conference on higher education in Jamaica, entitled *Revisiting Tertiary and Higher Education Policy in Jamaica* (Holding & Burke, 2005), much of the debate, and subsequent recommendations offered upon conclusion of the conference, were highly reflective of the World Bank's higher education policies as outlined in *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise* (World Bank, 2000).

Key issues in the policy process may be viewed within the context of three distinct policy environments: policy formation, policy implementation, and policy evaluation (Nakamura & Smallwood, 1980). These policy environments are interconnected by a variety of communication linkages to form a policy system. Policy implementers must interact with the policymakers and other actors to coordinate and navigate the environment in order to initiate and carry out policy directives (Nakamura, & Smallwood, 1980). In order to gain support, policymakers and implementers must ensure that policy goals are clearly stated, are specific and measurable, and that implementation activities are directed toward the achievement of stated goals (Nakamura, & Smallwood, 1980). These steps are necessary for effective policy implementation, as individuals responsible for carrying out policy decisions must be clear about what exactly

is expected of them, and what they need to do in order to be effective (Edwards & Sharkansky, 1978).

National higher education policies may have direct or indirect impact on the development of the private tertiary education sector. Changes in local demography and national politics may serve to reinforce or undermine the effectiveness of educational reform (Elmore and McLaughlin, 1988). Education policies that stipulate tuition fees to be charged at public institutions might impact enrollment within private tertiary institutions as increased tuition at public institutions minimizes the tuition gap between public and private institutions, which could lead to increased enrollment in private higher education (Levy, 2010). The educational policy planning process often requires value adjustments on the part of the primary stakeholders in the planning process as the goals and priorities of constituent groups may be conflicting (Berdie, Layton, Hagenah, & Swanson, 1962).

Education policymakers within many countries have historically neglected to include provisions for private delivery of higher education, which has raised concerns about the legitimacy of private tertiary institutions (Kisner, 2010). This statement holds true for Jamaica, as there is currently no comprehensive higher education policy framework in place (Foster-Allen, 2007), and there continues to be a dearth of educational policy directed specifically to private and offshore tertiary education institutions (George, 2008). The omission of the private higher education sector in the formulation of education policies in Jamaica, as in other Caribbean countries, has resulted in a relatively under-regulated or unregulated private higher education sector. Hunte (1976) insisted that new policies to guide higher education within the Caribbean are

urgently needed to facilitate “careful and effective planning of the future development of higher education in the West Indian community” (p. 6). Given that there is considerable demand for tertiary education within Jamaica and the Anglophone Caribbean, Harris (2007) suggested that policymakers should be more cognizant of the fact that increasing local and regional capacity for educating citizens, particularly at the tertiary education level, is an essential component in addressing the region’s social and economic challenges.

### **The Caribbean Context**

The Anglophone Caribbean Community (CARICOM) consists of a grouping of democratic states located in the Caribbean Sea that have a shared history of over 300 years of British colonization (UNESCO, 2001). Following the end of World War II, the process of decolonization began to take place in the Caribbean. The decolonization process resulted from a combination of events and factors, both domestic and international, during the postwar period, which altered the colonial relationship between the Anglophone Caribbean and Britain (Cox-Alomar, 2004). Two key factors impacting the decolonization process included insufficient finance on the part of the British Crown following the war, and a growing aspiration for independence among individual states within the Caribbean (Millette, 2004). In August of 1962, the two largest British colonies Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, gained their independence (Cox-Alomar, 2004; CARICOM, 2005). Many of the remaining British colonies gained independence shortly thereafter – during the late 1960s and into the early 1980s (Millette, 2004; CARICOM, 2005). However, a small group of islands with populations of fewer than one million

remained under British control and are referred to as dependent overseas British territories (Institute for European-Latin American Relations (IRELA), 1987).

Within CARICOM there are currently 13 independent states and four British dependent states. The British dependent islands include: Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. There are ten independent small island states: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago, and two independent South American states that were also former British colonies: Belize and Guyana (Roberts, 2003b).

States within the Commonwealth Caribbean have a shared heritage and cultural similarities. For example, the education systems throughout the Commonwealth Caribbean are based on the British model of formal education (Peters, 2001). The British model of formal education within the Caribbean dates back to the 1834 Emancipation Act, which provided the first opportunity for schooling within the region (Hunte, 1976). The Emancipation Act provided for the education of the ex-slaves within the British colonies and was backed by financial support from the Imperial Government through the Negro Education Grant (Hunte, 1976). However, higher education in the West Indies during this period was limited. Hunte (1976) contended that the British academic traditions had resulted in the creation of “a higher education system in the West Indies that was highly competitive, selective, and largely unresponsive to the needs of the area” (pp. 189-192). The British academic traditions are still an integral part of the education systems within the Caribbean (Peters, 2001).

### **A Brief Overview of Higher Education in the Caribbean**

Higher education within the English-speaking Caribbean began with the establishment of private religiously affiliated tertiary education institutions in the late nineteenth century (Cobley, 2000; Gordon, 1963; Miller 2000; Roberts 2003b). The first tertiary institution in the Commonwealth Caribbean was Codrington College in Barbados, which began as a grammar school in 1743 (Gordon, 1963). In 1830, Codrington College became the first private theological college in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Its primary mission was the training of Anglican priests. However, Codrington College did not offer degrees until after 1835 when it began doing so in collaboration with Durham University in Wales (Miller, 2000). Another noteworthy private religiously affiliated college, Calabar, was established in Jamaica in 1843 (Gordon, 1963). Calabar, a Baptist theological college, was established for the sole purpose of training Baptist pastors who would later become instrumental in providing basic education to ex-slaves. Today, Calabar continues to exist in Jamaica and advances its educational mission as a prominent all-male high school located in Kingston.

Other prominent institutions of higher learning emerged within the Caribbean during the twentieth century and include those established by the colonial authorities with the intention of servicing the Caribbean region as a whole. Two such institutions were The Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture (ICTA) and the University College of the West Indies (UCWI). The ICTA intended as a college for higher studies in agriculture, was established in Trinidad, in 1921 (Roberts, 2003b). The mission of ICTA was to provide a center for research and “for the gradual propagation of scientific ideas throughout the colonies from which its students were drawn” (Gordon, 1963, p. 291).

The University College of the West Indies was established in 1948 in Jamaica as a regional institution of higher learning designed to serve the nations within the Commonwealth Caribbean (Roberts, 2003b).

Between the 1830's and the 1950's, when transition towards independence commenced, Miller (2000) reported that "there were no more than ten small colleges training teachers, five even smaller colleges training ministers of religion, a few nursing and one college training agriculturalists in the entire Commonwealth Caribbean" (p. 122). According to Miller (2000) during the late 1960s through the 1990s there was a rise in the number of tertiary institutions within the Caribbean in response to the growing demands for higher education within the region. Similarly, Roberts (2003b) asserted that increased demand for higher education resulted from pressure for access by larger numbers and more diverse groups of students. Thus, at the dawn of the twenty-first century increased demand for higher education within the Caribbean was being met by the emergence of new universities, multi-disciplinary colleges as well as specialized non-university tertiary institutions (Roberts, 2003b).

Higher education within the Anglophone Caribbean consists of a diverse mix of over 150 tertiary institutions, approximately 60% of which are publicly or nationally funded (Howe, 2003). Of the remaining 40%, Howe (2003) estimated that, 30% are completely private, while the other 10% are privately owned but receive some government funding. Within CARICOM there is one flagship regional university, the University of the West Indies (UWI). UWI was established in 1948 at Mona, Jamaica, as the University College of the West Indies and offered degrees through the University of London (Sherlock, & Nettleford, 1990). In 1962, the year both Jamaica and Trinidad and

Tobago gained independence, UWI transitioned to an independent degree granting institution (Whiteley, 2001; UWI, 2006). Today, UWI consists of the three regional campuses that are located in Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago, University Centers in the non-campus countries (NCCs), and a Center for Hotel and Tourism Management in the Bahamas. The number of registered students at UWI rose from approximately 10,800 in 1986 to more than 22,000 in 2000 (Whiteley, 2001). Enrollment at the UWI was approximately 39,000 for the 2009-2010 academic year (UWI, 2006).

The mission of the UWI is to:

Unlock the West Indian potential for economic and cultural growth by high quality teaching and research aimed at meeting critical regional needs, by providing West Indian society with an active intellectual centre and by linking the West Indian community with distinguished centers of research and teaching in the Caribbean and overseas. (Sylvester, 2008, p. 263)

Within CARICOM higher education plays an integral role in regional development through preparing graduates for taking on leadership roles in government, industry and commerce, education, and research. Traditionally, tertiary education has served the region as a catalyst for productive endeavors that support the creation, acquisition, and dissemination of the knowledge and skills necessary to stimulate and drive Caribbean economies (Leo-Rhynie, 2005). There is a strong belief among CARICOM states that tertiary education provides the capacity to move beyond cognitive and intellectual development by utilizing the teaching and learning environment and the academic experience to enhance the autonomy, maturity, and character of the individual in a holistic manner (Nettleford, 2002).

CARICOM's ongoing imperative to expand access to tertiary education is a proactive response to "anticipated demand for local leaders, professionals and technocrats in the newly emerging nation states and semi-autonomous dependencies" (Miller, 2000, p. 123). As CARICOM governments continue to chart national goals of social and economic development and integration into the CARICOM single market economy (CSME), the importance of expanding higher education and ensuring academic quality within the tertiary education sector cannot be overstated. Jules (2010) posited that CARICOM higher education reforms often prove problematic to implement, as reform agendas are often inconsistent and are likely to change when local governments change. Therefore, governments should consider the needs of the region as a whole in their prediction of national tertiary education requirements and in the formulation of local education policies for the expansion of access (Jules, 2010).

Enrollment in tertiary education within the English-speaking Caribbean has been significantly low when compared to neighboring Spanish-speaking Caribbean and Latin American countries (World Bank, 1993; Williams, 2004). This has been attributed to the private costs associated with attending tertiary institutions and the high academic entry requirements for attending traditional state funded universities within CARICOM (World Bank, 1993). Traditional admissions policy for entry to higher education within the region stipulates that students must obtain at a minimum four or five Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) passes, in selected subject areas, often passes in Mathematics and English Language are mandatory requirements (World Bank, 1993; Williams, 2004). In addition to the CXC passes, some institutions require that students have at least two A-level passes to be considered for admissions (World Bank, 1993).

Recognizing the importance of higher education in “producing skilled labor for the key economic sectors” (Caribbean Community (CARICOM), 1997, 15), CARICOM states view low tertiary enrollment as problematic as they seek to improve the quality of their human resources in order to become more competitive within the international marketplace. At the June 1997 meeting of the CARICOM heads of states, which was held in Jamaica, CARICOM governments agreed to re-emphasize the importance of life-long learning as part of the education policy agenda and to target a gross tertiary enrollment of 15% of the 18-24 aged populace by 2005; (the gross tertiary enrollment for the region was 7% in 1997 (CARICOM, 1997). This goal was not attained by all CARICOM states within the scheduled timeframe. However, Jamaica exceeded this target two years in advance of the 2005 deadline with a gross tertiary enrollment of 18.1% in 2003 (Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), 2009c).

### **Jamaica’s Unique Position within the Caribbean**

Jamaica is a small, tropical island located in the Caribbean Sea. The island is 898 kilometers south east of Florida, 144.8 kilometers south of Cuba, 160.9 kilometers south west of Haiti (George, 2008), and has an area of approximately 10,900 square kilometers (Graham & Edwards, 1984). Jamaica was colonized by the British in 1655 and gained its independence on August 6, 1962. Jamaica features prominently among CARICOM nations in several regards. With a population of 2.7 million, Jamaica has the largest population within the English-speaking Caribbean. The island is world renown as a trailblazer in the areas of sports, music and culture, and tourism. Jamaica was the first CARICOM nation to initiate a mass literacy campaign in the 1970s (Jules, 2010), home of the first and largest campus of the Caribbean’s regional university – UWI (Sherlock &

Nettleford, 1990), and the first CARICOM nation to establish a fully functioning accreditation body for higher education. Jamaica is recognized as the Caribbean island with the largest number of private tertiary institutions (Brandon, 2003) and is the first of three Caribbean states to sign commitments to the World Trade Organization's (WTO) General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) (Hosein, Chen, & Singh, 2004). GATS facilitates the provision of higher education by foreign providers and helps to ensure that foreign providers of education services have unrestricted access to domestic markets (Rikowski, 2007).

### **Political Economic Environment**

The system of governance in Jamaica may be described as a constitutional parliamentary democracy, modeled on the British parliamentary system of governance. The political environment in Jamaica is stable and based on a bi-partisan system. The two major political parties are the People's National Party (PNP) formed in 1938 under the leadership of Norman Manley, and the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP), formed in 1943 by Alexander Bustamante (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2010). During the 1970s, under the governance of PNP administration, Prime Minister Michael Manley, education became a national priority. In 1973, Prime Minister Manley enacted a policy of open access to tertiary education whereby the government bore all the cost of education, including the cost of tuition and fees, housing, and books for eligible Jamaican students (Nkrumah-Young, Huisman, & Powell, 2008). However, the policy of free tertiary education was fiscally unsustainable, and students were later asked to contribute to the economic cost of attending tertiary education institutions.

The 1970s through the mid 1980s was a period characterized by strong bureaucratic controls, high governmental involvement in the economy, and financial repression (Kirkpatrick & Tennant, 2002). Having won the 1980 general election, the Jamaica Labor Party (JLP) under the leadership of Edward Seaga, took over the governance of Jamaica (Payne, 1992). The new government forged a relationship with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United States, “collectively bringing to bear upon Jamaica the neo-liberal economic orthodoxies of the 1980s” (Payne, 1992, p. 464). During the 1980s, an intense privatization initiative ensued that continued into the 1990s (Thomas, 2002). The implementation of economic policy reforms that lead to the liberalization of the Jamaican economy was a stipulated component of the structural adjustment loan agreements entered into with the World Bank (Kirkpatrick & Tennant, 2002). Structural adjustment requirements call for “the slimming down of government employment, cuts in taxation to stimulate investment, and a reduction in public services” (Clarke & Howard, 2006, p. 108). The effects of the aforementioned economic reforms impacted the nature of the Jamaican higher education sector, creating an environment conducive to the emergence of private tertiary education institutions and encouraging growth of the private sector provision of higher education in Jamaica (Sylvester, 2008). The impact of adopting the neo-liberal ideology is reflected in how Jamaica is positioned in relation to various economic and social indicators.

### **Economic and Social Indicators**

Jamaica has a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$23.8 billion and a GDP per capita of \$8,400. In 2009, the rate of inflation was 9.6%, and the unemployment rate was 11.4%. Education is mandatory up to the age of 16 years. The national expenditure on

education in 2005 was 5.3% of GDP (CIA, 2010). Some primary sectors of the economy include tourism, bauxite and alumina, food processing, light manufacturing, bananas, sugar, rum, cement, and chemical products. Some of Jamaica's major trading partners include the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Canada, the CARICOM countries, Latin America, and Japan (CIA, 2010; Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2010).

Jamaica has a population of 2.7 million with an annual population growth rate of 1% (PIOJ, 2010). Males account for 49.3% of the total population while females account for the remaining 50.7% (PIOJ, 2009b). Shifts in the demographic features of the Jamaican population have occurred as a result of population aging due to reductions in fertility and mortality rates (PIOJ, 2008). The size of the working age population, 15-64 years, increased to 60.1% in 2007 from 57.8% in 1997, while the proportion of individuals in the 65 years and over age group increased to 9.2% from 7.9% over the same period (PIOJ, 2008). Since 1998, the annual population growth rate has remained constant at 1.0% (PIOJ, 2009b).

With a human development index (HDI) of 0.73 and a world HDI ranking of 101 out of 177 countries, Jamaica is considered a medium level developing country (PIOJ, 2009a). On the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), which measures the levels of productivity of a country, Jamaica ranked 86<sup>th</sup> out of 134 countries in 2009 (PIOJ, 2009a). Based on its GCI score, Jamaica is considered a country in the "efficiency stage of development" (p. 8), which means that although the core components of competitiveness are present they are neither effective nor efficient enough to support an "innovation-driven economy" (PIOJ, 2009a, p. 8). Jamaica's HDI and GCI rankings are

undoubtedly impacted by the island's political and economic environment. The nation's concerns about its current low rankings and levels of competitiveness within the international community and the desire to improve its rankings on the various indices that measure development have resulted in the formulation of a national development plan – *Vision 2030 Jamaica*. Jamaica's national development plan has as its primary goal the achievement of developed country or high income economy status for Jamaica by the year 2030.

According to the World Bank (2011) country classification matrix, a developing country or developing economy refers to nation-states with low and middle income economies. The Bank (2011) considers Gross National Income (GNI) to be the best single indicator of economic capacity and progress and utilizes GNI per capita as the primary criterion for classifying countries. Based on its GNI per capita, a country may be classified as: (a) low income economy - US\$1,005 or less; (b) lower middle income economy - US\$1,006 - US\$3,975; (c) upper middle income economy - US\$3,976 - US\$12,275; or (d) high income economy - US\$12,276 or more (World Bank, 2011). Jamaica is currently classified as an upper middle income economy and has a GNI of per capita of US\$7,310 (World Bank, 2011). The fact that Jamaica has the largest population (2.7 million) within the English-speaking Caribbean is highly significant when comparing GNI per capita among CARICOM nations. For example, Jamaica's GNI of US\$20.14 billion is significantly higher than the GNI of its CARICOM neighbor Barbados (US\$939.12 million), which is ranked as a high income economy. However, Barbados has a population of 273,331 which makes its GNI per capita US\$18,830. Thus, population size significantly impacts a country's GNI per capita and economic ranking.

## **Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan**

*Vision 2030 Jamaica* is the nation's first long-term national development plan (PIOJ, 2009a). This plan is aimed at enabling Jamaica to transition from developing economy to achieve “developed country status by 2030” (PIOJ, 2009a, p. xxii). *Vision 2030 Jamaica* serves as a strategic guide for the achievement of this level of development by providing clearly outlined “short- and medium-term priorities, policies and programs which are captured in the [island's] Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF)” (p. viii). This framework for implementation is both dynamic and flexible as it “facilitates consistent monitoring and evaluation and allows domestic as well as global changes to be reflected and incorporated in the planning process” (p. viii). Contributors to Jamaica's national development plan include the public and private sectors, ordinary citizens, trade unions, NGOs, as well as external agencies (PIOJ, 2009a).

*Vision 2030 Jamaica* is based on seven guiding principles – social cohesion, equity, transformational leadership, transparency and accountability, partnership, sustainability, and urban and rural development. The national development plan is aimed at achieving four overarching national goals: (a) Jamaicans are empowered to achieve to their fullest potential; (b) Jamaican society is secure, cohesive and just; (c) Jamaica's economy is prosperous; and, (d) Jamaica has a healthy environment. Each of these national goals is broken down into a series of national outcomes, which are further supported by an array of national strategies directed at achieving them.

Higher education features as a core strategic component in the achievement of goal number one – Jamaicans are empowered to achieve to their fullest potential. There are four national outcomes directed at achieving this goal. These include: (a) a healthy and

stable population; (b) world-class education and training; (c) effective social protection; and, (d) authentic transformational culture. However, for the purposes of this research study, the discussion presented herein will be limited to higher education as it relates to goal number one and specifically to the achievement of national outcome number two, namely world-class education and training. In pursuit of world-class education and training, Jamaica, through its higher education system, hopes to produce “well rounded and qualified individuals who are able to function as creative and productive individuals in all spheres of society and be competitive in a global context” (PIOJ, 2009a, p. xxvii).

### **The National Goals for Higher Education**

The national strategies outlined in *Vision 2030 Jamaica* for the attainment of world-class education and training calls for incremental strengthening of tertiary institutions in order to ensure that graduates will be able to “lift production of goods and services up the value chain beyond simple processes and products” (PIOJ, 2009a, p. 58). It was stated within the development plan that the primary objective of tertiary education and training institutions is to “impart skill areas that are relevant to existing and emerging jobs or career tracks, [as within] an increasingly knowledge-based global economy, one of the key sources of a country’s competitiveness resides in the quality of its human capital” (p. 68). Some of the key national strategies identified for achieving the national goal of world-class education and training include:

- a. Create and implement a standards-driven and outcomes-based education system that emphasizes the institutionalization of a competency-based approach in all educational institutions at all levels;
- b. Ensure that adequate and high quality tertiary education is provided with emphasis

- on the interface with work and school;
- c. Expand mechanisms to provide access to education and training for all;
- d. Establish a National Qualification Framework Academic Institutions; and,
- e. Strengthen the mechanisms to align training with demands for the labor market.

The national strategies for achieving world-class education and training as outlined in *Vision 2030 Jamaica* highlights the significant role of higher education in helping to facilitate a vibrant and sustainable economy. Both private and public tertiary education institutions in Jamaica play a role in the development of higher levels of human capital, a key ingredient in Jamaica's "transformation from a middle income developing country to one which affords its citizens a high quality of life and world-class standards in critical areas including education, health care, nutrition, basic amenities, access to environmental goods and services, civility and social order" (PIOJ, 2009a, p. xxii).

### **Jamaica's Higher Education Landscape**

Higher education in Jamaica has its origins in the private sector with the establishment of religiously affiliated institutions of training initially for ministers of religion and later for teachers. Evans and Burke (2006) reported that the first tertiary institutions on the island were established for the training of religious ministers and date back as early as 1832. One of the earliest teacher education institutions, Mico College, was established in 1835 and still exists today as a degree granting institution. Mico College was funded by the Negro Education Grant, which was derived from a private trust "for the religious and moral education of the ex-slaves" (Evans & Burke, 2006, p. 6). Early attempts by the Jamaican Government to offer higher education in 1889 led to the establishment of Jamaica College. However, very few candidates were successful in

achieving the standards (Gordon, 1963). After twelve years of operation only five students had been successful in the B.A. and M.A examinations (Evans & Burke, 2006). Brathwaite (1958) argued that “the failure of the College as an institution of higher education lay in the narrowness of secondary education and in the superior facilities available abroad for the pursuit of higher education” (p. 22). Evans and Burke (2006) postulated that during the initial stages of the development of higher education in Jamaica the “government became involved in higher education only when it became clear that the churches were unable to provide it to a sufficient degree” (p. 11).

Higher education in Jamaica is provided through a network of both private and public institutions with a wide variety of missions, educational philosophies, curricula and program offerings, and governance structures (Blank & McArdle, 2003). Public higher education is provided through the Ministry of Education and Youth (MOEY). The public higher education sector consists of 19 institutions, which are located in both rural and urban areas across the island. The two major public universities, The University of the West Indies (UWI) and The University of Technology (UTECH), are both located in the capital city, Kingston, and in recent years have established academic centers in other locations across the island. The public tertiary system is relatively diverse and consists of five community colleges, six teachers’ colleges, five multidisciplinary colleges, and two universities (MOEY, 2006). A number of public tertiary institutions have developed partnerships with a variety of offshore universities in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom (MOEY, 2006). All public tertiary institutions receive a significant proportion of their operating budget from the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) through the provision of tuition subsidies. However, the allocation formula varies by institutional

type (MOEY, 2006; Evans & Burke, 2006).

The private higher education sector consists of a combination of local and offshore institutions offering specialized training, along with a range of undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Private tertiary institutions operating in Jamaica are encouraged to register with the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ). However, they are not legally obligated to do so as there is currently no policy framework in place that mandates private and offshore institutions to register with and obtain accreditation from the UCJ (George, 2008). As of August 2010, there were a total of 25 private institutions and programs registered with the UCJ (UCJ, 2010). The private tertiary education landscape is also marked by the emergence of institutions based on the model of the corporate university. Institutions modeled after corporate universities are aimed at meeting the need for specialized skill sets within the local tourism and financial sectors and offer several programs in direct competition with those being offered by existing public and private academic institutions (MOEY, 2006).

In 2003, approximately 80% of students enrolled in tertiary education were enrolled in public higher education institutions; students enrolled in certificate and undergraduate degrees accounted for approximately 95% of this total (Blank & McArdle, 2003). Unlike most developing countries, in Jamaica, females are overrepresented in all sectors of the education system and even more so within the tertiary education sector (Millennium Development Report, 2004). At the secondary level, females outperform males and as a result more females qualify for available places at higher education institutions. In 2007, approximately 66% of all students enrolled in tertiary institutions were females compared to male enrollment of 34% (PIOJ, 2009a).

During the 2002-2003 academic year, there was an estimated total of 41,761 students, or 16.9% of the 18 to 23 years of age cohort enrolled in tertiary institutions (Miller, 2005). Traditionally, the basic qualification required for entry to higher education is a minimum of five ordinary level passes in the CXC (Caribbean Examination Council) or GCE (General Certificate of Education) subject exams, which must include passes in mathematics and English Language. However, limited capacity within public universities, failure to meet traditional matriculation requirements, and the inability to pay, often restrict access to tertiary education (PIOJ, 2009a). The Jamaican tertiary education sector is highly competitive, with institutions targeting specific student populations by customizing courses and program offerings to meet student demand (MOEY, 2006). The relatively high level of institutional diversity across the public and private sectors has helped to minimize perceived gaps in the provision of tertiary education. There has been some level of collaboration among institutions to address the rise in demand for higher education. However, there is no system-wide articulation agreement (MOEY, 2006).

### **The Growing Demand for Higher Education**

The demand for higher education is largely a function of what kinds of higher education programs are being offered and the terms associated with such programs (Fulton, 1981). Conversely, the demand for higher education has a direct impact on what types and forms of tertiary education programs institutions are willing to provide (Whitman, 2003). The diversity of learning opportunities at the tertiary level is a reflection of the existing and anticipated needs of society, enterprises, and the economy (Whitman, 2003). Improvements in the gross tertiary enrollment rate, and the continued

expansion of access to tertiary education, have a direct impact on the achievement of goals held by the various stakeholders of higher education (e.g., students, academics, politicians, and industry), as changes in the power balance among stakeholders shape how higher education is defined and delivered, and which of its purposes are privileged (Deer, 2003). The demographic changes that are occurring in higher education around the world have been characterized by increased demand for access to higher education and a move towards greater massification. Increases in the number of students applying to tertiary institutions worldwide may be due, in part, to the fact that higher education became “increasingly important as a key to social mobility” (Goastellec, 2008, p. 4), particularly in developing countries.

CARICOM countries are experiencing an increase in demand for access to relevant, quality higher education (Beckles, Perry, & Whiteley, 2002). Within the region the increased demand for higher education has led to expansion in both the number of students engaged in tertiary education programs as well as the types of programs being offered (Nettleford, 2002). Demographic changes give credence to the view that within the Caribbean knowledge is increasingly “replacing physical capital as the source of future wealth and higher education now constitutes a primary force driving the sustainability of development” (Nettleford, 2002, p. v). In a 2001 report by the Office of the Board of Non-Campus Countries (OBNCC) at the University of the West Indies, the authors of the report highlighted the importance of higher education within the region. The authors indicated that meeting the demands for higher education remained a priority to governments within CARICOM despite difficult economic times and the influence of

World Bank studies that argued that investments in higher education had a lower rate of return in comparison to investment in primary and secondary education.

The observations noted in the OBNCC 2001 report hold true for Jamaica where the rate of participation in higher education has been increasing as a result of rising demand (Irvine, 2005; MOEY, 2006; PIOJ, 2009a). Increased demand for higher education in Jamaica is evidenced by the fact that enrollment rates have more than doubled over the past 15 years, with higher education being the only sector that has surpassed goals set by the Ministry of Education (Miller, 2005). Several factors help to explain the increased demand for higher education in Jamaica. According to Jamaica's national strategic plan, *Vision 2030 Jamaica*, some key factors include growth in the population, increased corporate demands for a specialized and highly skilled workforce, high primary education completion rates, and positive perceptions about personal gains to be attained from completing tertiary education (PIOJ, 2009a). Similarly, Miller (2005) posited that the expansion of the secondary education sector and shifts in the demographic makeup of the population are relevant factors contributing to the increased demand for Jamaican higher education.

As demand for higher education continues to increase, issues related to access come into focus. In light of globalization and the increasing importance of higher education within the knowledge economy, the World Bank (2000) contends that, "higher education is no longer a luxury: it is essential to national social and economic development" (p. 14). Therefore, it is imperative that developing nations work to ensure that higher education is accessible to a wider cross-section of individuals by taking the necessary steps to address and overcome barriers that impede access to higher education.

## **The Determinants of Access to Higher Education**

Access to higher education may be defined as “the capacity to provide higher education to those who possess the physical, mental and psychological ability to undertake this level of education” (Evans & Burke, 2006, p. 29). Roberts (2003a) expands upon this definition positing that access to higher education also includes “opportunities for enrollment as well as the facilitation of entry and the encouragement of sustained enrollment by learners in appropriate education programs” (pp. 2-3). Access, therefore, includes features of openness facilitated by the ability to enroll a heterogeneous student population; provision of relevant and diverse offerings within a supportive environment; and, maximization of institutional capacity with a view to meet existing demand for higher education (Roberts, 2003a).

The nature of the existing education system, the types of political and economic structures in place, and the dominant attitudes and beliefs held by members of a particular society regarding the distribution of educational opportunities are key determinants of access to higher education (Deer, 2003). Education policy concerning access to higher education continues to be a heavily discussed topic among educational policymakers around the world (Teichler, 1988). The pertinence of the issue of access to higher education has resulted in evolutionary changes in educational policy development. Historically, policies on access to higher education were restrictive in favor of the elites (Forojalla, 1993; Teichler, 1988). Access policies have since evolved towards massification as advanced Western countries began to embrace the notion that higher education plays a crucial role in socio-economic advancement (Forojalla, 1993). Roberts (2003a) suggested that within the Caribbean there are several unwritten policy

components that influence access to higher education. The author highlighted the fact that scheduling of courses during traditional daytime business hours and on weekdays and the “absence of rest facilities for working part-time students or lack of day care facilities for children can restrict access” (pp. 55-56). Transportation costs and geography may also be limiting factors to access even in situations where offers of college admission are made on academic merit as the student’s decision to accept such offers are made on the basis of economics (Roberts, 2003a).

Efforts to expand enrollment in higher education across the globe have largely resulted in the marginalization of traditionally disadvantaged groups, particularly those from lower socio-economic strata and those located in rural areas (Ziderman, 2005). Evans and Burke (2006) posited that within the Caribbean admission policies, required credentials, access to financial resources or the lack thereof, and minimum age requirements all have an impact on access. Financial cost, place of residence, social class, and gender are key factors that have a direct impact on students’ ability to access higher education within the Commonwealth Caribbean (Miller, 2000). Family background and whether or not a student’s parents accessed tertiary education may also be key considerations (Asplund, Abdelkarim, & Skilli, 2008).

Direct financial costs, as well as the opportunity costs (i.e., earnings forgone by students while enrolled) associated with pursuing tertiary education, are a major barrier to access for disadvantage groups (Fulton, 1981; Asplund, Abdelkarim, & Skilli, 2008; Ziderman, 2005; Peters & Whittington, 2009). In a study of 13 CARICOM countries, Peters and Whittington (2009) found that there are similarities among Caribbean nations regarding the major barriers to, and enablers of, participation in tertiary education. The

five major barriers highlighted in the study include: attitude (motivation), entry requirements, finance, program relevance to job promotion, and time constraints due to job demands. The authors emphatically stated that, “lack of finance was identified by all stakeholder groups from all countries as being the universal barrier to participation in tertiary education” (Peters & Whittington, 2009, p. 63).

The issue of expanding access to higher education cannot be resolved by applying a simple formula or policy instrument aimed at facilitating equality, as factors such as existing social, economic, and geographical barriers must also be addressed (Husén, 1976). By providing students with greater financial leverage and expanding the range of qualifications for admissions, institutions may adapt more readily to the needs of potential students (Fulton, 1981). Acknowledging that there are social biases built into the admissions process, Husén (1976) recommended that tertiary education institutions utilize a combination of competitive and non-competitive admissions strategies. It may be necessary to utilize a flexible admissions policy in which the prerequisites students must meet in order to maximize gains from participation in higher education are directly aligned with specific programs of study (Husén, 1976). Similarly, Craig (1993) suggested that within the context of Jamaican higher education, establishing a range of matriculation standards equivalent to the traditional requirement of five O-levels is necessary in order to stimulate the expansion of access to higher education, as this would allow students greater flexibility to pursue approved programs in either public or private educational institutions. Tertiary education institutions might expand access to higher education by implementing policies of open access/admission, supplemented by remedial courses, and by incorporating blended on-line programs that make use of information

technology in curricular delivery, placing a greater focus on web-based learning (Peters, & Whittington, 2009).

In order to expand access to higher education for low-income populations, the issue of cost must be addressed through the implementation of a need based, means testing system that allocates funds to those with greatest need (Hossler, Shonia, & Winkle-Wagner, 2007). The student loan model that best facilitates access for the financially disadvantaged is the social targeting model, which employs mechanisms to ensure that loans are successfully allocated to applicants with the greatest financial need (Ziderman, 2005). Hossler, Shonia, and Winkle-Wagner (2007) highlighted the importance of providing early information about the possibilities and opportunities for higher education to disadvantaged groups at the earlier stages of their education, as this could significantly improve access.

The major enablers of access to tertiary education in the Caribbean are access courses (i.e., remediation/continuing education courses, financial assistance, and flexibility incentives), relevant program development, and promotion (Peters & Whittington, 2009). The government has a role to play in addressing barriers to accessing higher education as higher education features prominently as a resource for achieving national economic and social objectives (Peters & Whittington, 2009). Efforts on the part of the government to expand access to higher education must therefore be proactive rather than reactive. Peters and Whittington (2009) have argued that “when the inability to access tertiary education is coupled with the contribution it could make to national development, the need for government to be proactive and creative in financing tertiary education becomes apparent” (p. 74). Growth in the private sector provision of

higher education in conjunction with the existing public sector provisions may prove advantageous for Jamaica, as this provides greater scope for the expansion of access in response to a range of needs (Leo-Rhynie, 2007).

### **The Rise of Private Higher Education**

The private higher education sector is comprised of those institutions that provide higher education services but do not receive direct fiscal funding from the state or local government. Typically, these institutions rely primarily on student tuition and fees to support their operations. Private higher education institutions may be categorized as either private for-profit or private nonprofits. In general private for-profit institutions are corporate entities that closely adhere to pure market mechanisms and are subject to corporate tax laws (World Bank, 2002). Conversely, private nonprofit institutions typically operate under specific fiscal regulations that prohibit the distribution of surplus revenue or profits (World Bank, 2002). Surplus revenues earned by private nonprofit higher education institutions must be retained within the institution (World Bank, 2002).

Enrollment in private higher education has increased in all regions of the world and is currently “the fastest growing sub-sector worldwide” (UNESCO, 2010a, p.16). Private higher education represents approximately 30% of current global provision (Bjarnason, Cheng, Fielden, Lemaitre, Levy, & Varghese, 2009). Within Latin America and the Caribbean, at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, enrollment in private tertiary education represented over 40% of the total student population (Steier, 2003). Many countries within the region continue to experience significant growth in their private tertiary education sector. The presence of private tertiary institutions has increasingly become an important part of the higher educational landscape in both developed and developing

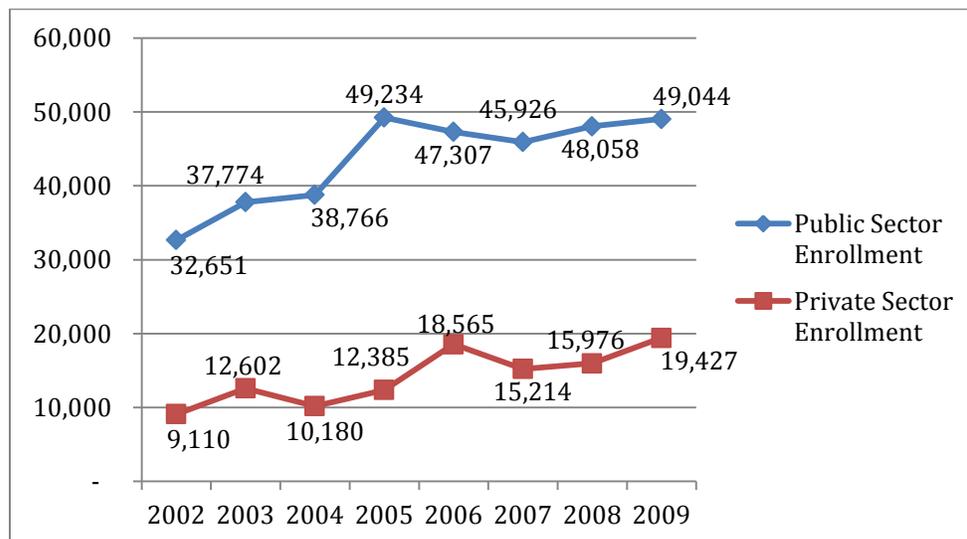
countries across the globe (Geiger, 1989; Altbach, 2000; Steier, 2003). Steier (2003) argued that “the growth of private [tertiary] institutions in response to rising demand has been much more rapid in developing countries than in most OECD countries” (p. 159). The growth of the private tertiary sector has impacted how the role of tertiary education is viewed within many developing countries. Higher education has traditionally been considered both a public and a private good. Traditional patterns of dominant state financing and provision support the notion of higher education as a public good. Increased privatization within the tertiary education sector signals a move toward positioning higher education as a unique commercial product that confers predominantly private benefits.

The private tertiary education sector within a country may be classified in one of three ways depending on its role and degree of prominence (Geiger, 1989). These three sectors may be described as mass private sector, peripheral private sector, and parallel private sector. Geiger (1989) has suggested that a mass private sector exists where the private tertiary institutions account for the majority of student enrollment. By contrast, the peripheral private sector is characterized by dominant public sector provision and enrollment (Geiger, 1989). The parallel private sector constitutes a system in which both public and private institutions share equal status and function. Therefore, the private higher education sector in Jamaica may be described as peripheral, as it accounts for 26% of student enrollment (PIOJ, 2009c) and plays a less prominent role in relation to Jamaica’s institutionally diverse public sector.

Private higher education institutions have emerged largely in response to demand for higher education that the public sector institutions are unable or unwilling to supply

(Kisner, 2010; Altbach, 2000). Levy (1986) described this situation as demand-absorbing, as private higher education institutions taking on the metaphoric attributes of a sponge soak up those students who are eligible to participate in higher education but are unable to be accommodated by institutions within the public sector. The growth absorption function of private higher education institutions has been more pronounced in developing countries, like Jamaica, where excess demand for higher education is being met by local private institutions as well as by for-profit internationally based, offshore providers (Levy, 2010). The graph below presents a visual representation of estimated private higher education enrollment trends in Jamaica between 2002 and 2009. The chart indicates that there has been an overall increase in private higher education enrollment in Jamaica. This growth in private enrollment may be attributed in part to the fact that the number of private higher education providers in Jamaica had also increased.

Figure 2. Trends in Public and Private Sector Higher Education Enrollment



There continues to be excess demand for higher education within CARICOM countries and Jamaica in particular. The liberalization process that is currently taking

place across the Caribbean higher education landscape will result in the increased presence of local private and offshore tertiary institutions in response to the excess demand (Hosein, Chen, and Singh, 2004). In the past, the UWI held a monopoly status in the provision of tertiary education within the CARICOM region, but this is no longer the case (Whiteley, 2001). The UWI has lost its monopoly on higher education due to the increasingly diverse and competitive nature of the tertiary education sector resulting from growing numbers of private tertiary education providers that have emerged in response to rising demand (Leo-Rhynie, 2007). However, in spite of increased competition from private tertiary education providers, the UWI maintains that it has not been left with excess capacity as “most faculties at the three [UWI] campuses receive more qualified applicants than they can find space and other resources to accept” (OBNCC, p. 21). This statement speaks to the extensive nature of the demand for tertiary education within the CARICOM nation states. The educational expansion in Jamaica has occurred faster than the government’s capacity to accommodate due to increased access to primary and secondary education (Honig, 1996). Thus, higher education in Jamaica has become increasingly market oriented as more private tertiary institutions emerge to meet excess student demand.

### **Quality Assurance in Higher Education**

Quality assurance has attained global prominence within higher education through the diffusive effects of cross-border educational policy borrowing, the influences of international organizations such as the OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank, and the formation of regional and international quality assurance agencies such as the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE)

(Singh, 2010). Drawing upon the works of the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), Houston and Maniku (2005) defined quality as:

Fitness for purpose, where the word purpose is to be interpreted broadly, to include mission, goals, objectives, specifications, etc. Fitness for purpose means both that an organization has procedures in place that are appropriate for the specified purposes and that there is evidence to show that these procedures are in fact achieving the specified purposes (p. 214).

Within the field of higher education one of the most commonly accepted definitions of quality is “fitness for purpose” (Woodhouse, 1999). Adopting this definition of quality serves to facilitate institutional diversity by affording higher education institutions significant autonomy to decide on their own missions, purposes and objectives (Woodhouse, 1999). Given the vast diversity present within the field of higher education fitness for purpose may vary significantly by institution type, academic discipline, and program. Materu (2007) advanced that factors affecting quality in higher institutions include: institutional mission, vision, governance and leadership; physical infrastructures such as libraries and laboratories; levels of faculty expertise; teaching, learning, and assessment standards; admissions standards; and the employability of graduates (i.e., the relevance of acquired knowledge and skill sets in relation to the demands of the labor market). In Jamaica, as in many nations across the globe, these factors are core components utilized by national accreditation agencies in assessing and evaluating the quality of higher education programs and institutions.

### **Jamaica's Quality Assurance Mechanism**

The University Council of Jamaica (UCJ) is “the national body for assuring quality in tertiary education in Jamaica” (UCJ Annual Report, UCJ 2010a, p. 2). The UCJ is a statutory body under the portfolio of the Ministry of Education and was established in 1987 by the University Council of Jamaica Act (UCJ, 2010a). The mission of the UCJ is “to increase the availability of tertiary level training in Jamaica through a robust quality assurance system that ensures excellence, transparency, integrity and adherence to standards” (UCJ, 2010a, p. vi). The core functions of the UCJ include: (a) registration of institutions offering tertiary education, (b) provide accreditation for degree and specialized programs, (c) assist in the development tertiary institutions by providing professional council, (d) provide appropriate public information about registered institutions and programs, and, (e) act as the national information center for Jamaican tertiary education qualification (UCJ, 2010a). Commenting on the role of the UCJ in relation to the accreditation process Gordon (1998) affirmed that:

In the total accreditation process, the Council does not function as an examining body or a policing agency. UCJ's role is development and is intended to facilitate the on-going strengthening and development of institutions and programs of study as the institutions work in partnership with the UCJ (p. 18).

### **The University Council of Jamaica's Accreditation Procedures**

The accreditation process is aimed at assuring the quality of the students, staff, and programs of study, assessment methods, resources and student welfare (UCJ, 2010a). Within the context of Jamaican higher education accreditation is the process by which programs of study at the tertiary level are reviewed in accordance with stated criteria of

the UCJ. The UCJ accreditation process is designed to determine whether or not an institution has met the published standards for a given program of study (UCJ, 2010a). Gordon (1998) asserted that the “UCJ’s accreditation of a program of study means that that program is meeting the accreditation objectives and is therefore attaining at least the minimum standards required for the delivery of such a program locally, regionally, and internationally” (p. 18). For higher education institutions in Jamaica accreditation is voluntary. In order for an institution to be eligible to have its programs accredited it must first be registered with the UCJ. This registration process serves to “certify that an institution meets certain minimum operating standards required for the conduct of tertiary education in Jamaica” (UCJ, 2010b, p. 14).

The criteria for gaining UCJ accreditation are the same for both public and private higher education institutions in Jamaica. Registered institutions seeking program accreditation through the UCJ must submit a completed application and institutional self-study along with any additional supplementary materials. The submitted application materials are reviewed by the UCJ. If the institution, based on the submitted materials, qualifies as a candidate for accreditation a date is determined (in collaboration with the applying institution) for a site visit.

The evaluation team selected by the UCJ to visit the institution and conduct the program evaluation is comprised of “professional educators and practicing professionals chosen for competence in fields relevant to the program being evaluated” (UCJ, 2010b, p. 15). Site visits consist of a series of interviews with a wide cross-section of relevant stakeholders including faculty, administrators, students, graduates of the institution, and employers of graduates from the program. There is also an evaluative assessment of the

institution's facilities and resources. Where necessary the accreditation team may choose to observe classes that are part of the curriculum of the program being assessed while these classes are in session.

Once the site visit is complete the evaluation team prepares a comprehensive report of the visitation findings and provides a summary of the observed strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations. A copy of the completed report is sent to the Principal or President the institution who is provided the opportunity to submit a written response on the institution's behalf to the evaluation team's report. Both the evaluation team's report and the institution's response are then reviewed by UCJ's Accreditation, Curriculum and Development Committee which then makes a recommendation to the UCJ as to whether or not the program should be accredited. The UCJ makes the final decision and informs the institution in writing.

### **Institution Self-study**

Self-evaluation and academic audits are common elements in the quality assurance process in higher education. Many institutions of higher learning readily embrace self-assessment as a means of generating awareness among staff and primary stakeholders as to the extent to which the institution has progressed in relation to key performance indicators (Materu, 2007). Materu (2007) suggested that self-assessment also helps institutions to identify and evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses without the pressure typically associated with external audits.

In Jamaica, institutions seeking to be accredited by the UCJ are required to conduct a detailed institutional self-assessment, the results of which are presented to the UCJ for review in a document called the self-study. The intent of the self-study is to help

“institutions to be self-critical and self-correcting” (UCJ 1998, Irvine, p. 17). The self-study “provides an opportunity for a formal review and evaluation of the institution’s mission, objectives, resources, and product and the relationships among them” (McMillan, 1998, p. 20). The UCJ provides guidelines and technical advice to assist institutions in carrying out the self-evaluation process and conducts external audits to identify critical issues that the institution will need to address in defining and maintaining the integrity and quality (UCJ, Irvine, 1998).

### **Academic Standards**

The UCJ has developed several academic standards, which are objective indicators that provide threshold guidelines to assist higher education institutions in the development and evaluation of their academic programs at the various academic levels (i.e., short courses, associates degrees, bachelor’s degrees, and the master’s degree levels). The academic standards utilized by the UCJ are developed and established through its Boards of Studies. These academic standards are “aligned with international standards” and are an integral part of the program accreditation process (UCJ, 2010a, p. 14). Standards developed for degree programs provide specific guidelines for the structure of the degree program, curriculum, admissions policies and requirements, instructional resources and facilities, student learning outcomes, faculty resources and development, and assessment procedures. For example, the Business Studies Standard for bachelors degree programs (UCJ, 2004) specifies that the curriculum must address national, regional, and global issues; giving ample consideration to the influence of social, political, ethical, regulatory and legal, technological and environmental issues. The program must also be structured such that there is a general education component

(accounting for 25-30% of total credits taken), a major or specialization with supporting courses (accounting for 60 - 70% of total credits taken), and an elective component (accounting for 5-15% of credits total credits taken). In addition the Business Studies Standard clearly outlines the requirements for establishing admissions policies, assessment procedures, and offers a guide to the kind of instructional and faculty resources that ought to be available.

### **Summary**

Internationalization and globalization have direct effects on conceptions of higher education at the international, regional, and national levels (Knight, 2010). Jamaica, like many developing nations, is faced with the reality that government lacks the necessary resources and the capacity required to meet society's growing demands for expanded access to higher education. Proponents of the neo-liberal framework offer that private higher education institutions may be better equipped to provide educational opportunities in response to the market demands. Higher education is increasingly being viewed as an essential tool for economic development within developing nations. It has been asserted that a higher education participation rate of 40% to 50% is necessary to facilitate sustainable economic growth (UNESCO, 2010a). However, Jamaica has not yet attained such targets.

In light of this reality, there is pressure to accelerate the pace of educational development in order to become a competitive participant within a knowledge-based global economy (Craig, 1993). As Jamaica strives towards its national goal of achieving developed country status by the year 2030, it becomes clear that higher education will need to be made more accessible to a wider cross-section of the Jamaican populace. In order to cope with the many challenges of global capitalism, developing nations, like

Jamaica, often choose to adopt strategies such as marketization, commodification, and privatization (Mok, 2005). Evidence of these strategies is reflected within the current Jamaican higher education sector. Given the limited resources available to the government, due to debt servicing and commitments to the provision of other social services, a niche market has emerged for private higher education providers. However, not much scholarship is available to determine whether private tertiary institutions in Jamaica are attuned to the island's national objective of achieving world-class education.

The present study utilizes a qualitative case study methodology to gain greater insight into the private higher education phenomenon in Jamaica. The use of qualitative methodology provides an opportunity to obtain the perspectives of high-level administrators at private tertiary institutions as to how private higher education is evolving in Jamaica, and the role of private tertiary institutions in the attainment of the island's national goals for higher education. The following chapter contains a detailed outline of the methodological approach and assumptions, research design, data collection and analytical processes that will be employed in this study.

### **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

Presented in this chapter is an overview of qualitative research methodology and a description of the qualitative research method that was employed in this study to answer the research questions. The purpose of this study was to gain insight into why private higher education institutions have flourished in Jamaica, how these institutions facilitate access to higher education, and to what extent private higher education institutions contribute to the achievement of Jamaica's national higher education goals. The researcher wanted to understand how private higher education is unfolding in Jamaica and how access to Jamaican higher education is impacted by the presence of private tertiary institutions. A qualitative case study approach was employed. Structural functionalism, specifically human capital theory within the context of the neo-liberal perspective, was utilized as an analytical lens. Methods employed in this qualitative case study approach included individual interviews, document analysis, and onsite visits to four private higher education institutions in Jamaica.

#### **Research Questions**

This qualitative case study research was guided by the following overarching and sub-level research questions:

1. Why have private tertiary education institutions emerged as key providers of higher education in Jamaica?
  - a. What are the primary factors that impact the growth of private tertiary education institutions?
  - b. How do admissions policies and entry requirements of private tertiary education institutions facilitate access?

- c. How do private tertiary education institutions address access barriers such as finance, geography, flexibility of course schedule, program relevance, and mode of delivery?
2. How do local private tertiary education institutions contribute to the attainment of Jamaica's national higher education goals?
  - a. Is there a conscious attempt by private tertiary education institutions to align institutional goals and outcomes with the national goals for higher education?
  - b. How does institutional mission and vision differ among private higher education institutions in Jamaica?
  - c. How diverse is the higher education curriculum available through accredited private tertiary institutions?
3. How does the University Council of Jamaica's accreditation process help to facilitate quality outputs from private tertiary institutions?
  - a. Why was the UCJ established as the accreditation and quality assurance authority for Jamaican Higher education?
  - b. What are the procedures involved in obtaining and maintaining UCJ accreditation?
  - c. Is the UCJ's accreditation process a conduit for aligning the mission of private tertiary institutions with Jamaica's national goals for higher education?
4. How has the role of government evolved within Jamaica's higher education sector?

- a. To what extent is the higher education sector in Jamaica market-driven?
- b. To what extent does the tertiary education sector in Jamaica reflect the neo-liberal economic priorities as expressed in higher education policy recommendations of multilateral lending agencies such as the World Bank?
- c. To what extent is the neo-liberal framework an appropriate fit for achieving Jamaica's national goals for higher education?

### **Qualitative Methodology**

Academic research may be guided by one of two contrasting paradigms, the conventional or the constructivist (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). A paradigm may be defined as a worldview or a basic set of assumptions that direct the actions of the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Paradigms are shaped by ontological assumptions (belief about what can be known), epistemological assumptions (belief about the nature of the relationship between researcher and the researched) and, methodological assumptions (belief about rules for and methods of finding knowledge) (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The conventional paradigm is affiliated with quantitative research, which operates from a realist ontology that assumes a singular reality, a dualist objective epistemology, and an interventionist methodology whereby the researcher is able to control and manipulate variables within a study independent of their real life context (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). By contrast, the constructivist paradigm is associated with qualitative research, which operates from a relativist ontology that embraces multiple realities, a monistic subjective epistemology, and a hermeneutic methodology wherein research is conducted in a

pragmatic manner that leads to a better understanding of the phenomenon under study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

The present research study employed the constructivist qualitative paradigm. Researchers within the constructivist, qualitative paradigm are committed to illuminating the emic (insider) perspective by providing “rich descriptions of the social world” in which the phenomenon being studied exists and how participants within the study make meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 10).

### **Rationale for Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research may be defined as a method of inquiry that employs techniques of personal understanding and introspection (Reichardt & Cook, 1979) in order to acquire a comprehensive, contextual knowledge about a defined issue, setting, or problem (Creswell, 2006). The present study was concerned with gaining a contextual understanding of how local private tertiary education institutions in Jamaica have positioned themselves in relation to Jamaica’s national higher education goals. The researcher explored why private tertiary institutions have emerged as key providers of higher education in Jamaica, and how institutional setting, mission, education philosophy, and admissions policy influence the growth of Jamaica’s local private higher education sector and facilitate access to higher education. Yin (2003) stated that a qualitative case study design is appropriate in instances where the researcher seeks to answer how or why about a particular phenomenon and is most interested in discovery.

One of the major advantages of conducting qualitative research studies is that they provide holistic portrayals of a particular phenomenon and focus greater attention on the impact of setting, context, nuances, idiosyncrasies, and complexities (Patton, 1990). A

qualitative approach to the present study was apropos as the researcher wanted to present the emic (insider) perspective of high level administrative practitioners at local Jamaican private tertiary institutions as to why these institutions have emerged as key providers of higher education and to explore the role of the private tertiary education sector in meeting Jamaica's national goals for higher education. The purpose of this research study was not to generate statistical generalizations but to provide insight on how private higher education is unfolding in Jamaica. The exploratory nature of qualitative research provides a framework that will facilitate detailed examination of the social phenomenon of Jamaican private higher education, a topic about which very little has been written.

### **Policy Research**

Qualitative research is both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary in nature and provides the researcher an opportunity to include those aspects of policy research that are relevant to gaining a holistic understanding of the issues addressed within the present study. This study drew upon policy research to explore how admissions policy at local private higher education institutions facilitates access to higher education, and to explore to what extent the higher education policy recommendations of multilateral lending agencies are reflected within the Jamaican private tertiary education sector. Specifically, this study will focus on the higher education policy recommendations of the World Bank.

Policy may be defined as “a set of instructions from policymakers to policy implementers that spell out both goals and the means to achieving those goals” (Nkamura & Smallwood, 1980, p. 31). Policy may also be viewed as a political process in which needs, goals, and intentions are translated into a set of objectives, laws, and programs that ultimately impact resource allocations and actions (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004).

Policy research involves the critical examination or analysis of a fundamental social problem with a view to provide policymakers with realistic, action-oriented recommendations for resolving the problem (Majchrzak, 1984). Policy research studies may also be primarily directed at providing policymakers with a more comprehensive understanding of a social problem by highlighting the possible causes and illuminating a range of alternative solutions (Majchrzak, 1984).

As a value-laded process, policy research requires that researchers be aware of and explicit about their own values, those of the various stakeholders, and the normative values of the society in which the research is being conducted (Majchrzak, 1984). The researcher's ability to be explicit about the range of values that impact policy research is essential as "values shape the meaning of the policy, how it should be evaluated, and most importantly, how results are to be evaluated" (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004, p. 112). Given the nature of policy research, a qualitative research design provides an appropriate context for conducting policy research, as qualitative research methods focus on the construction of meaning among participants within naturalistic settings (Rist, 2000).

Higher education policy cannot be isolated from the cultural, social, structural, fiscal, and economic realities faced by the primary stakeholders within the local Jamaican higher education setting. Policies do not exist in a vacuum as the local context inevitably influences the evaluation process (Brewer & deLeon, 1983). Brewer and deLeon (1983) contended that "in order to understand a system's purposes, one needs to understand its operating goals" (p. 327). Therefore, the researcher of the present study sought to examine the access policies of Jamaican private higher education institutions and the

higher education policy recommendations of the World Bank within the specific context of the local Jamaican higher education environment and in light of the national higher education goals as express in *Vision 2030 Jamaica*.

### **Design of the Study**

Research design is described as a “logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s research questions and ultimately to its conclusion” (Yin, 2009, p. 26). The primary components of a research design include: the research questions, the unit of analysis, and the criteria for interpreting the findings (Yin, 2009). A qualitative case study design was used to explore the research questions regarding how private higher education is unfolding in Jamaica. The use of case study was ideal for this study, as the primary objective of the researcher was to obtain greater understanding of the private higher education phenomenon in Jamaica.

### **Method**

Qualitative case study research methods typically involve gathering evidence from a variety of data sources such as documents, interviews, and observations (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). In this study, the steps outlined in Yin’s (2003) case study protocol, along with Stake’s (1995) guidelines for field observations, were utilized to guide the process of data collection and analysis. Yin’s (2003) case study protocol consists of the following three principles: (a) using multiple sources of evidence – two or more distinct sources that converge to supports the findings of the study; (b) using a case study data base – a formal assembly of evidence distinct from the final case report; and, (c) establishing a chain of evidence that explicitly links the research questions, data collected, and the conclusions drawn from the study.

Jamaican local (as opposed to offshore) private higher education institutions were the unit of analysis in this study. The selection of institutions was based on purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). Four private higher education institutions in Jamaica were asked to participate in the study. The key informants at each of the participating private higher education institutions were selected based on their administrative rank as senior administrative leaders. Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, the researcher maintained a field journal, engaged in peer debriefing, and member checking.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The sources of evidence for this study about how private higher education is unfolding in Jamaica were primarily individual interviews, institutional documents, government documents, education reports, World Bank publications, and media, including online publications. The aforementioned documents were reviewed by the researcher, and the information gathered was used to create a profile of each of the institutions included in the study, provide thick description of the contextual setting of higher education in Jamaica, and the local private higher education sector in particular.

### **Individual Interviews**

The researcher conducted a total of 10 semi-structured, face-to-face, individual interviews. The participants included one senior administrator from the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), and nine high-level administrators from four local private higher education institutions in Jamaica. Each of the study's participants was interviewed once. The interviews ranged from 20 minutes to 70 minutes in length and were digitally tape-recorded. Although only one high ranked administrator from the UCJ took part in the study, the interview lasted for approximately 70 minutes and provided

rich thick description of the role of the UCJ in relation to Jamaica's higher education landscape, and private higher education institutions in Jamaica. Prior to being interviewed, all interview participants were asked to read, fill out, and sign an Informed Consent Form which provided explicit details about the nature and purpose of the research study, and acknowledged the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence (see Appendix A).

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed and used by the researcher to focus the interviews and elicit rich data (see Appendix B). To ease transcription, interviews were digitally recorded. Interview data were transcribed verbatim. The researcher conducted preliminary analysis of the interview data by listening repeatedly to the interview recordings, reading and rereading interview transcripts, and drew upon field notes. The names and titles of the administrators interviewed were not included in the dissertation; rather, pseudonyms were used to preserve the confidentiality of interviewees. The interview data were coded using open coding and axial coding techniques. Open coding was used to identify emerging themes and data codes (Creswell, 2007). Axial coding was used to further develop themes and refine the data codes identified in the open coding process (Creswell, 2007). A preliminary summary of the interview data, major themes, and findings was then compiled.

A copy of the interview transcript was submitted to respective participants via email for review and feedback. Prior to the completion of the study, a copy of the final case report, including findings from the documents analyzed, was submitted to each interview participant via email for review, feedback, and confirmation of accuracy.

## **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality implies that the identity of participants will be kept anonymous and that the readers of the final case report will be unable to deduce the identity of the participants in the study from the information quoted and reported in the case report (Anderson, 1990). Protecting the privacy of participants was facilitated by assigning pseudonyms for each interview participant, altering all distinguishing designations, such as job titles and institutional affiliation to protect participants' identities, and by ensuring that informed consent was obtained (Magolda & Weems, 2002). Coding procedures for institutional affiliations was developed in order to avoid linking data to the concerned respondent (Anderson, 1990). The raw data were stored on the researcher's personal computer; however, the code keys were stored in a separate location. Two Universal Serial Bus (USB) flash drives were used to store data for this study – one was used to backup the raw data stored on the researcher's personal computer, and the other was used to store the interview data. All participant data were secured in the possession of the researcher and was used solely for the purpose of completing this dissertation research.

## **Research Sites**

Data collection took place in Jamaica at five separate research sites. Four of these sites are located in the capital city of Kingston. These four sites included the head office of the University Council of Jamaica, as well as the campuses of the International University of the Caribbean, the University College of the Caribbean, and Vector Technology Institute. The fifth research site was the main campus of Northern Caribbean University located in a rural community near the town of Mandeville. Mandeville is located in the south western part of the island and approximately 60 miles from Kingston.

## Case Selection

Case study research methodology requires specificity in the selection of the cases to be studied (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). One of the primary criteria for case selection is to maximize what can be learned (Stake, 1995). Therefore, the cases, participants, and research sites chosen for this study were purposefully selected, as they are able to best inform a holistic understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2006; Stake, 1995). Purposeful selection provides an opportunity for qualitative researchers to study an appropriate “subset of the units of interest” (Hedrick, Bickman, & Rog, 1993, p. 43). This study was concerned with local, as opposed to foreign or offshore, private higher education institutions in Jamaica and the role of the local accreditation agency in assuring quality within higher education. Thus, the selection of cases was limited to local private higher education institutions that offer bachelor’s degree programs and are accredited by the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ).

The four private higher education institutions selected as cases for this study were International University of the Caribbean (IUC), Northern Caribbean University (NCU), University College of the Caribbean (UCC), and Vector Technology Institute (VTI). In 2007, the combined enrollment at these four private higher education institutions was over 13,421, accounting for approximately 77% of the total market share of Jamaica’s private higher education sector (PIOJ, 2009c).

Given the small sample size, the relatively small size of Jamaica’s local private higher education sector, the fact that Jamaica is a small island nation, and the overtly unique characteristics of each of these private higher education institutions, the use of pseudonyms to represent the institutions in the present study would prove futile in the

attempt to preserve institutional anonymity. The very criteria for participation in this research study, though seemingly general, serve to easily reveal the identity of the institutions identified as potential cases for this study. Given this inescapable reality the researcher obtained the permission of the participating institutions to include their names in the final dissertation report (see Appendix C). However, to preserve the confidentiality of interview participants, pseudonyms will be used to represent individual informants and their job titles. To further secure the confidentiality of key informants, the researcher will not link informants to their affiliated institution.

### **Selection of Interview Respondents**

Interviews help to facilitate an understanding of a particular phenomenon by putting into a larger context the social, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of the environment in which the phenomenon occurs (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). The selection of respondents within qualitative research is guided by the purpose of the study, the research questions, the methodological approach (Jones, Torres, Arminio, 2006), and “what the researcher desires to know, and from whose perspective [the] information is desired” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 91). The appropriate sample size for a qualitative research study depends on what the researcher wants to know, what will be useful and credible, as well as what can be achieved within the available time, given resource constraints (Patton, 2002).

In this study the researcher gained the perspectives of nine high-level private higher education administrators within Jamaica’s private tertiary education sector. In addition one high-level administrator from the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), the quality assurance and accreditation agency for higher education in Jamaica, also

participated in the study. Drawing upon Patton's (2002) notion of information-rich cases (i.e., cases that facilitate a great deal of learning about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research), the researcher interviewed high-level university administrators who possess the capacity to exert direct influence on institutional access policies and decision-making processes regarding what curriculum the institution offers, how academic programs are expanded, and how the institution positions itself in the eyes of the Jamaican public.

The methods for recruiting participants included reviewing the websites and organizational charts of the UCJ and each selected local private higher education institution, participant referrals, and the use of a gatekeeper. The researcher contacted each high-level administrator via email, clearly stated the purpose of the study and provided information regarding how the study will be conducted.

### **Document Analysis**

The term 'document' encompasses a wide variety of "written, visual, and physical material relevant to the study at hand" (Merriam, 1998, p. 112). Personal documents "refer to any first-person narrative" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 132) that convey information about inner meanings associated with a participant's perspective, while public documents are more formal and objective, for example, agency records and government documents (Merriam, 1998). Patton (1990) suggested that "documents not only provide valuable information about the [phenomenon] itself, but they can also stimulate thinking about important questions to pursue, through more direct observations, and interviews" (p. 233). However, Burgess (1982) cautioned that documents should not be used in isolation, as the original purposes for which they were created may be vastly

different from how they will be used and interpreted in the research process; therefore, the researcher must take into consideration the original context of each document that will be used as a resource in the research process. Despite some limitations, documents are good data sources for qualitative research (Merriam, 1998).

For the purpose of this study, institutional documents, national documents, and World Bank documents, including available online resources, were consulted. Table 1 provides a detailed outline of the documentary sources of evidence that will be used in this study.

Table 1. Type and Sources of Evidence for Document Analysis

Document Type	Document Description	Document Source
Institutional	Student handbook Faculty/Staff handbook Institutional publications (brochures) Annual reports Self-Study	Participating private tertiary institutions
Government/National	Strategic plan for tertiary education National strategic plan – <i>Vision 2030 Jamaica</i> Survey of Living Conditions – Jamaica Economic and Social Survey – Jamaica Jamaican newspapers Accreditation Process / Requirements	Ministry of Education Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) <i>Gleaner, Observer</i> University Council (UCJ)
International Agency	World Bank (1993). <i>Caribbean region: Access, quality, and efficiency in education.</i> World Bank (1994). <i>Development in practice, higher education: Lessons of experience.</i> World Bank (2000). <i>Higher education in developing countries: Peril and promise.</i> World Bank (2002). <i>Constructing knowledge societies: New challenges for tertiary education.</i> UNESCO (1998). <i>World declaration on higher education.</i>	World Bank    UNESCO

### **Establishing Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is achieved when the researcher is able to provide evidence that the research processes are carried out fairly, are grounded in ethical principles, and the final case report is closely aligned with the experiences of the study participants (Ely, et al. 1991; Merriam, 1998). Prior to engaging participants the researcher obtained approval of the research project from the Bowling Green State University's Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) (see Appendix D). There are four criteria for building trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Procedures for achieving dependability and confirmability are inherent in the processes described for achieving credibility and transferability.

#### **Credibility**

Credibility is impacted by whether the researcher's judgment is perceived to be reasonable based on the level of congruence among the purpose of the research, the method of data collection, and the way in which the collected data were analyzed and presented (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Therefore, for this study, the case selection, participant selection, and the choice of documents for analysis have been purposefully aligned with the research questions in order to illuminate and provide insight on the phenomenon of private higher education in Jamaica, which the researcher is attempting to understand. Credibility criteria include triangulation, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, member checking, explicit acknowledgement, and clarification of the researcher's biases.

**Triangulation.** Triangulation may be defined as the convergence of data gathered from different sources, such as documents and respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and by different methods, such as interviews and observation (Ely, et al. 1991) in support of the research findings. The present study is designed to utilize multiple sources of documentary evidence, as noted in Table 1, and individual interviews. The researcher also utilized information and reflections recoded in his field journal throughout the data collection process to help facilitate data triangulation.

**Prolonged engagement.** Prolonged engagement enhances the scope of the research study by acknowledging the existence of multiple realities, and involves the investment of sufficient time to “learning the culture, testing for misinformation introduced by distortions either of self or of other participants, and building trust” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301). In March 2010, the researcher visited and met with mid-level and high-level administrators at four of Jamaica’s most prominent tertiary education institutions. These meetings included site visits to three of the four local private higher education institutions included in the present study. During these institutional visits, the researcher met with high-level administrators and engaged in discussions on the role of private higher education in Jamaica. In November 2010, the researcher spent three weeks in Jamaica conducting a literature review on higher education in Jamaica and the Caribbean for the present study. Prolonged engagement was further enhanced during the data collection process, which occurred in May 2011. During the data collection process the researcher was physically present in Jamaica, visited all five data collection sites for the purpose of conducting face-to-face interviews.

**Persistent observation.** Persistent observation provides depth by identifying and highlighting characteristics and elements within the research environment that are most relevant to the research problem (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For the present study, persistent observation was facilitated by the researcher's ability to gain access the research sites, and through interaction with high-level administrators at each of the selected campuses. The researcher's immersion within the Jamaican culture and context also provided opportunity for observation. While in country the researcher was briefed on new developments within the local higher education sector concerning pending changes in the Jamaican government's higher education funding model. Being onsite in Jamaica facilitated the opportunity to observe firsthand the responses of key higher education stakeholders to the government's proposed restructuring of higher education financing. The local media featured the opinions and views of several stakeholders included those of politicians and government officials, educators, administrators, faculty, and students from both public and private higher education institutions in Jamaica.

**Peer debriefing.** Peer debriefing is a process that exposes the researcher to searching questions of a disinterested peer in a manner similar to that of an analytic session for the purpose of "exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind," to probe the researcher's biases, and to provide clarification of interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 1989, p. 308). The researcher elicited the assistance of a peer debriefer who is an experienced qualitative higher education researcher.

**Member checking.** Member checking is a process in which data, analytical categories and interpretations, and conclusions are submitted to members of the

stakeholder group from whom the data were originally collected in order to ensure that the collected data, the way they are interpreted, and the conclusions drawn by the researcher are in fact an accurate representation of the respondent's experiences, intended meaning, and construction of reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1989). The researcher provided a copy of the interview transcripts along with a summary of the findings and conclusions drawn from the present study to each participant via email prior to the completion of the study. In an effort to ensure that respondents have been accurately represented, participants were asked to review the transcripts, findings, and conclusions and provide feedback to the researcher.

### **Transferability**

Transferability is achieved through the presentation of rich, thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1989; Merriam, 1998). The researcher endeavor to provide detailed description of private higher education in Jamaica, the institutional contexts, and perspectives of participants in this study such that readers of the final dissertation will have enough information to determine the extent to which their situations match the research situation, and whether the research findings are applicable in other settings (Merriam, 1998).

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability requires that the researcher create an auditable trail by keeping a written log of his experiences and reflections during the research process by using a reflective journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher maintained a field journal throughout the data collection and data analysis processes. This field journal was used to record thoughts, observations, experiences, reflections, and concerns directly related to

the present research study. The field journal served to establish a chain of evidence linking the research questions, data collected, and the conclusions drawn by the researcher (Yin, 2003).

### **The Researcher as the Instrument of Analysis**

The constructivist epistemology employed in qualitative research designs requires that qualitative researchers be conscious of their own subjectivity (Stake, 1995). Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) argued that “because the qualitative researcher is the instrument of analysis, especially in interpretive and constructivist designs, his or her interests, values, experiences, and purpose influence the analysis” (p. 125). The qualitative researcher must acknowledge his positionality, that is, any personal biases the researcher takes to the study that may influence how data are collected, interpreted, and presented (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2006). Once the qualitative researcher becomes aware of his own assumptions, preconditions, and feelings, he must strive to bracket or systematically put them aside in order to be receptive and open to the phenomenon he is trying to understand (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991). An explicit statement of the researcher’s autobiographical data provides readers of the study an appropriate contextual understanding of the methods employed and the research findings (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2006).

### **The Researcher’s Autobiography**

Growing up in Jamaica, it was clear that education was a core value within Jamaican society. As early as elementary school, I, like many children all across the island, learned and was frequently required to recite in school and at home one of the most profound ‘memory gems’ that champions education and lifelong learning as an

immensely invaluable component of human existence: “Labour for learning before you grow old, for learning is better than silver and gold; silver and gold will vanish away but a good education will never decay.” I commenced my educational journey at the age of four at “Sister B’s Basic School” just a couple of houses away from where I lived, in a small suburban community located in Portmore, Jamaica. I attended primary school and high school in Kingston. I graduated from high school in 1993, then completed a year of sixth form, after which I attended a community college for two consecutive years, completing that academic program in 1996.

Upon completion of community college, I worked as a full-time employee within the Jamaican public sector for a year, spending the majority of that time working for the tax administration branch of the government, the Jamaica Revenue Board. Subsequently, I joined the private sector workforce. I was employed within the airline industry until Summer 1999 when I migrated to the United States (U.S.). While in the U.S., I lived on Long Island in New York. I attended and completed my Bachelor’s in 2003 and Master’s degree in 2006 at a private, predominantly White, four-year university on Long Island. Following completion of my undergraduate studies, I was employed as a full-time student affairs administrator at that university in 2004, a position I held until 2008 when I commenced my studies as a full-time doctoral student at Bowling Green State University.

My interest in the present study stems from a combination of factors including: my graduate studies in business administration, my experiences studying and working at a private university in the U. S., taking graduate courses that dealt with the impact of international organizations on developing countries, my interactions with administrators at Jamaican higher education institutions in March 2010, and a desire to gain a better

understanding of the private higher education sector in Jamaica, a system in which I have not engaged as a participant. However, having lived, worked, and studied in the U. S. since 1999, I must be mindful that my interpretations are not unduly colored by superimposing a U.S. perspective and American social values onto the Jamaican context. During the 10 years I have lived, studied, and worked in the U.S., I have grown accustomed to a cultural environment that has been fast-paced, where time is often perceived as money, where educational resources, options, and access opportunities are numerous and seemingly endless, and where there is a greater focus on individual gain and achievement than on gains to the community as a whole. Therefore, I am aware that having acculturated to life in the U. S. impacts my process as a qualitative researcher.

As the researcher of this constructivist qualitative case study, I acknowledge my identity as an individual who was born in Jamaica and socialized in the Jamaican culture and heritage. The Jamaican culture is one that truly embodies a sense of community, values diligence and hard work, education, the arts, leisure, and sports (e.g., cricket, football, netball, and track and field). The essence and spirit of Jamaica is reflected in its music, a relaxed attitude towards time, and the expressive, intense rhythm and melody of Jamaican *patois* – the local language that is often punctuated with countless proverbs and wise sayings of the “old time people”. The local Jamaican saying that best captures the depth and richness of the Jamaican culture, the strength, resilience, creativity, and resourcefulness of its people is “*we lickle but we tallawah*” which translated means “we are small in size yet we have the potential and ability to do and achieve great things.”

Although English and Jamaican *patois* are both spoken and understood by all Jamaicans, and English is often used in formal settings, the ability to understand

Jamaican *patois* and local proverbs is crucial to understanding and navigating the local culture. Within the context of this study, my background proved advantageous, having been socialized in the Jamaican culture, possessing fluency in the native tongue (i.e., Jamaican *patois*), and having an intimate understanding of colloquial customs, traditions, social protocols, and norms unique to Jamaica.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Qualitative researchers must be cognizant of and committed to engage in ethical principles of research (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Although it is impossible to anticipate every potentially negative consequence that may result from involvement in a particular research study, researchers must make every attempt to reduce the risk of potential harm to the participants (Anderson, 1990; Creswell, 2007; Magolda & Weems, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). By clearly communicating the unique aspects of qualitative research to the respondents, researchers can minimize the risk of harm (Magolda & Weems, 2002).

### **Potential Risks**

The risks associated with participation in the current research study are no greater than those encountered in daily life. The use of email to communicate with participants particularly during the member-checking process may pose a potential risk, as email is not 100% secure at all time. Thus, there is the risk that information being communicated between researcher and respondents could be intercepted. Prior to conducting the present study, the researcher obtained the informed consent from each participant in the study.

### **Safeguard from Risks**

The researcher of the present study sought to minimize risk to participants by ensuring that informed consent is obtained, assigning pseudonyms for each interview participant (Magolda & Weems, 2002). The researcher developed coding procedures for institutional affiliations in order to minimize the risk of linking data to the concerned respondent. The code keys were secured by the researcher and kept separately from the raw data (Anderson, 1990). As an additional precaution, pseudonyms assigned to interview participants were not linked to their affiliated institutions.

### **Benefits**

Insights gained from this study add to the body of knowledge on Jamaican higher education and may serve as a point of reference for higher education administrators, researchers, and institutional policymakers at public and private tertiary institutions. Specifically this study: (a) identified conditions necessary to support the growth of private higher education in Jamaica; (b) described how the policies and initiatives of private higher education institutions in Jamaica facilitate the expansion of access to higher education; and, (c) analyzed the relevance of a market-based approach to higher education in moving Jamaica closer towards the higher education goals outlined in its national strategic plan, *Vision 2030 Jamaica*.

### **Summary**

Qualitative research facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon within its natural setting with a focus on the particular. Within the qualitative constructivist paradigm, reality is socially constructed and, thus, dynamic. The purpose of qualitative research is not to generalize, but rather to explore a phenomenon of interest in order to gain in-depth

understanding. This qualitative case study focused primarily on the use of document analysis and in-depth individual interviews to explore how the phenomenon of private higher education is unfolding in Jamaica. The researcher engaged in the use of multiple validation strategies, such as confirming data from several documentary sources and individual interviews (i.e., triangulation), having the findings and conclusions drawn from the study reviewed and corrected by the participants (i.e., member checking), and having other researchers review the research procedures employed during data collection and analysis (i.e., peer debriefing) (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, the researcher was committed to doing all possible to ensure that participants were duly informed of the study's purpose through the process of informed consent and protected the participants' confidence through the use of pseudonyms, coding, and securing interview data.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Presented in this chapter are the findings from the 10 interviews conducted as part of this qualitative case study. The purpose of this study was to gain insight on how private higher education is unfolding in Jamaica and how access to Jamaican higher education is impacted by the presence of private higher education institutions. The researcher sought to understand from the perspective of high-level administrators at four private higher education institutions in Jamaica, why private higher education institutions have flourished in Jamaica, how these institutions facilitate access to higher education, and to what extent private higher education institutions contribute to the achievement of Jamaica's national higher education goal of world-class education. Additionally, the researcher explored the relevance of the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), the national accreditation agency responsible for quality assurance in higher education, and the accreditation process in assuring the quality of academic programs offered by private higher education institutions.

As part of this study the researcher conducted 10 face-to-face interviews in Jamaica in May of 2011. Interview participants included nine high-level administrators representing four Jamaican private higher education institutions and one senior administrator from the University Council of Jamaica, the national accreditation agency with responsibility for quality assurance in higher education. In an effort to preserve the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants. Due to the relatively small size and the interconnected nature of the Jamaican higher education sector, the researcher was concerned that the use of pseudonyms alone may be insufficient to protect participants' confidentiality. To address this concern, the

researcher chose to omit the pseudonyms of the speakers in areas of the report where the participants' responses were directly connected to their affiliated institution. The researcher obtained permission from each institution represented herein to have its name published as part of the study. Thus, pseudonyms were not used to represent any of the institutions in this study. A descriptive profile of the participants and the institutions are provided below. Table 2 provides a brief overview of the participants' demographics.

### **Participant Profiles**

There were 10 participants in this qualitative case study, five females and five males. The participants included one senior administrator from the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), and nine high-level administrators from four local private higher education institutions in Jamaica. The senior administrator from the UCJ had served as a member of the UCJ's Board of Directors since its inception. She possessed a wealth of knowledge regarding the circumstances that lead to the formation of the UCJ, its roles and functions within the Jamaican higher education sector, and the various processes and procedures involved in assuring the quality of higher education within Jamaica.

Of the nine high-level university administrators who participated in the study, there were five males and four females. At the time the study was conducted seven of these participants held an administrative position equivalent to that of university vice president while two held an administrative position equivalent to that of university president. The number of years' experience within the field of higher education varied among participants and ranged from 10 years to 25 years. The average higher education work experience for these nine administrators was 17 years. The participants' years of service at their affiliated institutions varied widely. Three participants had worked at

their affiliated institution for five years or less, three had between six and twelve years of service, while three had more than 20 years of service.

Participants were selected based on their rank as high-level administrators with the capacity to shape or influence institutional decision making process. Two high-level administrators were interviewed from each of the following institutions: Vector Technology Institute, International University of the Caribbean, and University College of the Caribbean. Three high-level administrators were interviewed from the Northern Caribbean University. All four private higher education institutions are registered with the UCJ and offer accredited programs and undergraduate degrees.

Table 2. Participant Demographic Information

Pseudonyms	Gender	Institution Type
Ms. Daling	Female	Secular
Dr. Davis	Male	Secular
Dr. Fearon	Male	Religious
Dr. Green	Male	Religious
Dr. Hill	Male	Religious
Dr. Johnson	Female	University Council of Jamaica (UCJ)
Ms. Lambert	Female	Religious
Dr. Parker	Female	Religious
Dr. Robinson	Female	Secular
Dr. Williams	Male	Secular

### Institutional Profiles

Four local (as opposed to off-shore), private, Jamaican higher education institutions were included in this study. The criteria for inclusion required that the higher education institution be private, local, registered with the UCJ, and offer UCJ accredited programs and bachelor's degrees. The institutions selected were: International University of the Caribbean (IUC), Northern Caribbean University (NCU), University College of the Caribbean (UCC), and Vector Technology Institute (VTI). Of the four institutions included in this study, three have their main campuses located in Kingston, Jamaica's capital city. One institution has its main campus located in a rural suburban community near Mandeville, which is approximately 60 miles south west of Kingston. Two of these institutions may be categorized as nonprofits with religious affiliations and two as secular for-profit. UCC, IUC, and VTI serve predominantly part-time students many of whom are employed full time within the workforce.

Table 3. Profile of Private Higher Education Institutions

Name	Founded	Enrollment	Signature Programs	Centers	Student Profile	Type
International University of the Caribbean	2005	2,538	Counseling and leadership	20	Predominantly Part-time	Religious Nonprofit
Northern Caribbean University	1907	4,482	Liberal Arts and Teacher education	4	Predominantly Full-time	Religious Nonprofit
University College of the Caribbean	2004	4,830	Business and management	8	Predominantly Part-time	Secular
Vector Technology Institute	1992	Was not available	Information technology	2	Predominantly Part-time	Secular

Together IUC, NCU, UCC, and VTI provide access to higher education for over 12,000 Jamaicans each year from 34 campus locations across. Presented in table 3 is a brief profile of each of the four private higher education institutions in the study. In addition to online programs, these institutions often lease office and classroom spaces at local high schools, community centers, and businesses within some of the rural and suburban communities where they operate. This helps to reduce overhead cost and the cost of tuition charged to students. Presented in table 4 is a comparative summary of undergraduate tuition cost charged by the four private institutions in the study compared to the cost of tuition at the UWI. Although the costs of tuition per annum at the four private institutions are relatively comparable, there is a noticeable cost differential between the tuition charged at these institutions and the tuition charged at the UWI.

Table 4. Comparative Summary of Undergraduate Tuition Costs at Selected Institutions

Name of Institutions	Cost per credit	Annual Tuition Cost
Northern Caribbean University	J\$7,635.00	J\$244,320.00
International University of the Caribbean	J\$ 7,343.75	J\$235,000.00
University College of the Caribbean	J\$8,050.00	J\$206,205.00
University of the West Indies	J\$12,606.80	J\$378,204.00
Vector Technology Institute	J\$6,290.00	J\$195,000.00 (yr 1&2)
	J\$6,875.00	J\$220,000.00 (yr 3&4)

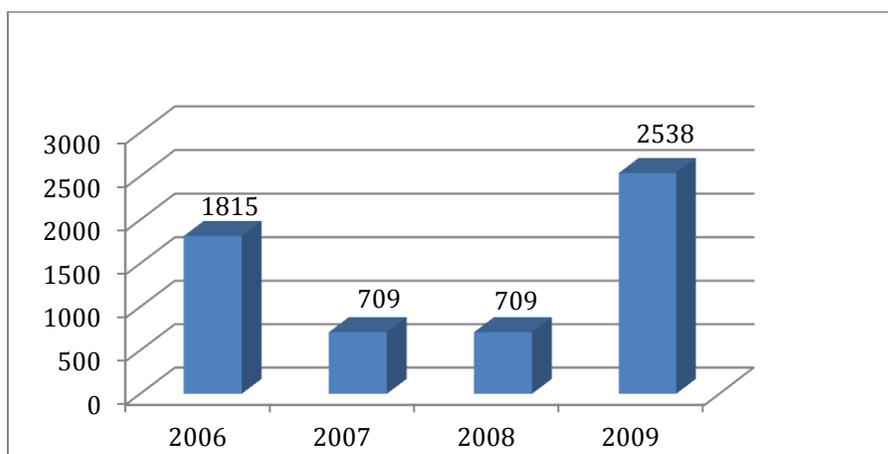
### **International University of the Caribbean (IUC)**

International University of the Caribbean (IUC) was established in 2005 and is comprised of two constituent colleges: The Mel Nathan College, founded in 1989 and the College of Leadership and Theological Development (CDTL) founded in 2004 as the tertiary division of the Mel Nathan Institute which was established in 1978. IUC is a private nonprofit institution owned and operated by the United Church in Jamaica and the

Cayman Islands. With its main campus located in Kingston, IUC also operates from 20 campus locations across the island and caters to a predominantly part-time student population. A large majority of students attending IUC are non-traditional college students who are employed full time within the local workforce.

Data available from the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) revealed fluctuations in the student enrollment figures for IUC between 2006 and 2009. The data shows that student enrollment for 2006 stood at 1,815 then plummeted to 709 for 2007 and 2008. However, in 2009 student enrollment rebounded to more than triple the enrollment of the two previous years. Presented in figure 3 is an overview of IUC's enrollment trends for the period 2006 to 2009.

Figure 3. Student Enrollment Trends at IUC for 2006 to 2009



IUC offers both part time and full time programs at the undergraduate level. Undergraduate courses within the full time program are scheduled Mondays through Fridays 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., while courses within the part time programs are scheduled Mondays through Fridays 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Graduate level courses are offered part time and are generally held one weekend per month Fridays through Sundays. Courses

within the graduate programs utilize a combination of face-to-face and online delivery methods. IUC's academic curriculum consists of approximately 16 separate degree programs with signature programs in leadership, and guidance and counseling. The undergraduate degree programs offered include: education, nursing, theology, media and communications, psychology, community development, hospitality, business, and project management. While the more limited graduate level offerings include master's degrees in education, psychology, counseling, leadership, and missiology; and doctoral degrees in theology and three areas of psychology. Presented in table 5 below is a general overview of undergraduate and graduate degree programs offered as part of IUC's curricular.

Table 5. Partial List of Undergraduate and Graduate Degrees Offered by IUC

Undergraduate Degrees	Master's Degrees	Doctoral Degrees
Business Administration	Counseling and Consulting	Doctor of Psychology
Community Development	Educational Administration and	Doctor of Pastoral
Guidance and Counseling	Leadership	Psychology (D. PPsy)
Hospitality Management	Missiology	Doctor of Theology
Human Resource	Pastoral Psychology and Counseling	
Nursing	Psychology	
Primary Education	Transformational Leadership	
Project Management		
Psychology		
Theology		

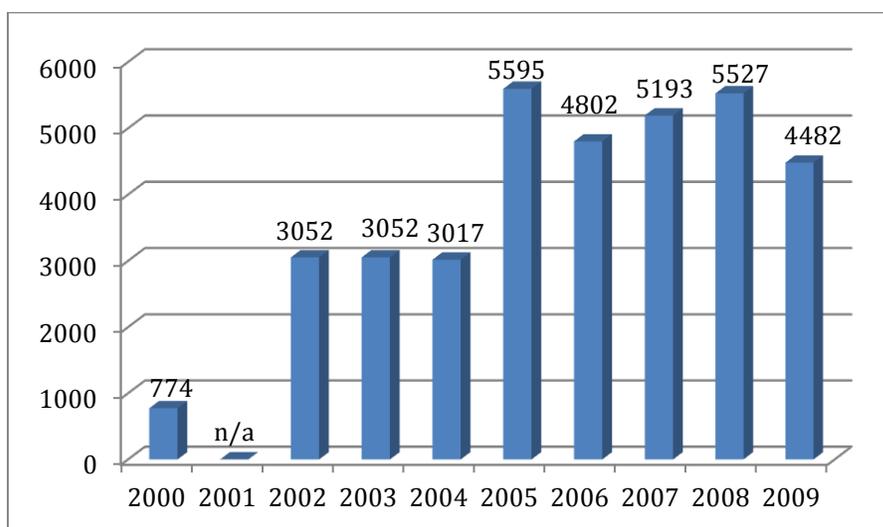
### **Northern Caribbean University (NCU)**

Northern Caribbean University (NCU), formerly West Indies College, is the oldest private nonprofit higher education institution in Jamaica. NCU's main campus is located approximately two miles outside of the town of Mandeville in the parish of

Manchester. The institution is owned and operated by the Jamaica Union Conference and the Atlantic Caribbean Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church from which it receives a significant portion of its operating budget. NCU was first established in 1907 as the West Indian Training School and began offering degree programs in the 1950's and was renamed West Indies College. In 1999 the institution was awarded university status by the Jamaican government and was subsequently renamed Northern Caribbean University. NCU currently operates from four campus locations and provides residential student housing at its main campus in Mandeville.

NCU is one of Jamaica's best know private higher education institutions. Student enrollment data available from the PIOJ indicated that during the period 2002 to 2004 annual enrollment at NCU was relatively stable at approximately 3,000 students. Student enrollment peaked at 5,595 in 2005 and fluctuated in the four year period that followed. Figure 4 provides an overview of NCU's enrollment trends for the year 2000 to 2009.

Figure 4. Student Enrollment Trends at Northern Caribbean University 2000 to 2009



Catering primarily to a traditional full time student population NCU offers a liberal arts curriculum in a wide variety of disciplines. NCU offers the most extensive academic curriculum of any local private higher education institutions in Jamaica. The institution offers a variety of bachelor's, master's degrees, and a limited selection of doctoral degrees through its five colleges. These colleges include: Applied Health and Nursing, Business and Hospitality Management, Education Leadership, Natural and Applied Sciences, and Humanities Behavioral and Social Sciences. In addition to the five colleges NCU also offer degree through its School of Religion and Theology. Presented in table 6 below is a listing of the academic departments and affiliated programs offered within each of NCU's five colleges.

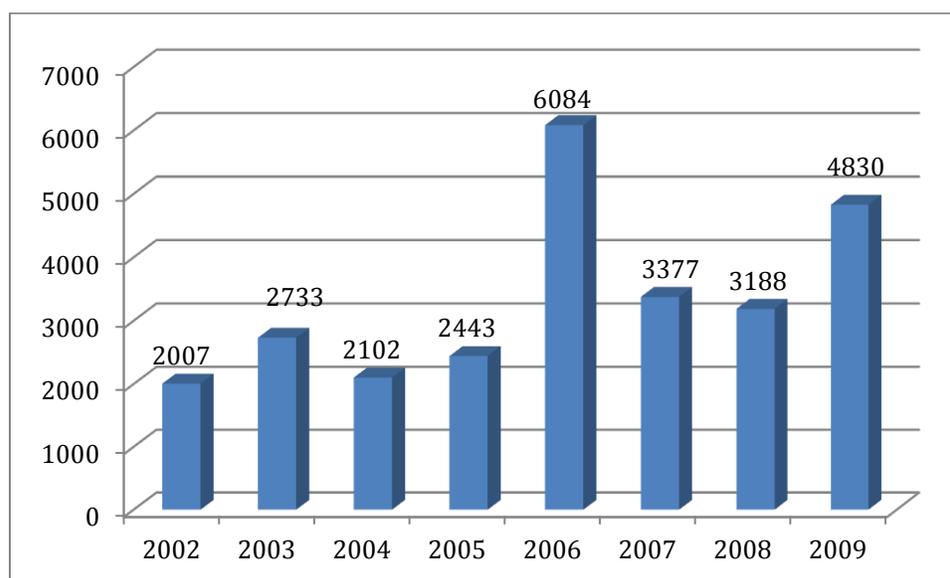
Table 6. Academic Curriculum Offered Within NCU's Five Colleges

<b>College of Business and Hospitality Management</b>	<b>College of Humanities, Behavioral and Social Sciences</b>
Business Administration Management Hospitality Management	History and Geography Music and Fine Arts Behavioral Sciences Communication Studies English and Modern Languages General Studies
<b>College of Allied Health and Nursing</b>	<b>College of Natural and Applied Sciences</b>
Public Health Dental Hygiene Medical Technology Nursing Nutrition and Dietetics	Mathematics and Engineering Biology Chemistry Biochemistry Computer Information Sciences
<b>College of Education Leadership</b>	
Teacher Education Graduate Education Leadership	

### University College of the Caribbean (UCC)

The University College of the Caribbean (UCC) was established in 2004 as a result of the merger of two corporate entities; the Institute of Management Science (IMS) which was founded in 1992 and the Institute of Management and Production (IMP) which was founded in 1976. UCC's main campus is located in Kingston. The institution caters primarily to adult part time students consisting mostly of individuals who are employed full time in the workforce. Student enrollment data available from the PIOJ reveal that there has been a sharp increase in student enrollment at NCU during 2006. In 2006 student enrollment at UCC was reported at 6,084, a sharp contrast to the relatively moderate enrollment figures reported between 2002 and 2005. UCC's 2006 student enrollment figure was also the highest of the private institution in this study within the 2002 to 2009 period.

Figure 5. Enrollment Trends for University College of the Caribbean for 2002 to 2009



UCC's core academic focus areas are business studies and information technology. Thus, UCC's curricular offerings include corporate education, management services solutions, short courses, diplomas, associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, and master's degrees (UCC, 2012). In alignment with its business focus UCC also offers a range of customized training programs for employers seeking to provide professional development opportunities for their employees. UCC offers several degree programs in partnership with Florida International University (FIU), University of London (UOL), and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). As a registered center for the University of London International Programs LLB, UCC administers the UOL curriculum locally in Jamaica utilizing both local and international faculty. UCC has a similar arrangement with FIU, however, a significant proportion of these graduate courses are delivered by full time FIU faculty who commute to Jamaica to provide course instruction. Table 7 below provides a general overview of UCC's degree offerings. Programs that are offered in conjunction with UCC's international partner institutions have the names of the partner institutions abbreviated in parentheses next to the name of the respective degree program.

Table 7. Partial List of Degree Programs Offered at UCC

<b>Associates Degree</b>	<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>	<b>Masters Degree</b>
Business Administration	B.Sc. Business Admin.	M.Sc. Curriculum and Instruction (through FIU)
Management Information Systems	B.Sc. Human Resource Management	M.Sc. Human Resources Management (FIU)
Accounting and Financial Management	B.Sc. Information Tech.	Executive MBA (FIU)
Tourism and Hospitality	B.Sc. Marketing	Executive MPA (COL)
Production Management	B.Sc. Tourism and Hospitality Management	Executive MBA
Supervisory Management	Bachelor of Law LLB (UOL)	MBA in Entrepreneurship

### **Vector Technology Institute (VTI)**

Vector Technology Institute (VTI) was established in 1992 to provide training for computer technician in the area of information technology. VTI operates solely from its location in Kingston and provides highly specialized education and training in the fields of computer systems technology, software programming, technology management, and information communication and technology. The institution serves a predominantly part time student population consisting of individuals who work full time. VTI offers a narrow selection of diploma programs as well as associate and bachelor's degrees which include: Diploma in Software Programming, Diploma in Computer System Technology, Associates of Science in Software programming, Associates of Science in Computer Technology, Bachelors of Science in Technology Management, and Bachelors of Science in Information Communication and Technology.

### **Analytical Themes**

The findings of the study have been organized according to themes that emerged from the analysis of the participants' responses to the interview questions. These themes and their constituent sub-themes have been presented within the contextual frame of the overarching research questions and sub-questions. The major categorical themes that emerged from analysis of the data concerned higher education for the 21st century, world-class higher education for Jamaica, establishing a yardstick for quality higher education, and the changing role of government within higher education. Each analytical theme was further divided into subthemes that help to better contextualize the perspectives, views, and insights shared by interview participants.

The study was guided by four overarching research questions: (a) Why have private tertiary education institutions emerged as key providers of higher education in Jamaica? (b) How do local private tertiary education institutions contribute to Jamaica's national higher education goals? (c) How does the UCJ's national accreditation process help to facilitate quality outputs from private tertiary institutions? and, (d) How has the role of government evolved within Jamaica's higher education sector?

### **Higher education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The higher education landscape in Jamaica has evolved significantly since the inception of the University Council of Jamaica in 1987. Increased demand for affordable, relevant, quality higher education along with changes in the demographics of the student population has helped to shape the local higher education environment and how private higher education institutions are positioned therein. As the participants discussed the relevance of higher education to Jamaica within the 21<sup>st</sup> Century several sub-themes emerged. These sub-themes included an exploration of Jamaica's evolving higher education landscape, competition among higher education providers, admission matriculation requirements, financing higher education, and addressing the affordability issue.

The present higher education environment in Jamaica was described as diverse, vibrant, and competitive. Ms. Daling (secular institution) emphasized the importance and relevance of tertiary education in preparing Jamaican students with both the skills and academic qualifications required to compete globally. She stressed that:

In this 21st Century we really need another level of education to compete in the world, you recognize that you need a tertiary level qualification. You need an

applied skill and also the paper behind it to show your academic qualification, especially in Jamaica.

There has also been a national movement towards focusing on the quality of the programs and academic credentials that are being offered through the various higher education institutions across the island.

A major development within Jamaican higher education was the establishment of the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), the local accreditation agency that focuses on quality assurance in higher education. The role of the UCJ and accreditation as a mechanism that aids the Jamaican public and particularly students in assessing the quality of academic programs offered in both the public and private sectors has influenced the dynamics among Jamaica's higher education providers. Dr. Davis (male, secular institution) observed that:

Over the past 24 years, there has been a significant change due primarily to the role of the accrediting body, the University Council of Jamaica. By virtue of accreditation they have put all institutions on a level footing, equal footing. The competition from the private institutions that receive accreditation, their degrees challenged the other entities in the state to really be more creative in how they facilitated access to the student.

Ms. Lambert (religious institution) offered this view of the local dynamics that exist within the Jamaican higher education environment, which served to enhance the researcher's understanding of the diverse nature of the current local higher education landscape.

The environment in Jamaica is very diverse. We have a whole slew of institutions that are degree granting and that are just all vying for offering services, increasing access to individuals seeking higher education. And, in spite of this, there seem not to be enough because there are still so many persons who are wanting to reach for higher education and it seems that the demand exceeds supply. The environment in higher education in Jamaica is very vibrant.

The higher education environment in Jamaica is far more expansive today than it was in the days when UWI was the only university offering degree programs in Jamaica. Dr. Parker (female, religious institution) described the evolving nature of Jamaica's higher education environment and how Jamaican higher education is unfolding in the 21st century. Dr. Parker informed that within the current higher education landscape opportunities for accessing higher education locally has improved significantly.

I think the overarching descriptor I would use is 'unfolding' or 'evolving' compared to, for example, when I studied at the undergraduate level – there are significantly more opportunities locally. Before you either went to UWI or you went overseas. Those were the options that I was aware of. Whereas now we have essentially three registered universities; we have a couple of university colleges, and then we have various teachers colleges, which are now offering full undergraduate degrees. And then, of course, you have the offshore universities, which are coming here to offer their programs, in addition to those that offer exclusively online studies. So basically, the only limitation, really, for an individual that wants to study at tertiary level is financial and ensuring that they have the basic qualifications. So it's a totally different landscape.

The Jamaican higher education landscape has evolved significantly over the years and continues to evolve with an increased emphasis on preparing graduates with applicable skills that will allow them to be globally competitive.

**“UWI had become the status quo for higher education.”** Participants in the study indicated that several factors within the Jamaican higher education environment contributed to the emergence of private tertiary institutions as key providers of higher education in Jamaica. Dr. Hill (male, religious institution) advised that knowledge of the historical and environmental contexts, as well as an awareness of what was considered to be “status quo” within Jamaican higher education, were essential to understanding how higher education was unfolding in Jamaica and the nature of the local higher education landscape from which local private higher education institutions had emerged.

In order to really interpret the environment within which the private entities have come, we need to establish the fact that the University of the West Indies had become the status quo for higher education; it was not challenged for most of its 60 years by other entities.

Dr. Davis (male, secular institution), a graduate of the University of the West Indies (UWI), explained that UWI, Jamaica’s premier university, has historically enjoyed a privileged position and was often viewed as the “king on the hill.” Commenting on the extent of the privileges afforded the UWI, Dr. Davis asserted, “they are favored in everything – in the relationships with the European Union, [and in] any international grants they are prioritized.” Dr. Williams (male, secular institution) articulated that as “king of the hill” the UWI was not very proactive in its response to the increasing demands for higher education, changes in the demographic makeup of the student

population, or the demands of the local workforce. Dr. Williams felt that the failure of UWI to be more responsive to Jamaica's workforce needs created a void within the higher education system that would later be met by private higher education providers.

I don't think that our premier university, the University of the West Indies, was dynamic enough and hence they left a void that was being filled in the short term by many of the overseas universities. I think that was a situation that was permitted only because there was not enough forward thinking from the University of the West Indies.

Dr. Williams suggested that the UWI failed to be proactive in anticipating changes in the needs of students and the increased demands for higher education in Jamaica. This view was expounded further and extrapolated to the public sector as a whole by the Ministry of Education and Youth (MOEY). The MOEY, in its *Strategic plan for the tertiary sector 2006-1010*, stated that public higher education institutions neglected to meet the educational needs of one of the fastest growing segments of the student population, adults who were employed within the workforce and seeking to enroll in higher education.

At present, [public] tertiary institutions focus primarily on the education and training of the age cohort 17-25, who are just emerging from the secondary system. However, there is a burgeoning market in workplace and adult education that is being largely overlooked in national public tertiary institutions, and, as a result, is currently being addressed by private, offshore, and overseas providers. (MOEY, 2006, p. 44)

Participants in the study consistently echoed the sentiment that private higher education institutions emerged in response to this void that existed. Participants stated

that within the public higher education sector there was often a disconnect between the academic training of graduates and the practical skills needed for engagement in the workforce. Dr. Davis stated that in the past, public sector higher education institutions had been criticized for producing graduates who were academically qualified but did not possess the practical hands-on skills and training needed for immediate engagement in the workforce. He recalled that “You used to hear criticisms of the formal state system producing people with paper, but who couldn’t do much work and weren’t competent in terms of when they got out into the workforce.” Similarly, Dr. Williams confirmed that “folks used to say if you want to learn how to do anything go to CAST [College of Arts, Science, and Technology], if you want to just sit down and learn bookwork go to UWI.”

The public higher education system was also viewed as a bureaucratic entity which provided little flexibility in terms of making higher education accessible to the growing number of adults who were employed in full-time positions within the workforce and were also seeking to access higher education on a part-time basis.

Many working adults, who had to work to support their families [and] support themselves, did not have the luxury of three, four years full-time in a university to gain a degree. They had to go out there and work; having secured employment, where there were now opportunities for part-time study so that they could gain a degree and these were severely prescribed. University of the West Indies was not a very friendly place where this was concerned and many of the other state entities, the teachers colleges, were equal and similarly negative in terms of facilitating people’s schedules. (Dr. Davis, male, secular institution)

Ms. Daling (secular institution) believed, as did other participants, that because Jamaican private higher education institutions tend to be less bureaucratic in nature than their public sector counterparts, this facilitated a level of flexibility among private sector providers that allowed private institutions to be more responsive to local higher education and training needs. She stated that “private institutions are able to be more flexible; they see the need and are able to satisfy needs in terms of training and development.”

Similarly, Dr. Robinson (female, secular institution) expressed that local private higher education providers helped to facilitate access to higher education as they afford students a variety of choices which included greater “flexibility in payment plans, the time of day [course] offerings, [and] location.” Dr. Robinson further explained that “a number of the brick and mortar institutions, traditional ones, have maintained their presence predominantly in Kingston.”

Local private higher education institutions have unique characteristics that make them an attractive alternative to public sector institutions. Dr. Parker (female, religious institution) suggested that local private higher education institutions in Jamaica were more student-centered, customer service oriented, and also provided a more intimate learning environment.

I think persons gravitate to private institutions as well because they tend to be smaller. They tend to have more of a familial feel, which is what we attempt to communicate to our students. They tend to focus a little bit more on customer service. The characteristics of the institution define or determine the choice that a student will make.

**Competition among higher education providers.** The higher education landscape in Jamaica is a highly competitive one in which local private higher education institutions compete not only with the heavily subsidized public sector institutions but also with off-shore institutions from developed countries such as Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom that provide higher education services in Jamaica. Dr. Fearon (male, religious institution) highlighted the nature of the competitive challenge faced by local private higher education institutions in Jamaica.

When you think of government owned institutions that are subsidized to the tune of around 80%, you know it's a real challenge for [local] private tertiary education to survive. At the same time, we've been able to survive because we have kept our tuition at pretty low costs in contrast to the government subsidized institutions and in contrast to those foreign-based institutions who have the funding.

Ms. Daling (secular institution) offered that because of the competitive nature of the higher education market, and due to limited financial resources it was beneficial for private higher education institutions to establish "a niche" or area of specialization.

That is what really helps us to stay in the business; [we] create a sort of niche. Find our niche market, stick to it, try and be current and relevant, try and look in the future at what we think might keep us up there. We have to try to be one step [ahead] – not even one full step, because we are limited to our resources – cash resources, physical resources, and so on. But just to keep that one little step ahead, even half step ahead.

The fact that public institutions have access to government subventions while private institutions do not seemed to further support the relevance of establishing niche markets within Jamaica's private higher education sector. There was agreement among participants around the idea that having a niche, an area of specialty, or a range of selected programs that the institution would become "known for" was necessary for building reputation as well as for institutional longevity particularly in the case of small private institutions. Dr. Parker (female, religious institution) affirmed that institutions in the study had already established distinctive reputations within the local higher education sector.

NCU [Northern Caribbean University], for example, is very strongly steeped in religious tradition. So their ethos, in my understanding, is education that is rooted in a theological philosophy. UCC [University College of the Caribbean] has another ethos and mandates, which I think focuses much more on business education. IUC [International University of the Caribbean] focuses on leadership development through its various programs.

Although the competitive nature of the Jamaican higher education sector was described as a challenge for local providers, participants also thought that competition among institutions within the sector was beneficial to students and the Jamaican higher education sector as a whole. Dr. Hill (male, religious institution) suggested that the competition among higher education institutions in Jamaica has forced public sector institutions to become more responsive.

I think that the older traditional universities have been jolted out of their complacency in respect of what is necessary for the onward journey of Jamaica.

The climate of competition is good for the universities. You are going to have to work hard to hold your own.

**Admission matriculation requirements.** The basic qualification for entering Jamaican higher education has traditionally been a minimum of five Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) or General Certificate of Education (GCE) ordinary level exam passes. There were very few, if any, exceptions to this prescriptive admissions policy at higher education institutions in Jamaica. However, in recent years the basic qualifications required for accessing higher education have been amended to include the use of equivalent qualifications in conjunction with formal academic credentials where necessary. Many local private higher education institutions have incorporated equivalent qualifications as part of the admission and matriculation policy. Dr. Davis (male, secular institution) noted that the use of the equivalent qualification guidelines which have been established by individual institutions in collaboration with the national accreditation agency, the UCJ, has helped to make higher education available to segments of the Jamaican population that would have otherwise been excluded.

Given the mature entry, given the ability to use equivalent qualifications such as professional certification in accounting exams, professional account exams, professional secretarial exams, etc., persons were able to use those qualifications, work experience, plus the formal academic qualifications by virtue of this new dynamic system created by accreditation to gain access. And so, many persons who didn't stand a chance to get into the University of the West Indies, for example, now had great opportunity.

All four higher education institutions in the study have included various forms of equivalent qualification as part of their overall admissions policy in an effort to make higher education more accessible to the student populations they serve. Interview participants also highlighted how the respective institutions assist students to navigate the financial challenges associated with accessing higher education and training in Jamaica.

**Financing higher education.** The issue of financing higher education was an omnipresent concern raised by all participants. Within the Jamaican context, once the basic academic entry qualifications for higher education have been met the ability to access higher education becomes a factor of affordability. Dr. Robinson (female, secular institution) expressed the view that “accessibility has to do with your ability to matriculate into the program and afford a program.” This sentiment was expressed by other participants including Dr. Fearon (male, religious institution) who provided a more nuanced contextual outline of this concern.

There have been many many more institutions that have evolved, that have come on the stage of action in the course of the past 15 to 20 years. The problem though is with the fact as to whether or not people are able to access education because of the financial costs involved. There is access, but access is limited dependent on the affordability. One has to appreciate the fact that the government has made available to individuals who want to access tertiary education support through the Students’ Loan Bureau. However, the Students’ Loan Bureau is not a facility that can offer everybody who wants to access tertiary education the financial backing that is necessary. So there are limitations there.

Given the limited financial resources available to students through the Students' Loan Bureau, local private higher education providers, who initially functioned to expand access to Jamaican higher education by way of offering facilities for academic engagement across the country, are also faced with the challenge of making higher education more affordable. Dr. Hill (male, religious institution) pointed to the fact that affordability has emerged as a major concern for all Jamaican higher education providers and for local private higher education providers in particular. Dr. Hill stated that "in reality accessibility is not the challenge of the day; the challenge of the day is affordability."

For many Jamaicans, the inability of individuals to sufficiently finance higher education continues to be a major deterrent to accessing higher education. Even in cases where students exceed the traditional matriculation requirements of five ordinary level CXC (Caribbean Examination Council) examination passes, the issue of financing higher education remains a challenge. Dr. Johnson (female, University Council of Jamaica) acknowledged that the funding available through government sources is limited and suggested that local private higher education institutions have emerged partly in response to this situation. Local private higher education institutions play a role in assisting students to combat the financial challenges associated with accessing higher education by providing a variety of flexible financing options for students.

How could I forget this? Finance. They [students] can't finance it. Big, big, big, big thing all around – financing tertiary education. So even if the girl or boy sometimes gets six O'levels they don't have the money to go [on] to tertiary [education]. And remember, the government can only finance so much. So that's

why private ones [higher education institutions] came up. You see what I mean? And maybe some of them [private institutions] work out a [payment] plan, you know, where you can do this. And not only that, they [private institutions] also have them [students] coming in not full-time, but on a part-time basis, on weekends, sometimes only at nights, so that they [students] can maybe have a little job out there so that they can finance themselves. (Dr. Johnson, female, University Council of Jamaica)

Within public sector higher education institutions there is often less flexibility in the payment options available to students as far as tuition payment is concerned. Dr. Johnson informed that students attending public institutions who are unable to pay tuition fees within the timeframe prescribed by the public universities may be subject to involuntary withdrawal from classes through a process known as “de-registration.”

Many times at UWI and UTech they have a process now called de-registration where they allow them [students] in, but give them a certain time in which to pay their fees. And many times the time goes and no fees paid. So they de-register them. They have to leave. I don't know how long this has been going on, but I know there is that process going on now. De-registration. You just have to leave. You cannot write the exam, you cannot go any further. So the government has increased the loans at the Students' Loan Bureau but that's still a drop in the bucket.

**Addressing the affordability issue.** Access to affordable higher education in Jamaica has expanded in recent years and the presence of local private higher education institutions has contributed to making higher education more accessible to a wider cross-

section of Jamaicans. The institutions in this study have adopted a range of initiatives and practice to facilitate greater access to higher education in Jamaica in terms of location, flexibility, course schedule, and affordability. All four institutions in this study appeared to be intentional and deliberate in their efforts to address the issue of affordability. Presented in this section are participants' reports that serve as exemplars of how each of the four private higher education institutions in the study is addressing issues of accessibility and affordability within the Jamaican higher education sector. The perspectives of two participants from each of the four institutions have been offered. To preserve confidentiality the pseudonyms of the speakers have been omitted.

The International University of the Caribbean (IUC) was among the first local private higher education institutions to adopt a multiple-location approach to providing higher education to Jamaicans. IUC began with five campus locations and had established learning centers outside the Kingston and St. Andrew metropolitan area. The IUC participants shared that taking higher education to individuals in suburban and rural communities was a strategic approach by the institution to addressing the issues of access and affordability. Participants from IUC affirmed that the institution seeks to address the issues of access and affordability by executing various initiatives such as scholarship programs, targeting specific underrepresented groups, expanding academic centers across the island, and providing students with several options for meeting tuition costs.

We came to the educational environment with a sense that it was necessary to lift the numbers and we could not lift the numbers in any significant way unless we found a way to take tertiary education to the people. We started at the time with five centers, each one with all of what is required for quality assurance and

quality control and so the university itself is built on that foundation of accessibility - taking education, tertiary level education to people.

IUC has taken on the mandate of making higher education accessible to individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, inner-city communities, and underrepresented males. The institution also utilizes alternative equivalent qualification as part of their admissions and matriculation requirements.

We target inner city individuals, particularly men, because we recognize that in the average tertiary classroom, the ratio of males to females is creeping increasingly higher regardless of any kind of intervention. We're increasing access for males and also access for persons from disadvantaged backgrounds. We also consider flexible entry requirements. So an individual, as long as they meet certain basic standards, we can attempt to bring them up to scratch in terms of what is required for university level. So that's why we have the pre-university program. We also have a mature entry program which we use to facilitate persons with atypical entry requirements.

The multiple-location model adopted by IUC forms part of the institution's strategy to provide an affordable higher education alternative to Jamaicans across the island by minimizing educational expenses associated with traveling, housing, and accommodations if persons in suburban and rural communities had no alternative to attending institutions in Kingston.

When we started, we were addressing that challenge [of affordability] by bringing the education to your doorsteps. We are cutting the cost to you to achieve. You don't have to travel far. You don't have to move your residence. You don't have

to spend three, four years in a different location with cost for rental and so on.

And we are bringing you largely accredited degrees, so anywhere you go in the world these degrees are valuable and accepted.

To further address the issue of affordability, IUC has put in place a number of payment plans, scholarships, and has launched a campaign to assist students to source tuition funding.

Our fees we consider to be competitive. In addition to that, we have put a number of different payment plans in place. So financially, we are attempting to meet the student where he or she is. Recently we launched a campaign called *Twelve Keys to Pay Your Fees*. We've actually identified 12 ways in which students can attempt to identify funding for their tuition. In addition to that, we offer scholarships.

The International University of the Caribbean has sought to strategically address the issue of affordability in conjunction with the accessibility issue. IUC has collectively addressed these issues by providing access to higher education in many of Jamaica's rural and suburban communities, targeting under represented males and individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, facilitating a variety of payment options for students and through its consideration of flexible admissions requirements.

The Northern Caribbean University (NCU) has established a variety of institutional initiatives to assist in making higher education more affordable for its students. The most venerable of these include NCU's student work study program and scholarships. NCU promotes and encourages its students to participate in the Jamaica Values and Attitude Project for Tertiary Students (JAMVAT), a national program that

provides financial assistance to students who meet admission requirements for higher education but are unable to finance their education. JAMVAT requires that participating students complete 200 hours of public service; in return, the government covers 30% of the students' tuition cost.

One of our big things in this institution is our age-old work study program. The work study program is one of the pillars of our institution. A lot of students here come and work on campus and earn wages as a student worker. We don't pay them in cash. They get it as credits towards their education. Then, of course, we also have encouraged them to participate in the JAMVAT Program. So there are those working in NGOs around [the Mandeville area] and getting that stipend that government pays for that. Then we have a large number, a good number of scholarships and grants that we have available, many of them donated by alumni of the institution, some from organizations locally, and some, a few overseas that we offer. The church, as well, provides a good deal of support to students who are having struggles in finding their fees. They can get some funding support from their churches or from church institutions and organizations. And of course, we encourage our students to apply to the student loan for support.

Additionally NCU contributes to expanding access to higher education through its multiple learning centers across the island.

About 15 years ago as we looked at the educational landscape. We recognized that not everyone will be able to come to a Mandeville campus and therefore we started some extension campuses. And we were taken to task by some people who couldn't understand what we were doing, but we stuck to it and we

established a campus in Montego Bay, we established one in Kingston, and later we established one in St. Ann. We find ways and means of doing things differently and to expand the landscape.

The University College of the Caribbean (UCC) has been proactive in facilitating access to higher education in Jamaica for individuals who wish to pursue higher education part-time. As one of the first higher education institutions to offer courses on a Sunday in Jamaica, UCC is also the pioneer of the “early bird” class schedule. The early bird schedule was designed to accommodate working individuals who would prefer the convenience of taking a course towards their degree prior to the start of the workday. Students who enroll in these early bird courses are provided breakfast courtesy of UCC as an added convenience. The participants from UCC highlighted that innovative course scheduling and the modular design of many of UCC’s programs, coupled with a variety of flexible payment plans has helped to address the issues of accessibility and affordability for its students.

UCC, just to name one, and there were others, developed some innovative schedules to drive and to facilitate people part time, I mean really part time. So people started looking at part time meaning, okay you finish work at 5:00 we can start the class at 5:30 and we give you a three hour block, we can have it on [the] weekend, or we can have it early bird – just before you go to work.

UCC has seven learning centers outside of Kingston. These centers are located in May Pen, Mandeville, Sav La Mar, Montego Bay, Ocho Rios, and in Jose Marti, Spanish Town. The modular nature of the courses offered by UCC, and the flexibility of the

payment plans that are available to students, serve as part of UCC's efforts to provide affordable higher education within Jamaica.

The University College of the Caribbean, UCC, has a very flexible payment plan. If you pay all the school fees for the duration of your program up front, you get the discount. If you can pay for the year, you can do that. You can pay by the term or you can pay monthly. We also offer the opportunity to take different modules so you can take one module or two modules if that's what you can afford.

UCC has adopted a strategic approach to meeting the needs of the working adult who aspires to obtain higher education. Through its innovative course schedule, corporate training courses, and the modular nature of the programs offered UCC helps to facilitate access to non-traditional students and adult learners.

Vector Technology Institute (VTI) has in place several payment plans to assist students in meeting the financial cost of higher education. Both participants from VTI provided three examples of ways in which the institution seeks to address the issue of affordability for its students. As a small specialized tertiary institution that focuses on developing professionals in the area of information technology, VTI facilitates more customized payment plans to accommodate its students where necessary.

We have several payment plans, we have about five, but if you don't fit into those plans we will customize one for you. We encourage them [students] to follow what they [have agreed to pay]. We have even gone to the situation where we say okay give us \$1000 [approximately USD \$11] per week, you understand, just to

show that you want to do something. So we even go to that level because once a person is in the system you want them to finish.

VTI is currently in the process of developing a scholarship program to further assist its students in meeting the financial challenges associated with accessing higher education and training.

We are trying to develop a scholarship plan, trying to get sponsors from some of our stakeholders, the primary ones, especially from [the] industry that many of these [students] end up in. So that's where we are looking at spending some resources.

The modular nature of the courses offered by VTI has proven to be beneficial to students, as it allows them an opportunity to plan how best to navigate financing their education.

The way our classes are set, it's modular, so [students] can pick up modules as long as there are no prerequisites. We have different batches that come in, so every three months we have a new batch. So if you drop out from your batch [because you are unable to pay your tuition] you can always pick up with the next batch three months down the road. So you find that people may opt to do that where they hold off and then they come in again.

The evolving nature of the Jamaican higher education landscape has influenced how local private higher education providers facilitate access to higher education. Increased competition for students, who are faced with the challenge of meeting the financial costs of higher education, has compelled local private institutions to innovate new ways of making higher education more accessible and affordable for Jamaicans.

### **World-class Higher Education for Jamaica**

Participants consistently made reference to the need for Jamaican higher education to be relevant to local needs while preparing graduates to be globally competitive. Jamaica's national development plan, *Vision 2030 Jamaica*, declares that the overarching goal for the education sector is that of achieving "world-class education" by the year 2030. Within this context, it is expected that local higher education institutions will play a distinctive role.

Jamaica's goals for higher education as stated in *Vision 2030 Jamaica* are to: "promote a culture of learning, strengthen mechanisms to align training with demands of the labor market, expand mechanism to provide access to education and training, and ensure adequate and high quality tertiary education is provided with emphasis on interface between work and school" (PIOJ, 2004, p. XVI). The study participants suggested that the notion of world-class higher education was multi-faceted and that, in order to achieve this goal, there needed to be consensus around what constitutes "world-class education".

**"World-class in comparison to what?"** *Vision 2030 Jamaica* does not provide a clear definition of what constitutes world-class education for Jamaica. Thus, participants were asked to share their perspectives on what would constitute world-class higher education for Jamaica and to what extent local private higher education institutions contributed to its achievement. In response to this question, Dr. Green (male, religious institution) offered a particularly intriguing response.

I've read the statements you're reading too. I've not had anybody to answer the question, world-class in comparison to what? The US based system? There are

times when we think that to have a “world-class” means I must compare it to this other person. [But] I can do the thing I’m doing and do it so very well and it fits into the society and it’s world-class. How do you define that [world-class]?

Participants stated that some of the key components of world-class education for Jamaica must include a focus on quality, research, international competitiveness, education that is relevant to the local Jamaican, and Caribbean context while meeting international standards and fostering critical awareness. Presented below are some of the expressed views of participants regarding key components required for world-class higher education in Jamaica.

Dr. Johnson (female, University Council of Jamaica) asserted that world-class education must be based on quality with emphasis on preparing graduates who are equipped to compete internationally and are globally aware.

I think the biggest thing for world-class higher education anywhere is having quality education, which makes your graduates competitive on the world scene. So therefore, you have to have a good curriculum. It has to be related to what’s happening nationally as well as globally because many national issues are also global issues. And you have to have quality standards. A good world-class education keeps abreast of research worldwide.

Dr. Green (male, religious institution) suggested that world-class higher education for Jamaica facilitates an opportunity for Jamaica to develop its own unique brand of higher education that will allow the island to stand out as a pioneer within the international education community.

I think we ought to develop a unique brand of education in Jamaica and create for ourselves acceptable world standards that say, this is the brand of education that we're offering in Jamaica and we are saying to you from wherever you are, we are not like you but here is something that we would like you to come to see. I call that world-class.

Ms. Lambert (religious institution) expressed the view that world-class education must prepare individuals to transcend national boundaries and provide opportunities for students to engage the world in meaningful ways.

World-class education means education that has the capacity to prepare individuals to be world citizens. True world citizens are individuals who are going to really make a difference, impact the world, and individuals who are aware of what the issues are and who have been adequately prepared so to do. Education has to transcend what goes on in your four walls. If you are going to be providing a world-class education, you have to be, for example, engaging students in experiences outside of Jamaica a great deal. You have to be providing world-class facilities.

The participants' perspectives on what constituted world-class higher education seemed closely aligned with the views they expressed concerning the purpose of higher education in Jamaica and the mission of the institutions they represented. They affirmed that central to the attainment of world-class higher education was the ability to provide the necessary physical infrastructures, engage students in experiences outside of Jamaica, keep abreast with research, and create and maintain internationally acceptable standards.

**Preparing citizens to engage with the world.** Exploring the views of high-level administrators at local private higher education institutions about the purposes and functions of higher education in Jamaica allowed for a contextualized understanding of the extent to which the mission of each institution in the study is aligned with Jamaica's national higher education goals. Participants shared that the purposes and functions of higher education in Jamaica, as in many countries across the globe, are multi-dimensional. Dr. Green (male, religious institution) and Dr. Parker (female, religious institution) offered that at its core Jamaican higher education seeks to prepare individuals with the capacity to engage the world as responsible global citizens, to facilitate critical thinking, and to develop moral, cultural, and social awareness.

What Jamaica is trying to do is prepare citizens for a world community. The purpose of [higher] education, therefore, is to not only train the mind but [it] is also to train the individual to live in a society and be tolerant in a society where we are different. (Dr. Green)

Higher education is really the pathway to social development – not only locally, but regionally and internationally. It facilitates a level of critical thinking. It lifts peoples' capacities to engage with moral, social, [and] cultural issues. It also puts us on a platform to be able to dialogue with other contexts particularly in the developed world. Tertiary education is what facilitates that process. (Dr. Parker)

Dr. Hill (male, religious institution) and Ms. Lambert (religious institution) emphasized the role of higher education in creating and molding leaders and problem solvers who possess an awareness of the local context, and are able to contribute to society and address issues of national concern.

We are in a knowledge-based world and we believe that [the] tertiary education community needs to bring to the workplace, the market place, the leadership forum [in which] people will have to function not just [as] degreed leaders, but critically aware leaders; leaders who take the time to understand the application of the content of leadership to their particular context. (Dr. Hill)

Recipients of tertiary education will be individuals who are able to grapple with the issues of the day and are able to make a reasonable contribution to what's taking place in the society and participate in a meaningful way in coming up with solutions to some of the problems that our country faces. (Ms. Lambert)

**Private institutions and their missions.** The mission statements of the four local private higher education institutions in the study provide a point of reference when assessing and evaluating the extent to which these institutions help to fulfill Jamaica's national higher education goals. The mission statement makes clear the institution's mandate in relation to its various stakeholders. As a part of the accreditation process, the UCJ pays particular attention to the mission statement of each institution that applies for program accreditation and assesses how each institution fulfills its mandate. Dr. Johnson (female, University Council of Jamaica) articulated the importance and relevance of having an explicitly stated mission.

If you're going to offer a program, you have to always think of what is my mission? And so we put a lot of emphasis on the mission of the institution because that will help us to assess how the institution is going about fulfilling its mandate. You must have a mission. You must have ways of assessing that

mission. And you must have ways of evaluating what's happening and where you need to go in order to plan properly.

The mission statements of the four private higher education institutions in the study varied according to institution type and reflect what each institution considers to be its primary objective in providing higher education in Jamaica. The mission statements of the four local private higher education institutions in the study support Jamaica's national higher education goals. Collectively these mission statements speak to facilitating alignment of educational training with the demands of the workforce, lifelong learning, and providing mechanisms for expanding access to higher education.

Presented below are the mission statements as published on the respective website and institution's publications for each of the four private institutions in the study. Alongside each statement are the comments of participants from each institution regarding the mission of their respective institutions.

**International University of the Caribbean's mission statement.** Co-creators of a more excellent way to lifelong learning, educational empowerment, prosperity, peace, and wholeness.

The mission of IUC was viewed as an extension of God calling upon the United Church in Jamaica to prepared quality leaders with a view to improve the quality of governance at all levels within the Jamaica society.

We begin with a sense of education as part of our mission; what we are called by God to be and to do in the context where we are placed. We have as part of our vision and mission the formation of quality leaders. And we feel that has impact on and implication for quality of life of our people. The higher and greater the

quality of our leaders, we believe, the greater the quality of our governance which they offer, whether it be in the church or in business or in the parliament, because it is all of those together that provide the quality leadership which is important for what we are about, so that for us is very important.

At the core of IUC's mission is assisting individuals to develop critical awareness a key component in the preparation of solution-oriented leaders.

The vision is very much wrapped up in persons developing a sense of leadership in their own spheres of influence. Leadership is characterized by critical awareness being able to assess a situation and identify the strengths and weaknesses, and address those creatively. It's a solution-oriented type of leadership, which is rooted in critical awareness. So that is basically what the institution is trying to do.

**Northern Caribbean University's mission statement.** Northern Caribbean University (NCU), a Seventh Day Adventist institution, has as its mission, quality Christ-centered education achieved through academic excellence, social interaction, spiritual and physical development and a strong work ethic, thereby fitting each student for committed professional service to country and to God.

Both participants from NCU expressed in very clear terms the philosophical underpinnings of NCU's mission. The following statement speaks to the centrality of a Christ-centered faith to the mission of NCU. The participant shared that NCU's mission is incorporated into the academic curriculum which provides a unique educational experience for students as it focuses on spiritual development.

Our mission speaks to the fact that we are here to provide quality, Christ-centered, education which speaks to the total development of the student who comes here; not only the intellectual life of the student, but the spiritual life of the student, the social life of the student, and in the final analysis, fitting the student to serve here in this world, but more fundamentally in the world to come. Because that's a fundamental part of our philosophy we're not only fitting people for now, we are also fitting people for eternity. All of that is integrated into our curriculum. We believe that that is an important part of preparing a worthwhile citizen. We are a faith-based institution, and although we have to contend with others out there in the real world, we also have to help people to understand that a part of real life is a relationship with our maker and we make no apologies for it.

At the core of NCU's mission is the training of individuals to serve as professionals who are committed in their service to the country as under God. This aspect of the mission is facilitated through various co-curricular programs such as the work study program and other community and social interactions.

The mission statement for us is more than just black ink on white paper. The mission statement embodies the total value proposition of our university and we live by our mission statement. We are training people for committed professional service to country under God. That's what we say and that's what we do. That's why we have service learning as an integral part of it. That's why the work-study program is the way it is. It's because we teach and inculcate in our students the value of honest labor. We seek to provide quality Christ-centered education

through these various means, the social interaction and physical development.

The spiritual component is a big part of who we are as a faith-based institution.

**University College of the Caribbean's mission statement.** To provide professionally focused tertiary education and training for individuals and organizations through a student centered environment that facilitates the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competencies to compete in a global marketplace and which fosters a passion for lifelong learning and excellence, thereby enhancing individual and national economic growth and development.

The historical trajectory of the UCC revealed that the institution's mission has evolved to meet the changing needs of the individuals it serves. This evolution was referred to as "mission creep." The participant explained that UCC's mission evolved gradually over time in response to changes within the local higher education market.

There is this concept of mission creep. IMP and IMS began as entities that served short term training needs, [providing] short courses for organizations and their employees. IMP came out of the HR department of a group of companies. They saw an opportunity, and they developed it and began serving the needs of the private sector entities for short term courses because there [were] access issues with the established state sector because they were not providing these types of training and development opportunities. And IMS, because there was still pent up demand, came to the market to also produce their versions of similar short term supervisory management, accounting, financial management, and then diplomas to give persons who really and truly were in the workforce for years, who couldn't access the former system whether [due to] schedule matriculation or

otherwise. IMS in addition to their short term courses developed associates degree [and] was also offering in association with Florida International University degree programs, bachelor's and master's levels. There was this merger IMS/IMP [which] created University College of the Caribbean. So what you see then is this progression, this mission creep.

Today UCC's mission focuses on meeting the workforce needs by providing variety of training programs with an emphasis on corporate education and management.

The country needs certified individuals and so, UCC offers a range of training and education opportunities, for example, our corporate education and management services solutions, short courses where we customize courses for the clientele or we have stock courses that we offer and invite the people to come in or we go to them. We offer diplomas, associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees. So we are taking care of all the needs.

**Vector Training Institute's mission statement.** To produce specialists in the field of Computer Systems Design, Maintenance and Administration; to serve the needs of industry, and to provide the basis for further academic pursuits in this field of study.

VTI, since its inception has focused primarily on the training of information technology specialist. Thus workforce development has always been at the heart of VTI's mission: "When we started our vision was to try and develop the workforce of Jamaica and that is still one of our primary goals, workforce development especially in the technical areas." In focusing on workforce development, VTI's mission is also to help students recognize their role in moving the nation forward by providing the technological expertise required for national development.

In terms of vision or mission workforce development is always in our mind. Our students are the future of Jamaica and we want to get them thinking and accepting that that is their role. [They] have to recognize that in you collectively [lies] the expertise that the country requires to move from here to there.

The mission statements of these four private institutions have identified a commitment on the part of the institution to foster “a passion for lifelong learning and excellence,” “serve the needs of industry,” and facilitate “professionally focused tertiary education and training for individuals and organizations.” The language of the mission statements presented above is very similar to the expressed higher education goals as outlined in *Vision 2030 Jamaica* which speaks to promoting a learning culture, strengthening the alignment between education/training and labor market demands, expanding access to education and training, and quality assurance. In order to fulfill the commitments outlined in their mission statements, these local private higher education institutions have taken the necessary steps to ensure that the quality of their programs is certified as locally, regionally, and internationally acceptable. Participants contended that local private higher education institutions in Jamaica make significant contributions to Jamaica’s national development a reality which often goes unacknowledged.

**Advancing the cause of national development.** The study’s participants argued that local private higher education institutions in Jamaica play an important role not only in the achievement of the national goal of world-class education but also in advancing Jamaica’s national development. Dr. Fearon (male, religious institution) asserted that “private tertiary institutions do make their mark in advancing the whole cause of national development.” In light of this, Dr. Williams (male, secular institution) suggested that

“the vast majority of our folks [Jamaicans] need to be able to do something useful that contribute to national development and that’s our focus [as private institutions]; that’s where we begin at all times, our programs are geared towards that.” In an effort to illustrate how local private higher institutions contributed to Jamaica’s national development, Dr. Hill (male, religious institution) offered the following explanation.

We believe that the key to the how is [by addressing] the issue of accessibility.

We are able to connect with people where they are, and then secondly, because we are able to connect with people, we are actually engaging people who are working and we are helping them to learn by doing. And so what they are learning is not alien to what they are doing, and therefore, we are providing the methodology and the inputs, which ensure that they do what they are doing better.

Likewise, Dr. Davis (male, secular institution) posited that local private higher education institutions contribute to national development in significant ways. He highlighted the fact that local private higher education institutions contribute by expanding local capacity for providing access to higher education and by providing additional educational infrastructures without utilizing government resources.

I think, in more significant ways that we are not just teaching but we are contributing to national development [by] providing access, providing programs, in terms of the research that we do and helping students to think through the problems and apply their learning to solve these situations. Bearing in mind that we don’t receive government grants or subventions, we are able to create space that the state sector, given the public sector constraints, might not be able to do [in terms of] buildings and increase[d] facilities.

Research was another area through which local private higher education institutions contributed to national development. Dr. Fearon (male, religious institution) was keen to note that local private higher education institutions have made important strides in the area of applied and action research.

I think private tertiary institutions play an important role in contributing to national development. Take for example from the perspective of research. We have embarked on a number of research projects that seek to add value to the Jamaican way of life.

Dr. Davis (male, secular institution) affirmed that within the context of Jamaica applied research is “critical given both [the] economic and social challenges that exist.” Specific examples of research ventures mentioned by participants included ongoing research by faculty and students at Northern Caribbean University (NCU) on sorrel, a local plant that has been utilized in the treatment of certain types of cancers. A number of value-added sorrel products have been developed by researchers at NCU and have been made available to local consumers. Researchers at NCU are also exploring new ways of utilizing locally grown products such as breadfruit by adding value to the natural products.

At the University College of the Caribbean (UCC) research has been conducted in the use of information technology to address local problems. Students at the institution have recently developed an information technology based tracking system that would be able to assist farmers to locate their animals if they are stolen. UCC has collaborated with the Ministry of Agriculture to explore the implementation of the newly developed

technology for use by local farmers. Another noteworthy research project at UCC involves efforts to improve the efficiency of the local motor vehicle licensing process.

To further illuminate the role of local private higher education institutions in advancing the cause of Jamaica's national development, participants suggested that one only has to consider the economic impact on communities and Jamaica as a whole if these private institutions did not exist today. Not only do local private institutions prepare students for engagement in the workforce but they themselves are also major employers within the communities in which they are located and within the education sector as a whole. Dr. Hill (male, religious institution) asserted that if the church were not actively involved in education in Jamaica today "the educational system [would] collapse" as in addition to religiously affiliated higher education institutions many of Jamaica's prominent secondary schools that feed into the tertiary education sector are also church affiliated institutions.

Ms. Lambert (religious institution), like many other participants in this study, lamented the fact that local private higher education institutions seemed to be under appreciated by the government. She was disappointed that local private higher education institutions did not receive any financial support from the Jamaican government in spite of the significant contributions these institutions make to expanding access to higher education and to the national development of the country.

I think it is unfortunate that our system does not allow for private [higher education] institutions to benefit from the national purse in any meaningful way because I think the contribution that private [higher education] institutions make

to national development is as important as that contribution from public institutions.

*Vision 2030 Jamaica* accentuates the need for quality higher education as Jamaica strives to achieve world-class education. In Jamaica quality assurance for higher education is the primary responsibility of the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ) which has developed a “yardstick” for assessing the quality of local higher education programs.

**“We Needed Some Kind of Yardstick by Which We Could Measure Quality”**

Prior to the establishment of the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ) in 1987, there was no system wide “yardstick” being utilized in Jamaica to assure the quality of academic programs offered by higher education institutions. Jamaica’s national education goals speak to ensuring that adequate and high quality tertiary education is provided locally. And it is in this regard that the UCJ accreditation process serves as a conduit for aligning the mission of private higher education institutions with the national higher education goals. Dr. Johnson, who had been a part of the UCJ’s administrative leadership team since the agency’s inception, shared insights on the origins of the UCJ. She explained that because there were inconsistencies in the standards being applied by tertiary education institutions, there was the need to protect the interest of students and to help facilitate a system of credit transfer among the various tertiary education programs, the Jamaican government established the UCJ by an act of Parliament.

There were different types of standards around, so we needed some kind of not standardization, but some kind of yardstick by which we could measure quality across the board and to assist students in transfer of credits from one institution to

another. We also were looking at cost-effectiveness of education as well. And we felt that cost, quality, and access were issues to be looked at.

At the time the UCJ was established, UWI was the only degree granting higher education institution in Jamaica, and, thus, the government of Jamaica was concerned about the inability of local higher education institutions to award degrees.

So [the Jamaican government] was concern about awarding degrees. The only [tertiary education institution] at the time when the Council was set up that had a legal instrument to award a degree was UWI. Later on, the government gave UTech – I think just before the Council was set up, it gave UTech that power. But none of the others had any degree-awarding powers. So they couldn't award degrees. They could [only] award diplomas and certificates. (Dr. Johnson, University Council of Jamaica)

Dr. Johnson also noted that in creating the model for how the UCJ would function, the Jamaican government examined models from the British higher education system and adapted the administrative model used by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA).

So what the government did was to look at England. The British government had set up what was called CNAA, the Council for National Academic Awards, which used to award degrees to the polytechnics. The government did not give each polytechnic its own degree awarding power because then you're going to get different standards across the board. So it had given a central body the degree-awarding power that they would set the standards for the polytechnics. So when they looked at that, they thought that the model for the Council could be that.

As the number of higher education providers in Jamaica grew, the environment became increasingly competitive and the need for quality assurance became more pressing. Ms. Lambert explained that many local private higher education institutions welcomed the idea of UCJ and its focus on quality assurance in higher education. She stated that, “because the environment is the way it is, fiercely competitive, lots of players, it’s vital that institutions maintain quality in order that they can keep their share of the pie or even seek to increase it as it were.”

Private tertiary education institutions that focus on quality have been able to gain and maintain a competitive edge within the Jamaican higher education sector. Quality assurance is not taken lightly among private higher education institutions. Dr. Hill (male, religious institution) warned, “If you are taking quality assurance seriously then you are in line with what they [the UCJ] require of you; if you are resistant and not just refusing now but resisting then the system throws you out.”

Armed with the mandate of assuring quality in Jamaican higher education, the UCJ has adopted a multidimensional approach in defining and assessing the quality of academic programs offered by higher education institutions in Jamaica through its accreditation process.

Quality is multidimensional. And if it is multidimensional, it has to be the quality of the students, the quality of the staff, the quality of the curriculum, the quality of the delivery methods, how the curriculum is delivered. The quality of the assessment of the curriculum. The quality of the resources to support the program and the quality of things like your libraries and, not to mention, the physical facilities, [and] the quality of your student support services. Do you have things

like counseling, advising, work study programs, scholarships, and the usual thing that goes with student support? So when you look at all these dimensions, you look for specific things. (Dr. Johnson, female, University Council of Jamaica)

Through its work over the years, the UCJ has obtained a degree of success in making quality the watchword within Jamaican higher education. Ms. Daling (secular institution) observed that over the past 10 years Jamaican students have been sensitized to the value of accreditation as a standard of quality. She noted that the accreditation status of private higher education institutions influences the students' enrollment decisions.

Most people want to get their [programs] accredited and as I said [because of] the students themselves. Because, when they come in to apply, the first thing they ask is, "Is it accredited?" I mean 10 years ago they never asked that. That was not even on their radar. But now they are asking, "Is it accredited?" They didn't use to ask that 10 years ago. So they themselves have been educated to know that if I am going to spend so much money for a program let me make sure I can use it to go ahead. The students themselves will not want to [attend an institution] anymore unless it is accredited, not if they want a diploma.

The UCJ is a member of several regional and international networks, which helps to ensure that the UCJ's quality assurance procedures and accreditation practices are relevant, and in compliance with international benchmarks for quality higher education. Dr. Davis (male, secular institution) pointed to the fact that UCJ's membership in regional and international quality assurance networks for higher education helps to ensure that Jamaican higher education is both credible and internationally reputable.

Quality, quality, quality, that's the international language and so the UCJ has to ensure that its processes certify only that which is nationally – that is Jamaican and internationally reputable. UCJ plays a role in international networks, they are a part of the Caribbean network that deals with quality assurance agencies and institutions in higher education, [and] they are a member of the international INQAAHE [International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education]. All of that is part of the mix. So their standards must be internationally credible and hold us to account so that is definitely their role.

**Program accreditation.** The UCJ has a positive image among participants in the study as the “quality control arm for tertiary education”. Participants highlighted that the agency has been supportive, developmental in its approach, and provides guidance to institutions throughout the accreditation process. Dr. Fearon (male, religious institution) lauded the work of the UCJ and its role in helping to facilitate institutional growth.

The University Council of Jamaica as an external agent is that facility that has enabled institutions like NCU to have grown over the years. It has provided the backdrop for us and the underpinning for us, the undergirding for us, to move our academic programs forward with the kind of guidance that it has provided, with the kind of scrutiny that it has given to our programs. And they are taken seriously, quite seriously to the extent that many tertiary institutions in Jamaica now have seen the need to access the service that is provided by UCJ in terms of accrediting their programs. UCJ is an important quality control arm for tertiary education and [has] grown from strength to strength.

Similarly, Ms. Daling (secular institution) praised the UCJ for the guidance and advice it provides private institutions in meeting and maintaining higher education quality standards.

They are excellent. They term themselves as facilitators. They are not there to block you from achieving a certain level. They want you to go over the hurdle, so they are going to be guiding you, and they give you a lot of advice. They have their standards that they themselves spend a lot of time to create for the different programs. If we did not have that, we ourselves may not have had the internal knowledge of how to do it. They are really encouraging, very accessible; you have a problem you can call them. I think they are really excellent.

Other participants also shared the view that the UCJ developmental approach has been reassuring. Dr. Williams (male, secular institution) commented that the UCJ has projected a vision and mission of quality higher education that transcends Jamaica's nation boundary as the UCJ standards are internationally benchmarked. Dr Hill (male, religious institution) asserted that the UCJ in assuring the quality of higher education in Jamaica holds both private and public institutions to the same standards.

I'm sure they have their own vision in terms of quality education and how that fits within the region and the world. Their mission is not confined to Jamaica. As such, they are very active in the field, and they play a good role not only in looking at your output but also on the development side. They are the quality control folks, but they see themselves as playing a strong hand in the development process. That to me is one of the great benefits. (Dr. Williams)

When you go to the University Council they don't make any distinction between private and public. They look at how you keep faith with standards, where you are in relation to those standards, what you need to move to where you need to be, or why you have failed and therefore need to be excluded. They have always taken a developmental approach, so there is always a way in which the developmental agenda is at work in the way the UCJ relates to entities. UCJ has distinguished itself as an outstanding internationally-recognized entity. (Dr. Hill)

Dr. Parker (female, religious institution) advanced the view that the UCJ provides comprehensive feedback upon assessing a program, is open to dialogue, and welcomes innovations. She suggested that her interactions with the UCJ have been constructive.

Our experience with the UCJ itself has been positive in the sense that they view themselves and they have communicated themselves as developmental. They're not regulating in the sense of you must do it by the letter of the law and it's our way or no other way. They will assess a program and you get a very full report on the strengths and the observed challenges. And I think they've always been open to dialogue, always been very responsive. If we take a position and can support it with evidence, we have found them to be supportive. So they welcome innovation. In that sense the process of accreditation has been very good.

Accreditation has become an integral component in legitimizing the work of private higher education providers in Jamaica. Accreditation signals a seal of quality within the Jamaican higher education sector. It is also viewed as one of the factors that

has contributed to the growth of local private higher education institutions in Jamaica.

Dr. Davis (male, secular institution) explained that within the context of Jamaica higher education sector:

Accreditation has been absolutely critical for the growth of the private institutions because when the UCJ [University Council of Jamaica] came on the scene it was the private sector entities that actually saw the opportunities and went to them – because it's not mandatory, it's a voluntary thing – to say, listen we want to be registered by you. We want our qualifications to be certified as accredited. The first academic award to be accredited in Jamaica was that of a private institution, Jamaica Theological Seminary. So the accreditation is critical.

Dr. Robinson (female, secular institution) concluded that it was in the best interest of private higher education institutions to strive to have their programs accredited. She stressed that “the fact of the matter is that in a landscape where accreditation exists, it behooves you to seek accreditation of your programs. It's the standard by which you are judged and students make decisions.”

As part of the UCJ's accreditation process institutions are required to prepare and submit a self-study and facilitate a UCJ campus visit. Participants have identified the self-study as a most beneficial and important part of the accreditation process. Dr. Williams (male, secular institution) and Ms. Lambert (religious institution) spoke to the value of the self-study component of the accreditation process.

I think the most important part of that process is what they call the self-study, which is much like a SWOT analysis you would do if you were in business. I think it allows you to actually see your weaknesses in

particular. You tend to just accept your strength because you know them but your weaknesses, sometimes you don't see them, and you don't recognize the importance until you start to do that analysis. So the SWOT analysis to me is the most important. (Dr. Williams)

The University Council has played a big part in our development over time; the process of committing ourselves to doing [and] preparing for the accreditation visits. The self-study that we have had to do, the opportunity that that provides for critical analysis of our functions and our programs, that has been most helpful. (Ms. Lambert)

**Critiques of the UCJ's accreditation model.** Although participants were overwhelmingly pleased with the UCJ's accreditation process, some participants voiced concerns about the accreditation model as it currently exists. The first concern was raised by Dr. Williams (male, secular institution) and was related to the UCJ's system of individual program reviews for institutions seeking to be accredited.

Their accreditation model is one where it's a course by course [assessment], so it's very detailed. I don't know if at some point they are going to find that that load is too high. You know with the proliferation of universities that's coming, it's kind of difficult to continue this course by course evaluation assessment. Because when they get into like a UWI, they spend almost a year in there just doing UWI's assessment.

The second concern was related to the inherent challenges of the peer assessment model that the UCJ employs in the accreditation procedure. Dr. Parker (female, religious institution) shared that, because of the competitive nature of the higher education

environment in Jamaica, having your competitors as part of the accreditation assessment and evaluation committee may sometimes prove problematic.

The UCJ's process of accreditation has been very good. Where I think it falls down is that they use a peer assessment model, which means that we are assessed by our competitors. And whereas in some cases that has worked, in other cases we have seen evidence that attempts have been made to undermine a program because it will have implications for a program at the competitor's institution. And I've been here for 10 years, and I've seen it a few times. And so I don't believe that it's an idle observation. I think it definitely is a reality.

Overall, all participants expressed that the UCJ has been an invaluable resource in helping to assure the quality of the higher education programs offered by their respective institutions and the quality of higher education in Jamaica as a whole. The establishment of the UCJ as a statutory arm of the government is indicative of the changing role of the Jamaican government within higher education.

### **“The Government is Currently Thinking About a Policy Shift”**

Historically, the Jamaican government has taken on the role as chief financier of public higher education. Public higher education institutions in Jamaica have received a significant percentage of their operating budget from direct government subventions. Students attending the University of the West Indies (UWI), for example, benefit from a government tuition subsidy of approximately 80%. Participants shared that there is currently a level of anxiety within the tertiary education sector due to a proposed change in the existing government funding model for public higher education. Dr. Davis (male,

secular institution) provided details of the proposed change to the government's higher education funding model.

The government is currently thinking about a policy shift in how institutions are funded. That's to say public sector institutions, rather than giving them block grants of money, the position has been put on the table to consider increasing monies to the Students' Loan Bureau so that individual students get the loans and then shop around and see where they wish to go as opposed to giving the money to an institution. The implications of that would be one: the cost to deliver the education might go up in the public sector entities, given that they are not receiving these funds anymore. And two, some such as the University of the West Indies might be negatively affected in that they may lose their treasured position.

Participants shared the opinion that this new development would be advantageous to students as such a change would allow greater access to financial support to a wider cross section of eligible Jamaican students. The contemplation of this new funding model by the government was also viewed as a significant policy directive that would result in the further leveling of the playing field for private higher education providers.

If access to government funds remains in the mode of the Students' Loan Bureau in which any accredited degree which a person is pursuing can be funded, then I believe that is a significant move because it means that [for] private [institutions] all students doing our accredited degrees have access to the Student Loan Bureau. And I believe that it's further leveling the playing field. (Dr. Hill, male, religious institution)

In addition to its traditional role as the chief financier of public higher education, the role of government within Jamaican higher education has evolved by virtue of the role and functions of the UCJ and other regulatory bodies serving the higher education sector. Dr. Parker (female, religious institution) insisted that today the Jamaican government through the auspice of agencies such as the UCJ performs three primary functions within the Jamaican higher education sector. These three functions were described as regulatory, educational, and facilitative of innovative approaches to the provision of higher education.

I think their [the government's] role is exemplified, to a large extent, in the function of the University Council of Jamaica and other bodies that they've established like the Joint Board of Teacher Education and the Joint Committee for Tertiary Education. And they serve three functions, I would say. One is regulation. So they establish standards that new institutions can aspire to. So if I want to be a tertiary entity in Jamaica, this is where I go, this is how I do it. The second thing would be education. So they provide a number of training opportunities as well so that there is common ground. There are opportunities for dialogue. They also facilitate innovation, so even as they regulate, they also, in our experience, have been very supportive of new approaches to tertiary education. (Dr. Parker, female, religious institution)

Participants seemed to indicate that the role of the Jamaica government within the higher education sector has changed in ways that could prove beneficial to private higher education institutions. However, there was a general perception among participants that the government could do more to support local private higher education providers.

**“You would think the government sees us as a necessary evil.”** Several participants highlighted the fact that the relationship between the Jamaican government and local private higher education institutions has not always been amicable. Dr. Williams (male, secular institution) explained that the government provided very little incentive to encourage or support the development of the private tertiary education sector. In fact, he described what little support that existed as being “inadequate” and stated that:

Sometimes you would believe that the government sees us as a necessary evil; and not one that they would necessarily want to bring you into that whole framework of planning and all that sort of thing. I think they see us as a necessary evil and a part of the competitive landscape. They cannot shut us down because they decided that we are going to have open competition.

Similarly, other participants, including Dr. Green (male, religious institution), suggested that in matters of funding, the local private higher education institutions do not receive any assistance from the government and are sometimes overlooked or excluded from decision-making forums.

Private institutions in Jamaica currently suffer because any time there [are] matters of funding or assistance the private institutions are treated not just as step-children [but as] none-existent children. We basically have to go and beg for inclusion in some of these things, and the people who make the decision are themselves part of the public sector.

Despite the view that local private higher education institutions have been underserved by the government, participants also shared that there has been evidence that the

Jamaican government is gradually making changes to accommodate local private higher education institutions in areas of higher education policy development. Dr. Robinson (female, secular institution) suggested that the Jamaican government did not really factor private sector institutions into the policy mix when much of the higher education policies were developed. Dr. Robinson clearly illustrated one way in which the government failed to acknowledge and make provisions for local private higher education institutions within Jamaica's overall higher education framework and by citing incremental manner in which local private higher education institutions are helping to shape higher education policy in Jamaica today.

There is a body called Caribbean Knowledge Learning Network (CKLN) that is [a] government originated, supported body with a mandate to provide technology network solutions for higher education. But it didn't really factor private sector in that mix because they are looking at the funding coming from the government. But since we pay our corporate and whatever taxes are due, we have had training from the CKLN for faculty across different learning institutions and training institutions. So we have to shape policy in that direction. So we shape policies not in an autocratic and confrontational [way], but in an incremental manner, persistently incremental.

Participants stated that there are currently opportunities for local private higher education institutions to work collaboratively with public sector higher education institutions to shape Jamaica's higher education policies. Dr. Williams (male, secular institution) commented that "we all belong to the Joint Committee on Tertiary Education, so both private and public belong to the same body and we do interact quite a bit." Dr.

Fearon (male, religious institution) further explained that local private tertiary institutions are currently represented on several higher education committees and policy making boards.

From the Ministry of Education perspective, I do know that private institutions are represented on the varying policy making boards. From our university, we have had the privilege of sitting on some of those committees which drive policy. In fact, in the implementation of the Jamaica Transformation Project, quite a number of tertiary institutions were involved in the whole process of determining that policy direction.

As the Jamaican government facilitates greater interface between public and private sector institutions through institutions such as the Joint Committee on Tertiary Education, the UCJ, and various higher education policy making boards, the increased interaction enhances the likelihood that institutions will develop collaborative partnerships within and across sectors. The World Bank's policy recommendation for higher education suggests that such a move on the part of government allows for "greater openness to facilitate institutional partnerships between tertiary institutions and businesses through knowledge and revenue sharing links" (World Bank, 2000, p. 11). When viewed in light of the higher education recommendations outlined by the World Bank, many of the changes in the role of the Jamaican government in regard to the higher education sector seem to be closely aligned.

### **Summary**

The findings of the study indicate that several factors within the Jamaican higher education environment, along with the unique characteristics of local Jamaican private

higher education institutions, contributed to the growth of Jamaica's private higher education sector. The findings suggest that the primary factors which account for the growth of local private higher education institutions as key providers of higher education in Jamaica are related to the limitations of public sector higher education, the responsiveness of local private sector higher education institutions to the changing needs of various stakeholders, and the innovative ways in which local private higher education institutions have addressed the various barriers to accessing Jamaican higher education.

The findings also suggest that the mission and vision of the four private higher education institutions in the study, to a large degree, reflect and support key components of Jamaica's national goals for higher education. Participants in the study indicated that institutional mission helps to shape the nature of the curricular offering at local private institutions. The findings suggest that the mission of each of the four local private institutions in the study serves to facilitate the alignment of academic training with the demands of the local workforce. The focus on quality assurance in Jamaican higher education is vital to the attainment of world-class education. The quality assurance mechanism established by the UCJ has been well received by private tertiary institutions as a beneficial tool for institutional development, reputation building, and longevity. The UCJ's program accreditation process seeks to assure the Jamaican public that accredited programs offered by local private institutions meet the minimum requirements to be deemed fit for the purpose of meeting the demand for relevant quality higher education.

Jamaica's higher education sector is diverse, vibrant, and highly competitive. Changes in the role of government within the Jamaican higher education sector have been incremental. Some of these changes have helped to create a more inclusive environment

for local higher education providers. The proposed change in the public higher education funding model being contemplated by the Jamaican government, if implemented, will further increase competition among private and public sector institutions. The findings of the study support the view that the Jamaican higher education system reflects, to a significant degree, the neo-liberal higher education recommendations of the World Bank, which suggest that government involvement in the higher education sector should be minimal and more regulatory in nature.

Presented in the following chapter is a detailed discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions. Additionally the researcher discusses the implications of the study to the field of higher education, and Jamaican higher education in particular, and proposes recommendations for practitioners and future research.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Presented in this chapter is a discussion of the research findings in relation to the research questions. The present study was concerned with gaining a contextual understanding of how local private higher education institutions in Jamaica have positioned themselves in relation to Jamaica's national higher education goals. The researcher explored, from the perspective of high-level administrators at four private higher education institutions in Jamaica, why private higher education institutions have emerged as key providers of higher education in Jamaica and how institutional setting, mission, educational philosophy, and admissions policy influences the growth of Jamaica's local private higher education sector and facilitates access to higher education. The purpose of this research study was not to generate statistical generalizations but to provide insight on how private higher education is unfolding in Jamaica.

The exploratory nature of this qualitative research provided a framework that facilitated a nuanced exploration of the social phenomenon of Jamaican private higher education, a topic about which very little has been written. Included as part of the discussion is an examination of the extent to which the neo-liberal framework, which supports the notion of education as a tool for economic development, is appropriate for understanding how higher education is unfolding in Jamaica. This study was guided by four overarching research questions: (a) why have private tertiary education institutions emerged as key providers of higher education in Jamaica?; (b) how do local private higher education institutions contribute to Jamaica's national higher education goals?; (c) how does the University Council of Jamaica's (UCJ) national accreditation process help

to facilitate quality outputs from private tertiary institutions?; and, (d) how has the role of government evolved within Jamaica's higher education sector?

The findings of the study suggest that private higher education institutions emerged as key providers of higher education in Jamaica due to several developments within the Jamaican higher education environment. The most pertinent of these developments were related to the limited capacity of government to meet the growth in demand for higher education, the formation of the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), and the flexibility of local private higher education institutions in addressing issues of access and affordability. Based on private higher education enrollment data available from the Planning Institute of Jamaica, the reported student enrollment at private higher education institutions in Jamaica grew from 9,110 in 2002 to approximately 19,427 in 2009. During the eight year period from 2002 to 2009, there was a total of approximately 113,459 students enrolled at private higher education institutions in Jamaica. Excluded from these enrollment estimates are students enrolled at private higher education institutions that are not registered with the UCJ. The findings support the view that local private higher education institutions play an important role in shaping Jamaica's national higher education goals. Local private higher education institutions have contributed to increasing access to quality higher education for segments of the population that were previously excluded or underserved, offering a wide range of mission-focused educational programs and providing higher education and training that is aligned with the needs of the workforce.

Within Jamaica "the University of the West Indies had become the status quo for higher education [and] it was not challenged for most of its 60 years by other entities"

(Dr. Hill, male, religious institution). The demand for higher education in Jamaica consistently outpaced the capacity of public higher education institutions. This situation served to preserve the status quo as access to higher education was restricted primarily to those Jamaicans who possessed the necessary economic resources and social capital that allowed them to earn their college degrees by attending the prestigious UWI, or travel overseas to the UK, Canada, or the U.S. to pursue higher education. By contrast, those who had fewer resources or were employed full time within the workforce and wanted to pursue higher education had to negotiate the significant challenges associated with part time studies or else defer their college aspirations due to the rigid structure of the public higher education system. It is against this backdrop that new private higher education institutions, like IUC, NCU, UCC, and VTI emerged to meet the demands for specific kinds of higher education and training that would prove financially feasible and yet challenge the status quo by providing more accessible and affordable higher education options. Religiously affiliated private education institutions, the bedrock of education in Jamaica, also expanded and strengthened their commitments to making higher education more accessible to a wider cross-section of the Jamaican populace.

At present, Jamaica's higher education sector is relatively more diverse, vibrant, and highly competitive. There is a wide cross-section of higher education providers operating in Jamaica, which consists of public sector entities, local private institutions, and offshore private institutions including those that maintain a physical presence in the island as well as those institutions that offer online instructions exclusively. The basic economic principles of demand and supply are evident within the Jamaican higher education sector and attest to the fact that the sector is market-driven. Local private

higher education institutions are compelled to be responsive to the needs of the Jamaican higher education consumer for accredited programs that are accessible, affordable, and relevant. It is the responsiveness of local private higher education institutions in meeting the changing needs of the various stakeholders that has helped to secure a place for local private higher education institutions within Jamaica.

### **Expanded Access to Jamaican Higher Education**

Higher education in Jamaica is relatively more accessible today due to the presence of private higher education providers and local private higher education institutions in particular. Local private higher education institutions have expanded access to higher education by creating access opportunities for segments of the Jamaican population who were previously excluded or underserved due to structural, social, geographic, economic, and financial barriers. Within the context of this study, access referred to features of openness facilitated by the ability to enroll a heterogeneous student population, provide relevant and diverse course offerings within a supportive environment, while maximizing institutional capacity with a view to meet existing demands for higher education (Roberts, 2003a).

Peters and Whittington (2009) posited that the major barriers to higher education within CARICOM countries include: attitude (motivation), entry requirements, finance, relevance of education program to job promotion, and time constraints due to job demands. The authors concluded that “lack of finance” was the universal barrier to participation in higher education among CARICOM nations (p. 63). Similarly, the findings of the present study revealed that affordability, the ability to finance the cost of higher education, was identified as the primary barrier to accessing higher education in Jamaica. Evidence from the study affirmed that access to higher education in Jamaica

has been impeded by barriers such as financial constraints, stringent admissions entry requirements, time constraints due to employment status, geographic location (i.e. place of residence), and limitations of the public higher education sector.

Jamaica's public higher education sector lacks the capacity to meet the increased demands for higher education. Honig (1996) posited that the growth in the demand for higher education in Jamaica occurred at a much faster rate than the government's capacity to accommodate. Public higher education institutions were also very reluctant to respond to changes in the local student demographics, as more adults who were employed within the workforce began to seek higher education. With greater numbers of individuals who were employed full-time in the workforce seeking higher education, there has been a significant demand for more flexible course offerings that would better accommodate and support these individuals in their academic endeavors.

The Ministry of Education and Youth (MOEY) acknowledged in its *Strategic Plan for the Tertiary Education Framework 2006-2010* that the public higher education sector had blatantly overlooked the working student population. The authors of the report affirmed that public higher education institutions in Jamaica focused primarily on traditional aged students who came out of the nation's secondary education system. It was also stated that because public sector institutions failed to address the growing non-traditional segment of the higher education student population, private higher education providers emerged as the principal suppliers of higher education and training for this particular group of students. It was noted in the MOEY report that:

At present, [public] tertiary institutions focus primarily on the education and training of the age cohort 17-25, who are just emerging from the secondary

system. However, there is a burgeoning market in workplace and adult education that is being largely overlooked in national public tertiary institutions, and, as a result, is currently being addressed by private, offshore, and overseas providers. (MOEY, 2006, p. 44)

The failure of public higher education institutions to respond adequately to this particular demographic change is significant in light of the fact that three of the four local private higher education institutions in the present study have successfully targeted this demographic student population. At the International University of the Caribbean (IUC), University College of the Caribbean (UCC), and Vector Technology Institute (VTI), part-time non-traditional students most of whom are employed full-time in the workforce account for the majority of student enrollment. These private institutions have been deliberate in their efforts to structure their curriculum, course schedules and program offerings to meet the needs of individuals who are employed within the workforce and are seeking to access higher education as a means of upgrading skills for personal, professional, and career advancement. Together, the private higher education institutions in the study provide a diverse range of scheduling options which include: early morning classes – prior to the start of the work day, day and evening courses, weekend courses, as well as Sunday courses and programs. In addition, these institutions offer a vast variety of modular, sequential, and online programs leading to accredited degrees.

The fact that public higher education institutions have overtly underserved the nontraditional segment of the student population may be attributed in part to the inherent social bias within the Jamaican higher education system, which dates back to the colonial origins of public higher education in Jamaica. Cogan (1983) and Williams (1968)

suggested that, historically, Jamaica's higher education system has been socially biased and elitist in nature favoring individuals from the higher socio-economic groups who are better able to access the necessary financial resources that would allow for full-time enrollment in traditional day time degree seeking programs. The authors of the MOEY's (2006) strategic plan contended that a paradigm shift is necessary in order for the public higher education sector to adequately meet Jamaica's higher education needs, particularly in the area of adult education and training for individuals who are employed within the nation's workforce.

### **The Growth of the Local Private Higher Education Sector**

The findings of the study support the view that the growth of Jamaica's local private higher education section is due in part to the limitations of the public higher education sector. This assertion is consistent with the reviewed literature which suggested that private higher education institutions emerge largely in response to existing demand for higher education that the public sector institutions are unable or unwilling to provide (Kisner, 2010; Altbach, 2000). Not only have public higher education institutions in Jamaica failed to meaningfully address the higher education needs of individuals employed within the workforce, these institutions were also reluctant to provide higher education in rural and suburban locations outside of Kingston, Jamaica's capital city.

Jamaica's public sector universities have traditionally maintained a presence in Kingston. There are only two public degree granting universities in Jamaica, the University of the West Indies (UWI) and University of Technology (UTech), which are both located in Kingston. For its part, UTech has established franchises for two of its degree programs with five community colleges outside of Kingston. These arrangements

allow students to complete the first two years of their programs at the local community college before transferring to the main campus in Kingston to complete the degree requirements. UWI, the premier university in Jamaica and the Caribbean, was established in Kingston in October 1948. However, it was not until August of 2008, 60 years after UWI was founded, that the institution established a campus outside of Kingston. UWI's western campus was established in Montego Bay to serve the needs of rural communities in the western part of the island. Prior to this venture, students from rural communities who were accepted and decided to attend UWI had to commute long distances into Kingston and, in many cases, had to pay the costs of transportation, boarding accommodations, and other expenses in addition to the cost of tuition. Participants in the study insisted that public universities did very little to facilitate access to higher education for individuals who lived in rural communities. Thus, students from rural and suburban areas outside of Kingston were required to commute to the universities' main campuses in Kingston in order to earn their degrees.

By contrast, the private institutions in the present study have made higher education more accessible to individuals living in rural and suburban communities by establishing multiple academic centers and regional campuses across the island, and in several remote locations outside of Kingston. Of the four private institutions studied, IUC and UCC have the most expansive network of learning centers and regional campuses on the island. The IUC has established 20 regional centers across Jamaica within the last five years, including its main campus in Kingston. IUC's vast network of regional campuses allows the institution to provide higher education in 11 of Jamaica's 14 parishes. This is a more expansive network than is currently available within Jamaica's public tertiary education

sector, which has established higher education institutions in seven of the 14 parishes. UCC has nine regional campus locations island-wide, five of which are located outside of Kingston. In addition, all four private institutions in the study offer a variety of online course options. The void that exists due to the demand for higher education and the limited capacity of the public higher education sector to meet these demands created an opportunity for private higher education institutions to emerge as key providers of higher education in Jamaica.

The study revealed that the shortfall in the capacity of public sector institutions to meet local demands for higher education was one of the major factors that contributed to the growth of Jamaica's private higher education sector. However, there were other relevant factors that emerged from the research findings that help to explain the growth of private higher education institutions as key providers of higher education in Jamaica. These factors include the unique characteristics of private institutions, access strategies employed by local private higher education institutions, and the legitimization of local private institutions as a result of the UCJ's quality assurance and accreditation processes.

### **Key Determinants of Private Sector Growth**

Peters and Whittington (2009), whose research involved assessing the major enablers and barriers to access to higher education in 13 CARICOM countries, stated that the major enablers of access to higher education in the Caribbean are financial assistance, flexibility incentives, relevant program development, access courses (i.e., remediation or continuing education courses), and job promotion.

Private institutions in Jamaica employ a variety of strategies to help expand access to higher education. The common strategies among the four local private higher

education institutions in the study include: (a) providing a variety of options for students to meet the financial costs of higher education; (b) offering flexible course schedules that meet the needs of both individuals employed full-time within the workforce as well as those of traditional aged day students; (c) providing higher education facilities in geographic locations that have been underserved by public universities; and, (d) offering a wide cross-section of education and training that is relevant to workforce needs.

The issue of affordability of higher education continues to be a major concern in Jamaica. Participants in the study unanimously agreed that the inability of individuals to meet the financial costs associated with higher education is a major access barrier. In light of this finding, Fulton's (1981) recommendation is highly apropos. Fulton (1981) advanced that institutions of higher learning may adapt more readily to the needs of potential and existing students by facilitating opportunities for students to attain greater financial leverage and by expanding the range of qualifications considered in the admissions matriculation decision making process. All four local private institutions within the study have adopted a variety of alternative admissions policies, which help to facilitate access for non-traditional as well as underprepared students. In addition, all four institutions have been intentional and proactive in their efforts to address the affordability issue by providing a range of payment options aimed at helping students to better leverage their finances in order to meet the costs of higher education. However, within the public higher education sector, some institutions seem to be less proactive in this regard as there is less flexibility in the tuition financing options available to students. Moreover, the admissions matriculation requirements are often more traditional.

Public higher education institutions have not adequately addressed the issue of affordability. Dr. Hilton (female, UCJ) pointed to the fact that in recent years Jamaica's public universities, UWI and UTech, have put in place a process called deregistration whereby students who are unable to pay their university tuition are involuntarily withdrawn from the universities by the registrar. This policy of deregistration was first introduced by the UWI in 2004 as a means of bolstering revenues from unpaid student fees in light of reductions in government funding to the institution. The policy sparked a series of protests from UWI students who saw the policy as being insensitive to their financial plight. UWI's Public Relations Office stated, in a press release published on the institution's website on October 20, 2004, that deregistration would apply to those students "who had not paid their fees in full or present[ed] a written request for a payment schedule on the basis of exceptional and verifiable difficulties." It was further explained that:

Those full-time on-campus students who have not paid fees or owe over \$1000 [JMD] are being deregistered. [Part-time on-campus students] who [have] paid sufficient fees to cover at least one course and miscellaneous fees, will be retained in the system, but will have their registration adjusted by the University to reduce their course approval to what their existing payments can cover. Any part-time student who has paid less than this minimum is being deregistered for the semester. Students who have been deregistered will be given Leave of Absence for the Semester 1, and will be allowed to register for courses in Semester 2 provided they pay the fees for that semester by the deadline. (UWI, 2004)

By contrast, the private higher education institutions in the present study provide vast flexibility in the financing options they make available to students. Participants at each of the four institutions in the study indicated that their institution had made a commitment to being sensitive to the financial challenges that individuals faced in relation to the costs of higher education. One participant from IUC explained that, “financially, we are attempting to meet the student where he or she is.” IUC encourages its students to explore and tap into funding resources such as partners (a local community based short term saving and interest free loan system), scholarships and grants, the Students’ Loans Bureau, as well as loans from employers, credit unions and building societies. Study participants at the UCC stated that UCC has flexible payment plans that allow students some degree of flexibility. UCC participants shared that their students have the option of paying tuition fees by the semester, monthly, and may be eligible for tuition discounts should they choose to pay tuition fees in full at the start of the program.

According to study participants from UCC and information obtained from the institution’s website, students who opt to pay their tuition fees upfront may be eligible to save between 5% and 10% on their overall tuition cost. In monetary terms these tuition discounts may translate to an estimated cost savings of between J\$10,800 and J\$50,700 depending on the program and number of semesters or modules for which the student enrolls. In addition to tuition discounting, UCC also facilitates extended payment plans, which allow students to pay their tuition in two or three equal installments within a given semester. Table 8 provides a detailed overview of UCC’s tuition discount rates and savings available to eligible students who choose to pay tuition in full.

Table 8. UCC's Tuition Discount Rates

Semester	Modules	Credits	Cost (J\$)	Discount Rate (%)	Discount Value (J\$)	Discounted Fee (J\$)
3	9	27	217,350	5	10,867.50	206,482.50
4	12	36	289,800	7.5	21,735.00	268,065.00
5	15	45	362,250	10	36,225.00	326,025.00
6	18	54	434,700	10	43,470.00	391,230.00
7	21	63	507,150	10	50,715.00	456,435.00

Source: UCC's website

At VTI, the smallest of the four private institutions, participants shared that the institution offers five standard payment plans, and has the ability to customize plans based on students' needs. One VTI participant stated that there have been cases where, based on the students' financial circumstances, they have allowed students to establish a weekly payment plan where the students were permitted to pay a minimum of J\$1000 each week. NCU, which caters to a predominantly full-time student population, offers a 10% tuition discount to students who hold membership in the Seventh-day Adventist church. NCU participants shared that NCU's "age-old work study program" provided students the opportunity to earn income to offset the cost of their education. In addition, NCU also offers a variety of scholarships and grants, many of which are sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, donors, and alumni.

Roberts (2003a) posited that the scheduling of courses during traditional daytime business hours and on weekdays and the lack of rest facilities for working part-time students are deterrents to accessing higher education. Additionally, transportation costs and geographic residence may serve to limit educational access. The private higher education institutions in the study address these issues by establishing multiple learning centers across the island and through innovative scheduling of courses and programs. Together the four private institutions in the study provide access to higher education

through a network of 33 campuses across the island in addition to the virtual education options. This is highly significant in light of the fact that Jamaica's public higher education system is facilitated through 18 institutions, which include five community colleges, six teachers' colleges, five multidisciplinary institutions, and two public universities.

The findings suggest that local private higher education institutions play a role in expanding access to higher education for many Jamaicans who were systematically denied the opportunity for professional and social advancement due to significant institutional, social, economic, and structural barriers. Several factors contribute to the emergence of local private higher education institutions as key providers of higher education in Jamaica. According to the study participants, the primary factors that have impacted the growth of private higher education institutions in Jamaica include the limitations of the public higher education sector, the responsiveness of private institutions to the demographic changes within the local higher education sector, and the legitimization of local private higher education institutions as a result of the UCJ's quality assurance and accreditation processes.

### **The Impact of the UCJ's National Accreditation Process**

The University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), the national accreditation body responsible for quality assurance in Jamaican higher education, holds both public and private higher education institutions to the same quality standards. The UCJ's accreditation process is highly relevant to the Jamaican higher education system in that it provides a national benchmark for quality in higher education that is consistent with international standards. Prior to the establishment of the UCJ in 1987, there was no formalized national quality assurance process to which Jamaican higher education

institutions adhered. Thus, students and the Jamaican public were left in the precarious position of trying to decide which educational programs and institutions were of good repute without having any real evaluative standards against which to benchmark. Given this reality, public higher education institutions, the recipients of significant government funding, were deemed to be safe choices and generally perceived to be of greater repute. This perception was influenced partly by the fact that public higher education institutions were under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education and Youth (MOEY), and some had been in existence for several decades. Many private higher education institutions, on the other hand, struggled to establish credibility and public recognition as they lacked the historical legacy and government support of their public sector counterparts.

Many of Jamaica's public higher education institutions possess a significantly high degree of prestige based on their historical legacies and rich traditions which have been deeply engrained in the cultural, social, academic, and intellectual identity of the Jamaican society. Public higher education institutions such as MICO University College (founded in 1835), the University of the West Indies (founded in 1948), and the University of Technology (founded in 1958), have longstanding reputations for academic rigor and excellence. Jamaican public higher education institutions have produced many of the nation's intellectual elites including highly acclaimed lawyers, doctors, media personnel, politicians, ambassadors, Governor Generals, and prime ministers.

It is against this backdrop that local private higher education institutions strive to make their mark within the Jamaican higher education sector. With the exception of Northern Caribbean University (NCU), which received a degree granting charter from the

Jamaican government in 1999, no other private higher education institution in Jamaica has the autonomy or legal instrument to grant degrees. Currently, there are only three universities in Jamaica that possess a degree granting charter namely the UWI, UTech, and NCU. However, institutions that meet the quality standards stipulated by the UCJ may award degrees in conjunction with the UCJ, which has degree granting powers. Prior to the establishment of the UCJ, higher education institutions without a charter to award undergraduate or graduate degrees could only offer certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees. The UCJ's registration and accreditation processes were therefore viewed by many local private higher education institutions as an opportunity to validate and legitimize the quality of the programs they provided and to uplift the institutions' public image.

Francis (2005), an education reporter for *The Gleaner*, a Jamaican newspaper, quoted a statement from the Executive Director of the UCJ, who noted that "accreditation [was] not compulsory, but a majority of tertiary institutions seek official recognition because when they become accredited it increases their marketability and their credibility. Institutions that become accredited usually have an increase in enrollment." UCJ accreditation was recognized as one factor that helps to account for the growth of private higher education in Jamaica. In the present study, Dr. Davis (male, secular institution) emphasized that accreditation is a critical factor in the growth of local private higher education institutions in Jamaica. He stated that:

Accreditation has been absolutely critical for the growth of the private institutions because when the UCJ came on the scene it was the private sector entities that actually saw the opportunities and went to them – because it's not mandatory, it's

a voluntary thing – to say, we want to be registered by you. We want our qualifications to be certified as accredited.

Similarly, Dr. Hilton (female, UCJ) contended that accreditation has had a positive impact on higher education institutions in Jamaica and on private institutions in particular as “it provides recognition for the work they do for their students.”

### **Fitness for Purpose and Fitness of Purpose**

The UCJ has helped to facilitate the implementation of quality standards among private institutions and has provided the support necessary to ensure institutions are meeting and maintaining quality benchmarks. In Jamaica, UCJ’s program accreditation is viewed as a seal of quality and communicates to the public that the accredited institution has established integrity. A review of marketing publications from the four institutions in the study revealed that each institution clearly identified which of their programs had been UCJ accredited. And in some instances, institutions also noted those programs that were currently under accreditation review. Dr. Hilton (female, UCJ) insisted that “the hallmark of accreditation is integrity,” and, therefore, the accreditation process required that institutions be transparent in the way they communicate and pursue their mission. The UCJ’s accreditation process requires that institutions conduct and submit a detailed self-study, which serves as a key component in evaluating the institution’s fitness for purpose in relation to its mission and available resources.

The self-study requires institutions to critically assess their mission, goals and objectives, planning and evaluation processes, organizational and administrative finances, physical infrastructure and resources, faculty, students, educational programs, and strategic direction. An institution’s mission is a commitment to perform a specific range

of duties in service to its stakeholders. To the extent that the stakeholders of higher education in Jamaica are the Jamaican people, the UCJ helps to ensure that higher education institutions operating in Jamaica are able to deliver in accordance with their mission. Thus, the UCJ through its registration and accreditation processes seeks to insure that higher education institutions are fit to fulfill their purpose as guided by their mission. In this way, the UCJ's processes insure that higher education institutions are indeed meeting the minimum quality standard that would render these institutions "fit for purpose." The UCJ's quality assurance process also includes institutional audits, individual assessments of programs, courses, and student outcomes. According to Dr. Hilton, quality is defined as "fitness for purpose and fitness of purpose as well" and thus, the accreditation process is aimed and answering "How fit are you for the purpose [for] which you are intended? And then, how are you fulfilling that purpose?"

Irvine (1998) suggested that quality, when defined as fitness for purpose, assumes that purpose is characterized based on the needs of stakeholders. Therefore, the assessment of quality ought to reflect the extent to which available resources are being used in order to achieve agreed upon purposes which incorporate the views of key stakeholders (Irvine, 1998). *Vision 2030 Jamaica*, the national development plan, constitutes the shared goals held by Jamaica's principal stakeholders. The *Vision 2030 Jamaica* document is "broad based in scope, non-partisan and inclusive, the recipient of input from the public and private sectors, Trade Unions, NGOs, external agencies, and ordinary citizens" (PIOJ, 2009a, p.vii). It is within the context of the national development plan that Jamaica's goals for higher education have been articulated.

Jamaica's national goal for higher education is to achieve world-class education characterized by expanded access to higher education and training for all, the alignment of education and training with the needs of the labor market, and an emphasis on standard driven quality assurance (PIOJ, 2009a). The UCJ, through its quality assurance framework, academic standards, degree granting powers, and accreditation procedures serves as a conduit for aligning the mission of private higher education institutions with Jamaica's national goals for higher education. Additionally, Jamaica's Ministry of Education and Youth declared that "it is imperative that we maintain a system of tertiary education that meets the needs of our diverse population, provides enhanced opportunities for lifelong learning and addresses the intellectual, economic and workforce needs of the country" (MOEY, 2006, p. v).

The UCJ, through its academic standards, insists that the programs offered by higher education institutions be relevant to the Jamaican and Caribbean historical and cultural contexts. By insisting that institutions make their curriculum relevant and encouraging project based interactive learning, the UCJ helps to ensure that institutional missions, though diverse, are aligned with the national higher education goals. The guidance and support that the UCJ provides to institutions is essential to establishing a positive relationship with local private higher education institutions with a view to enhance the overall quality within Jamaica's higher education system. All nine high-level higher education administrators who took part in the study had favorable opinions of the UCJ and the role it plays in assuring the quality of Jamaican higher education.

### **Perceptions of the UCJ**

Study participants described the UCJ as being encouraging, excellent, responsive, supportive, very accessible, developmental, and an important quality control arm for tertiary education. It was clear that participants saw the accreditation process as one that offered great benefits to higher education institutions in Jamaica. It is interesting to note that the first institution and program to be accredited in Jamaica by the UCJ was private. The positive relationship that exists between the UCJ and local private higher education institutions appears to be mutually beneficial. Many local private higher education institutions were supportive of UCJ's mission and saw the UCJ's quality assurance processes as highly advantageous. As private institutions were registered with the UCJ and engaged in the various program accreditation processes, the UCJ itself also gained credibility along with national and regional recognition for its work within Jamaica's higher education sector.

However, when the UCJ came into existence in 1987, it faced resistance from some higher education institutions within the public sector. The public institution that was perhaps the most resistant to comply with the UCJ was the UWI. The UWI refused to register with the UCJ, although the institution occupied three seats on the UCJ board of directors. Francis (2005) reported that, "the UWI whose principal and two senior lecturers sit on the board of the UCJ, accrediting other tertiary institutions and their programs, has not bothered to seek accreditation from the body." The UCJ mandated that UWI seek registration, and the institution complied and commenced its self-study in 2006 (UWI, 2007). It was not until 2011 that UWI decided to have its programs accredited by the UCJ.

Irvine (1998) posited that accreditation bodies, like the UCJ, function to “safeguard that the rules governing quality are not arbitrarily determined and that the assessment of whether or not quality has been achieved is not subjectively or impartially decided” (p.17). It is within this context that the UCJ, through its national accreditation process, has helped to facilitate quality output not only from private higher education institutions but also from all higher education providers who volunteer to register with the UCJ, and submit their programs for accreditation. The UCJ has provided for the Jamaican public a mechanism for evaluating the quality of higher education programs and has helped to cultivate a culture of quality among higher education providers. Dr. Robinson (female, secular institution) concluded that today, within the context of Jamaican higher education, “the fact of the matter is that in a landscape where accreditation exists, it behooves you to seek accreditation of your programs. It’s the standard by which you are judged and students make decisions.”

The evidence from the study revealed that the UCJ’s national accreditation process helps to facilitate quality outputs from private tertiary institutions by requiring institutions to produce a detailed introspective critical self-evaluation in the form of a self-study, the development and provision of standards and benchmarks, and the regular assessment and evaluation of registered institutions and the programs they offer. The findings also revealed that the role of government within Jamaica’s higher education sector has gradually evolved to become more regulatory and inclusive. Through the establishment of the UCJ, a national quality framework has been put in place that is directed at the higher education system as a whole rather than just the public sector. And although local private institutions still do not benefit from the national purse, evidence

from the study affirmed that the government has been more inclusive of local private higher education providers. Today, all four local private higher education institutions in the study have had opportunities to participate on various national higher education committees and have been included, to some extent, in government directed higher education policymaking forums.

### **The Nature of the Jamaican Higher Education Market**

The research findings illustrated that Jamaica's higher education sector is diverse, vibrant, and highly competitive. There is a wide cross-section of higher education providers operating in Jamaica, which consists of public sector entities, local private institutions, and offshore private institutions including institutions that maintain a physical presence in the island as well as those institutions that offer online instruction exclusively. The basic economic principles of demand and supply are evident within the Jamaican higher education sector and attest to the fact that the sector is market-driven. Local private higher education institutions are compelled to be responsive to the needs of the Jamaican higher education consumer for accredited programs that are accessible, affordable, and relevant. It is the responsiveness of local private higher education institutions in meeting the changing needs of the various stakeholders that has helped to secure a place for local private higher education institutions within Jamaica.

The UCJ, through the quality assurance and accreditation process, has helped to enhance the competitiveness within the Jamaican higher education sector in that local private higher education institutions are able to compete with the stalwart public universities on the basis of program quality and accreditation status. The new funding model for higher education being contemplated by the Jamaican government, if implemented, will further level the playing field for public and local private providers of

higher education. If public sector institutions were to lose a significant portion of their government subsidies, as the government re-allocates these funds to the Students' Loans Bureau, public higher education institutions will be forced to make up the shortfall. Institutions may choose to do this by operating more efficiently, securing additional forms of revenue earning, and competing more aggressively for students.

### **The Neo-liberal agenda and Jamaican Higher Education**

There is substantial evidence to suggest that the neo-liberal agenda is at work within Jamaica's higher education sector. However, there is not a wholesale adoption of the neo-liberal philosophy by senior level administrators at local private higher education institutions. The neo-liberal ideology is evidenced by the fact that: (a) there are multiple providers of higher education who compete for students; (b) private higher education institutions offer programs in response to market demands for access to quality local higher education that the government is unable to meet; (c) private institutions operate autonomous of government interference; (d) student consumers have greater choice among degree granting programs and academic institutions; and (e) there is an intensified focus on satisfying the student consumer. In addition, all four private institutions within this study fill specific niche markets, are concerned about the profitability of the programs they offer, stress the importance of efficient resource allocation, and the benefits of attaining UCJ accreditation.

By contrast, there is also a strong social justice agenda being advanced by study participants. This social justice concern is reflected in the mission statements of the four private higher education institutions represented in this study. Whiteman (2001), a former Minister of Education for Jamaica, highlighted that within the Jamaican society it

is generally assumed that higher education is “desirable because it offers the best [prospects] of a professional, well-paid job, and earn[s] you respect among the mainstream population” (p. 37). The fiscal and infrastructural limitations faced by the Jamaican government have restricted its ability to provide access to higher education for a significant segment of the Jamaican population. Individuals within this underserved segment are further marginalized due to the structure of the public higher education system which privileges those who are able to enroll in traditional full time study, and possess adequate financial resources to attend the public universities within Jamaica’s urban center. In an effort to challenge the higher education status quo, the local private institutions studied cater predominantly to members of this marginalized segment of the population, who live in rural areas, and must work full time to sustain themselves and their families. The study participants and the four private institutions they represent seek to advance the social justice agenda by expanding access to higher education with a view to promote and facilitate greater levels of social equality and upward mobility.

Study participants strongly emphasized that providing accessible, affordable, quality higher education options for Jamaicans is not merely a business venture, but rather a part of their duty to the local communities within which they operate, the Jamaican society, and the Caribbean region as a whole. Access to higher education in Jamaica was severely restricted for the majority of individuals within the society who wish to pursue higher education but lacked the economic resources that would allow them to study full time at UWI, UTech, or overseas. Although the profit motive cannot be overlooked, it was clear that study participants were deeply concerned about the levels of marginalization that exist in Jamaica and the social disparities that are perpetuated due

to insufficient access to higher education. Within this context, providing access to higher education for individuals who were previously underserved or overlooked by the public higher education sector represents a conscious attempt to challenge the status quo.

The four local private institutions in this study have done much to construct themselves as different from, and as rivals to the public universities, particularly the UWI. Some of the major ways in which the private institutions in the study have distinguished themselves from UWI are by (a) catering predominantly to part-time students, most of whom are employed full time within the workforce; (b) establishing academic centers within rural communities; (c) offering more flexible course schedules; and (d) providing flexible payment options (e.g., tuition discounts, monthly and pay as you go plans). In an effort to assure students that they will receive value for their money, these private institutions have embraced a culture of quality assurance. Through compliance with the UCJ's guidelines and by seeking accreditation for their academic program, local private higher education institutions in Jamaica have begun to establish a greater sense of legitimacy and credibility within the higher education sector.

### **The World Bank's Recommendations**

The World Bank (2000) asserts that the ideal higher education system is characterized by four core qualities. These core qualities include: (a) increased institutional autonomy from government interference; (b) clear stratification of institutions with an emphasis on competition for students, faculty, and funding; (c) competition and cooperation that facilitates the profitable sharing of knowledge, human and physical capital; and, (d) greater openness to facilitate institutional partnerships between tertiary institutions and businesses through knowledge and revenue sharing

links. There are some similarities and differences between how higher education is unfolding in Jamaica and the World Bank's recommendations for higher education within developing countries.

The Bank recommended that the government interference within the higher education be minimal in order to facilitate greater institutional autonomy. In Jamaica, the government's involvement within the public higher education sector has been relatively unchanged. In spite of nominal reductions in subsidies to public tertiary institutions over the years due to contractions in the national budget, the government still functions as chief financier of public sector higher education. On the one hand, issues related to institutional governance are still within the realm and supervisory purview of the Ministry of Education and Youth. Private sector institutions, on the other hand, have historically had significant levels of autonomy. These institutions may opt to submit to the UCJ's regulatory control by registering with the UCJ and submitting their programs to the accreditation process. These are still voluntary processes and are not mandated by law. Those private institutions that have registered with the UCJ and have submitted programs for accreditation have essentially given the government regulatory control. Although this does not necessarily restrict the autonomy of these private institutions, it certainly has expanded the government's involvement within the higher education sector.

The higher education market in Jamaica is very competitive and stratified and in this sense the Jamaican higher education system reflects elements of the World Bank's recommendation. There have also been efforts to foster partnerships between higher education institutions and private businesses as well as inter-institutional partnerships between public and private higher education institutions. One such inter-institutional

partnership has been forged between the Jamaica Institute of Management (JIM), a private institution and the University of Technology (UTech), a public institution. In this sense, there is a reasonable degree of similarities in the way in which higher education is unfolding and the World Bank's recommendations for higher education in developing countries. However, this does not imply that there is a correlation between these observed developments within the Jamaican higher education system and the recommendations of the World Bank.

### **The Expanded Role of Government**

The role and function of the Jamaican government within the higher education sector has evolved significantly over the years in response to changes and developments in the national, regional, and international environment. The study revealed that the government plays three primary roles within the higher education sector. These roles are closely aligned with the neo-liberal thesis, which suggests that government ought to function more as a regulator or facilitator of the system rather than orchestrator or authoritarian. The three roles performed by the Jamaican government may be described as regulatory, educational, and facilitator of innovative approaches to the provision of higher education. The roles are carried out through statutory bodies such as the Joint Board of Teacher Education (JBTE), the Joint Committee for Tertiary Education (JCTE), The Council of Community Colleges in Jamaica (CCCJ), and the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ). The UCJ's work in the area of quality assurance in higher education is a prime example of how all three of these government functions are administered to address the need for quality assurance within the Jamaican higher education sector as a whole.

Accreditation is a relatively new concept in Jamaican higher education and has only been part of the local higher education culture for approximately 23 years. Prior to the establishment of the UCJ, the role and the efforts of the government were primarily directed towards public institutions. Higher education policy initiatives consistently failed to adequately accommodate for the private provision of higher education. Dr. Robinson (female, secular institution) pointed to the example of recent amendments in the matriculation policy at the Norman Manley Law School (NMLS) and explained that, in creating the matriculation policy for the NMLS, the government did not anticipate that graduates from other Jamaican higher education institutions would seek to matriculate into the NMLS, and, as such, did not make provision that would accommodate qualified individuals who were not graduates of UWI. Over the years, the Jamaican government has made incremental changes to accommodate for previous oversights in narrowly written higher education policies.

With the formation of the UCJ, private higher education institutions have been included on the UCJ's Board of Directors and as part of the accreditation evaluation teams. The Joint Committee for Tertiary Education (JCTE) was also established through the UCJ and is comprised of both private and public higher education institutions. The JCTE provides a forum for discussing issues impacting the Jamaican higher education sector, shaping higher education policies, and fostering partnerships among private and public higher education providers. In addition, the Jamaica Students' Loan Bureau, a statutory body, which previously provided loans only to students pursuing higher education at public institutions, now provides financial assistance to students enrolled at both public and private tertiary institutions. Prior to 2005 applicants who were not

enrolled at the UWI or UTech had no assurance that they would receive loans to cover the full cost of tuition even if they were approved for a loan (Wint, 2006). These developments provide evidence that the Jamaican government has been more inclusive of local private higher education providers.

### **Achieving Jamaica's National Higher Education Goals**

Jamaica's local private higher education providers play a key role in national development. As Jamaica strives towards achieving its *Vision 2030* goal of world-class education, the four local private higher education institutions in the study have functioned within the UCJ's national quality assurance framework to ensure that they continue to deliver relevant, cost effective, quality higher education and training. The findings indicate that the local private higher education institutions in the study make significant contributions to the attainment of Jamaica's nation goal for higher education. These institutions offer a diverse academic curriculum, provide access to higher education in previously underserved communities, and cater to segments of the population that have been largely overlooked by public sector institutions. In addition, the local private higher education institutions have effectively implemented mechanisms that help to address affordability, the primary access barrier to higher education in Jamaica.

Participants, in their discussion of institutional mission, purposes of higher education in Jamaica, and what would be required to achieve world-class higher education, did not make direct reference to the national goals for Jamaican higher education in strict economic terms as outlined in *Vision 2030 Jamaica*. Study participants offered that the purposes of higher education in Jamaica are to: prepare critically aware leaders; train globally engaged citizens who are tolerant of differences;

lift peoples' capacities to engage with moral, social, and cultural issues; produce internationally competitive graduates; equip individuals to grapple with the issues of the day and make a reasonable contribution to what is taking place in the society; prepare quality citizens – the thinkers, creators, and innovators of society; strengthen the fabric of society; contribute to national development; and develop the workforce. The participants' perspectives on the purposes of higher education in Jamaica were heavily centered on the social as opposed to the individual and economic benefits of higher education. Service to the community and the nation were privileged themes.

By contrast, the language contained within the *Vision 2030 Jamaica* document defined the primary purposes of higher education strictly in terms of economic development objectives. *Vision 2030 Jamaica* advocated that graduates of higher education must be able to “lift production of goods and services up the value chain beyond simple processes and products” (PIOJ, 2009a, p. 58). It also asserted that a prime objective of higher education institutions is to “impart skill areas that are relevant to existing and emerging jobs or career tracks, [as] one of the key sources of a country's competitiveness resides in the quality of its human capital” (p. 68). This narrow economic focus gives the impression that the Jamaican higher education system is guided solely by a neo-liberal framework and human capital theory, in particular. Human capital theory suggests that investment in higher education allows individuals to become more productive and that the returns to educational investment lead to future economic gains, increased productivity, and ultimately improved social conditions (Psacharopoulos, 1996). Human capital theory assumes that education creates a form of capital that may be exploited for the economic benefit of a nation-state (Psacharopoulos, 1996). From this

theoretical perspective, the primary purpose for investing in higher education is to achieve economic growth and development.

Ironically, the *Strategic Plan for the Tertiary Education Framework 2006-2010* prepared by the Ministry of Education and Youth (MOEY) presents the vision and mission of Jamaican higher education in a very different light. The vision for the tertiary education sector is to facilitate national and regional development through lifelong learning and access to quality education and training. The MOEY (2006) stated that the mission of the Jamaican higher education system is to:

Provide a well-managed framework which is competitive and will: ensure access to adequate funding and appropriate technologies; provide seamless articulation across institutions; enable planning and research for national and regional growth, development and wealth creation; thereby producing graduates who are creative, culturally aware, ethical, analytical, innovative and productive citizens. (p. 36)

The MOEY presents a more balanced articulation of the purposes and functions higher education serves in Jamaica which is consistent with the perspectives shared by the nine top-level private higher education administrators in the study. The mission for Jamaica's higher education sector as expressed by the MOEY is broad enough to facilitate the multiple purposes of higher education and the diverse missions and visions held by the local private institutions in this study. Private higher education institutions help to fulfill the goals of the Jamaican higher education sector by carrying out their individual missions, which focus on serving the needs of industry; lifelong learning and educational empowerment; enhancing individual and national economic growth and development; and fitting each student for committed professional service to country and

to God.

The purposes of higher education in Jamaica are not viewed purely in terms of investment in human capital. Mayer (1996) suggested that higher education plays an important role in social development, as well as in the preservation and transmission of indigenous culture, capacities, and history. This view of the role of higher education is consistent with the views expressed by the study participants. It was apparent that participants were fully aware of the growing marketization of higher education and the global trend towards preparing individuals for their role within the knowledge economy. However, participants rejected the notion that a strict neo-liberal approach to higher education is appropriate within the context of Jamaica's socio-cultural and historical realities. Dr. Hill (male, religious institution) argued that simply mimicking and embracing approaches to national development that are in vogue elsewhere within the global community without assessing and evaluating the relevance to the Jamaican context was ill advised. He stated emphatically that a key role of higher education in Jamaica is to "insulate the culture, which gives a sense of historical identity." He further stated:

One of the things that many people lament is the fact that our economists don't feel that they can survive unless they take, as gospel, the doctrine of the economics of the first world. The global marketplace and the removal of boundaries ought not to remove the boundaries which insulate the culture, which gives us a sense of our historical identity and our psychology. We study in a particular place, whatever we are taught needs to be factored through our capacity to learn on the basis of critical consciousness. And [*Vision*] 2030 must begin to position the people [in ways] which allow us not to just mime and imbibe what is

in those reading books. We must begin to write our own reading books, we [must] begin to write our own history. (Dr. Hill, male, religious institution)

### **Implications for Practice**

The issue of affordability is a major barrier to accessing higher education in many countries, and Jamaica in particular. The findings of the present study suggest that greater flexibility in the tuition payment plans offered by local private institutions helped to expand access to higher education in Jamaica. Within the context of Jamaica, this implies that those institutions that are better able to provide students with a variety of options for meeting the financial cost of their education are more likely to see growth in student enrollment. Thus, it would be important for higher education practitioners to be more attuned to the financial challenges that their students face and take the necessary actions to formulating institutional policies that will better assist students in this regard. The study participants suggested that it was an in depth awareness of the kinds of financial challenges students encountered that allowed the four institutions in the study to formulate and implement institutional policies that facilitate a variety of feasible fiscal alternatives for their students to meet the cost of higher education.

The Ministry of Education has acknowledged that the public higher education sector has failed to provide adequate access to higher education for working adults who are employed full time within the Jamaican workforce and are seeking to engage in higher education on a part time basis. Private higher education institutions emerged to meet the higher education needs of this neglected segment of the Jamaican population. This implies that the rigid traditional public sector model of higher education that privileges full time day students is outdated and must be improved in order to become more accessible. The private higher education institutions in the present study serve as

exemplars of how higher education institutions within the public sector may improve the efficiency with which existing public infrastructures and resources can be utilized to make public higher education more accessible to working adults.

Nkamura and Smallwood (1980) define policy as “a set of instructions from policymakers to policy implementers that spell out both goals and the means to achieving those goals” (p.31). The authors also suggested that the policy process may be viewed within three distinctive yet interconnected policy environments, namely: policy formation, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. In order to ensure effective implementation it is essential that policymakers and implementers are able to clearly articulate and communicate the policy goals. In an effort to address the social problems arising from educational marginalization, local private higher education institutions in Jamaica have formulated and implemented institutional policies that are directed specifically at providing affordable higher education alternatives and expanding access to higher education for previously underserved or overlooked segments of the population. The success of these policy initiatives by the private institutions in the study highlights the importance of having shared goals and the ability to clearly and effectively communicate these goals to the policy implementers within the organization, while ensuring that the necessary resources are provided in order to execute key policy directives.

### **Recommendations**

Jamaica’s quality assurance framework can only achieve its optimal effectiveness if all higher education institutions in Jamaica are held accountable for meeting quality standards. In Jamaica, registration and accreditation are voluntary, which is problematic

in light of the national higher education goal of achieving world-class education.

Although the UCJ has done a stellar job of educating the Jamaican public about the value of accreditation, the findings of the study suggest that students are less inclined to enroll at private institutions that are not registered or accredited with the UCJ. Thus, meeting the minimum quality standards should not be optional, but mandatory.

The enrollment data reported by the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) in the annual Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica (ESSJ) only include selected private higher education institutions that are registered with the UCJ. For example, enrollment figures for VTI, a relatively small private institution that has been registered with the UCJ since 1997, does not appear on the PIOJ's list of selected institutions. Additionally, the private institutions that do appear on the list vary from year to year and thus there seems to be no real consistency. This is problematic as it distorts the accuracy of the enrollment data by understating enrollment in private higher education. As Jamaica strives to establish itself within the global knowledge economy, lack of accurate data or the absence of data regarding the higher education attainment and engagement of the Jamaican people may prove to be severely detrimental to the national image. To the extent that higher education attainment is viewed positively by international organizations such as the World Bank, IMF, and UNESCO, and used to assess a nation's standard of living, quality of life, and credit worthiness, it is essential that higher education policymakers and implementers in Jamaica work to create and implement a regulatory framework that facilitates systematic and accurate tracking, recording, and reporting of student enrollment within private as well as public higher education institutions.

The Ministry of Education must also play an active role in monitoring and being better informed about the activities of Jamaica's private higher education sector. This is imperative if Jamaica is to achieve its goal of world-class higher education. World-class higher education for Jamaica will require that both public and private higher education institutions work collaboratively in meeting the needs of local higher education stakeholders based upon a shared vision. The Ministry of Education in partnership with private higher education institutions must work to establish clear and realistic expectations for Jamaica's higher education system based on assessment of institutional capacities, societal needs, and quality assurance, while staying attuned to changes within the global environment.

The limited scholarship published on Jamaican higher education is written almost exclusively about the public sector and UWI in particular. A majority of the reviewed literature on Jamaican higher education failed to acknowledge the existence of Jamaica's private higher education sector. Interestingly enough the preponderance of these publications are authored by UWI faculty and affiliates. Similarly, many national documents, when making reference to the Jamaican higher education system, almost exclusively referred to public institutions, while other merely make cursory mention of the private sector. This is a fundamental issue that needs to be addressed, particularly as the local private higher education sector is quiet vibrant and contributes significantly to the achievement of Jamaica's national higher education policy directives as outlined in the *Vision 2030 Jamaica* and the Ministry of Education and Youth's (MEOY) *Strategic Plan for the Tertiary Education Sector*. It is important the MEOY and the UWI begin to recognize private higher education institutions as equal partners in meeting the diverse

higher education needs of the Jamaica as the country strives to achieve *Vision 2030 Jamaica*.

### **Further Research**

There is a need for further research on higher education in Jamaica. Further research on Jamaican higher education may facilitate a better understanding of how Jamaica's cultural and historical context influences the impact of higher education on the achievement of national goals and priorities. The Jamaican private higher education sector has grown significantly over the last decade, yet there is no published research on Jamaica's private higher education sector. The dearth of published research in these areas impedes the ability to plan effectively for the development of Jamaica's higher education sector as a whole.

The innovation of the four private institutions studied in adapting and accommodating access to higher education indicates that there are cost effective ways of providing higher education to meet the local demand. A more detailed study of local private higher education institutions that are successfully navigating and addressing the issue of financing higher education would provide a mechanism for guiding the development of higher education policies in this area for both the public and private sectors.

This study sought to gain insight from the perspective of high-level administrators at private higher education institutions on how private higher education is unfolding in Jamaica. It would be interesting to explore this phenomenon from the perspective of other Jamaican higher education stakeholders such as students, employers, the Ministry of Education, and the general public. Further research, whether qualitative or quantitative, into the perceptions of these external stakeholders would serve to provide a

more complete picture of the private higher education sector in Jamaica, its impact on the education system, and the extent to which private higher education institutions meet the needs and expectations of the various stakeholders. For example, a future study could explore how satisfied graduates from private higher education institutions are with the quality of the education they received. Another possible area for further research would be to examine whether there is a significant difference between the employment rates or job performance among graduates from private as opposed to public higher education institutions in Jamaica.

The UCJ states that accreditation signals to the public that tertiary institutions have met the minimum standards of quality. However, there is neither a clear indication of how institutions are evaluated (i.e., the matrix used), the range of quality that may exist between those institutions that meet the minimum standards versus those that exceed the minimum requirements for registration and program accreditation; nor is there a rubric or grade sheet that the public may access to examine the extent to which a particular tertiary institution measures on particular quality components. Further in-depth research on the UCJ and its processes as the sole agency charged with assuring the quality of the entire Jamaican higher education system would be a meaningful topic to explore for future research. In light of the fact that accreditation is relatively new to Jamaica and the English-speaking Caribbean, it would be insightful to gain an understanding of how the UCJ's quality standards are formulated, staff are trained to carry out the organization's mission and functions, and the degree to which these functions are effectively carried out. A research study that assesses what mechanisms are

in place to assure the quality of the quality assurance agency may be beneficial within the Jamaican context.

### **Summary**

The discussion of the findings of the study highlighted the impact of the four local private higher education institutions in expanding access to higher education in Jamaica in light of national higher education goals. These four institutions, namely, International University of the Caribbean (IUC), Northern Caribbean University (NCU), University College of the Caribbean (UCC), and Vector Technology Institute (VTI), facilitate access to quality higher education by implementing institutional initiatives such as multiple campus locations, flexible payment plans, and innovative course scheduling which help to meet the needs of previously underserved segments of the student population. Through a commitment to their institutional missions, the study participants indicated that these local private higher education institutions have contributed to Jamaica's national development.

The UCJ, through its accreditation functions, has served to facilitate quality outputs from higher education institutions that submit their academic programs to be accredited. As a statutory body, the agency has helped to expand the role of the government within the Jamaican higher education sector. UCJ functions to regulate the higher education sector and ensure compliance with quality standards, educate the public as to the value of accreditation, and encourage innovations among higher education institutions. In so doing, UCJ serves as a conduit for aligning the mission of private higher education institutions with Jamaica's national goals for higher education.

The Jamaican higher education system is dynamic and highly competitive. The system to some degree reflects aspects of the World Bank's recommendations for higher

education. There is evidence to suggest that several elements of the neo-liberal ideology are present within the Jamaican higher education system. For example, the four private institutions in this study each serve a specific market niche, are sensitive to the needs of the student consumers, and make decisions about location, course scheduling, and program offerings based on student demand and the needs of their stakeholders.

However, there is great commitment to addressing the social justice concerns among study participants. Study participants asserted that local private higher institutions in Jamaica serve to challenge the status quo by making higher education accessible to members of the society who have been marginalized and underserved by the public higher education system. There was a heightened sense among participants that their institutions were making meaningful contributions to the Jamaican society by filling a gap or meeting a vital need, providing a much needed service that the government was not able to adequately provide.

Participants at the two religious-affiliated institutions spoke of higher education as an expression or extension of the mission of the church. The role of higher education, as described by these participants seemed primarily directed towards producing change agents within the Jamaican society. Participants stated that higher education creates critically aware graduates who are committed to serving the community, who lead with integrity, and actively contribute to improving the very fabric of the society. Participants from the secular institutions also spoke of higher education in relation to duty to the society. For example, participants at VTI shared that they feared that, with the speed of technological advancement, Jamaica would fall too far behind if more opportunities were not available locally for individuals to acquire skills in this area. One participant in

particular described VTI's commitment to higher education as being driven by an innate desire to give back to Jamaica as an act of patriotism.

When considered in light of the mission of Jamaican higher education as expressed in the Ministry of Education and Youth's strategic plan and the higher education goals as expressed in *Vision 2030 Jamaica*, the four private institutions in the study do contribute to expanding access to higher education in Jamaica. And although economic profitability may be a primary factor in the growth of the local private higher education sector, it is not the only driving force. Dr. Hill (male, religious institution) suggested that the desire to reap economic profit is only one of three distinctive factors that help to explain the growth of Jamaica's private higher education sector. He posited:

There are those who are just born educators and look for opportunity to expand their interests and commitment in education. There are those who appreciate that education is a business and so it is set up as a business – they have shareholders, are responsive to shareholders and treat [their] clients well. [There] are others who bring all of those, because if you don't run the university as a business, it runs you. So, there are those who bring the love of education and the requirement to function effectively as a business with a strong passion, which is missionary in character.

Thus, as Jamaica moves towards its goal of becoming a developed nation by the year 2030 serious consideration must be given to the role of local private higher education institutions in advancing that process. Study participants suggested that private higher education contributes to national development by providing access to higher education for segments of the Jamaica population that would have otherwise been

excluded. Therefore, although elements of the neo-liberal ideology are present within the Jamaican higher education sector, given Jamaica's cultural and historical context, and the fact that study participants gave precedence to the social rather than the economic benefits of higher education, the neo-liberal framework alone appears to be insufficient in explaining the rise in local private higher education institutions in Jamaica. This would suggest that there are factors other than economic profitability that are helping to drive the growth of local private higher education institutions in Jamaica.

### **Conclusion**

The neo-liberal framework is not a theory to be tested but rather a guide for inquiry. Within the context of the present study the neo-liberal framework helped to provide a contextual language to describe the competitive nature of the Jamaican higher education sector and the increased presence of local private higher education institutions. The neo-liberal framework suggests that when there is excess demand for a product, such as higher education, then new providers will emerge to meet these demands and to exploit opportunities for economic profits. As markets become more competitive, the role of government is minimized and relegated to the periphery from which it may perform an increasingly more regulatory role, thus allowing the market mechanism to run its course. Utilizing the neo-liberal framework in the analysis of higher education as a tool for economic development is based on the assumption that economic profitability (i.e., gaining a competitive edge in the world market thus, generating greater national income) is more prized than social values such as citizenship, and the preservation and transmission of indigenous culture.

As Jamaica strives to become a high income economy or a developed country, *Vision 2030 Jamaica* emphasizes that increasing the productivity levels of Jamaica's

greatest resource, the Jamaican people, is at the core of attaining this goal. It is against this backdrop that higher education is presented as an investment in human capital, a means of achieving economic growth and development, and a source of international competitiveness within the global marketplace. Throughout history, Jamaica's economy has relied heavily on exports of natural resources (e.g., bauxite), agricultural products such as sugar, coffee, bananas, spices, etc., and tourism as the primary revenue generators. Jamaica has a labor force of approximately 1.3 million. Over 60% of the Jamaican workforce is employed within the service industry (CIA, 2011). In addition, the service industry accounts for 64% of Jamaica's gross domestic product (GDP) while manufacturing accounts for 30% and agriculture 5.8%. Thus, within a developing middle income economy, like Jamaica, where there is an abundance of "human capital" it seems plausible that expanding access to higher education would in fact serve to "lift production of goods and services up the value chain beyond simple processes and products" (PIOJ, 2009a, p. 58). Not only is it necessary to expand access to higher education by allowing local private higher education institutions to operate as complements to the public institutions within Jamaica, but it is also necessary to ensure that all higher education institutions function within a quality framework that is relevant to the needs of Jamaica and the Caribbean region. Additionally, having clearly articulated higher education goals within an effective quality framework is essential. This helps to ensure that higher education institutions are indeed able to "impart skill areas that are relevant to existing and emerging jobs or career tracks" and meet the needs of the Jamaican society (PIOJ, 2009a, p. 68).

Although *Vision 2030 Jamaica* seems to privilege the economic benefits of higher education over the social advantages it affords, participants in the study did not share this view of higher education. Therefore, the neo-liberal framework alone proves necessary but insufficient in providing a full understanding of how private higher education is unfolding in Jamaica. As effectively summarized by Dr. Davis (male, secular institution), the neo-liberal perspective cannot be applied to a country like Jamaica in lieu of a comprehensive contextual assessment and understanding of the nation's historical and cultural experiences and realities:

We know that government [is] experiencing significant resource constraints. [And] neo-liberalism [seems to be] driving this sort of blind adherence to particular economic policies and approaches that say the state is bad, the market is good. And that's nonsense in a context like Jamaica with its historical experiences. Yes, people have to depend [less] on the state, but at the same time you still have to leverage your resources so that there is social equity and justice and that persons from disadvantaged backgrounds can access [higher education]. You don't want a situation where institutions look only to exploit the market. For tertiary education to be meaningful, it has to address national, social, and human development through its teaching, service, and research activities. You want a system that is flexible, [one that] acknowledges its historical reality.

Grant-Woodham (2007) asserts that "higher education contributes to labor productivity, entrepreneurial energy and quality of life, enhances social mobility, strengthens society, and promotes democratic governance" (p. 134). This supports the notion that higher education, particularly within a developing country like Jamaica, can in

fact serve as a tool for economic development and simultaneously facilitate greater levels of social equity and mobility, as these goals are not mutually exclusive. The fact that the neo-liberal principles are evident within the Jamaican higher education system does not imply that the social benefits of higher education are secondary goals for local private higher education institutions. Local private higher education institutions continue to contribute to the expansion of access to higher education in Jamaica. These institutions have etched out a niche within the Jamaican higher education sector by focusing on creating new ways of making higher education more accessible and affordable. As Jamaica moves forward, it is likely that local private higher education institutions will play an increasing role within the Jamaican higher education landscape as they continue to challenge the status quo and expand the range of higher education options available to both non-traditional and traditional aged students.

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## Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

### Project Title:

#### **Private Higher Education In Jamaica: Expanding Access in Pursuit of Vision 2030**

You are invited to participate in a study regarding private tertiary education in Jamaica. The study is entitled *Private Higher Education in Jamaica: Expanding Access in Pursuit of Vision 2030*. This study is being conducted as part of the requirements for my doctorate in Higher Education Administration in the Department of Higher Education and Student Affairs at Bowling Green State University.

**The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of why private higher education institutions have flourished in Jamaica, how these institutions facilitate access to higher education, and to what extent private higher education institutions contribute to the achievement of Jamaica's national higher education goals.**

If you agree to take part in this research study, you will be asked to participate in one face-to-face interview with me that will last approximately 60 minutes. This interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed. I will send you a copy of the transcript of the interview and will ask you to review the transcript. Then I will ask you to either speak with me by telephone or email me about any further thoughts or comments you wish to share upon reading your transcript. Finally, I will send you a copy of the conclusions I have drawn from this study and ask you to read the conclusions of the study, and to speak with me by telephone or email me about your reactions to those conclusions.

The transcript of your interview, along with those of approximately eight other participants, will be used to develop a better understanding of how private higher education is unfolding in Jamaica, how private tertiary institutions facilitate access to higher education, and the extent to which free market policy recommendations of the World Bank are evidenced within the Jamaican higher education sector as a whole.

This study involves minimal risk to you, that is, no greater than those normally encountered in daily life. I will make every effort to ensure that your participation in this study is confidential. Prior to the interview, I will ask you to choose a pseudonym. I will use the self-selected pseudonym throughout the study and alter all distinguishing designations, such as job titles and institutional affiliation. Interview transcripts will be coded and secured so that only my dissertation advisor and myself will have access. A summary of your responses will be included in my dissertation. If you are directly quoted, your statements will be attributed to the pseudonym you have selected. Upon completion of the study, all interview recordings will be erased, and the interview transcripts and data codes will be destroyed.

**In an effort to preserve confidentiality interview responses of participants will not be linked to the institutions in the final dissertation report.**

**Your participation in this dissertation research study is completely voluntary, and you can refrain from answering any questions without penalty or explanation.** You are free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time. If you decide to participate and later change your mind, you may withdraw your consent and stop your participation without penalty or explanation. Your decision to participate or not participate will not impact any future relationship you may have with Bowling Green State University.

Should you have questions about this study or need further information or clarification, please contact me at chadc@bgsu.edu, 631-748-1609 (mobile), or 419-372-9645 (office). You can also contact the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Patricia Kubow at pkubow@bgsu.edu or 419-372-7380. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu if any problems or concerns arise during the course of the study.

**You will receive a signed copy of this consent form.**

Your signature below indicates that you have been informed about what is expected of you as a participant in this study, that you are over 18 years of age, and that your participation is entirely voluntary.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Mailing Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Appendix B: Schedule of Interview Questions and Sub-questions**

### **Project Title:**

#### **Private Higher Education In Jamaica: Expanding Access in Pursuit of Vision 2030**

What are the primary functions of higher education in Jamaica?

What is the mission of [name of institution]?

- How does [name of institution] carry out this mission?

Is there a generally accepted standard of quality for higher education in Jamaica?

Describe the higher education environment in Jamaica today.

- Who are the key stakeholders of higher education in Jamaica?
- To what extent do private higher education providers meet the needs of stakeholders?
- What is the role/purpose of higher education in Jamaica?
- What is the role of private tertiary institutions in shaping the higher education policy agenda?

How has the private tertiary education sector grown over the last 10 years?

- What are some of the major factors that have attributed to the growth in the provision of private tertiary education in Jamaica?
- How do various stakeholders perceive Jamaican private tertiary institutions?
- Who are the students being served by the private higher education sector?
- What are some of the core characteristics of the students enrolled in private higher education institutions?

What are the challenges associated with accessing higher education in Jamaica today?

- How does [name of institution] address (these) barriers to access?

- How do admissions policies and entry requirements of private tertiary institutions facilitate access?
- How does [name of institution] facilitate access to higher education in Jamaica?
- How does the cost of attending a private tertiary education institution differ in relation to the cost of attending a public tertiary institution?
- What are some of the primary factors that determine what programs are offered at [name of institution]?

Describe the role of [name of institution] in meeting the higher education needs of Jamaica.

- Describe the nature of the relationship between public sector and private sector providers of higher education in Jamaica.
- To what extent is higher education serving the needs of Jamaica?
- What should the ideal higher education system for Jamaica look like?
- What is the role of the Jamaican government in the provision of higher education in Jamaica today?
- What are the national policies (or incentives) in place to guide/ support/ encourage the growth of the private higher education sector?

### Appendix C: Letter of Invitation to Jamaican Institutions

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am conducting a study regarding private tertiary education in Jamaica. The study is entitled *Private Higher Education in Jamaica: Expanding Access in Pursuit of Vision 2030*. This study is being conducted as part of the requirements for my doctorate in Higher Education Administration in the Department of Higher Education and Student Affairs at Bowling Green State University.

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of why private higher education institutions have flourished in Jamaica, how these institutions facilitate access to higher education, and to what extent private higher education institutions contribute to the achievement of Jamaica's national higher education goals.

I am requesting permission to include [name of institution] as part of my study. This study is concerned with local, as opposed to foreign or offshore, private higher education institutions in Jamaica. I would like to include a maximum of three institutions as part of my study. The selection of institutions for this study will be limited to local private tertiary institutions that offer bachelor's degree programs, are accredited by the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), and are listed as approved tertiary institutions with the Jamaica Student Loans Bureau. Given these selection criteria, the relatively small size of the local Jamaican private tertiary education sector, and the overtly unique characteristics of each private tertiary institution, the use of pseudonyms to represent the institutions in my research study would prove futile in the attempt to preserve institutional anonymity. However, the ability to include the names of each institution that agrees to participate will significantly enhance the credibility, reliability, and trustworthiness of this qualitative research study.

A qualitative case study approach will be used, which includes individual interviews with high-level administrators, institutional visits, and document analysis. Three or four administrators from your institution will be invited to participate in the study. In an effort to preserve confidentiality, interview responses of participants will not be linked to the institution in the final dissertation report. I will use pseudonyms for participants throughout the study and alter all distinguishing designations such as job titles and institutional affiliation. Data gathered from individual interviews will be used in aggregate to help develop an understanding of how private higher education is unfolding in Jamaica, how private tertiary institutions facilitate access to higher education, and the extent to which free market policy recommendations of the World Bank are evidenced within the Jamaican higher education sector as a whole.

If you agree to take part in this research study, you will be asked to grant written permission for me to include the name and a profile of [name of institution] in my dissertation, visit [name of institution] campuses in Jamaica for the purposes of observation and conducting interviews, and access to institutional documents relevant to this study. (Please refer to the enclosed list of institutional documents being requested).

Should you have questions about this study or need further information or clarification, please contact me at chadc@bgsu.edu, 631-748-1609 (mobile), or 419-372-9645 (office). You can also contact the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Patricia Kubow at pkubow@bgsu.edu, or 419-372-7380.

Thank you for your time. I would greatly appreciate a response by [date]. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Chad O. Coates, Doctoral Candidate  
Bowling Green State University

## Appendix D: HSRB Approval Letter



Office of Research Compliance  
 308A University Hall  
 Bowling Green, OH 43403-0183  
 Phone: (419) 372-7718  
 E-mail: hsrb@bgsu.edu

**HSRB MEMBERSHIP  
 2010-2011**

Amy Morgan, HSRB Chair  
 Kinesiology  
 amorgan@bgsu.edu

Mary Jerez, HSRB Vice Chair  
 Psychology  
 mjerez@bgsu.edu

D. Wayne Bell, M.D.  
 Wood Health Corp.  
 353-5225  
 kwanking@woodcorp.net

Cheryl Conley  
 Alzheimer's Assn., NW Ohio  
 mc\_ey@bgsu.edu

L. Fleming Edlund, Jr., M.D.  
 Public & Allied Health  
 lfed@bgsu.edu

Rodney Gabel  
 Comm. Sciences & Disorders  
 rgabel@bgsu.edu

Hillary Harms  
 Office of Research Compliance  
 hsrb@bgsu.edu

Leslie Lockford  
 Theater & Film  
 lockfor@bgsu.edu

Montana Miller  
 Popular Culture  
 montam@bgsu.edu

Jeanne Novak  
 Invention Services  
 jnovak@bgsu.edu

Eric Smith  
 Psychology  
 esmith@bgsu.edu

Ashtabeh Salami  
 Family and Consumer Sciences  
 asohon@bgsu.edu

Mark Tink  
 Psychology  
 mtink@bgsu.edu

April 19, 2011

**TO:** Chad O. Coates  
 HESA

**FROM:** Hillary Harms, Ph.D.  
 HSRB Administrator

**RE:** HSRB Project No.: H11D220GE7

**TITLE:** *Private Higher Education in Jamaica: Expanding Access in Pursuit of Vision 2030*

You have met the conditions for approval for your project involving human subjects. **As of April 19, 2011, your project has been granted final approval by the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). This approval expires on April 6, 2012.** You may proceed with subject recruitment and data collection.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is attached. Consistent with federal OIRP guidance to IRBs, the consent document(s) bearing the HSRB approval/expiration date stamp is the only valid version and you must use copies of the date-stamped document(s) in obtaining consent from research subjects.

You are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB and to use only approved forms. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, send a request for modifications to the HSRB via this office. Those changes must be approved by the HSRB prior to their implementation.

You have been approved to enroll 13 participants. If you want to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

Good luck with your work. Let me know if this office or the HSRB can be of assistance as your project proceeds.

**Comments/ Modifications:**  
 Stamped consent documents are coming to you via campus mail.

c/ Dr. Patricia Kubow

Research Category: EXPEDITED 27