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**A Critical Inquiry into the Status of Social Justice Education in the  
Teacher Education Programme of the Division of Teacher Education  
and Educational Administration of the Sir Arthur Lewis Community  
College in St Lucia.**

**M. Edward**

**Thesis submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Education**

**School of Education**

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**April 2015**

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## **Dedication**

*I dedicate this study to the principals, teachers and students of the so called failing schools in St Lucia.*

## **Abstract**

Over the years, successive St Lucian governments have embarked upon a number of reforms to improve the academic performance of all students. In that regard, the attainment of equity remains one of the main aspirational goals of the education system. Teachers are central to these reforms since they are at the forefront of educational work. The manner in which teachers are oriented during their pre-service training influences their teaching. Social justice teacher education which orients teachers to reflect on pedagogical and systemic issues that impact on student achievement is essential in preparing them to develop the skills, behaviours and predispositions fundamental to working for equity.

Drawing from qualitative research techniques, specifically, auto-ethnography, documentary research and critical theory, this study examines the pre-service teacher education curriculum used at the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration of the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in St Lucia in order to determine whether student teachers are oriented to teaching practices that facilitate social justice and equity. The answer to that question emerged from critical analyses of data obtained from the wealth of my knowledge and experiences, related curriculum documents and from interviews with three faculty members and four student teachers.

The findings from my research indicate that the curriculum to which the student teachers are exposed is not underpinned by a philosophy of social justice and consequently student teachers of the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration of the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College are not oriented to socially just teaching. My findings also suggest that, despite the absence of a social justice agenda, there is openness among some staff and students of the Division to the inclusion of social justice in the teacher preparation curriculum.

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## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

AD: Associate Degree

BEEP: Basic Education Enhancement Project

B.Ed.: Bachelor in Education

CARICOM: Caribbean Community

CCETT: Caribbean Centre of Excellence for Teacher Training

CE: Common Entrance

CIDA: Canadian International Development Agency

COL: Commonwealth of Learning

CPD: Continuous Professional Development

CSEC: Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate

CXC: Caribbean Examinations Council

DCEO: Deputy Chief Education Officer

DTEEA: Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration

EDMU: Education Development Management Unit

EDPM: Electronic Data Processing and Management

EFA: Education for ALL

ESDP: Education Sector Development Plan

ICT: Information Communication Technology

JBTE: Joint Board of Teacher Education

MDG: Millennium Development Goals

MOE: Ministry of Education

MST: Minimum Standards Test

OECS: Organization of Eastern Caribbean States

OESS: OECS Education Sector Strategy

PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment

PPP: Pillars for Partnership and Progress

PS: Permanent Secretary

SJC: Saint Joseph's Convent

SLTCC: St Lucia Teachers' Credit Cooperation

SLTU: St Lucia Teachers' Union

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

USE: Universal Secondary Education

UWI: University of the West Indies

**A Critical Inquiry into the Status of Social Justice Education in the Teacher Education Programme of the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration of the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in St Lucia.**

**Preface**

**Research Journal Extract**

October 11<sup>th</sup> 2011

*I have been thinking a lot lately of my purpose for doing this EdD programme. What is my true motivation? Initially, it was a way of making the best of a bad situation; in keeping with my philosophy that when life throws you lemons you make lemonade. It was my attempt to remain productive...I was being pragmatic; using the present – or shall I say – exploiting the present situation to prepare for my retirement which is due to come up in the next 4 years. Recently though, I am beginning to change. I am beginning to see this time as more than just a response/pushback to the situation at the Ministry. There is a bigger calling, a pull towards engaging in a real cause that can make a real difference to thousands of St Lucian children. I think that pull was always there. I kept responding to it in very tentative ways, not making a full commitment. I remember always thinking and saying that being in the CCETT Project allowed me the opportunity to make a difference to the disadvantaged children who could not read and that helping teachers improve on their literacy teaching skills was like a crusade. The passion was always there.*

This research project is a critical inquiry that I conducted into the status of social justice teaching in the pre-service teacher education programme of the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration of the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in St Lucia. While this excerpt from my research journal captures my motivation for doing this inquiry, it is also my signal to the readers to enter into a dialogue with me as I interrogate and seek answers to the many problems of education that continue to plague us at the personal, professional and public levels. I invite readers, in particular professionals in the field of education, to engage with me as I draw the past into the present and journey through my personal reflections to bring what was hitherto private, into the public discourse on the future of education in St Lucia.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

*The cat sat on the mat is not a story. The cat sat on the dog's mat is the beginning of a story.*

I have chosen to begin my report with an anecdote from one of my many encounters working with primary and secondary school teachers to improve literacy instruction in St Lucia. To put this anecdote in context, I need to indicate that in St Lucia, story writing is one of the most challenging areas for our teachers to teach. Over the years, I have conducted numerous professional development workshops to help teachers improve on their pedagogical skills in this area of the school curriculum. The fundamental difficulty, I discovered, was that the teachers had not fully understood the organizational structure of stories or what, in the literature on literacy teaching, is referred to as story grammar. Reutzel and Cooter Jr. define story grammar as 'a system of rules necessary for making a story' (2005, p. 111). One of these rules is that a story is structured around a central problem which moves the plot forward. I came to realize that the teachers' concept of a story was the linear recounting of events in chronological order. They transmitted that understanding to their students who in turn demonstrated a similar inability to differentiate between recounts and stories.

Significantly, the ability to write a story is prioritized on the school curriculum as a core skill and is one of the main discriminatory items on the table of specifications for both the Common Entrance Examination and the Caribbean Examinations Council/Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CXC/CSEC) Exams. The Common Entrance, otherwise known as the Eleven Plus Examination, is administered at the end of grade six to place children in secondary schools. The CXC/CSEC is administered at the end of secondary school. At this terminal point, students' academic achievement is measured against their ability to obtain a minimum of five CXC/CSEC subjects, inclusive of mathematics and English. Clearly, both of these are high stakes examinations that greatly

influence students' future academic trajectories and social standings. It is therefore paramount that teachers possess the methodological tools to develop students' story writing skills.

I can recall that after many unsuccessful attempts at trying to help a group of teachers understand the concept of a story and, more explicitly, a story problem, I conducted a workshop where I introduced them to the following quotation which I had come across in my readings: 'The cat sat on the mat is not a story; the cat sat on the dog's mat is the beginning of a story.' It is important to note that I had been working very closely with the teachers over a period of time and so I knew them well. My aim for the workshop was to take the teachers through the various components of story grammar and to improve their own story writing skills. I first attempted to help them understand that in order to teach children the techniques of story writing, they themselves would need to move away from the simple linear recounting of events and to begin problematizing mundane everyday occurrences. Secondly, I wanted to help them understand that characters, especially those in situations where power differentials exist, embody contending interests which lead to tension and conflict. Further, I wanted them to appreciate that the development and resolution of the conflict define the movement of the plot. I anticipated that the teachers would use that insight to develop their students' ability to discern underlying problems in the stories they read and to transfer that knowledge when writing their own stories.

The strategy worked because the discussions which followed the introduction of the quotation were rich. The teachers began to generate a number of questions, for example, 'Why did the cat sit on the dog's mat?' 'Why didn't the dog want the cat to sit on the mat?' 'Did the cat know that the mat belonged to the dog?' 'Where was the dog when the cat sat on the mat?' 'Where was the mat?' and 'Who put it there?' Coming out of our workshop, the teachers conceded, firstly, that the answer to each of the questions they generated had the potential to create another set of problems and secondly, that there

were multiple points of view that could be taken into consideration, each dependent on who is viewed as the protagonist or the antagonist of the story.

In essence, the teachers came to the understanding that narratives are never the straightforward retelling of events and that the narrative slant depended on the perspective of the narrator. The teachers' responses to the quotation were so powerful that I later posted it on my office poster board so that they could read it and be reminded of its meaning every time they came in to see me. This interaction with that group of teachers continues to resonate with me, even now, as I engage with other teachers and principals.

My attempt to help teachers appreciate that there are multiple perspectives that shape opinion is just as relevant now as it was then. This is because the insights the teachers gleaned from the workshop apply, in a very meaningful way, to the broader narrative of the way education is enacted in St Lucia, particularly with respect to how the various actors involved in education are perceived. It is common, for example, for policy makers to cast certain principals and teachers as the villains of the act, by holding them responsible for the vexing problem of student underperformance. By the same token, teachers and principals often hold parents and even the students as the culprits. However, it should be noted that in societies where structural and economic inequality exists, the perceptions of those groups who possess the power and authoritative voice dominate the discourse, while other views are marginalized. In other words, perspectives are not weighted equally. In the case of St Lucia, it is the views of the influential class and those of the policy makers who hold the ultimate sway. In this situation, contrasting viewpoints are not given high regard and are often marginalized.

Secondly, without a critical analysis of the various contending viewpoints, the assumptions underlying the perspectives of the dominate group are taken to be impartial and fair assessments of any given situation. In the case of St Lucia, it is important therefore that teachers are aware of the power asymmetries used to assign value to

contending multiple perspectives and to utilize that awareness to engage in an informed critique of those perspectives, especially those which relate to how they are perceived as teachers.

Over the years, I have found that there is a general tendency among St Lucian teachers and principals to shy away from asking questions or to be critical of the status quo on matters related to educational policy and practice, at the school or ministerial level. I can recall being on a panel for a conference hosted by the St Lucia Teachers' Union (S.L.T.U) in September 2012 where teachers openly disagreed with my call for them to express their views on education policy by speaking truth to power. Ironically, the theme of the conference was 'S.L.T.U. and S.L.T.C.C. (St. Lucia Teachers' Credit Cooperative) Partnering to take a Stand for Teachers'. I had been asked to focus my presentation on how the Ministry of Education could contribute to the vision contained in the stated theme. In my address, I tried to impress upon the audience of teachers the need to empower themselves even as they looked to other agencies for support. I suggested that they begin to see themselves as professionals who are sufficiently qualified to question existing policies and to suggest alternatives to the practice of education in St Lucia. However, the teachers firmly rejected my advice. As far as they were concerned, it was not their job to challenge the Ministry of Education. Instead, they indicated that their job was to carry out the dictates of the Ministry even when they may not agree with its policies.

As a young teacher, I too had been uncritical of our education system and at that time in my career, I had little impetus to interrogate how it functions. At that time, as well, I did not think that I was in the position to question education policy. Underlying this stance is the assumption that schooling is a neutral and therefore fair exercise which ought not to be challenged. Over time however, I've come to believe that the adherence to simple common sense explanations for educational inequalities may be emblematic of a lack of a criticality that discourages teachers from discerning the differential power relations that



undergird the existing social structure and the attendant inequalities that impact on their lives and that of their students.

Experiences such as the one I had at the SLTU 2012 conference usually bring me back to the ‘Cat sat on the mat’ quotation and the workshop that I had conducted with the group of teachers. I continue to wonder whether there is a connection between the teachers’ tendency to teach children story writing as a linear recounting of events and our teachers’ seeming reluctance to unearth and interrogate conflicts inherent in St Lucian society and in our education system. I also wonder whether this lack of curiosity to search beneath the surface of accepted educational practices is symptomatic of our teachers’ disinclination to problematize the very conditions within which they work.

Consistent with this lack of curiosity, I have observed that teachers tend to eschew discussing social inequalities and other exogenous factors which may be hindering their efforts to improve their students’ performance. Indeed, many teachers I’ve spoken with seem to hold individual students or their families responsible for academic failure and are more inclined to defend inequality as being normal and inevitable. On occasion, when I asked teachers to explain why they thought a particular student was underperforming, their responses typically included some historical reference to the child and their family coming from a background of generational underperformance. Thus, what I often heard from teachers were words to the effect that the child was simply following in the footsteps of their parents or siblings who, when they were students at the school, also underperformed.

I wish to note here that this tendency to be uncritical of the education system is not unique to St Lucian teachers. As I interact with educators across the Caribbean, I have discovered that there is widespread belief among educators other than teachers that inequality is normal and inevitable. Thus, I have found that there is very little tolerance among players at all levels in the field of education for any argument which threatens to derail the legitimacy or inevitability of inequality. The following journal excerpt brings

together two experiences that had occurred one year apart: the first chronicles my participation as a panelist at the Saint Lucia Teachers' Union Education Conference held on October 6<sup>th</sup> 2010 and the second, as a participant in the Mind, Brain and Education Conference held at the Cave Hill Campus of the UWI on July 18<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> 2010.

August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011(Extract 1)

*... It is disheartening to hear untrained, young teachers as well as professional, experienced educators espouse the same views regarding inequalities in our education system. I remember being so sad when a young teacher who had graduated from the Division of Arts and General Studies, told me that the CE (Common Entrance) was necessary to 'stratify' children because society was stratified and that children who are low achievers demand too much of a teacher's time, thus taking away the time teachers have to spend with bright children. Well I despaired week before last at the Mind, Brain and Education Conference when a top CXC official expressed the view that inequalities existed in society and so children are not equal in ability. As such, the CE was fine as a selection mechanism... During one of the breaks he wanted to know what school I had attended. When I informed him that I had gone to SJC (St Joseph's Convent)... he was confused. He was almost certain that my views on the CE were as a result of my not having attended the top school on the island.*

From the time of its establishment in 1898, St. Joseph's Convent has enjoyed the reputation of being of one of the top schools on the island. Between the years 1995 - 2013, for example, the school has ranked first in the CXC/CSEC Examinations reaching, a ninety nine percent pass rate in 2012 and 2013 (2013 Education Statistical Digest, p.111). A large number of eminent and prominent St Lucian women have graduated from St Joseph's Convent. The question posed to me by the CXC official indicates the difficulty he had to reconcile my stance on the Common Entrance with my being a graduate of St Joseph's Convent. Implicit in his response is the belief that someone with my background would naturally be accepting of the inevitability of inequality and therefore, mine was a minority and therefore invalid position.

It is because of the normalization of inequality in the English Speaking Caribbean and more specifically, St Lucian society that critical questions which would challenge its continued existence remain unasked and unanswered. Such questions include among others: ‘How are the differentials in power relations manifested in the practice of education in St Lucia?’ ‘Whose interests are being served by the school curriculum?’ ‘Whose interests are not being served by the curriculum?’ ‘What impact do educational policies have on various groups of students?’ While it must not be assumed that teachers are a homogenous group of workers who are mindlessly unaware of existing inequalities, I believe the development of a criticality is of such immense importance that it should not be left to chance. I think it is fundamentally important that that criticality encourages prospective teachers to dissect taken for granted assumptions about the St Lucia’s social structure. Secondly, it should encourage them to consciously examine their lived experiences and that of their students in order to identify how the power differentials inherent in the St Lucian social fabric impact on teaching and learning.

It is in this regard that I think the time is ripe for a new and fuller story to be told of how education is being practised in St Lucia. This new narrative would require two major shifts in how the story has been told: (i) placing the spotlight on the parts of the storyline that have been omitted in the past and (ii) re-evaluating our understanding of who we consider to be the villains and heroes of the story. For these shifts to take place, the discourse on education would have to move beyond skimming the surface representation of everyday practices. It must go deeper to dislodge the underlying social contestations that are buried in the substrata of our education system. Opening the possibility for such narratives to emerge would also require that opportunity be given for multiple voices, especially those that have been silenced in the past to be heard.

I do believe that teachers belong to that group of persons whose voices have been marginalized. I say so because generally, in St Lucia, teachers are not consulted during the process of policy development. In other words, they are not allowed the space or the opportunity to tell their stories from their point of view, even when decisions that would

affect their work are being made. Until such time that teachers' voices are heard, their classroom experiences and knowledge of the teaching/learning process will continue to be disregarded. As such, the knowledge and insights which they can bring to the decision making process will remain untapped. More importantly, they will continue to be held responsible for students' performance and viewed as the villains of the story of academic failure, lending credence to the African proverb that, 'Until lions have their historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunter.' In this regard, it is necessary for teachers to be given the privilege to tell their stories or to have their stories told, not only for themselves but also for the students who have been disadvantaged by our educational practices.

I believe that in addition to having the privilege to tell their story from their point of view, teachers must also be empowered with the dispositions that would prepare them to use their stories to transform their students' lives. As a basic prerequisite, it is important that teachers' stories are valorized, not only by others but by the teachers themselves. In addition, it would ultimately require the growth and development of a new band of story tellers or 'critical teachers' defined by Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg (2011, p.165) as '... scholars who understand the power implications of various educational reforms...'. In other words, it requires teacher story tellers, or when necessary, tellers of teacher stories who are skilled with the ability to discern the contending interests inherent in our educational policies and practices and to use these insights to advance the causes of underprivileged social groups.

I contend, therefore, that the very act of retelling the story of education in St Lucia could serve as a catalyst that would propel teachers into becoming advocates for change on behalf of disadvantaged groups of students. Social justice education, with its focus on the dismantling of systemic structural arrangements that facilitate inequalities, provides the theoretical and pedagogical frameworks to develop a cadre of critical teacher/story tellers.

My study will focus on examining the status of social justice education in the present teacher education programme at the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration (DTEEA) of the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in St Lucia. At present, the DTEEA offers two initial teacher education programmes: the Associate Degree in Primary Education and the Associate Degree in Secondary Education. The Joint Board of Teacher Education for the Eastern Caribbean, University of the West Indies (JBTE) - hereafter referred to as the Joint Board- is the certifying body for teachers in the sub-region and Barbados and is therefore responsible for the design of the teacher college programmes.

### **1.1 Scope of Study:**

The scope of this examination will focus on the two Associate Degree programmes since it is during the two years of these programmes that intending teachers engage in their first formal course of teacher training. According to the JBTE in its philosophical statement, the content of the initial training courses which the student teachers receive in the Associate Degree programmes is designed to ensure that they are competent in four areas: ‘academic knowledge or content – personal and professional; skill development; pedagogical expertise or methodology; personal qualities’ (2012, p. 1). These four areas therefore represent the core curriculum that prepares teachers to develop the dispositions, knowledge, skills and attitudes that they need to become effective teachers.

It must be kept in mind that curricular or course content is undergirded by particular philosophies which ultimately shape the profile of the learners for whom the content is designed. Based on my many years of working with teachers in the field and on my two and a half year tenure at the DTEEA, I have come to believe that the teacher preparation curriculum currently in use at the DTEEA aims to make teachers more competent technicians while de-emphasizing the moral imperatives of social justice and equity. As such, my study will examine the content of the teacher preparation curriculum vis a vis the principles underlying and issues related to social justice education.

## **1.2 Content of Teacher Education Programme:**

The Associate Degree programme comprises four main areas of study and a practicum. These are: (i) general education courses designed to develop student teachers' communications skills; (ii) education foundations courses consisting of three professional core subjects: Educational Psychology, Introduction to the Social and Cultural Foundations of Education and Techniques of Classroom Investigation, and (iii) methods and content courses which constitute the curriculum and instruction component of the programme. At the primary level, these courses cover the four subject areas of the school curriculum: literacy, science, mathematics and social studies. At the secondary level, student teachers specialize in two courses, a major and a minor which come from the suite of subjects offered by the Caribbean Examinations Council. The fourth area of study comprises the electives from which student teachers select three courses. These electives are designed to enrich student teachers' experience at the institution.

Additionally, it must be noted that the courses administered by the DTEEA are similar in content and delivery to those of the other teachers' colleges under the jurisdiction of the Joint Board. Consequently, the findings from my study would be relevant across the sub-region of the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and Barbados.

## **1.3 Structure of the Thesis:**

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter One, the introduction to my study, presents an overview of my research, by providing the background to the study and by outlining the scope and research context. I present the research context in two parts: (i) The Public and (ii) The Personal. Under the sub-heading of The Public, I describe the policy climate pertaining to general and teacher education and the impact of policies on educational practices in St Lucia. Under the sub-heading of The Personal, I offer a four stage autobiographical account in which I chronicle the salient events of my life which have influenced my thinking throughout the years. In the introduction, I also establish the purpose of the study, my philosophical position and its influence on the manner in which

I conducted the research. I also detail the problem under investigation and delineate the key research questions that have emerged.

Chapter Two presents a comprehensive review that includes a survey of the extant literature on social justice as a philosophy, and subsequently, on social justice in general and teacher education globally. The review then focuses more specifically on social justice in teacher education in the region inclusive of St Lucia. A survey of educational policy formulation in St Lucia completes the scope of the review.

In Chapter Three, I explain the methodology and methods used to conduct the research by establishing the methodological framework. I do so by indicating how qualitative approaches support critical theory. I further explain why my adoption of a non-positivist approach actually goes against the global trend of evidence and measurable outcomes based discourse used to frame education policy making. I also indicate why my adoption of this approach is a deliberate attempt to join the growing community of researchers who work towards de-colonizing educational research so that it is more applicable to local issues and sensitive to the matters that are non-quantifiable. I therefore justify the use of the auto-ethnographic and critical ethnographic approaches as a decolonizing methodology and one which is most suitable to capturing the quality of data needed for my study.

Following the exposition of the methodology, I describe the methods that I used to collect and analyze the data. I therefore detail and justify the three ethnographic data collection tools that I employed: (i) personal narratives; (ii) interviews and (iii) documentary research. This also includes information on my data sources as well as the ethical issues that I had to attend to.

Chapter Four documents the findings of the research in relation to the research questions and the analysis of the findings. In presenting my analysis of the data, I explain the processes involved in interpreting the selected policy documents; the responses of the

participants and my own personal reflections. I will close Chapter Four by outlining the conclusions that I have drawn from undertaking the research.

In Chapter 5, I offer my reflections on the study by presenting an evaluation of the study that takes into consideration (i) the limitations of the research and (ii) the contributions that the study could make to future educational research particularly in relation to general and teacher education policy development.

## **1.4 Research Context:**

### **1.4.1 The Public:**

The current teacher preparation course is operating within a social and political milieu that is still undergoing a process of de-colonization, which in itself, is hampered by the lingering effects of colonialism. Making reference to the practice of education in St Lucia, Rizvi and Lingard point to the differentials in status assigned to the variety and forms of language and knowledge found in St Lucia:

...colonial residues are still evident in the hegemony of English as the language of instruction in schools and the neglect, indeed denial of Kwéyòl, the national language in schooling. Such residues are also evident in the neglect of indigenous knowledges in the school curriculum which, particularly at the secondary level, remains very academic in orientation and dominated by public examinations, manifesting the continuing effects of colonialism. (p.113)

Based on the observation made by Rizvi and Lingard, the argument can be made that, thirty six years after attaining flag independence, education policy making in St Lucia continues to be influenced by the norms and values which prevailed during the period of colonialism. Adherence to those norms and values is not limited to education. Within the broader society, the debate surrounding the decision to establish the Caribbean Court of Appeal is emblematic of the reluctance to sever ties with inherited institutions such as the United Kingdom Privy Council and to replace these with indigenous institutions.



Underlying this reluctance to break ties with the past is a basic lack of confidence in things that are home grown. This is clearly illustrated in the excerpt taken from an article entitled, 'The Wings of Change' written by Jeff Fedee a well-known St Lucian Columnist. The article was published in the St Lucia Star Newspaper of February 26<sup>th</sup> 2008:

Our politicians and historians in the region love to criticize our colonial past. But citizens should thank God we inherited a democratic system of government from the colonials which restricts the exercise of arbitrary power by politicians and guarantees us compulsory elections every five years... Left to their own devices, Caribbean politicians would have imposed a worst tyranny on "we the people" if not for the measures to protect our rights and freedoms inscribed in our independence constitutions by the British colonials. (P. 8)

To extrapolate from the argument that the writer has proposed, institutional arrangements inherited from British colonialism are axiomatically superior to any that would emerge from the local context. By extension, he seems to argue that institutions and institutional arrangements inherited from the British are inherently fair and just. Arguments such as these have found widespread acceptance both within and without the sphere of education policy making. With regard to broader social issues, for example, residual forms of colonialism are found in the unequal economic structures and societal arrangements that have defined the national landscape. Unchecked, these structures and arrangements reproduce themselves and threaten the attempts made at improving the social and economic health of developing nations.

In a context where such disparities exist, social justice and equity remain fundamental to sustainable national growth and development. Lavia (2007) makes the case for educators in post-colonial societies to play a leading role in the pursuit of the development agenda. She posits that,

In the context of unbridled globalization of education and impositions of new forms of colonialism, education professionals must confront socially unjust practices. This is a democratic, progressive and radical agenda linked with wider democratic aspirations of activists and communities.

Collectively and individually, educators working in post-colonial settings must address key questions of history, self-knowledge and resistance. (p. 293)

If, as Lavia (2007) contends, addressing questions related to history, self-knowledge and resistance remains fundamental to the work of educators in postcolonial societies, then teachers who form the backbone of the education system, must be actively engaged in asking these questions. It is my belief that this type of engagement should commence during the period of teacher preparation and continue throughout the course of teacher professional development. Of course, engaging student teachers in this type of questioning would require a curriculum that is embedded in the socio-historical and political contexts of our countries. Such a curriculum could, at the very least, help prospective teachers become attuned to the socio-historical and political antecedents of the contexts within which they would be required to work.

However, what I've observed during the course of my professional life, are teachers who approach their teaching careers with little attention to the socio cultural realities of the students they teach. Further, they demonstrate very little sense of agency towards social change. Thus, while the notion of equality as espoused by the goals of the United Nations, Education for All (EFA) 1990 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 2000 is prioritized in recent educational reform efforts that have been undertaken in St Lucia, graduates of the teacher education programme appear to be largely unresponsive to that social agenda.

The global EFA and MDG policy agenda has shaped the overarching educational policy framework and related educational reform initiatives in St Lucia at three levels: the regional, sub-regional and local. These reform initiatives and policy frameworks include inter-alia, the CARICOM recommendations on the Ideal Caribbean Person at the regional level (1997); The Pillars for Partnership and Progress (PPP) (2000)) and the OECS Education Sector Strategy (2012 – 2021) at the sub-regional Organization for Eastern Caribbean States level and the Ministry of Education's, Education Sector Development Plans (ESDP, from 2000 onwards) at the local level.

Emanating from these policy documents are a number of other policies specifically related to achieving educational and social equity. These policies are mainly of two kinds: (i) those that relate directly to the quality of education and are mainly concerned with, curriculum, assessment and pedagogy and (ii) those which promote access to education as represented by the provision of school spaces and support services. In all of the reform initiatives, the aim of improving the quality of education through initial and in-service teacher training features consistently as the critical factor in achieving both social and educational equality. For example, the OECS Education Sector Strategy (OESS) 2012 – 2021 states that, ‘Teachers ultimately have the greatest day-to-day impact on learner outcomes. The interpretation and translation of the curriculum into classroom activities are in the hands of a teacher. Ensuring a stable, qualified and motivated staff is therefore central to the Vision for the OESS’ (p.14). It therefore places teacher competence at the center of social and educational reform.

However, policies which have focused on improving teacher quality have largely failed to eradicate the severe disparities that persist in the overall social and economic development of the country. The Report on the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) Post 2015 Consultations which were held in preparation of St Lucia’s submission to the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2015 Agenda summarizes the country’s present state of inequality thusly:

Current manifestations of inequality include low income, underemployment and unemployment, limited access to good quality education, unmet basic human and survival services (safe drinking water, water for sanitation and proper personal hygiene, household and sewerage disposal), inadequate housing, unsafe physical environments and living conditions, social discrimination and exclusion, and limited participation in the decision making process. (2013, p. 5)

This assessment of the inequalities highlights the gravity of the challenges which the country faces and the threat posed by them to sustained national development.

Wide disparities also exist in educational achievement among students from various socio-economic groups. The results of regional and local examinations consistently indicate lower pass rates for students who attend schools where the population represents a lower socio-economic demographic. Figures pertaining to the number of students accessing available support services, such as the school feeding, bursary and transportation subsidy programmes serve as proxy indicators of socio-economic status. Evaluation reports on school maintenance indicate differentials in the level of resources allocated to urban and rural schools. Thus, while there is physical access to education and support services and while there have been many attempts at curriculum reform, equity has not been achieved. In essence, education is not inclusive and the practice of education may well be exclusionary.

With regard to the socio-economic indicators relating to gender, the data coming out of the 2011 census reveal large disparities pertaining to men and women. For example, the data indicate a ten percent differential in the salaries of men and women, with women workers continuing to be disadvantaged. At the school level, the problem of gender inequality is even more insidious. St Lucia has met the Education for All Goal which aims to give girls full access to primary and secondary education. However, the continuing trend of girls consistently outperforming boys in national and regional examinations over the years has led to the conclusion that, (i) gender equality has been achieved and (ii) boys are disadvantaged by the education system. In response, there has been a shift in policy to tackle the perceived marginalization of boys and a concomitant de-emphasis on problems faced by girls. What this suggests is that years after the adoption of the global agenda of Education for All, seemingly intractable social, economic and gender inequities still persist. A sizeable portion of the society and student population remains disadvantaged and marginalized.

### **1.4.2 The Personal:**

My opening paragraphs contextualize the broad policy climate within which education is practised in St Lucia and present a concise synopsis of the problem under study. On a macro scale, it is a problem of social and economic development for which few answers have been found. For me however, it is a moral problem for which new questions must be asked. I regard the persistent disparities emanating from this problem in education to be unjust and it is my belief that they must be tackled urgently and strategically if St Lucia is to achieve meaningful and sustainable national development. These persistent disparities have always caused me some discomfort both personally and professionally, even when I had little understanding of their genesis or even when I tried to deafen that inner voice which kept pointing to the blatant and sometimes hidden injustices that percolate through the education system.

The attempt to suppress that inner voice, exemplifies my own struggle to accept the hegemonic discourse which promulgates the notion of meritocracy as a fair means of the practice of education in St. Lucia. This struggle became more intense as I interfaced with the various groups of students that I taught. For years, I did not give voice to my feelings that, without the existence of an even playing field, meritocracy as a principle was flawed. In retrospect, this was a form of silencing that I felt I had to inflict upon myself so as not to be labeled a radical or a trouble maker. It was a defense mechanism against the inevitable backlash that I anticipated I would have had to face once my true sentiments were expressed, as a female educator, working within a culture which is largely paternalistic.

I have now reached a point in my professional life when I am no longer reluctant to remain quiet or to conform to received wisdom. To a significant degree, my research into social justice in teacher education parallels my search into the injustice of my 'self-silencing' and that of others who may be thinking like me. For me, the very act of writing is one step towards breaking that conspiracy of silence that has allowed canonical

views to marginalize opposing intellectual thought in education. It is an act of liberation against the intellectual violation that suppresses others who may want to ask questions that are not in accordance with those which have been asked in the past or even in the present, as new education policies are actively being formulated.

This study therefore, represents my attempt to offer another version of the story that has been told on education in St Lucia. I write from the point of view of one who is prepared to interrogate the inequalities of the education system and to foreground those whose interests have been marginalized in the traditional telling of the tale. In so doing, I intend to use my story to problematize taken for granted assumptions that are buoyed by the vested interests of those in positions of power. My story charts the stages of my professional career and more importantly, the growth in my awareness of social and educational inequality over time.

I have mapped out my story into two broad phases: (i) policy implementer and (ii) policy director. These two phases span the four stages of my professional life. Stages One, Two and Three span the thirty years of my professional life during which time I was a field officer. These years correspond to the policy implementer period of my professional life primarily because most of my work entailed carrying out the policies of the Ministry. First, as a classroom teacher, I was expected to adhere to and implement the instructional and assessment practices contained in the curriculum stipulated by the Ministry of Education. Then as a curriculum specialist and subsequently as a reading specialist, I was responsible for providing teachers and principals with the technical assistance that would improve their ability to implement curriculum policy. Because much of my work as policy implementer took place in the classroom observing, supervising and guiding teachers, I developed a solid understanding of how they interpreted and implemented policies handed to them by the Ministry of Education in their everyday teaching practices.

Stage Four covers the past six years of my career to the present. This period encompasses the policy director stage of my career as it corresponds to my promotion to senior administrative positions in the Ministry of Education. Because of my senior position, I form part of the policy team of the Ministry and sit on all policy meetings. While I may not be responsible for dictating policy, I am situated in a place where I am able to influence the policy direction of the Ministry. Significantly, my present position has caused me to become more knowledgeable about the process of policy development both within and beyond the Ministry of Education. I constantly draw upon the insights that I have acquired during the policy implementer stage of my career to help influence the policy decisions taken by the Ministry. I therefore view my contributions to the policy process as being grounded in actual field experience.

In building my story, I will be drawing upon sources of information that are consistent with an ethnographic approach to doing research. Apart from including autobiographical pieces from my life history, I will draw extensively from my research journal and from other artefacts such as newspaper clippings, records of email and other conversations as well as policy documents that I have collected prior to and over the course of the research project. The journal excerpts will not be arranged in chronological order as my main aim is not to simply recount events as they happened but to make the critical connections across time and space. By so doing, I hope to connect the dots of my experiences and to draw a bigger picture of the practice of education in St Lucia. As my story unravels, I will be telling the stories of teachers and principals that I have interacted with since their stories and mine are inexorably linked.

### **1.4.3 (1) Policy Implementer Phase:**

#### **1.4.3.1 Stage One:**

My first teaching experience was at one of the elite secondary schools in St Lucia with a student population of mainly urban and middle class boys together with a scattering of

exceptionally talented boys from rural working class families. At that time, I was a very young, untrained and inexperienced teacher. Though I had come from a middle class family that had migrated to the city, and had attended the premier secondary school for girls, my family had rural roots which remained strong since all our vacations were spent in the village. As I moved back and forth between the two worlds, I grew conscious of the struggles of rural working class folk and developed an affinity with students from that particular demographic. While at that school, I took a keen interest in boys who were faced with financial challenges and were at risk of dropping out. My interest in those students propelled me into advocating on their behalf and I was able to assist in providing the neediest with books and school fees. Despite my lack of training, teaching at that school was a pleasant, unchallenging experience. All the students were highly motivated, generally articulate and quick learners.

There are seminal moments in our lives that destabilize our equilibrium and cause us to think and then re-think. I remember as an undergraduate student being in a group of other St Lucian students talking about the plans for our lives upon graduation. Like most undergraduates who had taken loans to finance our study, we were mainly concerned first, with repaying our student loans; accumulating property, a vehicle, land, a house, as the next steps. Listening to our chatter was a post graduate St Lucian student who had been president of the St Lucia Teachers' Union. He interrupted our conversation to admonish us against forgetting that it was the money gained from the hard work of our banana farmers that had paid the economic cost which allowed us to study at the University of the West Indies. He suggested that we owed it to the farmers and their children to make a difference to their lives when we returned home.

His admonition sank into my sub-consciousness and marinated there for years. Consequently, I am ever mindful of those St Lucians who have not been the beneficiaries of our education system. In an interesting twist of fate this post graduate student is the current prime minister of St Lucia. This, I believe, marked the moment when I first



began to intellectualize the issues involved in the practice of education in St Lucia and to think about my social responsibility.

#### **1.4.3.2 Stage Two:**

Immediately upon working in my second school, I had to interface with the children of farmers and farm labourers and it was at that point that I became truly cognizant of the elitist nature of our education system. The school was built as part of the government's strategy to end the three year junior secondary school programme and to replace it with a full five year secondary programme. Most of the students who attended that school when it first opened had gone through the junior secondary system which accommodated students who had not succeeded at the Common Entrance Examination. The fact that the first cohort of children had failed the Common Entrance and had not obtained the grades that would have placed them in one of the top secondary schools meant that the school was placed at the bottom of the league table. Thus, even though the school was brand new, at the time of my appointment, it was considered a 'low ranked' school. Many of the students had come from working class and rural families. A significant number were also from single parent households headed by women. By that time, I had returned from University and I was looking forward to being among the first group of teachers to staff the school.

The first few years teaching at that school presented a sharply contrasting experience from that which I had experienced before. Though older and better qualified, I had immense difficulty reaching the students. Not only were there severe behavioural problems but generally, the students' literacy levels were so low that they had extreme difficulty accessing the school curriculum. Their general poor performance at the CXC/CSEC examinations was discouraging and demotivating to the staff. What, up until that time, had been an initial interest in disadvantaged groups of children grew into an immediate and burning concern.

### **1.4.3.3 Stage Three:**

This concern deepened and took another turn when I was appointed as the reading specialist attached to the USAID (2002) funded Caribbean Centre for Excellence in Teacher Education Project (CCETT). It was at that juncture in my professional life that I became intimately familiar with the struggles and sentiments of primary school teachers and principals who were experiencing the same frustrations, disappointments and stresses that I had experienced during my time at my second school. Because I had come from a similar teaching situation, there was a common bond between me and these primary school teachers. Their story was my story and I believe, that of other teachers working in similar difficult situations.

The CCETT Project was specifically designed to improve the performance of disadvantaged students in Latin America and the Caribbean by improving the ability of teachers to teach reading effectively. The project engaged teachers of grades one to three in various modes of training so that they could become master teachers in the area of literacy instruction. All of the seven principals and thirty five teachers were trained and had graduated from the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration. The teachers therefore shared common practices and employed similar instructional strategies in their teaching. Also, the seven selected primary schools shared common characteristics: they were situated in rural or urban disadvantaged communities; were under-resourced; their student populations were from low socio-economic households; students were mainly speakers of English Creole or Kwéyòl<sup>1</sup> and were underperforming in national examinations.

As the reading specialist, I had complete access to the teachers' classrooms where I observed their teaching as well as their interactions with the students and provided immediate feedback to them. I also conducted demonstration lessons and held workshops and meetings with them and the principals on a regular basis. One significant aspect of their training was to assist teachers in becoming reflective practitioners. In

order to do so, the teachers were coached in action research procedures. They were therefore required to develop an intervention, document and then reflect on the strategies they employed in their classrooms. In particular, the quality of their reflections was a significant component of their training as it was one of the areas that were used to measure their level of professional growth.

Contrary to the common perception that principals in low performing school possess weak leadership skills and that their teachers are lazy, incompetent and uncommitted, my engagement with the principals and teachers in the project schools revealed the opposite. In the main, my observations of the principals and teachers of all seven schools led me to conclude that they were very driven, competent, and dedicated to their students. It became clear to me that, with the exception of about two teachers, these were teachers who had not been receiving the recognition they deserved for their gargantuan efforts in the classroom. Prior to my assignment in the CCETT Project, I had been a curriculum officer for ten years and during that time, I had acquired substantial knowledge of teachers' practices island wide. My assessment of the project teachers was that, despite their students' low test scores, they were no different in their capacity to teach or in their level of commitment from teachers in any of the other seventy seven primary schools on the island.

However, because of the students' low achievement ratings, their schools were stigmatized as 'failing' schools and the teachers were also labelled as failures. From my initial encounters with the teachers, it was obvious to me that the principals and teachers were acutely aware of this and objected to the constant criticism and scrutiny to which they were subjected. In spite of their objections, the teachers had become jaded over time and many expressed a sense of hopelessness, a severe lack of confidence, immense frustration and resentment towards the Ministry of Education. The following excerpts from the journal which I was required to keep during my time as reading specialist with the CCETT Project chronicle my observations of my very early interactions with teachers in two of the CCETT Project schools:

11<sup>th</sup> February 2004

### **Marchand Primary School**

*2 weeks ago I was shocked to learn how frustrated a teacher (Ms Marcia Theodore) was. She expressed in the most extreme terms her dislike for the children, the school, the parents etc. She admitted not having any interest in assisting the students. She tries avoiding the parents by not attending any of the CETT parent teacher meetings. She also vented her anger at being criticized by the DCEO Instruction (Deputy Chief Education Officer) for not having any charts in her classroom.*

*After my session with the teachers at Gordon and Walcott Methodist Memorial Primary School, I realize how lacking in confidence they are. The staff on the whole appears to be afraid to implement new practices and to try out new things. There needs to be a way to boost their morale.*

- *I have observed that Ms Rhonda Johnson appears not to be interested in professional development activities.*

I gradually came to the realisation that what the teachers were manifesting were signs of teacher burn out, a phenomenon which is typical in situations where teachers are forced to deal with both the continuous failure of their students to meet national standards as well as the criticism of their competence that invariably ensues. Further, the teachers manifested a number of contradictory behaviours which had made it difficult for me to determine how to address their needs.

Firstly, even as they expressed frustration with the Ministry of Education, the teachers all shared a common desire to meet the standards set by the Ministry and to move their schools from the bottom of the league tables associated with the Minimum Standard Tests and Common Entrance Examination. They were hungry for positive change and desperate for a remedy that would improve their students' reading levels. From my observations at the time, Ms Theodore, for example, planned her lessons carefully and executed them well. Moreover, there was little evidence of anger in her interactions with her students.

Also, Ms Johnson was very creative and resourceful. In fact, the teachers in Methodist Memorial stood out for the high quality of teaching aids that they had developed and used for instruction, while the teachers in the Marchand Primary would use their own funds to purchase materials for their classes. What was common between these two schools was that they were both inner city schools with students coming mainly from the nearby depressed communities. Many of their students had been victims of physical and sexual abuse; had witnessed crime; especially gun related violence and had parents or family members who had been in conflict with the law.

Secondly, though the teachers believed that they were being unfairly criticized, they had adopted a 'deficit' mentality and a culture of failure and blame permeated the climate of the seven schools. The teachers and principals blamed their students' failure on the failure of the parents to adequately support their children's learning and on the failure of the Ministry of Education to provide them with the necessary resources. More specifically, they felt that neither the pre-service nor in-service training that they had received had adequately prepared them to deal with the many 'deficiencies' which they believed the students presented. The teachers openly disclosed to me that they felt that they were deficient, based on their supposed lack of the requisite pedagogical skills. However, they held the Ministry of Education responsible for their perceived skill deficiencies. As far as they were concerned, the Ministry had failed in its responsibility to train them adequately and had therefore lost the moral authority to judge them.

Paradoxically, by acknowledging that they lacked the requisite pedagogical skills, the teachers had unwittingly implicated themselves in their students' failure and had conformed to the notion that they were ultimately responsible for making the difference in their students' academic lives. As a result, they manifested a deep sense of guilt for their students' poor academic performance. The general consensus among the teachers was that given the right tool kit of instructional methods, they would be able to get their students to meet the national standards. They viewed me as the person who would provide them with that tool kit and this assisted in legitimizing my engagement with

them. I was therefore able to develop a level of trust with the teachers that caused them to be frank and open with me as I was with them. Because they were from supposedly ‘failing’ schools, the teachers and principals had no voice and felt powerless to defend themselves against accusations of incompetence or indifference.

My increasing appreciation of the work of the project teachers caused me to question and staunchly reject what I came to believe was the unfair criticism that had been levelled at them by the public and education officials in particular. Also, because of my closeness to the teachers, I became more au fait with the emotional stress that they were under and in fairness to them, I felt it necessary to give voice to their struggles. I felt that someone had to speak on their behalf and to validate their efforts in the classroom. The incongruence in the amount of effort that the teachers in the project schools invested in their teaching and the students’ consistent low performance in the national examinations led me to believe that factors other than their assumed incompetence were impacting the teaching learning environment. Fortuitously, my tenure as reading specialist afforded me the experiences that assisted in illuminating the incongruities in the teachers’ performance in their classrooms and their students’ performance in national examinations.

Firstly, pertaining to the quality of their work, my participation in the CCETT Project gave me the opportunity to observe and evaluate how the teachers in the project schools had been translating and applying their pre-service training in their classrooms. As such, I was able to get a sense of the profile of graduates from the DTEEA. As I recall, the teachers placed heavy focus on their lesson planning and delivery. What was quite telling was that their reflections on their students’ learning were limited to an assessment of the extent to which the objectives of the lessons were met. As such, their evaluations of the effectiveness of lessons were invariably limited to the teaching/learning act. Apart from their claims of poor parental support or inadequate training, the teachers never made reference to any exogenous factors which may have impacted on the students’ ability to grasp what was taught during lessons.

Secondly, the location of the CCETT Project at the DTEEA placed me in a complex insider/outsider situation which offered me a broad scope of the content and delivery of the teacher preparation programme. On the one hand, I was an 'itinerant' insider whose tenure at the Division, though temporary, gave me access to the staff, students and resources of the Division. I was able to interface and share ideas with lecturers and with the student teachers. I was also able to listen in as tutors delivered lessons. On the other hand, I was an 'anomalous' outsider who reported, not to the administration of the College or Division but to the Project Office in Jamaica. Though the seven project schools were part of the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College Cluster of schools, I was positioned at and functioned from the periphery of the Division because I was not considered to be a de facto member of staff.

My insider/outsider position gave me sufficient distance to critique what I was seeing from the standpoint of one looking in from the outside while simultaneously looking out from within. The simultaneous inward and outward gazing upon the Division assisted in broadening and deepening my awareness of the pre-service experiences to which St Lucian teachers are exposed. I was therefore able to get a broad sense of the quality of the pre-service training programme vis a vis teachers' in-service attempts to put their training into practice. I came to the conclusion that the teachers in the CCETT Project and others in similar working situations, had not been adequately prepared by the DTEEA to address the problems that children from disadvantaged backgrounds face in the classroom. At the end of my tenure at the Division, I surmised that gaps existed in the teacher preparation programme particularly with regard to preparing teachers to respond to non-school factors that may impact learning. I have posited that the gaps in teacher and student performance may be related to the gaps in the current teacher preparation programme.

#### **1.4.4 (2) Policy Director Phase:**

##### **1.4.4.1 Stage Four:**

August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011(Extract 2)

*I have been thinking lately that education reform in St Lucia is like Matthew 9: 17. 'Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.'*

*We are attempting to change the substance of our education system while maintaining the old structures.*

As one of the officers responsible for guiding the policies of the Ministry of Education, I am intimately familiar with the prevailing policy discourse shaping the practice of education in St Lucia. Since as stated previously, one of the assumptions that undergird the discourse on education in St Lucia is that social stratification is an integral and inevitable aspect of life, educational inequality is deemed to be justified. This common sense view is used to rationalize selection mechanisms such as the Common Entrance Examination which places children in various schools and educational tracks depending on their academic performance.

I have been concerned that despite the plethora of policies aimed at promoting equity, educational policies and practices such as those related to the Common Entrance Examination are in direct opposition to the intent of official government policies. One such example is the policy on mixed ability grouping. The Ministry's official policy discourages streaming and calls for mixed ability grouping to be used by school administrators in assigning students to class groups. However, the Ministry maintains a policy of categorizing students according to their perceived ability in assigning them to secondary schools. The inherent contradiction in the Ministry policy on mixed ability groupings sets up a double standard and sends mixed messages to principals and teachers who are required to adopt and implement it at the school level. As a consequence,



principals and teachers simply ignore the official policy and employ streaming and tracking mechanisms.

For me, the metaphor of the wine and the wineskins aptly symbolizes what I view as the sheer confusion and folly of the policies and the associated reform strategies that do not adequately address systemic structures. The wine represents the attempted innovations, and the wineskins, the structural arrangements which frame the education system. Moreover, the spilled wine represents the colossal waste of human and financial resources that has resulted over many years of educational reforms which have not yielded the expected results.

The persistent wastage of the country's resources in the name of educational reform evokes a deep desire in me to change the course of educational policy development. Moreover, the concern for what I deem to be the mismatch in policy intent and policy implementation is even more urgent since I am acutely aware of the tendency of other senior policy directors to adhere to old educational policies and practices. For instance, many of our existing educational policies have been and continue to be influenced by the School Effectiveness Approach primarily because of its emphasis on improving standards in relation to both teacher and student performance. I remember sometime in the early 1990's attending workshops on Effective School Management organized by the Ministry.

The email conversation that follows documents an exchange that I had in April 2013 with a senior policy officer in the Ministry on the approach that we should take in planning an intervention to improve student performance at one of our 'failing' schools. As indicated in the response to my query, the officer's recommendation follows the traditional standards based approach associated with the Effective Schools movement. This approach is commonly employed in our education system especially in terms of the emphasis that is placed on nurturing teachers' pastoral care for students and on improving teachers' competence through professional development. Implicit in his recommendation is the belief that teachers, particularly those in supposedly failing schools, lack care and concern for their students as well as the technical competence to teach effectively.

April 2

(From me)

*Hi ...,*

*On a serious note, did you have any further thoughts on the design for the boys' underachievement project?*

April 15

(From official to me)

*My view is that the MOE embraces an approach that stresses inclusivity and overall school effectiveness rather than the targeting of specific groups. Our approach should emphasize insistence on high standards for all groups and not targeting any one specifically. We should support professional development activities which stress (a) looking at the whole school policy issues; (b) classroom management and pastoral care and (c) Lesson planning; and teaching and learning materials and approaches*

April 16

From Me

*Hi ...*

*I may have agreed with you some time ago but there is so much that I've learned about the weaknesses of the school effectiveness approach that I'm not sure that this is the way to go. I feel, if we keep focusing on what we've been doing in the past, it will be more of the same. I do agree that it should be a whole school campaign but I sincerely believe that we need to start looking at group specific needs: girls, boys, poor etc. In preparing for our intervention, can we examine the data to determine who is actually failing? I just came across a wonderful quote from Peter McInerney who says: 'The most powerful policy for improving student achievement is a reduction in family and youth poverty'. While reduction of poverty is outside of our purview and control, I suggest we recognize that poverty is a factor (as well as gender) in student learning and tailor our interventions to respond to those factors...*

April 21, 2014

*Ms Edward*

*Sorry, but I am very much pro effective schools though I recognize limitations with the model. I hope the MOE will finance my participation in the 31<sup>st</sup> conference on effective schools next year.*

The recommendation offered by this senior officer is representative of the present policy development climate in education where interventions are formulated on commonly held beliefs, such as the inevitability of inequality, and on unsubstantiated claims of teacher incompetence and lack of commitment. Those claims demonize teachers by holding them responsible for their students' poor performance. I have found that as I interact with my colleagues in other Caribbean territories, views vilifying teachers for being either lazy, incompetent or both are standard among educators. This next extract captures the sentiments that some regional Ministry of Education officials expressed about teachers:

29/3 2014

*I am just back from the Open Distance Learning and COL (Commonwealth of Learning) Focal Points meetings in Trinidad... I heard the same kind of teacher bashing from ministry officials from the various Caribbean territories. One ministry official from St Vincent expressed frustration with the seeming inability or unwillingness of teachers to apply the methods and strategies they were exposed to in their pre-service and CPD training. That view was echoed by a colleague from Antigua who boldly declared that teachers should be appointed on contract because permanent appointments make them feel too secure. She felt that this was the cause for teachers not using what they had learnt via their training. Both of these colleagues believed that this was the reason for the poor student performance.*

*Once again I found myself coming to the defense of teachers. I didn't want to because I knew that I would be the lone dissenting voice and I really didn't want to sound like an over enthusiastic convert, but I could not keep quiet. I shared my views irrespective of what their reactions would have been. I gave them the definition of academic triage and explained that teachers across the Caribbean were doing exactly what is demanded of them, i.e. to maximize the potential of those children most likely to attend*

*a “top” secondary school. Secondly, teachers try to improve on performance, theirs and their students, by teaching to the test.*

*It was refreshing to see that the people in my group did not jump down my throat. As a matter of fact, they all agreed that there might be some truth to what I had said. At least three of them felt that we may need to review our education system and what we were asking teachers to do. The conversation even went on to look at the growing trend of children in 5<sup>th</sup> Form doing increasing numbers of CXC/CSEC subjects, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and even 15 when all that is required is 5...*

*If only we could have more of those conversations with educators, I think we could start to change some minds.*

The assumption that security of tenure is one of the reasons for West Indian teachers’ apparent failure to adopt best practices was new to me and raised my concern that officials with the power to influence educational policy may be proposing recommendations formulated on baseless claims levelled at teachers. The call for teachers to be appointed on a contractual basis is reminiscent of the call that has been made in some quarters of the United States to attach teacher compensation schemes to student performance. Although, this is not the adopted practice in St Lucia, a number of education officials, have occasionally expressed their openness to such an idea thus indicating their underlying belief in the charges made against teachers.

Given the present situation where so much accountability is required of teachers, the suggestion made by the Antiguan official - and others who hold similar influential positions - to link teacher compensation to student performance may find legitimacy in the discourse on education across the region. I think that this makes it even more important for criticisms levelled at teachers to be challenged, not only because of the weaknesses inherent in policies emanating from unsubstantiated claims but also because such claims about teachers may be destructive to teacher morale. It is for this reason that I have included the following three extracts: the first is taken from my research journal and captures the story of a group of teachers from one of our low ranked secondary schools. It chronicles a visit to the staff of the school after they had lost one of their students who had participated in the school marathon the day before:

January 19<sup>th</sup> 2014

*I was accompanying the Minister (of Education) to the school so that we could meet the staff and later the parents in response to the boy who died after taking part in the marathon. What I saw was touching. The school was subdued. The boy's mother and sister were hurting badly. I saw teachers who were distraught and the P.E. teacher expressed some level of guilt. What really touched me was the teachers' expression of the pain that they were feeling as a result of the child's death. For them, it was too much after having "buried six other children" and this was the seventh. When I walked into the staff room to greet them, a group of about five teachers were recounting the circumstances that had led to the deaths of the children they had lost: one from drowning; two by shooting; one in a vehicular accident and this one. The teacher who was writing down the names of the students and the years they had passed suddenly broke down in tears. She was in agony. The teachers felt that it was too much for them; almost as if the school was cursed. I don't know if that was something they truly believed or if they were reacting to the intensity of the moment. I don't know but what I saw were teachers who were truly invested in their students and hurting because they had lost one of their own again...*

The second is from a newspaper article written by columnist, Toni Nicholas in the Star Newspaper. It records the words of the art teacher from that same school referenced above. Two years earlier, the school had celebrated its 30th Anniversary and had mounted a public exhibition on April 9<sup>th</sup> 2009 of the art and craft work done by the students.

Star Newspaper: April 14<sup>th</sup> 2011

...Delthia Naitram the Arts teacher at the school indicated that the exhibition was a result of lots of hard work which sometimes saw emotions running high. "But at the end of the day there is a sense of joy and we have to explain to our students that nothing in life comes easy," she said. Likening their work to that of the fabled Rumpelstiltskin, Naitram explained that "with very little we had to make something, out of which came this (exhibition.). The school also had very little funds to complete their art program, since according to school officials monies originally allocated to them was diverted to assist other schools which were affected by Hurricane Tomas. In the end, the school turned to the representative for Castries South East and his constituency group who came to their assistance with an undisclosed sum. "To a large extent that

donation assisted us in helping make this exhibition a reality,” Naitram pointed out.

According to her, her department bases their efforts on the philosophy that “no mind should be left behind.” Students she explained who many persons had given up on, she now saw a sense of pride and self-worth coming from them and greater interest in school as a result of their involvement in the arts. “We shouldn’t have an education system where we cut certain people out because they do not fit the mold that we have,” Naitram threw out.

The two preceding extracts are speaking of the George Secondary School and its teachers who are the subjects of the email exchange which I had had with my ministry colleague. George Charles Secondary has had the reputation of being among the worst schools on island. Because of its low ranking, it is not a school of choice and many parents are disappointed when their children are placed at that school. For many years now, the Ministry of Education has expressed concern with the poor academic performance and problems with indiscipline at the school. A proposal to dis-establish the school and to re-open it with a completely new management and staff has been mooted as the possible solution to the problem.

The third extract comes from another article entitled, ‘The Forgotten Ones’ written by the same columnist two months before. In it, the writer offers his impressions of the school as well as snippets of an interview he had had with the then principal after a visit there. This excerpt lends support to the two previous excerpts and paints an accurate picture of the bleak physical and psycho-social climate that characterizes the school. Three years after the article was written, the situation remains the same at the George Charles Secondary School.

Star Newspaper: February 26<sup>th</sup> 2011

A young girl, who has had nothing to eat, has no mother and father and finds solace in an orphanage, holds her stomach in pain as a compassionate teacher props her up and moves out in an effort to find her

something to eat. Today is not black Friday, and these scenes are among every day occurrences, everyday reality of a high percentage of students at that school, where at any point, a class may have more than one child whose father is in prison or the latest victim of gun violence.

These are the children of a failed education system, children of a “monster; school” which the Ministry of Education has created, as the principal put it, children who are being set up to fail. They are the ones whose scores at the common entrance were too low to make it to the so called “top” schools, students whose reading and numeracy skills are below average. Compounding their status is that a Ministry of education policy now expects them to compete with the so called “Ivy league” schools by writing a mandatory five CXC subjects general proficiency. This has become disconcerting to the students, parents and teachers as well who believe that the voice of the school is being disregarded... At one time the school experienced a drop-out rate of almost 50 percent. In 2006, amidst a barrage of negative reports of school violence some even involving teachers, Lera Pascal took up the position of school principal there... “My first impressions when I saw the school was that this seemed to be an impossible task,” Principal Pascal told the STAR in an exclusive interview last week. “There seemed to have been a complete breakdown of authority, a very troubled school, and lots of measures to put in place, regulations had to be adopted to bring it to a point where it was functioning as a normal school. But I was up to the task so I took up the challenge,” ... She noted that not only was there low self-esteem among students but some teachers appeared worn out after years of trying to get things straight at the school. “There was a general lack of energy and drive to put things together,” ... One of the first things the “new” principal enquired about was the area allocated as a playing field for the students. “I was told that the funds were there to set up the grounds, someone came to take the measurements, but since then nothing has been done,” she revealed. The only sporting area for students is a broken down basketball court which was built by parents and teachers, an eyesore now, adjacent to the school. The school grounds itself is a combination of dirt, mud and rocks and the only semblance are a few benches built by students themselves. “The students we get here are not high academic achievers, they are more into sports, singing, dancing, the arts, but we do not have the facilities or even the teachers to accommodate them in those areas, “You should have seen how eager and excited the young boys were when we got them to build those benches and last year despite the lack of a training facility we were able to place second in the basketball competition, so these children have talent, but we are just not being given the facilities to develop those skills.”

The stories of the teachers' grief at the student's death; the arts teacher's deep commitment and the principal's frustration at the lack of support she received for her school provide the counter narratives that challenge the stereotype of the disinterested, uncaring, teacher or principal whose only reason for coming to work is to receive the benefits of a tenured salary. In fact the stories, present another picture. They speak instead of teachers and of a principal who feel isolated, abandoned and hamstrung by policies which disadvantage their students. As their voices emerge through the stories, one gets the sense that they are pleading for help but no one in authority seems to be listening. So the school is continuing on a downward spiral and in 2013, for example, George Charles Secondary attained a pass rate of only seventeen per cent in the CXC/CSEC Examinations, the lowest it has ever received in nineteen years (2013 Education Statistical Digest, p.111).

On a more pragmatic level, the love that the George Charles teachers demonstrated for their students has led me to question the usefulness of investing resources in the kind of interventions that my Ministry of Education colleague has advised in his email. I question the usefulness of an intervention that is aimed at making the teachers at George Charles Secondary become more caring towards their students when it is clear that they actually do care. Similarly, I question the effectiveness of an intervention aimed at improving teachers' pedagogical skills when, as suggested by Mrs. Naitram what is needed may not be more training but greater access to resources. What may also be needed as Ms. Pascal intimated, is a greater level of autonomy that would allow principals the flexibility to modify policies to suit the needs of their students. As I see it, teacher stories such as these, can provide the kind of evidence that is needed to more effectively shape education policy. These policies would be more reflective of the realities of the classroom and therefore more suited to the purposes for which they are intended. An approach to such policy making has the potential to make a significant difference to the quality of reform measures that are undertaken to improve education.



With the introduction of Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2006, the need for education policies that would stem the trend of student underperformance has assumed greater significance primarily because a number of students are entering secondary school with very low reading and numeracy skills. Increasing pressure is put on teachers to address the problem with literacy and numeracy on the island. In response, teachers and are feeling pressured to perform and now, in my current administrative post, I am encountering teachers who are demonstrating a similar level of teacher burnout and frustration as the teachers in the CCETT Project had demonstrated ten years previously.

This was brought home to me, most forcefully, when I was visited in my office by a teacher who was working in one of our other ‘failing’ secondary schools. Like the George Charles Secondary, this school, the Vieux Fort Technical Secondary, is not a school of choice. In 2013, the school was only able to achieve a fourteen percent pass rate in the CXC/CSEC Examinations. The following extract from my journal chronicles the teacher’s visit:

January 5<sup>th</sup> 2013

*Yesterday, I experienced a moment when the research meets the reality and it was a powerful moment. Cecilia Mayers came to me exhibiting all of the characteristics and symptoms of the classic “burnt out teacher”. She wanted a transfer from the failing school to another school in the district. As far as she was concerned, the children at the Vieux Fort Technical Secondary had no interest in school; they were disrespectful, unappreciative, unmannerly, rude and uninterested in achieving. She even brought along some of their work as evidence of how weak they were and therefore incapable of success at CXC. It was difficult to hear her speak of the frustration she felt when trying to explain concepts to them over and over again, to no end. She expressed further frustration with the students’ lack of cooperation in handing in assignments on time and admitted that many times, teachers simply have to give up and forget about the homework...*

*What was most significant for me though was when I introduced the idea of the systemic failures that impact the instructional programme, such as the suppression of the native language. It was amazing. She readily*

*agreed that when she explained in Kwéyòl the children fully understood concepts, however, this acknowledgement went no further. Her only response was that other teachers felt that the Kwéyòl should not be used to assist with comprehension. Despite her knowledge of the value of native language instruction, she preferred to give in to the pressure.*

*What is clear for me is that Cecilia has unwittingly joined the “blame game” ... She blames the students, the school administration and most unfortunately she has turned inward and blamed herself for not being able to make a meaningful contribution for the last ten years. Her solution was for her to move to another school in the district where she would be able to make a difference.*

Cecilia, like the teachers of the George Charles Secondary and those who had been in the CCETT Project, is representative of many teachers working in similar situations. I need to state here that I know Cecilia well. I had worked with her on a project and knew of her excellent qualifications in the area of literacy teaching. She is highly trained, qualified and experienced, yet the pressure to perform had made her question her ability to make a difference in the lives of the students in her charge. The fact that she admitted to not using the children’s native language even when she knew of its effectiveness, was perplexing to me because I had known her to be a proponent of the use of the mother tongue for instruction. I concluded that her visit to my office was an urgent and desperate attempt to obtain relief from her present working situation.

Principals of the low ranked schools, like their teachers, are also caught in a vortex of anxiety and fear of student failure. However, because they have ultimate responsibility for the management of schools, they assume a greater burden of the responsibility for their school’s performance. Consequently, over the years, some principals of ‘failing’ secondary schools have resorted to a number of undemocratic practices in an effort to move their school up on the league table. To illustrate, a student may be debarred from writing particular subject examinations if the teacher believes that success is unlikely. It must be noted that this contradicts the official Ministry policy which assures every child the right to sit as many subject examinations as they choose since parents are the ones who bear the costs of each sitting.

The extract which follows documents my record of a conversation between the Chief Education Officer and a principal. He was attempting to get her to reverse her decision to disallow a student from sitting a number of subject examinations after the child's mother had come to complain. Such complaints are common and emerge about the time when examination fees are to be paid. Indeed, I had received two similar complaints from other parents the week before.

January 24<sup>th</sup> 2013

*I listened in as Mrs ... stridently defended her case debarring the student in her school from doing CXC CSEC subjects. As far as she was concerned, the Ministry was sending children who score zero at the Common Entrance to her, expecting that those children would 'give more than zero' when they leave her school. She actually said that her good name was at stake... she quickly back tracked and said that she really meant the reputation of the school. She claimed that the staff is working very hard to improve student performance and allowing such children as the student in question to write exams was simply undermining their efforts.*

This principal's attempt to defend the actions she had taken against the student, I believe, is emblematic of the long held practice of viewing children as statistics whose main purpose is to maintain or increase the academic reputation of individual schools. This matter is very personal to me. As a student of the St Joseph's Convent, I was forced to repeat in fifth form, two Cambridge Ordinary Level subjects that I had already sat and passed - with good grades - in fourth form. My pleas to the then principal of the school to be exempted from repeating the subjects were in vain. Her rationale for my having to repeat the subjects was simply that, as an 'A' student of the school, I had to graduate with at least eight subjects at one sitting. This practice continues today in the top ranked secondary schools. Although this principal's action is the reverse of what happened in my case, in that, she attempted to keep the student from writing a number of subject examinations, the end result is the same. Principals engage in a game of numbers to maintain the academic standing of their schools.

In essence, principals deliberately manipulate the examination process in an attempt to manage their image and that of their individual schools. It is precisely for this reason that parents and teachers are pushing children to sit many more than the five CXC/CSEC subjects required to matriculate to higher education or to be employed. In such situations, children are dehumanized in a manner similar to that described by Gewirtz (2000, p. 361-362). Her description is so apt that it is worthy to be quoted at length:

‘... children have been recast as commodities. And they are commodities which are differently valued. Now schools and teachers are being encouraged to value students according to what these children can offer the school financially and in terms of image and examination performance. In this way, students in many ways become objects of the education system, to be attracted, excluded, displayed and processed, according to their commercial worth, rather than subjects with needs, desires and potentials. They are judged and processed in terms of their capacity to contribute to a school’s market success and image.’

According to Gewirtz (2000) the ramifications of such practices include, inter alia, educational triage where more attention is given to children who are more capable of achieving academic success; differentials in resource allocations to high and low ranked schools; and an over representation of disadvantaged children in low ranked schools. Additionally, as Gewirtz (2000) explains an overemphasis on image management encourages teachers to concentrate their efforts on meeting externally mandated standards rather than on pedagogical practices that promote ‘autonomous, critical, reflective, creative, fulfilled individuals’ (p. 363). In sum, when principals and teachers engage in image management at the expense of their students’ welfare, two outcomes invariably follow: (i) issues related to social justice and equity are de-emphasized and (ii) the curriculum is narrowed to meet the demands of examinations. Paradoxically, both of these outcomes run counter to reform strategies that seek to decrease levels of injustice and academic failure. On the contrary, they further exacerbate the situation that reforms seek to ameliorate.

The tremendous pressure that principals and teachers feel to maintain standards is matched by a similar drive to address the problem of underachievement at the regional level. There is therefore, an overall thrust at the school and governmental level across the region to design new educational policies that would improve the standard of teaching and learning. At this juncture, it is critical to ensure that these new policies promote the type of training that would furnish teachers with the dispositions, competencies and attitudes that would prepare them to meaningfully contribute to an amelioration of this problem. If social and educational equity are seen as the means to ameliorating the problem of underachievement, it makes practical sense that teachers are oriented to teach in a manner that promotes social justice and equity.

However, it is important to note that, as Ball (1993) suggests, educational policies, teacher education policies included, do not occur in a vacuum and should therefore be viewed within the wider context of public sector policy making. As such, teacher education policies would need to be scrutinized under the lens of general education which in turn would be understood within the context of public policy. Questions therefore remain as to whether (and if so, how) present general education and specific teacher education policies interact with each other to hinder the translation of the goals of equity into the teacher education programme.

It therefore becomes necessary to investigate the context within which teacher education policy is made. That context lies within the sphere of general education. As I've indicated in my introduction, my familiarity with past and present education policies and with policy makers have led me to conclude that the Effective Schools Model has dominated the discourse on education in St Lucia. In addition, my interactions, with principals and teachers over the years, have raised my awareness of how education policy impacts teachers' practices and views about themselves.

Consistent with the philosophy of the Effective Schools Model, social justice and equity are secondary to managerialism and accountability which are indeed valorized. By

continuing to employ the Effective Schools Model to design education policies, policy makers seem to be ignoring those socio-cultural and socio-historical antecedents that have resulted in the systemic inequities inherent in pre- and post-independent St Lucian society. In other words, policies fashioned after the Effective Schools Model may be antithetical to efforts made towards achieving social justice and equity mainly because they are silent on the social inequalities that have historically retarded national development. In this regard, education policy making is dis-embedded from the socio-historical and social-cultural contexts that frame St Lucian society. The overarching question that guides my inquiry seeks to uncover the meanings behind general education policies and how these have impacted the goals of social equity particularly with regard to teacher education. In so doing, I hope to unveil some of the underlying reasons for and motivations behind the apparent dis-embedded approach to education policy development and its impact on programming for teacher education.

It is for this reason that I specifically wish to investigate the status of social justice education in the teacher education programme. I will also explore the views of teacher educators pertaining to social justice and equity in the teacher education programme of the DTEEA. As a corollary, I aim to identify the general education policies and their attendant practices and that may be influencing the shape and content of the teacher education programme. It is necessary to do so since these policies and practices would influence the inclusion or exclusion of social justice education in the teacher education programme. It is critical that those policies be identified and interrogated in order to locate the underlying contradictions in intended policy goals and actual practice.

### **1.5 Research Questions:**

The research questions are as follows:

1. How does the curriculum used at the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration prepare student teachers for social justice teaching?

2. What do teacher educators think about the inclusion of a social justice agenda in the teacher education programme?

I hope to contribute to the continuing thrust towards social and economic equity in St Lucia by refocusing attention on the moral and ethical aspects of teaching as a counterpoint to the continued valorization of and emphasis on the instrumental aspects. It is hoped that the findings would inform policy makers and teacher educators of the gaps and contradictions in stated policies and practices which may indeed impede the progress of reform towards quality education for all. The study is also aimed at broadening the awareness of prospective teachers as well as practising teachers to the notion of social justice education as an alternative discourse on the nature and purpose of their work.

### **1.6 Positionality:**

In congruence with my position, I would not wish or be able to adopt a posture of neutrality as it would be impossible for me to separate my own subjectivities from the very act of doing the research. I will assume the position of ‘the interpretive bricoleur’ who, according to Denzin and Lincoln, ‘understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her own personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting’ ( 2005, p. 6). I therefore subscribe to the position that research is not value free and what is important is that researchers be aware of and declare their biases. This position serves as the platform upon which I could be intellectually free to take a position of agency which, I believe, is critical since my research is ultimately aimed at promoting a level of social transformation in the lives of underserved students and marginalized social groups. Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg (2011) posit that such research follows the critical tradition and

... can be best understood in the context of the empowerment of individuals. Inquiry that aspires to the name “critical” must be connected to an attempt to confront the injustice of a particular society or public

sphere within the society. Research becomes a transformative endeavor unembarrassed by the label “political” and unafraid to consummate a relationship with emancipatory consciousness. Whereas traditional researchers cling to the guardrail of neutrality, critical researchers frequently announce their partisanship in the struggles for a better world. (p. 164)

As the following journal extract reveals, my choice of research methodology evolved over time. The growth in my understanding that social justice research falls under the umbrella of critical research was followed by a wholehearted embrace of my positions as a critical story teller and researcher advocate.

September 9<sup>th</sup> 2011

*I came across the term 'social justice research' and I think it captures my understanding of the type of research that is important and what I want to engage in. It is not research for profit, i.e. the formulation of new knowledge for monetary gain. It is research to ameliorate the lives of the most vulnerable...*

I anticipate that the image of me as a crusader, championing the rights of disadvantaged children may seem hyperbolic to some who may cast me as an idealistic bleeding heart but as a social justice researcher, I embrace the responsibility that I have given myself. Though I still hold firm to this image of the crusader and the passion it conveys, I am ever so mindful, as one who has adopted an ethnographic approach, of the need to maintain balance in my investigations and in my reporting. It is critical that I do so in order to do justice to those on whose behalf I conducted the inquiry. In other words, I will make every attempt to avoid the ‘navel gazing’ that ethnographic researchers have been warned against.

Additionally, in making the decision to use the extracts from my research journal as valid forms of data, I am making use of the auto-ethnographic approach which demands that I acknowledge my dual role of researcher and informant. Since, as a researcher, I have situated myself in the tradition of critical ethnography, I must admit my own subjectivity from the onset, that is, I do not see educational practices as being neutral. Instead, I see



them as being characterized by underlying power relations that reflect contending interests. The purpose of my research is to unearth and to interrogate those power relations in a way that may lead to transformational change. As an informant, I am prepared through my personal narrative and reflections, to reveal and explore my ‘experiences, activities, thoughts, behaviour and perceptions’ (Wellington, 2000, p.118) and to present them as my versions of the inner working of an educational culture with which I am intimately familiar.

And this is why I assert that, with regard to my perspective on the problems facing education in St Lucia, I have made a deliberate turn from passive observer to active participant. I have unreservedly decided to present my report in the first not the third person since my writing will reflect my thoughts on and my understanding of the findings coming out of my research. In other words, I am prepared to own my writing. It is important to note that across the English Speaking Caribbean, writing in the first person is frowned upon and considered to be inappropriate in academic writing. By adopting the first person, I have therefore made a deliberate decision not to conform to the rules of regional academia.

Walcott (1990, p. 145) proclaims, ‘I am entitled to personal opinion: in fieldwork, I am guided by the maxim that you do not have to be neutral to be objective.’ Thus, in as much as I will be reporting from a personal perspective on matters which I think are rooted in ethics and morality, I am comfortable that my interpretation of the data would be fair. In similar vein, I have made the decision to value my personal experiences as a credible source of evidence to illuminate on pertinent aspects of the culture to which I belong. It is my view that I cannot divorce myself from the culture in which I am rooted and with which I am intimately familiar. My very identity is in part shaped by the St Lucian culture. I therefore believe that I am incontrovertibly qualified to speak on and interpret that culture.

In that regard, I view myself as an instrument of the research to both provide and interpret information emerging from my inquiry. Thus my personal narrative is, in some

measure, allegorical to the extent that it may contain interpretative possibilities that could contribute to an understanding of the problem under study. As such, I have included in my report what I have judged to be significant anecdotes from my past as well as excerpts from my research journal which exemplify instances during my working life when the personal and cultural intersect. I consider these excerpts from my past and present to be sources of information that may lead to a more insightful unravelling of the complex and multi-layered issues surrounding the problem under study. Social phenomena are complex, essentially because human beings and their interactions are at the core of all existence. As a corollary, investigation of social phenomena is not a straightforward or de-personalized enterprise that can be undertaken with a stance of neutrality.

I therefore approach this investigation with the viewpoint that, because humans are social beings, we are guided by our individual thought processes that are in turn coloured by our experiences. Consequently, reality is socially constructed and cannot be quantified or atomized into small chunks of 'being'. My position will therefore be guided by Wolcott's acclamation that, 'I do not go about trying to discover a ready-made world; rather, I seek to understand a social world we are continuously in the process of constructing' (1990, p.147). Furthermore, because experiences are so powerfully idiosyncratic in shaping what and how we perceive, there is no one absolute truth that can be held up as indisputable or valid evidence. In other words, reality is a highly subjective construct that could at best be interpreted but not fully grasped. I therefore acknowledge that my interpretations in the field will be influenced by my position as a woman, and as an educator who subscribes to a neo-Marxist political agenda, even though my awareness of my own political stance emerged from without rather than within my own consciousness.

My first two research journal entries which follow, document the initial difficulty which I experienced to identify what I stood for politically together with the disconnect from self and reality that results from a lack of self-knowledge or self-acknowledgement. They highlight my own dysconsciousness, referred to by King as, 'an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and

exploitation by accepting the existing order of things given' (1991, p. 135). These journal entries mark my first attempt to admit to and embrace a social ethic which is a state in opposition to a state of dysconsciousness. King, (1991, p. 135) cites Cox who defines a social ethic as that which rejects the notion that there can be no other alternative to the inequitable social system which presently exists and aspires instead to more equitable social arrangements.

My progress towards the development of a social ethic is as much personal as it is professional since my dysconsciousness represented my inability to name my own marginalization even as I began to respond to the marginalization of poor and disadvantaged groups of students. It is my position that the inability of the CCETT teachers - and that of others whose working conditions are marked by asymmetrical power relations – to speak out against the structural conditions that may have impacted on their ability to work effectively is also a manifestation of 'dysconsciousness'.

July 26<sup>th</sup> 2011

*I am a Marxist, which is something I did not know but felt. I think part of it was my unwillingness to name or acknowledge a position until it was brought to my attention (by Pat), and until I was able to link my “meandering” in my papers to my tendency to move away from myself.*

August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011 (Extract 3)

*I've taken another look at Pat's comments and her exact description was of me being a neo-Marxist. I still do not know how this differentiates from being a Marxist but I think it relates to moving beyond the theory of capital and reproduction to include notions of resistance.*

Particularly, where research into social phenomena is concerned - as in the case of educational research - what serves as evidence emanates from social interactions in which language becomes the key vehicle of communication both in representing thought and in re-presenting the interpretation of those thoughts. Because language is critical in interpreting and re-presenting reality I believe due diligence must be paid to ensure

coherence, completeness and authenticity in reporting research findings. Importantly, since my biases as a researcher, would influence how I interpret the information I will be receiving from the documentary search, participants and from my own knowing, I will accept the position that my interpretations will remain approximations of the truth and therefore partial in nature. It is for this reason that, I subscribe to the view that the most researchers can do it to try 'to get things as "right" as possible' (Wolcott, 1990, p.144), and that is, to sufficiently illuminate an issue in order for it to be understood.

## Chapter 2

### Literature review

#### 2.1 Literature on Social Justice Education:

All major reforms that have occurred in St Lucia and the OECS have primarily focused on improvements in school and teacher quality as the impetus for improving student performance. It is equally important to note that all of these reforms have come in the form of pre-packaged imported prescriptions that are typically attached to conditions for the granting of aid by international funding agencies. Miller, (2009, p.10) identifies four major educational reform movements which have been imported into the region: the Scientific Management Model, 1960s; the Effective School Model, 1970s; the Content Driven Model, 1980s; and the High Standards/High Involvement Model of the 1990s. According to Miller (2009 p.1), in almost all of the reform initiatives, teachers are deemed to be central to educational improvement

To illustrate, the CCETT Project was entirely focused on addressing teachers' instructional practices with regard to literacy. According to Campos, (2001, p. 7) the purpose of the Project was to 'upgrade classroom teacher's (sic) skills so that they become more effective reading teachers in the early primary grades (1-3)' particularly in schools in vulnerable settings. Thus, as in the case of all other reform projects, in the Caribbean, the designers of the CCETT Project made a causal relationship between teacher competence and student performance, mirroring the tendency of policy makers to axiomatically hold teachers responsible for varying levels of students' achievement. Indeed, the Introduction to the CCETT Concept Paper, clearly states that, ' While it is understood that a wide range of systemic issues impact the quality of reading instruction, the Centres of Excellence will focus on improving teacher training' (2001, p.5). Thus while there was an acknowledgement of systemic factors, exclusive attention was placed on improving teachers' pedagogical skills. The fact that no consideration was given to addressing those systemic factors underscores the assumption that teacher quality compensates for all other hindrances to learning.

Significantly, the most recent OECS Education Sector Strategy (OESS) 2012-21 (p.14) reinforces this position in its strategic objectives and outcomes:

Teachers ultimately have the greatest day-to day impact on learner outcomes. The interpretation and translation of the curriculum into classroom activities are in the hands of a teacher. Ensuring a stable, qualified and motivated staff is therefore central to the Vision for the OESS.

The underlying message is that the success or failure of educational reforms ultimately rests with the teacher in the classroom. Other factors which the plan acknowledges may also impact students' performance are limited to those relating to the overall administration and management of education. Minimal or no reference is made to external socio-economic or socio-cultural issues which may be impacting on the ability of teachers to work effectively. For example, the framers of the OESS 2012-21 delineate the risks to educational reform as follows:

lack of political will; restrictive legislation; fluctuating economic circumstances; lack of capacity and resources of the EDMU (*Education Development Management Unit*); ineffective communication and advocacy; inadequate levels of capacity at the national level; environmental disasters; lack of investment in ICT and ineffective and inadequate monitoring and review at the institutional, state and regional levels. (p.xi)

Using the OESS, 2012-21 as the reference, it is logical to assume that teacher competence continues to be given highest and often exclusive priority in recent reforms. It was as a consequence of this practice that I found it necessary, to examine the genesis of the philosophy underpinning this approach to educational reform, particularly with respect to the fact that local reform strategies have traditionally emanated from external institutions. To do so, I examined existing thought on the matter of teacher quality and student performance globally. Angus' observation that, 'One searches in vain for any discussion of ways in which schools might attempt to be effective in a social and cultural, as well as educational sense by dealing with social and cultural barriers to learning' (1993, p.344) contains particular resonance as he makes the point that, with regard to factors affecting

student performance, the hegemonic discourse is one which is essentially apolitical and non-sociological in its conceptualization. As far as the body of work on educational reform is concerned, the bias is against analyses which espouse a more political and socio-cultural perspective. Consequently, it was necessary for me to obtain an understanding of the genesis of this bias.

The current hegemonic discourse, as it pertains to student performance and teachers' work, is based on the premise that education and schooling are neutral forms of enterprise and thus, according to Angus (1993, p. 335), such a perspective advances '... a narrow quest to identify school practices that are correlated with narrowly measured indicators.' On the other hand, there is, as Angus (1993, p. 334) posits, the contrary set of analyses, influenced by the work of Bourdieu, Passeron and Bernstein in the early to late seventies as well as other neo-Marxists theorists such as Collins (1981) whose work highlights the politics of education and the role of schools in the 'microtranslation of macrosociological patterns'. Because it encapsulates both micro and macro variables in its framing of the issues, the latter view presents a fuller interpretation of schooling and education. A more detailed exposition of these two contrasting viewpoints will be presented later in this paper within the discussion on education policy development.

Suffice it to say at this juncture that, at present, what exists is a tension between a strictly instrumentalist, managerial understanding of the teaching/learning process and another which places teachers' work within a wider socio-cultural and socio political macrocosm. Since, as stated previously, much of the educational reform which has been undertaken in St Lucia has predominantly focused on improving teacher competence with little attention paid to social issues, I posit that reform has traditionally been pitched at the micro, technical/instrumentalist level. Angus (1993, p.342) summarizes this mode of educational reform as one which emphasizes, 'direct instruction, time on task, tighter linkages between what is taught and what is tested, continuous monitoring and accountability.' In such a paradigm, the management and surveillance of teachers' work are regarded as key administrative functions which have been institutionalized through high stakes testing, teacher appraisal and school inspectorate schemes. In St Lucia, this is

operationalized through the administration of the Grade 2 and 4 Minimum Standards Test, (MST) the Grade 6 Common Entrance Examination (CE); the Caribbean Examination Council Examination (CXC) as well as the standards - based teacher appraisal scheme. Interestingly, the Report of the Education Task Force on A Review of Universal Secondary Education in St. Lucia (2007) has proposed a re-institution of school performance reviews that would cover such areas as curriculum content, delivery of the curriculum, and assessment.

In the case of St Lucia and the rest of the region, the *raison d'être* for these educational arrangements and reforms lies in the goal of improved educational outcomes as a basis for sustainable social and economic development. Indeed, the OESS 2012-21 policy document states that, 'The overarching goal of education within the OECS as expressed in the OESS is to contribute to the socio-economic advancement of the OECS through a quality education that enables learners of all ages to reach their true potential' (p. vii). Based on student performance at the CXC CSEC examination, the general consensus is that past reform projects have been unable to achieve that goal. It is for this reason that the drafters of the OESS 2012-21 agenda sought to adopt a new approach to education reform. As recently as June 2013, the World Bank reported that:

The average pass rates for standardized tests in core subjects such as English and mathematics are less than 50 per cent, and many students lack basic skills in information and communication technology and other disciplines deemed critical for success in the workplace. Even more worrisome, are the reports of poor student CSEC performance on test items that require critical thinking, analysis or communication. Despite having received up to 11 years of formal education, school leavers often struggle greatly to find employment. (p. 5)

An exploration of alternative reform strategies is therefore justified and the question then becomes what should quality education look like for countries in the English speaking Caribbean. This requires searching for alternative models to education reform. In examining the literature, social justice education emerged as one such alternative.



### **2.1.1 Social Justice:**

Before expounding on the meaning of social justice education, it is important to explain the notion of social justice. To do so, I elected to draw extensively upon the work of John Rawls whose work is referenced by Sen (1990, p. 47) as ‘arguably the most important contribution to moral philosophy in recent decades’ and in that regard is closely related to the development of the concept of social justice in recent times. Fundamentally, social justice is synonymous with the notion of fairness and is therefore perceived as a basic moral imperative whereby all members of society are beneficiaries of the social good. Rawls defines a good as, ‘the satisfaction of a rational desire’ (1971, p. 80) and lists five broad categories of primary social goods: rights, liberties, opportunities, income, wealth and a sense of self-worth (1971, p. 79). Rawls’ theory of social justice hinges upon two principles, (i) the principle of fair equality of opportunity and (ii) the principle of difference. According to the first principle, arrangements made for the achievement of basic liberties in respect of each individual member of a society must be similar to and compatible with those made for all others. Ideally, this guarantees every individual an equal right to basic liberties.

To paraphrase, Rawls’ second principle: any social and economic inequalities that may exist must be so arranged that they do not disadvantage one person over another and relatedly, no form of employment should be protected from these inequalities (1971, p. 53). It is also important to note that Rawls’ theory is based on the notion that social justice is achieved as long as there is consensus among members of the society regarding the manner in which the social good is distributed. In short, consensus is the mechanism through which a society normalizes what is just.

Rawls’ viewpoint speaks to the need for equity across socio-economic classes and in that regard, holds particular relevance for the discussion on social justice in education. More importantly, Rawls’ theorizing foreshadows the discourse surrounding the notion of meritocracy; that is the belief that some individuals have the right to or deserve more of the social good than others. This has relevance for education in St Lucia since it is

generally believed that children deserve the secondary school place they obtain based on their performance in the Common Entrance Examination. The possibility that children may not have had an equal starting point remains unquestioned. Rawls' stance reflects my own philosophical stance and it is for this reason that I deem the following quotation particularly apropos:

Thus it is incorrect that individuals with greater natural endowments and superior character that has made their development possible have a right to a cooperative scheme that enables them to obtain even further benefits in ways that do not contribute to the advantage of others. We do not deserve our place in the distribution of native endowments any more than we deserve our initial starting place in society. That we deserve the superior character that enables us to make the effort to cultivate our abilities is also problematic; for such character depends in good part upon fortunate family and social circumstances in early life for which we can claim no credit. The notion of desert does not apply here. (1971, p. 89)

Rawls' words highlight the injustice associated with inherited advantage and the notion of meritocracy. As a consequence of our colonial past, St. Lucia's education system is inherited from and patterned after the British class system which carries with it, a number of inequalities related to socio-economic status in particular. In view of Rawls' principles of social justice, St. Lucia's education system would not meet the standard of fairness; however, it would be considered just and unproblematic since there would seem to be general consensus across St. Lucian society that it is fair. While Rawls' theory of social justice presents a starting point for a discussion on social justice, more insight was needed to elucidate how the contradiction underlying perceptions of justice and fairness are worked through in the discourse on and process of policy development. Further investigation into the literature revealed two contrasting perspectives on how social justice is conceptualized.

### **2.1.2 Distributive Justice:**

On the one hand, the proponents of Rawls' theory of social justice advance the view that fairness is attained through consensus on the equal apportioning of the social good. In

that way, the mode of apportioning is legitimized and secondly, since technically, no one member of the society is excluded, everyone has an equal opportunity to receive a portion of that social good. This conceptualization of social justice is referred to as **distributive** justice. It is based on the premise that the social good can be portioned out based on established criteria. Generally, the criteria are pegged to a perceived meritocratic social order where each person as a member of a society has an equal chance to benefit from the goods that the society provides.

As such, evidence of justice based on this method of distribution is determined by the outcomes or end results. Strike (1984) refers to this conceptualization of justice as 'equality of results' (p. 414) which is to be realized through committing to Rawls' (1971) earlier concepts of 'equal liberty and the fair value of equal liberty' (1984, p. 414). Strike (1984) proposes that, 'If we need to produce equal results, it is likely that we will need to generate an unequal distribution of resources. Here, however resources will need to be distributed not on a criterion of ability but on a criterion of need' (Strike, p. 414). In that regard, the notion of distributive justice recognizes that differences such as socio-economic class exist among individuals and social groups and therefore acknowledges that they would have diverse needs. It is for this reason that the notion of distributive justice goes beyond equality to emphasize equity as a basic principle in the distribution of the social good. The need for social safety nets and other support mechanisms for less resourced individuals in order to achieve a more even distribution of the social good is based on principle of equity. Various forms of affirmative action introduced in the United States to improve opportunity for minorities and other disadvantaged groups are practical examples of such safety nets. In St Lucia, compensatory arrangements such as the provision of student support services in the form of the text book rental scheme, bursaries, and the school feeding programme result from the notion of an equitable distribution of the social good. Simply put, in order to compensate for their disadvantage, members of particular groups are given more than what they already possess so that they can access, utilize and ultimately benefit from the social good.

In sum, distributive justice functions on two elemental principles: (i) equity of access to the social good and (ii) equity of opportunity. Government policy to increase the number of primary school spaces and to introduce Universal Secondary Education in order that all children have access to primary and secondary education seems to be congruent with both of these principles. Indeed, the Draft Final Report on Post 2015 Consultations in St Lucia declares:

The country has met the target of achieving universal primary education with a net enrolment of 94 percent. The implementation of the policy on Universal secondary education in 2005 has resulted in perfect equality of opportunity for females and males since from 2009 to the present. (2013, p. 5)

Further, the notion of distributive justice is premised on the anticipation that in compensating for the disadvantages, the ultimate outcome of equity would be achieved. The criterion for measuring justice in this case is based on the outcomes resulting from the apportioning of the social good. Each individual member of society is then held responsible for her/his own levels of success or failure. The assumption is that, given access to the resources and the opportunity to utilize those resources through agreed upon social and economic schemes, it is left to the individual to determine his/her life chances. Emphasis is therefore placed on improving the lot of disadvantaged individuals through compensatory measures.

Critiques of distributive justice question its validity on a number of grounds. With regard to the notion of consensus, Wegener (1987, p. 2) contends that in actuality, any apparent consensus on the mode of distribution of the social good is fictitious and illusory since, in no time in history has there been total consensus on standards of justice. Such consensus, he posits, is based on false perceptions and distorted understandings of the social order, particularly among subordinate groups in class based societies. In his view, consensus based on ignorance cannot justifiably be used to legitimize the manner in which the social good is distributed. Wegener's argument may help shed light on the situation in St. Lucia where there is unquestioned acceptance of the inequities in the education system.

Relatedly, this acceptance of educational inequality pertains to the notion of hegemony which explains how social and political arrangements which promote inequality become accepted as common sense even by those who are most disadvantaged by them, in this case, the parents, teachers and even the students in failing schools. In addition, the widespread acceptance of these arrangements facilitates the coercion of such subordinate groups and leads to further perpetuation of the status quo.

A second criticism leveled against the notion of distributive justice is its singular focus on the outcomes of the distribution as the criterion for making judgements about fairness. Runciman (1978) argues that a more holistic construct of social justice should include both an identification of social goods as well as the structure of the society within which the distribution occurs. Thus, Runciman proposes three (3) dimensions of social structure: 'economic class, social prestige and political power' (1978, p. 37) that represent contested areas of vested interests. In Runciman's view, justice can only be measured in terms of the extent to which social institutions limit or delimit people's ability to advance their self-interests. Therefore, both the procedure used to distribute the social goods and the eventual outcome or end result of the mode of distribution must be taken into consideration in determining what is socially just. What emerged out of Runciman's theorizing is the notion of a two pronged approach to an understanding of social justice. This approach reflects the 'bivalent theorising' that Walker (2003) argues is critical in a discussion on social justice since it embraces both 'individual flourishing and structures' (p. 182). To paraphrase, a bivalent approach would encompass both micro and macro analyses of the root causes of injustice as well as the interventions to alleviate that injustice.

Runciman's prescription for a two pronged approach forms the basis for a third criticism of the distributive justice paradigm which holds that, because it focuses on the end result of distribution, there is a shift in emphasis away from the structural barriers that impact entire groups and classes of people to a focus on the individual. Young (2001) warns against this tendency since it invariably pays little attention to the exploitative and

oppressive power relations that inhere in the economic structure of capitalist states. In conceptualizing social justice, Young proffers instead, the concept of the ‘structural group’ (2001, p. 6) which she describes as groups, ‘positioned by social structures that constrain and enable individual lives in ways largely beyond their individual control’ (2001, p. 6). Thus, while within the paradigm of distributive justice, the disadvantage experienced by individuals may be acknowledged and addressed through compensatory mechanisms, broader patterns of discriminatory practices are overlooked and even perpetuated. Gewirtz (1998, p. 477) makes reference to Young, who conceptualized justice as being free from what she outlines as ‘five faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence.’ Thus in this conceptualization, the dismantling of the patterns of oppression is core in the quest for social justice. Because of its emphasis on the individual, one can broadly theorize that the notion of distributive justice (i) operates at the micro level of analysis; (ii) is outcomes based and (iii) is limited in its focus on equity of access and opportunity.

### **2.1.3 Relational Justice:**

In contrast, my search of the literature revealed another construct of social justice that goes beyond equity of access, opportunity and outcomes to include equity of conditions as a necessary component of social justice. In this viewpoint, emphasis is placed on the relations inherent in the structures, relationships and processes that have historically disadvantaged and marginalized ‘structural groups’ (Young, 2001, p. 6): the poor, women and homosexuals, for example. In this regard, the collective biographies of the individuals who make up the structural groups would reveal the systemic discrimination and oppression that the group as a whole is faced with.

This second conceptualization of justice is referred to as **relational** justice, a term employed by Gewirtz (2006) who submits that because distributive justice does not go far enough to address social barriers to success, the paradigm contributes to the maintenance of structural inequality. The notion of relational justice foregrounds the need for

attention to be paid to the dismantling of structural barriers and the improvement of social and material conditions that would allow greater equity in accessing resources and opportunity within and across social groups. Relational justice hinges on two associated concepts (i) the development of human capacity and (ii) equity of social conditions. To paraphrase, social justice is achieved by maximizing human capacity and by engineering conditions in a manner that leads to the full actualization of individuals. In this paradigm, outcomes become inconsequential since, as Lynch and Baker (2005, p.132) argue, egalitarian theories cannot assume that the outcomes of all social processes must be uniformed. This is so because differences in human agency make it impossible to predict or guarantee sameness in outcomes among individuals. Thus, if after the enabling conditions are provided, an individual elects not to take advantage of them, the situation which results from that decision cannot be deemed to be unjust.

Pertaining to maximizing human capacity as a prerequisite for achieving social justice, proponents of relational justice propose the capability approach theorized by Sen (1990). Sen's (1990, p. 43) capability approach (i) qualifies human life as 'a set of "doings and beings" or "functionings" and (ii) bases its judgments about the quality of life against human beings' capability to function. Succinctly put by Nussbaum, human capabilities comprise 'what people are actually able to do and to be – in a way, informed by an intuitive idea of life that is worthy of the dignity of the human being' (2000, p. 222). Working from a feminist perspective, Nussbaum (2000, p. 232-233) proposed ten (10) capabilities which are vital for true self-actualization: (i) life, (ii) bodily health, (iii) bodily integrity, (iv) sense of imagination and thought, (v) emotions, (vi) practical reason, (vii) affiliation, (viii) other species, (ix) play, and (x) control over one's environment. Nussbaum (2002) contends that the efficacy of the human capabilities model is that the capabilities outlined are cross cultural; sufficiently broad to be contested and inclusive of other elements.

With regard to the second component of relational justice, i.e. equality of conditions, the point must be made that the concept extends beyond concern with the material well-being

of persons but includes as well, consideration of emotional and psycho-social needs. Lynch and Baker (2005) explain that equality of conditions ‘...is the belief that people should be as equal as possible in relation to the central conditions of their lives. Equality of conditions is not about trying to make inequalities fairer, or giving people more equal opportunity to become unequal, but about ensuring that everyone has roughly equal prospects for a good life’ (p. 132). In this respect, notions of what constitutes the ‘good life’ extend beyond Rawls’ (1971) two principles of social justice and incorporate Lynch and Baker’s (2005) five critical dimensions of equality: (i) resources, (ii) respect and recognition, (iii) love, care and solidarity, (iv) power and (v) working and learning. These five principles encompass the gamut of wholesome living.

In particular, because it targets structural discrimination, the notion of equity of conditions is germane to an understanding of how social policies aimed at closing the gaps that exist among social groups could be conceptualized and promoted. Of significance, equity of conditions problematizes the principle of meritocracy as applied in classed based capitalist societies by drawing attention to the underlying contradictions that inhere in situations where social goods are disproportionately distributed to privileged groups at the continued expense of others. Simply, the greater the barriers, in number and form that one encounters, the less likely it is for her/him to benefit from the social good. Proponents of relational justice contend that in such situations, the principle of meritocracy is distorted in that, while much emphasis is placed on the freedom that all individuals possess to make decisions that determine their life chances, the social barriers curtailing that freedom are invariably under theorized. Consequently, what pertains in these societies is a false meritocracy where access to the social good is a privilege and not a right.

Because of their insistence on promoting equality of conditions, proponents of relational justice actively advocate policies and actions that attempt to ameliorate the lives of the most disadvantaged. Such attempts, they concede, should lie within the sphere of social and economic policy since it is from there that arrangements for the distribution of



resources such as wealth and other social goods evolve. In that regard, the philosophical underpinning of the concept of relational justice is closely aligned to a neo-Marxist analysis of social structuration together with its critique of the neo-Liberal free market economic structures that typify capitalist societies. One of the main pillars of neo-Marxist thought is that the division of labour practised in capitalist societies is based upon uneven power relations and the exploitation of the less powerful classes that make up a society.

It is important to note that in the view of neo-Marxists (Giroux, 2000; McLaren and Farafmandpur, 2001; Apple, 2004) the term, 'class' goes beyond differentials in socio-economic status to include race and gender; thus accommodating Young's (2001) notion of structural groups. McLaren and Farafmandpur (2001) further postulate that there is a clear nexus between class inequality, capitalism and the attendant 'relations of exploitation and oppression linked to imperialism' (p.142) which has remained largely unquestioned. In accordance with neo-Marxist thought, this nexus remains uninterrogated on a global scale because it allows governments to absolve themselves from taking responsibility for persistent social and economic inequalities that may be linked to the distribution of resources. Apple (2000, p. 239) posits that:

...we are witnessing a process in which the state shifts the blame for inequalities in access and outcome, which it has promised to reduce, from itself onto individual schools, parents, and children. This is, of course, also part of a larger process in which dominant economic groups shift blame for the massive unequal effects of their own misguided decisions from themselves onto the state. The state is then faced with a very real crisis in legitimacy. Given this, we should not be at all surprised that the state will then seek to export this crisis outside itself.

Apple's words quite succinctly illuminate the genesis of the blame game which has characterized discussions on existing inequalities and poor student performance globally. As in the case of St. Lucia, the shifting of blame away from the state is bolstered by the narrow focus on micro instrumentalist issues related to pedagogy, student cognitive abilities and parental involvement. As is also the case in St Lucia, exogenous social

factors, particularly the systemic structural barriers to teaching and learning have been jettisoned from the debate on educational reform. This provides further impetus for members of the dominant social classes to adhere to the false meritocracy which holds individuals in disadvantaged groups responsible for their own academic failure. One can then posit that, within a paradigm framed by a false meritocratic principle, a conceptualization of social justice that seeks to dismantle structural inequities would not be prioritized.

#### **2.1.4 Multi-dimensional Social Justice:**

Aiming for a comprehensive framework that would adequately explain the meaning of social justice, Gewirtz (1998, p. 477) proposes that a ‘multi-dimensional approach’ which combines both distributive and relational dimensions be adopted. In that way, concern for differences that exist among and across individuals as highlighted by proponents of distributive justice would be addressed. The strength of Gewirtz’s (1998) multi-dimensional approach is that it presents a broad spectrum of the micro and macro variables that appertain to the development of a theoretical framework of social justice. This is based on the premise that a multi-dimensional understanding of social justice would support the need for compensatory mechanisms in response to the systemic discrimination experienced by disadvantaged social groups. More importantly, such an approach would extend beyond the imperative of ameliorative compensatory mechanisms, to include the need to dismantle political and economic arrangements that lead to oppression and exploitation of marginalized groups.

In sum, the paradigmatic framework that constitutes the multi-dimensional approach to social justice comprises four different but inter-related concepts: equity of (i) access, (ii) opportunity, (iii) outcomes and (iv) conditions. The overarching principle connecting each of the elements is the maximization of individual capabilities towards the full realization of human potential.

Consequent upon the inclusion of equity of conditions in framing social justice, the multi-dimensional approach presents a more comprehensive understanding of social justice in that it combines both micro and macro-analytical perspectives. As such, it provides a useful framework which could be applied to theorizing on social justice in education. In practical terms, the four elements represent a continuum that comprise critical criteria against which specific educational policies may be measured in order to determine their underlying theoretical construct: access, opportunity, outcomes and conditions. Moreover, it can be argued that because, the notion of equity of conditions addresses the critical component of human capability, it can be viewed as the litmus test for judging the extent to which educational policies seek to facilitate genuine empowerment of individuals.

By way of further explanation, I have provided the following table which synthesizes my interpretation of the distinguishing elements of social justice education that I have outlined: ((i) outcomes, (ii) access, (iii) conditions, (iv) multi-dimensional together with the different orientations in teacher professional reflection (i) individual, (ii) structural, and (iii) individual/structural (i.e., multi-dimensional) that roughly coincide with each of the four elements that I have delineated. My conceptualization is based primarily on the work of Chubbuck (2010) and forms the basis of the theoretical framework that guides my analysis of the status of social justice in the teacher education programme. Each orientation is delineated in terms of what I view as (i) the focus, i.e. its main area of emphasis; (ii) the goal, i.e., its overarching intention and (iii) the criterion for success, i.e., the primary outcome for teacher education with which it is associated.

As can be extrapolated from the table, educational policies and associated curriculum documents that prioritize outcomes and access are consistent with an individual orientation and do not primarily consider the systemic arrangements that impede learning. On the other hand, educational policies that prioritize ameliorating conditions move beyond the individual and emphasize the structural impediments to learning. Finally, policies guided by a multi-dimensional orientation move beyond the individual to consider both the structural and pedagogical barriers to learning. In Chapter Three, I will

expand on this framework by detailing some of the principles and practices that are consonant with the concept of the multi-dimensional orientation to social justice education. I also discuss the application of the framework to my interpretation and analysis of the data.

### Conceptualization of Social Justice Education

<i>Orientation/ Element</i>	<i>Individual</i>		<i>Structural</i>	<i>Individual/Structural</i>
	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Access</i>	<i>Conditions</i>	<i>Multi-Dimensional</i>
<i>(i) Focus</i>	Maximizing returns in educational investments.	Increasing access to resources through compensatory mechanisms.	Eliminating systemic barriers to educational achievement.	Eliminating systemic and pedagogical barriers to student achievement.
<i>(ii) Goal</i>	Parity in student performance through improved teacher quality.	Equalizing opportunity so students could benefit from educational resources.	Providing equitable economic and socio-cultural conditions to optimize achievement for all.	Providing equitable material conditions and quality instruction to optimize achievement.
<i>(iii) Criterion for Success (Expected outcome of training)</i>	An improvement in levels of performance measured through standardized tests.	An increase in the number of individuals from disadvantaged groups gaining access to educational resources.	Equity in the distribution of resources necessary for student achievement across social groups.	Equity in the distribution of resources and in the application of quality pedagogical practices across social groups.

Using this framework, one can theorize that educational policies and, in this case, teacher preparation curricula that fail to address the equalization of conditions in their formulation or implementation may not be categorized as being socially just. As such, a multi-dimensional approach provides a useful tool for interrogating the discourse on education policy development by introducing a criticality which can unpack hegemonic views and their associated practices. It is from this critical standpoint that I investigate existing thought on social justice in education.

### **2.1.5 Social Justice Education:**

The debate surrounding social justice as it pertains to social policy development runs parallel to that which is taking place within the context of educational policy. As such, the varying discourses on social justice education diverge into two broad areas of emphasis: the micro and macro analyses of variables impacting student learning. These differing emphases reflect the philosophical divide between those who view education and schooling as neutral processes and those who view these processes as being culturally and politically driven. The latter formulation emerges out of the critical theoretical perspective of education that situates social policy within the realm of the political economy and its inherent power relations.

In that regard, critical theorists such as, Nussbaum (2003) and Walker, (2003), working within the field of education are more aligned with the capability rather than the outcomes based approach to social justice. As such, while cognizance is taken of the need to achieve equity in access, opportunity and outcomes in the provision and distribution of resources, critical theorists prioritise the need to empower teachers and learners. Within such a philosophical paradigm, reforms which do not include the transformation of social and economic structures would be deemed to be superficial. When situated within the educational sphere, the capabilities approach translates into the dismantling of conditions that work against the full realization of the capabilities and potential of children from minoritised groups. The capabilities approach is shaped in

great measure, by a Freireian philosophy regarding the empowerment of the poor living in societies marked by inequality that is rooted in colonialism. Using descriptors that present a macro analysis of such societies, Freire (1970) contends that these societies are:

characterized by a rigid hierarchical social structure; by the lack of internal markets, since their economy is controlled from the outside; by the exportation of raw materials and the importation of manufactured goods, without a voice in either process; by a precarious and selective educational system whose schools are an instrument of maintaining the status quo... (p.47)

The significance of Freire's analysis is that it highlights (i) the class-based nature of such societies; (ii) the socio-historical antecedents that led to present unequal economic arrangements; (iii) the political role that education plays within such societies in maintaining the inequities inherent in these economic arrangements. With respect to the latter point, education performs the role of maintaining the culture of inequality and is therefore an agent of cultural reproduction. Thus in this instance, education is complicit in advancing the cause of the elites who, according to Freire, 'are anxious to maintain the status quo by allowing only superficial transformations designed to prevent any real change in their power of prescription' (1970, p. 51). As Freire, (1970) intimated, the advancement towards greater equity is consistently resisted by the influential classes. Consequently, the move towards equality is rooted in class struggle.

Congruent with a critical theoretical standpoint, the advancement towards equality in education would come up against resistance from those who benefit most from the arrangements that govern the distribution of resources. Troyna and Vincent (1995, p. 54) cite Myers who refers to this resistance as 'equiphobia' which defines the hostility towards interventions that promote equality in education. For proponents of the relational justice/capabilities approach, educational reforms aimed at providing equity in terms of opportunity, access to space and resources may appear progressive but fall short of being truly transformational. One can surmise that such reforms are a byproduct of the 'equiphobia' existing within the elite classes. Referencing the case of Britain, Troyna

and Vincent (1995) draw attention to what they deem to be some of these compensatory superficial educational reform projects: ‘comprehensive education, mixed ability teaching, integration, anti-racist and multicultural education, antisexist initiatives and ‘girl-friendly schooling’ (p. 152). Troyna and Vincent (1995) explain that though these reforms are presented as being progressive even by reform minded policy makers, they lead to complacency and a perpetuation of structural discrimination.

In the case of St Lucia, one clear example of this is the much touted goal of inclusion which appears in numerous educational policies as a fundamental principle towards the realization of socially just education reforms. In most cases, the term inclusion encapsulates actions taken to provide equal access and opportunities for children facing particular challenges. For example, the provision of ramps for children with physical challenges or extra literacy support for children with low levels of literacy. However, based on the capability approach, a more meaningful understanding of inclusion would incorporate the removal of all hindrances, systemic or otherwise which may impede a child’s capacity to benefit from an equitable distribution of available resources. This would also mean going beyond compensatory mechanisms to include wider social policy that would facilitate a more equitable distribution of wealth in order to improve the material conditions of children from working class families. In this case, it is a matter of leveling the social and economic circumstances so that, irrespective of group differences, all children could benefit equally from education as a social good.

As Clough and Nutbrown (2007) explain, this would entail expanding the notion of access so that children with disabilities or second language learners, for example, enjoy not only physical but, emotional and curricular inclusion as well. This view is in congruence with Lynch and Bakers’ (2005) third dimension of equality, i.e. love, care and solidarity which they aver is critical for wholesome human development. Lynch and Baker (2005, p. 133) argue that if equality of conditions is to be achieved, there must be a commitment to, ‘... ensure that employment, transportation networks and neighbourhoods are structured in such a manner that facilitates caring ...’ among other

actions. In practical terms for example, this would mean that education policy should facilitate the involvement of working class parents in their children's academic life by reducing the distance or cost of transportation to and from schools.

It is clear here that these interventions are outside of the direct control or purview of teachers since they would require the activation of resources held by the state. Lingard and Mills (2007) posit that while teachers make a difference in students' learning, they do not make all of the difference. Thus, in as much as teachers may function as advocates for change, their role in the movement towards social equity is circumscribed by their limited capacity to intervene at the state level. Ultimately, the responsibility for leveling the material and social conditions that promote learning would lie with the state. Any actions undertaken by the state to address those conditions would be political and therefore value-laden in nature. More often than not, the values of those with the power and authority determine the policy trajectory.

This presents a complex dynamic for teachers to negotiate. By dint of their professional standing, teachers belong to the middle class. If, as has been argued by critical theorists, efforts to achieve a more equitable distribution of resources are tied to class struggle, teachers are placed in a unique position of having to advocate on behalf of a social class to which they do not, or no longer, belong. Secondly, teachers must negotiate the tension that results from the opposing role of schools as agents of change on the one hand and agents of reproduction on the other. These issues raise a number of pertinent questions: What is the role of the state in the thrust towards social justice? Do teachers suffer from 'equiphobia'? Can teachers, as members of the middle class advocate on behalf of working class children? Given that teachers, have limited capacity to intervene, what would be the scope and substance of their contribution to a social justice agenda? To what extent can teachers facilitate or hinder efforts towards social equity and what would it take to orient teachers towards social justice? In sum, the question is; what constitutes social justice teacher education? In responding to those questions, consideration must be



given to the fact that teachers are not a homogeneous group and as such, not all may be predisposed to work towards change.

### **2.1.6 Social Justice Teacher Education:**

In order to find answers to what is indeed a complex and multifaceted area of discussion it was important to examine existing thought on the role of teacher education in preparing teachers to teach in a manner that seeks social justice. This is significant because the shape, content and delivery of the curriculum designed for any group of trainees would be a reflection of underlying beliefs about the purpose of the training programme. However, because of the contending theoretical perspectives on social justice education, it was essential to establish a workable definition for social justice teacher education from which to theorize. To do so, I dissected the literature pertaining to the conceptualization and implementation of social justice curricula in teacher education. Because of the historical and economic ties between the Caribbean, Britain and North America, the review of the literature examined education systems of countries who are members of the British Commonwealth such as the English Speaking Caribbean, Britain, Australia, New Zealand as well as Canada and the United States.

Three different orientations in developing pre-service teacher education emerged. These orientations relate to the type and substance of the reflection that teacher education curricula prioritize and promote. Over the years, reflection has become a standard practice in teacher education programmes and the goal of training teachers to become 'reflective practioners' has become the norm. In tracing the inclusion of reflection in teacher education in both North America and Britain, Griffiths (2000, p. 539) notes that 'By 1991, the Modes of Teacher Education Project in England and Wales ... revealed that over 70% of all courses of initial teacher education claimed to be underpinned by a philosophy of reflective practice.' A similar pattern obtains in teacher training institutions in the English Speaking Caribbean. Chubbock (2010, p. 198) posits that, as in the debate surrounding social justice, the differences in orientation to teacher reflection rest on differing views pertaining to two salient and related issues: (i) the cause of

injustice and, (ii) corresponding measures that should be taken to address injustice. Chubbock postulates that:

Some would argue that the cause of inequitable access is best understood through analysis of the individual and thus should be resolved through individual efforts, such as acts of mercy, charity or personal endeavor. Others would argue that the injustice which limits people's access to goods and opportunities exists because of structural inequalities, and thus addressing the injustice requires the transformation of those inequitable structures. Still others would argue that both individual and structural factors affect the level of injustice, in fact feeding off each other, and thus both need attention. (2010, p.198)

Based on Chubbock's (2010) synthesis of reflective orientations which shape social justice teacher education, three different approaches to social justice teacher education programmes emerge:(i) an individual; (ii) a structural/relational approach and (iii) a multi-dimensional approach. It must be noted that Chubbock's (2010) categorization of social justice teacher education into individual, structural/relational and multi-dimensional orientations mirrors Gewirtz's (1998) three dimensional conceptualization of social justice, i.e., the distributive, relational and multi-dimensional approaches. When juxtaposed against each other, Chubbock's categorization of social justice teacher education and Gerwirtz's theorization on social justice present us with a framework which can be used to match the various teacher education programmes with their respective orientations and theoretical bases. This framework thus provides a tool for categorizing and critiquing various teacher education programmes designed to promote social justice.

Based on this framework, one can surmise that with regard to teacher education programmes that promote an individual orientation, the content and delivery of instruction would be aimed at preparing student teachers to reflect upon, respect and recognize differences which may exist among students. The individual orientation is congruent with the distributive justice paradigm in that, emphasis is placed on improving access to education and on improving outcomes for individual members of society through the removal of discriminatory practices. Differentiated instruction can be seen as

one of the strategies congruent with the individual orientation to social justice education and teachers' ability to effectively implement such instruction would be given high regard within this framework. Teacher education models that emphasize an individual orientation would typically be associated with curricula that promote the goal of full access to education through inclusion. Such curricula are, inter alia, implemented through multicultural, anti-sexist, anti-racist, special education and affirmative action programmes. Teacher interventions, in this case, are primarily focused on improving instruction and consequently teachers are required to reflect on the extent to which they have improved learning outcomes for each student.

Chubbock (2010) theorizes that because of the limited focus on the macro social factors impacting on learning, teachers who are trained to adopt an individual orientation in their teaching respond in two ways to struggling learners. In the first case, they may disengage from a child, blaming his/her family background for his/her deficiencies or they may attempt to eradicate 'deficits' which individual children supposedly suffer from by providing them with the necessary, knowledge and skills. Chubbock (2010) explains further that there are cases where teachers may adopt a non-deficit stance, in that they may determine that a student's weakness may not be related to her or him but from school experiences related to instruction, lesson pacing, the content of the curriculum or strained interpersonal relationships. But even in such cases, Chubbock (2010) notes, teachers' interventions that aim to provide necessary skills that students appear to lack are consistent with the deficit model. Here the tendency is for teachers to view themselves as the students' saviors.

With regard to the second model, curricula are designed to orient teachers to look beyond their classroom practices in order to interrogate and reflect on the systemic structural relations that impede students' learning. As such, the structural orientation in social justice teacher education shares an affinity with both the relational justice paradigm and a critical theoretical standpoint. One of the basic tenets of critical theory is that differentials in power relations have their genesis in exploitation of one class by another and reflect the social relations of market driven economies. Blackmoore for example,

contends that ‘markets are based on inequality, envy, greed, desire and choice’ (2000, p. 478) and because of differences in material condition some classes are limited in their ability to make choices. Thus all forms of oppression inclusive of gender and race can be understood within the context of class analysis. In substantiating her viewpoint, Blackmoore (2007) makes reference to the inequalities experienced by women and girls as a result of structural arrangements imposed by international lending agencies on developing nations. Similarly, working from a critical race theoretical standpoint, Leonardo highlights whiteness as a form of capital and racism as a form of exploitation by pointing to the ‘close relationship that exists between economic exploitation and racial oppression’ (2002, p. 30). In both of these examples capitalism is directly linked to the material conditions of disadvantaged societal groups.

This may explain why programmes which prioritize a structural/relational orientation in pre-service teacher education adopt critical pedagogy as an essential component of the curriculum for student teachers. Two of the fundamental tenets of critical pedagogy are (i) consciousness raising which, according to Beyer (2001, p.154), is ‘Understanding and analyzing the linkages between day-to-day practices in schools and larger domains and values that are often linked to social and political realities...’ and (ii) activism powered by a ‘social reconstructionist orientation that seeks to alter class-room practices and provide an impetus for social change’ (Beyer 2001, p. 158). This is in keeping with the Freirean tradition of praxis which critical theorists have embraced as a necessary form of human agency in the movement towards equity and social justice in education. The significance of praxis in relation to social justice education lies in the combined power of action and reflection to overturn cultural norms and practices that marginalize subordinate groups of students.

In keeping with the notion of praxis, critical pedagogy requires that teachers’ reflective practices focus on macro level analyses of issues and factors which impact on teaching/learning processes. Essentially, critical pedagogy problematizes educational programmes that are apolitical in their design. Within this theoretical framework, teachers’ delivery of instruction is perceived as a moral act, informed by their knowledge

of social issues and motivated by a commitment to transform the lives of their students. In consonance with critical theoretical thought, critical pedagogy interrogates the unequal economic structures inherent in capitalist societies and their impact on educational practices. Thus, in the judgement of critical theorists a fundamental component missing from pre-service social justice teacher education is an explicit critiquing of the historical and cultural antecedents of economic and social inequality. This position is enunciated by McLaren, Martin, Farahmandpur and Jaramillo (2001) who claim that,

When teacher education programs with decidedly social justice agendas do deal with the critical educational tradition, even when they studiously prepare their teachers within the context of anti-racist and anti-sexist frameworks, they almost invariably exclude unvarnished critiques of the capitalist state by Marxist scholars' (p.140).

With respect to the critical theoretical and pedagogical paradigms, curriculum as a form of knowledge is subject to interrogation not as a stand-alone construct but as part of the wider context of the economic system and the attendant structural relations which obtain. Moreover, teachers are viewed not merely as technicians, passively transmitting knowledge to students but as 'public intellectuals' (Giroux, 2004 p. 35) and as cultural brokers actively questioning taken for granted curriculum knowledge with the aim of transforming their students' lives. Such interrogation of curriculum translates into a critique of the unequal power relations that typify capitalist states where competition in the market place is the norm.

The third model, i.e. the multi-dimensional approach to social justice teacher education is related to and builds on the work of critical theorists by including both the individual and structural dimensions in the discourse on social justice. Chubbock (2010, p. 202) postulates that '...the teacher who analyses the child's learning experience through both an individual and structural orientation will be better equipped to supply the support and instruction that the child needs individually and to begin to redress the effects of and transform the realities of educational and societal structures that perpetuate learning inequity.' In that regard, curricula designed on the multi-dimensional approach would

orient teachers to interrogate both micro and macro factors that affect student performance.

However, one critical point of note is that in the multi-dimensional approach, very high premium is placed on the development of teacher's technical competence. Thus, in as much as teachers' reflective practices focus on the macro cultural and social conditions that impact on student achievement, teachers are also acutely focused on their own technical competence. This is based on the premise that within the multi-dimensional approach, equity is achieved by eliminating all conditions; be they pedagogical or systemic which may impede students' access to the curriculum.

Indeed, within the multi-dimensional approach as well, the access to quality and effective teaching is perceived as a socially just act which is essential for achieving equity. As such, while teachers cannot be held totally responsible for student academic achievement, their ability to effectively facilitate students' successful negotiation of the school curriculum remains key to transformational educational reform. As Darling-Hammond (2006, p. 1) asserts, '... growing evidence demonstrates that – among all educational resources – teachers' abilities are especially crucial contributors to students learning.' This assertion is supported by her earlier work in which she reported on research which revealed that, '...measures of teacher preparation and certification are by far the strongest correlates of student achievement in reading and mathematics, both before and after controlling for student poverty and language status' (2000, p. 1). Teacher effect is therefore a significant factor in student performance and as a consequence, teacher preparation programmes must ensure that student teachers are equipped with the technical expertise to teach all children effectively.

Lingard (2005, p. 173) indicates that an approach to teaching which combines technical expertise with a social ethic results in 'socially just' and 'productive' pedagogies since teachers' actions in the classroom are morally compelling, intellectually demanding and emotionally satisfying. Lingard (2005) explains that a definition of socially just pedagogies includes three elements, the technical, moral and ethical. As such, teachers

are expected to be highly trained technicians who possess the capacity and commitment to address pedagogical barriers to learning and to deliver the curriculum in a manner which is cognitively accessible to all students. In order to do so, teachers, according to Lingard and Mills (2007), must possess a sound theoretical base and the ability to negotiate the curriculum in a manner that is contextually relevant and connected in space both locally and globally.

It is for this reason that educators such as Lavia (2007) working from a post-colonial perspective, point to the need for teachers, as negotiators of curriculum, to fully appreciate the genesis and lasting impact of the social and economic inequality on educational practices in Caribbean societies. In that regard, Lavia (2007) calls for a critique of colonialism in all of its mutative forms to be embedded in teacher education programmes. A basic requirement of such a critique would be an interrogation of globalization as a colonizing force which continues to shape the form and content of teachers' work. In tandem with the principles of the multi-dimensional approach, Lavia (2007) proposes that pre-service teacher education in the Caribbean be geared towards developing a 'critical professionalism' which 'accepts teaching as a political act, elaborates the centrality of the teacher in relation to society and embodies the notion of a critical, engaged pedagogy' (2007, p. 294). In doing so, Lavia, makes the case for teacher education programmes which promote the politicization and intellectualization of the teaching profession in order that teachers' pedagogical practices make a positive difference in the lives of their students. These practices, as delineated by Lingard and Mills (2007, p. 238), should be 'intellectually demanding, connected to place, space, real and virtual, and biographies, supportive yet demanding, and working with and valuing difference'. These descriptors foreground teaching which is contextualized, focused on students' cognitive development, and respectful of students' needs and differences. From a multi-dimensional perspective, the nature and quality of teachers' daily engagement with students is of paramount importance in teaching for social justice.

In this regard, Haberman(1991, p. 291.) contends that 'teacher acts' require the same level of scrutiny as do reform interventions aimed at addressing systemic inequality.

According to Haberman, the main objective of that scrutiny is to distinguish between ‘the pedagogy of poverty’ and ‘good teaching’ (1991, p. 290). He lists fourteen (14) acts which, when performed to the exclusion of other teaching acts, constitute a pedagogy of poverty and twelve acts (12) that form the core of good teaching.<sup>2</sup> Referencing Haberman’s (1991) distinction, teacher acts associated with the pedagogy of poverty are direct and authoritarian while those characteristic of good pedagogy are indirect and facilitative. Boaler (2002, pp. 248 - 250) concurs with Haberman’s perspective on the importance of teacher acts by detailing three (3) ‘teacher moves’ or learning tasks that may have a positive effect on promoting equitable access to the curriculum: (i) ‘introducing activities through discussion’; (ii) ‘teaching students to explain and justify’; and (iii) ‘making real world contexts accessible’ (p. 248). Boaler (2002, p. 242) asserts that these moves work together to equip disadvantaged groups of students with ways of ‘doing school’ equal to those of their more advantaged counterparts. The ultimate aim, according to Lingard (2007), is ‘to provide a more just re-distribution of intellectual capital’ (p. 261). Therefore, in working towards equity, teachers must be sufficiently competent to foster disadvantaged students’ mastery of both declarative and more importantly, procedural knowledge. Procedural knowledge, in this case, is not limited to the discrete steps that must be followed when learning particular subject related concepts but goes further to include the notion of ‘school learning practices’ which as Boaler, (2002, p. 243) argues would assist those children in knowing how and when to employ relevant learning strategies.

Congruent with the discourse on the significance of teacher competence, Lingard, Mills and Hayes (2006) foreground teachers’ assessment practices as critical elements in social justice education. Simply put, in working towards equity, teachers’ assessment acts are as critically important as their teaching acts. Borrowing from the work of Bernstein on the three message systems of schooling: curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, Lingard et al (2006) postulate that assessment practices have the most profound impact on achieving equity. The significance of assessment within the discourse on equity is acknowledging, as do Barnes, Clarke and Stephens (2000), that assessment should be viewed ‘not as a neutral element in the curriculum, but as a powerful mechanism for the



social construction of competence' (p. 625). Thus the results of various assessments - in particular standardized tests - have traditionally been used to rank, sort, label and assign students thereby reproducing existing inequalities. In that regard, teachers working within a multi-dimensional orientation would be required to be knowledgeable about and skilled in administering alternative forms of assessment, particularly performance based and formative assessment. There is concurrence in the literature (Lingard, Supovitz and Brennan, 1992; Black, 1998) that these assessment practices present more successful outcomes for disadvantaged students. This is so primarily because these forms of assessment cater to student differences and provide the continuous monitoring of student performance and feedback that allow students to participate in their own learning.

In terms of framing the type of curriculum that would prepare teachers to employ the type of teaching and assessment acts that are congruent with the multi-dimensional approach, the research done by Pollock, Deckman, Mira and Shalaby (2010) on preparing pre-service teachers to work with racial inequality holds much promise. Pollock et al (2010) noted three tensions in teaching teachers about racial inequality – each representing a version of the question, 'What can I do?' - which need to be addressed explicitly during pre-service training and throughout teachers' professional careers. In the first version of the question, student teachers are concerned about their ability to apply the appropriate classroom methodologies that relate to abstract theories about race. In the second version, student teachers are concerned about their power as individual educators to work against structural inequality through their classroom practices. In the third version, student teachers question their own personal commitment to become advocates for change in their private lives and in their classroom practices. The researchers propose that by framing teacher education programmes around the responses to these questions, tutors are better able to help student teachers appreciate the breadth and depth of teaching for social justice.

The significance of the work of Pollack et al (2010) is that in a very practical manner, it suggests a comprehensive way forward regarding the main areas of focus that would constitute social justice teacher education. Based on their findings, it can be extrapolated

that in designing the content and delivery of social justice teacher education both with respect to the courses and field work, attention should be paid to: (i) bridging the gap between teachers' knowledge of theory and practice; (ii) balancing teachers' acknowledgement of structural inequality and their individual belief that they each could become agents of change and (iii) merging the emotional with the intellectual so that teachers' personal development with respect to inequality is linked to their professional growth and vice versa. In order to achieve this, the researchers suggest teacher education courses that focus not on problems but on problematica, which more adequately describes the continuous inquiry that must shape teacher education. This would mean that teachers should be oriented to continuously reflect not only on their practices within the classroom but also on the all issues impacting on teaching and learning.

While Pollack et al (2010) offer a broad theoretical guideline on the design of social justice teacher education programmes, McDonald (2005) posits that the most elemental aspect of social justice teacher education is an explicit acknowledgement that, in instances where differentials in power exist among social groups, structurally arranged group privilege and group oppression result in oppression and injustice which must be addressed. Thus, according to McDonald (2005), it is fundamental that, 'social-justice teacher education provide prospective teachers with opportunities to develop respect for individuals' differences and recognize how those differences might be informed by individuals' affiliation with particular social groups, such as those based on race, ethnicity, or class' (p. 422). She contends that an analysis of social justice teacher education should include an appraisal of the opportunities offered to teachers in training to learn that individuals' membership in various social groups do not determine but definitely circumscribe their life chances. As such, McDonald (2005) suggests that social justice teacher education should be framed around an acknowledgement rather than a denial of social group differences.

Maina (2002) foregrounds consciousness raising as one of the pillars of social justice teaching. She therefore emphasizes the need for student teachers, who are being prepared to teach for social justice, to be provided with the opportunity to question existing

knowledge systems and to produce their own knowledge so that they could become ‘socially conscious catalysts for change’. In reporting on a research course which she designed to prepare teachers for social justice teaching Maina proposes objectives and activities that support social justice teacher education. These include: (i) developing the students’ skills to effect social change while helping them to value research as a means to support the changes they would like to make; (ii) developing the students’ confidence to initiate change in the school; (iii) developing their understanding of the importance of thoroughly examining and assessing the need for change and monitoring its status; (iv) exposing the student teachers to instruction and assessment strategies that lead to transformative change; and (v) establishing connections between the lives of the student teachers and the student populations, schools and communities. Collectively, the objectives and activities presented by Maina (2002) bear congruence with both the structural and multi-dimensional orientation to teacher reflection. They therefore offer specific guidelines on the content and delivery of courses aimed at promoting teaching for social justice.

#### **2.1.6.1 Social Justice Teacher Education in the Caribbean:**

In addition to researching the literature on social justice teacher education internationally, it was important to do a similar inquiry with the focus on the English Speaking Caribbean. My main point of inquiry was to determine the extent to which the notion of social justice education - as alternative to the traditional instrumentalist approach to teacher preparation - has entered into the discourse and practice of teacher education regionally and consequently, nationally.

My inquiry revealed a dearth in the research on orienting student teachers to issues of social justice and equity in our teacher education institutions. It may be argued that this silence on social justice in teacher education is emblematic of the insignificant value that Caribbean researchers have placed on issues of justice and fairness in education. Persaud’s (1976) examination of the workings of the hidden curriculum in both teacher education and schools represents one of the earliest attempts at highlighting the

reproductive function of teacher education programmes and the need for teachers to challenge existing social inequality. Persaud, even at that time, surmised that attempts at adding new courses to the teacher education programmes or improving teachers' technical competence would be of little value unless attention was paid to dismantling the hierarchical institutional styles and structures that dominate West Indian society. His analysis therefore bears some resemblance to the structural/relational orientation to social justice teacher education.

While not focusing on teacher education but on practising teachers, Evans (2006), in her research further explores the link between teacher practices and the maintenance of inequality in Jamaican schools. Of note is Evan's assertion that because of the complexity involved in reforming education in Jamaica, one cannot rely on initial teacher education but on changing school conditions that would lead to 'a new way of organizing teachers work' (p. 147). Two of these conditions are (i) the improvement of teachers' technical competence and (ii) the development of an ethos of care. By focusing primarily on school conditions, Evans (2006) does not substantially explore the structural arrangements that impact teaching and learning and as such, her recommendations for educational reform reflect the individual orientation to teacher education. In that regard, Evans' (2006) analysis is limited in scope.

Among Caribbean educators, Lavia's (2007) work stands out as the most incisive and forthright exposition of issues of social equality and justice and the role of teachers in transforming education. One of Lavia's main contributions to the discourse on social justice resides in her call for the inclusion of a post-colonial criticality in teacher education programmes in the Caribbean. As such, Lavia introduces a counter narrative to the market driven neo-Liberal hegemonic discourse that continues to shape education policy in the Caribbean. In that regard, Bristol's (2008) work in which she calls for course content in the form of Critical Action Research to be incorporated in the teacher education programmes follows from Lavia's post-colonial theoretical perspective. Through her analysis of pedagogical practices reflective of the socio-cultural context of a

plantation economy, Bristol (2008) provides a first hint of a multi-dimensional approach to teacher education in the Caribbean.

In contrast, the work undertaken by other Caribbean researchers such as Warrican, Downs and Spencer-Ernandez (2008) and Leacock (2009) does not reflect a critical theoretical perspective. Instead, their research on educational reform and teacher education in Caribbean countries is essentially apolitical. Using the Caribbean Centre for Excellence in Education as their reference, Warrican et al (2008) delineated six areas for teacher training which qualify as exemplary practices: (i) differentiated instruction; (ii) diagnosis of and reflection on students' needs; (iii) curriculum integration; (iv) grouping procedures; (v) school, home, community partnerships; and (v) fostering a disposition of care. Although they acknowledge that teachers are limited in their capacity to overcome non-school conditions that impede student learning, the researchers pay cursory regard to those conditions and simplistically recommend the 'cooperation from policymakers and administrators' (p. 24) to ameliorate systemic conditions that impact on student performance. Their exclusive emphasis on teachers' technical competence as a measurement of best practice is indicative of an individual orientation to teacher education.

Similarly, with respect to improving student outcomes, Leacock (2009) proposes four best practices in which teachers should be trained: (i) dealing with student diversity; (ii) improving skills in content areas and in literacy and numeracy; (iii) diagnosing students' performance and planning appropriately; and (iv) making appropriate use of technology in instruction. The emphasis here is in on instrumentality. Even when Leacock alludes to the need for policy makers to address broader issues pertaining to curriculum, the transfer procedures and the purpose of education, she eschews any in-depth consideration of macro socio-economic and cultural issues. Indeed, Leacock's unquestioning and unqualified use of the term 'less academically-able' (2009, p. 27) to describe children who receive low scores in the Common Entrance Examination is suggestive of an individual orientation and a stance aligned to the deficit model of student learning.

It is noteworthy that Warrican's (2010) most recent work takes a more critical turn by assuming a postcolonial standpoint in his interrogation of (i) the use of the Common Entrance as a transfer mechanism and (ii) the quality of the teacher training programme which he argues 'is more in keeping with the system that supports elitism' (p. 25). His recommendations for improving student outcomes include (i) improving the administrative structure of education; (ii) training teachers in critical literacy; (iii) adopting a new approach to placing students at secondary level; (iv) putting an end to streaming and other hierarchical arrangements in schools; and (v) continuous professional development of teachers in democratic principles. However, absent from Warrican's (2010) synopsis is an explicit discussion of the socio-economic and cultural conditions that impede student learning. Warrican's (2010) foregrounding of critical literacy as the tool through which teachers can effect change is in consonance with the critical theoretical perspective adopted by Lavia (2007) and Bristol (2008). Despite his prioritizing of critical literacy, Warrican's belief in individual teachers' competence to deliver critical literacy as the impetus for change places an inordinate responsibility on teachers for the success or failure of educational reforms. By placing the focus mainly on teachers' classroom practices, Warrican (2010) has shifted the responsibility for system wide improvement from the state to teachers and school administrators. In so doing, Warrican (2010) downplays the role that government public policies, of which education policies are no exception, play in shaping practice.

It is fair to conclude that research on the impact of existing government policy on student performance in the Caribbean is largely non-existent. This failure, on the part of Caribbean educational researchers, to critically interrogate existing education policy has created a vacuum in the research on educational policy development in the region. Moreover, it may have contributed to the continued adoption of practices that preserve rather than reform the region's education systems.

## **2.2 Education Policy Development Globally:**

It therefore became important to engage in an examination of the underlying reasons behind this apparent silence on the impact of education policy on student performance and as a corollary, the exclusion of social justice education from the discourse on teacher education in the region. To do so, it became necessary to examine education policy development in the Caribbean. It must be stated here that education policy, like all other social policy is public policy and must therefore be analysed as part of a network of policies. It should also be noted that since Caribbean countries have historically depended on extra-regional institutions and governments for aid in developing their education systems, the region's educational policy development agenda is located within a global geographical landscape.

Ball's (1993) influential exposition of the complexity of policy analysis posits that policy formulation occurs within a complex and wholistic framework in which policies intertwine and impact upon each other. In one of his more recent writings, Ball (2008, p. 747) details the increasing complexity of policy development in his explanation of how 'new policy communities' consisting of public, private, quasi-governmental and philanthropic agencies form complex networks that influence educational discourse and shape educational policy. Similarly, Weaver-Hightower (2008) postulates that, 'Educational policy might productively be conceptualized with an ecology metaphor. Each policy, thus considered, exists within a complex system that reflects varied international, national, regional and local dynamics' (p. 153). The ecology metaphor is instructive because it allows for an understanding of how global policies - such as those which frame the EFA agenda and the Millennium Development Goals - influence regional and local policy making. Indeed, in most of the project documents which accompany education reform initiatives and in the national Education Sector Development Plans, deliberate and explicit linkages are made with the EFA and the Millennium Development Goals. Consequently, in attempting to understand teacher education policy development, it is imperative that (i) the nexus between general

educational policy and public policy be taken into consideration and (ii) globalization as an external force be examined.

Working from a critical theoretical perspective, Ball (1993) argues that policies should be viewed as cultural texts and discourse with attendant effects that should be analysed within a historical, social and political framework. Weaver-Hightower (2008) delineates some of the critical elements that must be considered in understanding policy by indicating that, ‘... policies are (a) crucial in their physical and graphic form as well as their textual content; (b) multidimensional, with many stakeholders; (c) value laden; (d) intricately tied to other policies and institutions; (e) never straightforward in implementation; and (f) rife with intended and unintended consequences’ (p.153). In other words, in deconstructing policies it is necessary to interrogate both the form and content of policies; whose interests they serve; what and whose values are being promoted; other related policies and institutional arrangements, the differing and contradictory processes involved in policy implementation as well as the eventual outcomes.

Critical theorists have argued that current education discourse is typified by a neo-liberal agenda which by and large valorizes competition among suppliers and consumers of educational products for profit. Elemental to the neo-liberal policy agenda is the requirement of accountability and management systems that are aimed at establishing and monitoring pre-determined standards of educational processes and products. Ball (2003) expounds upon the notion of performativity which, he surmises, characterizes teachers’ response to demands placed on them for more accountability. In addition, he highlights the deleterious impact which performativity has on teachers’ everyday practices and by extension, student performance. Keep (1997) theorizes that, consonant with the neo-liberal policy agenda, education is perceived not as a social, but a ‘positional good’ that offers a competitive advantage to individuals seeking opportunities for material advancement. In that regard, Keep (1997) argues that the beneficiaries of such a competitive situation have a vested interest in ensuring that ‘... the structural barriers that limit the supply of and access to high quality learning opportunities remain in place’



(p. 467). It must be noted that as members of the society, policy makers and teachers - who are themselves policy implementers - would not be exempt from such a tendency. Parents, as well, would use education to give their children a positional advantage over other children and would therefore have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo that perpetuates the hierarchical ordering of schools. Milner, (2008, p. 2) elucidates upon the 'interest convergence' that occurs when various self-interests merge to influence policy and suggests that it is this 'interest convergence' which ultimately maintains or changes education policy. Thus when applied to St Lucia, it can be argued that interests have converged around the continued use of the Common Entrance Examination as a mechanism to maintain what Ball (1997, p.317) characterizes as the 'good school/bad school' designation of schools by those who are most advantaged socially and economically. Adding to the debate, Haberman (1991) posits that the human agency needed to change education policy is absent partly because those persons who have been victim to deleterious educational policies are least likely to demand change. According to Haberman (1991) 'People who have been brutalized are usually not rich sources of compassion' (p. 2). If this is the case, it may be that teachers and parents who experienced the brutality of the St Lucian education system may present the greatest obstacles to change.

Thus, globally, interests have converged around the implementation of a neo-liberal 'education by the bootstrap policy' consistent with an individual orientation to education policy which insists on individual responsibility for academic success. The underlying assumption is that students and schools, by their own efforts can improve academic performance and are therefore responsible for their rate of success or failure. Thrupp (1998, p. 196) refers to this as the 'politics of blame' which he proffers, 'involve an uncompromising stance on school performance in which quality of student achievement is seen as the result of school policies and practices and any reference to broader socio-political factors is ruled out as an excuse for poor performance.' This conceptualization of education decontextualizes the teaching/learning process and reduces it to a simple linear process of measuring inputs and outputs that fits into the global discourse on the need for greater accountability and management systems in education. By way of

illustration, Thrupp (1998) highlights the socio-economic make-up of the student population - or school-mix - as one of the critical factors that have largely been ignored in explaining student performance. Thrupp (1998) contends that the socio-economic make-up of the student population would have an impact on the ease with which schools can be managed and by ignoring that impact, the neo-liberal agenda fails to measure one of the critical conditions affecting the quality of teachers' work.

The net result according to Shahjahan (2011) is that globally, education policy remains silent on issues of socio-economic disadvantage, discrimination and exploitation. One may conclude that the tendency to erase such critical issues from the discourse in education policy development finds support in the lack of educational research in these areas and more importantly, determines the type of educational research undertaken in the region. Shahjahan further theorized that the omission of 'glaring systemic inequities that are privileging some bodies...and some knowledge systems over others...' (2011, p. 199) is consistent with the positivist world view which valorizes empirical forms of evidence. Of equal significance is Angus' (2012, p. 246) observation that this valorization of empirical research is driven by a 'policy as numbers' approach which 'facilitates an educational convergence around an international obsession with test results, limited goals of schooling that rely on teacher and student performativity, and a paradigm of measurement in which dehumanised numbers/scores are the focus of attention.' Empirical forms of evidence rely on the objectiveness of the data collection and interpretation. It is this approach to evidence based policy development which Shahjahan (2011) surmises is responsible for the silencing of the voices of the subjects most affected by injustice. According to Shahjahan, (2011) for educational researchers working in post-colonial contexts, this represents a mono-culture of the mind which steers them away from engaging in forms of qualitative research that could more meaningfully address the very social issues that impact on the pace of reforms.

Taking the full gamut of the discourse of educational policy formulation into consideration, it was important to explore how the omission of systemic inequalities has translated into practice globally. A distillation of the literature on education reform

globally revealed that the School Effectiveness Approach/Effective School Model remains the model of choice from the mid 1960's to present time. Indeed, Angus (1993) and Goldstein and Woodhouse, (2000) among others, have argued that the neo-liberal educational agenda is buttressed by the School Effectiveness Approach in various ways. In tracing the development of the Effective School Model, Coe and Fitz-Gibbon (2006) explain that the model evolved from Edmund's (1979) five-factor model, to Purkey and Smith's (1983) eight factor model and subsequently expanded by Mortimore et al (1988) to twelve factors. Rassool and Mortley reference Sammons et al (1995) who, after examining the Effective School Model internationally, synthesize school effectiveness factors under eleven broad categories.<sup>3</sup> Proponents of the School Effectiveness Approach contend that these key factors constitute mechanisms of effectiveness which when practised result in school success. In every case, the factors are school based. That being the case, the School Effectiveness Approach, according to Rassool and Morley (2000), reflects an apolitical, mechanistic and instrumentalist view of education which severely narrows our understanding of educational processes.

Because of its affinity with the neo-liberal agenda, Angus (2012, p. 233) cites Jones who noted that the Effective School Model fits into the hegemonic discourse of accountability and management which has become part of the 'global architecture of education'. This global architecture is characterized by borrowing and transplanting of policies across countries. In the view of Goldstein and Woodhouse (2000), the Effective School Model appeals to policy makers across the globe because it shifts the responsibility for the attainment of educational standards from the state to the school which is then held solely accountable for student performance. In that regard, The Effective School Model is consistent with the workings of the politics of blame as theorized by Thrupp (1998) and the attendant blame game as postulated by Apple (2000).

In spite of the criticisms levelled against it, the school effectiveness campaign continues to gain currency globally through the network of the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI). Indeed, from as early as 1993, Angus informed that, 'Despite its problems, school effectiveness is a rapidly growing field. There is a

thriving international journal on School Effectiveness and School Improvement, and an annual conference whose proceedings are commercially published' (1993, p. 335). In 2014 for example, the theme for the 27<sup>th</sup> conference was 'Redefining Education, Learning, and Teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Past, Present and Future of Sustainable School Effectiveness.' That conference was held in Indonesia; the 28th conference will be held in Ohio, USA.

Globally, education policies that prioritize the implementation of accountability mechanisms aimed at managing and quantifying student performance and teacher quality have become the norm in planning educational reforms. In this approach, teacher quality is largely regarded as the added value that teachers contribute to the students' cognitive ability. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) ascribes the prioritization of management and accountability mechanisms to the '... new public management approach' which establishes core achievement goals and views '... the site of practice being accountable for the achievement of these goals measured against performance indicators, standardized test results and the like' (p 99). Thus, internationally, teachers' practices come under intense surveillance through mechanisms such as the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) launched in 1997. In this regard, Rassool and Morley (2000, p. 248) contend that approaches which valorize teacher accountability such as the Effective School Model simplify and distort the teaching/learning process by perceiving each child as a 'cognitive unit' and each teacher as 'disembodied intermediary'. Within this paradigm, little attention is placed on developing the whole child or on the complex interactions that occur between teachers and students. As a consequence, the school curriculum is narrowed and only a limited number of student outcomes - particularly those pertaining to cognitive ability - are measured. Such measurable outcomes are congruent with the evidence-based approach to educational research and the 'policy as numbers' approach to educational policy development. Outcomes pertaining to the child's social or cultural attributes are largely neglected.

Secondly, the Effective School Model, according to Goldstein and Woodhouse (2000, p. 354) 'pathologises schools' in that, the discourse on the quality of schools is framed

along the lines of ‘effective’ versus ‘sick’ schools (2000, p. 360). Failing schools are diagnosed as being deficient while supposedly failing students are deemed to be ‘at risk’ and therefore in need of clinical intervention in order to be made well. Wellness is equated with the attainment of pre-established standards. However, because these interventions do not address external variables, schooling is decontextualized and under-theorized. The net result is that poor performance is attributed to individual students and schools. As such, policies associated with the Effective School Model are consistent with the deficit view of student ability since they are based on the assumption that the effects of inequality can be nullified within the confines of the school walls.

### **2.2.1 Impact of Global Education Policy Development on Education Policy in the Caribbean Region:**

A similar pattern obtains in St Lucia where, even today, the Effective School Model continues to have the strongest influence on local educational policy and practices. In the first case, the discourse on education policy development continues to frame reform initiatives in terms that pathologise schools. Relatedly, the need to fix or bring low performing schools back to health remains high on the policy agenda. In this regard, reform initiatives invariably maintain the focus on ameliorating impediments to learning that manifest themselves within the school. By so doing, related policies address problems that may be school ‘*based*’ though not necessarily school ‘*caused*’ according to Thrupp (1998, p. 213).

Secondly, congruent with the Effective School Model, the quality of teachers’ instruction, measured against quantifiable student outcomes, is regarded in the region as the most critical factor in improving student performance. The politics by numbers approach has therefore been adopted in designing local and regional educational policies. In that regard, the design of the CCETT Project in 2003 and the ongoing Basic Education Enhancement Project (BEEP) as well as the Minimum Standards Tests administered in St Lucia and in the other OECS countries have their genesis in policies consistent with the principles of the School Effectiveness Approach. These involve, inter alia, a focus on (i)

increasing accountability of principals and teachers; (ii) establishing measurable standards of performance; (iii) enhancing teachers' technical capacity; (iv) fostering competition among schools; and (v) sustained monitoring and surveillance of schools.

Thirdly, the discourse surrounding educational policy development is driven by the politics of erasure. In the case of St Lucia, the politics of erasure would include a silence on classism, differentials in language and geographical location, gender bias and 'pigmentocracy'. The latter refers to the categorizing and valuing of persons according to complexion. Jules (2012, p. 3) hints at the functioning of the politics of erasure in the discourse on education policy development in the Caribbean region when he asserts that, 'The equity imperative is still hidden from view and the most dramatic indicator of this is the percentage of the cohort who are "deemed unable" to sit CSEC.' This silence on issues of equity has created a gap in policy analysis, particularly with regard to social justice in teacher education programmes.

In order to understand the reason behind that silence, I examined the literature with respect to two broad areas of focus; the processes that attend the formulation of: (i) general educational policy and (ii) teacher education policy in the Caribbean. In surveying the work of Caribbean educators and researchers it became clear that while they make reference to educational policies in their respective contributions, they do not examine specific policies pertaining to teacher education in relation to social or educational equity. It is useful to note here that at present, St Lucia has been selected as the only Caribbean country in the English Speaking Caribbean to participate in the Post 2015 MDG agenda and as such, local policy is actively being formulated within a global context. Using the ecology metaphor of policy development, I kept the focus on the interplay between local and global imperatives which, in large measure, will shape teacher education policy in the near future.

The review of the literature revealed a scarcity in research within the Caribbean context that addresses the nexus between the two areas of policy formulation or on the impact of globalization on teacher education. Of note is the extensive work done by Miller (2002,

2009) on teacher education in the Caribbean. However, Miller offers more of a descriptive and historical account of the development of the various arrangements and policies that have been implemented for teacher training rather than an analytical one. On the other hand, Isaac (2001) provides a comprehensive analysis of the impact of international agencies such as CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) on both general and educational policy in the Caribbean. Isaac's work re-established the complex and multi-layered nature of policy making and is useful in that her analysis is centered on an examination of the OECS Reform strategy which was shaped by the PPP and funded by CIDA.

Although Isaac (2001) gives some consideration to teacher education as a subset of policy, her analysis does not extensively detail how the global or public policy agendas translate into teacher education policy formulation per se. In as much as she identified social equity as one of the policy objectives which had been given priority in reforming education, she did not explicate on policies that were formulated to translate that objective into teachers' practice. Jennings' (2001), work, detailing the gap between policy and practice in Commonwealth Caribbean teacher education systems focuses on the effectiveness of the existing implementation mechanisms but not on the policies themselves. While Bristol (2008) provides contextual information on the historical antecedents of Caribbean education systems, she delves more deeply into the structures and practices that frame teacher education programmes and not the underlying policies from which they evolve.

Of interest are the observations made by Jules (2006) with respect to the deleterious influence of international lending and donor agencies on educational planning in the OECS. Jules' (2006) work is critical because it sheds light on the specific constraints that educational planners in St Lucia and the wider Caribbean face in attempting to shape educational policies that respond to the needs of our education systems. It is as a consequence of these constraints that Jules (2012) contends that critical structural reforms remain untouched. This is consistent with Jules' (2012) assertion that regionally, poor student performance is systemic and not a result of individual failure. In this regard,

Jules' (2006) structural/relational perspective on issues affecting learning is congruent with Lavia's (2007) critical theoretical viewpoint. Together, they constitute a minority viewpoint within the discourse on educational policy development in the English Speaking Caribbean.



## Chapter 3:

### Methodology and Methods of Collection and Data Analysis

#### Introduction

We have to continue to do the best and most socially just research possible. This means that we have to continue to challenge the conditions which seek to frame us otherwise, employing theoretical and methodological bricolage in the quest for social justice. Sikes (2006, p.7)

I preface this chapter with the quotation from Sikes (2006) to signal to the reader that I have decided to challenge some of the canonical research practices which have colonized how research is carried out and judged in the Caribbean. These include inter alia, valorization of notions such as objectivity, quantifiable evidence, generalizable findings and a detached reporting style. In the main, these notions represent what Shahjahan (2011, p. 181) describes as ‘...some of the colonial vestiges in educational policy, research, and neoliberal reform’ which have come to dominate the discourse on educational research and policy development.

The move away from this hegemonic discourse is important because, at present, much of the research which dominates education policy development in St Lucia excludes diverse ways of knowing such as personal experiences to the extent that, the voices of those for whom the policies are developed continue to be marginalized. Smith (1999) argues that in post-colonial societies, research projects must seek to reverse the harm done to indigenous and marginalized groups which was facilitated through scientifically oriented research methodologies. Consequently, Smith (1999, p. 16) asserts that, ‘... the responsibility of researchers is not simply to share surface information (pamphlet knowledge) but to share theories and analyses which inform the way knowledge and information are constructed and represented.’ This is achieved through the application of decolonising methodologies which more adequately capture the voice and maintain the dignity of the researched.

It is in light of the need to find transformative methodologies that I reference the work of Denzin and Lincoln (2005) who advise that the critical researcher break away from traditional research orthodoxy and adopt the stance of the bricoleur who makes use of the variety of methodological choices available to her instead of being shackled to one specific strategy. Methodological bricolage is therefore purposeful, eclectic and pragmatic.

Thus a critical theoretical approach to research presents me with the methodological tools to challenge the long held assumptions about educational research.

### **3.1 Rationale:**

Critical theorists argue that critical research is purposefully transformative. For example Kincheloe and McLaren and Steinberg (2011, p.164) assert that ‘Inquiry that aspires to the name “critical” must be connected to an attempt to confront the injustice of a particular society or public sphere within the society.’ More specifically, in making reference to the field of educational research, Griffiths (2009) asserts that, critical research, ‘aims at understanding, uncovering, illuminating, and /or transforming how educational aims, dilemmas, tensions and hopes are related to social divisions and power differentials’ (p. 1). Essentially, a critical theoretical perspective provides the philosophical basis for work rooted in advocacy and motivated by the goal of transformative change.

In that regard, I fully subscribe to Lather’s position that since education and research are not neutral, researchers should, ‘... no longer apologize for unabashedly ideological research and its open commitment to using research to criticize and change the status quo’ (1986, p.67). Thus, I unreservedly appropriate Lather’s phrase and thus locate my work within the tradition of ‘openly ideological research’ (1986, p.63). This unequivocal declaration of my philosophical position did not come easy as my journey into critical theory was marked by periods of self-doubt and self-questioning which dogged me at the initial stages of the research process. The self-doubt arose out of my own discomfort

with critical research, which by nature requires that the researcher remains unapologetically political while gathering information that is subjective and non-quantifiable.

Such partisan research is antithetical to the detached, apolitical positivistic approach to research and to the empirical forms of evidence that I alluded to in the introduction to this chapter. My discomfort arose out of the tension associated with my embracing of a criticality and my knowledge of the low status often ascribed to critical research and other qualitative research approaches. As such, the overhanging questions were always: “How would my peers receive my research?” and “Would they see my research as valid?” However, in spite of the initial self-questioning and self-doubt, once I had resolved to conduct my research in the spirit of advocacy, my decision to adopt a critical theoretical perspective to inform the philosophical direction of my research prompted my decision to employ a qualitative research design. This design would attempt to question not the ‘what’, the ‘how’ or ‘how many’ with regard to social justice and teacher education but more significantly, the ‘why’ and the ‘why not’. In other words, I was seeking evidence that was substantively subjective and non-quantifiable.

This meant that I needed to adopt research methodologies that accommodated an excavation of the often unspoken and deeply hidden meanings embedded in the discourses on teacher preparation presently obtaining in St Lucia. This quest is complicated by the knowledge that in the realm of human interaction, there is no one true meaning and that truth is relative because it is ever changing, idiosyncratic and both historically and contextually bound. This is in keeping with the principles of critical hermeneutics which posit that the best the researcher can do is to present her own subjective interpretation of the information that she has gathered from her various data sources.

However, the advantage of a critical hermeneutical approach is that, according to Kincheloe and McLaren (2000, p. 286) the hermeneutical researcher can ‘produce thick descriptions’ and in so doing is able to contextualize and unpeel the layered meanings

hidden in policies. In addition, since, as Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg (2011, P. 164) posit, there is no single critical theory which could be packaged ‘as a universal grammar of revolutionary thought objectified and reduced to discrete formulaic pronouncements or strategies’, my adoption of a critical theoretical perspective is consistent with the approach associated with the methodological bricoleur.

Also, I was guided by Grossman and McDonald’s observation that, ‘... teacher education exists at the nexus of multiple institutional and policy contexts’, two of which are the national and institutional. (2008, p. 185). As such, I remained cognizant of the fact that because teacher education policy is a subset of general education policy, my description and interpretation of the discourse on social justice would go beyond the walls of the DTEEA. Thus, while I concentrated my interrogation on deconstructing the curriculum practices at the DTEEA, I was by extension, interrogating the policy direction of the Ministry of Education where I worked. In other words, I was operating from multiple sites in that, my investigative lens were focused directly at the DTEEA while I was extracting data from my day to day interactions within the Ministry of Education and from my past and experiences in the field to make sense of the information I was receiving.

Auto-ethnography:

My decision to use my own knowledge and experiences as an instrument to gather and analyse information led me to utilize elements of auto-ethnography in conjunction with a critical theoretical approach in the design of my research

Auto-ethnography falls under the broad umbrella of narrative /autobiographical research. Ellis, Adams, and Bochner (2011) define auto-ethnography as ‘an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experiences (auto) in order to understand cultural experiences (ethno)’ (p.1). Succinctly put, auto-ethnography has the capacity to make the personal political (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The personal experiences are expressed through anecdotes which Ellis et al (2011, p. 6) refer to as “epiphanies”. They define epiphanies as ‘remembered

moments that significantly impacted the trajectory of a person's life... these epiphanies reveal ways a person could negotiate "intense situations" and "effects that linger – recollections, memories, images, feelings – long after a crucial incident is supposedly finished". Epiphanies translate into the kind of non-quantifiable evidence that gives voice to personal experiences. Consequently, they represent more authentic and direct forms of knowing that more adequately, according to Griffiths and Macleod (2008, p. 138), 'capture the nuances of extremely complex situations' that are useful in research which is aimed at informing education policy. Importantly, the use of anecdotes is aligned with Smith's (1999) call for researchers to use testimonies, storytelling and remembering, among others, as strategies to decolonize research.

Further, auto-ethnography supports my decision to undertake openly ideological research because as Ellis et al (2011, p. 3) explain '...autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist.' In effect, auto-ethnography together with critical theory provided me with the framework to openly situate my subjective critique of the discourse on social justice in St Lucia within the wider cultural and social milieu of educational policy making.

Finally, in detailing the processes of auto-ethnography, Ellis et al (2011) recommend that auto-ethnographers go beyond their own experiences in order to connect with those of other members of the culture under survey and this 'might require comparing and contrasting personal experience against existing research, interviewing cultural members, and/or examining relevant cultural artifacts' (p. 9). Taking their recommendation into consideration, I decided to incorporate multiple perspectives by seeking the views of other participants as well as textual information contained in relevant documents to collect and analyze my data.

### 3.2 Reflexivity:

In keeping with my stance to employ theoretical and methodological bricolage, it was imperative that I re-evaluated existing notions for their usefulness to my research and to be transparent and honest in disclosing the choices that I made. Transparency and honesty be transparent and honest in disclosing the choices that I made. Transparency and honesty are key aspects of truthfulness which is facilitated through the exercise of reflexivity. With regard to reflexivity, Gergen and Gergen (2000, p. 1027) explain that,

... investigators seek ways of demonstrating to their audiences their historical, and geographic situatedness, their personal investments in the research, various biases they bring to the work, their surprises and “undoings” in the process of the research endeavor, the ways in which their choices of literary tropes lend rhetorical force to the research report, and/or the ways they have avoided or suppressed certain points of view.

The need for full disclosure and truthfulness makes it imperative that I acknowledge my alignment with the view expressed by Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011, p. 32) which states that ‘... when terms such as reliability, validity, and generalizability are applied to autoethnography, the context, meaning and utility of these terms are altered.’

I therefore admit my adoption of Ellis et al’s (2011) position that notions of reliability relate to the auto-ethnographer’s credibility and in essence respond to how believable her description of her experiences is vis a vis available information. They describe validity in terms of the usefulness of the stories told by the ethnographer. Here, I refer to the work of Lather (1986, p. 78) that spoke to the need for catalytic validity as a criterion for judging the quality of research that is openly ideological. Lather (1986) referenced catalytic validity as ‘some documentation that the research process has led to insight and ideally, activism on the part of the respondents.’ As a participant in the research, I left myself open to the moments of insight and activism that may emerge.

Finally, pertaining to generalizability, Ellis and Bochner (2000, p. 751) explain that, ‘A story’s generalizability is constantly being tested by readers as they determine if it speaks to them about their experiences or about the lives of others they know.’ Similarly, a story

should be able to tell the reader about the lives of people they may not know. I therefore subscribe to Ellis and Bochner's (2000) admonition that the researcher parts ways with the quest for a generalizable objectivity that can be replicated universally and to adopt instead, an approach which privileges the rich data contained in personal experiences and stories. My commitment to maintain a reflexive stance also means that I am prepared to disclose instances when contradictions arise in my stated beliefs and in my actions. This is because I first want to convey the moral dilemma experienced in admitting such contradictions and secondly, to communicate to the reader, my desire to be transparent and authentic in my selection of evidence.

It is in this vein that I've shared the following anecdote from my journal extract. It exemplifies my own dysconsciousness and chronicles the disequilibrium I experienced when I realised that I too was demonstrating some of the same biases that I was vehemently opposed to. By remaining reflexive, I am therefore able to be self-critical in a research context which frowns upon such personal confessions. The inclusion of such a disclosure resonates with Kaomea's (2003, p. 23) observation of postcolonial Hawaiian scholarship of which she states that, 'In the recent past, such uncomfortable and potentially self-critical studies have been largely absent...' As such, I am willing to express my desire to be self-critical and to be both subject and object of my research.

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*Something happened this week which has caused some discomfort in me. In fact, I'm finding it difficult to write about because it has caused me to admit some things about myself that I truly do not subscribe to and have been speaking out against.*

*I was reading an article by Zeichner where he was stating that teachers are often treated in a subservient way especially in matters related to curriculum and instruction. Zeichner was saying that teachers are rarely given the opportunity to bring their expertise to improve learning. On the contrary, their knowledge is sidelined while pre-packaged programmes are promoted by those in positions of power. This is a view that I wholeheartedly agree with as I do believe that more premium should be*

*placed on teachers' knowledge and experiences. This is exactly what I have been advocating. But then it hit me. At the time when my colleague and I were trying to design an intervention for the George Charles Secondary, it had not occurred to either one of us that we should or could have invited the teachers of the school to come up with a plan or to even present ideas which could guide the shape of the intervention. This on reflection has made me realise that I too was complicit in placing the teachers at George Charles Secondary in a subservient position. It tells me that I too am not above criticism and that, in spite of my growing awareness, I'm still a product of my culture...*

Consequently, as subject of my research, I readily admit that my main preoccupation in the field was to gather data that would assist me in understanding and illuminating deeply rooted cultural practices. As object of my research, I openly admit that I too constitute a research site, therefore my beliefs and practices are subject to scrutiny. While the incorporation of data from multiple sites and multiple sources is in synch with the tradition of triangulation in which the researcher employs different methods to validate research findings, I prefer to view the selection of my sources as an example of crystallization. Richardson (2000, p. 935) explicates that crystallization rejects a three-dimensional approach to our understanding of the world by eschewing the traditional ideas of validity and by providing researchers '... with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic.' Therefore, even as our knowledge of a subject grows we recognize that there is much more to know.

Finally, I point to the fact that, in referencing my past experiences, I would be drawing from my memory which, because of the passage of time and changing circumstances may be fallible and therefore open to dispute.

### **3.3 Methods:**

For purposes of reporting, I have separated the sections on data collection and analysis. However, it is misleading to assume that these two processes were undertaken separately. As Janesick (2000) observes, 'Qualitative research design is an act of interpretation from beginning to end' (p. 395) since qualitative researchers are continuously involved in the processes of generating and testing hypotheses as well as reformulating research



questions based on the insights which emerge. It means therefore that data collection and analysis do not occur in a linear fashion but are carried out simultaneously and recursively.

To exemplify, Wellington (2000) emphasizes the wholistic nature of qualitative research when he points to the integral role of data analysis in the research process. Wellington (2000, p. 134) advises that, ‘Data analysis is part of the research cycle, not a discrete phase near the end of a research plan. It must begin early, in order to influence emerging research design and future data collection, i.e. it is formative, not summative.’ For this reason my collection and analysis of the data were messy, tentative at times, and constantly evolving from the beginning of the field work and to the end of the analysis. I will first report on matters related to ethics and access in relation to the data collection process. I will then detail my experiences collecting the data and subsequently brief the reader on the data analysis process.

### **3.3.1 Ethics and Access:**

In order to collect the data that would allow me to answer the questions which guided my research, I opted to source information from my personal narrative which constituted my past and present experiences, curriculum related documents available at the DTEEA and from a selection of tutors as well as student teachers. I will detail these under the section that deals with data sources and sampling.

I was aware that as I extracted anecdotes and memories from my personal narrative, I would inevitably be including persons who had not consented to be part of my research. However where possible, I sought to gain permission from persons whose identities could be revealed because of their positions. Thus, I requested and gained permission from the chief education officer to use the email exchange between me and him. In cases where it was not feasible to gain permission from persons such as the principals and teachers, I reported on past events sensitively and respectfully so as not to compromise their reputations. I have decided to use the actual names of the schools that I’ve included in

my report but I've attempted to protect the anonymity of the teachers by using pseudonyms.

Gaining access to the participants and to the relevant documents was relatively easy. After gaining ethical clearance from the University of Sheffield and formal consent from the Principal of the College to enter the College for the purpose of my research, I was able to organize to meet with the faculty and with the student teachers. I presented all the participants with written consent forms and participant information sheets which they read and signed.

All of the selected faculty members were past colleagues of mine, having been on staff with them at various times in my professional career. Because of the relationships that we had established over the years, they were more than acquaintances and the familiarity we shared made it easy to establish trust between them and me. Their desire to participate in the research was unreservedly enthusiastic and therefore, after informing them of the nature and purpose of the study, they freely volunteered to provide the necessary information. I also gained access to significant curriculum related documents and through the tutors, I was able to obtain their specific course outlines. Importantly, I received the assistance from one of the tutors who served as the contact person with other college tutors who were not key participants. She assisted in identifying and setting up meetings with the group of student participants and with other faculty members. Because the student teachers had already written their final examinations, they were out of class and therefore more readily available to meet with me. As in the case of the tutors, I informed them of the nature and purpose of the research. However, I took particular care to assure them of anonymity which for them would have been more of a concern. That assurance was based on my knowledge that their identities would not be revealed if their colleagues or others involved in education in St Lucia read my account.

### **3.3.2 Data Sources and Sampling:**

The choice of sample was purposive. As such, I purposefully selected a sample that would provide me with the most useful and comprehensive forms of information that I

would require. Cohen et al (2000, p. 104) observe that the cases included in purposive sampling are not representative of the total population but more importantly, 'it is also deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased.' Because my choice of sample hinged on my specific needs and purpose, it is biased and not representative of the entire faculty or student body. However, I view this more as an advantage than a disadvantage since it is consistent with my decision to be openly ideological.

Another factor for consideration was time. On the one hand, the demands of my job gave me limited time and as a result it was more practical that I based my sampling on a selection of sources with which I could interact as expeditiously as possible. At the same time, my decision to use purposive sampling made it possible for me to co-opt my personal contacts at the college into helping me identify, arrange and gain access to other sources, thus lessening the time that would have been required to undertake such activities.

### **3.3.2.1 College Tutors:**

The college tutors were deliberately chosen because they taught the two courses which, I judged would provide the most relevant information on the status of social justice teaching at the DTEEA. The tutors' interpretation of the objectives of the courses was therefore essential in obtaining information on the actual implementation of the courses. The first tutor teaches the course entitled, 'The Social and Cultural Foundations of Education' and as the title implies, would most likely contain subject matter that pertains to social issues and their impact on student learning. The second tutor teaches the other compulsory foundational course: 'Techniques in Classroom Investigation'. I thought that it was necessary for me to determine the particular approach to research promoted and valorized by the DTEEA since this would be an indication of the faculty's stance on the purpose of education, and educational research. In that way, I surmised that I would be able to discern, from the tutor as well as from the course material itself, the value ascribed to social justice education by the institution.

The third faculty member provided information on the historical development of the teacher preparation programme and insight into the overall organization of the teacher education programme.

### **3.3.2.2 Student Teachers:**

I also selected four Year Two student teachers. The group consisted of three female student teachers who had completed the Associate Degree in Primary Education, while the fourth was a male student who had completed the Secondary Education programme. All four of the student teachers had taught before attending the Division and therefore had some classroom teaching experience. It was critical that I found out from students any experiences they had had to learn about social justice teaching via their course work. Their input was necessary in order to corroborate and further illuminate the information given by the tutors. I purposefully decided on Year Two students because I needed to have a group of students who had covered and completed the entire teacher preparation programme as it is currently designed.

### **3.3.3 Personal Narrative:**

Since my present experiences constituted a significant part of my data source, my research journal became a key repository of the thoughts and anecdotes which I started recording from the beginning of the research process. My memory was also an important resource as I recalled and referenced past experiences that seemed to be particularly relevant and connected to some of the salient issues that I was interrogating through the research questions. The information expressed through my personal narrative communicates my interpretations of some of the social and cultural practices that have molded St Lucia's education system.

### **3.3.4 Documents:**

My selection of the documents that I would use to gather data was based on the assumption that policy texts are not neutral or abstract documents. As Denzin and

Lincoln (2000, p. 642) assert texts ‘... are not transparent representations of organizational routines, or of decision-making processes. They are situated constructs, particular kinds of representations shaped by certain conventions and understandings.’ In that regard, the policies that govern the practices adopted by the DTEEA are developed out of a particular socio-cultural context and are borne out of a philosophical standpoint that shapes the very ethos of the institution. That philosophical position is articulated through the various policy statements contained in the documents that have been issued to faculty and students. These policy statements are fundamentally, statements of intent and therefore serve as guideposts for developing the specific competencies, dispositions and knowledge that the institution deems to be commensurate with the profile of the teacher.

These statements of intent take the form of goals, objectives, outcomes, mission and vision statements crafted into policy documents. In the case of the DTEEA, I selected to interrogate the following policy documents: (i) the Regulations for the Associate Degree in Education for the Academic Year 2012-2014; (ii) The Associate Degree Secondary Programme Outline; (iii) The Associate Degree Primary Programme Outline; (iv) various course outlines.

### **3.4 Methods of Data Collection:**

#### **3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviewing:**

Policy documents encode the philosophical position of the institutions from which they emerge and thus express how the institution views itself. However, the translation of an institution’s policy into actual practice is carried out primarily through the behaviours, actions and interactions of the actors who fall within its ambit. In the case of the DTEEA, this would involve the faculty and the student teachers as they negotiate the curriculum. In order to gain insight into the unobservable, such as the thoughts, perceptions, values, biases, attitudes and feelings of the key participants, I elected to conduct semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with the tutors and a group interview with the students. My main preoccupation, in that regard, was to uncover their deepest understanding and

perspectives on social justice teacher education vis a vis the existing teacher preparation programme.

I decided to use semi-structured interviews because I wished to reduce the formality of my interactions by maintaining a conversational tone while at the same time, incorporating some level of structure through guiding questions. Robson (1994, p. 231) explains that in semi-structured interviews, the interviewer prepares a set of guiding questions but she has the freedom to make modifications to their order or to their wording. She may also provide explanations, omit questions which she may deem to be unsuitable in the case of a particular interviewee or she may incorporate additional ones.

In advance of the interviews, I had prepared an original list of five open-ended questions for the selected college lecturers and six for the former dean. I had also drafted a list of eleven questions for the group interview with the student teachers. I first worked out a crude preliminary list of questions based on each of the research questions. I then reformulated the questions after I had classified and categorized broad themes and questions which had started emerging from my reading of the literature and from the data that I had started collecting. However, the original list of questions expanded significantly as the interviews proceeded. Further, after the first and second interview, I made some slight refinements to the original list so that the questions were appropriately suited to each participant.

The flexibility offered by the semi-structured interview was enhanced through the use of open ended questions. The open-endedness of the questions allowed the participants to be expansive in their responses. Their elaborations enabled me to pose more questions which then provided more information and greater insight into their views.

Moreover, the flexibility and freedom that I was able to achieve through the semi-structured interviews resulted in a relaxed, conversational atmosphere which allowed the participants to turn the table and direct questions at me, seek clarification, offer their observations and make comments outside of the questions that I posed to them. Each interview was recorded and lasted for approximately one hour. Though I took note of

significant points which arose during the interviews, I transcribed the recordings at a later date.

I conducted the interviews at two venues: on campus and in my office at the Ministry of Education. Because they felt they would face fewer interruptions if the interviews were done away from the college campus, the two college tutors opted to be interviewed in my office. The interview with the dean of programming was carried out on campus.

I selected to conduct a group interview with the students because of the advantages that reside in bringing together participants such as students and teachers, in one location and at the same time. Wellington (2000) suggests that group interviews are beneficial because, 'The interviewees may feel safer, more secure and at ease if they are with their peers... They are also more likely to relax, 'warm-up' and jog each other's memories and thoughts' (p. 81). Indeed the student teachers appeared comfortable and did prod each other throughout the course of the interview.

The interview with the students was conducted on campus because I wanted the students to feel comfortable and secure in surroundings with which they were familiar so that they would be more at ease to express their views. Secondly, I wanted to ensure that any differences in status between them and me were minimized. I indicated to the students that they were to see me not as a senior Ministry official but as an equal who, just as they were, was following a course of study.

### **3.4.2 Journalling:**

My entries were not written on a daily basis but coincided with those critical moments which provoked deep reflection and introspection. Such moments typically arose out of my interactions with other policy personnel, educators and members of the public. I started documenting these moments from as early as two years before I had actually undertaken the field work. In addition to critical moments, I recorded observations, ideas and hunches which emerged during the conduct of the research as these helped to guide and clarify theoretical positions and methodological decisions as I proceeded.

### **3.4.3 Documentary Research:**

I started gathering documents by ‘squirrelling’ (Wellington, 2000, p. 52), that is, collecting, recording storing and filing documents from before the commencement of the field work. Apart from the course related documents that I selected for analysis, I also surveyed policy documents from my work related files as well as correspondence and newspaper clippings. Importantly, the insights emerging from my survey of the documents at every stage helped to inform my subsequent decisions throughout the data collection process.

### **3.5 Data Analysis:**

#### **3.5.1 Conceptual Framework:**

In my literature review, I referenced the research of Maina, (2002), McDonald, (2005) and Pollack et al (2010), whose work cumulatively offers essential elements that should be included in the content and delivery of teacher education courses with a social justice remit. I concluded that these elements are consistent with a multi-dimensional orientation to teacher professional reflection. As I began to analyze the documentary material that I had collected, a number of broad themes started to emerge. Applying the insights that I had gained from my review of the literature together with the themes generated from my initial analysis from the documents, I further theorized that fundamentally, courses with a social justice remit would provide student teachers with opportunities, in terms of content, time and reflective practices, to learn the principles and practices of social justice education. Out of this theorization, I developed a conceptual framework which I used to analyse the data.



The table below represents the conceptual framework.

### **Multi – Dimensional Perspective on Social Justice and Social Justice Teacher Education**

	<b>Social Justice</b>	<b>Social Justice Teacher Education</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Focus is on eliminating structural and pedagogical barriers to student achievement.	Providing student teachers with opportunities - in terms of (i) breadth and depth of content, (ii) time, and (iii) reflective practices - to develop respect for individuals' social and economic differences and recognize how those differences might be informed by individuals' affiliation with particular social groups, such as those based on race, ethnicity, or class.
<b>Goal</b>	Providing equitable structural conditions and quality instruction to optimize achievement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing the student teachers' :               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) skills to effect social change while helping them to value research as a means to support the changes they would like to make;</li> <li>(ii) confidence to initiate change in the school;</li> <li>(iii) understanding of the importance of thoroughly examining and assessing the need for change and monitoring its status;</li> </ul> </li> <li>• exposing the student teachers to instruction and assessment strategies that lead to transformative change;</li> <li>• establishing connections between the lives of the student teachers and the student populations, schools and communities.</li> </ul>
<b>Expected outcome of training.</b>	Equity in the distribution of resources and the application of quality pedagogical practices.	Student teachers become socially conscious catalysts for change.

### **3.5.2 Research Question 1: Analysis of Documents:**

With regard to Research Question 1, I used the conceptual framework to ascertain whether the content of the courses offered at the DTEEA bore congruence with the elements that I had outlined. I theorized that courses underpinned by a multi-dimensional orientation to teacher professional reflection would bear clear congruence with the aims and content of social justice teaching and by extension with a critical theoretical perspective. I surmised that absence of the aims and elements of a multi-dimensional approach to social justice from the teacher preparation programme would need to be identified then interrogated in order to determine the reasons for their omission.

In order to do so, I focused my interrogation of the selected curriculum related documents on searching for an explicit reference to teaching for social justice or equity. I emphasize, explicit, because I theorized that the level of directness with which statements of intent are expressed would be an indication of the positions espoused by the DTEEA. I surmised that unequivocal support of a social justice agenda would be expressed in unambiguous and direct terms. I therefore attempted to examine how these statements of intent are articulated and to determine whether they make explicit reference to social justice and or social justice teaching.

In that regard, it was equally important that I identified when and where these statements of intent were silent on social justice as I surmised that an omission would indicate a devaluing of the place of social justice in the teacher preparation curriculum. I associate this silence on social justice with Kaomea's (2003, p. 16) application of the notion of erasure in analyzing data. Kaomea refers to erasure as, 'situations, emotions or perspectives that have been erased figuratively or metaphorically.' In order to interrogate any instance of erasure that I discovered in the selected documents, I sought to deconstruct the underlying meanings behind the omissions that I had detected. This is in keeping with Kaomea's (2003, p. 16) suggestion that, 'comprehensive interpretive analyses should progress beyond the study of surface appearances and should include the persistent excavation of perspectives and circumstances that have been buried, written

over or removed.’ This meant that I had to focus my investigation on both the written and hidden curriculum that direct the teacher preparation programme of the DTEEA.

Since my main focus of interrogation was on the deconstructing the meanings embedded in the content of the documents, I applied Codd’s (1998) approach to analyzing the content of policies. Codd (1998, p. 236) explains that the analysis of policy content, ‘...examines the values, assumptions and ideologies underpinning the policy process.’ In this approach to policy analysis, the intent of policies is problematized so that the difference in intentions on the one hand and statements of intent on the other is highlighted. The critical focus of policy content analysis is therefore not on intentions in terms of stated plans or designs but on actions that are done intentionally. The task of the analysis is to uncover the real intentions behind the plans while remaining cognizant of the fact that there is no single interpretation of the meaning behind a policy. Codd, (1998, p. 245) explains that in order to unpack the meanings underlying the intentions, deconstruction of policy takes into consideration three important aspects of policy development: (i) how the policy is produced; (ii) how the relevant discourses are constituted; and (iii) what strategies are used to hide the ideological contradictions and incoherences which may obtain.

This approach was therefore useful in helping me read beyond the wording of the stated course objectives. I further sharpened my deconstruction of the texts by employing critical discourse techniques.

### **3.5.2.1 Critical Discourse:**

Critical discourse methodology is a useful tool to interpret policies because it is premised on the notion that power resides in language used to shape thought and action. In that way, it assists in identifying the mode and forces behind the production of policies. Taylor (2006, p. 28) asserts that, apart from facilitating the exploration of policies in their historical context, discourse theory is ‘...useful in highlighting how policies come to be framed in certain ways – reflecting how economic, social political and cultural contexts

shape both the content and language of policy documents.’ I therefore began my analysis by sifting through the documents to identify the statements that carried the institution’s philosophical position, i.e. what was inscribed within as well as what had been omitted from it. I then closely examined the words and imagery, in particular the metaphors that were used to encode the policies and matched them against my understanding of the rhetorical uses to which these devices had been put. I subsequently formed inferences on what I surmised were the unstated intentions behind the policies that I had examined and the motives behind the omissions that I had detected.

### **3.5.3 Research Question 1: Analysis of Interview Data:**

In keeping with the eclectic approach, the analysis and interpretation of the interview data was informed by the need to employ strategies that worked. Similar to the approach that I had followed in analyzing the documents, the process of analyzing the interview data was recursive and framed by the conceptual framework that I had developed. However, whereas in the case of the documentary analysis, I had concentrated heavily on examining the words and rhetorical devices contained in the policy documents, in the case of the interview data, I focused mainly on identifying themes from which I made inferences and drew conclusions. In order to generate workable themes to analyse the interview data, I had decided to employ elements of the constant comparison and contrast methodology.

Referencing the work of Glaser and Strauss, Goetz, and LeCompte explain that the constant comparative method, ‘... combines inductive category coding with simultaneous comparison of all social incidents observed. As social phenomena are recorded and classified, they are also compared across categories.’ (1981, p. 58). Emerging from this recursive process are new relationships and categories which yield new insights. Each new insight is used to inform the future direction of the analysis.

My first step in sorting the information I received from the participants was to identify broad areas of focus which had begun to emerge from my initial review of the responses. Four areas of focus emerged: the (i) curriculum intent, i.e. the goals/objectives/stated

outcomes; (ii) opportunity to learn/develop the knowledge, dispositions, practices that relate to social justice; (iii) programme cohesion; and (iv) reflective practices. I then turned each of these broad areas of focus into themes which I articulated in question form. I further broke down the themes into specific questions which I used to interrogate the responses that had come from the participants. Because I had in-depth transcriptions of the interviews, I was able to highlight and categorize those significant chunks of information that referred to the specific questions. I combed through the data looking for similarities and differences within and across the responses that had been provided during the interviews. Further, I made cross comparisons between the interview and documentary data, constantly cross referencing the evidence pertaining to the themes that I had identified.

#### **3.5.4 Research Question 2: Analysis of Interview Data:**

Since my purpose for eliciting the views of the selected faculty was primarily to determine the extent of their familiarity with social justice, the one question that I directly posed to them, asked the tutors to give their views on the subject. I anticipated that by posing that question to the tutors, I would be able to gauge how familiar they were with the concept of social justice teaching as well as their personal and professional positions on the inclusion of social justice teaching in the teacher preparation curriculum. This was important because, as tutors they have the capability of introducing student teachers to their own personal beliefs which may or may not run contrary to those espoused by the DTEEA. In that regard, the tutors would be able to influence the curriculum to the extent that the formal curriculum could in fact be different from the received curriculum. I surmised that cumulatively, the views articulated in their responses would be an indication of the level of and attitudes towards the discourse surrounding social justice among the faculty at the DTEEA.

In summary, through the application of the conceptual framework on multi-dimensional teacher education that I had drawn up and a number of methodological tools that I specifically selected to sift through the layered meaning embedded in the design of the

teacher preparation courses at the DTEEA, I was able to draw conclusions based on a number of inferences that I had made. The inferences emerged from a critical analysis of the language of the policy documents. In addition, inferences emerged from the constant cross referencing of themes that evolved as I combed through all of the data I had received – from the interviews and from the documentary research. It is important to reiterate that my interpretations are buoyed and influenced by the knowledge embedded in my past and present experiences and therefore colour the conclusions that I derived from them. In the following chapter, I detail the findings from the analysis of the data.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Research Findings**

#### **4.1 Introduction:**

This chapter is presented in two parts. Part 1 is devoted to Research Question 1 and Part 2, to Research Question 2. Part 1 is sub-divided into two sections. In the first section of Part 1, I present the findings of the study based primarily on the data gathered from my review of documents. In the second section of Part 1, I report on the findings that emerged from my interviews with members of faculty of the DTEEA and from the group discussion which I conducted with four Year Two student teachers. In Part 2, I report exclusively on the findings from the interviews with the college tutors. I conclude the chapter by presenting a summary of the findings.

#### **4.2 Part 1 (i): Research Question 1: Findings from Documentary Research:**

**What are the stated policies and actual practices at the DTEEA that promote the inclusion of social justice teaching in the Teacher Education Programme?**

##### **4.2.1 Philosophy Underpinning the Courses:**

As regards Research Question 1, my findings revealed that there is no mission or vision statement expressing the philosophical direction of the DTEEA. While the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College has an institutional mission and vision statement that pertain to all divisions, there is no allusion to social justice in either of these statements. However, the DTEEA issues a document published by the JBTE which is entitled, 'Regulations for the Associate Degree in Education for the Academic Year 2012 – 2014' that contains a section, under the heading the 'Philosophical Statement' which guides the operationalization of the teacher preparation programme.

The document also foregrounds three major tasks of the teacher preparation programme designed by the JBTE. The tasks outlined in the Philosophical Statement are summarized

as follows, ensuring that: (i) teachers are competent; (ii) there is public and personal confidence and (iii) teachers are child oriented in their approach to teaching and learning.

My inquiry into the Philosophical Statement reveals that the academic programme of the DTEEA is underpinned by technical and mechanistic values. In fact, the Philosophical Statement conveys a concentration on teachers' technical expertise by declaring its intention to '*... pay very great attention to the academic and professional competence of the teacher*' (2012, p. 5). The heavy concentration on teachers' technical expertise expressed in this declaration is reinforced through the use of words and phrases such as '*academic knowledge*' (p. 2), '*skill development*' (p. 2), '*pedagogical expertise*' (p. 2), '*mastery in methodology*' (p. 2), '*mastery of skill*' (p. 2) throughout the articulation of the aims of the programme.

My reading of the Philosophical Statement also revealed an inherent contradiction in the aims of the programme on the one hand and recommendations for practice on the other. To illustrate, the notion that mastery of knowledge also takes into account teachers' knowledge of '*the social context from which they (their students) are coming, the strengths and weaknesses of that social background*' (p. 2) could be interpreted as a basis for social justice. However, the term 'social background' is not problematized and the phrase 'strengths and weaknesses' is presented in neutral terms with no reference to how the deep structural inequalities inherent in Caribbean societies could impact on teacher performance. In other words, while the document acknowledges the impact of the social context on teaching and learning, it erases from the discourse any clear reference to the unequal nature of that social context and remains silent on how teachers could mount a wholistic response to the inequalities that are played out in the classroom.

Instead, the document presents the social context of teaching in two ways: firstly, it pathologizes the education system by making the point that, '*The problems within the school system are complex*' (p. 3). Secondly, it suggests that there is a lack of confidence in the teaching profession by indicating that the majority of the teaching profession consists of young teachers, who, because of the age demographic, may not be competent



to adequately operate in such complex classrooms, particularly as, *'The teacher is the person who is physically and visibly present and is seen as being responsible to a large extent for the success of the educational system'* (p. 3). By making the assumption that young teachers are not sufficiently competent to deal with complex educational problems, the document seems to be simultaneously endorsing ageism and shifting the responsibility for school success primarily onto the teachers.

Additionally, the use of phrases such as *'... worthwhile and meaningful standards in teacher education'* (p. 3) in relation to teacher assurance is consistent with the focus on teacher's technical competence and by extension, with a performance based approach to teacher assessment. This approach assumes that (i) teacher performance can be measured objectively against set criteria to which number values have been assigned and (ii) such measurement can be done outside of consideration for the social context within which the teacher works. Such an approach to teacher appraisal is consistent with the technical-empiricist approach where teacher performance is seen as a fundamentally decontextualized, mechanical exercise.

Further, in keeping with the technical- mechanical approach undergirding the philosophy of the teacher preparation programme, my findings are that the document is silent on the development of a social ethic in its treatment of teachers' dispositions and attitudes to teaching. In fact, under the heading, 'Attributes of the Teacher' (p. 4), the authors of the document absolve themselves from identifying *'... the critical factors in personality and character for teaching'* (p. 4) and opt instead to present *'general guidelines'* (p. 4). These guidelines outline broad generic attributes which are applicable to any profession which provides custodial care. They include recommendations for teachers to be *'good'*, *'involved in their communities'* and for them to possess *'interpersonal skills'*, *'leadership qualities'* and an *'aesthetic sense.'* The omission of a firm statement on the moral and ethical development of the teachers represents another example of erasure.

In addition, the document virtually erases activities geared towards the moral and social development of student teachers from the core curriculum by recommending that this be

facilitated informally through, '*extra-curricular activities and routine life of campus*' (p.5). The suggestion that the development of attributes be conducted informally by faculty indicates that colleges are not mandated to deliver explicit courses that deal exclusively or primarily with the social and moral aspects of teachers' professional growth. Secondly, it suggests that colleges are granted the autonomy to treat this aspect of teacher development in whatever way they deem fit. My examination reveals that there is no standard set of guidelines established by the faculty of the DTEEA that expressly sets out to shape student teachers' sense of a social and moral responsibility particularly with respect to disadvantaged groups of students.

From my investigation, I discovered that where the document talks about teachers' relationship with and responsibility for the children they teach, the emphasis is on teachers being child oriented and demonstrating a '*deep concern*' (p. 3) for their students. However, as expressed in the words, '*The task of the teacher is to discover how much of the subject children at a particular stage are able to learn and to seek to have them master that quantum*', (p. 3) the recommendations reveal a deficit orientation and are limited to the teacher employing the necessary adjustments that would make the curriculum accessible to the students. Thus by focusing only on what the teacher should do in the classroom, I have found that the document is silent on actions that teachers could take beyond the classroom to act on behalf of their students.

The absence of any recommendations which may nudge teachers towards activism or advocacy suggests that there is a leaning towards conservative values that privilege the maintenance of the status quo. Congruent with the above finding, is the notion contained in the extract under the heading, '*The Teacher and Nation Building*' (p. 6) in which the teacher is cast as a builder of bridges '*... between the different social groups within their societies*' (p. 6) whose purpose is to connect the various social classes and to maintain a level of optimism among future generations commensurate with living in an independent state. Consistent with this conservative stance as well, is the heavy emphasis which is placed on the maintenance of order and discipline. This is illustrated by the bolding of the phrase in the statement, '*It is expected that the **standard of discipline** maintained in*

*the colleges will promote good character, the social graces and inter-personal skills and a caring attitude toward children'* (p. 5). The emphasis on the maintenance of discipline re-establishes the notion that teachers ought not to be disruptive by challenging accepted rules and regulations but are required to fall unquestioningly in line with societal norms and aspirations.

In examining the statements under the heading, 'Personal Development' (p. 6), I discovered that the document does make the link between the professional and the personal lives of teachers in its acknowledgement that both teachers' professional and personal development are important in ensuring their total development. Thus, reference is made to developing the student teachers' awareness of issues that are of serious national and global import. However, the suggested approach to developing awareness is limited to engaging student teachers in regular discussions on issues as they arise as opposed to providing them with the opportunity to engage in sustained intellectual discourse through a mandated and explicitly designed course of study. The document states that:

*On a regular basis burning national and international issues should find a place to be discussed. Teachers in training should be aware of the world in which they are living and issues that are currently dominating the minds and thinking of their fellow men.* (p. 6)

This further substantiates my findings that the document is silent on societal inequalities and the notion that in societies where power differentials and contending interests exist, societal aspirations need to be problematized. Thus, it makes no mention of nurturing attributes that would prod the student teachers to engage in such problematization. In that regard, hegemonic values, such as the higher status given to males over females are reproduced without question even in the language of the document itself. The use of the word 'fellow men' in the above statement is evidence of the exclusive use of language and underscores the lack of attention to gender equality. It further re-establishes the insensitivity to social justice issues that I detected in my investigation of the documents.

#### **4.2.2 Course Content Outlines:**

From my examination of the course outlines I was able to ascertain a similar pattern of silence on issues related to social justice discourse in the content of the courses that I examined. Specifically, the course outlines did not support the development of a critique of the structural arrangements, globally and locally, that impact on student performance. The DTEEA offers two compulsory courses that are considered to be foundational: (i) ‘The Introduction to the Social and Cultural Foundations of Education’ and (ii) ‘Techniques in Classroom Investigation’. As the title of the first course implies, the subject matter covered in this course is fundamentally sociological in nature, while that of the latter focuses on research.

##### **4.2.2.1 (a) Introduction to the Social and Cultural Foundations of Education:**

Pertaining to the first compulsory course, none of the objectives makes any direct reference to social justice as a worthwhile area of pursuit for student teachers. The phrasing of the objectives on the first page of the Course Outline document does not convey any intention to provide the student teachers with the knowledge, skills or dispositions that would prepare them to develop a critical stance and the sense of agency necessary to prod them into action beyond the classroom. Phrases such as ‘*creating a plan of instruction*’, ‘*demonstrate and display appropriate pedagogical methods*’ and ‘*evaluating how these factors affect teacher*’ *classroom practices*’ (p. 1) in Course Objectives, Two, Three and Four, respectively convey an underlying intention to develop the student teachers’ technical competence to deal with issues impacting on student learning.

In terms of content, the course covers four modules: (i) the Purpose of Education; (ii) the Development of Caribbean Education Systems; (iii) Contemporary Issues in Education and (iv) Determinants of Academic Achievement. The latter, comprises four main headings: (i) Gender; (ii) Inequality in Society and Schools; (iii) Exceptional Learners and (iv) Parental Involvement. By specifically incorporating gender and inequality under

issues affecting student achievement, the course appears to take structural factors into consideration.

In addition, I discovered that the suggested assessment activities included in the course outline of the ‘Introduction to the Social and Cultural Foundations of Education’ course were aligned to the stated objectives. This lent further support to the finding that the objectives which guide the teacher preparation programme emphasize mastery of knowledge and pedagogical skill rather than the development of a social ethic and competencies required to teach in a manner that is socially just. None of the suggested assessment activities included in the course outlines required teachers to suggest interventions that rise to the level of activism or advocacy. On the contrary, the phrasing of the recommended activities was consistent with interventions that are classroom bound and teacher specific. The following phrases are extracted from two of the assessment activities: *‘measures the teacher would take at the classroom level’* (p. 3) and *‘methodologies intended to help students gain maximum benefits from their school experiences’* (p. 3). The congruency between the course objectives and the assessment practices suggests that social justice is not included or tested in the curriculum and could therefore be considered to be part of the null curriculum.

#### **4.2.2.2 (b) Techniques of Classroom Investigation:**

A similar pattern of emphasis on teacher competence and a corresponding silence on matters of social justice emerged from my investigation of the Course Outline for the second compulsory foundational course: ‘Techniques of Classroom Investigation’. My examination of the course objectives revealed a concentration on providing teachers with investigative skills such as the ability *‘to identify areas of need, collect data for investigative purposes, plan and implement solutions, monitor the outcomes and make decisions about future actions’* (p. 1) as the means to improve their classroom practices. Thus, I ascertained that while the skills and content areas pertaining to the course purport to focus on research that is social in nature, the scope is limited to the examination of phenomena occurring within the school.

This finding is further substantiated by the treatment of action research in the course content. My investigations revealed that action research is the research methodology to which the student teachers are exposed. The focus on action research is stated unequivocally in the following statement articulated in the Course Overview:

*It is not a regular course in research methods as it does not focus on all the possible research designs, but focuses primarily on action research.*  
(p.1)

This primary focus on action research is given further expansion in the subject matter subsumed under Unit 3, titled ‘Designing School-based Research Projects’ (p. 2) and covering areas such as the features of action research, its guiding principles, planning for and executing action research. Significantly, by focusing primarily on ‘school based research projects’ (p. 2), the content of the course seems to limit the scope of action research methodology to the investigation of microscopic school related problems. As such, problems that may be school based but not school caused are not catered for in the course. Consequently, student teachers are not oriented to research tools that could facilitate the investigation of educational issues at a macro socio-political level.

In examining the assessment requirements for the course, I found that the students were required to do a task at the end of each of the six units that make up the course. These six assignments counted for one hundred percent of their course grade and therefore the students were not required to write an end examination. Below is the statement pertaining to the course assessment:

*The assessment of this course is an amalgamation of tasks that the participants will be required to do after each unit. These tasks, linked to the particular component of the investigation process explored in each unit, will be presented along with a reflective journal.* (p. 3)

The task oriented nature of the assessment requirements suggests that students would be engaged in doing practical work relevant to each stage of the research process. One of these tasks would be attached to the preparation of a research report at the culmination of the course. The inclusion of the reflective journal, as part of the assessment, (i)

reinforces the practical approach adopted in this course and (ii) suggests that importance is indeed placed on preparing student teachers to engage in reflection as part of the research process.

#### **4.3 Part 1 (ii): Research Question 1: Findings from Interviews:**

##### **What are the stated policies and actual practices at the DTEEA that promote the inclusion of social justice teaching in the Teacher Education Programme?**

My main interest in doing the interviews was to learn from the informants how the student teachers were being oriented to reflect on the factors that affected student achievement and by extension, how they are prepared for social justice teaching. In order to do so, I concentrated on ascertaining what opportunities exist in the content and delivery of the curriculum for student teachers to learn about social justice teaching, its associated principles and practices. As in the case of the documentary research, I attempted to discern instances when their responses were silent on opportunities provided for student teachers to learn about social justice. I conceptualized opportunity to learn as consisting of three components: (A) the scope of the curriculum which would be the breadth and depth of the content related to social justice teaching; (B) the reflective practices prescribed in the curriculum; and (C) the amount of time that was allotted to engaging student teachers in activities where they could acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions required for social justice teaching. I have detailed the findings under the headings that correspond to the three components that I have outlined.

##### **1 (A) Opportunities to learn: The breadth and depth of the content related to social justice teaching to which the student teachers are exposed:**

The findings from the interviews show that the course content to which the students are exposed focuses primarily on developing student teachers' technical competence and as a result, encourages a classroom bound micro-analysis of student performance. This micro-analytical perspective is consistent with an individual orientation to teacher professional reflection. It is noteworthy for example, that when informing about the

inclusion of the ‘Introduction to the Social and Cultural Foundations’ course in the curriculum, College Tutor Three emphasized that there was need for a course that prepares student teachers to view themselves as the main determinant of student performance. In that regard, the course was designed to arm the teachers with the pedagogical and academic knowledge necessary to assume that responsibility and to function in that role. This extract from College Tutor Three’s chronological overview of the development of the teacher preparation programme conveys this intention:

***Question: Have there been any shifts that have occurred in the curriculum over the years that you have been dean, if so what were they?***

*There have been shifts from the initial programme when we did the certificate ... to the Associate Degree... in the primary and secondary. It’s about the belief that you can’t have a good teacher if the teacher does not have a good content base so one of the core areas in terms of the shift has been in the academic content of the teachers but also paying attention to the curriculum needs related to the school level learning so that the teachers not only got exposure to beefing up their own academic capacity, but they also had exposure to the curriculum, the content of the curriculum that they had to teach. So the marriage with the content and the methodology happened in that way...*

*There has also been the introduction of newer areas for example, in the Social Foundation course, where teachers got the opportunity to learn about the sociological impacts on students’ learning; the fact that a teacher is an agent of social change and the teacher actions and behaviour influences the outcomes of students...*

In outlining the objectives of their courses, both College Tutor One and College Tutor Two also reinforced the focus on honing the student teachers’ technical competence and mastery of pedagogical knowledge. Thus, while as College Tutor One indicated, the main objective of the ‘Introduction to Social and Cultural Foundations’ course was to prepare student teachers to address social issues impacting on learning, it was evident that the discourse was primarily focused on teachers’ classroom practices. Her response below underscores the focus on teacher competence in that course:



*What are the aims and objectives of the course?*

**College Tutor One:**

*To familiarize student teachers with social issues that impact students' learning ... As a result, teachers would be deliberate in their planning to respond to those factors; to improve their interactions so that children can perform.*

A similar micro-analytic perspective and individual orientation to teacher professional reflection emerged in College Tutor Two's response to the same question in relation to the aims and objectives of the 'Techniques in Classroom Investigation' course:

*It takes the students through a journey that will enable them to carry out action research. It starts with them identifying a problem in the classroom that pertains to teaching and learning.*

With regard to the specific purpose of this course, her repeated reference to teachers' actions in the classroom suggests an orientation to research which is classroom bound:

*They are beginning teachers. They are teachers in training and they need to have the background or the foundation so that when they go back to the classroom, if they realize that there is a problem, they would like to address, they will have the skills required to address that problem with probably support from the Ministry or even the Teachers' College.*

This narrow focus on the micro-social factors within the classroom was further underscored by the revelations made by both of College Tutor One and Two when they admitted that their respective courses did not adequately prepare the student teachers to consider socio-economic and other structural factors in planning interventions to address student performance. College Tutor One, for example, emphasized this deficiency in the 'Introduction to the Social and Cultural Foundations' course, by comparing it with another course, 'The Social Context of Education' that she had taught previously:

**Question: How much of the reflection takes the student teachers outside of the classroom and into the political culture that creates the socio-economic situations that the children are in?**

**College Tutor One:**

*Those who did the 'Social Context' course are better prepared. They reflected more. This course is not deliberate. How I see this course. It was a slap dash thing hastily done. Modules were just pulled out from all the old course outlines. There was no intent, no theme; there is no thread running through it, just a pack of disconnected ideas. There is no teaching about the sociology of education, what is sociology as a study of society; how the study of society would show how people are educated...*

Her critique of the course that she lectures, demonstrates a lack of confidence in the scope of the content to adequately prepare teachers to address the social factors affecting student performance. The apparent lack of content coherence that she reports in her response indicates a major weakness in the course design and further highlights the observation that the course content lacks depth in relation to societal factors impacting student learning. She also criticized the course for its lack of specificity in relation to socio-economic determinants of student performance. Thus when I asked her to explain specifically, how student teachers are prepared to deal with socio-economic factors that impact on education, her response was that:

*... the course outline is vague. It just had determinants of academic achievement, a listing of determinants of academic achievement. It does not go into detail on how to treat it (socio-economic factors). So I take it on my own to decide how to treat it.*

Her assessment that the course is vague on factors associated with student academic achievement substantiates my previous finding from the documentary research that the course is largely silent on such matters and that this silence can be interpreted as another indication of erasure.

In terms of the course material that was utilized to support student teachers' understanding of socio-economic determinants of academic achievement, the informant reported on the unavailability and inadequacy of the required readings. She lamented that

her students had never been exposed to the course material needed to more comprehensively explore issues related to determinants of academic achievement. In the response which follows, she again informed that after several failed attempts to source the required text from the university, she was forced to use her own resources to deliver the course:

***Question: How is that (socio-economic determinants of academic performance) dealt with?***

*Um... I guess... we...uh... actually the university asks that we present this...This would be through readings. The university also recommends the readings and sends down one or two and we are to secure the rest. Um...um there is a text that they suggested that we use and to this date, we don't have ... This is the second time I'm teaching this course, we don't have the text. It is a text by Darling –Hammond called 'Teaching through Social Justice'... this is the material that is to shape the kind of thinking that we want our students to have. In fact last semester we had no text to teach that course. I was just going on material that I had from other courses and I tried to put it together...*

Based on the title of the text, social justice as a concept appears to be critical to the delivery of the course. However, as gleaned from the tutor's response, by not providing that text, the university had failed to provide the required course material. That the student teachers go through the course and successfully write the course assessments suggests that the content of the required text may not be integral to the delivery of the course and that learning about social justice may be tangential to the students teachers' experience at the DTEEA.

As regards the scope of the 'Techniques in Classroom Investigation' course, College Tutor Two was asked, through the question: ***So what is the purpose for doing the course the way it's done?*** to explain how the course was delivered. Her response was that, whereas, previously, student teachers were put through the actual research process when they were required to conduct research and then present a report referred to as 'The Individual Study', student teachers are now essentially required to learn about the stages of research. As such, the student teachers graduate with more of a theoretical than an

actual experience in conducting research. This emphasis on theoretical knowledge suggests that greater focus is placed on engaging student teachers in activities which train them to be consumers of knowledge rather than on those which orient them to form their own knowledge that could inform their practices.

**(B) Opportunities to Learn: The reflective practices that would inform the student teachers' responses to student performance.**

I approached this aspect of Research Question 1 by attempting to ascertain how much opportunity and space was provided in the curriculum for student teachers to transfer the knowledge they would have gained about social justice into practice, either during the time of their practicum and/or through the conduct of research. I posited that it is through the activities associated with these two components of the curriculum that students would demonstrate the self-efficacy required to undertake social justice work.

As College Tutor Two reported in her response to the following question which sought to determine the reason behind the decision to remove the individual study from the curriculum, the student teachers' exposure to the stages of educational research extends to the writing of a proposal. This suggests that student teachers lack the experience of engaging in actual research and as such, are not provided with the opportunity to practise the depth of reflection associated with any type of research particularly that which is required in the writing of a research report:

*So what was the reason for stopping the individual study that students were required to do in the past to move to the type of course where they are given the beginning of how to do research instead of actually doing research?*

**College Tutor Two**

*The JBTE revised the AD programme in the Primary and Secondary education and their focus was on the reflective practitioner so they felt that the students were just turning out or churning out studies. It was not any use to them. They were just doing it for doing it sake. So now, since the revision of the A.D. Programme, we have now introduced classroom investigation to make teaching more meaningful to the students and to help them kind of facilitate change in schools so that they are not just*

*going through the motions and that teaching and learning become more meaningful to them and that they can make a greater difference in the classroom.*

The suggestion that the JBTE deliberately removed the practice of research from the curriculum in order to help student teachers reflect more on their classroom practices further underscores the inordinate amount of emphasis that is placed on the micro-social analysis of the teaching and learning process. This emphasis once again underscores the finding that the curriculum promotes an individual orientation to teacher professional reflection. This finding was supported by College Tutor Three in her answer to the question which follows:

***How have the student teachers in the initial teacher programme been trained to become reflective practitioners?***

**College Tutor Three:**

*... I think in the last 2003-2009, Teachers' College always encouraged the notion of reflective teaching but perhaps it did not articulate it as well in a way that made it more practical, more in your face, but I think it was always there because practical teaching is an opportunity for that to happen... They have the opportunity of so called experts sitting in the class; the cooperating teacher, the college supervisor whose role is to enable the teachers to think through what they have done and to ask the appropriate questions about how you think you can improve, what would you have changed... so that teachers can begin to address the critical elements related to the methods area that they are teaching.*

As seen below, College Tutor One's hesitance in responding to the same question suggests that she was unsure as to how to answer the question. Her inability to respond confidently about the treatment of reflection seems to be consistent with the sentiments expressed by College Tutor Three that teacher professional reflection has not been clearly articulated in the curriculum:

*I don't... this always a... I guess all teacher education programmes aim to create the reflective practitioner. It is infused in the assignments. We are beginning the process of the reflective practitioner.*

However, when asked to comment precisely on whether student teachers were required to reflect on non-school factors that may affect student learning, her response was much more categorical and clear:

*There is no such explicit curriculum concerning this. I would do it but it is not like the curriculum or course outline says to do it. It would come from discussion and regular discourse. I will tell you what I do because it is not part of the course...*

As well as not being provided with the opportunity to engage in reflection that accompanies the research process, student teachers are not required to engage in continuous reflection through the keeping of a reflective journal or diary. Below are the responses offered by the participants pertaining to that question of reflective journals. At first glance, there appears to be some inconsistency in the responses given by College Tutor One and College Tutor Two regarding the incorporation of reflective journals in their respective courses. College Tutor One informed that this was not a requirement for her course:

***Question: Are they required to keep a reflective journal?***

**College Tutor One:**

*No. In some courses, example the language arts department, they are required to keep a journal to reflect on articles, key phrases, words that they reflect on. They do some reflection when they go on teaching practice. As a requirement for the Associate Degree programme, they do ten weeks of practicum. They keep a portfolio where they write, include artefacts. It's a reflective exercise...*

College Tutor Two, on the other hand, initially indicated that a reflective journal was a component of the assessment requirements. This answer was consistent with the assessment requirements articulated in the course outline. However, she qualified her response by explaining that the student teachers are not required to keep a reflective journal as part of the research process but are supposed to reflect on what they had learnt about the various stages of research.

**(C) Opportunity to Learn: Time allotted for student teachers to learn about social justice.**

The absence of themes and topics pertaining to social justice from the course material was consistent with the insignificant amount of time allocated to engaging student teachers in such discussions. When asked to inform on how prepared student teachers are to address the structural factors that impact on learning such as low socio-economic status, College Tutor One for example, indicated that no specific attention is given to such issues and consequently, she has made a unilateral decision to expose the students to what she offered as non-school factors affecting student achievement. Even then, she reported that the time was limited and engagement in such discourse was rushed:

***How are student teachers oriented towards addressing the non-school/factors out of their control?***

*It is limited in the amount we can cover. It's a one semester course. You are covering a lot. So each theme gets two hours.*

She reported that one of these themes, 'The History of Education' covered in this course is not clearly defined in the course outline and so she has developed her own content. In admitting that the course does not adequately present the existing educational inequalities in their historical context, she informed that:

*... There is nothing. It (the course outline) just says 'History of Education' so it is left to the lecturer to decide how far and how deep to go. Given there is not much time to cover it, I pull out from my texts from Mico where we did a full semester...*

When quizzed further about pivotal periods in the history of the Caribbean such as colonialism and post-colonialism that would have shaped Caribbean education systems, she responded that no time is set out to specifically engage student teachers in expanding their knowledge of key historical periods and their relevance to the practice of education. Here too, College Tutor One reveals the personal decisions that she is compelled to take to shape and deliver the course:

*I end up doing more than two hours, about three hours. There is not enough time to look at issues arising out of post-colonialism. It would come up during discussion but it is not intentional. That's where I bring up the Common Entrance and streaming, sorting out children and placing them in different secondary schools because I'm passionate about it, but it is not specific to the course outline...*

Similarly, when asked the same question, College Tutor Two spoke of the lack of time to adequately ground the teachers in the conduct of any research that would address structural factors. She indicated that the students are allowed only ten weeks of practicum and out of this, they would need at least six weeks to go through an actual action research project. She opined that because of the demands of the curriculum, it is not feasible for the students to undertake action research in the six week period.

Relatedly, when asked to explain how much time is allotted to orienting teachers to critical theoretical approaches in research, the tutor's response indicated that this was not a priority area in the curriculum:

***Do you all spend time on critical transformation theories?***

*Well, we mention the underlying theory or philosophy but we don't go into depth because of their level. We don't want to confuse them and we want to take it in stages. This is just the first step and if they go into the B.Ed. programme, then they would go deeper into it and they will have a deeper understanding of it.*

College Tutor Two's revelation that critical theory is not dealt with in depth, suggests an approach to action research that is devoid of critical philosophical underpinnings. In that regard, student teachers are not oriented to develop a criticality that would prepare them to challenge traditional values and assumptions about the education and educational research. This became evident when I posed this question to the student teachers, ***Do you think teaching is a neutral exercise?***

Their responses revealed that they had difficulty understanding the thrust of the question as they seemed to struggle to articulate a stance on neutrality. In the first place, the student teachers asked for clarity on the term 'neutral' and vacillated in their position as



the conversation progressed. The following extracts from the interchange on the subject of teacher neutrality chronicle the dissonance which accompanied the student teachers' thinking processes as the discussion unfolded:

**Student Teacher Three:** ... *Well, yes. Sometimes you have to take sides, but sometimes you have to forget about...sides, and just lay it there.*

**Student Teacher One:** *When you speak about sides, what do you speak about?*

**Student Teacher Two:** *You don't take sides. You stand for principle...*

**Student Teacher One:** ...*You don't have to take a side.*

**Student Teacher Two:** *You're not taking sides. The principle is ...the rule is always there.*

**Student Teacher One:** ... *it is impossible to remain neutral. Because to me, wherever you go, your beliefs must shape somewhat of what you do...*

**Student Teacher Two:** *I am not neutral*

**Student Teacher One:** *To me it is impossible*

**Student Teacher Two:** *You can be objective not neutral*

**Student Teacher Three:** *It is difficult to be neutral*

**Student Teacher Two:** *I think I am more objective. I would look at things...when I said neutral, it's like I am not gonna let my feelings or how I feel at the time influence...*

**Student Teacher Three:** *Your philosophy, it has to influence...*

**Student Teacher Two:** ... *we all are humans and we all have been socialized, we have a culture and what not, but as much as possible, I think teachers must be able to stand...there should be a set of dos and don'ts, what is right and wrong in the classroom ... while we all have a different religion and background, I think that the school system should have a fair set of bylaws or guidelines that will guide anybody's decision.*

The lack of time allotted to the practice of social justice teaching or to engage in the discourse surrounding equity was corroborated by the student teachers themselves. In responding to the question, *'What opportunities did you have during your two years here or when you were doing your teaching practice to talk about social justice and*

*equity?’* the students informed that engagement in discussions dealing with social justice was fleeting and at no time were they exposed to structural and systemic factors impacting learning in a consistent or substantial manner:

**Student Teacher Two:**

*In the secondary programme, I think we touched on that to some extent but that was particularly when we did special education and dealing with special needs students. It was done in the sense that we were taught how to identify special students and how to modify instruction for them in such a way that it would not limit their performance in the classroom.*

**Student Teacher Three:**

*A little in each subject, not to say we had a topic for it (social justice), but just a little bit everywhere...*

However, the most compelling piece of evidence confirming the finding that social justice teaching is not incorporated in the curriculum emanated from statements made by the student teachers themselves when they asked me to explain the meaning of the term social justice. That request for an explanation signaled that their experiences at the DTEEA had not provided the opportunity for them to achieve the intellectual mastery of the concept of social justice:

**Student Teacher One:**

*... when you speak about social justice, what is it exactly that you are talking about. I mean for us to know what you are talking about.*

**Student Teacher Two:**

*Right now, honestly, I don't know how I can link it with education in the classroom. When I think of justice, I think of law. If you speak of social equality then I will say well everybody is equal but as far justice, I don't know how it would fit in the classroom.*

The other three student teachers concurred with their colleague's understanding that justice is equated with law. Even after I had provided the clarification that they sought

their comments revealed the dissonance associated with their confusion and misunderstanding of the terms, 'justice' and 'social equality'. Moreover, Student Teacher Two's comment that he cannot see the relevance of justice in relation to what happens in the classroom, signals an absolute disassociation with the critical theoretical perspective in which education is seen as a moral and just endeavor.

#### **4.4 Part 2: Research Question: Findings from Interviews:**

##### **What are the views of teacher educators regarding the inclusion of a social justice agenda in the teacher education programme?**

In conducting my analysis of the views expressed in their responses to the question, I focused on words and phrases that conveyed the extent of their knowledge of social justice education. It was therefore a straight forward matter of identifying whether the informant had substantial, partial or little knowledge of the subject.

I also focused on words and phrases which communicated their position on the matter. I classified these responses into three categories as they emerged (i) positive, (ii) negative and (iii) ambivalent.

Based on their responses, College Tutor Three was the most versed in the area of social justice teaching and College Tutor One, the least. It was difficult to determine the level of familiarity of College Tutor Two since her answer to the question was not definitive. College Tutor One, the lecturer of the 'Introduction to the Social and Cultural Foundations of Education' course, readily admitted that she had a very limited understanding of the concepts of social justice and social justice education. Similar to the student teachers, she too asked me to explain what social justice meant. By the end of the interview, she expressed her wish for a social justice teaching course to be incorporated in the teacher preparation curriculum. What follows is her response to my request for her to give her views on the place of social justice in the teacher education programme offered at the DTEEA:

**Question: What are your views on the place of social justice in the teacher education programme?**

*I cannot tell you I know so much about social justice. I can't tell you I know. It is a new area in terms of teacher focus. For me, I did not do social justice in any of my training. It was not part of my own training as a student teacher. As a concept and exploring it, it is a new thing. So I can't tell you I know so much of it as a topic. What are some of the concepts of social justice?*

*... I would love this. I'm excited about this. It's actually opening my brain. I would love to do a course like this.*

College Tutor Two on the other hand, avoided answering the question of the place of social justice in the curriculum directly. Her opening statement regarding the role of social justice suggests that while it is not part of the taught curriculum, it is inherent in the practice of teaching. Her positive sentiments regarding the inclusion of social justice in the curriculum mirrors that of College Tutor One:

*I think whether there's a place for it, it's been happening because teachers are really change agents; they are the ones who implement everything the Ministry decides to adopt...the problem is teachers do not like to be forced to do anything. The problem is teachers are not seen to have any power. They are just told to do this, to do that but they are not given the necessary support...*

*... If given the necessary support, the training, they can develop confidence, and knowing they are so important in developing a nation, in effecting change; teachers can play a very significant role.*

College Tutor Three offered a more philosophical answer to the same question:

*I think we think about it because the minute you start to think about what we do as teachers, how we deal with situations, how we interpret situations, what are the lenses that we use to reflect on situations will impact our behaviours...*

Keeping in mind that College Tutor Three had been the Dean of the DTEEA for six years and the present Dean of Programming, her words, '*I think we think about it...*' imply that while social justice may be a subject that the faculty has ruminated upon, it has not been

incorporated as part of the core curriculum. She too responded positively to the role of social justice in the curriculum:

*... your understanding of social justice, and if you understand it, must impact, must influence how you craft, how you decide your philosophy of teaching and learning in a classroom because if you are going without that sense in your head, what you do is that we can create a situation where even before some students have started, we lock the doors and throw away the key from them and potentially, these might be our future Nobel Laureates...*

Their varying levels of familiarity with the discourse associated with social justice teaching lend further support to the finding that social justice is not a core or standardized component in the curriculum. At the same time, their responses indicate that the college tutors were of the view that the inclusion of social justice teaching in the core curriculum would be a positive step.

#### **4.5 Conclusion:**

By way of summary, my findings indicate that issues surrounding social justice, in particular discriminatory socio-economic structural arrangements and practices have been erased from the discourse on teaching and learning at the DTEEA. As such, no explicit reference is made to social justice and social justice teaching in the articulation of any of policy related statements of the DTEEA. The findings related to the various components which comprise the Philosophical Statement reveal a definite emphasis on the development of student teachers' competence and technical expertise but a complete omission of values promoting a social ethic.

In addition, the findings from the documentary search revealed that the objectives of the course designed to prepare teachers to respond to the social issues that impact on student performance, i.e., the 'Introduction to Social and Cultural Foundations of Education' and of the course designed to prepare students to undertake educational research, i.e., 'Techniques of Classroom Investigation', are commensurate with an individual orientation to teacher reflection which limits the scope of the curriculum.

In none of the courses offered by the JBTE, through the DTEEA, is attention paid in any direct manner to how teachers could take action in response to the structural arrangements that may affect student learning. In other words, no attention is paid to praxis and the role of teachers to work towards transformative change. This is borne out of the fact that no reference is made directly or indirectly to social justice, or social justice education in the content of the two foundational courses.

Similarly, the assessment requirements of the two foundational courses do not incorporate tasks that would appraise student teachers' knowledge and understanding of the discourse on social justice and social justice teaching. Greater concentration is placed on assessing mastery of content and methodology that would prepare the student teachers to deliver the school curriculum efficiently and effectively.

No time is allotted in the delivery of the courses to engage student teachers in the discourse on social justice teaching. Much of the time is allocated to covering (i) content that relates to pedagogy as well as the content of the primary and secondary school curricula and (ii) teaching methods associated with the teaching of the subjects that make up the school curriculum.

Students are not engaged in conducting research or in sustained teacher reflection. Though, according to the course outline for the 'Techniques in Classroom Investigation' course, student teachers are required to keep a reflective journal, this is not adhered to in practice. Because students are not actually engaged in research, their reflections are limited to responding to specific subject matter contained in the course content.

Further, the student teachers are oriented to undertake research in a manner that is devoid of a criticality. Though the curriculum highlights the importance of action research, the theoretical perspective underlying the approach adopted by the DTEEA is neutral and apolitical. The student teachers' unfamiliarity with the subject of neutrality together with their difficulty to articulate a position at the beginning of the exchange corroborates the

finding that they had not been familiar with such critical discourse. This unfamiliarity with the discourse supports the finding that student teachers are not oriented towards developing a critical stance that would inform a structural and or multi-dimensional analysis to teaching and learning. Further, this tendency to maintain an individual orientation suggests that, in relation to the standards for teaching, the student teachers are not required to demonstrate mastery of the knowledge, the self-efficacy or willingness to engage in social justice teaching.

While familiarity with the discourse on social justice varied among the tutors, they were all in favour of the inclusion of social justice in the curriculum.

Finally, a number of tensions began to emerge from my findings. Firstly, their openness to social justice was accompanied by signs of tension in the tutors' beliefs about what should be taught to the student teachers on the one hand and what the tutors are actually mandated to teach on the other. That strain is poignantly expressed in the criticism which College Tutor One levelled against the course that she lectures. Though College Tutor Two is less critical, she disassociates herself from the design of the course she lectures. A similar tension emerged from the confusion and vacillation that student teachers exhibited in talking about social justice and neutrality. This may be a signal that there is some underlying tension in their belief system which they have yet to acknowledge or confront.

## Chapter 5

### Reflections

#### 5.1 Introduction:

In this last chapter, I reflect on the following: (i) my experiences conducting the research; (ii) what, I believe, are the limitations that lie within; (iii) the contributions which the study could make to future educational research and teacher education programmes; and (iv) recommendations for future research.

In order to contextualize my reflections, I preface my thoughts with an extract from one of my more recent journal entries which records my 'end of journey' state of mind. There is no doubt that as I come to the end of my study, I am filled with a sense of pessimism but with an even greater sense of urgency to continue to place the spotlight on the injustices which St Lucian students from working class families as well as their teachers face every day in our schools.

November 25<sup>th</sup> 2014:

*Today during our policy meeting, the PS asked me to explain what social justice meant. She had never heard of it and needed to understand the term. I explained to her as succinctly as possible that the term was related to equity and reducing disadvantage. The chief education officer simply questioned the validity of the notion and almost rubbished it, in what I thought was callous disregard for disadvantaged children. As far as he was concerned, there are those who show remarkable resilience despite their disadvantage and as such, equity as an ideal has no merit. This is coming from the person who, according to the Education Act is vested with the authority to direct our nation's education policy. I despair.*

*I despair when I realise that those with the power and the opportunity to effect change show no desire or predilection to do so. We went on a school visit to Bocage Secondary on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> November where we toured the school and met with the staff. I was angry, hurt, resentful and frustrated all at the same time. I couldn't understand how the rest of the team...did not see the need to close down the school because of the substandard conditions that obtain there. The school is dark, cramped, students have*



*no place to recreate, the labs are inadequate, the toilets are broken and smell terribly, the computers in the EDPM (Electronic Data Processing and Management) room are old and unreliable, the court is invaded by dangerous elements from the community...*

*I have been begging for us to really examine that school and relocate the students as a matter of priority but no one is listening. I've come to the conclusion that the obvious neglect is because the children who go there are from working class homes and they are being punished for achieving low scores in the Common Entrance...*

## **5.2 My Experiences Conducting the Research:**

The sentiments that I express in this extract are borne out of the frustration which became palpable every time I witnessed any behaviour from my Ministry of Education colleagues and from other educators whom I believed, demonstrated disregard for or insensitivity to social justice. This resulted in an emotional tug-of-war which caused me to doubt my efforts to bring about change through my research. On many occasions, I tried and invariably failed to psychologically divorce myself from what was happening around me in order to maintain my focus on tasks related to my research or to my administrative responsibilities.

Apart from the comfort of knowing that I had a thesis supervisor who had faith in what I was doing, my research journey was a lonely one, mainly because I felt that I was on a solo professional mission. Firstly, I felt alone because I had decided to use a totally qualitative design and writing style of which there were few models in Caribbean academia. Secondly, I had elected to research a subject which was unpopular with policy makers to the extent that it seems to have been erased from the discourse on education policy in the English Speaking Caribbean. It meant that there were very few regional or local voices that I could rely on to lend support to the arguments that I was advancing through my thesis.

Despite these drawbacks, the experience was an overall enriching and enlightening one. It was enriching because, it provided me with insights that have helped broaden my

knowledge base of social issues that profoundly influence general and teacher education in St Lucia and the sub region. Specifically, I now have a fuller understanding and appreciation of the deficiencies which exist in past and present education policy discourse and the impact of these deficiencies on teacher education.

Finally, my experience was enlightening because it forced me to confront aspects of myself that I was not consciously aware of. I am now even more convinced that the reflective self-examinations that I engaged in were not simply instances of navel-gazing. They represented moments of personal humility as well as growth in the self-confidence and self-knowledge that I needed to engage in research which was so emotionally driven.

### **5.3 Limitations of the Study:**

In as much as I embrace the act of writing my study as an attempt to ameliorate the learning conditions of children in failing schools, I admit that by focusing primarily on socio-economics, I have not fully dealt with the other systemic issues, in particular, sexism, pigmentocracy, geographic and language background which also impact on teaching and learning. Thus, although as McLaren and Farahmandour argue (2001) all forms of oppression are ultimately bound to social class, by focusing my study mainly on socio-economics class divisions, I did not directly illuminate the injustices which female students, and female teachers, for example, have to contend with throughout the education system. In addition, I did not highlight the many pedagogical challenges which rural and Kwéyòl speaking children face as they engage with the school curriculum.

In terms of methodology, time limitations became a factor as the pressures of work made it impossible for me to use observation as a data gathering tool. Sustained observation of the tutors and student teachers over time would have been useful in helping to capture, the actual interactions between them as they negotiated the curriculum of the two courses that I had selected for review.

One of the other limitations that surfaced was my inability to include the lecturer of the social studies courses as part of my sample, in spite of my efforts to interview her. I believed that because of the nature of the subject, she would have been able to offer additional insight into how social issues are framed in the teacher preparation curriculum. The lecturer had retired from the division and the person who had replaced her was assisting part time. I decided not to include the part time tutor because she had indicated to me that she was not very familiar with the social studies courses.

#### **5.4 Contributions the Study could make:**

Despite these limitations, the design of my study as well as the findings which emerged hopefully represent a paradigm shift in how persons in positions of power and authority, could begin to include social justice as an ideal when prioritizing for education. This is of particular significance for the training of teachers who are at the frontlines of educational work. Ginsburg and Newman (1985, p. 49) assert that,

Indeed, if preservice teachers enter programs treating political and economic inequalities as natural or unproblematic (and if they are not successfully encouraged to critically examine these issues during their program), we may have part of the explanation for the tendency among teachers to function as professional ideologists, i.e. apologists or at least preservers of the status quo.

My study could serve as an example of the kind of research that should be undertaken to help move teacher education from a position where it is largely perceived as being apolitical and neutral to one where teacher education research is viewed from a critical perspective.

In that regard, I am of the view that the findings from my study should be used to support the implementation of a course at the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration that deals substantially and explicitly with social justice. I envisage that such a course would be fully assessed and be made compulsory for both the primary and secondary associate degree programmes, In addition, this course would be delivered in

two parts. One part would comprise a theoretical component in which student teachers interact with knowledge that would orient them towards a multi-dimensional approach to professional reflection. In this regard, the breadth and depth of the content of that course could be developed around the focus, goal and expected outcome of training that I have outlined in my conceptual framework of the Multi-Dimensional Perspective of Social Justice Teacher Education.

The second part of the course would consist of field work for a period of three to four weeks where student teachers would be actively interrogating problems that may be school based but not school caused. The field work would take the form of 'Collaborative Enquiries' (Ruddock and Wellington, 1989) in which student teachers work together in small groups to select and examine such problems. This period of field work must be accompanied by critical reflection where student teachers would be required to link their theoretical understandings with their practical experiences and suggest recommendations for transformative change. The introduction of critical reflection in the teacher preparation curriculum would mean a shift in the assessment of student teachers where the emphasis is exclusively on their technical expertise to one that includes an appraisal of their predispositions as well.

I also anticipate that through my study, policy makers would appreciate the potential for sound policy making when the voices and stories of minoritised groups are brought into to the research process. In that group, I include voices and stories such as mine and other socially conscious persons, especially those of us St Lucian female professionals, who may be educated but not yet sufficiently empowered to speak even more loudly against injustice.

Notwithstanding the feeling of despair which I have expressed, it is with a healthy dose of optimism that I note the enthusiasm that the key participants demonstrated for the inclusion of social justice in the teacher preparation programme. In particular, College Tutor One's willingness to go outside of the formal curriculum to include her own

content pieces may be a signal of her readiness to initiate change. The openness which the student teachers eventually showed to the idea of including social justice in the curriculum is an indication that some growth has taken place in their consciousness as well as a change in their attitudes towards issues of social justice. In that regard, I feel confident that my study has achieved some level of catalytic validity and in so doing could contribute to activating the critical mass of policy makers and implementers who, over time, would assist in transforming education in St Lucia.

### **5.5 Recommendations for Future Research:**

Coming out of my study, I believe there is potential for a new research agenda that deliberately privileges the voices of the actors who have been typically omitted from the discourse on teaching and learning. These voices are primarily that of school principals, teachers and students of failing schools.

I noted from my findings that issues surrounding social justice have been largely erased from the discourse on teacher education and as such, student teachers graduate without the wherewithal or predisposition to adequately advocate on behalf of students who have, in the main, been marginalized as a result of socio-economic background. Research into how student teachers without a multi-dimensional orientation to analysing student performance actually negotiate social differences once they begin teaching; what strategies they use, their coping skills and how they relate to their students should be undertaken. Relatedly, it is equally important to conduct research into how students from disadvantaged social groups negotiate the curriculum in classrooms where social justice is not prioritized; the social dynamics of those classrooms, as well as the students' coping mechanisms.

The tensions which emerged from my investigations may need further exploration in order to determine the underlying cause or causes and the implications for the tutors' and student teachers' practices. Taking into consideration the tensions exhibited by the

tutors, research that would illuminate the belief systems of the teacher educators at the DTEEA regarding social justice and equity may be useful in developing more transformative general and teacher education policies. Such research should be aimed specifically at determining what part they, as teacher educators play in reproducing and transforming society (Ginsburg and Newman, 1985). Importantly, it would be worthwhile to research the connection between the tensions expressed by the student teachers and the potential that may exist for teachers in training to develop the predispositions that are necessary for them to become activist teachers.

I indicated previously, that my study framed social justice mainly around the socio-economic antecedents affecting teaching and learning. Research needs to be conducted to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of all of the systemic forms of discrimination that hinder how students learn and how teachers teach in St Lucian classrooms. Therefore, research into the impact of gender differentials would be one such area of priority given the fact that the majority of our teacher educators and teachers are female.

In closing, at the level of the Ministry of Education, there is need to research how power is exerted and maintained through the production and implementation of education policy. In that regard, research that further interrogates education policy development; the attendant discourses surrounding education policy; the organizational structure that supports how policies are formulated and the beliefs of policy makers in relation to social justice is of paramount importance.

### Notes:

1. St Lucia was colonized by both Britain and France. Though Standard English is the official language of St Lucia, two other vernacular languages are spoken across the island: French Creole or Kwéyòl and English Creole. Kwéyòl is the mother tongue of the majority of rural speakers.
2. These acts require that teachers actively engage students (i) in their learning; (ii) in real life experiences; (iii) in heterogeneous groups; (iv) in redoing, polishing and perfecting their work; (v) in reflecting on their own lives and how they come to believe and feel as they do; (vi) with issues they regard as vital concerns; (vii) with the technology of information access. (viii) in explanations of differences; (ix) in planning what they will be doing; (x) in applying ideas such as fairness, equity or justice to their world; (xi) in thinking about an idea in a way that questions common sense or a widely accepted assumption, that relates new ideas to ones learned previously or that applies an idea to the problems of living; (xii) in seeing major concepts, big ideas and general principles.
3. The school effectiveness categories are: professional leadership, shared vision and goals, learning environment, concentration on teaching and learning, purposeful teaching, high expectations, positive reinforcement, monitoring progress, pupils' rights and responsibilities, home/school partnership, and a learning organization.

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## Appendix 1.

The following matrix outlines (i) the research questions, (ii) the data sources and (iii) the methods used to gather information from each source.

Research Question	Data Sources/Methods of Data Collection			
<b>RQ1.</b> How does the curriculum used at the DTEEA prepare student teachers for social justice teaching?	<b>College Faculty/Individual Interview</b>	<b>Student Teachers/ Group Interview</b>	<b>Curriculum Related Documents/ Documentary Research</b>	<b>Personal Narrative/memory, research journal</b>
<b>RQ2.</b> What do teacher educators think about the inclusion of a social justice agenda in the teacher education programme?	<b>College Faculty/Individual Interview</b>			

## **Appendix 2**

### **Field Questions: Prepared Lists of Interview Questions**

#### **A. College Tutors**

1. Could you tell me more about the course?
2. How does the course contribute to the students' preparation to be teachers?
3. What are some of the areas that are assessed?
4. In what way/s does the course address social justice issues?
5. How have the teachers been trained to reflect on their practices?
6. What are your views on the place of social justice in the teacher preparation programme?

#### **B. Former Dean of the DTEEA/Dean of Academic Programmes**

1. Based on your knowledge of the programme, what are the main areas of emphasis in the teacher preparation curriculum? (aims, objectives, content areas)
2. Have there been any shifts that have occurred? If so what have they been? What was the rationale for that shift?
3. What is the profile of the ideal graduate from the DTEEA?
4. How are the student teachers being trained to become reflective practitioners?
5. What are your views on the place of social justice education in the teacher education programme?

#### **C. Student teachers**

1. What is your purpose for being here as a student of the Teachers' College?
2. What is your purpose as a teacher?
3. Can you tell me what you know about social justice?
4. What opportunities did you have to learn about social justice or equity?
5. What opportunities did you have to talk about social justice or equity?

6. Are you sufficiently prepared to relate to students who may not share your background?
7. How did your experiences at the College prepare you to work with children from various backgrounds?
8. How would a child's low socio-economic background impact their in-school experiences?
9. How do you think teachers can contribute to improving the lives of children who come from low socio-economic backgrounds?
10. Can you describe one or more incidents when you felt that you had to take a stand on behalf of your students?
11. Do you think teaching is a neutral endeavor?

### Appendix 3.

**Table 1. Areas of Focus, Broad Themes and Related Questions/ Ideas emerging from the initial review of the interviews and documents.**

Area of Focus	Broad Themes	Related Questions/Ideas emerging from Review of Data.
Curriculum.	How are goals/outcomes/objectives of the teacher education programme articulated?	Is there explicit reference to social justice in the articulation of the goals/objectives of the teacher education programme? Are goals of social justice explicitly articulated in the course outlines? Contrastingly, are goals for social justice social justice indirectly stated or embedded in courses? Do the mission and vision statements specifically espouse a commitment to the principles of social justice education?
Opportunity to learn/develop the knowledge, dispositions, teaching practices that relate to social justice.	What opportunities are there for student teachers to learn about social justice?	How much time is allotted for student teachers to engage in learning about the principles and practices of social justice education? How does the course work engage teachers in dealing with social justice issues? How does the practicum provide opportunity for the application of social justice education? Does the content of the various courses reflect an orientation

		towards the principles of social justice? Do the course materials support the explicit teaching of social justice?
Programme Cohesion.	How is social justice articulated vertically and horizontally across the curriculum?	Is social justice integrated across subjects? Is there a deliberate focus on establishing connections/linkages to students' lives, communities, schools, student population, St Lucian society and wider educational policy? Is social justice integrated from Year 1 to Year 2? Are social justice issues consistently dealt with across the curriculum? Do the assessment practices appraise student teachers' knowledge of the issues related to social justice education?
Reflective Practices	How are student teachers oriented to reflect on the practice of education?	How much time is allotted for student teachers to reflect on matters related to social justice? How are teachers oriented to reflect on student achievement? How are student teachers required to reflect on their role as teachers?

**NB: Broad Themes and Specific Questions are phrased as questions.**



#### Appendix 4.

**Table 2**

**Example of the organization and cross-referencing of the information from various sources.**

<b>Area of Focus/Categories</b>	<b>Broad Thematic Questions related to Area of Focus/Category</b>	<b>Specific questions related to broad theme</b>	<b>Evidence emerging from data</b>
Curriculum Goals/objectives/stated outcomes.	How are goals/outcomes/objectives of the teacher education programme articulated?	Is there explicit reference to social justice in the articulation of the goals/objectives of the teacher education programme? Are goals of social justice explicitly articulated in the course outlines? Contrastingly, are goals for social justice indirectly stated or embedded in courses? Do the mission and vision statements specifically espouse a commitment to the principles of social justice education?	Preamble: No explicit or indirect reference to social justice. Philosophical Statement highlights 3 major tasks teacher preparation and of the JBTE (i) ensuring that teachers are competent; (ii) ensure public and personal confidence though maintaining standards and certification (iii) to ensure that the teacher is child oriented. (iv) Attributes: no mention is made of teachers' disposition towards advocacy. Social and moral development is left to each individual college through extra-curricular and campus life. Standard of discipline is seen as prerequisite for the development of good character, social graces, inter-personal skills and a caring attitude towards children. Teacher must be given an understanding of their and ways they can relate positively; they 'must have a sound grasp of the historical, sociological and economic of their society and how they can

			<p>contribute to the goals of the society. (NB: There is no mention in the philosophical statement of teachers being agents of change. Instead in they must not challenge but contribute towards achieving societal goals). They ‘must try to build bridges between different social groups’ and convince their students of opportunities that exist in the society. (NB. They are trained to preserve existing societal arrangements and protect the status quo. They are not to destroy/break down but to maintain and promote existing structures). They must simply be ‘aware of the world in which they are living and issues that are currently dominating the minds of their fellow men.’ Through regular discussion of ‘burning national and international issues’. NB: Geraldine indicated that course was devoid of sociological underpinning and did not provide students with sufficient information of social issues affecting learning.</p> <p>No mention is made of social justice outcomes in any of the course outlines. There is no mission or vision statement for the Division. There is no allusion to social justice/equity in the</p>
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			mission and vision statement of SALCC.
Opportunity to learn/develop the knowledge, dispositions, teaching practices that relate to social justice.	What opportunities are there for student teachers to learn about social justice?	How much time is allotted for student teachers to engage in learning about the principles and practices of social justice education? How does the course work engage teachers in dealing with social justice issues? Is there a specific course that prepares teachers to teach in a socially just manner? (i) Increasing student teachers' awareness of social injustice in and out of school. (ii) encouraging self-reflection to improve their practice; (iii) promoting self-efficacy by developing the teachers' skills that would enable them to make meaningful change in their environment (iv) developing the skills necessary to promote social change and to value research to support the changes they would like to promote, (v) developing the confidence to initiate change in the school; (vi) understanding the importance of closely examining	No time allotted to engaging with issues of social justice. Course: Introduction to the Social and Cultural Foundations of Education does not adequately address issues of social justice and equity. She describes it as a 'slap dash thing, hastily done' She therefore suggests that the course itself lacks cohesion.  According to Geraldine, the course work is mainly discussion where students are asked to respond to hypothetical situations. Course content does not reflect an orientation towards the principles of social justice.  According to Geraldine course material does not support teaching of social justice. Recommended text is not available. She has decided to include her own material to broaden the student teachers' knowledge. She has divided the course into school and non-school factors so that students are aware of all sociological impacts on learning. Uses material from past courses that dealt more substantively with sociological factors affecting learning to augment material resources.

		<p>and assessing the need for change and monitoring its importance, (vii) exposing the teachers to productive instruction and assessment pedagogies that lead to transformative change; (viii) Is there a deliberate focus on establishing connections/linkages to student teachers' lives, communities, schools, student population, St Lucian society, its social, cultural and political history and wider educational policy? How does the practicum provide opportunity for the application of social justice education? Does the content of the various courses reflect an orientation towards the principles of social justice? Do the course materials support the explicit teaching of social justice?</p>	<p><i>The teachers in the CCETT project were always hesitant to share their inquiries with their peers as they did not see their reports as being valuable knowledge.: keeping records as data was challenging as they did not see their teaching as being researched based and that they were researchers in their own classrooms and that they could have an effect on school policies.</i></p>
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## **Appendix 5:**

### **Samples of CCETT Project Teachers' Reflections:**

#### **CCETT Teacher**

##### **Reflection/Discussion**

When the CETT programme was introduced in my school, I was very excited about it, but I didn't know the impact that it would have had on me, not only as a teacher but also as an individual. I have changed a great deal. I began to open my eyes and to look for the little things in myself and the children, which would make a big difference in their lives and mine. This programme has transformed my class and my way of teaching not only in Language Arts, but also in other subject areas. It has made me a better teacher. I also noticed that we cannot teach reading if we do not have the materials, especially the books which will assist the students. The materials were a big asset to the class and we all enjoyed interacting with the texts.

This programme, which was implemented in the school about a year ago, has made my classroom a better place and the introduction of comprehension strategies has made me evaluate the students a lot more closely. The programme seeks to improve the teacher as an individual, so as to make the students better learners. It has introduced workshops that are supplemented with an abundance of teacher and student materials. The programme paves the way for the teaching of reading. Language Arts is a key component in the development of an individual, and the programme focuses on this aspect. I am delighted that the students of the Grande Riviere Primary School have had the opportunity to develop into better individuals, which in the long run, will make them more efficient people. The Literacy Block, which had previously been introduced to the school, is now better supported and the CETT Programme has complemented it.

I have come to realize that the teaching of reading cannot be successfully accomplished without the use of materials, most of all BOOKS. With this programme, I am better able to understand the students. I am also able to plan and cater to the individual and group needs in my class. The Literacy Block, which I struggled with, has now become more structured. The daily classroom activities are more exciting. The classroom has changed into a more relaxed and comfortable atmosphere and materials are more readily available to students. Overall, my way of teaching and learning of Language Arts and class interaction as a whole, has changed.

The main purpose of the student assessment is for improvement and remediation. Assessments are no longer completed and stored away. Instead, they are used to help make the children better individuals and to assist them to exploit their strengths and weaknesses.

The handouts and workshops helped to structure my Language Arts teaching.

Although the CETT programme has several benefits, I would not be true to myself if I did not say that it is time-consuming to administer, and takes a lot out of you as a teacher. There are many demands to be met and at times, meeting those demands can be very stressful. When you are in the classroom and there are so many things to do, it is sometimes hard to find the time to do them all.

My students are the ones who have gained the most. Their interest in reading and books has increased significantly, and the improvement that they have shown in their work and in their ability to comprehend texts is encouraging. Their ability to follow routines and procedures in the classroom has also improved and I hope that they will continue to progress.

Finally, I would like to thank to all those who made this programme what it is today.

## **CCETT Teacher**

### **Reflection /Discussion**

It is very rewarding to be able to assist students to achieve success. I believe that this project is one of the most beneficial I have been involved in. It has produced great results for my students, and ultimately for the school as a whole, and more importantly, the wider community. Staff members who are not directly involved in the project are now desirous of participating. As a result, in-house sessions are held with staff members to educate them on the various aspects of Language Arts. They have also been trained in testing students and analyzing results, with much appreciated assistance from Miss Edward.

Another feature of the intervention, which was extremely beneficial, was the constant guidance and help from Miss Edward, who was always available whenever I needed information, teaching materials and moral support.

The project has also awakened parents to the importance of reading, and they are now more involved in assisting their children. Unlike previous classes where parents hardly visited the school except when they were called, a number of parents from my class visit on a daily basis. They read to students and assist me whenever possible. This in turn, has boosted students' confidence, as they see their parents actively involved in their learning. Parents have also pledged their support to the school in anyway they can.

One major setback to my intervention, was my inability to evaluate the impact of the software as a tool in teaching vocabulary and comprehension. However, this will hopefully be done in the near future, as I have been informed that the software will be an acquired in the new school year.

**Appendix 6:**

**Letter to Mr. Urban Dolor, Principal, Sir Arthur Lewis Community College**



School of Education  
388 Glossop Road,  
Sheffield, S 10 2 JA  
United Kingdom

September 30, 2013

Mr. Urban Dolor  
Principal,  
Sir Arthur Lewis Community College  
Morne Fortune  
Castries

Dear Mr. Dolor,

I am seeking permission to conduct interviews with selected staff of the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration and to have access to the following documents: (i) the teacher preparation curriculum; (ii) the assessment procedures; (iii) research topics undertaken by students over the past ten years, and (iv) the Division's vision and mission statements. Interviews will be conducted between November 2013 and March 2014.

I am currently enrolled in the Doctor of Education programme at the School of Education, University of Sheffield and my research interest is in the philosophical positions that shape teacher education. My research examines the status of social justice in the teacher education programme of the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration.

Despite a number of reform strategies to improve overall academic performance, large groups of children in St Lucia, particularly those from low socio-economic households, continue to underperform in national and regional examinations. Over the years, reform



strategies have failed to meet the needs of a large percentage of the student population or achieve the goals of social and economic development. Specifically, the goal of social equity, though espoused by successive governments, remains unattained. It is important that research be conducted to reverse this continuing trend.

My research is qualitative in nature and will employ the use of ethno-autobiography, document analysis and interviews. I hope to contribute to the development of policies that prioritize equity as a goal of general and teacher education. I expect that the results would assist in refocusing reform strategies so that educational policies and teachers' practices could become more socially just and inclusive.

The interviews are not expected to involve any stress or discomfort to participants. They will be invited to respond to questions pertaining to relevant aspects of teacher education policy and practice. The interviews will be informal and will be scheduled in consultation with the participants so that they are not inconvenienced in any way.

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of data and participants. All participants will be required to sign a consent form. Participants can withdraw at any time during the research without providing a reason. The participants will not be identified by name in any reports or publications. The audio recordings of the interviews will be used only for analysis required for the study and for reference in other papers that I may publish. Also, all data will be securely stored and no one outside the project will have access to the original recordings or documents. Audio-tapes will be destroyed at the end of the project.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Sheffield Research Ethics Committee. The completed study will be made available for academic and public use by the Sheffield University Library.

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact my supervisor:

Dr Pat Sikes,  
University of Sheffield, School of Education  
388 Glossop Road,  
Sheffield, S 10 2JA  
United Kingdom

Telephone: 01142228158

Thank you for taking part in this research project.

**Appendix: 7**

**Letter from Sir Arthur Lewis Community College**



**Sir Arthur Lewis Community  
College  
Administration**

**Communications on this subject  
Should be addressed to:**

**Morne Fortune  
Castries  
Saint Lucia, West  
Indies**

**Tel: 758457-7301/2**

**Fax: 758452-7901**

**E-mail:**

**PRINCIPAL**

Ref: SALCC/2013/D1 .3-446/P  
[udolor@saicc.edu.lc](mailto:udolor@saicc.edu.lc)

11th November 2013

- M. Marietta

Edward  
Block X,  
Apartment 11  
Castries

**Dear Ms. Edward**

The Sir Arthur Lewis Community College is always pleased to support research that seeks to clarify and subsequently alleviate the social problems that afflict our nation. Under the circumstances, I am happy to grant permission for you to conduct research at the College on *the status of social justice in the Teacher Education Programme at the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration*.

I wish you well; and look forward to receiving a copy of the completed work for our Hunter J. Francois Library.

**Yours sincerely**

Urban Dolor(Mr.)

**-PRINCIPAL:**

**Copied to: Dr. Anthony Felicien - Dean**

**Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration**

## Participant Consent Form

**Title of Project: A Critical Inquiry into the Status of Social Justice Teaching in the Teacher Education Programme of the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration in St Lucia.**

**Name of Researcher: Marietta Edward**

**Participant Identification Number for this project:----**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated: .../.../... for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. If I do, I understand that I will not be subjected to any discriminatory treatment.
3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for the researcher to have access to my anonymised responses.
4. I understand that the individual interviews and group sessions will be audio taped.

The School of Education's Ethics Committee has approved this study. I understand that if I have any complaints or reservations about this research I can contact:

Dr Pat Sikes,  
University of Sheffield, School of Education  
388 Glossop Road,  
Sheffield, S 10 2JA  
United Kingdom

Telephone: 01142228158

5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
Name of researcher taking consent	Date	Signature

**Appendix 9:**

**Letter from University of Sheffield**



The  
School  
Of  
Education.

Head of School  
Professor Cathy Nutbrown

School of Education  
388 Glossop Road  
Sheffield  
S10 2JA

31 January 2012  
8115

Telephone: +44 (0)114 222

Email:  
[ta.eamshaw@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:ta.eamshaw@sheffield.ac.uk)

Dear Marietta

**ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER**

A Critical Enquiry into the status of Social Justice Teaching in the Teacher Education Programme of the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration in St Lucia

Thank you for submitting your ethics application. I am writing to confirm that your application has now been approved, and you can proceed with your research.

Good luck with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Dan Goodley  
Chair of the School of Education Ethics Review Panel

cc Supervisor

## **Appendix 10:**

### **Participant Information Sheet**

University of Sheffield

#### **School of Education Participant Information Sheet**

### **A Critical Inquiry into the Status of Social Justice Teaching in the Teacher Education Programme of the Division of Teacher Education and Educational Administration in St Lucia.**

Dear Participant,

I am currently enrolled in the Doctor of Education programme at the School of Education, University of Sheffield and am undertaking research in a project entitled; *A critical Inquiry into the Status of Social Justice in the Teacher Education Programme of the Division of Teacher Education and educational Administration in St Lucia*. I am inviting you to take part in this project. Before you decide, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This letter provides you with the relevant information needed for you to make a decision to participate in the project. Please take time to read the information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Despite a number of reform strategies to improve overall academic performance, large groups of children in St Lucia, particularly those from low socio-economic households, continue to underperform in national and regional examinations. Consequently, reform strategies fail to meet the needs of a large percentage of the populace and undermine the goals of social and economic development. The goal of social equity, though espoused by successive governments, remains unattained. It is important that research be conducted to reverse this continuing trend.

My research is qualitative in nature and examines the status of social justice education in the teacher preparation curriculum through the use of ethno-autobiography, document analysis and interviews. I hope to contribute to the development of policies that prioritize equity as a goal of general and teacher education. I expect that the results would assist in refocusing reform strategies so that educational policies and teachers' practices could become more socially just and inclusive. The project would be conducted over a period of twenty-three (23) months.

You have been selected to participate in the interviews because of your involvement in educational policy making and educational administration in St Lucia. You will be invited to respond to questions pertaining to relevant aspects of general and teacher education policy reforms. The interviews will be informal and will be scheduled in consultation with you so that you are not inconvenienced in any way. The research should take up no more than one hour.

You are free to decide whether or not to participate. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a Consent Form. You can still withdraw at any time during the research process without penalty or loss of any kind. It is not necessary that you provide a reason for your withdrawal. Whilst there are no immediate benefits for participants involved in this project, it is hoped that you would contribute to the development of policies that seek to improve the academic performance of all students in St Lucia. The completed study will be made available for academic and public use by the Sheffield University Library.

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of data and participants. The participants will not be identified by name, without your written permission, in any reports or publications. The audio recordings of the interviews will be used only for analysis required for the study and for reference in other papers that I may publish. Also, all data will be securely stored and no one outside the project will have access to the original recordings. Audio-tapes will be destroyed at the end of the project.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Sheffield Research Ethics Committee. The completed study will be made available for academic and public use by the Sheffield University Library.

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact my supervisor:

Dr Pat Sikes,  
University of Sheffield, School of Education  
388 Glossop Road,  
Sheffield, S 10 2JA  
United Kingdom

Telephone: 01142228158

Thank you for taking part in this research project.

Yours respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marianne Edward". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.