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Preservice Teachers' Preconception of Student Voice in their Teacher Education

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Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Joan Delerine Belfon

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Walden University

2025

Abstract

Preservice Teachers' Preconception of Student Voice in their Teacher Education

by

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MA, University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica 1999

BA, University of the West Indies, Mona Jamaica 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

Walden University

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Abstract

A 2022 Jamaican education report highlighted that student-centered pedagogy is crucial to educational outcomes. A problem exists in that there is limited research on how student voice practices within student-centered pedagogy are incorporated into teacher training. Before preservice teachers' praxis can be transformed, greater understanding of their preconceptions about student voice is essential. Guided by conceptual change theory, the purpose of this generic qualitative study was to explore the preconceptions of preservice teachers in rural central Jamaica about student voice in their teacher education. Eight preservice teachers preparing for the secondary level in three Jamaican higher education institutions were purposefully sampled for completion of semistructured interviews. Data were thematically analyzed resulting in three themes: (a) importance of student voice, (b) active student representation voice, and (c) student voice impact and the role of the teacher. Findings revealed that the preservice teachers articulated the value and importance of students having a voice in their education, but they also held underlying beliefs in teacher control that contrast with student-centered pedagogy. By fostering awareness and dialogue about student voice among Jamaican preservice teachers, this study has the potential to empower the teachers to value both their own voices and those of their future students. The study can aid teacher educators in developing more student-centered curricula and pedagogy, thereby contributing to meaningful social change in the transformation of curricula and teacher training, shifting teacher and student roles.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to all those students who sat through education experiences and had no involvement in the process yet were able to achieve their goals. This study also recognizes students who broke, were destroyed, dropped out because the education process did not cater for their differentiation and, were marginalized because the one size did not fit them and their voices remained silent.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Teacher education is a lifelong process. During the initial stage of preservice teacher preparation, individuals begin to shape their identity as teachers. At this juncture, preservice teachers can change their traditional perceptions of the role of the teacher as authoritative and in control of others to that of facilitator, nurturer and supporter of student needs. Dyson (2010) suggested that “quality teaching could be described as the meeting of the needs of the learner” (p. 14). However, teacher training in Jamaica, similar to many teacher training programs across the United Kingdom, United States of America, Australia, and Latin America, still revolves around a teacher-centered approach to pedagogy (Evans & Tucker, 2020; Hordatt Gentles, 2018; Roofe, 2018; Wilks et al., 2019) in which student voice is not an educational priority. To understand students’ needs requires providing opportunity for and listening to students’ voices; inclusive of allowing students a role in decision-making about their learning (Bron et al., 2018; Cook-Sather, 2018; Conner, 2022; Fielding, 2006; Mitra, 2004; Wong et al, 2024). While research has shown that student voice in education positively affects learning and motivation to learn among adolescent high school students in the Caribbean and Jamaican education landscape (Gutman & Schoon, 2018), the current teacher-centered approach that is modeled in higher education teacher preparation programs (Birbal & Hewitt-Bradshaw, 2019; DeLisle, 2018; Keshrino et al., 2024; Roofe, 2018) does not focus on the inclusion of the students’ voice or agency. In fact, the teachers’ student voice is also not included in their teacher education.

There is a call in the global research on student voice, in general, for educators to change their practice to be more inclusive of students as co-constructors of learning (Brennan, 2021; Conner et al., 2024; Mitra, 2018; Ressler et al., 2022; Vaughn, 2020). Nevertheless, research indicates that the content-focused approach to teacher preparation across the globe still shapes the preservice teachers' perspectives of their identity as one of control, authority, and subject expert (Cochran-Smith & Keefe, 2022; Keshrino et al., 2024; Ö Gallchoir et al., 2018; Smith-Sherwood, 2018). Little is known about how preservice teachers understand the role or importance of student voice and how having a voice in their own education may affect their learning in the higher education program. This lack of self-knowledge may limit preservice teachers from considering student voice when they begin to teach in the classroom. Therefore, a better understanding of the preconceptions of preservice teachers' in higher education teacher education programs about student voice is important.

Mitra (2004) suggested that student voice was concerned with “valuing students’ role in decision making and change” (p. 651). On the other hand, Wilks et al. (2019) placed emphasis on the students’ capacity for autonomy and responsibility in their participatory role in their learning spaces. However, teacher preparation programs in higher education in Jamaica focus primarily on delivering subject content (Bourne & Wright, 2018; Roofe, 2018;) and not on the agency teachers need to create change.

Throughout the literature on teacher education, researchers questioned the content-driven, teacher-centered focus of higher education training programs for preservice students. There are several contentions in the debate including the need for

preservice teachers to be “active mediators of their own learning” (Farrell, 2019, p. 6). The other concern is the disconnect between theory and practice. In the Farrell exploration of how new teachers cope on entering the classroom upon graduation, participants noted the trauma of transitioning from a content-driven preparation program to the reality of the classroom. These new teachers felt unprepared for the rigors of the classroom. A similar sentiment of unpreparedness was echoed by teachers in training in a study by Ressler et al.(2022). Conversely, among teachers who integrated student voice in their pedagogy, Connor (2022) found that student voice praxis better prepared teachers to improve their teaching craft to more effectively support their student needs and to manage their classroom environment more progressively. However, to manage the teaching and learning space requires an understanding of the needs of the learners in that learning space as expressed by the learners themselves (Dyson, 2010). Coming out of their separate research investigations Farrell (2019) and later Moore (2021) found that preservice teachers, when in training, do not have a voice in their own education and so have no precedent for exploring and understanding the empowerment learners experience when having a voice in their education.

As preservice teachers in teacher education programs actively construct and make sense of the information they are acquiring in their teacher education courses, self-evaluation and reflection on the preconceptions that shape their beliefs, values and which they bring to experiences is critical, if they are to acquire new habits of mind. Carey et al. (2015) noted that qualitative changes in existing concepts and conceptual contexts take place as individuals acquire new concepts through thinking “not just new thoughts but

previously unthinkable thoughts” (p. 38). New knowledge is built upon the ontological preconceptions individuals already hold and which are embedded in the lens through which they view the world.

Preservice students should be carefully guided to reflect on the assumptions and frames of reference including cultural ones that underpin their preconceptions.

Ö Gallchoir et al. (2018) found that second-year preservice teachers’ perceptions of self as a teacher were rated according to their confidence in their subject area or ability to control and manage the classroom. The preservice teachers, in reviewing videos of their teaching sessions, reflected on what Ö Gallchoir et al. referred to as their “physical performance” (p. 152) as teachers. In their self-evaluation of whether they were a good or bad teacher during their practice teaching, the preservice students made no connection to their ability to support student learning or to the strategies they employed to empower student learning nor to making their students’ voices heard. Perhaps there is too much focus on *what* the preservice teacher learns and not enough on who the preservice teacher is, how the preservice teacher thinks and feels, and on how the needs of the preservice teachers are being met.

In K-12 classrooms, Pineda-Báez et al., (2019) pointed to the need for further examination of the kinds and types of interaction that can better empower students to make their voices heard. Teachers’ roles must shift to enable student empowerment and student voice (Byker et al., 2017; Cook-Sather & Matthews, 2023; Mayes et al., 2021; Robertson, 2017) as imperative for student success. However, this transformation at the K-12 classroom level may not be possible without a shift in the approach to teacher

education at the higher education level. Little is currently known about preservice teachers' preconceptions of the role of student voice in their education. More importantly, the preservice teachers themselves are not aware of their own preconceptions; that is their prior ideas, misconceptions, predispositions, prejudices, and cultural frames of references about student voice in education including their own. Therefore, changes within the teacher education programs that could allow preservice teachers to explore and reflect on their conceptual ecology and experiences about student voice may precipitate change in these preservice teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes related to student voice.

Providing consistent opportunities for preservice teachers' voice can later transform teacher practice, helping preservice teachers to discover what works and encouraging a creative approach to pedagogy (Mayes et al., 2021). In the debate on teacher education curricula and what teachers should know including their pedagogical practices, researchers suggest that teacher education student voices are not currently included. Wilks et al. (2019) noted that including preservice teachers' voices in teacher education was a new strand in the debate. The conversation on the need for students at all levels of education to have a voice in their learning is a global one. In Jamaica and the Caribbean student voice is a newly emerging discourse where much of the existing research focuses on the Anglophone Caribbean region wherein Birbal and Hewitt-Bradshaw (2019) argued that classroom practice was still authoritative, teacher dominated, and often marginalized minority students.

One of the challenges to the education system as Dyson (2010) pointed out is that educators often make assumptions about students' needs without consulting the students

themselves. De Lisle (2018) also questioned where educational policy makers in the Caribbean got their data for policy formulation and argued that the community's voice was often ignored. These noted criticisms were significant to my research exploration, and underpinned my arguments in the background to my research which demonstrates how the answers to the research question can inform education policymakers, and may contribute to professional development of teachers. In this chapter, I present the background of the research, the problem, the purpose, and the research question that guided the study. I also discuss the framework, the nature of the study, relevant definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations with an explanation of the significance of the exploration.

Background

There is a call in the research on student voice, in general, for educators to change their practice to be more inclusive of students as co-constructors of learning (Brennan, 2021; Vaughn, 2020). This call has been ongoing. The recent pandemic forced swift changes and innovations in presenting and accessing education and allowed educators to rethink the relevance of the education being offered. Zhao and Watterson (2021) argued that traditional education paused, creating an opportunity for students to become owners of their learning and to propose new learning content that better satisfied their needs. Individuals need to be prepared for a new world where traditional jobs are changing and traditional knowledge may not guarantee access. However, the literature on higher education programs for teacher education globally and in the local Jamaican environment suggests that the focus is more on delivering subject content (Bourne & Wright, 2018;

Farrel, 2019; Roofe, 2018) and not on the agency prospective teachers need to create change.

Teachers need to be trained for a new environment where students are empowered to have more control in the teaching and learning process (Cook-Sather, 2020; Mayes et al., 2021; Mitra, 2018; Zhao & Watterson, 2021). Nonetheless, teachers need help to shift to this more student-centered and humanistic praxis (Brennan, 2021; Ó Gallchóir & McGarr, 2023; Roofe, 2018) and student voice praxis has the potential to engender the transformational education change needed to shift the power dynamics in the classroom. However, change is complex and multidimensional and requires negotiations with previously held knowledge, beliefs, and experiences that shaped identity and behavior before the new experience and context can be integrated into an individual's conceptual ecology. According to Carey (1987), conceptual change occurs due to an action in a context or experience. Mezirow (1997, 2003) noted that individuals understand the world based on their assumptions and expectations that are influenced by their experiences, and that one's sense of self is intertwined with our perceptions which are in turn embedded in our preconceptions and assumptions. In my study, interview questions were designed to help participants probe their assumptions about student voice and make sense of their lived experiences in their teacher education programs.

While there is a significant body of work on K–12 student voice as an important concept for democratic education in which students and teachers are equals, there is no research available that explores student voice among preservice teachers preparing for the K-12 classroom in a higher education teacher program in rural central Jamaica.

Specifically, little is known about the preconceptions preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education. This may lead to a lack of future understanding of how to learn from their own students to make a difference in their practice (Cook-Sather, 2020; Mayes et al., 2021; Young, 2018). Preconceptions impact thinking and behavior (Rea-Ramirez et al., 2023; DiSessa, 2014; Vosniadou, 2007, 2008). Before preservice teachers in higher education teacher training programs can be taught to include the voices of the students they will eventually teach, they must first understand their possible misconceptions, prejudices and prior ideas that influence their attitudes and beliefs about the concept of student voice. Farrell (2019) noted that the nature of teachers' beliefs and thinking could influence their teaching and learning, and it is through their beliefs that they develop their identity as educators. My research processes provided an opportunity for preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica to reflect on and discuss their preconceptions about their voice as students in their teacher education.

Problem

Being prepared for the classroom without understanding the role and importance of their own voice in their teacher education limits the teacher from comprehending how student voice can empower their diverse students when in the classroom. It appears that there is no available research on the preconceptions preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education. Teacher education in Jamaica, similar to many teacher education programs across the United Kingdom, Australia, and Latin America, still revolves around a teacher-

centered approach to pedagogy (Bourne & Wright, 2018) with classrooms, pedagogy and curricula designed, practiced and developed around the dominant paradigm of the teacher at the center or at the top of the relationship and participation pyramids. The teacher centered approach to education places the power of the teaching and learning process in the hands of the teacher, education administrators, curricula developers, and policymakers, leaving the voice of the student unheard (Charteris & Smardon, 2019b). Student voice activities are intended to shift the power dynamics and hierarchies in the classroom.

Teacher education activities do not always provide an opportunity for critical reflection, and this omission persists throughout the preservice teachers' classroom pedagogy and their later professional development. Even where student feedback is part of institutional policies and procedures, teachers in the classroom do not reflect on what the students have to say and, in some cases, resist and or fear the data from student feedback (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014; Charteris & Smardon, 2019a, 2019b; Finefter-Rosenbluh et al., 2021; Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2022). Researchers on student voice and teacher education argue that the education fraternity misses important messages from students. Where surveys have been conducted in a student voice effort, the focus has been on data that aligns with the values of the teacher and the institution (Fielding, 2004; Mameli et al., 2018; Mayes et al., 2021). At the same time there is a need to position the voice of both student and teacher as something with power and with views that matter (Gillet-Swan & Baroutsis, 2024). Teacher educators must understand the preservice teacher's perspectives on student voice so that the voices of the preservice teacher can be

better integrated into teacher education policies and practice to avoid the tokenism attached to many student voice efforts in education. Teachers in training do not have a voice (Farrell, 2019; Moore, 2021).

Castañeda-Trujillo and Aguirre-Hernández (2018), in examining preservice teachers' voices on their teaching practicum, noted the absence of the teachers' voices in the practice teaching process. They recommended that the initial stage of teacher preparation be a space for the preservice teacher's voice to be heard. The researchers argued that the preservice teacher's reflections and experiences were a crucial source for teacher education curricula development and called for teacher educators to move away from the traditional teacher-dominant classroom model. In the Jamaican education landscape, Hordatt Gentles (2018) argued that the system seemed incapable of change as it was focused on transmitting dominant norms and values and on maintaining the status quo. In the limited research on student voice in the Caribbean, in an investigation of how higher education institutions and faculty in Trinidad and Tobago respond to the voice of the undergraduate student in feedback, Blair and Valdez Noel (2014) commented on the physical choice of a lecture theatre model in the higher education spaces that was a feature across campuses throughout the Anglophone Caribbean region, including Jamaica. The researchers argued that the lecture theater selection was connected to the teacher-centered pedagogy mode that was influenced by societal history and dominant values wherein students were expected to be passive.

In his investigation into gendered patterns of achievement in education across the Anglophone Caribbean, De Lisle (2018) agreed with the limitations of the teacher-

centered Caribbean classroom argued by Blair and Valdez Noel (2014) who extended the debate to include the notion that the voice of the rural student in Jamaica was silent. Student voice discourse in the English-speaking Caribbean context noted is very limited and student voice research is newly emerging. To this end, the problem that this qualitative study explored was the preconceptions preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education.

Purpose of the Study

In this qualitative study, I aimed to explore the preconceptions preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education. Conceptual change theorists suggest that deeply held knowledge, attitudes and values, beliefs, and experiences shape the preconceptions individuals bring to situations, including new learning (Carey, 1987,1991; Larkin, 2012; Posner et al., 1982; Rea Ramirez & Ramirez, 2017; Rea-Ramirez et al., 2020). Preservice teachers bring preconceptions of themselves as teachers and of teaching to their higher education learning situations. Preconceptions can be reinforced or challenged to change through reflection that encourages displacing, deconstructing, reassembling, connecting, and combining toward possible transformation and change (Gibson, 1951; Kaisu & Mezirow, 2000; Piaget,1964). If a change from teacher-dominated pedagogy to more student-centered praxis is to take place throughout the K-12 grades, teacher education leaders may need first to address how new teachers are prepared in higher education programs. The change in classroom praxis which is at the center of the student-voice dialogue is

fundamental and will require a significant shift in the traditional teacher education paradigm that dominates Caribbean education.

Research Question

The following research questions guided my study:

RQ1: What preconceptions do preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education?

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study was based on conceptual change theory because it explains and addresses the difficulty in revising deeply held perceptions comprising beliefs, knowledge, values, attitudes, experiences, and concepts acquired through specific cultural norms and or education. Conceptual change theory is used extensively in research studies on teacher education and influenced by the work of Piaget and Kuhn, is linked to the concepts of learning and teaching (Kuhn, 1970, 1977b; Piaget, 1964). Theorists and conceptual change researchers note also the slow and incremental process of change that may take place over time as individuals struggle to accept, reject or merge new knowledge with existing perceptions (Carey, 1985; Nadelson et al., 2018; Özdemir & Clarke, 2007; Posner et al., 1982; Rea Ramirez & Ramirez, 2017). In the context of transformation and change, student voice research employs qualitative methodology to examine student voice phenomenon underpinned by sociocultural and social constructionist theories intertwined with conceptual change theory and thinking (Cook-Sather, 2020; Charteris & Smardon, 2019a; Farrell, 2019; Fielding, 2004; Hallewas, 2019; Mayes et al., 2020; Mitra, 2004, 2017, 2018; Moore, 2021; Young, 2018).

Conceptual change theory also provides a framework for thinking about phenomena. The connections between conceptual change and student voice research explorations are discussed in more details in Chapter 2. I focused only on the initial stage of the conceptual change process, that is, recognition of the preservice teachers preconceptions about student voice (See Figure 3).

Conceptual change theory connects to the qualitative descriptive approach to my research study. Posner et al. (1982) and later Larkin (2012) reminded educators and researchers that individuals organize their thoughts and ideas based on what they already know to accommodate new information for mental processing. Bearing in mind the essential role previous knowledge plays in the acquisition of new information, conceptual change theory underpinned the design, development and execution of my research processes, including development of my research instrument for the interview that was used to collect data to answer the research question. Data from interviews of the preservice teacher's preconceptions of student voice was used to answer the research question. Conceptual change theory offered guidance to explore and understand how preconceptions are formed, how preconceptions influence thinking and behaviors, and potential strategies to influence preconceptions toward possible change. Conceptual change theory was the lens through which I explored the preconceptions of preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica about student voice which is discussed in more details in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

To address the research question in this qualitative study, the specific research design included an in-depth exploration, collection, and analysis of the preconceptions preservice teachers have about student voice in their teacher education. My research focused on preservice teachers in teacher education programs preparing to be high school teachers and who were enrolled and attending a teacher's college or university in rural central Jamaica and in their third or fourth year of study. Crawford, 2019 (as cited in Burkholder et al., 2019) defined qualitative research as an exploration of "social phenomenon through observation, description, and thematic analysis of participants' behaviors and perspectives to explain and/or understand the phenomenon" (p. 82). The generic qualitative methodology was selected as it simply seeks to discover and to understand the "what" of the phenomenon (Kostere & Kostere, 2021; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015) to unearth what participants know, what they believe, how they feel, and what they have experienced about the phenomenon of student voice relevant to teacher education. The purpose of my research, the limitation of time within my doctoral program, the resources available and my research interest and question also guided my choice of methodology.

I considered narrative research, ethnography, case study and phenomenology as alternative approaches to my investigation of the preconceptions of preservice teachers about student voice. I was first attracted to narrative research because the process aims for in-depth analysis of meaning in people's stories about their lived experiences. The nature of my research question did not lend itself to the narrative methodology which

focuses more on the development of stories from detailed data collected from people's stories about their lived experiences (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2015; Wolgemuth & Agosto, 2019). The literature noted that narrative research is longitudinal in nature, a feature that was not appropriate for my dissertation time limitation.

Ethnography focuses on the culture and practice of a particular group in a specific location in relation to the wider society and is usually longitudinal in nature. The focus is on how culture works and not necessarily on an issue or problem (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015). The purpose of my study was to explore information from individuals about their unique preconceptions about student voice. I also contemplated phenomenology which focuses on the lived experiences of individuals but reduces that experience to a 'composite' (Creswell, 2007, p.75) of all the participants describing the essential nature of a phenomena (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015). Likewise, the bounded nature of the case study methodology was not appropriate for my research question as it would have limited my investigation to one context, requires time for observation and according to Creswell (2007) is essentially used to illustrate an issue .

Qualitative investigations take place in real time and in real world settings (Burkholder, 2019; Patton, 2014) and the interview protocols were designed and conducted within the context of education and in locations that were most comfortable for the participants of the teacher education programs and institutions in which the participants experienced their teacher preparation. My research data and findings provide a starting point to discussions, debates toward a long-term objective of creating projects, and programs toward positive social change. As the preservice teachers were in the

process of shaping their identities as teachers in this initial teacher preparation stage, it was a good opportunity to discover their preconceptions that influenced their beliefs, values, and attitudes to understand both the psychological (personal) and sociological (social) development of that identity in relation to student voice. The generic qualitative approach was most suited to capturing the data required to answer the research question.

Definition of Terms

Preconception: Flexible, malleable predispositions and prior ideas used to interpret and organize experiences. Preconceptions are influenced by surrounding contexts, are often developing and evolving as the frameworks in which they are embedded change (Posner et al., 1982; Rea-Ramirez & Ramirez, 2017; Vosniadou, 2007; Vosniadou et al., 2008)

Preservice Teacher: An individual with little or no experience in the classroom who is enrolled in a higher education teacher training program to become a professional teacher (Guzman et al., 2019; Miller, 2015). The preservice teacher is engaged in specific course selections, supervised practice teaching in schools and must meet specific criteria required for the degree. Program content for the preservice students' higher education teacher-education course of study is usually determined by the body with sole responsibility for education policy directives.

Student voice: The right to active student involvement in shaping and reshaping their learning, teachers' practices, the classroom's organization and operations, and participation in educational decision-making processes and education change (Bron et al., 2018; Charteris & Smardon, 2019b; Cook-Sather, 2020; Mitra, 2018; Conner et al.,

2024). Student voice includes but is not limited to participation, and is the bridge between the educational institution and the external world. The notions of student voice recognize, elevate and take seriously the diversity of voices, the alternate realities, values and opinions of the student.

Assumptions

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and interpretive frameworks that inform the study of research problems associated with meaning-making and values ascribed to those meanings within participants' culture and social settings (Burkholder, 2019). The first assumption was that participants would respond to the interview questions and be willing to share their perspectives, feelings, emotions, and concerns in interviews without fear of judgment. Secondly, I assumed that participants would provide honest responses to questions and prompts. The data collection process sought to build trust by inviting co-construction of research findings and building in the protection of participant identity. The final assumption was that the selected sample of rural central Jamaican preservice teachers would be an appropriate representation of the rural central high school teacher population.

The preceding assumptions were necessary as they provided the foundation for proceeding with the research process. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), assumptions also functioned as a guide for the design of the research process, including data collection and analysis. They helped to increase the clarity of the study steps and the credibility and validity of the findings. The conclusions in the analysis were inferred based on the assumptions and converted to support claims. Based on the study

assumptions, the interview protocols included strategies to de-identify and protect the participants' identity.

Scope and Delimitation

Qualitative methodology captures deeper understanding of human interactions in their constructed reality (Corbin & Strauss, 2014), making the world of the participants visible. The specific aspects of human behavior that I addressed in my research included the preconceptions of the participants about student voice in general, and about their personal student voice. Preconceptions when deconstructed comprise an individual's knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and experiences. The focus on the preservice teacher's preconceptions was chosen because the topic of student voice as a strategy to improve student outcomes, student achievement and success was not (and is still not) yet a conversation in Jamaica and specifically in rural central Jamaica. As a starting point, it was useful to discover and understand what preservice teachers knew, thought, and believed about the concept of student voice. The selected generic qualitative methodology included a descriptive component that gave voice to the participants and made visible the underlying factors that influenced each participant's prior ideas about student voice.

The theory of conceptual change was selected because it links to how individuals acquire their conceptual ecology, which influences their preconceptions. It helped me explore how preservice teachers conceived and perceived themselves and how they related to the concept and practice of student voice. I assumed that responses to the interview questions were truthful and were offered to the maximum degree of the

participants' knowledge and reflection. For clarity, I focused on the preservice teacher's preconception and not on their perceptions which as Dewey (1912) and Efron (1969) noted is active, creative, and subjective. Perception is formed from observation (Susan Carey, 2000) and is a more immediate response to the world around. Preconceptions are more embedded and formed beforehand, nurtured by culture, context, background, socialization and history, shaping an individual's world and influencing attitudes and behavior. One key and consistent philosophy underpinning student voice research in the literature is that beliefs, values, and knowledge influence attitudes and behaviors. Dyson (2010) argued for the preservice teacher's training to include an understanding of themselves first, so that they are better able to understand their attitudes and behaviors in the relationships of education.

The population that was studied was preservice teachers enrolled in teacher education programs in rural central Jamaica. There are other rural areas across the Jamaican landscape but for purposes of time, resources and my dissertation requirements, I limited the study to rural central Jamaica wherein I was employed as an educator at the higher education level. Participants were either in their third or final year of their teacher education program. I chose to exclude first and second year teachers only because they had not yet had sufficient practice in the classroom and were still new to the dynamics of classroom praxis and relationships from a teacher's perspective. Additionally, Year 1 and Year 2 preservice teachers were still determining whether they wanted to remain in the teaching profession.

Though a part of the Jamaican landscape and historical context, the rural landscape in Jamaica, as in any other society, has its peculiar historical, sociocultural and political dynamics that play out differently to the urban centers. Cummings (2012) and De Lisle (2018) forewarned researchers not to underestimate the complexity of the rural space. Despite being limited to a rural environment in central Jamaica in the Caribbean with its peculiar history and culture, principles and lessons learned from my exploration may be transferable to other learning and teaching situations and contexts.

Limitations

As an education reform activist, I ensured that my advocacy and personal bias did not influence the research process. Qualitative experts note that being the instrument of the research in qualitative investigations, it is not possible to remove all subjectivity from the research processes (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015). Through journaling, self-memos, peer debriefing and participant verification of the transcribed interviews, potential bias was significantly reduced. There was some difficulty in recruiting a sample of eight to 12 participants due to acts of God and institution examination scheduling. This is discussed in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4. The research findings are not transferable to the broader population due to the small purposeful sample size of preservice students in higher education programs who were preparing to be teachers in the secondary and high school classrooms.

Significance

This study is significant because it opens the possibility for fresh conversations, discussions, and debates on pedagogical practices and teacher preparation among college

and university administrators and teacher education staff across the rural school districts in central Jamaica. Bourne and Wright (2018) argued that there was need in Jamaica for a redefinition and changing of the old philosophy of education in a 21st century climate that demands new responses and fresh approaches. A better understanding among administrative and teacher education staff about student voice in the university and teachers' college classrooms may provide a fresh approach to classroom methodology and positively impact teacher-training models and practice.

The research is original because it appears that there is no study found to date that focuses on preservice teachers' preconceptions about their student voice in teaching and learning in higher education in rural central Jamaica. The findings discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 can generate discussions on teacher preparation and, may be the first step in impacting preservice teacher education curricula to include student voice and agency in higher education teacher education programs. Ultimately, these preservice teachers may recognize the role and importance of student voice practice and philosophy in their own teaching. My research can contribute to positive social change within teacher education programs and will expand the limited discourse in the Caribbean on student voice (Birbal & Hewitt-Bradshaw, 2019) as an enabler of change in pedagogy (Mitra, 2018) albeit from within a rural central Jamaican context.

There is further possibility beyond my research exploration, for preservice teacher participants upon graduation to be included in the voices of ongoing student voice activities. After graduating, the preservice teacher participants who might be willing to share their experience as a research participant may be encouraged to share their

perspectives on student voice with colleagues in their schools, raise questions at staff meetings, and continue the discussions on student voice in learning and teacher-preparation and praxis. The extension of the research potential noted was not an objective or aim of the exploration of the preconceptions of preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica about student voice in their teacher education. The post research possibilities are potential building blocks for social change and for my work as a change agent in education.

Social Change

Student voice is a powerful language for social change as it provides classroom evidence for teachers to respond to student realities and make learning more impactful. Roofe (2018) advocated for a change in the teacher preparation curriculum in Jamaica. Rural schools and communities are closely intertwined; more closely than urban schools (Miller, 2015), and have their own peculiar ways of living and communicating. Student voice creates an environment of engagement and consciousness and can help to provide new and veteran teachers with the “indigenous ways of knowing and doing” (Roofe, 2018, p. 825). Teachers, like their students “have little power and agency when it comes to participating in the process of school reform” (Cook-Sather, 2009, p. 225). My research adds another element to the existing discourse on professional development for teachers in a rural Caribbean context. Transformation takes time. My study can contribute to a first stage in the social change discourse that has the potential to eventually lead to better teacher preparation for preservice teachers in higher education teacher education programs in rural central Jamaica. By fostering reflection on their preconceptions about

student voice in the research interview, preservice teacher participants were offered the opportunity to construct and reconstruct held views with alternate options (Larkin, 2012; Rea-Ramirez & Ramirez, 2017) and make decisions to maintain their stance or change.

Summary

The preceding Chapter 1 provided the problem as first perceived and the supporting context in which it was explored. There has been little investigation into incorporating student voice in teacher preparation (Mayes et al., 2021). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the preconceptions the preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica had about student voice in their teacher education. I used a generic qualitative design and employed in-depth interviews with preservice teacher participants to understand their preconceptions of student voice. Conceptual change theory underpinned data collection and analysis and offered a framework to understand the process of knowledge transformation. The discourse in the literature noted that students were stakeholders in teacher preparation (Bron et al., 2018; Cook-Sather, 2020; Drewes et al., 2019) and called for student voices to be heard so that they could be empowered to be more engaged and participatory in their learning (Cook-Sather, 2020; Keshrino et al., 2024; Mitra, 2018). Simultaneously, there were calls for changes in teacher preparation (Bourne & Wright, 2018; Dyson, 2010; Farrell, 2019; Holquist et al., 2023; Moore, 2021) and for the voices of higher education preservice teachers who were students in teacher preparation programs to be included in curricula development, teacher education curricula and program content, and professional

development (Bron et al., 2018; Conner, 2022b.; Farrell, 2019; Gillet-Swan & Baroutsis, 2024; Moore, 2021; Ressler et al., 2022; Roofe, 2018).

In the Caribbean, student voice is a newly emerging debate, and what research exists indicates that classroom pedagogy needs to be more student-centered (Birbal & Hewitt Bradshaw, 2019; Blair & Valdez Noel, 2018; De Lisle, 2018). Implications for social change could include more creative and innovative strategies for inquiring and influencing conceptual change during teacher preparation for the classroom. In Chapter 2, I synthesize the current research and discourse on student voice in general and in teacher education. Additionally, I examine the historical context that still influences classroom practices and explore studies that explored the phenomena of student voice integration into classroom praxis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter was to review the literature related to the research topic that served to demonstrate the background from which the researcher proceeded. I looked at several key works concerning teacher education, student voice integration, conceptual change theory and framework against the historical context of education in Jamaica and the Caribbean, providing a view of the landscape in which my research was conducted.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the preconceptions preservice teachers in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education. No research was available that explored the preconceptions about student voice among preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica. Nevertheless, the literature identified student voice as a strategy that could help teachers to understand their students' needs better, to inform their classroom praxis and, improve the quality of teaching and learning (Charteris & Smardon, 2018; Cook-Sather, 2020; Fielding 2004; Gillet-Swan & Baroutsis, 2024; Matthew & Dollinger, 2022; Mitra, 2018; Warwick et al., 2020). However, teachers have expressed the need to feel trusted and heard before they could extend opportunities for their students to be involved in decision-making (Finefter-Rosenbluh et al., 2021; Finefter-Rosenbluh, 2022; Holquist et al., 2023). Hence the need for preservice teachers while in training to understand and explore student voice in their teacher education before they get into the classroom.

It is, however, essential to understand the historical context of education in the Jamaican and Caribbean landscapes, the influences of Western education ideologies,

globalization, and behaviorist notions on local and regional education, and how these ideas filter down to the embedded preconceptions of the preservice teacher demographic that provided data for this study. In this chapter I discussed how the history shapes and influences how teachers are prepared for the classroom, and the complexities individuals in teacher training bring to their preparation. It is also important to understand the global discourses and contexts of education reform conversations and strategies and how the Caribbean makes its way into the discourses and responds to the global calls for reform. In this chapter, I also provided examples of Jamaica's call for their education reform and the pace of the evolution of those calls.

The global debate pivots around the inability of institutions, and by extension, teachers, to understand, appreciate and deliberately include the voices of their students in decision-making and generally partnering in their own education. Researchers, commentators, and writers on the student voice movement noted that from kindergarten to higher level education, inclusive of teacher education, teacher-centered approaches dominated praxis, creating a divide between learner expectation and teacher practices. The consensus among researchers in the field of education is that there was a need to disrupt traditional paradigms to restructure the classroom relationships to a more student-centered dynamic allowing students input into the pedagogical dialogue (Blair & Valdez Noel, 2014; Borne & Wright, 2018; Bron, 2018; Farrell, 2019; Garcia et al., 2022; Holquist et al., 2023; Hordatt Gentles; 2018; McIver, 2020; Young, 2018).

In examining student voice among undergraduate students, Birbal and Hewitt-Bradshaw (2019) raised the concern that pedagogy in the Caribbean education landscape

was still teacher-centered. Roofe (2018) pointed attention to teacher training in Jamaica, noting the influence of globalization and education policies of more dominant countries on the local system. The researcher argued that global notions fostered a behaviorist approach to classroom practice, favoring competition and test scores as teacher accountability with less attention on a humanistic approach that positioned students as active participants in their learning and teaching. Teachers in Jamaica are prepared primarily for content delivery, and most have admitted to teaching in the classroom the way they were taught (Roofe, 2018). In 2008, Jules lamented the one size fit all approach to pedagogy in the Caribbean, arguing that while resources were spent on education reform, there was no change in approach. Bourne and Wright (2018) argued for fundamental change in “traditionalist teaching methodology”(p. 36) that have failed the Jamaican students yet continued to dominate classroom practice. The researchers made a call for methodology to reflect more current trends in philosophy. New methodology, nonetheless, must contend with the existing education climate within societies.

In the Jamaican rural environment, Miller (2015), in a study among principals in rural Jamaica, noted that there were serious tensions between education reforms, practice, and student needs. More recently, Cuban (2021), in his examination of the United States classroom practices, concurred with Jules and Miller concluding that repeated reforms had little or no impact on praxis. One continuing trend and philosophy that may answer the Bourne and Wright (2018) reform call in Jamaica is student voice philosophy and practice. Charteris and Smardon (2017) advocated for student voice in pedagogy, arguing that it provided evidence for teachers to make learning more impactful. From research in

the Australian education landscape, Mayes et al. (2021) brought the issue back to the role of the teacher in advancing the practice of student voice in the classroom and identified a gap in the research that there was little investigation on how to incorporate student voice in teacher preparation. Nevertheless, before teachers in training can be taught to include student voice in their classroom, higher education teacher-educators must first understand the preservice students' knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, that is, their preconceptions about student voice. To incorporate student voice into teaching and learning requires a change in thinking about education.

Disrupting the traditional paradigm of pedagogical approaches is not an easy fix as it may require first addressing deeply embedded notions of the teacher-student relationship among teachers, including where and with whom power and authority lie in that relationship. For example, educator and researcher Nunez (2021) noted his difficulty in deconstructing what he had assimilated from his culture about the dominant role of the teacher who controlled the teaching and learning space. Despite recognizing the value of student-centered pedagogy to the engagement and success of his students, it took four years for his preconceptions to shift enough to impact praxis. Bourne and Wright (2018) and Roofe (2018) argued that teacher-centered pedagogy had been the default mode of teacher training in Jamaica and the Caribbean, pointing to a need for rethinking and restructuring teacher concepts about their role as cofacilitators and not authoritative managers of teaching and learning. My small-scale research contributes to the gap in the literature with an exploration of the preconceptions of preservice teachers in higher

education teacher education programs in rural central Jamaica about student voice in their teacher education.

The discourse in the literature on student voice consistently connects the teachers' role to the empowerment of the student by allowing them a voice in their education. Mitra (2018) linked the practice of student voice to the inclusion of social justice in schools where allowing the student voice is to provide “opportunities to participate in and influence educational decisions that shape students’ lives and the lives of their peers “ (Holquist et al., 2023, p. 704). In Chapter 2, I extend the discourse on teacher preparation and student voice, providing a synopsis of the current and relevant conversations on the problems, challenges, and successes that supported the need for my exploration. I begin by describing the literature search strategy followed by the conceptual framework that grounded the study. I then provide a comprehensive review and synthesis of the current literature, including research studies that explain why my research question and approach were meaningful. I close the chapter with a concise summary of major themes emerging from the literature. I also reiterate in this section how my study on rural preservice teachers preconceptions about student voice in their teacher education adds knowledge to the discipline of education.

Literature Search Strategy

The key terms used throughout the development of my dissertation from prospectus to results and findings included the elements in the topic title and terms from within the education context and field of study in which my research and my work as an educator is located. Student voice was the central motif and driver for my investigation. I

organized my search strategy using the phrases and words *student voice*, *preservice*, and *preconception* as the key concepts of the search question. I combined the key terms with other terms such as *education*, *teacher education*, *teacher preparation*, *teacher's voice*, *preservice teacher voice*, *preservice teacher perception*, *preservice teacher training* among other combinations. I then used the limitation section in the literature I found to search for gaps in research on my topic.

Additionally, I used as many synonyms as possible, discovered alternative keywords in the library's thesaurus, and found recurring subject terms in the results. I employed backward chaining as a strategy to find sources, exploring reference lists from articles to determine what sources the researchers used to develop their ideas for topics similar to my study. I used Research Starter in the Walden library to explain theories and concepts and included reference lists for additional reading.

The types of publications searched included peer reviewed journals, books, blogs and videos on YouTube. The databases I searched consistently included EBSCO Host, PROQUEST, SAGE Publications, Google Scholar, Social Science Research Network (SSRN), Thoreau at Walden University, APA Psycnet Advanced Search, Wiley & Sons, Taylor and Francis Online, JSTOR, ERIC, Scholar Works and Emerald Insight. Through PDF Drive I was able to access and download full texts such as 'Voices of Teachers and Teacher Educators a 102-page free eBook. Among the journals I accessed and searched included European Journal of Education, Caribbean Quarterly, Cambridge Journal of Education, Theory and Practice, The Education Forum, Art Education, Teaching and Teacher Education and Higher Education. Throughout the development of the

dissertation a researcher becomes familiar with the seminal writers on their topic and that pool of student voice experts included Mitra, Charteris and Smardon, Cook-Sather, Conner, Fielding, as well as expert writers on Conceptual Change Carey, Vosniadou, Hatano, Rea-Ramirez, Posner et al. and Özdemir and Clark. Patton (1999, 2015) recommended that new researchers should always read the classics and to hear from the seminal writers directly about their work. To that end, Dewey, Piaget, Mezirow and Freire were among the seminal writers work I consulted on education, learning, perception, preconception and change.

In addition to the foregoing, I used as many synonyms as possible; I employed backward chaining as a strategy to find sources, exploring reference lists from articles to determine what sources the researchers used to develop their ideas for topics similar to my study. Research Starter in the Walden library provided explanations of theories and concepts and included reference lists for additional reading. In discussions with librarians, I was also guided in my search of the multidisciplinary databases to understand the topics from various perspectives, such as business management and psychology.

The keywords used either individually or in combination included *student voice in teacher education*, *student voice*, *trainee teacher perspective on teacher preparation*, *preservice teacher education*, *preservice teachers' perspectives*, *student teacher*, *teacher orientation*, *initial teacher education*, *teacher induction*, *teachers' voices in their education*, *student agency*, *student voice and teacher education*, *conceptual change*, and *teacher preparation*. The iterative search also provided a comprehensive notion of the current debate on student voice and teacher preparation, with a shift in focus to

educational change in the approach to curriculum both for teachers and students (Bron et al., 2018; Charteris & Smardon, 2019; Roofe, 2018; Mayes et al., 2021; Mitra, 2018).

The research unearthed some leading voices in the student voice movement, as well as discourses across Europe, Australia, Latin America and the United States of America.

The voices of these seminal writers on student voice are heard throughout my research discourse.

Conceptual Framework

Student voice is a complex term that intersects with the practices that allow for a range of possibilities for students in educational change efforts. Holquist et al. (2023) noted that there was no one shared definition for student voice, Nonetheless, Warwick (2019) conceived student voice as valuing the diversity of voices that according to Bron et al. (2018) have a right to input in the decision making, as well as the capacity and empowerment to make choices related to one's learning (Cook-Sather, 2018, 2020; Conner, 2024; Fielding, 2006; Mitra, 2004, 2018; Mitra & McCormick, 2017). Voice matters and has power (Gillet-Swan & Baroutsis, 2024). Student voice debates and discourses are rooted in constructivist theories where the construction of one's learning is the pivot. Learning, too, is rooted in constructivism and theories of conceptual change. To learn is to change (Larkin, 2012; Rea-Ramirez et al., 2020; Vosniadou, 2007/2008), which includes behaving and taking action based on new interpretations of oneself in the world.

Conceptual change theories define knowledge, attitudes, values, and beliefs as the preconceptions we bring to each new situation (Carey, 1991; Ödzemir & Clarke, 2007;

Rea-Ramirez & Ramirez, 2017; Vosniadou, 2007, 2008). Student voice explorations in the literature seek to explore change in teacher and student interaction, including actions, behaviors, views, and attitudes toward learning and teaching. Consistent with the discourses, research, and debates on student voice are the recurring themes of transformation and change.

Researchers and writers all agree that student voice for the K-12 learner is not possible without the support and practice of the teacher. To understand student voice, the teacher must first understand and experience their voice having power in the teacher preparation process of learning. Teacher education should be transformative (Moore, 2021) and should provide the opportunity for preservice teachers in higher education teacher education programs to reflect on their beliefs and values and the resulting actions they take. Taylor (2019) recommended that learning allows you to explore what you know, to revise and construct new interpretations of one's experiences, knowledge, and beliefs to move on to new ones and take action. Nonetheless, like learning, change is complex and conditioned by culture and experience.

Conceptual change researchers suggest that preconceptions about a concept create a frame of reference that influences our actions (Larkin, 2012; Vosniadou, 2008; Rea-Ramirez & Ramirez, 2017). Reflecting critically raises awareness, encourages questioning our thoughts of what we hold to be true, and recognizes that truths, according to Taylor (2019), are not durable; they can change. In interviewing the participants in my study and providing an opportunity for reflection on their voices as students in their teacher education, there was opportunity to raise an initial awareness and for the

preservice teacher participants to question what they knew and perceived to be true about the phenomenon of student voice.

Literature Review

Teachers and teacher-educators can improve praxis by viewing and practicing education from the students' perspectives. Despite ongoing and evolving over three decades (Charteris & Smardon, 2019), student voice engagement with students is not yet an integral element of education or teacher preparation (Charteris & Smardon, 2019; Conner et al., 2024; Fielding, 2004; Mayes et al., 2021; Mitra, 2018). Fielding (2004) argued that what student voice philosophy and ideals aspired to was lagging behind what was actually being achieved but was still very critical to developing a democratic society. Fielding (2004) noted that pedagogy was more prescribed in an education system that had become increasingly market driven, and accountability for success was punitive and bullying creating pressure for institutions and teachers in the classroom (Fielding, 2004, p. 198). While students achieve in teacher-centered praxis (Ab Kadir, 2018), many do not thrive and become demotivated and discouraged from moving on to further education (Gutman & Schoon, 2018). Even where students succeed in high-performing schools, these students lament the lack of opportunity for their input and describe the teaching and learning environment as rigid and not allowing their voices to be heard (Ab Kadir, 2018; Fendler et al., 2020; Filbin, 2021). In the global student voice discourse teachers too seemed to be struggling to be heard.

Researchers in student voice advocacy have been using their studies to give voice to students in K-12, teachers in the classroom, and preservice teachers in higher

education teacher education programs. Student voice researchers consistently integrate the role of the teacher in their analyses and recommendations for student voice in education, yet student voice is not without controversy. Advocacy of voice and choice is seemingly not penetrating the politics of education (Charteris & Smardon, 2019a; Charteris et al., 2020), which impacts the teaching and learning processes. Despite increases in student voice research and strong support for student voice as a critical element of teacher education and improving pedagogy to be more relevant and student-centered, there are researchers such as Mendes and Hammett (2020) who questioned if the phenomenon is a new form of tyranny.

In an examination of undergraduate participation in curriculum design, Mendes and Hammett (2020) noted that students were lackadaisical in their response to requested feedback, citing the numerous solicitations for their reactions and opinions through surveys that resulted in little or no changes that benefited students. Using qualitative research methodology, the researchers questioned whether administrators' application of student voice had become "routinized" (Mendez & Hammett, 2020, p. 2.) to be more accountable to the marketplace. Mitra (2018) and Cook-Sather (2018, 2020) have argued that in many cases, student voice is mere tokensim, having no profound impact on student learning and success. Roxa et al. (2021) asked that student voice move beyond surveys and ratings of teachers and teaching and learning to more productive dialogue between students and teachers. At the higher education teacher preparation level, Wilks et al. (2019), in a 4-year study among 485 preservice teachers exploring their perceptions and awareness of their developing knowledge and skills, found that teacher education

preservice teachers' voices were not heard. The lack of recognition, the researchers argued, negatively impacted the preservice teachers' preparation for a constantly shifting and changing global and societal contexts.

Currently, Holquist et al. (2023) and Gillet-Swan & Baroutsis (2024) continued to argue that student voice practices needed to move beyond rhetoric to more “tangible practices” (Holquist et al., 2023, p. 705). For Cook-Sather and Matthews (2023) it was imperative for student voice to “shift from hierarchy to co-creation” (Cook-Sather & Matthews, 2023, p. 2). Nevertheless, Hill (2019) saw student voice as an opportunity to improve teacher learning, for collaborative reflection on teaching practice, and promoted student involvement in professional learning, recommending student voice as a mechanism to improve schools.

The idea of student voice is not new and has been central to the philosophy of Dewey's progressive education and Freire's call for education to treat the student as equal and as a partner in their education. The role of the student, whether in higher education or K-12, is conceived as subordinate to that of the teacher, having no power or input into policies or decisions that fundamentally impacts the students' lives (Dubbs, 2020; Gibson et al., 2017). Student voice research, however, provides an opportunity for those without voice to be heard. Mahmood and Iqbal (2019) applied the concept of student voice to explore teacher preparation for student-centered teaching and discovered dissatisfaction and frustration among the 34 prospective teacher participants. Using observations of 252 lessons, self-reflective diaries, expectation and experiences questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups, the researchers found that the prospective

teachers in the programs felt they were inadequately prepared for the reality of the classroom. This voicing of inadequate preparation among preservice teachers is repeated by participants in the Ressler et al. (2022) study on the mental wellbeing of the teacher in training. These studies mentioned allowed the preservice teacher participants to have their voices heard about their learning. The higher education programs in those studies did not provide such an opportunity.

Comparably, Roofe (2018), investigating teacher preparation in Jamaica, in a similar socio-economic and colonial-designed education legacy as the Mahmood and Iqbal (2019) study in India , called for an ideological change in teacher education to be more transformational. Roofe (2018) pointed to the difficulty in transforming predominantly authoritarian and traditional teacher education. In her research, the author gave voice to 16 in-service teachers who felt they were inadequately prepared in their teacher education programs for the role of agents of social responsibility that was expected of them in the classroom. Roofe applied concepts of student voice to the data collection and analysis and found, through structured interviews, that participants expressed the desire to first understand and believe in the concept of social responsibility before teaching it to their students in K-12. This imperative to first understand and believe before changing behavior aligns with the notion in conceptual change that individuals need first to understand their values and beliefs before they can accommodate new ideas into their conceptual ecology. Conceptual accommodation may in turn influence attitude and behaviors and subsequent action; the individual then takes action based on a change in beliefs. Roofe used structured interviews that provided the in-

service teachers with the space and opportunity to express a need that could have made a difference to their classroom pedagogy if they had been allowed student voice in their preservice teacher preparation.

Lugueti and Oliver (2019) applied the concept of student voice to qualitative participatory action research among K 12 students and 10 preservice teachers ages 18-35 in teacher education degree programs in Brazil in a disadvantaged community where inequality was evident in the neighborhood's social fabric. This Brazilian environment was not unlike the urban setting for the Roofoe (2018) study. From their data analysis of the Brazilian preservice teachers as students, the researchers concluded that higher education students were passive learners in a market and consumer driven higher education system, wherein pedagogy focused on “rote learning, memorization and high stakes testing” (Lugueti & Oliver, 2019, p. 2). The 18-month study consisted of 84 sessions of data collection inclusive of 63 group meetings, reflective conversations on experiences, interviews, focus groups, and the 257 diary entries of self-reflection by the preservice teachers in the third and fourth year of higher education study. Lugueti and Oliver (2019) further noted that the preservice teacher participants first had to deal with their assumptions about student-centered pedagogy, which included the idea of student voice and their misconceptions about teaching and learning. The preservice teachers in the study struggled with self-awareness and were challenged by the idea of K12 students having a voice in their classroom, having autonomy, and being co-creators in the classroom. Lugueti and Oliver concluded that having a voice in the research allowed the preservice teachers to explore and understand their dispositions as they deconstructed

their values and beliefs. The discomfort created between the notion of K12 students taking ownership of their learning and the preservice teacher participants' traditional perceptions, the researchers felt, was important to the transformation in critical thinking required to change to a more student-centered approach to pedagogy. This analysis by Luguetti and Oliver links closely to the high end of the conceptual change continuum, where dissonance (discomfort) creates the space for dialogue that can lead to change.

Participation and Power: Student Versus Teacher

The advocacy for student voice inclusion in education is deeper than a call for a shift to student-centered pedagogy. Underpinning the notion of student voice is perhaps a need to redefine the concepts of students and teachers and their roles in the students' education. Historically, the voice of the student was unheard (Charteris & Smardon, 2019). This traditional exclusion of the student's voice in matters relating to their education may be rooted also in the definitions and meanings ascribed to the label and understanding of the term student as subordinate or an empty vessel to be filled (Dubbs, 2021). Labelling comes with connotations that become part of identity and influences how others respond to the labelled individuals or groups (Chandrasegaran, 2018). To add to the challenges created by labelling of individuals and groups, Matsuda (2015) argued that labeling was a social construct that shaped self-concepts and often controlled the identities of those individuals and groups and rationalized the behaviors toward them. Gibson et al. (2017), in an examination of the roles that labelling and language played in the notion of including students in higher education as co-inquirers, noted that

“institutional language ostracized” (p. 110) rather than included. Additionally, issues of power inherent in roles and identity challenge the learning and teaching process.

The literature on student voice debunks all notions of subordination from the roles of the student and positions the student as an active agent in the learning and teaching process with the right to question and challenge their education. The students’ right to have voice begins at the earliest stage of development. Anderson and Graham (2016) in the support of student voice as a critical element of early childhood education noted that student voice research had the potential to create “a conceptual shift from seeing children as passive recipients to social actors with their own views” (p. 351). For McLaren (2007), developing the student’s ability to question and challenge is part of the critical pedagogy emphasized in the student voice concept.

The notion of students’ voices being heard through research manifests mainly in the methodology used in student voice investigations and reflections. Across the field of research on student voice, researchers' predominant mode of inquiry is qualitative. In each instant, researchers endeavor to ensure that participant voices are heard and often seen through data collection choices such as reflections and reflective journals, narratives of experiences, poetry as a metaphor for participants’ stories and experiences, storytelling, and interviews. The participants’ lived experiences are seen as valid , and interviews help the participants to make meaning (possibly new or alternative ways) through their reflections. The research question in my study that sought to understand preservice teachers' preconceptions that are shaped by their beliefs, knowledge, values, and attitudes about their student voice in their education joins the body of student voice

research that makes the students' voice visual, providing data for reflection on teacher education in rural central Jamaica.

Teacher Preparation

Preparing preservice teachers for the realities of an increasingly changing and challenging world requires a reflective process that challenges their thinking and behavior. In examining teachers' voices in their preparation for teaching English as a Second Language, Farrell (2019) recommended that teachers in training be given opportunities and space to tell their stories. These narratives can inform curriculum development and program activities in teacher education programs that are more relevant and impactful for the teachers facing the reality of the classroom. Stories of teacher dissatisfaction with their preparation for the classroom abound through research giving teachers voice to tell their stories, including those of the classroom experiences. Bonner (2018), Mayes et al. (2021), and Young (2018) have noted that teachers fall back on traditional content-focused, teacher-dominated pedagogy to survive the challenges of the classroom. Not having a voice in their learning as K12 students themselves and then as preservice teachers, when in their roles in the classroom, teachers do not comprehend or appreciate how to give their students voice to in order to understand and cater to their K12 students' interests, needs, and concerns.

There are many advantages for both student and teacher in the deliberate inclusion of student voice philosophy and practices in teaching and learning. Cook-Sather (2018, 2020) noted that dialogue between students and teachers could foster quality pedagogy, as it provides teachers with space and opportunity to reflect on and see their practices

from multiple perspectives. However, the researcher also suggested that faculty were intimidated by the idea of allowing students voice. Faculty consider student voice as giving learners “unfettered authority” (Cook-Sather, 2020, p. 888). In higher level education, Young (2018), in a mixed method survey of teachers in teacher education programs for special education teachers, concluded that incorporating the voices of teachers in special education teacher education programs was a critical strategy for improving course offerings and impacting the quality of graduates who enter the classroom. In reflecting on the role of teacher educators in teacher preparation programs, Farrell (2019) contended that teacher training programs provided an essential opportunity for student teacher participants to reflect on and become aware of their beliefs and experiences in order to make room for new pedagogical ideas.

In another debate strand, Paine (2019) noted that teachers’ voices were missing from teacher education. Further, that many other voices were at the center of discourses on teacher education while teachers and teacher-educators were on the periphery. Farrell (2019) reflected on his and other teacher educator roles in the transitional period from teacher as student to teacher in the classroom and recommended narratives of reflection as a strategy in teacher education to give voice to teachers in higher education. In a qualitative study of 11 secondary school teachers, Finefter-Rosenbluh et al.(2023) found that student voice-based assessment activities can help to rebuild teacher agency and empower teachers professionally. The UNESCO International Task Force for education, in 2024 recommended a global cultural shift that values the importance of teachers’

voices. (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024). A good place to start is before the preservice teacher gets into the classroom.

Methodology

The chosen qualitative methodology for my exploration of preservice students' knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values, and experiences that shaped preconceptions is consistent with the small-scale qualitative study on student voice. The choice was driven by the research question to explore - what are the preconceptions of preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica about student voice in their teacher education.

Perhaps the most noted weakness in student voice research and its selective use of qualitative methods and strategies is its lack of transferability (Queirós et al., 2017), and the fact that the researcher is in control of all data, including interpretation of that information. In their critique of qualitative research, Queirós et al. raised the concern of researcher subjectivity. Nonetheless, Burkholder et al. (2019) and Maxwell (2013) noted that qualitative methodology is also best applied to investigations seeking to understand the complexity of people's realities and the meanings of their actions in any given context. The opportunity to give voice to the participants in the student voice research may outweigh the subjectivity inherent in qualitative research.

Because participants' voices are central to the data collected in qualitative research, there is opportunity for the change process to be initiated by the chance to tell their stories in their own language and from their own point of view. Theorists of conceptual change advocate that reflective discussions with others about conflicts created

by new ideas allow individuals to explore their existing perceptions and to juxtapose new ideas into what Larkin (2012) called their conceptual ecology. Reflective dialogue helps individuals to be more active in their learning. Larkin (2012), Posner (1982), and Vosniadou (2007, 2008) all endorsed the strategy of discussion and exploration of philosophies, values, theories, beliefs, and experiences that underlie perceptions as a means of making space to accommodate new ideas. My research provided space and opportunity for preservice teacher participants in higher education teacher education programs in rural central Jamaica to engage in the first stage of conceptual change by reflecting on and sharing through interviews their preconceptions that shaped their attitudes and influenced their experiences with and about student voice in their teacher education preparation for the classroom.

The Politics of Student Voice

The notion in student voice philosophy that positions students as equals is a challenge for a post-colonial education system that emerged out of a plantation pedagogy whose main purpose was transmission and maintenance of the status quo (Kemmis et al., 2013). The issue of student voice impacts all levels and players in education, including administrators and policymakers and, requires rethinking and reshaping education missions, goals, and their resulting policies before praxis could change radically to embrace the 'student' as an equal. Teachers in education programs, as well as teacher educators, all struggle to have their voices heard and meaningfully incorporated into decision-making. McIntyre et al. (2019) noted that the teacher students in teacher education programs at universities in the UK had been silenced by policy agenda. The

researchers revealed that the political players blamed teacher educators for the failure of students in schools because they failed to prepare good teachers for the system, yet “democratic discussion and debate were being closed down” (p. 154).

The student voice discourses and debates have many strands, including teacher education and professional development, governance issues, accountability, decolonizing voice, institutional transformation and reform, learner agency, and refusal (Charteris & Smardon, 2019). Nonetheless, the central pivot and reason for the student voice movement are to make learning more engaging, relevant, student-centered, and empowering for students at K12. Empowering the teacher to understand, include, and practice student voice in the learning and teaching process should begin at the initial teacher preparation stage, the preservice teacher education stage. Finefter-Rosenbluh et al. (2021) extended this notion to include preparation with strategies and support structures for the teacher when in the classroom, to respond to the matters important to the student, and to take action that makes a difference to the student learning. Like Cook-Sather (2020), Finefter-Rosenbluh et al. (2021) argued that voice was not enough; the teacher must be able to interpret and respond to the needs expressed through the students’ voice.

In a mixed method study in two secondary schools with strong student voice culture in Australia, Finefter-Rosenbluh et al. (2021) found that teachers ignored, struggled with, or resisted student feedback because they felt they had no training to address issues raised by students. Participants among the 14 teachers interviewed felt that acting on the feedback diminished their authority and autonomy. Still, others saw the

feedback from students as an attack. The fear and resistance by teachers already in the classroom to the voices of their students pointed to the need to include student voice at the initial preservice teacher education stage when the teacher is a student. At this point in the teacher preparation process, the preservice teacher is shaping their identity and exploring what their roles would and should be in the learning and teaching environment. Student voice philosophy and praxis introduced then, becomes part of the arsenal of tools and strategies the preservice teacher will have when in the classroom. Teacher preparation should include how to respond, how to take action, and what action to take to make the change needed for learning to be more student-centered and relevant. Included in the teacher's preparation to incorporate student voice in their praxis is the first stage of exploring and understanding preservice teachers' knowledge, beliefs, values and attitudes that shape their preconceptions about student voice and their own voice in their teacher education.

Farrell (2019) noted then that teachers' voice in their education was a new and emerging debate in the student voice discourses. Paine (2019) agreed with Farrell adding that teachers' voices were marginalized in the discourses on education and teacher education by new players in the commodification of education who had drowned out the voices of teachers in the dialogue. Teachers need the courage and confidence to initiate new praxis that fully engages students and gives them a say in their teaching and learning. Initial teacher education and ongoing professional development need to integrate student voice into its philosophy, ideology, and praxis. Student voice thrusts are not yet a vibrant part of Jamaica's education discourses and debates. In fact, student voice

discourse on the whole is newly emerging and limited in the education discourses in the Anglophone Caribbean (Birbal & Hewitt-Bradshaw, 2019). My research adds to the limited discourse on student voice in teacher education in rural central Jamaica and could also contribute to the discourse on curriculum change in teacher education programs.

The Jamaican Education Landscape: The Rural Position

To frame the context in which the Jamaican preservice teacher is being prepared for their roles as agents of social responsibility and change, a brief snapshot of its education history and the rural place historically and in contemporary Jamaica is important to the context of my study. Education in Jamaica, like counterparts across the Caribbean and the wider world, undergoes repeated reforms; nevertheless, as rural principals in a study by Miller (2015) noted, there are no significant improvements in the challenges faced by rural institutions. One of the key concerns of the principal participants was the education administration's strategy of applying "urban-based education" (p. 37) to rural contexts, which were extremely dynamic. Education policies ignored the changing dynamics of the rural conditions and the peculiar characteristics of the needs of the rural student. The principals argued that teachers were not prepared with the tools needed to respond to the realities and needs of the students in rural schools. Though teacher training and professional development were among the educational outcomes in the reform recommendations, the principals lamented the standardized approach to teacher preparation that created tension between practice and the school and student needs. The principals felt that the quality of the teaching corps severely hampered

student performance in rural contexts. The focus of teacher education was on accountability.

The Reform of Education in Jamaica report (2021) supports the concerns expressed by the principals in the Miller (2015) research. The Transformation Commission submitted the report to the Jamaican government in January of 2022 and noted that recommendations made in the report of 2004 and 2011 for improving the teaching profession and classroom procedures to inform student performance, had failed to impact student achievements across the country. Additionally, the Commission noted that central to Jamaica's educational crises was the outdated education philosophy that still supported teacher-centered pedagogy. Furthermore, most students across K-12 continued to underperform (The Reform of Education in Jamaica Report, 2021).

With its penchant for one size fits all philosophy, education homogenizes students, curricula, and praxis (De Lisle, 2018; Farrell 2019; Fielding, 2004; Jackman & Murrain-Webb, 2019; Moore, 2021; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). It was important in my study to account not just for the voice of the preservice student but the diversity of rural voices among them. The Jamaican rural environment would have had its own peculiar experiences and responses to the same colonial history as the rest of the society. Nonetheless, the rural community though restricted like the rest of the lower socio-economic population by those in power from expressing their voice (Cumings, 2012) did not simply react to their imposed history but were active in creating their histories. The Jamaican languages and meaning-making are also not homogenous; the languages are not simply Jamaican. Meanings in rural Jamaica are not necessarily the same as

meanings in urban Jamaica. For the preservice student voice to be relevant, their voices must be pushed to the center of action in their education. They must be allowed autonomy in using their peculiar voices to tell their stories. Quoting Marx (1888) as cited in McLaren (2007), “the educators themselves must be educated” (p. 7) and the student both in higher education and in K12 provides an essential opportunity for educators to learn from the bottom up.

In commenting on the rural students’ performance, the principals in the Miller (2015) study noted that competition for resources, recruitment and retention of teachers were major hindrances to their school’s performance. More importantly the principals observed that their teachers seemed unable to enrich the students’ lives. The diversity of age groups forced a combining of grades in one class due to lack of space and challenged teachers who had neither physical resources nor strategic pedagogical preparation to deal with the range and diversity of learning styles and needs in one class. Parents in rural are mostly farmers by occupation or unemployed due to the closure of major bauxite industries in rural central Jamaica. They depend on teachers to bring the outside world to them and see the teachers’ voice as important to fulfilling the dreams and aspirations of their children. In summary, the principals lamented that the education administration viewed the rural population and education as “other” (Miller, 2015). It would have been good to hear the rural teachers’ voices expressing their perspectives on their challenges as rural teachers, but no research has to date been found on the rural teacher’s voice in education in Jamaica.

Student Voice and the Jamaican Context

De Lisle (2018) questioned whether student voices in Caribbean contexts were being heard and argued that school type and location mattered to student engagement and achievement and that participants' voices in small-scale studies in the Caribbean needed to be heard. The one size fits all approach of teacher-centered learning, assessment, and evaluation, may be influencing the low performance in schools in general, and specifically among rural students. Student engagement and achievement could be improved if students were able to articulate better how, what, and why they learn best, closing the divide between learner expectation, preferences, and teacher practice (Cook-Sather, 2020).

According to Birbal and Hewitt-Bradshaw (2019), student voice research, discourses, and debates is a new and slowly emerging field in the education landscape across the Caribbean. Few researchers like Jackman and Morrain-Webb (2019) in the Caribbean region have linked student voice to student success and teacher practice. Student voice is not at the forefront of mainstream education reform debates in Jamaica. Very little research uses student voice or teachers' voice as their data collection tool to raise the issue as a powerful debate in teacher education. Birbal and Hewitt-Bradshaw refer to the colonial heritage of education management systems in countries in the Eastern Caribbean that still maintain teacher-centered approaches to pedagogy. Jamaica, too, is part of that British and European social, economic and cultural heritage that created and developed education policies and practices. To understand the resistance to acknowledging student voice as a legitimate field of study for teacher preparation, a brief

snapshot of the growth and development of the education system provides a background that heralds the need to explore preservice teacher preparation in rural central Jamaica. More importantly, the historical snapshot will justify exploring the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values, and experiences that shape the perceptions of preservice students in higher education teacher education programs about their voices in their education.

According to Cummings (2012), the Negro Education of 1835 led to the creation of a school system for the diverse Jamaican population, first facilitating the white and colored children who then went on to England for higher education. A secondary school system came into being with the Education Act of 1892, where the brightest of Black children in the elementary system could earn an opportunity for high school education. Private and church funding created and developed the Jamaican education system and led to the first teacher training colleges in Jamaica with the goal of training teachers, mainly young males, to teach industrial skills. Three more teacher training institutions emerged in the early Jamaica education system, none of which was located in rural central Jamaica.

The structure of education institutions in Jamaica was as hierarchical as the society, with clear boundaries between socioeconomic and ethnic groups. Cummings (2012) described the structure as that of a plantation or prison, with teacher educators as the “gatekeepers” of the mission (p.38), whose main goals were to maintain religious and moral principles and effective socialization of the values, beliefs, and behaviors of the prevailing dominant middle and upper classes.

The rural context still displays inequality, similar to the Brazilian context of the Luguetti and Oliver (2019) study. Currently, the church and private funding still own and manage the three teacher training institutions in rural central Jamaica that cater to the central region's need for teachers. With social advancements to independence, self-governance, and education reforms in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there was a shift in teacher training programs to more academic and theoretical curricula to meet the demand for upward mobility. Despite the education reforms that came with the Jamaican independence, Roofe and Miller (2013), Bourne and Wright (2018) and Roofe (2018) pointed to the entrenched teacher-centered traditional pedagogy in schools and teacher education programs and institutions that focused on content pedagogy and classroom control and management. More research is needed to determine if the mission and policies are still gatekeeping the colonial social values and beliefs. My research provides data that can contribute in some small way to this larger issue as selected participants from higher education teacher education programs in the three institutions noted in rural central Jamaica, were provided with opportunity to reflect on student voice concept and philosophy and on their student voice in their teacher preparation.

The discourses currently in the Jamaica education systems focus on violence in schools, in particular, in the secondary schools. This serious social and economic issue disrupts and endangers the entire education system; unfortunately, no research to date has made the connection between students not having a voice in their education and the violence that manifests in school interactions. It is not clear whether the students have outlets for restorative practices that include students voicing their personal and social

issues and concerns that they bring to the teaching and learning space. Dewey's (1986) treatise on education as experience suggested that the school was an extension of the community and that the home and school were closely intertwined. Interventions in Jamaica such as the Irie Classroom Toolbox, a violence-prevention training program for teachers (Baker-Henningham et al., 2021) were conducted to provide teachers with tools to deal with violence.

However, the toolbox does not include student voice tools, strategies, and support to allow students to address issues that matter to them. Students in the rural context bring their multiple roles and responsibilities to the classroom. Many are farmers, breadwinners, and caregivers of siblings and elderly families and have duties to manage before and after school. Classroom praxis and curricula are often divorced from the issues and concerns that hinder student participation. Teachers too are not prepared with the tools to allow them to voice their concerns and to integrate student voice process into learning and teaching for success.

Summary

Student voice movements have ebbed and flowed across three decades and are still not fully embraced as a critical factor in student engagement and success. Student voice is important to the K12 student accomplishment and to teacher learning. Normalizing student voice challenges the traditional role of the teacher requiring a cultural shift in the concept of the classroom and new roles for the teacher. Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy (2019) contended that student voice is more than student participation but includes “elevating student ideas and contributions about how

learning occurs and should occur” (p.2). Though student voice thrusts in some form are being integrated into the education practices in some societies and institutions, its philosophy and practice are not yet fully integrated into universal education philosophies and purpose. Even where institutions have student representatives in positions to speak on behalf of students in schools, Matthew and Dollinger (2022) reminded us that representation is not the same as student partnership. The authors insisted that the select few students who are granted student-representative status do not have the authority or opportunity to shape education as they do not capture the diversity of voices, lived experiences, values and opinions of all students. In the debate on student voice in teacher education, Charteris et al. (2017) advocated for student voice to be situated as an important role in initial teacher education and ongoing professional development. In the higher education sector, McIntyre et al. (2017) protested the disappearance of the student teacher’s voice in their higher education teacher education programs, and placed the responsibility in the hands of political agendas that influence educational policy. However, researchers in their investigations on student voice in teacher education give voice to teachers and preservice students in their predominantly qualitative research methodologies (Farrell, 2019; Ó Gallchóir et al., 2017; Moore, 2021; Paine, 2019; Roofe, 2018).

In the Jamaican education environment, Miller (2015) gave voice to the concerns of leaders in rural education in Jamaica, who raised issues still emerging in Education reform reports as enduring challenges to education in Jamaica. Education leadership in the rural Jamaican environment made a call in the Miller study for improvement in the

quality of the teaching and learning, and the need for teachers to be prepared to meet the specific reality and needs of the rural student. Despite repeated reforms in the Jamaican education system, the Jamaica Transformation Commission found that previous teacher education reforms failed both the teacher and the student (The Jamaica Education Reform Report, 2021). To this end, my research fits into the urgent necessity to prepare a different kind of teacher; one who understands the role of their voice in their education process and can transfer that knowledge into empowering the rural student's voice toward achieving their goals. Notwithstanding the dearth of research and commentary on the value of student voice practices to both student and teacher, Mayes et al. (2021) identified a gap in student voice research in how to incorporate student voice in teacher education. In the Caribbean and Jamaican landscapes, teacher centered praxis is still dominant and student voice discourses are newly emergent. Before student voice can be integrated into teacher preparation curricula, teacher-education administration and faculty must first understand the perceptions of the participants in teacher education programs about student voice. Student voice practice is integrated into student centered praxis and will require a conceptual shift in a culturally embedded teacher-dominant mindset. My research explored the very first stage in conceptual change and sought to understand the preconceptions of preservice students about their student voice in their teacher education. The qualitative methods and processes, including participant selection, data collection and organization design and procedures, interview protocols and participant protection, and stages and phases of data analysis, are presented in the explanation and details in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to explore the preconceptions preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education. While there is an abundance of research on student voice, little research explored how to incorporate student voice in the preparation of teachers for the classroom (Mayes et al., 2021). In Jamaica and the Caribbean, student voice is an emerging conversation and in Jamaica specifically, no research was found that explores the preconceptions preservice teachers in teacher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education. Student voice is described as the right of the student to participate in their education process and to have their voices heard in the design and implementation of their education curricula, the right and opportunity for some measure of learning autonomy and cocreation in their learning process.

Teachers' perceptions substantially influence how they teach (Dyson, 2010; Matsko et al., 2020; Garcia Gonzalez et al., 2020) and their behaviors and actions in the classroom. Preconceptions resist change (Vosniadou, 2007, 2008; Larkin, 2012; Nadelson et al., 2018; Rea-Ramirez & Ramirez, 2017; Rea-Ramirez et al., 2020). My study focused on the first stage of the conceptual change continuum, recognizing the preconceptions that influence an individuals' ecology, in this case, their phenomenological ecology about student voice. Conceptual change theory framed the research process, data collection, interpretation, and analysis, as well as the discourse and discussion of the findings. In this chapter, I provide detailed accounts of the research

experiences, sampling, and data collection through interviews which were created to allow reflection and sharing of individual experiences of student voice in the participants' voice. The step-by-step approach to data collection is described in Chapter 3, ensuring clarity in research questions, a clear idea of how outcomes and conclusions were guided and aligned, and establishment of an audit trail including evidence of integrity and credibility.

Research Design and Rationale

I sought to explore the preconceptions preservice teachers in teacher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education. Praxis is closely linked to identity. Farrell (2019) postulated that teachers' beliefs and thinking could influence their learning and are the lens through which they view their identity and development. I used a generic qualitative inquiry to explore the following research question :

RQ1: What preconceptions do preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education?

I selected the qualitative research tradition because it deals with human interaction and behavior and seeks to understand what comprises reality for each individual and to have those living in the context of the reality explain in their own voice how they see, believe, and live their reality and possibly *why* (Kostere & Kostere, 2021; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015). All of the research in the literature on student voice is grounded in the qualitative tradition. Kostere and Kostere (2021) advised student researchers to consider the following three questions when selecting the research

methodology- does your research question seek an understanding of human experience? Are you using qualitative procedures? Is your research design consistent with a qualitative stance? McLaren (2007) saw voice as a critical pedagogical concept that helps educators to understand the cultural and historical background specific to each student while at the same time helping the student to define themselves as active participants in the world, not just in the classroom. Concurring with McLaren's insights, I took a qualitative stance on the concept of student voice and sought to understand the perspectives of the preservice teachers about student voice in the experiences of their teacher education programs in response to the three questions noted.

The research processes were customized to match the research question, the purpose, and the preservice teacher participants who provided the best information to make their world visible. Billups (2021) described qualitative research as "emergent" because it seeks to discover through exploration of people's lives, behaviors, and emotions. A quantitative stance or approach would not have been suitable to answer my research question about the preservice teachers' preconceptions as numbers and measures in a controlled laboratory-like setting would not have allowed for the collection of the rich thick descriptions (Burkholder et al., 2019; Patton, 2015) of the preservice teachers' experiences. I considered qualitative research because the tradition is not concerned with representation but with uncovering meaning specific to the people in their real-world setting. Quantitative data are numbers based, countable and measurable and would not help us to understand the how or why of people's experiences (Creswell, 2007; Kostere & Kostere, 2021; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015). However, as seen in the

literature on student voice in a mixed study approach, quantitative methodology can be extremely useful. Nonetheless, qualitative research supports the idea that there are multiple perspectives, truths, and realities about how the world is ordered and is interpretive in its purpose to discover what is going on (Billups, 2021). A generic qualitative approach worked best with the research question that sought to find out what were the preconceptions preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is at the center of the qualitative inquiry process and is the instrument through which the research purpose is realized, through whom data is collected and analyzed, and the research questions answered. I was the interviewer and observer in the research process. Though I worked in the rural environment in central Jamaica, I had no affiliations to the three institutions in rural central Jamaica from which I recruited preservice teacher participants enrolled in teacher education programs for my study. I created a peer group through which I shared and resolved challenges and which helped to maintain focus and not derail my processes. As a qualitative researcher I was central to all aspects of the research which can lead to subjectivity (Creswell, 2007; Patton 2015). The peer group served to keep me from getting lost in the immersion in my research processes as they provided opportunity to talk about the research, brainstorm and problem solve facilitating objectivity, balance, and rigor (Patton, 2015; Shelby, 2000).

Maxwell (2013) suggested that the researcher's experiential knowledge from their background and identity should not be treated as bias that should be excluded from the research design and process. The author noted that the researcher's experiential knowledge could be a source for insights into analyses as well as provide validity checks. To avoid bias I maintained transparency throughout the research process, providing participants with as much detail as necessary, including having them verify transcriptions and summaries of the information they provided.

The research process impacts the qualitative researcher as they delve into the literature, discourses and theories that underpin the research question and into the lives of the participants. I approached this study from a constructivist viewpoint that human beings construct their knowledge. Student voice is a new and emerging discourse in the Caribbean (Birbal & Hewitt-Bradshaw, 2019) and is not yet at the forefront of education debates in Jamaica and the region. I have a deep desire to contribute to the minimal discussions about including voice as one strategy to addressing the issues with our youth. In addition to my educator experiences and discoveries, my motive for the research comes from observations of adolescent students in particular who are demotivated, discouraged and frustrated because they do not have the tools to safely express their voices. I observed the increasing student violence, school dropouts among the adolescent teenage population, their dissatisfaction with schooling, and success without self-awareness, and noted the Jamaican and Caribbean societies' rush to address the symptoms and not the possible deeper cause of what might be impacting the youth. I did not find a discourse that asked the Jamaican students what they may need and I heard the

fear expressed by the in-service teachers who enrolled in the master's program I coordinated about the challenges of the 21st century classroom. I wanted to enter the conversation from the perspective of teacher education and bring it to the fore from a rural perspective because that is the environment in which I worked.

I recruited preservice teacher participants enrolled in teacher education programs in two colleges and one university in rural central Jamaica. The sample of participants was purposive as the preservice teachers were the group who could provide the most accurate data to unearth information about their knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, and experiences that underlay and shaped their preconceptions about student voice in their teacher education.

Methodology

The purpose of the study was to explore the preconceptions preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education. No research was found that explored the preconceptions preservice teachers in teacher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education. The next section focuses on the sample selection, sample size and criterion for selection as well as recruitment and rationale for the sample selection.

Participant Selection Logic

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggested that the most appropriate sampling strategy for qualitative research is non-probability or purposive sampling. Nonprobability sampling is also recommended for exploratory research (Blackstone, 2018; Patton, 2015). I used purposive sampling to select the sample of preservice teachers needed to explore

and understand their preconceptions about student voice in their teacher education. Participants for this study were recruited from three higher education institutions in rural central Jamaica that offered teacher education programs. These institutions were not partnering or sponsoring my research study. I used pseudonyms in the research process to protect the identity of the higher education institutions. The higher education institutions were significant to my study only because they offered the teacher training and education programs that were sources for recruiting suitable participants.

The primary audience for the study is teacher education faculty in teacher education programs, university administrators, deans of schools of education and teacher preparation, deans of education leadership, in-service teachers, and preservice teachers. This qualitative study was grounded in the pragmatist philosophy that seeks a practical understanding of issues in the real world (Patton, 2015). My study sought practical and useful insights into the preconceptions of the preservice teacher participants enrolled in teacher education programs in higher education institutions in rural central Jamaica. The research question provided a basis on which student voice discourse could be initiated within the education system, starting in the rural central Jamaican environment, and further on can be considered for inclusion in teacher education curricula and courses. My goal was a starting point in the conversation to include student voice as a critical component of teacher education policy and practice.

Participant Selection

The intent of my study was not to transfer to the wider population but to focus in-depth on a small sample of participants to generate rich, thick descriptive information that

could contribute to knowledge about student voice. The sample of participants matched the purpose of the study and contributed to the rigor and trustworthiness of the data and results. The outcomes of the study, however, only apply to the participant sample but set the groundwork for future studies.

The process of recruitment of participants began with the Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (04-26-24-0532152). Recruitment invitations were issued mainly on public social media platforms. I did not need permissions from the higher education institutions in rural central Jamaica to conduct the interviews among their preservice teacher population who voluntarily responded to the public invitations. The preservice teachers enrolled in teacher education programs at universities or colleges in rural central Jamaica were the most suitable sample to provide the data needed to understand and analyze what they knew, believed, valued, felt, and experienced about student voice in their teacher education programs. Criteria for sample selection were as follows: Participants should be women or men 18 years and over, who were enrolled in a 3–4-year teacher education program at a university or college in rural central Jamaica. They should be in their third or final year of the program and being prepared to teach at the secondary level of the education system. Most of all, they should be willing to participate in my study.

The preservice participants who responded to the research invitation met the criteria because the institutions in rural central Jamaica from which they were selected have a focus on teacher education and offer 3–4-year undergraduate degrees in teacher education. These institutions offer teacher education programs that include early

childhood education, primary and secondary education, specializations within secondary education, and special education. I focused on preservice teachers preparing for the secondary or high school classrooms.

Recruitment

The data collection quality was significant to the study and required careful rigor in the research planning and execution. I set out to recruit eight to 12 preservice teacher participants for my study. Guest et al. (2006) found that there was no set number of interviews to arrive at the point in data collection when data begins to repeat; nonetheless they suggested that the occurrence of theoretical saturation in qualitative research was between the seventh and twelfth interviews. Qualitative experts also recommend that researchers start making their analysis and stating conclusion from the very first interview (Baker et al., 2012). I hoped to achieve theoretical sufficiency between the fifth and seventh interviews. Eight to 12 participants was a large enough sample to facilitate capturing of the diverse voices and opinions among the preservice teacher demographic. I considered and built into my data collection process the possibility that if data saturation did not occur after 12 interviews, there was the opportunity to include more individuals within the sample only if it added new dimensions to the study (see Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Fusch et al., 2015; Mason, 2010; Suter, 2012). It was important to keep the time-frame for the study at the forefront of the decision making in this regard. I was able to recruit eight preservice teachers participants.

Recruitment of participants did not commence until Walden Institutional Review Board had approved my study. The risks were minimal to the preservice teacher

participants' wellbeing; they were open only to the possible discomforts that individuals might experience in their daily lives as they engaged in sharing personal information about their thoughts and feelings. The privacy of the preservice teacher participants was protected through the de-identification of their demographic and interview data. The consent process was conducted via email correspondence and telephone calls. Volunteers who responded via email were obliged to respond with the statement "I consent" as required by the Walden University guidelines. The privacy and safety protocols were included in the interview protocols and were read to the participants at the start of the interview. Their verbal consent was also repeated at the start of the interview.

To attract participants, I had a two-way process for recruitment via social media networking platforms, through my personal and private education networks via emails and mobile phone chat groups. However, direct communication to participants was another means of protecting the privacy of participants. Therefore, I extended invitations to the public by sending the invitation for participation to three social media platforms: LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook. Secondly, through my personal and private professional education network groups on mobile phone application 'WhatsApp' and Google mail.

From prior investigation of the locations of the selected institutions, program schedules across the three rural central Jamaican higher level education institutions, and significant institutional activities in the three-semester 2024 academic periods, I had designed and planned the recruitment process to be conducted over a period of 4 weeks. This schedule was impacted by the end of April (2024) IRB approval which coincided

with the institutional examination and end-of-semester events derailing the availability of the Year 3 and 4 potential participants. The resulting recruitment period extended over the period May through to August 2024, further impacted by overseas work-study programs accessed by potential participants, and a major hurricane that disrupted the Jamaican society including the communication systems at the start of July 2024.

Nonetheless, interviews were scheduled immediately upon receiving responses to the email invitations, which were disseminated upon approvals from the Walden IRB. I anticipated that I would have been able to schedule a minimum of three and a maximum of four interviews per week but had to work with the availability, personal schedules, and communication technology access of the volunteers. The invitation included further details about the research purpose and use of data and was sent by email and mobile phone technology to volunteers responding to the invitation to participate. Once informed consent was obtained from each potential study participant, a follow-up email, mobile phone text or telephone call took place to set up the interview date, day, time, and location. At this point in the process, participants were in their homes in locations across Jamaica and, for many, in deep countryside communities, impacting their ability to participate in in-the-flesh, face-to-face interviews. Importantly, alternative interview options using technology were built into my recruitment plan and subsequent interviews were conducted via Zoom video conferencing technology and audio recorded using Zoom recording feature. The recordings were then stored on my local computer that is password protected. At the start of August 2024, responses to the research invitation by volunteers who fit the criteria ceased after the eighth volunteer. Nevertheless, as advised

by Baker et al.(2016) I had been analyzing and making notes of initial conclusions to the interview data collected and could see data repeating by the sixth interview. These preceding circumstances described, and the data collected along with my dissertation time crunch led to the decision to move ahead with coding and analyzing the data collected.

As part of my organizing process, I created an Excel spreadsheet of participant data to manage the recruitment and participant involvement processes. The database included all individual participant profiles, contact information, criteria match, concerns raised, question bank matched against profiles, appointments, and interview participant needs. The participants were anonymized in interview transcripts and eventual dissertation and data encrypted and securely stored on computer and back-up flash drives owned solely by me, the researcher. I was the only person with password access to the database and to the devices. Only relevant demographic data were captured and used. Data is stored for a maximum of 5 years after which they will be cleaned from both the primary and back up devices used for the research.

Instrumentation

The interview in qualitative research is designed to examine the perceptions of different participants, including their knowledge, views, understandings, and experiences of their social reality. The main instruments for the data collection process was the researcher conducted participant interviews. As the researcher conducting the interviews, the aim was to learn as much as possible about the issues central to the research (Majid et al., 2017; Patton, 2015). Ruslin et al. (2022) described the interview process in qualitative

research as a negotiated conversation aimed at understanding the world from the participant's point of view. I maintained an interview log documenting the process of each interview, differentiating interviewees' words from research language, researcher reactions, noting also the data sorting process used. Ruslin et al. recommended semistructured interviews as the most suitable and powerful method to mine “uncontaminated” (Kvale, 1996, as cited in Ruslin et al., 2022, p. 23) information from participants in educational studies.

Semistructured and open-ended interview protocols were used to collect data on the phenomenon of student voice from preservice teacher participants in my study. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to answer using their language and words to go in any direction they chose. Additionally, the semistructured interview questions helped to keep the interview from going off-topic.

My interview protocols were guided by Myers and Newman’s (2007) Dramaturgy model that positioned the interview as a social interaction in which individuals created their stories from their realities using their language and worldview, similar to the world of a drama. This model appealed to my artistic worldview and art-based researcher mode and helped me to see the interview process, purpose, and structure more clearly in the planning phase. As a cautionary reality check for the researcher, the model also acknowledged the non-natural (artificial) nature of the interview process and concurs with similar views by Baker et al (2012), Mason (2010), Rubin and Rubin (2012), and Patton (2015). At the same time the dramaturgy interview model recognizes the value of the interview as an important data collection tool in qualitative research whose main goal

is a deeper understanding of human realities and meaning-making within those realities. Other than myself as a research instrument, the study participant interview transcripts, audio recordings of interviews and my researcher journal were the only instruments I used for data collection.

My researcher journal and interview notes captured and recorded observations of human behavior in the setting of the interview and the nonverbal information, like silences and laughter, generated from the questions asked. The interview questions directly sought preconceptions from each participant. I was interested in each individual's worldview of their higher education teacher education program and how each participant made sense of their reality. While focus groups are another valuable tool and source for collecting rich descriptive data, in a group setting, quiet, less assertive voices can be lost or marginalized, and individuals can be influenced by shared perspectives and opinions. Hence the interview was the best choice to collect data for my research.

The development of my interview instrument was framed by notions of conceptual change theories and constructivist underpinnings that acknowledge that individuals make sense of new information by first reflecting on what they already know, feel, think, and believe. In addition, Patton's (2015) interview question guidelines, as well as the processes that shape an individual's preconceptions framed the development of the interview instrument. Larkin (2012) described the processes that underlie preconceptions as part of an individual's conceptual ecology, influenced by what they have experienced. Furthermore, the interview questions were categorized according to the main question, follow-up, and probes, as Rubin et al. (2012) recommended. The research

question explored the preconceptions the preservice teacher in teacher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education.

Interview sessions were approximately 45-70 minutes long, included in-depth, semistructured, and open-ended questions individually with each of the preservice teacher participants. I conducted the interview sessions and with participant's permission recorded the interviews on mobile phone audio recording technology as well as Zoom recording to my computer. The interview questions began with broad tour questions (Roberts, 2020; Rubin et al., 2012) to help with the development of more focused questions as the interview progressed and concluded. Additionally, probing questions and prompts were carefully used as needed to elicit deeper information that touched on critical aspects of the topic not previously considered. Semistructured interview questions allow for flexibility while maintaining research guidelines. In-depth interviews also helped to build trust between researcher and participants and was more about listening to participants' stories and less about them answering questions (Roberts, 2020). Participants were free to express doubts and fears for clarity.

The Myers and Newman (2007) model recommends and guides researchers to provide sufficient information to the participants for them to adequately understand the purpose of the research. The interview protocol (see Appendix C) included the opening and closing protocols of the interview to set the participant at ease and created an atmosphere of negotiation and sharing rather than one of power and distance (Baker et al., 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Myers & Newman, 2007; Turner, 2010). To ensure the

validity of the data collected, following the transcription of interviews, the data were shared with interviewees for verification.

Data Analysis Plan

I employed a generic qualitative approach to explore the research question-what preconceptions do preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education? I collected data using semistructured face to face interviews which were conducted audio and recorded using Zoom web conferencing audio recording technology. I used Turboscribe Transcription Application to transcribe the interview data, followed by careful line by line reading and matching of transcription data with recordings to ensure validity of the data. Analysis of qualitative data is time-consuming and can be overwhelming. Therefore, it was critical to ensure that data was properly stored for easy retrieval. I used Microsoft Excel application for storing and organizing data and reducing the time for manual entry (Burkholder et al., 2019). Following the Walden IRB guidelines for data storage, data related to my research were stored only on laptop computers and back up flash drives owned by me, the researcher, and I have sole access to any devices used in pursuit of my research study.

All data were coded and the list of code identifiers kept separately from the coded data on an external flash drive. All devices and technology used to collect research data were reasonably protected from theft and damage due to acts of God such as hurricanes and floods. I was the only person with access to my devices which are password protected and data encrypted. Data were not stored in the cloud. All systems on my computer devices are continually updated inclusive of my antivirus software. As

recommended by Walden IRB, data from interviews and other data related to my research are stored for at least 5 years from research completion and will be professionally cleaned from the mother boards of my laptops and from any flash drive used in the research process after the period of 5 years. Findings will be shared minimally with stakeholders and participants using PowerPoint presentations that capture only essential data related to the research topic. Participants' participation in the research was kept confidential, but ran the risk of the participants themselves breaching their anonymity.

To help to keep track of the coding process of occurrences of patterns, themes, words, phrases, and to change and eliminate as needed, a code book and code lists were developed and used throughout and beyond the study for easy reference and continued analysis. Initial codes were based on early readings and a review of the first sets of interview data. Data analysis included listening to each recorded interview several times, transcription of interviews, reviewing and creating descriptions, micro-coding, clustering, and coding as well as comparing themes, patterns and making connections that led to the story of the research (Seidman, 2013; Saldaña, 2015). Coding was done in stages.

As recommended by Burkholder (2019), in the open coding process data was disassembled and reassembled, and emerging categories labeled from the descriptions, patterns, and themes. Priority coding based on observations during interview sessions were based on predetermined categories such as participation, interaction, and collaboration. As information emerged in reviewing data, in vivo coding was conducted using the participants' language. Final and interpretive coding included selective coding

of larger categories, describing, interpreting, drawing conclusions, and determining the significance of findings (Saldaña, 2015).

Minor discrepancies and unclear information in the data collected were member checked to ensure clarity and clear up any misinterpretation of interviewee responses. However, one of the ways of testing findings against supporting evidence or data is to look for alternative explanations and identify negative instances or discrepancies (Patton, 2015) that may not be accounted for in the interpretation or explanations. Patton also encouraged that researchers view discrepancies or inconsistencies as opportunities for deeper insight during analysis. There were no discrepancies.

Creswell and Poth (2016), Merriam and Tisdell (2015), Patton (2015) all recommended that researchers, especially those new to qualitative research, practice their processes before conducting their research. In order to refine and test the interview instrument in the real world, I used the opportunity in my Advanced Qualitative Reasoning Course to conduct practice interview, coding, and data analysis. My research question guided both the development of the instrument and the practice interview, coding, and data analysis sessions.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Every aspect of the qualitative research process pivots on its ability to be trustworthy. Rigor is the axis on which the respect for qualitative research turns. For the research to have a purpose, other researchers must be able to replicate the structures and processes within their contexts to make their discoveries and arrive at similar but not the same conclusions. Trustworthiness demonstrates that the evidence supports the

conclusions. The data collection phase of the research was exceptionally important as it determined the answer to the research question and guided the analyses that eventually contributed to the discourse on the research topic and purpose. McMahon and Winch (2018) have cautioned that the researcher's skills in collecting data determined the quality of the data and subsequent analysis, and the field of study must be able to trust its contribution. Qualitative research experts suggest that trustworthiness in qualitative research is the equivalent of rigor in quantitative research and recommends that researchers develop a trustworthiness plan. The explanations and activities of trustworthiness that I disclose substantiate how I used evidence-based procedures in my study to investigate my topic without interference from unanticipated external or internal issues. Descriptions demonstrate a clear link between the data and the analytical conclusions, and my researcher journal was a part of the triangulation process. A trustworthiness table and checklist included in my data collection and analysis plan (see Appendix D). The table is a sample of how I summarized and documented my trustworthiness activities to assist my research's "traceability and verification" (Nowell et al., 2017). Other researchers must have confidence in the truth of the findings which hinges on the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research processes and structures that support decisions and findings (Nowell et al., 2017).

Credibility

The processes to ensure transferability, dependability and confirmability of a research exploration intertwine, overlap, and support the credibility of a qualitative study. Credibility included peer debriefing by external qualitative professionals at key points in

my process and especially at critical points in my data collection and analysis. Richards and Hemphill (2018) describe peer debriefing as a collaborative data analysis strategy that enhances transparency, aids the audit trail, and generally supports the trustworthiness of the research process and findings. I reached out to qualified professionals and a mentor with experience in doctoral research. The mentor acted as my debriefer and reviewer throughout my research process. I met with my debriefer at least once weekly for approximately 1 hour. Korstjens and Moser (2018) described credibility in qualitative research as the internal validity of the study. To further ensure the credibility of my research findings, I conducted transcript verification after interviews for accuracy with the study participants. Reflexive journaling was an ongoing activity that I used to record every step in the research process inclusive of the interviews. Among the written records in my reflexive journal were descriptions of interview environments, atmosphere, mood and behaviors, thoughts that surfaced, blocking, clouding, feelings, dates, times, persons involved, choices, and decisions (Nowell et al., 2017).

Qualitative research depends solely on the judgement and decisions of the researcher. As recommended by Patton (2015) I made efforts to remain open to viewing my data in alternate ways, instead of forcing the data to answer the question the way I might anticipate. In my search for the best fit in my analysis process, I searched for and tested the data for alternate answers, looked for differences, variations, comparing arguments, comparing observation notes with interview data while maintaining connectivity to the research purpose. An audit trail of alternative answers, arguments, patterns, and themes helped to demonstrate the systematic rigor of my research process

Transferability

My journal contributed to the transferability of my research. Interview reports, processes, and analyses were documented in an Excel file as well as handwritten in notebooks using rich, thick descriptions gathered from interview questions that sought detailed, extended answers using semistructured and open-ended questions. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggested that the transferability of a study is indicated by the ability of the study results to be applicable outside of its original boundaries. Protocols were replicated with each participant and, along with responses, reviewed with my chair and reviewer. A detailed audit trail that readers can clearly follow aids the transferability of my research to other settings.

Confirmability

To ensure confirmability, the audit trail included the strategies for organizing and managing data using an Excel file to document dates, times, locations, identity codes for interviewees, links to interview scripts, and audio recordings. All personal information such as names, addresses, gender, or institution were altered and masked to readers through pseudonyms and use of codes. The informed consent document was used to provide participants with assurances of confidentiality and disconnection to their personal information before the preservice teacher participants agreed to engage in my study. Information in my report will not be traceable to identify specific participants. The design of the research and the methods used were appropriate for my exploratory investigation and fully answered the research question about the preconceptions that preservice teachers expressed about student voice in their teacher education.

My analysis aligned with my research design. The design choice was a generic qualitative study that was guided by the research purpose. Creswell and Poth (2015) as well as Merriam and Tisdell (2015) cautioned that the research should be relevant to the field and the rigor demonstrated should ensure that the findings can provide knowledge to the field that can be useful to other education settings, education policies and projects. Both the research processes and confirmability also rests on the researcher's ability to demonstrate that confidentiality is built into the research processes. The choice of face-to-face interviews as a data collection method and tool, audio recorded and handwritten observation notes helped to reduce the risk of cyber hacking of participants' information. Preservice teacher participants also had the opportunity to withdraw their cooperation at any point before or during the interview process. Through the audit trail, there was clear evidence of all key decisions and choices made inclusive of the rationale for choices. Each file was properly labeled and participants de-identified. Transcriptions will be stored for a period of 5 years for researcher access only.

Dependability

Due to the dynamic nature of human behavior, the replicability of qualitative research is difficult. Representation and construction of social realities are always in progress and subjective to individual worldviews. The findings in qualitative research are specific to their context and are not generalizable to a wider population. Burkholder et al. (2019) and Patton (2015) have both noted that there are numerous ways in which data can be interpreted adding to the difficulty in replicating findings. Nonetheless, the research design and processes should be able to replicated by another researcher. Dependability in

qualitative research, therefore, relies on matching methods used in the research process with the question to be answered and ensuring that the findings are consistent with the data collection (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). I paid attention to coherence in my research design and processes by ensuring that all discrete parts were connected. Additionally, I provide a clear audit trail which was verified through peer review and includes explanations of how I arrived at the results, how the data was collected and how decisions were made in the process of the research. Careful data management, triangulation and comparisons of transcriptions, observational notes, and conclusions, along with member checking to validate data and conclusions add to the dependability and trustworthiness of the data collection process, the management of the research and the resulting analysis and findings.

Ethical Procedures

Recruitment and International Consideration

The Walden University IRB Research Ethics guide defines international research as “any study intentionally designed to target individuals outside the United States in its stated procedures for participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, or results dissemination” (Walden IRB, 2021, para.1). Since my research was conducted outside of the United States of America it was important to note that I referred to the Jamaica higher education and government’s guidelines for ethical research which aligns with the Walden university’s research ethics standards and requirements. The guidelines in Jamaica are grounded in international standards as noted in the Nuremburg Code, the Declaration of Helsinki, the Council of International Organizations of Medical Sciences , the

International Ethical Guidelines, and the Belmont Report (Mona Campus Research Ethics Committee, June 2020).

It is useful here to declare my role as an activist educator with a strong belief in advocacy for student-centered education and student-centered pedagogy, and I believe in a growth mindset approach to teaching and learning. Of some concern in my context in Jamaica, was that fact that I am not a native of Jamaica. I am from the eastern Caribbean island of Trinidad and Tobago but have worked in Jamaica for the past 24 years in the field of education. Despite my long history within the society and the education system, as a non-native of Jamaica, I was sensitive to the social context (Kostere & Kostere, 2021). Reflexivity played a central role in my journey through the research process and included constant journaling and self-checking while in the field to reduce bias and ensure trustworthiness and credibility of my data collection and analyses. I also used the recommendation by Patton (2015) of repeated interview practice for feedback from practice participants who alerted me to any question, prompt, or use of language in my interview protocols or body language cues that could be interpreted as insensitive to the Jamaican social context.

My research process was designed to produce valid and reliable knowledge following strict ethical codes guided by the Walden Institutional review Board's Research Ethics Approval checklist as well as the Jamaica Research Ethics protocols. Participants were recruited from three institutions in rural central Jamaica through public media and my personal and private professional network. I have no affiliation to any of

the three institutions in rural central Jamaica from which recruits were invited to participate, nor were they or anyone else sponsoring my study.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) noted that despite the existence of ethics policies and guideline that researcher values and ethics play a major role in ethical practices during a research study. I ensured that all aspects of the recruitment process, the interviews, and observations as well as the decisions in the research process did no harm to the participants. Above all, no data collection activity proceeded without informed consent of participants agreeing to be interviewed. Informed consent included explanations of the research purpose and the methods used as well as assurances of the voluntary nature of participation. No ethical issues emerged while in the field; interviews were conducted sensitively, with integrity and respect for the participant as “whole person” (p. 261) and I was as transparent as possible with participants about the study purpose and objectives. Burkholder et al. (2019) described informed consent as a process of communication that continues throughout the research study and possibly beyond, depending on the research design. Informed consent for my study included signed agreement to voluntarily participate in the research with the right to withdraw at any point. The benefits for my study were “satisfaction and possibly self-insight” (p.205). However, thank you letters were sent via email to all participants.

Miriam and Tisdell, (2015) noted that every participant has a right to privacy and confidentiality and strategies included de-identifying participants in the research analysis and reporting. I encrypted the research files, ensured that they were password protected, and limited access only to me as the researcher and data collector. In the recruitment and

participation process a researcher builds a relationship with participants that includes the development of trust and a rapport that encourages private conversations. The boundaries of the researcher-participant relationship were included in the informed consent but it was important to close the relationship at the end of the study with the same emphases on respect and sensitivity (Burkholder et al., 2019). Though deception was not necessary and was not be used in my study, participants were debriefed via email to signal the end of the research and I included the study title, my name and contact details for any follow up questions participants may have. The thank-you note expressed appreciation for the participants' contribution to the study and an offer to provide them with a summary of the research findings.

Summary

The preceding presentation and discussions provided a detailed outline of the methodology that was used to answer the research question and explore the study purpose. The research design facilitated the collection of data and made possible analyses and rich, thick descriptions intended to understand the preconceptions of the preservice teachers enrolled in teacher education programs in rural central Jamaica about student voice in their teacher education. I explained the data collection methods and processes, inclusive of sampling, recruitment of the sample, and the planned data analysis. In the preceding discourse in Chapter 3, to ensure the validity and reliability of my research, I reflected on the ethical issues that were considered, including the safety and protection of participants. Due to the fact that my research was conducted outside of the United States of America I included considerations that ensure that the ethical standards for research in

my research country, Jamaica, aligned with the Walden IRB standards. I included a trustworthiness table (see Appendix D) that helped to ensure the transferability, credibility, dependability, confirmability and rigor of the research processes and procedures. Patton (2015) noted that the credibility of a qualitative research study includes a presentation of self by the researcher. In the role of the researcher discussion, I have presented my identity, my potential bias as well as my motive for the research study. As a doctoral student, venturing into this first formal attempt at a qualitative research, I do not yet have a track record that will provide some of the credibility assurances readers seek. However, I am appropriately qualified to conduct this research at the doctoral level under guidance and supervision by the university's doctoral committee as well as institutional research protocols.

Each section of chapter three outlined the preplanned procedures to gather and analyze the data for this study. In chapter four, I discuss the methods used to collect and analyze the participant data. I discuss all planned and unplanned procedures to collect the data, the results, findings, and recommendations. Additionally, in chapter 4, I demonstrate evidence of systematic and in-depth field work, integrity and "multiple perspectives of theory" (Patton, 2015, p. 661) in my review and repeated analyses of my research findings. I also document in further detail the execution of the strategies and plans noted in chapter 3 for conducting my research. Chapter 4 is the product of my analytical processes and includes the emergent categories and themes and rich, thick descriptions of the participants' preconceptions of student voice, the central element in the topic of interest that was explored.

Chapter 4: Results

Purpose of the Study

Sharing authority in the classroom would require changing teaching and learning praxis. Change is slow and difficult (Carey et al., 2015; DiSessa, 2024; Johnson & Carey, 1998; Piaget, 1964). This qualitative study explored the preconceptions preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education. Central to student voice theories and praxis is the notion of student autonomy and the relinquishing of some authority in the classroom by educators and providing students with the agency to make decisions and contribute to their education.

Student voice operates well in a student centered education environment. Moving from teacher centered to student centered pedagogy and praxis will require a conceptual shift in how societies offer education. Johnson and Carey (1998) posited that conceptual change is a deeper level of change that impacts an individual's deeply held beliefs. Conceptual change researchers and practitioners Rea-Ramirez et al. (2023) noted that "conceptual change is the development of new ways of thinking and understanding of concepts, beliefs, and attitudes" (p.1). To integrate student voice into classroom praxis and pedagogy is to develop new ways of thinking about teaching and learning from the student's perspective. To begin the conversation about changing deeply held beliefs related to education, teaching, and learning and to student voice as an important pedagogical praxis change, educators must first understand preservice teachers'

preconceptions about student voice. This research suggests that a good place to start might be with preservice teachers in training.

The framework for this research is grounded in conceptual change theory, guiding the many stages of the research process. Preservice teachers in training, having completed at least their first year of their program, were deemed the best demographic to provide data to answer the research question. I collected data from preservice teachers pursuing a bachelor's degree in education at higher-level institutions in rural central Jamaica. In this section, I describe the research methods used in the study, the procedures used for collecting and analyzing the data, the results, and the summary. I provide information about participant demographics, the research design, and the findings about the preservice teachers in higher-level institutions regarding their preconceptions about student voice, including their own voices in their teacher education programs in rural central Jamaica. I explain the data collection process, describe how I coded the data, present the patterns, relationships, and themes among the data, and draw conclusions based on themes. Chapter 4 concludes with a summary of the findings gathered by analyzing the data collected during the study.

Research Question

The following research question guided my study:

RQ1: What preconceptions do preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education?

Setting

Participants were all preservice teachers pursuing their teacher education bachelor's degrees in higher-level institutions in rural central Jamaica. They were recruited from three institutions in rural central Jamaica that offered teacher education programs. At the time of approval of the IRB to proceed with data collection at the end of April 2024, participants were in the midst of their end-of-year exam period. This tertiary institutional schedule and a regional and countrywide natural disaster impacted the recruitment process and the number of participants recruited for the study. Nevertheless, the early collection of data and the richness of what I was collecting reduced the impact of the schedules on the number of participants who eventually contributed to the study. Early data collection and review also helped guide decisions in the recruitment process.

Participants consented to be interviewed via web conferencing technology and Zoom communication software was selected to facilitate video and audio conferencing, including live chats, using a computer or phone. Zoom software also allows the recording of meetings. The recruitment process took place during May, June, and July 2024. Eight participants were interviewed, many using mobile phones as their primary communication device. There was no single setting for the study.

Demographics

Participants for this study were selected from three higher-level institutions in rural central Jamaica that are deidentified in the data as Institutions A, B, and C. The three institutions included one university and two teachers' colleges. Participants were all pursuing a bachelor's degree in education. Specializations for subject teaching in

secondary schools included English Language and Linguistics, Geography, Mathematics and Computer Science, Business Accounting, Social Studies and Human Ecology. The eight participants included three males and five females. Three participants were in their 4th and final year of study with five participants being in their third year of study.

Data Collection

Qualitative data were collected from eight preservice teachers enrolled in Bachelor of Education programs from three higher-level institutions in rural Jamaica. Participants replied to my research flyer (See Appendix A), which I sent through my networks via social media platforms on LinkedIn, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. The first stage of the recruitment occurred through mobile phone technology, WhatsApp, with follow-up by emails. WhatsApp is a free application that allows users to send unlimited text messages, photos, videos, documents, user location, and content (About WhatsApp, 2025). It is also a means of sharing media across platforms. The security aspect of WhatsApp was its end-to-end encryption feature. Nonetheless, no interview data were stored in WhatsApp. Table 1 provides details of the interview schedule and duration using Zoom web conferencing technology.

I found that the initial contact by email was slow and did not always lead to a response despite follow-up email reminders. Once I had secured a mobile phone number for the participants, I alerted them to check their email accounts for details about the study and the consent form and to respond. This method proved efficient and quick. I used this format of mobile phone alerts throughout the process, for example, to alert those who had participated in an interview to check for the transcripts and to read and respond.

Some follow-up questions for clarity were also disseminated through WhatsApp technology.

The recruitment process spanned three months, from May to July 2024. Recruitment was impacted by the end-of-year examination period in the selected institutions. I received approval from the IRB on April 26, 2024. However, April to June was the selected institutions' study break and subsequent examination period. Further, the final-year students who expressed interest in my study were involved in their own research projects. Before the approval, I secured email contacts for 20 potential participants. These limitations noted above impacted the number of participants who eventually consented to and participated in my study. Nonetheless, the quality of the data collected was not impacted.

Table 1

Interview Schedule

Participant de-identifier	Date of interview	Duration of interview
Participant 1	May 3, 2024	29M
Participant 2	May 5, 2024	54M 34S
Participant 3	May 7, 2024	51M 34S
Participant 4	May 8, 2024	59M 34S
Participant 5	May 24, 2024	29M 52S
Participant 6	June 5, 2024	59M 30S
Participant 7*	June 21, 2024	1 Hr. 2M
Participant 8	July 14, 2024*	43M

Participant 7 was a snowball recruitment recommended by Participant 6.

Participant 8 was first scheduled for July 2, 2024, but had to be rescheduled due to an impending hurricane that hit Jamaica, the location of the study, on July 3, 2024. This hurricane destroyed communication towers and electricity facilities for several weeks into August, further hindering recruitment. A potential three more participants could not fit in an interview before they went off on overseas work-study projects. The research details and consent form were emailed to them, but they did not respond.

The interviews were recorded using the Zoom web conferencing recording feature and saved in an iTunes file on my laptop. These recordings were also backed up on a flash drive encrypted for access only by me, the researcher. The audio recordings were transcribed using Turbo Scribe, an online transcription subscription application, and saved in Doc.x format in Microsoft Word to my laptop computer, backed up on an encrypted flash drive. Interview dates, times, participants, and related audio file identifications were recorded in an Excel file and stored on my laptop. I reviewed the audio recordings, matched them with the transcribed Word documents, and edited them where necessary for clarity. I sent the edited transcriptions to the participants so they could confirm and/or correct any errors in the captured data. I used WhatsApp mobile phone technology to alert the participants to check their emails, review the captured data, and respond.

Data Analysis

The data analysis followed Saldaña's (2016) 3-cycle approach to analysis. Cycle 1 consisted of the organization of the interview notes and transcripts. Interview transcripts

were read, and initial NVivo coding was undertaken. I made initial notes using the participants' words to immerse myself in the participants' worldview, as Saldaña (2021) recommended. The first participant's transcript and data analysis was reviewed by my dissertation chair and these discussions enhanced further analysis of subsequent transcripts. Cycle 2 was a more focused coding process with at least six transcript readings. In an Excel file, I noted the responses to questions and then combed each response line by line, generating codes that attributed meanings to the data. I also made notes for possible categories and thematic analysis at a later point. Notes included details about the central message as conveyed by the participants; these notes were reviewed at each reading, and new insights were added. Some key quotations relating to student voice, the central phenomenon being explored, were identified and highlighted. I began noting keywords and phrases. Utilizing an open coding process, I first identified and listed approximately 561 codes across eight interview transcripts of 10-15 pages each. Table 2 provides a visual summary of the methodological approach to the data reduction and analysis. Interviews were compared to assist with consistent identification and emphasis of key points. The first list of 561 codes was sifted to better identify, analyze, and understand emerging patterns, concepts, actions, and meanings as revealed by the participants. Thirty unique categories emerged and were consolidated to arrive at three major themes. Each theme was made up of several categories with some overlap.

Table 2*Visual Summary of the Methodological Approach to the Data Analysis Process*

Themes	Categories	Quotes from transcripts
Definitions (of student voice)	Expression Listen; pay attention Having a say Advocacy Empowerment	<p>“So, when I hear about student voice, I’m thinking there must be some room in which students are able to express themselves” (Participant 4)</p> <p>“So sometimes you have to pay attention; you have to listen to them.” (Participant 4)</p> <p>“empowering students to share their ideas, sorry, concerns, and giving suggestions,” (Participant 2)</p> <p>“So, it’s having a say in how they’re educated (Participant 6)</p>
Active voice	Voice concerns; share experience Speak up; take action Take initiative Student leadership	<p>“So, voice don’t just mean speaking, but it also mean action.” Participant 8)</p> <p>“I normally tend to contribute to discussion...I advocate for my peers...I normally take initiative.” (Participant 2)</p> <p>“I was elected to serve as a batch representative. So that’s 150 preservice teachers...What I’ve realized is that it is important to have an active voice” (Participant 6)</p> <p>“So, I have to be that active voice because without voice, nothing is really going to move forward” (Participant 7)</p>

Themes	Categories	Quotes from transcripts
Impact:	Negative impact of voicelessness	<p>“So, I expressed it and my voice wasn’t heard. . . I was a bit discouraged. . . And so, I was very discouraged. . . However, I did not get the degree that I would have wanted” (Participant 1)</p> <p>“When I was going to high school, we did not have a say as it relates to how it is that we are being taught. For the most part, we just sat there passively in taking content. . . So, for me, I viewed learning then more of a burden, more of a requirement and not something that is interesting or meaningful.” (Participant 7)</p>
	Positive impacts of voice (being heard)	<p>“as a very diverse learner as myself, I think it is very soothing. . . Things like that made me feel so important and valued” (participant 3)</p> <p>“It helped me to take ownership of my learning” (Participant 2)</p>

The reduction process included looking for repetitive patterns and clustering. As I began to cluster and group codes in what Saldaña (2016) defined as axial coding, I looked for repeated words, main topics, and coded paragraphs, also looking for the most common responses. Patterns were not limited to responses to specific questions but permeated the data as participants considered various aspects of the central phenomenon of student voice around which questions were focused. Saldaña (2016) noted that codes not only reduce data but can also summarize or condense data. The following questions from Dr. Susan Marcus' (Walden, 2023) tutorial on qualitative data analysis and coding were invaluable in further summarizing and condensing, refining, and clustering the codes and noting the emergent themes:

How do participants interpret what is happening?

How do they speak about what is happening?

What does their language reveal?

What assumptions were made by the participants?

What do I want to learn from the data?

What am I trying to find out? (Walden, 2023)

These questions helped me to look for connections between groups of codes and to arrive at three main themes. I also conducted thematic, discourse, and content analysis to make sense of the data. Figure 1 is a visual representation of the essential categories underlying the emergence of the three themes from the dataset. Patton (2015) recommended the data display as a tool to organize and compress the data set. The data display supports decision making paths throughout the data collection and data analysis process. It also provides a visual of the data analysis. Having written up the results of my data analysis, I created a visual display to demonstrate how the deduction of themes aligned with the problem statement, purpose and research question, while also highlighting the trends and patterns that informed the emergent themes.

phenomenon discussed in the interview. He sent the data by text using WhatsApp technology. I kept an Excel file documenting each transcript reading and briefly noted what I highlighted, found, and felt after each reading. I included any frustrations or difficulties experienced during this review process in my notes. I then reviewed all the transcripts with the research question at the forefront. All data aligned with the research question. There were no discrepant cases.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The following is a reflexive account of the efforts and strategies employed to ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the research process. Saldaña (2024) suggested that "reflexivity provides researcher transparency and adds to the credibility and trustworthiness of the account." (p. 28). Because the researcher is the primary tool for collecting and analyzing qualitative data, it is important to reduce the potential impact of subjectivity (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Wa-Mbaleka, 2020). Established methods were used to maintain the study design, ensure detailed implementation records and coding processes, and analyze the data. This section discusses the strategies used to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

According to Patton (2015), issues of quality and credibility align with the intended audience for the research and the research purpose. The methods used should match the research question and issues. The following strategies helped to ensure the internal validity of the study's findings and interpretations. As Meriam and Tisdell (2015)

recommended, focused engagement in the data assisted in generating evidence through data saturation. I allowed the data to guide the data collection and analysis processes, aligning always with the research question and purpose. A peer debriefing strategy was employed at the start of the research undertaking to help keep the processes and researcher thinking and planning focused. A small peer group of two people helped maintain the research process's objectivity through sessions where I discussed my plans and some of the challenges I anticipated and experienced. These discussions also helped to eliminate or reduce bias. Before recruitment, meetings with my chair included discussion and examination of my interview questions to ensure clarity of each and alignment to the research question and purpose of the study.

Korstjens and Moser (2018) noted that triangulation could involve persistent observation and comparing data collected with the observation notes. The interviews averaged between 40 and 90 minutes. Data were recorded using Zoom Web Conferencing recording technology. I debriefed each participants immediately after each interview, thanking them and reminding them about the confidentiality of their information and the follow-up for them to review the transcript to ensure correct capture of their information. I carefully detailed each interview activity, including notes on the researcher and mood, interview management, participants behavior and mood, background activities or interferences, if any, and initial summaries of each interview event. Each transcript was then read an average of six times alongside observation notes, and the data were examined for its peculiar characteristics. Comparisons were made across lines, paragraphs, and transcript summaries. Codes followed from the raw data and

were grounded in the context of the data collected, then recorded and labeled. Member checking was then employed as another means of triangulating the data. Member checking was conducted via email and WhatsApp mobile phone technology. Once the transcripts were edited, they were sent to participants accompanied by requests to read and confirm that the data represented their intended responses. Participants were also encouraged to add any details or thoughts about the phenomenon of student voice.

Throughout the different stages of data analysis, I observed where participants' responses aligned with the conceptual change theories that an individual's preconceptions are influenced by their experiences, knowledge, deeply held beliefs and opinions which, in turn, impact their attitude and behaviors (Odzemir & Clarke, 2007; Posner et al., 1982; Vosniadou, 2007). This observation evidenced how I met the goal of what Glaser and Straus (1967) and Young and Casey (2018) called theoretical saturation.

Transferability

Patton (2015) advised that the qualitative researcher must be methodical in reporting sufficient details of data collection and analysis processes to permit others to judge the quality of the results. I upheld the external validity criteria by providing in Chapter 4 a detailed description of the participants, the research site, the methodology, and the study results. This strategy improves the transferability of the study (Meriam & Tisdell, 2016). I also listed the steps in my coding process, moving from NVivo coding to axial coding, followed by content and thematic analyses supporting the transferability and external validity of the research processes.

Dependability

Through rigorous documentation (Ahmed, 2024; Kostere & Kostere, 2021); Patton, 2015) and the creation of an audit trail, I ensure the dependability of the research. I documented how I gathered each piece of data through interviews with participants, observed and noted the context, the physical and emotional moods, and temperaments of the participants, the conditions under which the interviews were collected, including the stability of technology, the climatic conditions affecting connectivity as well as participant or researcher issues if any. I created a comprehensive log of actions, decisions, challenges, and resolution strategies that allow other researchers to reproduce the study, thus ensuring the dependability of the research results.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research ensures that the participants and not the researcher shape the narrative (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Kostere & Kostere, 2021; Meriam & Tisdell, 2016). I carefully let the data guide all decisions during the research's data collection and analysis stages. Persistent observation and examination of the data required open-mindedness, and I consistently reminded myself of my role as the researcher to remain objective. I referred to Patton (2015), Creswell and Poth (2016) and Kostere and Kostere (2021), who cautioned new researchers about the subjective nature of qualitative research with the researcher as the sole instrument and employed strategies to minimize researcher bias. Efforts were made not to judge the data or the interviewees who provided the data. Researcher memos, notes, and self-observations during interviews and transcript analysis helped maintain objectivity during research. Deliberate efforts

were made to examine the coding interpretations and write-up of the research results for instances of researcher voice. Immersion in the data ensured that I was capturing the participants' worldview. Member checking also helped ensure that the captured data conveyed the meanings the participants intended, assuring the results' confirmability.

Results

In this section, I explain how the participants' responses provided evidence to support the data analysis and answer the research question, 'What are the preconceptions of preservice teachers in higher-level education programs in rural central Jamaica about student voice in their teacher education?' Overall, the data revealed that the preconceptions of the preservice teacher participants regarding what student voice entails, aligns with the general ideas about student voice in the literature. In addition, the dominant preconception of the preservice teacher participants' student voice in their teacher training program is that their voice is active. However, the use of the participants' voices was primarily in service to student representation rather than in actively participating in their education. There was very limited evidence that the participants' voices were being used in the teaching and learning space in the classroom. Two participants could cite isolated incidences of being allowed to use their student voice to support their learning. Six participants cited student representation only, as evidence of their active voice in their teacher education program. The two participants who cited individual and isolated incidences of their student voice being used to contribute to their learning also cited consistent experiences of using their voice in service of student representation.

It must be noted that all eight participants held some role in the student representation system in their institutions at different points in their program duration. Student representative roles included vice president of the student council, class representative, batch representative, public relations officer, and secretary on the student council. These representation roles may have skewed or been responsible for student representation emerging as a significant experience for the use of participants' student voices in their teacher education. The data also brought to light some underlying preconceptions about the role of the teacher versus the role of the student in the teaching and learning space.

I unearthed three themes to support the findings. Theme one captures the participants' thoughts and ideas about student voice and what it means for the student to have a voice in their learning. Key phrases and words from the participants' responses are further broken down and explained to show how participants articulated the importance of student voice to the wellbeing of the student. Theme one also provided information about how participants gathered their knowledge of student voice. Theme two encompasses the participants' experiences related to their student voices in their teacher education program. Participants were proud of their student voices used mainly on behalf of others and outside of the teaching and learning in the classroom. Theme three emphasizes the impact of student voice on the wellbeing of the student through experiences of having a voice or being voiceless, and also places focus on participants' thoughts and concerns about the role of the teacher in an ideal student voice practicing setting. reactions to The three themes provide valuable insights into how participants

think about student voice in pedagogy and the experiences in their education that contribute to their preconceptions. Detailed description of the themes is presented in the analysis of data and is supported by actual quotations in the words and worldview of the participants.

Analysis of Data

There is a consensus in the education research community that students' voices in their education positively affect learning and motivation to learn (Bron et al., 2018; Garcia et al., 2022; Holquist et al., 2023). Research in higher education indicates that teacher preparation does not always include the student voice of the preservice teacher (Farrell, 2019; Mayes et al., 2021; Moore, 2021; Roofe, 2018) as a fundamental aspect of their learning and their practice as soon-to-be teachers in the classroom. However, how preservice teachers perceive their student voice in their teacher preparation programs may be a first step in understanding how to prepare teachers to give students a voice in the classroom. The research question, therefore, sought to explore the preconceptions of preservice teachers in higher education programs in rural central Jamaica about student voice in their teacher education.

From the data there was an indication of a possible disconnect between what participants perceived as a definition of the student voice concept and what they described as the practice of their student voices. There was also an indication that participants had no consistent, structured experience of the practice of student voice and that their thoughts and ideas about student voice came from reading, isolated instances in their teaching and learning, and their assumptions. While participants talked about their

student voices as active, the data revealed that their active voices were used outside of the classroom and centered mainly within their student leadership and student representation roles. Supporting evidence came mainly from within their student leadership, student representation, being members of the student council, and volunteerism involvement.

Though limited to two participants, there was some evidence of their student voice being used within the participants' teaching and learning in the classroom. Overall, the data analysis suggests that participants needed structured, dedicated support to better understand the concept and integration of student voice and, to learn how to use their student voices for maximum effect and change within the teaching and learning environment.

Themes

The three themes were outcomes of coding, categorization and analytic reflection of the data collected from interviews of eight preservice teachers enrolled in teacher education programs in three institutions in rural central Jamaica. The first theme related to the participants' definition of student voice and, more specifically, their thoughts and ideas about the concept of student voice. The second theme was the participants' perception and description of their voice in their teacher education program which was centered in student representation. Theme three related to the factors participants perceived positively or negatively impacting their voice in their teacher education program and the impact of student voice on the role of the teacher.

Theme 1: Student Voice Important to Student Wellbeing

Theme one centered on the participants' preconception of student voice and included their interpretations, their thoughts and ideas, meanings, and definitions. Theme one emerged from responses of all eight participants to the question 'What comes to mind when you hear or think of the term student voice?' and further reflection on the term's meaning throughout the interviews. The following discussion and presentation dig deeper into the key phrases and words used by participants in reflecting on their interpretations, shows their thinking, assumptions and frames of reference underpinning their preconceptions.

Participants thought that student voice was important to the wellbeing and performance of the student, catered to diverse learners, involved inclusivity and was a student centered approach to teaching and learning. They also thought that students having a voice included them voicing their opinions, expressing themselves and being heard, making input and participating in their learning. There was something unique about the participants' interpretations regarding student voice in that no two explanations by participants were the same. However, similar words and phrases were used. It is useful here to discuss in more detail some of the words and phrases participants used as well as their connection to their ideas about student voice.

One of the key definitions to emerge included the concept of expression. Though there were similar ideas about self-expression as an element of student voice, each participant focused on a different aspect or type of expression and how they saw students expressing themselves. Participant 4 stated, "So when I hear student's voice, I'm thinking

that there must be in it some room in which the students are able to express themselves." This general idea of the expression of voice is that students add their voices to the learning conversation, use their own language to speak, and release their most pressing thoughts. For Participant 5, student voice was not only about students expressing themselves but in providing opportunities for expression the teacher can observe who has the confidence to speak and who will need support, noting that "when hearing the voice, for example, in cases where some people cannot express themselves, but you can read them, you try to be the voice for them." Participant 5 added two components to the idea of expression: first, hearing what is expressed and keenly observing the students' body language and attitude. At the same time, thoughts and feelings are being made known; secondly, they are guiding or helping struggling students with the language to say and show what they feel.

Within the notion of expression for the participants lay the idea of action and not just utterances or speaking out. Participants viewed expression also as something that represents. For Participant 3, expression included action and representing or conveying messages through a collective of voices rather than a single voice. Moreover, Participant 3 noted that student voice was "the students coming together, unifying to speak about certain issues that they are having problems with" In Participant 3's definition, the collective voices become a single unit to make feelings or perspectives known by speaking out and showing the importance of expression.

Sharing as an element of expression was visible in several participants' definitions and thoughts and ideas of student voice. Among the participants, it was a core and

important notion for students to express themselves. Participant 4 stated that it was essential for students to be "able to share their concern," especially when there are things that may be causing anxiety or worry. The concerns to be shared were not only about learning and teaching issues but also included sharing " a broad issue or topic that they believe in or they, you know, stand for." (Participant 3). Participants also interpreted sharing as a meaningful interaction with those involved each contributing to the expression that is taking place. Participant 5 discussed sharing ideas and problems and sharing with someone who can "help to fix the problem." Sharing in the preceding quotation had a specific purpose and involved careful selection of the other with whom to share; that is, the other had to have the ability or capacity to resolve the specific issue or problem.

Participant 8 added another dimension to the element of sharing, emphasizing sharing as giving insight and making input, describing how she saw student voice being practiced in the learning and teaching space when students "can give input and insights as to how learning can be more conducive, how creativity can be intertwined with content." Insights involve sharing understanding and awareness of situations, problems, or topics, for example, and explaining the thinking behind the choices of expressing oneself. Giving input, on the other hand, is sharing opinions or information and offering suggestions to help make decisions. In Participant 8's definition, the voice of the student plays a significant role in their learning. However, sharing was not seen as a simple process left to chance; Participant 2 noted that student voice involved "empowering students to share their ideas, sorry, concerns" and that "by sharing their thoughts, students develop

confidence". Sharing involves trust. Participant 2's notion of being empowered to share suggested that students do not readily share what they think if they have no experience of sharing in the learning and teaching space. Sharing is an activity and an experience to participate in with others.

Additionally, the process of sharing required critical behavior from 'others,' as noted by Participant 4: " you have to pay attention, you have to listen to them" for it to be meaningful. In the context of teaching and learning, we may assume that the 'others' refers to teachers or lecturers. Here, expression requires both student and teacher to participate in the activity, each having a portion of the responsibility for the expressive process if sharing is to be helpful.

As mentioned earlier, for the participants, 'expression' has a representing component, where to take action is also to express voice. Representing and representation as core elements of student voice permeated several definitions. Elected student representation roles and systems featured in participants' conversations were examples of their student voice in action and were a familiar model for student voice in practice. Participant 3 linked her definition of student voice to representing and expressing voice through action, connecting this form of expression to the significance of the student council as a medium for students expressing themselves as she ended her definition with the quote, "That is why they have student guilds and student councils because, it is very important for students to defend students." Students speaking and acting on behalf of other students were at the heart of representation.

Students' needs and institutional goals often collide in student representation, where the student's voice is expressed through advocacy. Participants 3, 6, and 7 included representing and advocating in their definitions of student voice. Participant 7 said that the first thing to come to mind in reflecting on a definition of student voice was advocacy, stating that it was a tool students use to "build a bridge between communication from administration and the student body. . .between the decision makers and the student body." Participant 6 stressed that advocacy was both relevant and essential to student voice, and Participant 3, while not using the specific term advocacy, centered the definition of student voice around "a school being represented by a group of students". Representation and advocacy ensure that student interests and needs matter and are considered. Representation also allows the voice of students to participate on a broader scale to achieve change on students' behalf.

Participant 8 spoke of student voice as students voicing opinions, a more assertive way of expressing themselves and saying what they think. It also includes students using their own language to express or show their thoughts and feelings. Voicing opinion can consist of expressing perspective and viewpoints, words used by Participant 1 in the following quote "Hearing the students' viewpoints, their perspectives as it relates to their, whatever the issue is. So, basically their viewpoint, what is their take." Perspectives and viewpoints are how students see and experience their world and reality. Voicing opinions also includes revealing emotions and displaying individuality. Participant 8 extended the idea of voicing opinions to letting "their idea of education, of what they are going

through, or what they think, be heard." Participant 8 puts the responsibility on the student to let their opinion be heard and not to wait for opportunities to present themselves.

Akin to voicing opinion is having a say, which goes beyond being heard to having one's voice valued enough to be included in decision-making. Participant 6 suggested that to benefit the students, "it is a student having a say in how their learning takes place and how they're educated and how they're engaged and how they interact with content " In supporting the significance of students having a say, Participant 6 pointed out that the students have some experience and, in some instances, were more progressive and current and that experience should be recognized and considered valuable enough to be included in decisions within the educational processes. Participant 2 articulated similar thoughts about 'having a say' emphasizing how critical it was for the student in the teaching and learning process in higher education to be included, valued, and outlined essential areas in which students should have input, stating that

" having a say in curriculum design, the classroom environment, teaching methods, the learning methods, support services those little things, because I think it helps a student, it helps to fix or amplify or create, sorry, a more inclusive student-centered classroom."

This idea of the role and importance of the student's voice for Participant 2 recognizes that students have a unique perspective that, alongside that of faculty and administration, could be more effective in meeting students' needs and institutional goals.

Theme one connects with the theory of conceptual change that notes that preconceptions are influenced and shaped by background, cultural context, experience

and knowledge. How participants acquired their knowledge about the concept of student voice points can explain how preconceptions are formed and how they remain tenacious. The participants' thoughts and ideas about student voice came from their knowledge gathered from experiences of reading, discussions in their courses, their leadership activities and their own assumptions. Although participants seemed confident in their understanding of student voice as a concept, they searched for the language to express their interpretations and meanings while reflecting on and making connections to their individual experiences to support their responses.

Participant 2 discussed what influenced her ideas about the student voice concept and stated, "I believe it's something that we've actually talked about. So the courses, one of them, let me think about it, I've done so many courses, but a little bit of this and a little bit of that is included in all of them." Underlying the discussion was the suggestion that there was no organized, deliberate, or intentional student voice processes and practices within Participant 2's learning spaces. Participant 2 gathered her general knowledge and experiences of student voice from bits and pieces of information within the teacher education program courses.

Other participants' definitions of student voice came from reading, isolated experiences in the learning and teaching in the classroom, their assumptions, and discussions among their generation. For example, Participant 1 explained what shaped his idea of student voice, stating, "It is something that has become really rapid, something that has become very much more present in our contemporary scene of the Gen Z era, basically. It is something that is more out there". This statement from Participant 1

confirmed the unstructured and informal manner in which participants developed their definition or thoughts and ideas about student voice.

Theme 2: Student Voice as Active Student Representation

One of the central features of student voice in practice coming out of the literature is the active participation and the activeness of the students' voice in their education, particularly in their learning in the classroom. Central to the participants' thoughts and ideas highlighted in theme one is the student being very active in their education. Theme two connects to this concept of activeness in student voice in practice. Additionally, while theme one centered on the broader concept of student voice, theme two focused specifically on student voice in teacher education. Participants were encouraged to share their preconceptions of their own voice in relation to the activeness required in student voice practice and to provide concrete examples of their voice in action in their higher education. .

The participants' preconception of their own voice was that it was active. To support this preconception, they noted that they advocate, they speak out, they engage in public speaking, they represent others, they speak on behalf of others, they problem solve and they give voice to those who are afraid to speak out. The long standing and traditional practice of selected student representation features as a model or example of the preservice teachers' student voice in action and in practice. Student leadership and by extension, representation, is the formal and traditional mode through which institutions allow the voice of the student to be heard. It is a form of participation in their education. At the heart of representation is students speaking and acting on behalf of others. It is

where their student voice is most active. From the examples of participants' student voice in action, the participants' active voice is centered more outside of the classroom, and less within the learning activities inside the classroom as they had shared when discussing their thoughts and ideas in theme one. Their sharing of concerns, their vocal expressions, their voicing of opinions for example is less about learning in theme two and more about the day to day living in the reality of their teacher education programs. Theme two provides information on the experiences that shaped the preconception of the participants' student voice, and links to conceptual change theory that says experiences influences how individuals see and interact with their reality. Experience provides a map by which they navigate and make meaning of their world. To provide more clarity, the participants examples of their student voice in action is observed from inside the classroom and outside the classroom.

Inside the Classroom: Only two participants shared experiences of their active student voice within the classroom. Participant 2 spoke of using her active voice in the classroom, leading discussions, questioning, seeking clarity, being unafraid to disagree with the teacher, and voicing opinions when necessary, all of which aligns with student agency noted in the student voice literature. Participant 5, while stating that her student voice was active in the classroom, still saw the teacher as being in charge and only used her active voice to seek assistance from the teacher or from "a leader that I could call and talk to" (Participant 5). For Participant 5, the teacher in charge provided the confidence or the space for her active student voice. Here is an example of experience and belief, two elements of influence noted in the conceptual theory affecting and shaping a participants'

preconception about their student voice in their higher education. Participant 5's student voice was anchored less in representation and more in the safety of the teacher's role. This embedded traditional notion of the teacher as authority is part of the traditional teacher centered approach to teaching and learning which is the experience and cultural background of the education system in Jamaica and of the participants. According to the conceptual change theory societal norms and cultural background influence and shape preconceptions. The teacher in charge overlaps in the themes that emerged from the data and will be discussed further in theme three.

Outside the Classroom: The representation and leadership roles and activities outside the classroom were cited as support for participants' preconceptions of their student voice in action in their teacher education. The participants connected student representation activities to having and using their voices. There were variations in the activities that provided opportunities for participants to have, shape, or use their active voices. For example, some participants cited being involved in class representation, batch representation, volunteerism, public speaking, event coordination, writing, and student council membership as support for their self-determined active voice. Engaging in the aforementioned roles may have positively impacted participants' confidence in having an active voice. However, benefits gained from this outside active voice did not appear to translate into the classroom.

Because student representation was such a strong and visible element in the active voices of the participants, some descriptions of the types of representation and the roles and responsibilities attached to these representations are helpful to the discussion of the

emergence of the participants' student voice being active student representation as a theme. For example, Participant 3 was elected as a class representative with the title of Junior Affairs Director for Non Resident Students, and expectations in this role included addressing all matters raised by peers and taking those matters, if necessary, to the faculty member responsible for the class or the broader student council. This role provided some measure of agency for the participant.

The next stage of representation was batch representation, where participants 6 and 7 were selected to represent their peers who were enrolled in a specific intake or year body of students. As batch representatives, they conducted similar tasks and activities to the class representative but on a broader scale, which required representing a larger body of peers on the student council and liaising with student executive bodies, faculty, and administration.

Volunteerism for participants involved participating in groups that support students or external groups and organizations through which students may earn credits for community service. Participant 3 admitted that she was very keen on volunteer activities, stating "I'm a very outgoing individual when it comes to volunteerism and working outside in outside organizations." Along with the extra curricula experiences outside the institution, Participant 3 was emotionally invested in student representation noting that she had had positions since her entry into the teacher education program and that in her second year "I gained a position on the council and I felt very excited." Participant 3's active student voice resided deeply in student leadership and representation.

Participant 1 reflected on his active voice through involvement in the social curriculum at his institution, interacting with others, and being active in his external roles as a religious youth director and musician. Participant 1 spoke of "being passionate about this teaching career," unaware that his active voice was not focused on his teaching preparation but rather on outside activities. When probed further to determine the use of Participant 1's voice within the teacher education program and institution, the participant stated that "in my area, we actually have a student body that is supposed to cater to the student voice in its sense as to carry out the students' viewpoints as well as advocate for the students."

The confidence in the active voice of student representation by Participant 1 connected to Participant 6's sense of purpose and responsibility when he stated, "there are persons like myself who have to take on the challenge or take on or up the mantle and really advocate for these challenges students are facing, preservice teachers are facing". Thus, Participant 1 was happy to use his active voice in a world external to his teacher education program while relying on the active voice of student representatives to be his voice within the teaching and learning environment yet still describing his voice as a preservice teacher as active. Both participants viewed their active representation voices as synonymous with student voice in their teacher education program.

Event coordination for Participant 8 enhances management and people skills in the coordination and execution of activities for public participation, which may include entertainment, competitions, career and open days, to name a few. Participant 8 was also involved in public speaking, which calls for speaking about and on topics to broader groups often outside an individual's immediate network.

Overall, participants 2,3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 participated in student council membership with executive positions such as junior affairs director for nonresident students, secretary and vice president that involved engagement in leadership for the entire student body and interfacing with faculty and administration, discussing, debating, negotiating, and generally having some limited involvement in the policy, systems, and internal institutional politics. Representation activities can empower students to make their voices heard, boosting their self-esteem, self-confidence, and sense of pride and identity. .

Writing as Active Student Voice: One participant's description of her active voice deviated from all the other participants. Participant 4 described her voice as active but only in writing. Participant 4 noted that she expressed her voice actively in writing when lecturers requested reports and feedback on her experiences from specific courses. In her reflection during the interview, Participant 4 was not conscious of a contradiction in claiming an active voice used only upon request and within a tiny sphere of her teacher education program. This same participant indicated that she did not like speaking out, did not like being called on to speak, and mentioned this feature of her personality quite a few times in the interview process, stating, " I'm not the upfront type of person" In sharing how about her learning style and participation in the teaching and learning processes, Participant 4 clarified that it was not that she was not participatory, she just did not speak out in class, affirming "you have some persons who are not so interactive like myself because when I'm in class, (laughter) I don't talk. You think I'm a person, I'm someone that is not willing to participate, but I rarely speak." Nonetheless, Participant 4 wants to be included in decision making and is willing to let her voice be heard as part of

a collective stating "If I have company, then I'll probably be brave enough to voice my concern." The preceding descriptions of her personality is included in Participant 4's account of her active voice in the classroom and, is also one of the two experiences of the participants' student voice being used in the classroom.

The power and influence of experience, including a lack of experience, runs through all interview data and is especially significant to theme two where the experiences of student leadership and representation seemed to shape not just the participants' preconception of their student voice in their education, but also their identity as preservice teachers,

Preconception Revealed Through Participant' Language

Through further mining of the data, a better understanding of the participants' concept of active voice surfaced from the language they used to share and express themselves within the interview process. Participants' voices in the interview also revealed their self-identifications. Participant 7 used emotional language to share his response to using his representative role to resolve issues related to the scheduling of courses when he said, "I was just filled with happiness, simple, simple, because you know, the voices of the students through me was heard, right? This accomplishment seemed to have a profound effect on Participant 7's sense of achievement as he repeated this expression of happiness with the confirmation "So, I was very happy. I was very gleeful, man. There was pride in being the voice for others, with Participant 7 referring to himself in the third person as he shared how others spoke of his leadership, saying, "If it is that you come to the institution and they ask, you know who is xxxx xxxxxxxx one

thing that would come across is he's very active, he's very well spoken and he's very argumentative at times" All references to his active student voice were linked to Participant 7's identity as a student leader as he saw student voice through the eyes of student leadership and in his own words, he saw student leaders as powerful and wanted to mirror their behaviors. Participant 7's emotional response to how others spoke of him when he made a difference through his student representation suggested that he felt emotionally safe, belonged, and mattered. These feelings and emotions align with the literature on the impact of student voice on the wellbeing of the student.

Language choice can indicate several things, including participants' attitudes and ways of shaping their identity, and can provide an insight into the participant's mindset. The language used in the discussion of their active student voice included concepts of comfort and being comfortable within the teaching and learning space. Participant 1 used words and phrases such as comfort and more comfortable eight times in his conversation about student voice. In talking about the importance of his active voice in his education, Participant 1 noted that his student voice could help the teacher better understand how to cater to the diverse needs within the classroom, making students more comfortable to share and the learning space more comfortable. Participant 1 stated, "If you have a voice as to how you better learn, then it gives the teacher a more understanding of what catering to the diverse needs, as well as, I think that the comfort of learning, the environment, the conduciveness of the environment is very important as well."

For the participants, comfort was a state of relaxation and freedom from emotional stress experienced when they felt a sense of care and support. In talking about

the importance of her voice, Participant 5 connected being comfortable with academic performance and suggested that " it is very important for everybody to, as I said, to be comfortable. If you're at an institution, you want to be comfortable where you can perform well. And like to be comfortable overall, you perform better when you are comfortable. And you can communicate with the leaders of the institution". Participant 3 added another dimension to the notion of comfort linking comfort to safety, noting that the classroom should be a space "in which all students feel safe. And safe enough, and comfortable enough, and confident enough to want to share their experiences."

The notion of comfort in the conversations with participants was not always overt in the choice of language. However, it was also revealed in the participants' hidden sense of comfort with things such as the existing systems for student voice, such as surveys and end-of-term teacher and course assessments. For example, Participant 5 did not use the word comfort in talking about the importance of her active voice in traditional survey methods but cited the end-of-term assessments as an essential way in which she used her active voice when she said, "So, at the ending of a school, the school year, like assessment, assessing your teachers, the way how the lesson is brought out, communication with teachers and stuff. So, we do that at my institution. So, I think it's very important". Participant 5 felt that her active voice made a difference as things often got corrected after the surveys and there was a sense of being comfortable with and trusting the system.

Sometimes, as expressed by the participants, this comfort also came from being a voice for others. However, at other times, participants recognized that it may have the

opposite effect or limitations. Participant 8 voiced a mixture of confidence in being a voice for peers through student leadership as vice-president of the student council and a tone of resignation as she accepted the limitations of her active student voice to affect change. She stated, "So, you just keep what you have to say to yourself." From the choice of language, Participant 8's voice seemed to be one of cautious expectation, not to want too much because you may not get it, so you accept and do what you must do. From the thought patterns expressed, the tone of Participant 8's voice was one of skepticism about that voice making a difference. Hers was an active voice that, to paraphrase the participant's comments, was wary of being used at times because of the uncertainty of receptivity. There were several instances where Participant 8's choice of language was one of futility and conformity, as expressed in the statement, "What is it that I can do? I can't do anything about it. Because, I mean, we try, you know, not that we don't try and say what we want and what we think, but ultimately, things don't normally change".

Participant 1's language choice provided insight into the participant's mindset about his active voice and academic performance, suggesting that if he had the opportunity to study within a student voice environment, his performance would improve, "I think the whole student voice perspective would have opened my eyes going into the classroom. In considering the positive aspects of student voice practice on student learning, Participant 1 declared that he would be a teacher who employs student voice in his classroom because if he had the student voice experience in his learning environment in his teacher education he "would be far better than I am right currently because, I would be, I would excel in more, much more subjects than, than, than I did."

Expressions of the need for comfort were linked to developing student-teacher bonds. At the same time, thought patterns expressed wariness about the student being too comfortable and misusing the freedom of student voice, thereby impacting the quality of student output. Nonetheless, comfort is an element of an inclusive classroom wherein students feel accepted and safe. The above statement from participant 1 confirms the influence and role of experience in shaping preconceptions. The statement also highlights the clarity that the Participant brought to his observations of the reality in which he was being prepared for the classroom and the experience of a simple conversation to provoke important introspection about teaching and learning in higher education.

Inclusion, therefore, overlaps with comfort. While not sharing a specific experience, Participant 1's assumptions associate comfort with having learning styles and learning needs catered to instead of a top-down teacher-directed approach where one must accept what is being given. Participant 2 spoke generally about positive experiences in some situations of being included, which created feelings of belonging and value. Inclusivity experiences impacted the self-worth of Participant 3, who stated that "it was very soothing. I felt safe." Participant 7 added that "things like that make me feel important and valued". When students have a voice, they experience self-worth and are more invested in their learning.

Despite noting in their definitions or thoughts and ideas in theme one about student voice that students should have a say in their education, none of the participants shared examples of consistent association, discussion, or experience with the whole philosophy of student voice that includes an active and equal role in planning, learning,

and leading classroom instruction, as well as contributing to the creation and development of institution systems, practices, and policies in other words 'having a say'. Participants' stories, self-esteem, self-identity, and self-image resided in the activities and roles outside of the classroom in their representation roles and activities, focusing on those systems and policies that were allowed them, much of which they indicated their voices did not change to benefit the students. The participants did not note many opportunities to influence core teaching and learning matters. Instead, their engagement in student leadership and representation, and being the voice for their peers was at the forefront of their active student voice experiences.

Theme 3: Student Voice Impact and the Roles of the Teacher

A lot of student voice recommendations and practice rests on the assumptions of teacher receptivity. From the literature, student voice assumes not only that teachers will know how to shift their practice but that students will know how to relinquish their traditional dependence on the teacher as the ultimate authority in the classroom. The participants were simultaneously both students and preservice teachers who had experiences of teaching from teaching practice sessions within their training curricula. The teacher also plays a role in participants' stories about the impact of having a voice or being voiceless. Theme three highlights the preconceptions of the participants about the teacher in relation to contemporary notions of student voice practice.

The stories are an indication of participants' beliefs not just about student voice but about the teacher's role and responsibilities. Participants' student voice stories are presented as evidence of the impact of their embedded preconceptions on thought

patterns in their responses. Their stories are separated into positive and negative experiences.

Positive Impact - Having a Voice

Participant 2 described the impact of an active voice experience in a partnership with one lecturer that allowed expression and inclusion, collaboration, and co-creation, opening the participant to new insights and empowering the participant to take ownership of her learning in her teacher-training program. Participant 2 felt her experience broke down the institutional “hierarchy” between teacher and student.

Similarly, Participant 8 discussed the impact of her active voice being not just listened to but heard as one of feeling empowered due to opportunities for voicing opinions, sharing experiences and stories, questioning, and expressing views. What Participant 8 had to say in this shared experience indicated that what she and her classmates had to say was acknowledged, creating a feeling that her voice was valued and respected:

So, we tend to have a lot of oral communication. So, our lecturers will ask a lot of questions, and our thoughts will be heard or opinions and experiences. When that is done, we feel good because you are listening. You want to hear our part of the story. You want to hear our views. When that happens, we feel very good.

When asked to explain what good meant Participant 8’s response was “Empowered”.

Empowerment emerged as an essential element in participant's stories about their active voice. Feeling heard and understood is connected to identity and self-worth. Student empowerment gives students freedom of choice, the agency to self-direct, and the

authority to make decisions and take action in their education. Empowering students means including them in the teaching and learning and treating them like responsible and capable individuals. Inclusion, in turn, builds trust and helps to create an environment where students develop a sense of belonging in a safe space. A sense of safety is to know that one is welcomed and accepted as one is.

Not using the term empowerment specifically but expressing a similar feeling of being heard and understood during a positive learning experience in a student-centered environment, Participant 4 spoke about the impact of inclusion, which also allowed her voice to be heard and to have a say in decisions about learning. Participant 4 spoke of having her thoughts, ideas, and opinions requested on the best way learning activities could be completed, given options on learning partnerships and collaborations, and concluded that it was the best way to learn. The equitable learning environment and inclusive methodology adopted by one lecturer contributed to Participant 4's success. It appeared to be a transformative experience, as Participant 4 said the experience contributed significantly to her retention of information, positively impacting her exam performance. She stated,

Even studying for exams, it wasn't that hard because it's like I already knew the information that was there. So, I believe the approach that she took was very effective. And it made the whole course and the lesson and the whole experience of teaching, learning much easier."

This participants felt safe and eager to do more than earn a grade within the learning space and noted that if such an experience were consistent throughout the entire teacher education program, she would be a better student than she was.

Negative Impact - Voicelessness

Voicelessness, or not being heard, is the same as being invisible, discounted, and made to feel inferior and powerless. Interactions of voicelessness emerged when participants shared experiences of not being heard and the impact on them as students. Participants communicated the overt stories that impacted their voices and the underlying effects on their emotions and personalities. Some of the actual descriptive language of the participants included 'feelings of discouragement, defeat, learning as a burden, fear, and wariness.' Participants 1 and 7 referred to experiences from their high school journeys, which they felt were vital for them as preservice teachers preparing for the secondary classroom not to repeat. Participant 1 shared an interaction in a history class where the teacher's lecture mode delivery did not facilitate his audio-visual learning style. Participant 1 shared that he expressed his voice regarding his difficulty grasping information, and not only was he not heard, but his request for learning activities and or methodology that catered to his needs was rejected and neglected, leaving him discouraged, affecting his attitude and interest and impacting his overall performance in the history subject.

Participant 7 reflected on a similar negative high school experience to Participant 1 that resulted in voicelessness and made him a passive learner for whom learning was a burden. He described himself as a "tactile" learner who functioned best when doing and

interacting with learning content; in the passive learning classroom, learning became a burden to endure, a requirement to be fulfilled. Important to Participant 7 's reflection on this voiceless experience was a commitment not to repeat this neglect of individual learning styles in his teaching methodology when in his classroom.

Participants 3 and 8 shared experiences of voicelessness occurring within the teaching and learning environment of their higher-level teacher education programs. Participant 3 shared an interaction that left her in a state of emotional defeat. In querying a grade, she was sent from one lecturer to the other, and no one took responsibility or responded to the query satisfactorily enough to address the concerns raised. Participant 3's feeling of defeat, a phrase that was repeated three times, appeared to have impacted her mental wellbeing, silencing her active voice as she indicated "I feel very voiceless".

Participant 8, who is also a student leader, did not point to a specific interaction of voicelessness but spoke of a general atmosphere of uncertainty, wariness, and fear in voicing concerns in the classroom that may cause students to choose voicelessness. Participant 8's reflections pointed to the importance of the institutional setting in giving students the power or permission to express their voices freely and to have their voices heard. Underlying Participant 8's general view of the teacher education setting in which she was being prepared was the concern that not having a voice is not having any authority over their learning, and so students may choose voicelessness because, participants 8 said, "We need to pass our courses, we need to do well, and that's just so it is.". In Participant 8's own words, voicelessness could be a choice " But some of these

courses carry a lot of credits and you just have to, you know, go with it.” However, voicelessness produces feelings of inferiority, sadness, and powerlessness.

While very responsive to or accommodating of student voice concept and practice, the deeper methodological suggestions of partnering with and being equal in status with the teacher seemed to impact the held beliefs of the participants about the relationship between student and teacher. As noted in the student voice literature, to partner with the teacher would require the student to be engaged in collaborative decision making, determining and evaluating classroom activities and generally co-constructing the learning and the functioning of the classroom. Partnering within the student centered practice of student voice invests students with influence not possible in a teacher centered practice. Similarly, to be of equal status with the teacher, the student gains more control and ownership of their learning, has more responsibility in the teaching and learning praxis and is entrusted with more authority.

The role of the teacher as authority figure that emerged in theme two overlaps in theme three as the new idea of student and teacher relationship did not appear to fit with the traditional notion of the teacher’s role held by participants. This new knowledge seemed to impact the held beliefs of the participants. Responses and reactions varied. Participants either fully accepted the new information because of the impact of positive experiences, accommodated with reservations and concerns or rejected the new notions outright. Participant 1 supported the notion of partnership and equal status and felt that it could create a “lecture-student bond”. Nonetheless, in view of the historically entrenched tradition of “the teacher is always in the stance of being right,” Participant 1 felt that there

should be limitations within the new notions because it may limit the role of the teacher. There was also the concern that students could misuse the opportunity.

Though accepting that partnering with a teacher has positive benefits for the students' wellbeing and performance, and using terms such as diversity, safety and comfort, Participant 4 believed the student voice practice needed criteria and a rubric because it could be misused and unfair. Some measure of accommodation of the partnering recommendation was evident in Participant 4's comments. The impact of the new information on previously held preconceptions influenced the participant to modify her embedded preconception. The suggestion of criteria and rubric for student voice was made as Participant 4 sought a coexistence of the traditional with the more contemporary ideal of student voice practices.

Participants 3 and 5 related to and seemed to find safety in the tradition of the teacher in charge and in control. Participant 3 moved between being very open to and supportive of students having a voice and thought it was best for them to be involved in their learning and asserting her identity as the teacher. Alongside this overt acceptance participant 3's embedded preconception of the prominent role of the teacher was made clear. The notion of the teacher as authority seemed to have been necessary to Participant 3 as it was mentioned several times in different ways, including the following statement in which the participant, used language and expressions of control and said, "There are certain things students should not know. They know that I'm the teacher, I'm the facilitator, and I'm the manager of the classroom. In the same response to the question of students having some control in their classrooms Participant 3 was supportive of student

involvement in their learning yet contradicted herself with the statement “You don't facilitate how I run my classroom.” With this statement, Participant 3 placed the teacher in a position of complete power in the conversation about student voice with its philosophy of shared and empowered student participation. It must be noted here that participant 3 also shared a positive experience of one course where inclusivity and partnering were included in the lecturer's pedagogy and where she flourished academically yet still made statements such as “teachers should remain teachers, students should remain students.” The impact of the new information about deeper involvement in their education for students seemed to reinforce embedded traditional preconceptions for Participant 3.

Participant 5 thought that students having a voice was very important but student voice practice had the potential to confuse, and that it was prudent to maintain the tradition of the teacher in charge. The impact of notions of partnering and being equal on participant 5's embedded preconceptions seemed to one of confusion. In response participant 5 held on to the belief of the teacher as the authority, the person to fix, to help, who will listen. Participant 5 was comfortable with the traditional institutional systems of surveys and assessments giving voice to preservice teachers. The contemporary notions of student voice did not appear to penetrate the embedded belief in the traditional role of the teacher.

Socialization and cultural influence seemed to impact the preconception of Participant 6 in response to the contemporary notion of partnership between teacher and student to which he stated, “I think it's a good approach, but you know, I have a saying

where I say monkey see and monkey do is two different things.” This statement is an English speaking Caribbean and Jamaican cultural reference suggesting that the preservice teacher would be imitating the lecturer without true understanding of what they were doing. The embedded preconception about the limitation of the student came to the fore as Participant 6 contemplated the contemporary notion of partnership, contradicting a very supportive earlier statement this participant made when sharing thoughts and ideas about what student voice is that “sometimes students are really up to date and really advanced, a few steps ahead in actually in content.” From the literature on conceptual change, participant 6 seemed to hold two contradictory beliefs at the same time, accommodating but not fully accepting the value of the student’s previous knowledge and falling back on socially and culturally embedded preconceptions when new information challenges existing knowledge.

How participants construct their conversation can shed light on their internal struggles to make new information fit their relationship with their reality. Conceptual change theory notes the tenaciousness of preconceptions. Participant 8 felt that the student would have as much pressure as the teacher in an environment of equal status and was not in favor of equality within the practice of student voice and for her part would not want a say in everything. This reluctance was a bit of a surprise. I had predicted that the preservice teachers would be fully welcoming of the opportunity to help to direct their teacher education.

As a final example of the impact of new information on deeply held preconceptions of participants in the study, a moment of consternation by Participant 7 at

the idea of equal status between teacher and student is worth noting. Participant 7 whose identity was embedded in student leadership and representation of and for others, was very positive about the impact of students having a voice, and the power of students in teacher education using their voice to build “that bridge of communication between decision-makers and the student body.” However, new knowledge about equality between student and teacher seemed to require such a major shift in preconception that Participant 7 had a brief physical and emotional response to the idea. The participant asked for the question to be repeated and surprise could be heard in his tone. The participant then noted that “the term equal is throwing me a bit off.” When asked to elaborate on why the term was throwing him off, during the one minute and thirty-six seconds of his response the participant repeated three times that he was not advocating for equality, with the last statement “I’m not looking for equality, none whatsoever.” being a firm rejection of the idea of equal status. When probed further and asked to speak to advantages and disadvantages of the equal status notion, the participant struggled to find advantages. The participant’s responses turned the discussion back to terms that were more comfortable with his preconceptions such as student involvement and students having a say. In his tone it could be heard that his equilibrium was reestablished with the participant confirming his deeply embedded belief in the boundary between student and teacher with the statement “Just like in the secondary level of education, you still have teacher and then you have the student.”

Discussion and Conclusion

Student voice is a complex phenomenon that researchers and educators are still probing and discovering ways and means to help the education fraternity approach education from a bottom-up approach with the student as the guide. At its most basic understanding, student voice requires educators to yield some authority to the students so that they can become independent, autonomous learners. Theme one revealed that participants thought student voice was very important to the wellbeing of the student. The theme also highlighted that participants have no consistent, structured experiences of student voice practice and that their thoughts and ideas about student voice come from reading, isolated moments in the teaching and learning environment, and their beliefs and assumptions. Nonetheless, their thoughts and ideas that might be also be called their definitions, aligned with the basic principles and benefits of students having a voice in their education as noted in the literature .

Theme two emerged from the preservice teacher participants' descriptions of their voices in their teacher education programs, with all eight participants indicating that their student voices were active. The participants also supported the activeness of their student voices with examples of activities and environments that highlighted the use of their voices. Overall, the participants' voices were used outside the classroom and outside of the teaching and learning processes. Student leadership and representation played a significant role as a medium through which the preservice participants could make their voices heard and through which they best understood the role and importance of their student voice.

A contradiction lies between their definitions and their explanations of how they used their voices but the role of experience impacted this contradiction in that they shared very limited experiences of their teacher educators applying student voice practice within their pedagogy. Theme two also highlighted how and where the participants' active voices were used in their teacher education. A brief recap of the participants' student voice activities highlights their examples of their voices in action. The active voices of four participants were used mainly outside the classroom within student representation and leadership activities. Two participants focused their active voice on external volunteerism participation, with one of these two combining student representation and student leadership with their volunteer active voice. Two participants focused their active voice within the classroom, while one participant's active voice was heard when writing feedback requested through the assignment process. The contradiction lies in the fact that participants used words and phrases in their definitions in theme one, such as expressing self, voicing opinions, inclusivity, having a say in decision-making, and being empowered, all part of the vocabulary of what student voice is in the research. However, the vocabulary used by participants to describe their active voices included student leadership roles, representing their class and batch, being active within student council leadership, public speaking, and advocating outside of the continuous teaching and learning processes. There were limited shared experiences of the preservice teachers' active voice in the classroom. Theme two provided insight into how the preservice teacher participants spoke about their student voices and showed how their language

choice in their descriptions, comments, and thought patterns revealed their voices and their preconceptions.

In theme three, underlying preconceptions about the teacher surfaced as participants contemplated the impact of contemporary notions of student voice on the teacher's role and responsibilities in the classroom. Theme three also called attention to the impact of having a voice as a student and being voiceless, confirming that it is not only essential to have a voice, but that voice must be heard. The impact of students having a voice and not having a voice can be intensely emotional. From the stories of the positive impact of having a voice came emotions of happiness, gleefulness, empowerment, feeling safe, soothed, valued, and important. Conversely, the negative impacts that created voicelessness led to uncertainty, wariness, discouragement, feelings of defeat, and loss of interest. Additionally, patterns revealed that despite participants claiming to have active voices, they were not always sure that their thoughts and views were respected, valued, and meaningful enough to be listened to and to matter. Nonetheless, student leadership and representation appeared to fill the gap of being and feeling important and valued.

Some embedded background influences such as knowledge, traditional modes of education, the teacher in charge, surveys, and end-of-term assessments that still echo in the participants' attitudes and values about student voice as a concept and practice were made known. This chapter sought to explain the research theory and methods used in this generic qualitative study. Further discussion and analysis of the findings from the research data are explored against the literature in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

I undertook this study to explore the preconceptions that preservice teachers in higher-level education programs in rural central Jamaica may have about their own voice in their teacher education. One of the findings noted in the Reform of Education in Jamaica 2022 report on the state of education in Jamaica is that pedagogy was still too teacher centered and needed to shift to be more relevant to the needs of the student. For student voice theorists and experts, student voice is an educational approach that can potentially shift pedagogy from a teacher-centric mode to a more student centered one (Bron et al., 2018; Charteris & Smardon, 2018; Gillet-Swan & Baroutsis, 2024; Mitra, 2018; Ressler, 2022). The pedagogical shift may need to start from a conceptual level where deeply embedded beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning lie. Nonetheless, change is slow. Carey (1991) noted that conceptual change is even more difficult to shift. Student voice is not yet a conversation toward a repositioning of pedagogy in the Jamaican education environment.

The participants' responses in the conversational nature of the research processes within my study suggest that a place to start in the Jamaican context might be a conversation about preconceptions of their own voices among preservice teachers preparing for the secondary school classroom. My research exploration focused on discovering what preconceptions preservice teachers in higher level programs in rural central Jamaica have about student voice in their teacher education. The following is an interpretation of the findings toward answering the research question, noting some of the limitations of the study, implications, and recommendations for further research.

Interpretation of the Findings

The data indicated that the preservice teacher participants in the study had some knowledge of the concept of student voice. Participants' knowledge came from bits and pieces of reading or instances or mentions in several courses, revealing that the institutions they represented did not have student voice as a formal integration in the teacher education curriculum or pedagogy. This finding supports the discussion in the background and in the literature review that student voice was not yet a structured and focused part of the Jamaica education system and that there was an absence of student voice integration into teacher training.

Overall, participants shared minimal experiences of being allowed a voice in their learning and expressed the need for more opportunities to 'have a say' (participants' own words) and be more participatory in their education. Nevertheless, there was little evidence in the data of participants themselves advocating for more voice in their teaching and learning, even though they expressed the opinion that students are more invested and successful when allowed to have more say in their education.

Participants were able to cite knowledge of some of the elements involved in the holistic practice of student voice, such as students being able to voice opinions, being allowed self-expression, being in an inclusive teaching and learning environment, and being granted some authority to have a say. Again, participants did not cite any instances of advocating for more voice for themselves in the teaching and learning spaces in their teacher education programs, yet advocacy was a strong characteristic in their active student representation voices.

The participants in the sample were being prepared for the secondary school classroom. This level in the education system was chosen because the participants would have recently graduated from the secondary level systems, had current knowledge and experiences of the challenges they faced as high school students, and could more immediately use their teacher education to change pedagogy toward a more student centered praxis. In the examples shared of having a voice and voicelessness the teacher played a critical role in the outcome of the students' experiences. Through choice of pedagogy, choice in responding to students voicing their needs, choice in catering to the diversity of learning styles among students, the teacher has an impact on student wellbeing, student performance and the outcome of the experience. Two participants referenced their voicelessness in high school and the negative impact on their academic performance at the secondary level. These examples were cited to support the participants' opinion and belief that students having a voice in their education was important and linked to and affected confidence, self-worth, and performance. In Mitra's (2018) study, which focused on the secondary level, the author demonstrated how student voice can have a powerful effect on student performance.

To further support the link between student voice and student performance, in my study, Participant 4 shared a learning experience in one course in which she excelled and found that studying for exams was not hard because the teaching and learning experience was much easier. The lecturer had employed student voice strategies in a student centered teaching and learning environment, and Participant 4 observed that "if that approach was done throughout the program, then I would get A's for all those courses because, for that

one lecturer, I can shut my eyes and pass her courses with flying colors." Though the preceding quotation and experience was limited to one participant in my small-scale study, the experience shared aligns well with the findings of two separate investigations by Mitra (2018) and Anderson (2018), previous research that provided evidence relating to the positive impact of student voice practices on student outcomes. More importantly, the experience of Participant 4 supports the recommendation by Kahne et al. (2022) that further studies on a large scale are needed to explore the link between student voice practice and academic performance.

Additional evidence from even small-scale studies might encourage conversations toward social change. Change within the education system must also align with change in society's perception of education practices and the roles of the teacher versus that of the student. Participant 1 hinted at the need for this broader change, noting that the historical legacy of the teacher in control could not shift to accommodate the idea of the student as an equal, stating,

"I think history would not allow us to in a sense, if we go back to history, that the way that our foreparents are persons that your generation has basically been formatted in a sense that the teacher or what the teacher says goes, it actually brings across the narrative that, okay, the teacher is always in the stance of being always right."

The preceding statement from Participant 1 also demonstrates the influence of an individual's knowledge on their preconception of their reality. However, central to the literature review on student voice philosophy and practice is the belief that the student

brings unique perspectives to how they see their world, how they learn and understand information based on their worldviews and frames of references, and so should be allowed to shape their education (Bron et al., 2018; Charteris & Smardon, 2019, 2020; Cook-Sather; Conner et al., 2024; Kahne et al., 2022; Kageyama, 2025; Mitra, 2015, 2018).

Student ideas should be taken seriously. Marginalizing the voice of the student could have implications for academic performance as well as self-worth. Participant 1 shared an experience of having his voice rejected and noted how this deflated his motivation and confidence in his academic capabilities. He had expressed the need at the secondary level for a more interactive mode of delivery in his favorite subject to suit his learning style, but the teacher rejected the request. To quote Participant 1, "I was a bit discouraged because, like I'm expressing something on my behalf to better my growth as a student in this class, however, it is being neglected. I, I didn't have much interest towards the subject anymore." It is within the scope of this small study to make the connection to the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child "to express their views freely in all matters affecting the child...the views of the child should be given due weight" (United Nations, 1989, Article 12; 1). From the literature review, researchers and experts have reached a consensus that students are critical members of the education community. Nevertheless, the philosophy and practice of student voice are yet to be fundamental elements of teacher training toward a change in praxis and education reform. Students bridge the world between youth and adults, and to become

effective leaders such as in the role of a teacher, students need "to participate deeply [in their education], not just be heard" (Mitra, 2008, p. 7).

Faculty Perception of Student Voice

There is another side of the conversation that should include the faculty. The participants in this small study raised questions about the need for faculty to change their approach to teaching and learning and to relinquish some control in the classroom especially. According to Conner et al. (2024), educators in teacher training programs need to be more open to and supportive of student autonomy in the learning and teaching spaces. Participants shared opinions of their lecturers as being slow to change, still teaching the way they were taught, stubbornly holding on to modes of delivery that made the lecturers comfortable, being afraid as preservice teachers to speak out, settling for just grades and completing the program because in their words "what happens after we voice our opinion? What happens after we express what we want to express? Things don't normally change" (Participant 8). The implications of these concerns about their faculty include the need for research among teacher trainers with regard to their own preconceptions about student voice.

Finefter-Rosenbluh et al.(2021) and Finefter-Rosenbluh (2022) investigated faculty's concerns about the practice of student voice and discovered that faculty too, had fears, including being undermined by students' opinions and feedback on their methodologies, of not being trained in how to respond to and deal with the feedback from students and uncertain about navigating the student voice space without compromise or impacting their professionalism. These findings in my study of the participants ' concerns

about the pedagogy of the faculty support the need for more small scale studies to contribute to closing the more significant gap of integrating student voice into teacher training.

Conversely, when asked about their responsibility as students to speak out or ask for opportunities to have a say or to be more in control of their education, participants indicated that they did not feel empowered to take control or ask for control. Participant 8 raised the concern that fear may be a factor in the preservice teacher's hesitation to speak. This influence of fear on students' confidence in using their voices raised by Participant 8 connects to another aspect of fear noted in the findings from the Birbal and Hewitt-Blackman (2019) study of undergraduates in an anglophone Caribbean university who were allowed to be responsible for classroom activities and expressed fear of being in control. The participants in that 2019 study were more comfortable with the teacher in charge because of their cultural experience of deferring to adults as authority. However, my research interview raised participants' awareness that they, too, had a responsibility to initiate their student voice. For example, Participant 4 noted her sudden awareness that she could speak out without waiting to be given the opportunity by the lecturer and shared an experience of being bored in a course delivered using the lecture mode approach to teaching and learning. In reflecting, Participant 4 indicated that if she had asked for a more interactive mode of delivery that better suited her learning style, her voice would have benefited not just herself but the entire class. Participant 4 said she had not thought of speaking out without permission before. Participant 4's hesitation to use her voice and her lack of awareness that she could use her voice without permission

points to the gap in the preparation of teachers highlighted by Mayes & Black (2021) about the lack of research on how to integrate student voice into teacher training. The discussion on student voice across the globe suggests that it was not yet a formal integration into education nor the preparation of teachers for the classroom, particularly the secondary classroom. Birbal and Hewitt-Blackwood (2019) noted that the conversation had not yet begun in the anglophone Caribbean, of which Jamaica is a part.

Putting Student Voice Principles into Future Practice: Moving Forward

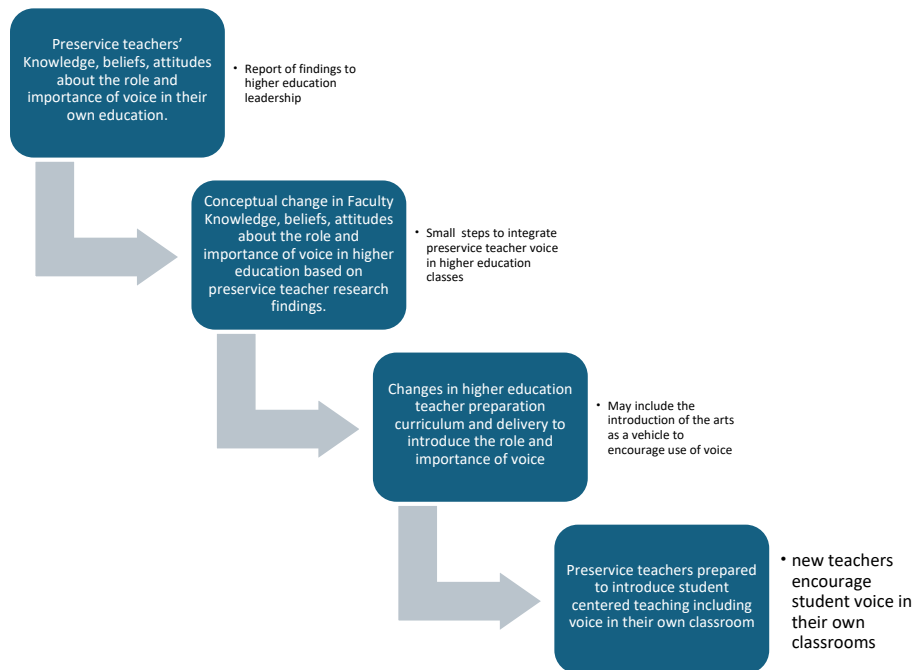
It bears repeating that the impact of lack of voice at the secondary level is important to the conversation on student voice. From the conversations with participants in my research study, it is evident that if there is no deliberate or consistent integration of student voice into the teacher training of the secondary school preservice teacher, the cycle of student voicelessness and its impact on student wellbeing and achievement could continue. By way of illustration, participants in this study indicated that their awareness of the importance of students having a voice would make their teaching more inclusive and student centered. Nevertheless, there was no evidence from the data that the training programs in the three institutions represented by the participants have a focused student voice integration component. While not totally absent from their teacher education student voice concept and practice seemed incidental and fractured as in its application to the participants teaching and learning. Participant 2 who shared positive experiences of student voice empowering her teaching and learning supports this finding with the statement "I've done so many courses, but a little bit of this and a little bit of that is included in all of them".

Within the data exploration emerged a concern that the cycle of voicelessness could continue without conscious knowledge by the teacher that their students do not have full agency. Both Participants 1 and 7 who had cited voiceless experiences that made learning a "burden" (Participant 7) resolved not to repeat the mistakes of their secondary school teachers to subject their students to voicelessness when they graduated and were in their own classrooms. Nonetheless, there was no evidence from the lived experiences that participants shared that they were being trained in concept, philosophy, or application of student voice to their praxis to fulfill this resolution. It is, therefore, critical, as Conner et al. (2024) recommended, that educators in teacher training institutions be able to help the preservice teacher to integrate student voice practice in their pedagogy so that they, in turn, can support the autonomy and voice of their K-12 students. Nevertheless, the teacher educator may need to examine their own preconceptions about student voice before they can assist the preservice teacher.

Student Voice Conversation as a Critical Strategy Toward Social Change

Conceptual change theorists suggest that deeply held knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs shape the preconceptions individuals bring to situations, including new learning (Carey, 1985, 1991; DiSessa, 2014; Larkin, 2012; Posner et al., 1982; Rea Ramirez & Ramirez 2017; Rea-Ramirez et al. 2020). The conversations with participants in my research exploration revealed some of the preconceptions that preservice teachers in training bring to their higher education learning situations. DiSessa, 2014 noted that preconceptions were important obstacles to learning. It will be useful for teacher educators and for the preservice teachers to understand the role of preconceptions in

teaching and learning. For the students the preservice teachers will eventually teach at the secondary level, demotivation, low achievement, disengagement, and attrition are critical issues impacting students between the ages of 12 -16 who are also experiencing the challenges of adolescence (Gutman & Schoon, 2018; Harun et al., 2024; Mitra, 2018). Figure 2 presents a continuum of research that I believe is important for the ultimate change from teacher centered to student centered education in rural central Jamaica. If a change is to take place in teaching throughout the K-12 grades, and particularly at the secondary levels of the education system we need first to address how new teachers are prepared in our higher education programs. Notwithstanding, before changes can be suggested to the curriculum and to pedagogy in the teacher education institutions, it is necessary to understand and hear the voice of the preservice teacher participating in their education while in training.

Figure 2*Research Continuum-Conceptual Change*

Ressler (2022) pointed to the importance of the voice of the preservice teacher and their lived experiences to inform change. Nevertheless, I recognize this is a multi-faceted problem that must be tackled over multiple projects. However, teacher educators must begin by recognizing the importance and value of preservice students' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes before they can encourage institutional change. Conversations with preservice teachers in training are an important first step towards change in praxis. My research focused only on the first phase in the research continuum on conceptual change and its relation to classroom pedagogy; the data also revealed that conversations about student voice as an approach to student centered teaching and learning are essential to begin any process of pedagogical change.

Opening up conversations about their student voice among preservice teachers can help faculty to better understand and cater to the needs and wellbeing of the preservice teacher in training. Participant 4's response to the research interview raising her consciousness regarding taking responsibility for speaking out in her teaching and learning space is worth noting here as an example of how student voice conversations can provide new ways of seeing and initiating change in thinking toward more student centered practice. After sharing an experience of not speaking out in a boring class to ask for a shift in methodology, and indicating that she would speak up if she had a similar experience in the future the following was Participant 4's response to a probe as to why she would speak up

I guess with the interaction that I'm having right now, sometimes you think about stuff, but you don't think about it in depth. So having the opportunity to speak about it now or having the opportunity to voice my concerns and thinking about, I'm like, you know, if I really had went ahead and shared my experience with the lecturer, then perhaps I could have been better. So, I think this, the mere fact that I'm given the opportunity to voice my concerns here, it's allowed me to think in depth.

It must be noted also that Participant 4 accommodated two opposing preconceptions of her student voice. In the classroom she indicated that she lacked the courage and confidence to speak out but outside the classroom she was a very active, very confident student representative speaking on behalf of others. The research interview conversation had an immediate impact on Participant 4's preconception of her

voice within the teaching and learning processes. The conversation should start with the preservice teachers themselves to raise their consciousness about the role they can and should play in advocating for their student voices to be heard in the teaching and learning spaces. Nonetheless, through classroom activities and experiences teacher educators need to help the preservice teachers to acquire the agency and autonomy they seem to find in student leadership and representation roles.

Mitra (2008) argued that student voice initiatives are categorically different from traditional student leadership roles (p. 7). Since student representation is a familiar strategy and forum for students to have some voice in their higher education, the conversations on student voice could explore a broader student advocacy model or mode than only having a say in their teaching and learning. Representation in the broader context ensures that student representatives and all students, are more inclusive in decisions about their curriculum, methodology, and teaching and learning activities. This representation of themselves as learners could take place alongside advocacy for other changes related to course scheduling, tuition issues, and other traditional student representation tasks that traditionally and currently seem to be the main focus of the student representation and active voices of the preservice teacher participants emerging from the data.

Preservice Teachers' Voices and Their Mental Wellbeing

The concept and practice of student voice can go beyond just having a voice and being allowed choice. This study indicates that a student's voice is much more than being heard and given a choice. Preservice teachers in this study want more input into decision

making at the administrative and pedagogical levels. In responding to open ended questions to share any further thoughts about student voice, participants in the study took the opportunity to express some significant concerns relating to their wellbeing in their course of study. One area of concern was the curricula. Participant 6 was concerned that his institution's preservice teachers were not adequately prepared for the 21st-century classroom. This concern connects to one of the findings by Ressler et al. (2022), where the preservice teachers felt moderately prepared for the stressors of teaching. The concern fits into the broader issues and decision making processes into which the preservice teacher should have a say. Ressler et al. focused on the voices of the preservice teachers and the issues that intersect with their training and mental health. The eagerness of Participant 6 to raise the issue of inadequate curricula at the start of the research interview with an invitation to share something about his life as a student in the teacher education program, can be interpreted as a demonstration of how the mental wellbeing of the preservice teacher intersected with their voices being heard. The concern shared by Participant 6 also underscores the suggestion from my study of the need for conversations about the role and importance of their student voice in their teacher education.

Simultaneously with growing and developing their student voice is the need for a change in preconception about the role of the teacher versus the student. Figure 3 provides a visual representation of some embedded preconceptions shaped by cultural and societal norms and echoed by the participants regarding a suggested repositioning in the relationship between teacher and student. Education can either challenge or reinforce sociocultural traditions and norms. While student voice theorists and practitioners ask for

a rethink in the student teacher relationship, especially at the higher education level, the traditional of the teacher as authority, the hierarchy expected creates an inequality in the teaching and learning environment. Because this traditional role of the teacher is still dominant as noted in the 2022 Jamaica education report, participants not sure how to respond to a change in the traditional dynamic that would give them a more equal status in their learning processes.

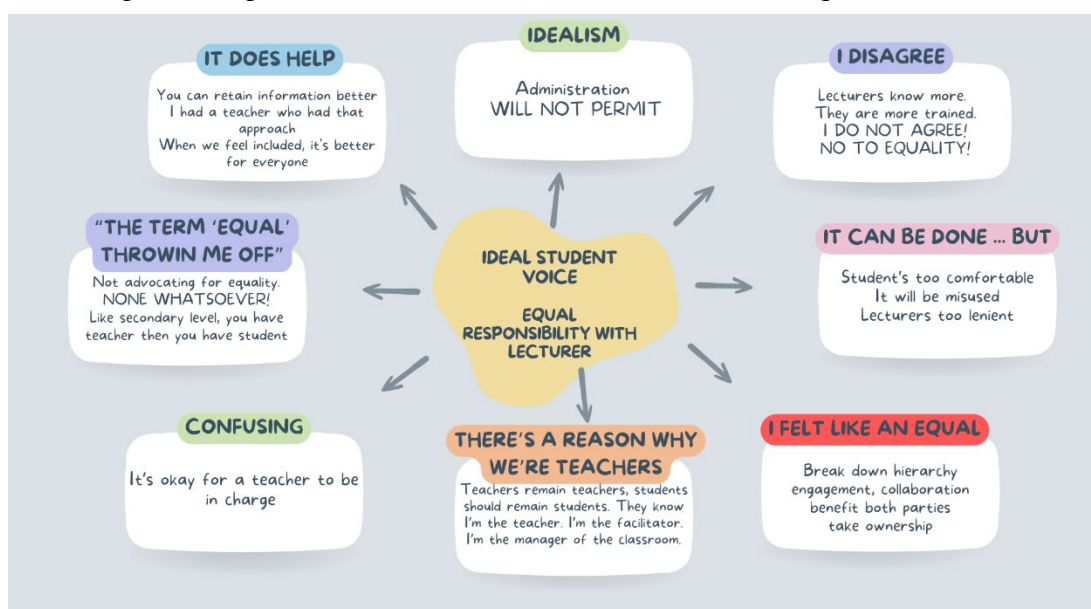
Equality and partnering that is recommended in a student voice driven student centered environment is less about being equal in expertise and more about the mutual learning possible in a democratic teaching and learning environment. In this democratic student voice environment, the student is treated less as a subordinate and more as a valued partner given opportunity to guide and lead. It holds within it the idea that the student brings information, knowledge and skills to the learning process and makes room for both teachers and students to interchangeably be both learners and teachers.

Participant 1 came closer to this idea of collaborative and cooperative learning with the statement "there has to be a level of mutuality about it". This notion of equality and partnership elicited a variety of responses including wariness, and confusion from participants. Figure 3 provides a quick scan of participants responses. It is worth noting that Participant 7 had a physical response to the question in that he was so disturbed that he lost his train of thought, When probed about the break in the interview flow, Participant 7 indicated that "the term equal is throwing me a bit off." and went on to be very emphatic about not wanting equality, repeating three times that as student leader, he was not advocating for equality "none whatsoever". Participant 1 was wary of partnering

and equality being "misused"; Participant 5 was concerned that partnering with teacher may be "confusing at times "; Participant 6 thought equality was an idealist notion not possible within the curricula; Participant 8 thought equality would put more "pressure" on the student while Participant 3 felt that "teachers should remain teachers, students should remain students," and Participant 4 was comfortable with the teacher being in charge.

Participants' responses point to the importance of experience as a major influence on changing preconceptions. Participant 2 was the only one to embrace the idea of equality and partnership and reported that she had flourished as a student and a person within the student voice and student centered experience she had during her practicum. The preconceptions of the role of the teacher needs to shift from being the main focus of attention in teaching and learning. Participant 3's use of the first person in the declaring "I'm the teacher, I'm the manager, I'm the facilitator." Indicated a clear identification with the teacher as authority. The use of the third person in "You don't facilitate how I run my classroom" relegates the student to a place of subordination and subservience despite participant 3's articulation of the value of student voice to the wellbeing and growth of the student. In the introduction of self at the start of the interview Participant 3 had provided a clue to this notion of her teacher identity when she shared that she admired the strictness of her teachers in primary and high school confirming "the rules they set, I loved it." Participant 3 was a bit disappointed at the lack of similar restrictions in her higher education program.

Figure 3

Mind Map: Participants' Reaction to Student and Teacher as Equals

The following question could be an extension to my research study: 'Why does the notion of equality between student and teacher disturb the preservice teacher in training? Conceptual change theorists acknowledge that deeply embedded beliefs are difficult to change and may never change (Dyson, 2010; Larkin, 2012; Posner et al., 1982). New information about deeply held beliefs must first be accommodated before being accepted and may eventually be replaced or continue alongside previous knowledge. Participant 7 in my study was unwilling to accommodate the notion of equality and rejected the notion outright. Conversely, Participant 2, who had experienced inclusion and partnership with a lecturer, "felt like an equal" and found that student and teacher working together, as equals, broke down the traditional student and teacher "hierarchy", making the participant take more ownership of her learning. Nonetheless,

Participant 2 was singular in viewing equality as a strategy that could positively help the preservice teacher's development. The conceptual change framework is designed to help individuals with new ways of seeing the world (Rea-Ramirez et al., 2023), hence the need for more research of this kind to explore preconceptions held about student voice among preservice teachers and more conversations supported by research to begin the conceptual change needed toward classroom praxis.

Limitations

This research on the exploration of the preconceptions of preservice teachers about student voice in their education is not transferable to other contexts and populations. However, it can be replicated to explore preservice teachers' preconceptions regarding their teacher preparation programs, their student voices, and the potential to impact their success and their praxis. The research context was specific to one segment of the Jamaican society with its peculiar sociohistorical and cultural ethos that contributed to the nature of the findings. Qualitative research is "steeped in choices and decisions, most of which cannot be forecasted (SAGE Publications, 2017). The period in which the participants, all students in their respective education programs, were recruited coincided with their end-of-term examinations and severely impacted their availability. The IRB approval came at the end of April 2024, when the participants who were on hold from February to March 2024 to be interviewed were no longer available, and a new recruitment process was undertaken. The coincidence with the colleges' exam periods impacted the expected sample size of eight to 12 participants; eight participants were eventually recruited in the second recruitment phase from May to July 2024. Nonetheless,

the eight participants who eventually participated contributed sufficiently rich data that helped to answer the research question.

This study's research question dictated the type of data collection strategy best suited; the semistructured interview created a conversation in which the interviewer reacts and shares to observe and create a comfortable atmosphere. The conversational interview allows for probing to gather additional information and needs fewer participants to provide valuable and relevant insights (Patton, 2003, 2015; Queirós et al., 2017). However, Patton advised that while the semi structured, in-depth interview can help to unearth deep, rich data from small scale research with small samples and interview experiences may differ it is difficult to transfer to larger populations.

Recommendations

Social change in classroom practice requires an adaptation to the times and the needs of current students in the teaching and learning space. Cochran-Smith and Keefe (2022) recommend that educators be prepared to relinquish methodology and adapt curriculum, classroom environment, and teaching and learning strategies to address evolving societal norms and values. While the student voice conversation is not yet predominant in the Jamaican and Caribbean contexts, more researchers are giving voice to the Caribbean students so that educators can better understand the needs of the changing classroom. Additional research will be needed to change how preservice teachers are prepared in higher education and how this affects what they take into their classrooms after graduation. In the rural central Jamaica context, conversations can begin with the Jamaica Teaching Council, which is responsible for teacher training and could

include presentations of this research findings as an introduction to the conversations.

Both participant 6 and Participant 8 pointed to the Jamaica Teaching Council as significant to any change in curricula and pedagogy suggesting that the teacher educators complacency may be as a result of a lack of voice within the control of the Council.

Other strategies to position student voice as an important approach toward transforming teaching and learning praxis proposed by the 2022 Jamaica Education report could include requests to present these research findings to the student bodies in teacher training institutions, teachers, and education administrators at conferences and education workshops. The transformation from a teacher centered to a student centered pedagogy was proposed in the education report as a critical pillar in the change required to make Jamaica education more relevant and more inclusive. The preservice teachers themselves are an important conduit through which the conversations should begin if the system is to move toward change in praxis. Perhaps the more significant gap in the research noted by Mayes and Black (2021) on how to integrate the student voice philosophy and practice into teacher training may be answered by the preservice teachers if their voices are heard in critical decision making about their education. Participant 6 was quite distressed at the notion that his institution was in 2024, utilizing a curriculum that had not changed for the past decade. At the same time, Participant 6 also noted the impotence of asking for change as the control or final say rested with a national body that controlled what the curricula contained for all teacher training institutions, stating, "As preservice teachers, we don't have a voice in that, and it's a challenge because, as I said

before, the content is not reflective of what is actually taking place inside the current modern-day classroom, right? ".

Participant 6 also made the following observation: "The content that we're being delivered with needs to adapt to what we're seeing and what we will encounter in the 21st-century classroom."; and asked some important questions that should be included in the student voice conversation, for example, "Why is it that our teacher training institutions aren't so accepting of changing methods in their teaching to adequately prepare the 21st-century teacher for 21st-century learners?". Though Participant 6 was a student leader, there seemed to be no space in his leadership context to express serious concerns about education practices in higher level teacher training programs. The interview conversation provided an opportunity to make critical observations, such as "It was a shocking revelation that course outlines have not been updated since 2014. And it's appalling because it shows us that the teacher training institutions are not up to date with current trends because 2014-2024, that's 10 years." Importantly, as Mira (2008) noted, student voices need to be amplified throughout their education journeys and should include leadership roles in education change and reform. Their voices can also improve classroom practice (Connor et al., 2024; Kincheloe, 2008).

Critical to the continuing conversations on student voice integration into teacher training are the following observations made by Participant 6: "

A lot has changed in the span of 10 years. And so, even though the data is available to inform changes, those changes are not taking place. And it shows us that, well, I have observed that the preservice teachers are going out there with

ancient knowledge and ancient information and trying to use that ancient knowledge and information in a classroom that is 10 years more advanced than the content that they have."

The above quotation is also crucial to the teaching and learning in the secondary school classroom of the future and demonstrates the important need for preservice teachers to have a say in critical decisions regarding their teacher education. One other participant, Participant 8, felt that her institution could not request the much-needed changes at the level noted by Participant 6 because all the teacher-training institutions in Jamaica used the same curricula. Thus, they will have to allow a change in all institutions that was not foreseeable for Participant 8. It could be interpreted from the preceding revelations by participants in my study that even though they were youth leaders in their institutions, they had limited experience of the power of their student voices to affect change and so were underestimating their potential to impact these more significant education issues thus affecting their self-confidence to advocate at the administrative level.

More use of their active student voices in matters impacting their teaching and learning and the application of their learning about using their voices to their own classrooms should be another focus of conversations. Such dialogue has the potential to help the preservice teacher to make the connection between their knowledge of the student voice concept and potential change in the teaching and learning in their higher level programs. The intersection of student voice practice, the voices of the preservice teacher, and their mental wellbeing raised by Ressler (2022) is yet another strand that

further student voice researchers could explore, exploring the connection between deeply held beliefs and mental health. Though limited and isolated to one-off experiences, the positive accounts by Participants 2 and 3 and the impact of feeling empowered, taking ownership of their learning, growing their confidence when operating in an inclusive student centered teacher training environment are important examples to share with the higher educator fraternity of what can be achieved when they relinquish or share authority with their learners. These positive examples may also be an impetus for further research.

Implications

While the preservice teacher participants in the study have some knowledge and opinions about the elements of student voice as practice and a philosophy, they do not make the connection to the use and role of their own voice in their teacher education. Though all participants described their preservice student voice as active, they are passive in their waiting to be provided with an opportunity for their voices to be heard in the classroom; this could be because they have had little or no opportunity and insufficient experience at their earlier levels of education (primary and secondary) and in their current higher level teacher education program to take the initiative to have their voices heard about fundamental issues such as curricula, delivery methodologies, and teaching and learning activities, for example. Participant 6 noted that the student's voice must, at times, "be loud," or it will not be heard. Perhaps my research study could stimulate a louder conversation about student voice and its potential for change to a more student centered education system.

Change begins or is possible through impacting preconceptions, which are defined as opinions or concepts formed in advance of actual knowledge or experience (Dyson, 2010; Posner et al., 1982; Rea-Ramirez & Ramirez, 2017; Rea-Ramirez et al., 2023; Vosniadou 2007, 2008). For many conceptual change researchers in education, preconceptions are the biggest obstacles to change. DiSessa (2014) and Parsons and Mamo (2017), using examples from the teaching of economics and science, confirm the critical role of preconceptions in creating barriers and biases that can cloud the learning of new information and behaviors. Toward conceptual change is toward new ways of thinking. The more we know about preconceptions, the more we can devise strategies toward changes in behavior and praxis among new teachers entering the classroom,

Secondary School: Critical Transition Period in Education

The secondary or high school level of education is an important transition to adulthood and to impacting preconceptions that carry over to adulthood, as shown by Participants 1 and 7. Both participants had negative experiences at the secondary level, where learning was a burden, and their voices were not heard, which still colors their higher-level education. While the literature advocates that student voice is important at all levels of the education system, from early childhood to graduate level and beyond to citizenship, high school is a critical juncture to impact change toward student-centered, inclusive teaching and learning. The sample of participants in this study started their teacher training fresh out of secondary school, and much of the experiences of having a voice and being voiceless, their beliefs about the role of the teacher versus the role of the student they shared came from their secondary school journeys. The implication here is to

change the experiences at high school, change the preconceptions, and possibly create more preservice teachers empowered to express their voices, to advocate for their voices to be more inclusive than the token, traditional student representation allowance, and start the process toward conceptual change and new ways of thinking and understanding teaching and learning.

Conclusion

Student voice approaches within classroom pedagogy are more than just active participation by students in the classroom. The concept of student voice requires the deliberate involvement of students in decision-making regarding their education, including the administration of that education. Data from my study indicate that the preservice teacher in training wants more than active engagement in the classroom; participants have indicated their concerns about significant issues such as curriculum design and development and query whether they are being prepared for the classroom of the future. The voice of the student should inform and be able to enact change. Conner et al. (2024) pointed to collaborative decision making involving educators and students as a fundamental principle in student voice practice. The researchers noted, however, that there was still a challenge for all educators to embrace this broader concept of student voice practice. Nonetheless, in their examination of student voice practices, Conner et al. (2024) concluded that "it was critical that teacher educators help teachers to learn how and why to incorporate SVPs into their pedagogical portfolios" (p.7).

Research Connections

Institutions must create conditions that support student voice practices across their program offerings and activities. My findings could be stimuli for further research in various parts of Jamaica and the Caribbean. My research also connects to the voices of Roofe (2018) in Jamaica, who asked for more agency for teachers in training, and to Marc Jackman and Morrain-Webb (2019) in Trinidad, asking for boys to have more voice as a way of increasing their performance capability and capacity. My study also connects to Young (2018), and to Moore (2021), who recommended that more attention be paid to the knowledge and experience teachers in training bring to the teacher education classroom.

Conceptual change philosophy and practice served as the foundation for this research process. The findings connect to the research on conceptual change that cites the importance of what individuals know, have experienced, and believe in shaping their preconceptions and impacting any strategy designed to affect behavior change. My study reinforces the need to close the wider gap in the research noted by Mayes and Black (2021) that while educators and student voice researchers understand the need for a more focused integration of student voice philosophy into teacher praxis, there is limited research on how to integrate student voice into teacher training. My small study shows that there is no focused inclusion of student voice in teacher training in rural central Jamaica in the three institutions that the participants represented. More research is needed to explore whether this lack of inclusion permeates other teacher training institutions in

various parts of the rural Jamaican society and whether it is the same for institutions in the cities.

Navigating a student voice environment in the education system is complex, especially in a climate of varying understandings of how student voice should be practiced and integrated into the system. Student voice integration into classroom praxis is not yet a conversation at the national level in the English-speaking Caribbean. Nevertheless, small-scale research in the region (Hordatt-Gentles, 2018,) concurring with the global recommendations about student voice as an integral education strategy has suggested that giving voice to students is critically important. More recently, Keshrino et al. (2024), in exploring challenges of academic performance from the point of view of the secondary students in the Caribbean secondary school achievement certificate exams, gave voice to the students and concluded that the future of education requires "involving and listening to students on education matters because they are critical stakeholders who can assist in shaping important education ideas (Keshrino et al., 2024).

Additionally, student voice philosophy and praxis must accommodate and eventually reposition culturally embedded norms about the roles of the teacher versus that of the student, as well as the traditional classroom space. While the student is at the center of the education system and whose wellbeing, growth, and development are the mandates of teaching faculty, the voice of the faculty is equally important if they are to embrace the philosophy and practice of student voice. Conceptual change researchers have shown that preconceptions are critical not just to education but to tolerance among

diverse peoples and communities and that change begins with conceptual change of embedded preconceptions that are culturally and socially formed (Rea-Ramirez et al., 2023). Research is needed to understand preconceptions of the preservice teachers being prepared to teach in the culturally diverse societies of Jamaica and the Caribbean with its peculiar social and historical foundations. By extension, research is also needed to understand the preconceptions of teacher trainers whose fear may include fundamental concerns about whose voice will be prioritized.

This small-scale study has touched on issues raised in the global student voice landscape and confirms previous findings about the impact, often long term, of voiced and voiceless experiences on the student. The research also confirmed the need for deliberate integration of student voice in the training of the preservice teacher in rural central Jamaica and provides a starting point toward a much-needed conversation before integration can occur. This research also gives voice to the preservice teacher in training, similar to Keshrino et al. (2024), whose research gave voice to secondary school students in Jamaica.

In summary, while this research on the preconceptions of preservice teachers in higher-level programs in rural central Jamaica that touches also on the role and importance of their student voice in their teacher education is not transferable, it is replicable. Preconceptions challenge learning, and since learning is really about a change in perspective, conceptual change theories and practice provide a helpful foundation for research that seeks to understand the role and importance of preconceptions in change strategies. Despite the limitations noted in the recruitment of participants, each

participants was able to provide sufficient rich, thick data to allow for an enriching analysis and emergent findings that can contribute to the conversation on student voice, confirming the literature and adding a unique view of the issue from the Jamaican and Caribbean contexts. The Caribbean perspective or views are currently limited in the global student voice conversations, but my study and the Keshrino et al. (2024) study are an indication that more small-scale research is being conducted focusing on the Caribbean students' voices.

The use of semistructured interviews as a research methodology, while able to illicit an immense amount of data for analysis, the strategy is time-consuming, and the findings are not transferable to larger populations. Nonetheless, these research findings connect to existing global and Caribbean student voice research noted in the preceding discussion, particularly the work of Dana Mitra, Jerusha O'Connor, and Susan Cook-Sather, and support the findings of Hordatt-Gentles (2018), Birbal and Hewitt Blackwell (2019) Keshrino et al. (2024) and Roofe (2018) from the anglophone Caribbean. Additionally, this research hints at immense possibilities for further research. The participant quotations presented throughout chapters 4 and 5 serve several purposes. First, they help to uncover the participants' preconceptions about student voice, about their student voice in their teacher education and about the role of the teacher in the teaching and learning processes. The role of the teacher is linked also to the participants' teacher identity. Second and importantly, the quotations give voice to the participants. Thirdly, the quotations have the potential as a foundation script to guide Drama in Education course outlines or pedagogical strategies and activities for integrating student

voice into teacher education. The quotations also indicate the importance of data from conversations that can be valuable for faculty as they develop their pedagogical praxis.

The following are potential topics for further research:

1. Preconceptions of preservice teachers in other rural communities across Jamaica
2. Preconceptions of preservice teachers in urban communities and training institutions
3. Preconceptions of student voice of teacher training faculty
4. Embedded cultural notions of the roles of the teacher versus the roles of the student

Finally, while this research minimally contributes to the broader complex issue of teaching and learning and education praxis, the study initiates important conversations toward change in thinking among preservice teachers in training. I fulfilled and echo here the recommendation by Gillet-Swan and Baroutsis (2024) that voice in research must be sought and valued acknowledging participants not only as providing information but honoring their perspectives. Importantly, this study indicates the potential to raise awareness about the power and potential of the preservice teacher's voice for the preservice teacher in training about the role their voices can play in empowering and investing agency in their higher-level education. To quote Participant 7 " I would say just be willing and, you know, you view the students voices as important for everything. It starts with a humble conversation. This is where everything starts."

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Appendix A: Trustworthiness plan

Criteria	Activities
Credibility	Recording and documenting through journaling
	Fit between data and findings
	Peer debriefing, peer review
	Member checking-post interview and post analysis
Transferability	Recording with rich thick descriptions
	Journaling
	Interview protocol and questioning replication with each participant
	Peer reviewing and debriefing
Dependability	Audit Trail
	Journaling using the computer
	Auditing schedule with dates and times as agreed with peer reviewer and debriefer
Confirmability	Triangulation
	Journaling

	Interview protocol and questioning replication with each participant
	Peer reviewing and debriefing