

## Out of Many, One People: Jamaican Teachers' Perspectives of Global Learning

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### Abstract

15 teachers from across Jamaica participated in interviews that articulated ideas about, and methods of fostering global learning. This study explores Jamaican teachers' perceptions of global learning, as well as their thoughts of how to implement this into the K-12 classroom. The researchers applied various western definitions of the global learning process. According to these frameworks, all 15 teachers offered examples of global awareness that they incorporate into their classrooms. Some described global awareness as a mechanism for developing a global perspective. Teachers also noted that their students lacked exposure to diverse people and places, when diversity was interpreted as ethnic or cultural difference. Religious education served as a space where students could encounter diverse others. These results problematize the practice of applying Western conceptualizations of global learning in international contexts and highlight the importance of learning from the Global South when thinking through the goals and processes of global education.

**Key words:** Global learning, global perspective, global awareness, teacher education

### Introduction

Educational institutions throughout the world recognize the need to equip 21st-century learners to navigate an interdependent and complex world. At minimum, citizens need a knowledge of the diversity of human cultures and the physical and natural world, critical reasoning that incorporates multiple perspectives, information literacy, and a sense of civic and social responsibility (American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2012). These characteristics are synonymous with global competencies, or “the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance” (p. xiii). To facilitate these 21st-century skills, policymakers and educators must promote goals that not only serve local neighborhood schools but also prepare globally competent citizens (Brown et al., 2014).

To respond to rapidly changing globalization processes, countries across the world align national goals with efforts to ensure the population and workforce are globally competent. In 2009, after years of examination and deliberation, the Government of Jamaica (GoJ) issued their national

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reform, *Vision 2030 Jamaica*, outlining a plan to bring the nation to “developed country status” by 2030. This plan targets areas that include industry, commerce, the environment, science and technology, and education, situating Jamaica within its global context. Of significance is that it highlights the expected roles and competencies of its citizenry that would allow the country to meet and sustain the national goals. According to *Vision 2030*, the profile of the globally competent Jamaican citizen includes the ability to “adjust to different situations,” “develop a perspective tolerant of diversity,” and “commit to a sustainable lifestyle” (Government of Jamaica, 2012, p. 57; see also Gordon-Brydson, 2013). These goals are consistent with the national motto, “Out of Many, One People.”

The role of teachers in meeting these goals is paramount. In order to develop a globally competent citizenry, teachers must develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are necessary to foster global competencies within their students. A curriculum centered on *global learning* can develop these competencies (Landorf et al., 2018). However, a review of literature produced little research related to global learning within a Jamaican context; that limited research will be outlined below. Our study aimed to understand Jamaican teachers’ perceptions of global learning to provide a reference point for those seeking to implement global learning within the nation. In particular, the researchers were interested in examining teachers’ perceptions and understandings of global learning, and their description of how global learning is or could be incorporated in classroom curriculum and practice. More importantly, this research also integrates another layer of voices, Jamaican teachers’ voices, into the global discourse on global education.

### **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

Many educational and political pundits call for global learning as a mechanism to prepare individuals to compete in a globalized world. For example, Friedman (2012) describes globalization as an “invisible herd” and urges communities to develop the capacity to join the herd or risk being left behind. The neoliberal emphasis on 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills as a necessity for the global marketplace advocates for global learning as “globalized education.” According to this approach, institutionalized education should create a deeper pool of resources to avoid wasting human potential (Bloom, 2004). These same neoliberal ideas often shaped the language surrounding the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills graduates would need for success in a global marketplace.

Bosio and Torres (2020) critique this neoliberal notion based on how policies of global education for globalization strong-hold many educational initiatives in developing nations (see also Bosio, 2020 and Gauelli 2016 for similar critiques). Therefore, some scholars view global learning as a mechanism for transformative social change (Maguth & Hilburn, 2015; Merryfield & Subedi, 2006). This latter notion recognizes that global education is necessary to address or counter socio-cultural and socio-political trends, not just for a changing industrial society. The focus here is on the ability to deliberate on global issues and protect universal human rights (Landorf, 2009). The perspectives mentioned above present global learning as a continuum where one has to situate themselves between neoliberal and transformative goals.

In this research study, we draw on a framework that conceptualizes global learning as *holistic student development*. Landorf et al. (2018) present global learning as both a process and a product. The authors define global learning as “a process of diverse people working together to collaboratively analyze and address problems that transcend borders” (p.4). Although global learning *outcomes* may vary according to institutional goals, context, and student needs, in most cases, they typically produce three competencies:

1. *Global awareness*, or an understanding of the interconnectedness of global trends and issues
2. *Global perspective*, or the ability to analyze local, national, and global issues from multiple perspectives
3. *Global engagement*, or a willingness to participate in problem-solving on local, national, and global levels (Landorf & Doscher, 2015)

Developmental models of intercultural maturity (King & Baxter-Magolda, 2005) and lifetime development (Kegan, 1994) also influence our notion of holistic global learning. Braskamp et al. (2011) blended both models, outlining a framework for student-development through what the authors termed global perspective development. This model attends to three dimensions: the cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions. The *cognitive domain* adds greater complexity to the nature of knowledge, as individuals answer the question, “How do I know?” Here individuals consider how their identities influence how they view knowledge. This domain also includes the knowledge one has of other people and places. Individuals that rank high in the *interpersonal domain* feel comfortable working with people with different social norms. They can easily reflect on the question, “How do I relate to others?” Finally,

individuals ranking high in the *intrapersonal domain* have a strong sense of identity. This characteristic relates to the question, “Who am I?” (Braskamp et al., 2011, p. 2-3).

These frameworks provide a definition of global learning and conceptual foundation for those seeking to engage students in global citizenship education that addresses economic, political, and social change. These frameworks also acknowledge the various areas educators seek to address when constructing learning activities – i.e., the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domains - and offer a strategy for engaging students in the global learning process –i.e., collaboratively analyzing global issues. This conceptualization of global learning accounts for student learning outcomes – awareness, perspective, and engagement - to determine areas of strength and growth.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

As indicated above, our review of literature produced limited evidence of research related to global learning within the Jamaican context. Much of this literature examines westerners while studying or working abroad in Jamaica. For example, Renner et al. (2010) describe the evolution of an international service-learning program that established a partnership in Jamaica. The white, American researchers describe how their perspectives of their work in the “global south”<sup>3</sup> evolved (see also Renner, 2011). Hartman et al. (2020) explores how Students of Color and members of the LGBTQ community experienced disruption, disconnection, and solidarity as a process of global learning during their study abroad in Jamaica. Finally, Hardacre & Kinhead-Clark (2017) explore their own conversations across the UK and Jamaica regarding family literacy projects in their respective countries, examining the importance of intercultural communication, a component of global education, to counter neoliberal policies and give participants agency. These pieces served as spaces for the authors to contemplate their role in facilitating global education yet did not offer empirical research on how global education is understood and enacted in Jamaican educational institutions.

In a previously conducted study, Iuspa et al. (2016) administered the Global Perspective Inventory (GPI) to 176 Jamaican teachers to gauge these teachers’ global perspective as measured by Braskamp, et al.’s (2011) domains of holistic learning. The overall T-test analysis reported that

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<sup>3</sup> The global south is a term used by the World Bank and other organizations to demarcate the differences between nations based on the north/south global divide. Countries in the global south, with exception of Austria and New Zealand, are typically developing, have newer or less stable democracies, and have or are emerging from histories of colonialism (Dirlik, 2007).

only two subscales - Knowing and Interpersonal Social Interaction – demonstrated a statistically significant relationship regarding an individuals’ global perspective. This research did not demonstrate any additional significant difference based on the GPI subscales.

There is limited empirical research demonstrating how global learning is incorporated in Jamaican education, and Iuspa et al.’s (2016) use of the GPI did not present a comprehensive overview of Jamaican teachers’ global perspective. In reflecting on the dearth of research, we identified a need to use qualitative methods to further explore the state of global learning throughout the island, focusing on teachers. The purpose of this study was to examine teachers’ perceptions and understandings of global learning and their description of how they incorporate global learning in their pedagogical practices.

**Methods**

This study attempted to fill in the gaps regarding the possibilities for implementing global learning throughout Jamaica.

**Research Design**

This interpretive, qualitative research study (Merriam & Grenier, 2002) examined Jamaican teachers’ understanding and perceptions of global learning. The following questions guided this research:

1. How do Jamaican teachers’ define global learning?
2. How do Jamaican teachers describe integrating global learning in their curricular choices and teaching practices?

**Participants and Context**

**Table 1**

*Participants and Context*

Teacher Pseudonym	Background Information	School Information
Michelle	Female, Math Teacher Taught Programming	Non-traditional Rural Co-Ed High School in the parish of Westmoreland. This school is the main high school that serves the immediate and surrounding communities. Most of the teachers are from the same community. Regional needs, primarily
Erica	Female, Social Studies Teacher	

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		agricultural, influence the curriculum. The average student/teacher ratio is 50:1.
Carson	Male, Business/Accounting Teaching	Technical High School in the parish of Saint Elizabeth. This is the largest and most successful technical high school in that part of the island. They have had success in sports, agriculture and technical trades in local, regional and international competitions. In the past 10 years greater attention has been given to more traditional academic subjects. Average student/teacher ratio is 55:1.
Danika	Female, Administrator in Charge of Testing	
Christine	Female, Administrator in Charge of Curriculum	Private Elementary School in the parish of Manchester. This is the second campus of one of the more successful private elementary schools whose main campus is in the country's capital. It serves a more affluent population with students being ranked among the top academic performers across the island. They also provide special education services which has been limited in that geographical area for years. The average student/teacher ratio is 20:1.
Grace-Anne	Female Reading Specialist	Elementary School in the parish of Clarendon. This school has a large student population but a low literacy rate. This school serves students from both urban and rural centers in that geographical region. The average student/teacher ratio is 55:1.
Claire	Female, Sixth Grade Teacher/ All subjects	
Kimberly	Female Fourth Grade Teacher/All subjects	Private Elementary School in the capital city of Kingston. School has a long history of success in academics, sports and culture locally, regionally and internationally. While located in one of the city's poorer urban centers, very few students from the community attend the school due to affordability. Most the students who attend are typically from more affluent suburban communities. Less than 1% of the teachers or staff is from the community. The average class size is 25 with two teachers per class
Rachel	Female, Fifth Grade/All subjects	

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		for K-2, and a floating teacher for each grade 3-6.
Ruth	Female, Fourth Grade Teacher/All subjects	Rural government-run school in the parish of St Thomas. It is one of the larger primary schools in the parish and serves students from both urban and rural centers. Academically, it is one of the better performing primary schools in the region and has enjoyed success in regional and national academic and cultural competitions.
Janice	Female, Fourth Grade Teacher/all subjects	Many of the teachers do not live in the community with some travelling from neighboring parishes to work.
Olivia	Female, Third Grade Teacher/All subjects	All-age school in the parish of Portland. It is a small rural school with multi-grade classes. It serves the students in the immediate community. In addition to academics, students are exposed to gardening and animal husbandry which are the primary industries in the area. The literacy rate is low, but the school has been making strides in this area. Class size is small with approximately 10 students in each room.
Daniel	Male, Sixth Grade Teacher/All subjects	
Krystal	Female, English Teacher	All-girl, traditional high school in the parish of Saint Ann. Students attending this school have attained high academic grades in order to be admitted. The school is in a part of the island that is heavily influenced by tourism, mining and agriculture. Some students are from the immediate community but the majority commute from other communities.
Shanelle	Female, Social Studies Teacher	Some student board on campus. The average student/teacher ratio is 40:1

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Fifteen Jamaican educators participated in one-hour individual, semi-structured interviews (see table 1). We included teachers from each of the six regions of the nation in the sample of teachers interviewed. The school system is divided into regions for administrative purposes. Four of the regions have rural populations, and two are a mix of rural and urban. All interviews were conducted at the schools where the teachers were employed. We intentionally chose a variety of schools that

would cover a range of socio-economic status and exposure to diversity (see participant demographic table above).

This convenience sample included two male teachers and 13 female teachers. Those interviewed included teachers working in a range of schools: private and public elementary schools with grade levels ranging from K-6; all age schools with grade levels ranging from 1-9; and high schools with grade levels ranging from 7-11. The Jamaican education system further distinguishes secondary institutions as traditional, non-traditional, and technical high schools. Traditional schools refer to schools established prior to 1953 by various churches, have grade levels ranging from 7-13 (twelfth and thirteenth grades are pre-university), and currently receive grant aid from the GoJ. Non-traditional high schools refer to schools established post-1970 by the GoJ and are fully funded by the government. Technical high schools are also non-traditional schools; however, they focus on technical and vocational training. We included teachers from all three types of schools in our sample. The sample also included teachers serving at the classroom level, except for one teacher who recently transitioned into an administrative position. In this regard we attempted to use Sandelowski's (1995) notion of maximum variation sampling to interview a wide range of individuals in terms of the geographic location and institution type.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Each semi-structured interview was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The researchers first coded each transcript individually, looking for common and uncommon emerging themes using inductive coding procedures (Patton, 2002). Then the researchers compared both sets of codes, narrowing and grouping codes, once reaching a consensus. This process is consistent with the constant comparison process of qualitative data analysis (Kolb, 2012). We then compared these codes to Landorf and Doscher's (2015) definition and outcomes of global learning and Braskamp et al.'s (2011) notion of global perspective development.

### **The Researchers' Positionalities**

At the time of this study, both researchers worked at Florida International University (FIU), which provided a Master of Science in Curriculum & Instruction (MSC&I) degree in collaboration with a tertiary institution in Kingston, Jamaica. Every MSC&I student enrolls in one specific global education course; however, global learning is embedded throughout the program due to faculty

expertise. The faculty that teach in this program represent a range of nationalities, speak various languages, and have conducted research or engaged in professional educational experiences throughout the world. Although the university values global learning, and many of the MSC&I faculty have experience in this area, we believe it is essential to examine what *global learning* does, or can, look like within a Jamaican context. This research was an attempt to go outside of the university setting to explore how Jamaican teachers understood global learning.

Sarah: I am a White, faculty member from the United States who worked within the Jamaican MSC&I program. I am a Social Studies Teacher Educator, and I promote global education through my research and practice. I taught six semesters of courses in Jamaica and have experience teaching in global programs in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Italy, Kenya, and Venezuela. However, I recognize that my race, gender, nationality, and position as a professor and researcher influences my perspective and interaction with the participants.

Carolyn: I am a Black Jamaican native who was completing doctoral research at FIU at the time of this study. My perspective is shaped by the fact that I was a former K-12 and Higher Education Educator in the Jamaican system and a graduate of the MSC&I –Jamaica program. I previously served as an Education Officer for Special Education Services for the Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE). I was able to recruit the participants for this study using my connections to the community and my previous position in the MOE. While this provided an opportunity to access this population of teachers, I acknowledge that my position as a former administrator, and a lecturer within the Jamaican university system, may influence how I view the research. I also recognize that this impacts how the participants interacted with the researchers during the research process.

We recognize that ethical procedures are very important to adhere to within educational research, especially with research conducted in traditionally exploited locations. As a result, we adhered to the IRB regulations at our university and consulted with the Jamaican MOE regarding the ethical procedures for conducting research in Jamaica.

## **Findings**

### **Global Learning Equals Global Awareness**

In this study, the global awareness outcome refers to the “the ability to demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems”

(Landorf & Doscher, 2015, para 3). Many of the teachers admitted that their understanding of global issues was limited. When asked to rank their global awareness level on a scale of one to five – one representing limited and five representing the highest level – all 15 teachers ranked themselves around a level three. However, these teachers were open about instances where they saw possibilities for strengthening their own and their students' global understanding.

***Global Awareness Demonstrated through Instructional Decisions.*** All 15 teachers in the study described global learning as a mechanism to help students develop global awareness. Grace-Anne<sup>4</sup> and Claire shared that they expose their students to different people and places through the books they read. Grace-Anne, a reading specialist, explained,

Well, some of the books that I have provide vicarious experiences for the students. They are not in Japan, but they are learning about Japan from the book. Some of them cannot read the books. I have to read them. But it is important for them to imagine they are somewhere else.

In Kingston, Rachel suggested that she would have her students research different countries. She said, "Each group would complete a presentation, and they would circulate the information." In Portland, Janice described a similar unit that she incorporates into her curriculum. Students supplement their research by creating a dish that originated in the country they are researching. Michelle stated, "To me, global learning would be not just limiting yourself to what is going on in your country or your geographical location but a wider scale." However, she was concerned that in her region, students had limited access to other people and places. Upon reflection, she added, "Maybe not just overseas... I'm here in Westmoreland but getting information about what is happening in Clarendon." This teacher lives in Westmoreland, a parish located in western Jamaica, and is emphasizing how important it is to understand similarities and differences between people and experiences in other parishes, i.e., Clarendon, which is in the south. Her pedagogies utilize *glocal* understandings (Mathews, 2016; Brooks & Normore, 2010; Courchene, 1995), or the awareness that global phenomena can be explored within a local context.

In Portland, Ruth also utilized a *glocal* approach to global awareness. This teacher described an assignment she implemented at the beginning of the year, where she asked her fifth-grade students

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<sup>4</sup> All of the names used in this manuscript are pseudonyms.

to examine their ancestral roots. She explained that “individuals often discover that their ancestors come from a different cultural or religious background.” This lesson reflects the national motto, “Out of many, one people,” and provides a foundation to explore various other people and places throughout the year.

Erica thought a student’s global awareness was mostly limited to what the teachers told them or Facebook©. She explained,

Coming into the high school system, they are very aware of what’s going on because quite a few of them are exposed through the internet. So when they come to class you just have to do some explanations and clarify certain things that they saw, because we all know that not everything on the internet is true. We have to just balance it out. You have to teach them to identify proper sources. Collaborate sources. You have to teach them how to go about obtaining proper information.

Erica emphasized media literacy to correct students’ misunderstandings about global people, issues, and trends as they interacted with information on a global level.

***Global Awareness as a Step Towards Developing a Global Perspective.*** While many teachers described lessons that remained at the global awareness level, some teachers hinted that awareness could help students develop a global perspective. Braskamp et al. ’s (2001) framework suggests that individuals with high global perspective recognize there is no singular truth, are cognizant about how their identity shapes their worldview, and have the desire and ability to interact with those who hold diverse perspectives. In interviews, two teachers described how the Religious Education<sup>5</sup> curriculum served as a space to help students learn that their view of the world is not universal. Olivia explained how she would handle this in her class:

If I’m teaching about religion, I would open a discussion about what [the students] do at church. Then I would let them know that the Bible is the holy book for Christianity, but there are other holy books that other religions use. And other religions do things differently than Christianity. So when they grow up and experience other religions, they can’t just say,

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<sup>5</sup>Religious Education in Jamaica is about introducing students to different religions’ beliefs and traditions.

well, that is not my religion, so I'm not listening. They ought to appreciate other persons' views.

Her colleague also described the way that he incorporates global learning into his Religious Education course. Daniel explained,

We covered rites of passages, and [the students] were ok with Christian rites of passage. When we went to Judaism, I brought up the topic of circumcision, and they were condemning it. I was saying to them, "No. That is not the way we go about it. Because we have to learn about different people from different backgrounds."

Jamaica is primarily a Christian nation, and it was Daniel's perception that his students started to take issue as they transitioned to learn about the rites of passage of other religions. Daniel described how he brought in the students' culture to highlight differences and make a comparison. He told them, "Here we eat cow foot. What if they criticize us and say that we are not supposed to eat cow foot?" Daniel wanted to help his students to become not only aware of global religious practices but also respect other traditions.

The Social Studies curriculum provides opportunities to develop a global perspective while exploring global connections. Daniel described how he fosters this through the geography curriculum. For example, he explained that environmental factors often influence the types of clothes that people wear or the foods they ate. This instruction is necessary because many students will never travel outside of Jamaica.

The teachers in this study all agreed that global awareness is an essential aspect of global learning. When the teachers recommended using books about other countries, helping their class understand colonial influences, encouraging students to explore their own ancestry, and implementing critical medial literacy, they were highlighting efforts to introduce their students to other people and places. Although these examples primarily focused on the global awareness outcome, Daniel, Erica and Oliva hinted that a secondary goal for global learning is to consider others' perspectives; this notion is essential for global perspective development.

### **Notions of Jamaican Diversity as a Tool for Global Learning**

According to Landorf et al., global learning requires the opportunity and skills to work with diverse individuals and perspectives. Most of the teachers initially interpreted diversity as *ethnic diversity*

or, as Grace Anne suggested, “someone from a different country.” Daniel expanded on this definition saying,

In the sense that if I am a culturally diverse person, I am aware of other people’s cultures, what their cultures are about. And I have investigated these cultures. I have acquired information about many of these different nations.

Erica was the only teacher to discuss Jamaica's rich ethnic diversity. She explained,

We know that Jamaica is made up of a lot of different ethnic groups. And so from the primary stage, our students know that stuff. They know that we have a lot of persons from Chinese descent. They’re Jamaican even though they are from a different background, and we learn that from an early stage. And with social studies, we learn about all of the different cultures and so forth. It sort of comes naturally, because we were taught that from like primary school. Not because a man is not black does not mean that he is not Jamaican.

As we probed further through our interviews, the teachers’ explanations evolved into a more nuanced understanding of diversity within the Jamaican context.

***Perceived Limited Exposure to Cultural Diversity.*** All of the teachers referenced cultural diversity in terms of nationality; however, only three teachers offered an example of their students’ opportunities to interact with individuals from other countries. For example, Carson mentioned that the athletes in his school often travelled to other countries, such as the U.S. and Barbados, to participate in athletic events. In this case, only athletes had access to these experiences. Carson was the only teacher to indicate that his students had the opportunity to travel abroad.

Olivia discussed an American Peace Corps volunteer who developed a garden at the school. She explained,

This lady came, and she taught gardening. She worked wonders. The carrots were so big! Everybody wanted our carrots at 4-H. And we really enjoyed her. In fact, when she was leaving, if you saw the children crying. She was really into it with them, and they were all over her. But since then we have not had anybody.

The Peace Corps volunteer connected the students to the United States and provided the only interaction these students had with someone from outside of their country. This limited exposure to other nationalities was demonstrated when we visited an elementary school in Portland. Janice explained that her students were disappointed that we were not coming into the class to speak to

them. The students thought we were there to teach about the United States. Janice explained, “You see, the children do not have much exposure to Americans. They have seen some missionaries and such, but they do not interact with them much, and never at school.”

Only one teacher spoke of the cultural diversity found at the particular school where she taught; this institution happened to be an all-female, elite boarding school on the northern part of the island. Krystal explained,

Well, now I think Jamaica has grown toward [cultural diversity]. Maybe fifteen years ago, you would see that we were not that diverse. We were more bi-racial. So you had the white Jamaican and the Black Jamaican. But because we’ve had the influx, tourism, and the change in managerial styles...we have the Hispanic community coming in. We have Chinese. And we have their children in schools. Now our children will have to appreciate them. We have other students that are of Indian descent.

This teacher worked in a region that serves much of the tourism industry on the island. Many of the companies that support the infrastructure and tourist industries are often foreign companies (e.g., Chinese road construction companies and Finnish and Swedish power companies). The leaders of these companies send their children to schools similar to the school where Krystal teaches.

***Religion as a Marker of Diversity.*** Religion has played a significant role in the Jamaican schooling process. In fact, the church historically created and maintained traditional high schools (Evans, 2001). For many teachers, it was assumed and even taken-for-granted that the students in their classrooms practiced the Christian faith. However, a few teachers were able to discuss how religious variations throughout the island affected their instruction, and the schools where they work.

Christine shared a story about her friend who moved from Canada and did not cut her child’s hair. Christine explained,

She asked me if his hair had to be cut. And I said, “If it’s for religious reasons...I would have to check to see how I would have to approach that. But if it’s just because you don’t

want to cut the child's hair, then no. You would have to cut his hair for him to come to school. She said they took ...what is called the Nazarite vow.<sup>6</sup>

In this example, Christine reflected on how she would handle this situation in her administrative role. Her response suggests that she had never had to address these types of issues as a teacher. However, Christine suddenly related that to Rastafarianism, asking, "What do we do about Rastas and their hair? I've never thought of that, maybe because there are no Rastas at my school. So, where do the Rastas go?" Jamaican schools had historically excluded Rastafarians based on their hairstyle or headgear; having a haircut has traditionally been used as a condition to attend schools in Jamaica (Evens, 2001). In our conversation, Carolyn, explained that Rastafarians typically go to non-traditional schools because the Church does not run those institutions. Christine finished this section stating that she would have the student just "comb his hair back" but would not know how to handle things if other children kept asking why he was allowed to wear his hair long. As stated in the previous section, Shanelle taught in a boarding school near tourist and industrial centers. In her interview, she explicitly addressed the issue of religious diversity, explaining,

We have other students that are of Indian descent. They still have their cultural practices with them as well as religion. Regarding the curriculum, we could provide a little more for them, in terms of religion, so to speak. As it is with the Jamaican school structure, we don't accommodate for all types of religion. It is only Christianity that is covered.

As our interview continued, we asked her to describe what it might look like to incorporate Hinduism into her curriculum. She replied,

I'm thinking about even starting with our regular devotion. We could start with one day per week...so the student who practices Hinduism could maybe share her religion with us. Because I am a Christian does not mean I cannot think of other religions. How can I bash something that I don't know about? In my grade 11 class, I have a student who is Indian, and she practices Hinduism. After I asked her to share, she said, "Miss, I really appreciated that because sometimes I feel so left out, because they think I'm so different."

Shanelle recognizes that an individual can learn about another's religion while still maintaining their commitment to their own religious beliefs. Daniel and Oliva echoed these sentiments through their examples of using their religion lessons to help students become globally aware and honor

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<sup>6</sup> Christine was referring to the Nazarene or Nazirite/Nazarite vow (as practiced in the Rastafarian religion) that prohibits individuals from cutting their hair as stated in the Bible, Numbers 6: 1-21.

diverse perspectives. However, in this case, Shanelle realizes that it is also vital for the student practicing Hinduism to see herself reflected in the school culture.

These examples demonstrate that religion can serve as a space to discuss “diversity” and diverse perspectives found *within* Jamaica. The first sub-theme is that Christianity is often taken-for-granted as the national religion in Jamaican society. Although Jamaica, as a nation, has faced controversy and tension surrounding the acknowledgment of Rastafarianism as an organized religion, those that practice this faith often do so on the fringes. Because of institutionalized norms, Rastafarians are “absent” from traditional schools (Evans, 2001).

The second sub-theme involves whether or not teachers use religious diversity as a tool to develop perspective consciousness. Christine believes her students would not understand why she made allowances for one student to wear long hair if it reflected their religious beliefs because this practice violates school norms and rules. She never discusses if she thinks she can turn this into a teachable moment about various religious perspectives. Shanelle, however, identifies how the tradition of morning devotion excludes a student practicing Hinduism. She wants to incorporate inclusive practices to introduce her students to different belief systems and religious traditions.

Eventually, the teachers that we interviewed recognized that diversity is found throughout Jamaica and explained how this diversity was emphasized in the national motto, “Out of Many, One People,” and celebrated in events like Heritage Day. However, Claire and Grace-Anne in Clarendon, and Oliva and Daniel in St. Mary, also admitted that their students seldom have opportunities to leave their own towns, let alone their parishes or regions. These statements suggest that some Jamaican students may have limited access to the rich diversity of their nation and indicate potential regional differences in this study.

### **Limitations**

This study was conducted during a two-week research trip to Jamaica. As researchers, we attempted to gain access to as many teachers as possible across the nation. Our efforts led to interviews with 15 teachers. We acknowledge that if we were provided extended time in the field, we would have been able to interview more teachers. Another limitation to our study is that although Carolyn was able to directly recruit teachers in two locations, the principals at many of the schools we visited actually chose the teachers we interviewed. This limitation impacted the variation of demographics (e.g., gender or years teaching). Because of lack of funding and limited

access to participants, we were also unable to conduct follow-up interviews with most of the participants. We were able to consult with the three teachers that Carolyn recruited to check our analysis when appropriate.

We recognize the limitations to this study as well as acknowledge that our positionalities influenced the entire research process. These acknowledgements are offered in an effort to make our research more transparent and solicit ideas for future research. Yet, as Onwuegbuzie & Leech (2007) remind us, sample of voice in comparison to other voices can serve as another form of sampling decision. This notion suggests that the representative participants must be representative of the sample and that the “words must be representative of each key informant’s voice” (p.109). We chose to account for variation of region, though other researchers may have made different sampling decisions. As with most qualitative research, there were interesting variations amongst participants. What we find most interesting were the lack of words that also served as a representation of teachers’ voices, which give equal insight into what aspects of global education may be missing in Jamaica. These ideas will be discussed further in the next section.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Jamaica’s Vision 2030 includes a set of educational aspirations to facilitate 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills consistent with global citizenship education. We originally started this study to examine teachers’ understandings and perception of global learning, as well as their opinions of how global learning is implemented in the Jamaican context. However, we quickly discovered that Jamaican teachers’ voices have been missing in the global discourse on global learning, evident in the limited research on global education in Jamaica. As we will discuss below, our results offer evidence of which aspects of global learning are currently implemented in Jamaican schools. However, this research also highlights the challenge of applying U.S. definitions of global learning to educational practices within other nations without interrogating the purpose and process.

Our overarching research questions sought to explore Jamaican teachers’ perceptions of global learning. The teachers that we interviewed answered this question with evidence related to our notion of the global awareness outcome. For example, they discussed opportunities for students to learn about other cultures through the books they read or by creating a meal from another country.

Rachel described how she would have her students research and then present information about another nation. These are examples of global awareness.

Having students research other countries or cultural groups is a good start; however, these types of activities also risk reinforcing narrow generalizations and stereotypes. These approaches often reflect a “Heroes and Holidays” or “Foods, Fun, and Fashion” approach (Bennett, 2010; Nieto, 2010), and it is important to note that similar practices also occur in the U.S. Nevertheless, surface-level approaches that remain at global awareness often do not lead to the types of transformative global learning that develop affirmation, solidarity, and critique (Banks 2007; Paris & Alim, 2014). According to our framework of global learning, global perspective pushes individuals to ask, not only “How do I know?” but “Who am I?” and “How do I relate to others?” (Braskamp et al., 2012). These questions require individuals recognize that their “view of the world is not universally shared” (Hanvey, 1982, p. 162) and develop the skills that are necessary to solve complex problems using multiple perspectives (Landorf et al., 2018). Four teachers included evidence that they saw global awareness as a process to develop a global perspective. For example, Olivia and Daniel described how they used discussions about different religious traditions and the food and clothing prevalent in various nations to push their students to understand their worldview is not universal. By asking students to interrogate what they were learning about the world through social media, Erica was challenging students to answer Braskamp et al.’s, (2012) question, “How do I know?” Finally, Ruth asked her students to research their ancestral roots, pushing them to answer the question, “Who am I?”

The Jamaican teachers in this study saw the Social Studies, Religious Education, and Geography curricula as appropriate spaces for helping students gain global awareness. However, research on holistic global learning suggests that it should be incorporated throughout the entire curriculum (Braskamp et al., 2012). Teachers in all disciplines should be trained to incorporate an interdisciplinary approach in their courses that help students study complex global issues (Landorf & Doscher, 2015; Landorf et al., 2018). The Jamaican Ministry of Education has moved in a direction that supports integrated learning, which would foster a holistic approach to global learning.

Landorf et al. (2018) present a definition of global learning: “Global learning is the process of diverse people collaboratively analyzing and addressing complex problems that transcend borders” (p. 4). The teachers’ responses in this study reflect a fundamental understanding of the latter part

of this definition, i.e., they were aware of the issues and problems that transcend borders. While some of the teachers offered specific instances where they helped their students develop this global awareness aspect (e.g., through children's literature and researching other cultures), most of the teachers acknowledged that their students had limited exposure to diverse people and perspectives. Significantly absent in all 15 interviews were examples of "collaboratively analyzing and addressing problems," the core process outlined in this definition. This process is an essential component of global learning and one that global educators may choose to emphasize when preparing Jamaican teachers to meet goals established in the *Vision 2030*.

There was little evidence that the teachers were promoting the *global engagement* outcome of global learning. Perhaps this is because of the initial perception that diversity was limited to cultural diversity. Using that definition of diversity, teachers may think it challenging to find opportunities to engage in what Landorf et al. (2018) promote as global learning, i.e., a process requiring "diverse people" to work together. However, teachers did offer examples of diverse religious perspectives. Whether a student should have to cut their hair, hair intentionally grown out because of religious reasons, would meet the qualification of a complex issue with multiple perspectives. In fact, this, or similar issues, impact other cultures around the world.

Global citizenship education should provide teachers opportunities to draw on the nation's diversity to help students make connections between the local, national, and global levels. Community partnerships, engagement with NGOs and other private and governmental sectors within Jamaica (e.g., commerce, technology, and environment) could create opportunities for projects and programs that will allow teachers to make global learning integral to the teaching and learning process. Global educators in similar educational systems may draw on their own contexts across regions throughout their nation to explore global engagement. This will push global learning beyond just global awareness, providing individuals with opportunities to develop a global perspective and engage on a global level. Working with organizations or exploring diversity within a Jamaican context helps students answer Braskamp et al.'s (2011) question, "How do I relate to others?"

### **Conclusion**

As demonstrated through this research, the Jamaican teachers we interviewed indicated that they were cognizant of similarities and differences of global people and places and understood how

global systems interact. This is the basis of global awareness. They also gave examples of classroom activities they could use to address this global learning outcome. Four teachers discussed opportunities to use global awareness to help students gain a global perspective. Missing in the data are examples of global engagement, including opportunities where students could work with diverse others to analyze issues that transcend borders.

This research attests to the notion that experiential forces of cultural and contextual aspects influence perceptions about global learning. Therefore, it is important to incorporate diverse perspectives on global learning from outside of Euro-centric and Western academia. Hardacre & Kinkead-Clark's (2019) dialogues between the UK and Jamaica remind us about the importance of having cross-cultural conversations that recognize the global politics of policy implementation while also honoring the agency of those facilitating and benefiting from these efforts. The Jamaican teachers' voices, as well as other teachers across the global South, non-Western countries, and indigenous populations, are often left out of the narrative on global education. This research study also suggests that frameworks for global education should draw on local and cultural contexts to facilitate and expand global learning, especially in locations with a perceived lack of ethnic or cultural diversity. By focusing on the voices of Jamaican teachers, global educators may be able to turn the goals of Vision 2030 from a neoliberal globalization policy to a framework for developing authentic global learning. Although this study took place in Jamaica, key findings from this research can inform global learning around the world.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Global South is a term used by the World Bank and other organizations to demarcate the differences between nations based on the north/south global divide. Countries in the Global South, with exception of Austria and New Zealand, are typically developing, have newer or less stable democracies, and have or are emerging from histories of colonialism (Dirlik, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> All of the names used in this manuscript are pseudonyms

<sup>3</sup> Religious Education in Jamaica is about introducing students to different religions' beliefs and traditions.

<sup>4</sup> Christine was referring to the Nazarene or Nazirite/Nazarite vow (as practiced in the Rastafarian religion) that prohibits individuals from cutting their hair as stated in the Bible, Numbers 6: 1-21.

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