

INTEGRATED HIGHER EDUCATION IN SUPPORT OF FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS IN JAMAICA

Report for the IIEP-UNESCO Research 'SDG 4: Planning for flexible learning pathways in higher education'

Dawn Barrett Adams and Carolyn Hayle



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This report was prepared for the IIEP-UNESCO research project ‘SDG4: Planning for flexible learning pathways in higher education’ in collaboration with the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ). The study aims to produce knowledge and provide evidence-based policy advice in different development contexts to Ministries of (higher) education that are considering building or strengthening flexible learning pathways as an area of reform. It comprises a stocktaking exercise, an international survey, eight in-depth country case studies (Chile, Finland, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Morocco, South Africa and the UK) and thematic studies. This report is one of the eight in-depth country case studies.

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List of abbreviations

APSE	Alternative Pathways to Secondary Education
ATO	Accredited Training Organizations
CAAG	Career and academic advising and guidance
CAP	Career Advancement Programme
CAPE	Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBT	Competency-based training
CCCJ	Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica
CMU	Caribbean Maritime University
COS	Centre for Occupational Studies
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate
CT	Credit transfer
CVQ	Caribbean Vocational Qualification
CXC	Caribbean Examination Council
EBT	Enterprise-based training
EQA	External quality assurance
EQAA	External quality assurance agency
FLPs	Flexible learning pathways
HE	Higher education
HEART/NSTA Trust	Human Employment and Resource Training/National Service and Training Agency Trust (previously HEART Trust/National Training Agency)
HEI	Higher education institution
IA	Institutional accreditation
IBT	Institutional-based training
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IIEP-UNESCO	International Institute for Educational Planning UNESCO
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IQA	Internal quality assurance
JAMVAT	Jamaica values and attitudes
JBTE	Joint Board for Teacher Education
JCTE	Jamaica Committee for Tertiary Education
JEF	Jamaica Employers Federation
JFLL	Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning
JMEA	Jamaica Manufacturing and Exporters Association
JTEC	Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission
MIND	Management Institute for National Development
MLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
MOEY&I	Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (previously Ministry of

MoU	Education, Youth and Culture)
MTF	Memorandum of understanding
	Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework
NCTVET	National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
NCU	Northern Caribbean University
NQF	National qualification framework
NQF-J	National Qualifications Framework of Jamaica
NTA	National Training Agency
NVQ-J	National Vocational Qualification of Jamaica
NYS	National Youth Service
OAD	Occupational Associate Degree
PA	Programme accreditation
PATH	Programme for Advancement through Health and Education
PIOJ	Planning Institute of Jamaica
PL	Prior learning
PLA	Prior learning assessment
PSOJ	Private Sector Organization of Jamaica
QA	Quality assurance
QAA	Quality assurance and accreditation
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIP	Social intervention programme
STATIN	Statistical Institute of Jamaica
T&L	Teaching and learning
TCJ	Teachers Colleges of Jamaica
TQF	Tertiary Qualifications Framework
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UCJ	University Council of Jamaica
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UTech	University of Technology, Jamaica
UWI	University of the West Indies

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We are grateful to the former Minister of Education, Youth and Information, who, in February 2019, accepted an invitation from IIEP for the inclusion of Jamaica in this international research project. The findings from this study have addressed many tangential issues that have dogged the higher education landscape for years; fortunately, many have been resolved. These issues have been the subject of previous attempts to reform the education sector. The recommendations contained in this report are, nevertheless, relevant and timely as they align well with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and the long-term *Vision 2030 Jamaica National Development Plan* (PIOJ, 2009).

We also extend our profound thanks to Senior Policymakers and Administrators at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (MOEY&I), the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS), the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), the Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission (J-TEC), the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN), the Jamaica Employers Federation (JEF), and the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ), all of whom consented to participate in the interviews and have shared invaluable information. The work of the MOEY&I in developing an overarching framework for FLPs and implementing programmes contributing to the integration of TVET in HE, is commendable, as is the PATH programme implemented by the MLSS.

To the senior administrators and students at the three selected institutions, Moneague College, Northern Caribbean University, and the University of Technology, Jamaica, we extend our appreciation for sharing insights on practices regarding FLPs within the institutions. We commend the commitment of higher education institutions (HEIs) to increasing access and enabling flexibility in HE. The sessions with the students were stimulating, motivating, and insightful and for this we say thanks.

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The lessons learnt from this research project are truly invaluable. The conversations with the participants sharing their different perspectives have made this research journey a truly rewarding experience. We hope that the findings and recommendations will be beneficial to informing strategies in relation to the national objective of having at least 80 per cent of eligible cohort of Jamaicans participating in HE, and the national vision of ‘Jamaica, the place to live, work, raise families, and do business.’

Executive summary

This study on flexible learning pathways in higher education (FLPs in HE) was commissioned by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP). It is a part of a global research project to determine the effectiveness of national provisions for inclusive and equitable access to quality higher education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, including disadvantaged groups (SDG 4). Jamaica was one of the eight countries selected to participate in the project.

The Jamaican case study sought to ascertain the effectiveness of alternative pathways promulgated by the Government of Jamaica in the implementation of measures to achieve its target of having at least 80 per cent of Jamaicans participating in HE. In addition, the project sought to provide evidence-based information to the Ministry of Education in the planning and reform of the HE sector in Jamaica. The foci for the project were:

- 1) Flexibility in pathways for admission **into** HE, with emphasis on:
 - a) recognition of prior learning (RPL);
 - b) the Career Advancement Programme (CAP);
 - c) the Programme for Advancement through Health and Education (PATH).
- 2) Flexibility in progression **through** higher education, with emphasis on:
 - a) transfers from a two-year associate degree to a bachelor's degree (additional two years) based on the '2+2' model;
 - b) Occupational Associate Degrees.

The effectiveness of national policies, regulatory frameworks, instruments, and practices in enabling FLPs within the institutions and the establishment of linkages were assessed.

Current knowledge on the research was garnered from a literature review. Primary data was obtained from 31 in-person interviews with 91 stakeholders drawn from national bodies and institutions. The interviews included focus group discussions with students at the three institutions selected for the study.

The HE model for Jamaica addresses quality, equality, and equity. The following enacted legislation governing the management of HE in Jamaica were found to be sufficient to achieve the outcome of world-class education and training:

- Education Act, 1965
- Human Employment and Resource Training (Change of Name and Amendment) Act, 2019
- University Council of Jamaica Act, 1987

The policy direction and national instruments that have been implemented for FLPs include the National Qualifications Framework of Jamaica (NQF-J), the Career Advancement Programme (CAP) which was initially managed by the now HEART/NSTA Trust, and the Occupational Associate Degrees (OADs). Whereas the quality assurance and accreditation (QAA) instrument has been fully developed and supports FLPs in HE, the NQF-J and career and academic advising and guidance (CAAG) instruments are still in their infancy. The NQF-J and the CAAG are necessary to guide and support students as they pursue FLPs in completing a HE degree.

Governance in relation to institutional autonomy for public educational institutions is a matter of urgency. Based on the Education Act, 1965, the Minister of Education has the power to award degree-granting status to institutions such as teachers' colleges and community colleges, without which they are not authorized to confer degrees. The UCJ Act can be used to legitimize the award of the degree for institutions without degree-granting authority. This is limited to institutions that have gone through the quality assurance process.

The Career Advancement Programme (CAP) has revolutionized Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Jamaica. It should be credited with the recognition of TVET certification as an acceptable pathway to enter into HE. It has also levelled the proverbial playing field by increasing opportunities to access HE through the implementation of grades 12 and 13 in the non-traditional high schools. Prior to CAP, grades 12 and 13 were features only of traditional high schools and catered for the higher-performing students in the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC). The restricted access to grades 12 and 13 has been eliminated, resulting in a more equitable HE sector. The OAD programmes have also been equally successful in integrating TVET and the widening of study opportunities in HE. Students with TVET certification are able to seamlessly enter into HE. However, it is essential to mainstream the CAP and OADs into the regular programmes offered by the institutions in order to realize

full integration of TVET in HE. The government, as part of its objective of increasing access to and participation in HE, has provided the necessary financing through subvention to create a seamless system.

The findings suggest that the current funding arrangements through HEART/NSTA Trust, the MOEY&I, and PATH (MLSS), have addressed equity by enabling the participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in HE. The negative stigma associated with TVET, reflected in the continued use of the phrase ‘a second chance option’, as well as belonging to a household in the lower poverty quintile, have the potential to threaten the take-up of these funding opportunities by the people who most need it, including unattached youth¹ and at-risk youth. A cross-sectoral approach through policy coherence among the respective Ministries will certainly yield the desired returns on these investments in HE and simultaneously and substantially contribute to Jamaica achieving its goal of having 80 per cent of the eligible cohort successfully complete a HE degree. As it now stands, the funding through HEART/NSTA Trust and PATH supports progression through the NQF-J.

The successful formation of a prior learning assessment (PLA) system at North Caribbean University (NCU) and the University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech) has increased the opportunities for individuals to gain entry into HE. The expansion of the PLA system to cater for articulation is an area for growth. The quality assurance of the entire NQF-J is essential to ensure the recognition, acceptance and portability of the qualifications gained in Jamaica.

Another area requiring urgent attention is the development and operationalization of an effective data system to track the performance of students through the study options pursued. While there is anecdotal evidence to support the effectiveness of the FLPs, the data collection and analysis are lacking and are required to inform the improvements necessary to increase access to equitable and quality HE and lifelong learning opportunities in Jamaica.

¹ Young people not in work or education, or participating in any training course.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Globally, HE has expanded significantly in terms of enrolment as well as the diversity of providers, delivery modalities, and participants. This international research project, commissioned by IIEP in the context of SDG 4, seeks to examine national progress towards the provision of inclusive and equitable access to quality HE and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. As countries implement policies and strategies to achieve this objective, there is a need to ensure that their HE systems are undergirded by quality assurance, comparability, recognition of learning (including formal and non-formal), and credit transfers, while, at the same time, providing equitable access for all. In light of this, this global project aims to evaluate the extent to which countries across the world have implemented policies, instruments, and practices towards achieving SDG 4.

Jamaica was one of eight countries invited to participate in this international study. The University Council of Jamaica was selected to conduct the research on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Information (MOEY&I). The findings from the project will provide evidence to Ministers of Education who are considering strengthening learning pathways as an area of reform for HE systems.

The impetus for this study lies in the target areas outlined for the achievement of SDG 4 (Box 1) and the Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2015).

Box 1. Summary of targets: Education 2030; Incheon Declaration and Framework for action

- Promoting quality lifelong learning opportunities for all, in all settings.
- Providing equitable and increased access to quality technical and vocational education and training and higher education and research, with due attention to quality assurance.
- Providing flexible learning pathways and recognition, validation and accreditation of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education.
- Developing more inclusive, responsive and resilient education systems to meet the needs of youth and adults living in the context where crime and violence and pandemic continue to disrupt education and development.

Source: UNESCO, 2015

Education systems should consider all types of learning and allow access to and progression through HE and the achievement of a qualification by the learner. This necessitates the provision

of multiple pathways for individuals not only to enter into, but also to progress through HE. In its research proposal, IIEP identified some supporting instruments that enable such a fully articulated HE system. These include national qualifications frameworks (NQFs), quality assurance and accreditation (QAA), and career and academic advising and guidance (CAAG).

The benefits to be derived from a flexible system that is quality-assured are immeasurable. Each person can map a pathway for his/her own learning that is not only accessible and affordable but also allows that individual to progress from one level to another and to learn at his/her own pace in achieving a HE degree. Each individual can have confidence that, locally and internationally, his/her learning and certification will be accepted and recognized.

Another expected benefit is ensuring that those persons who are in vulnerable situations are able to access HE and lifelong learning opportunities. This requires countries to implement strategies targeting disadvantaged groups such as persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and the poor, and ensuring that these persons are able to access and progress through HE. This augurs well for the development of the human capital and higher earnings for Jamaicans which translates to improved economic status and the reduction of poverty, crime, and violence.

IIEP garnered preliminary information for the project through an international survey conducted in 2019, which was administered to the Ministries of (higher) education from all Member States. The survey was configured to collect a wider stock of information on existing policies, regulatory frameworks, instruments, and practices that support the development of FLPs in HE.

1.1. Context for Jamaica

IIEP identified eight countries that are at different stages in the development of FLP. This research is applicable to the Jamaican context as, over the last decade and more specifically the last four years, a number of initiatives have been undertaken to increase participation in HE² in Jamaica through alternative entry pathways. It has been recognized in Jamaica that HE can break the poverty cycle and, at the same time, reduce the levels of crime and violence. The project

² In this research the terms ‘higher education’ and ‘tertiary education’ are used interchangeably. The terms refer to all post-secondary education, from ISCED Level 4 to ISCED Level 8.

therefore allowed for an assessment of the national strategies for HE that form part of the *Vision 2030 Jamaica National Development Plan* (PIOJ, 2009) and the progress that has been made in relation to the achievement of ‘world class education and training.’

1.2. National priorities for HE

Jamaica has promulgated four key strategies for HE in relation to its long-term development plan (*Vision 2030*) for world-class education and training. These are:

- 1) Expansion of mechanisms to provide access to education and training for all, including unattached youth.
- 2) Promotion of a culture of learning among the general populace.
- 3) Establishment of a NQF to facilitate seamless articulation between HE providers.
- 4) Strengthening the mechanisms to align training with the demands of the labour market.

These strategies have been pursued through a number of initiatives, which are encapsulated in the following goals:

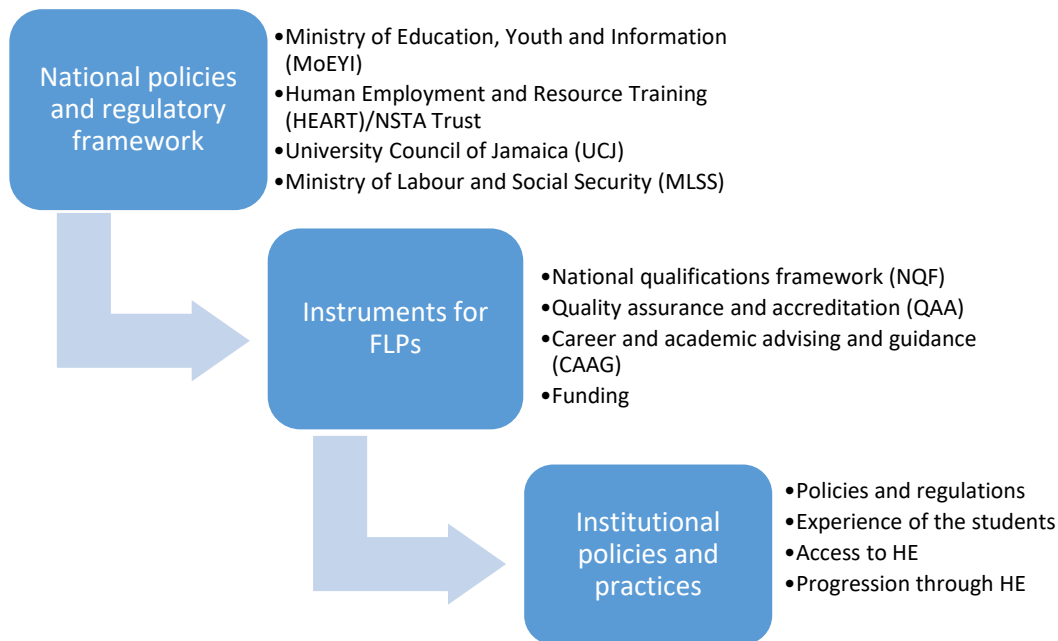
- (i) Developing alternative pathways into HE.
- (ii) Increasing enrolment in HE and having at least 80 per cent of the eligible cohort participating in post-secondary education.
- (iii) Optimizing existing resources for workforce development.
- (iv) Expanding access to training, certification, and employment.

Regarding the 80 per cent target, gross enrolment in tertiary education was 28.68 per cent (PIOJ, 2018). So, there is considerable room for improvement, especially through *Vision 2030*. Another matter for contemplation is the gender inequality in the participation in HE. Almost two-thirds (64.3 per cent) of students enrolled in an ISCED Level 5 programme in 2016 were women; this rose to 71.3 per cent in 2018. The root cause of these inequalities should be identified as they seem to be magnified from one level of education to the next. In fact, in 2018, 61.6 per cent of women were enrolled in a post-secondary non-tertiary programme compared to 38.45 per cent of men (UIS, 2020).

Overall, these goals address issues relating to access, participation, funding, and equity in HE and aim to create an integrated HE sector which promotes lifelong learning. This study will

investigate the policies and regulatory framework and supporting instruments that promote the achievement of these goals, particularly in providing flexible pathways for entering into and progressing through HE across the various institutions with an emphasis on equity (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Objectives of the research project in Jamaica



Source: Elaborated by authors

The policy and regulatory framework of the MOEY&I and the linkages with national bodies and selected HEIs form the core of this project. The national instruments covered in the research were the NQF-J, QAA and CAAG.

Another important aspect of the project involved the linkages between the national policies and initiatives and the institutional policies and practices, and the impact on the experience of students.

1.3. Focus and scope of the research study

Given the above goals, and in line with the objectives of this international research project, the case study on Jamaica will seek to evaluate:

- (i) The effectiveness of the policies, regulatory frameworks, instruments, and practices in establishing FLPs within HEIs, using selected institutions in Jamaica in the case study.

- (ii) The extent to which the selected institutions have developed policies to promulgate FLPs for students to access, progress through, transfer, and complete a HE degree, and to support transition into the labour market.
- (iii) The effects that such policies have on disadvantaged groups in Jamaica, particularly those from lower socio-economic groups, as defined by PATH.
- (iv) The lessons and best practice learned from the experience in Jamaica regarding the key enablers and inhibiting factors in the implementation of FLPs in HE.

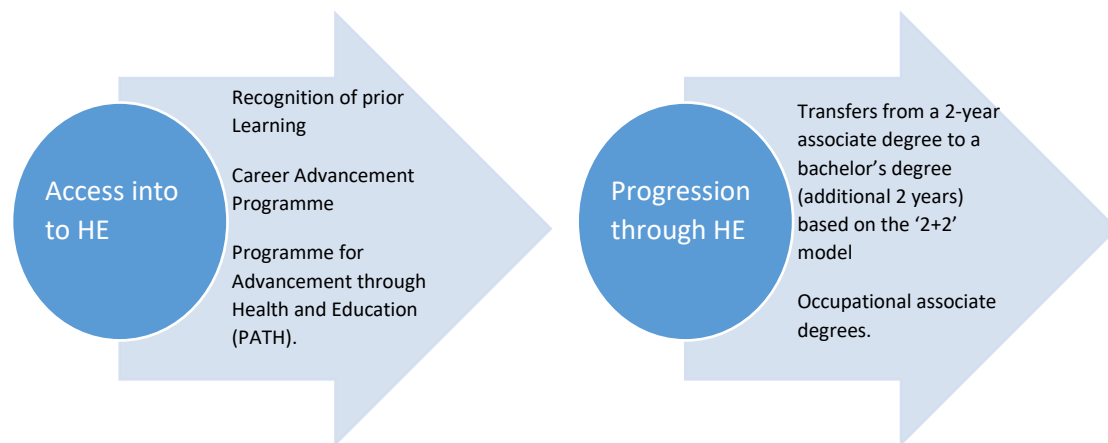
The case study on Jamaica will address the following research questions:

1. What are the **policies, regulatory frameworks, instruments, and practices** that support FLPs in HE?
2. How **effective** are these policies, regulatory frameworks, instruments, and practices in establishing FLPs and building closer linkages between and within HE levels and institutions?
3. How does the establishment of FLPs **influence** the access, progression, transfer, completion, and transition to the labour market of those identified as **disadvantaged** groups?
4. What lessons can be learned from the experience regarding the **key enablers** and **inhibiting factors** in the implementation of FLPs in HE?

The study at institutional level is outlined in Figure 2. The areas covered are:

- (i) Flexibility in pathways for admission **into** HE, with emphasis on:
 - (a) Prior learning assessment (PLA);
 - (b) Career Advancement Programme (CAP);
 - (c) Pathway for Advancement through Health and Education (PATH).
- (ii) Flexibility in progression **through** HE, with emphasis on:
 - (a) Credit transfer (CT) system;
 - (b) Occupational Associate Degree (OAD).

Figure 2. Scope for FLPs in HE in Jamaica



Source: Elaborated by authors

The project team also conducted a baseline study of FLPs in three selected HEIs in Jamaica.

1.4. Methodology for the case study

For the purposes of this study, a literature review was conducted on the development of HE in Jamaica, the governance and management structure, the national goals and policies for implementing FLPs, and the measures that have been pursued at national and institutional levels to implement FLPs in the HE system in Jamaica.

Interviews conducted at both national and institutional levels zeroed in on the implementation of the existing national goals, policy and instruments in support of FLP, and how these have impacted the experience of the students, including the most vulnerable ones. The research also explored how these policies and practices fostered equity and increased the participation of Jamaicans in HE, as supported by available data.

A list of the interviews with national stakeholders is provided in Table 1. These interviews sought to determine the objectives of FLP at the national level, and the extent to which the relevant national bodies implement the national policy and instruments for FLP in practice, and conduct evaluation to inform further policy-making.

Table 1. List showing interviews conducted at national bodies

National organizations/ agencies	Date of interview	No.	Role of the representatives	Format of the interview
Ministry of Education Youth and Information	15 October 2019	3	Permanent Secretary in charge of Operations; Chief Technical Officer for Education; Technical Officer for Tertiary Education	Face to face
Ministry of Labour and Social Security	20 September 2019	4	Permanent Secretary in charge of Operations; Director for Manpower Services; Director for, Research and Analysis; Director for Labour Market Information/Exchange	Face to face
University Council of Jamaica	23 September 2019	3	Executive Director; Technical Officer for Quality Assurance; Technical Officer for Development of Standards	Face to face
Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission	23 September 2019	3	Commissioner/Executive Director; Technical Officer for the National Qualifications Framework; Director for Standards and Legislation	Face to face
Statistical Institute of Jamaica	25 September 2019	3	Director General; Statisticians	Face to face
Jamaica Employers Federation	24 September 2019	1	Chief Executive Officer	Face to face
Private Sector Organization of Jamaica	15 October 2019	2	Chief Executive Officer; Manager for Finance and Operations	Face to face

Source: Elaborated by authors

The interviews at the institutions sought to evaluate the alignment of the institutional policies and practices to the national policies and named instruments, and determine the extent to which these have been implemented. The experience of the students was important to ascertain the extent to which the institutional practices created opportunities for increasing the participation of students in HE. The policies and practices explored at the selected institutions are represented in Table 2.

Table 2. Areas of focus in the interviews with the selected institutions

Higher education institution (HEI)	How does it support FLPs?
HEI #1: University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech)	Public national university Formal qualifications Alternative admissions Prior learning Transfer of credits Partnership agreements Internal transfers (programmes)
HEI #2: Northern Caribbean University (NCU)	Private university Formal qualifications Alternative admissions Prior learning Transfer of credits Partnership agreements
HEI #3: Moneague College	Multi-disciplinary college, public entity Formal qualifications Alternative admissions Prior learning Pre-college programme Skills-based learning

Source: Elaborated by authors

Interviews were therefore held with key institutional administrators tasked with the responsibilities for policies and initiatives for FLPs, as well as focus group discussions with students and alumni in relation to their experiences. The focus group discussions with students included those who accessed HE based on the recognition of prior learning, as well as those who transferred between programmes within and between institutions. The interviews with alumni were geared at identifying how their experience impacted their transition into the labour market or further studies. Another intended outcome of these interviews was the identification of good practices for FLP at the selected institutions. The stakeholders who were interviewed at the selected three (3) institutions are given in tables 3, 4, and 5.

Table 3. Institutional stakeholders interviewed at the University of Technology, Jamaica

Position at the institution	Date of interview	No.	Role of persons interviewed	Format of the interview
Vice-President for Academic Affairs	15–16 October 2019	4	Vice-President for Academic Affairs; Head for Distance Learning; Planning and Development Manager; and Registrar	Face to face
Head/Coordinator of Quality Assurance	15–16 October 2019	2	Head of Quality Assurance and Coordinator of Prior Learning Assessment	Face to face
Deans of Faculty and/or Heads of Department	15–16 October 2019	6	Deans of Faculty and/or Heads of Department: Hospitality, Natural Sciences, Health Sciences, Business	Face to Face
Head of Placement/Career Counsellor	15–16 October 2019	1	Head of Placement/Career Counsellor	Face to Face
Registrar/Research Officer/Head of Statistics	15–16 October 2019	1	Head, Planning and Development	Face to face
Students and graduates (focus group)	15–16 October 2019	1	President, Students' Union	Face to face
	15–16 October 2019	5	Students and graduates (focus group), entered through flexible pathways: PLA, PATH programme	Face to face
	15–16 October 2019	4	Student transfers from one programme to another, '2+2' model	Face to face

Source: Elaborated by authors

Table 4. Institutional stakeholders interviewed at Moneague College

Position at the institution	Date of interview	No.	Role of persons interviewed	Format of the interview
Vice-President for Academic Affairs	30 October 2019	1	Vice-Principal for Academic Affairs	Face to face
Head/Coordinator of Quality Assurance	30 October 2019	1	Head/Coordinator of Quality Assurance	Face to face
Deans of Faculty and/or Heads of Department	30 October 2019	4	Dean of Faculty and/or Heads of Department: Sciences, Humanities, Business and Hospitality	Face to face
Head of Placement/Career Counsellor	30 October 2019	1	Career/Guidance Counsellor and Placement Officer	Face to face
Registrar/Research Officer/Head of Statistics	4 December 2019	1	Registrar	Face to face
Students and graduates (focus group)	30 October 2019	5	Student transfers from one programme to another '2+2' model	Face to face
	30 October 2019	5	Entered through Flexible Pathways, CAP certification	Face to face
	30 October 2019	1	Graduate	Face to face
JBTE Office, UWI, Mona	11 November 2019	2	Director and Administrator	Face to face

Source: Elaborated by authors

Table 5. Institutional stakeholders interviewed at the Northern Caribbean University

Position at the Institution	Date of Interview	No.	Role of Persons Interviewed	Format of the Interview
Vice-President for Academic Affairs	6 December 2019	8	Vice-President for Academic Administration; Vice-President for of Research; Associate VP for Academic Affairs; AVP Academic Administration	Face to face
Head/Coordinator of Quality Assurance	12 February 2019	2	Head/Coordinator of Quality Assurance	Face to face
Deans of Faculty and/or Heads of Department	6 December 2019	5	Deans of Faculty and/or Heads of Department: Nursing, Humanities and Behavioural Sciences, Business, Mathematics, Natural Sciences	Face to face
Head of Placement/Career Counsellor	6 December 2019	1	Career Services/Guidance Counsellor and Placement Officer	Face to face
Registrar/Research Officer/Head of Statistics	6 December 2019	2	Registrar and Head of Statistics	Face to face
Students and graduates (focus group)	12 February 2020	1	Head of student movement	Face to face
	12 February 2020	3	Students and graduates (focus group), transfer from one programme to another, '2+2' model	Face to face
	6 December 2019	5	Students and graduates (focus group), entered through flexible pathways: CAP certification	Face to face

Source: Elaborated by authors

1.5. Data availability

Data concerning FLPs were sourced from the institutions and from national organizations such as the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) and the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ). In preparation for the interviews, the UIS data template was shared with the MOEY&I, STATIN, and the registrar/statistician at each institution involved in the study. The team was unable to

access the required data as neither the national bodies nor the institutions had been keeping track of the students who accessed HE without the formal entry requirements. Secondary data were available from the MOEY&I and the PIOJ, based on the annual census conducted by each of these two bodies. This information was mainly on total enrolment collected and the statistics published in the form of annual reports. These data were used in this project. The MLSS had data on the amount of funding distributed to its PATH recipients in the HE system.

1.6. Structure

The national report comprises six chapters.

Chapter 1 outlines the rationale and relevance of the research, and provides details of the design of the project.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the sector, including the context, key features and structure of HE in Jamaica. The legislative arrangements and specific programmes undertaken by the Jamaican government to effect FLPs and increase participation of students in HE, including initiatives aimed at ensuring equity in access to and progression through HE, are outlined.

Chapter 3 focuses on the evaluation of system-level policies, national instruments, and practices that support FLPs in Jamaica's HE sector. Emphasis is given to the effectiveness of the CAP, OAD, PLA and PATH in enabling increased access to higher education in Jamaica. Inhibiting factors and priorities for the future are delineated.

Chapter 4 explores in detail FLPs practices within institutions, with focus on PLA, CAP, PATH, OAD, and CT, and evaluates the effectiveness of these practices, including through the experiences of students. The application of the NQF-J, QAA, and career placement within the three selected HEIs is evaluated, as well as the impact of these programmes in enabling vulnerable groups in Jamaica to access and progress through HE.

Finally, the findings in relation to any linkages among policies, national instruments, and practices, and recommendations for enhancing FLPs in HE are documented in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2. The HE landscape in Jamaica

Globally, transformations in HE have been dynamic. The sector has evolved in terms of the types and number of institutions, programmes, instructional modalities, and student participation, to name just a few areas of change. These changes have enabled increased accessibility to, availability and portability of HE. Despite these developments, however, access to HE is restricted for the most vulnerable groups in society, mainly for socio-economic and political reasons. Vulnerable groups vary from country to country and may include women, people with disabilities, and the poor in society.

The scope of this research covers equity in access to quality HE in order to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development. The SDG 4, which forms part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, advocates measures to ensure that the most vulnerable groups in society are able to benefit from a long-term reduction in poverty.

The commitment of Jamaica towards achieving sustainable development is evident in the strategies being currently pursued and contained in the *Vision 2030* long-term development plan to make ‘Jamaica the place of choice to live, raise families, and do business’. *Vision 2030* aims to actualize sustainable prosperity and inclusive growth, equity, and good governance. ‘World class education and training’ is one of the pillars for attaining that goal of empowering Jamaicans to achieve their fullest potential. Through a series of three-year Medium-Term Socio-Economic Policy Frameworks (MTFs), priority strategies and actions under each of the national outcomes have been identified for implementation. As stated in Chapter 1, the Education 2030 plan also has **four key strategies** in relation to first-class education and training, targeted at the HE level. These are:

- 1) Expansion of mechanisms to provide access to education and training for all, including unattached youth.
- 2) Promotion of a culture of learning among the general populace.

- 3) Establishment of a national qualifications framework to facilitate seamless articulation between HE providers.
- 4) Strengthening the mechanisms to align training with the demands of the labour market.

This chapter seeks to provide an overview of the development, transformation, and current status of the HE landscape in Jamaica based on available literature. A number of key issues are explored, such as the governance and management of the sector, policies and regulations for HE, the role of national bodies, existing instruments for HE, types and levels of HEIs and programme offerings, and stakeholder participation in HE, including among disadvantaged groups, as well as recent initiatives geared at increasing flexibility in access to, progression through, and completion of a HE degree. The current model for HE, discerned from the literature review, is presented within the context of equity and equality, as well as the Vision 2030 goal of actualizing world-class education and training in Jamaica. The next section gives the background to the development of HE in Jamaica.

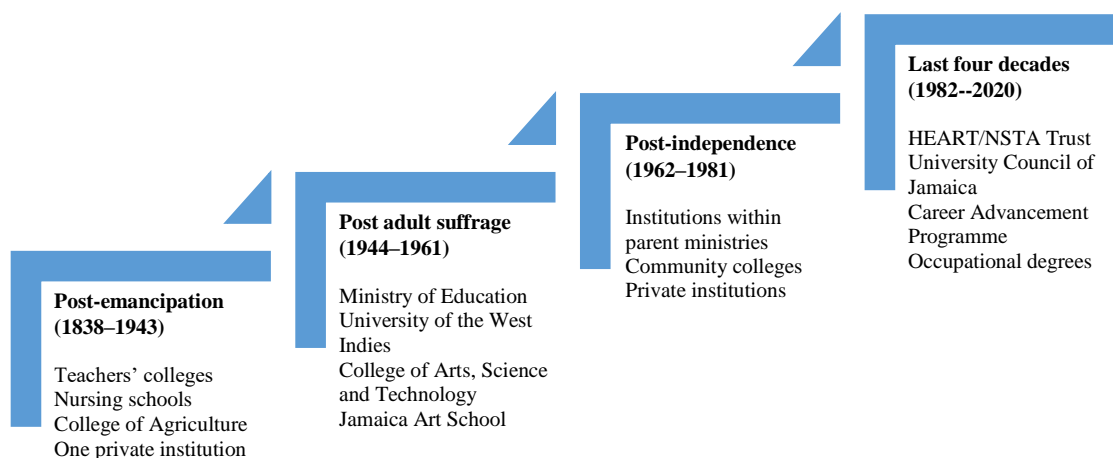
2.1. Background and context for HE in Jamaica

The emergence of a HE in Jamaica can be traced back to as early as 1838, post-emancipation period, when it was determined that a trained local workforce was required to fill the gap in labour supply. Suffice to say, since then successive national administrators have been committed to actualizing economic growth and development through the provision of an educated and trained labour force. The sector has grown significantly, both at the post-secondary and tertiary levels. Four major transitional periods in HE in Jamaica are depicted as contained in Figure 3.

The Mico was apparently the first HE provider to be established in the post-emancipation period. This institution opened its doors in 1838 to train teachers for the primary schools. Other teachers' colleges and some nursing schools were also established in this period, from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. The West Indian Training School (later renamed the West Indies College; now the Northern Caribbean University) appeared to be the first private training entity to be established; this was in 1907. Later in 1910, the Government Farm School geared at training workers for the agriculture sector was founded; it transitioned to the College of

Agriculture and later merged with a teacher's college to become the College of Agriculture, Science and Education. This was followed by the West Indies School of Public Health (entity training public health nurses, inspectors, and medical personnel) which was founded in 1943 and later incorporated into the University of Technology, Jamaica.

Figure 3. Major milestones in the growth and development of HE in Jamaica



Source: Elaborated by authors

Another period of growth coincided with the granting of full adult suffrage in 1944. The first institution offering bachelor's degree programmes, the University of the West Indies (UWI), opened its doors in 1948 as a college of the University of London. It became a university in 1962 by way of an Act of Parliament. The Jamaica Institute of Technology was founded in 1958 and renamed a year later as the College of Arts, Science and Technology; it is now the University of Technology, Jamaica. The Jamaica School of Art (1950), now the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Art, was also established during this period.

Jamaica gained independence in 1962. This led to a significant growth in the sector as a result of a surge in the demand for qualified Jamaicans for the workforce. There was a burgeoning of institutions and facilities geared at developing Jamaica's human capital. Some of the institutions that emerged were the Vocational Training Development Institute (VTDI, 1970), and a number of community colleges which catered for the education and training needs of the community. The expansion extended to Government Ministries which established training institutes to provide a cadre of skilled individuals to meet the specific employment needs in the

profession. For example, the Dental Auxiliary Training School was established by the Ministry of Health in 1970 to train dental auxiliary personnel to perform basic dental care work among children up to the age of 15 years. Similarly, the Ministry of National Security and Justice opened its own training school in 1976. Other government training units such as the Administrative Staff College and the Finance and Accounts College of Training were also established during this period.

Apart from UWI, which is a regional entity, all public entities were originally under the control of the Government of Jamaica, and, as such, aspects of their operations were regulated by the Education Act (Education Act, 1965) and/or the respective acts of parliament. However, these entities were only awarding certifications up to the diploma level. Over time, a few of the institutions were upgraded and others transferred to the MOEY&I. The Education Act makes provision for some institutions to be granted the authority to award degrees. Legislations have been enacted for some public educational institutions, such as, the University of Technology, Jamaica (University of Technology, Jamaica Act, 1995), the College of Agriculture, Science and Education (College of Agriculture, Science and Education Scheme, 1995), and The Mico University College (The Mico University College Scheme Order, 2006). The scheme order confers the authority to grant degrees and has been awarded to selected tertiary colleges. Some tertiary colleges have been offering bachelor's programmes through franchise arrangements. This is discussed later in the report.

Private institutions also played a significant role in the massification and diversification of HE in Jamaica during the post-independence period. Apart from West Indies College, which was given a Charter for University in 1999 (and renamed as the Northern Caribbean University, NCU), other private entities established include the Jamaica Theological Seminary (1970), the Institute of Management and Production (1976), WTG Systems Limited, Education and Training, the Eagle Foundation for Enterprise: Education and Training, and the College of Insurance and Professional Studies. Some of these institutions were established as non-profit private providers and were under the control of churches (faith-based), while others were for-profit private entities. Many of the existing private entities provided certification in business and specific technical professions, and were mainly funded through student fees. Though the faith-based institutions

received endowments, their main source of income was through student fees. Over time, some of the private entities closed down and new ones emerged.

The establishment of the Human Employment and Resource Training Trust (HEART Act, 1982) aimed at creating a skills training and employment programme for Jamaica boosted skills training in Jamaica. Consistent with the name, the Trust was established to finance skills training for the purpose of employment in Jamaica. Institutes offering a variety of skills training at the post-secondary level covering stenography, beauty, clothing, construction, automotive, agriculture, hospitality, and food skills training programmes were created through the Trust. Among these were the Stony Hill Academy (now South-Eastern Institute) and the School of Cosmetology (now College of Beauty Services) both founded in 1984, the Portmore HEART Academy (now the HEART College of Construction) in 1985 and the Garmex Academy for Apparel Skills in 1986.

In 1994, vocational training centres operated by the MLSS were vested in HEART Trust/National Training Agency (NTA). The education and training functions of HEART Trust/NTA were organized in three categories, namely: institution-based training (IBT), community-based training (CBT), and enterprise-based training (EBT). The number of institutes and colleges providing training and certification in a range of skills stands at 26.

The last four decades have been a dynamic period of transformation of HE in Jamaica. Apart from the establishment of post-secondary training institutes and tertiary institutions, a number of agencies and committees were authorized or commissioned to develop, expand, streamline, support, and make the sector more efficient. Among these were the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), the National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET), the Council for Community Colleges of Jamaica (CCCJ), and the Taskforce on Education. These are further explored in the next sections of this chapter.

2.2. Structure of the HE sector in Jamaica

An evaluation of the HE sector in Jamaica will reveal it to be characterized by diversity in the types, sizes, and control of institutions/entities, modalities for teaching and learning, levels and disciplines of programmes (Table 6) and the involvement of participants, players, and

stakeholders. This more accurately reflects and supports FLPs and granular data collection in the Jamaican context.

In order to fully understand the structure of HE in Jamaica, it is important to recognize that while HE has been adopted to include post-secondary education and training, and tertiary education, the current education sector continues to reflect these two as distinct levels.

Table 6. Features of the HE sector in Jamaica

Descriptors	Feature of the HE sector
Types of institution	Grades 12 and 13 (post-secondary); brokers, general providers; colleges/institutes; university college; university; training units.
Nature of the institutions	Public; private; faith-based; for-profit; not-for-profit.
Types of programmes	Pre-college certification; certificates; diplomas; CVQs and/or NVQs; associate degrees; bachelor's degree; postgraduate diplomas; master's degrees; doctoral degrees; certification through short courses.
Delivery modalities	Face-to-face; blended (Face- to-face and online combined); fully online; part-time/full-time; extension campuses; broker.
Specializations/majors	Education (early childhood, primary, secondary, guidance and counselling, special education), theology, business, hospitality and tourism, management, agriculture, engineering, information technology, performing and visual arts, communication, sciences (pure), health sciences, theology, counselling, psychology.
Number of institutions	18 tertiary institutions in the public education system (MOEY&I); 23 listed as independent tertiary institutions (PIOJ); 255 independent post-secondary institutions (MOEY&I).
Quality assurance	287 accredited programmes and 3 accredited institutions (UCJ).

Source: Elaborated by authors

Students are able to pursue programmes spanning ISCED levels 3 and 4 in grades 12 and 13 (which are features of the high schools) as well as in the HEI as pre-college programmes. This has increased access to HE and allowed for greater participation. The normal use of the ISCED classification is for statistical tabulation at the institutional level; however, in the Jamaican context, it speaks to the placement of an individual within a level.

The formal requirements for entry into tertiary education in Jamaica are five (5) passes at the Caribbean Secondary Education (CSEC) level including mathematics and English (Box 2).

Box 2. Formal entry requirements for tertiary education

The normal entry requirements for tertiary education are five (5) Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) passes, including mathematics and English. This is offered by the regional certification body, the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC). CSEC is comparable in standards to the GCE O-levels, which was initially used in Jamaica.

2.2.1. Post-secondary education and training

Most of the training programmes that are supported/financed/coordinated by the HEART Trust/NTA continue to be classified as post-secondary education and training (PIOJ, 2018). Included in this category (post-secondary education and training) are certifications provided by technical high and vocational/agricultural schools, as well as training units within specific Government Ministries such as the Ministry of Security and the Ministry of Transport. These programmes are of a technical and vocational nature with a focus on providing a skilled workforce for the labour market. Whereas the duration of the programmes vary from three months to one year, there are exceptions where the training exceeds one year. The certifications awarded were usually named according to the entity offering the programme and/or the sector.

Another post-secondary education avenue was provided through the Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning (JFLL). The entity offered a ‘second chance’ opportunity for persons who did not complete secondary education, uncertified school leavers, and unattached youth to pursue courses and programmes ranging from basic literacy and numeracy to a high-school diploma. Participants had the option of pursuing their CSEC subjects to meet normal matriculation requirements for tertiary education. Recently (2017/2018), JFLL was merged with HEART Trust/NTA/ HEART/NSTA Trust as a strategy to improve the coordination and efficiency and effectiveness of post-secondary education and adult learning.

Sixth forms

Sixth forms (which are typically grades 12 and 13) also provide opportunities for post-secondary education. Sixth forms were a feature of only the traditional high schools in Jamaica and catered to an elite class of students who, having gained the formal entry requirements of five or more GCE O-level (which was later replaced with CSEC), pursued the GCE A-level certification. It models the British system. The GCE A-levels were replaced by the Caribbean Advanced

Proficiency Examination (CAPE), another certification offered by CXC. Preparation for CAPE is also provided by community colleges and private entities. Students sit the examination annually in June/July. The University of the West Indies admission requirements are also modelled on the British system and require CAPE units for matriculation into its three-year bachelor's programme. The traditional sixth forms are also referred to as grades 12 and 13.

Grades 12 and 13 are now a feature of non-traditional high schools (secondary schools that were upgraded to high schools). These were created through the implementation of the Career and Advancement Programme (CAP), which was introduced in 2010. CAP allows students to resit CSEC subjects or sit CAPE units and at the same time pursue skills training leading to the National Vocational Qualification of Jamaica (NVQ-J) certification. The NVQ-J certification is awarded by the National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET) which is a Division of HEART/NSTA. Students in Grades 12 and 13 also have the option of pursuing the CAPE Associate degree which was developed by CXC and comprises select CAPE units. CXC is currently working with a number of institutions to accept the degree for matriculation into year 2 of the ISCED level 6 programme. A student who has received both a CAPE Associate degree and an NVQ at minimum of a level 2, is in an enviable position with respect to employment.

Private post-secondary providers

There are private providers which offer post-secondary education and training geared towards facilitating students resitting CSEC subjects in order to meet the formal requirements for tertiary education. In some cases, these providers also offer short courses or introductory training for specific professions. There are 255 independent post-secondary institutions listed in the directory of institutions published by the MOEY&I. The regulations (1980) to the Education Act defines 'independent school' as any school at which education is provided for 20 or more students between the ages of 8 and 19 years, and which is not a public educational institution. This seems to imply that independent schools should really be catering for primary into secondary education level programmes and may include some post-secondary certification. This needs to be streamlined.

2.2.2. Tertiary education

Tertiary education (PIOJ, 2018) refers to the educational activities of both public and private institutions and the contribution of programmes to developing the skills and intellectual capacity of professionals, senior officials, and technicians for the local, regional, and global labour force. The formal entry requirements for tertiary education (Box 2) are used for the two-year associate and four-year bachelor's programmes at universities, community colleges, and teachers' colleges. UWI, which has offered degrees since its inception, requires six CAPE units for matriculation into its three-year bachelor's degree programmes.

Public tertiary institutions

Public tertiary institutions are under the control of the MOEY&I. The MOEY&I plays an integral role in the governance of these public tertiary institutions by way of financing, through subvention, the costs associated with salaries of the employees, and aspects of operational activities. There are 18 tertiary institutions listed as part of the public education system (see Table 7).

Table 7. Public tertiary institutions

Number of institutions
3 universities
1 university college
3 multi-disciplinary institutions, one of which is responsible for training in agriculture
1 physical education college
1 visual and performing arts college
4 teachers' colleges
5 community colleges

Source: MOEY&I, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020

The Caribbean Maritime University, which was initially housed in the Ministry of Transport, was awarded university status in 2017 by the Government of Jamaica and is now within the ambit of the MOEY&I.

The three public universities and six other public tertiary institutions are located in the Kingston Metropolitan Area; two in St Catherine, two in St James and five across the other 10 parishes. Only five of the tertiary institutions are empowered to offer degree programmes and are referred to as 'degree-granting' institutions. Four teachers' colleges and five community colleges do not

have degree-granting authority. They offer bachelor's and postgraduate level programmes through franchise or partnership arrangements. The degree programmes offered at the community colleges are awarded by the Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica (CCCJ), while the teacher education programmes are awarded by the University of the West Indies through an agreement/memorandum with Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica (TCJ). CCCJ and TCJ form part of the HE sector in Jamaica, but neither is an awarding body. This is an anomaly which requires attention as it does not accord with quality-assurance definitions. Yet, the Minister has the power to grant them this authority.

Most of the programmes offered at public tertiary institutions are delivered using the full-time modality. Over time, a number of these institutions have developed their own ICT infrastructure and transferred a number of their programmes to online delivery as a means of reducing costs. The community colleges and multidisciplinary institutions began offering programmes based on the UCJ's '2+2' model for a bachelor's degree. This model incorporates two years for an associate degree, and an additional two years of upper-level courses towards a bachelor's degree. Whereas many students pursuing the associate programmes do so on a full-time basis, the upper two years cater mainly to part-time students who work and study. As a consequence, the courses at the upper levels are mostly offered in the evenings. The colleges also offer their associate degree programmes on a part-time basis, catering for those persons who work and study. Some institutions established extension sites in rural towns where they provide access to their programmes on a part-time basis. These interventions have enabled greater participation in tertiary education, especially given that, in 2018, slightly more than half of the population was living in the rural areas (UIS, 2020).

Private tertiary institutions

Private tertiary institutions continue to play a pivotal role in the expansion of HE in Jamaica. These entities are required to register with the Registrar of Companies to be recognized as a legal entity. While these institutions do not form part of the annual data collected and analysed by the MOEY&I, they are included in the annual census. Some of these institutions are quality-assured by the UCJ (UCJ, 2019). Currently, there is one private university, two university colleges, and one college, while the other providers are recognized as institutes (Table 8). Two of these private entities, NCU and the University College of the Caribbean (trading as University of the

Commonwealth Caribbean) have been granted institutional accreditation and are listed as tertiary institutions by the MOEY&I. The other private providers are categorized as independent tertiary institutions by the MOEY&I.

Table 8. Private institutions in Jamaica

Number of institutions
1 university
2 university colleges
8 colleges
14 institutions

Source: MOEY&I, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020

The student population for the private tertiary institutions normally comprises working individuals. As such, many of the programmes at these institutions/entities are mostly part-time and there is flexibility in the system to include online or mixed delivery modalities, flexibility in scheduling to include early morning and/or evening classes, and flexible arrangements for the payment of fees. Some have also established extension sites, taking the programmes to the students. Quality assurance and accreditation provide recognition and acceptance of these programmes.

Overseas universities

A number of overseas universities have, over the last two decades, contributed to the development of human capital in Jamaica. These institutions have established extension sites or partnered with public tertiary institutions to offer programmes at ISCED levels 7 and 8 in the disciplines of educational management and business administration, providing greater access to master's programmes. Many of these institutions no longer operate in Jamaica.

2.3. Governance of the HE sector in Jamaica

The MOEY&I is the government arm that sets policy and provides policy direction for education in Jamaica. It was established in 1953, with responsibility for the management and administration of the public education system, from pre-primary education to HE in Jamaica (Education Act, 1965). The MOEY&I has organized its systems and processes based on the Education Act (Government of Jamaica, 1965).

The provisions in the Act clearly set out the powers of the Minister which include promoting education and ensuring that the policies implemented provide for a varied, comprehensive, coordinated education system where all Jamaicans can realize their fullest potential. The Act organizes education into 3 stages; primary, secondary, and tertiary (Box 3).

The oversight and management of teachers' colleges, community colleges, and training centres by the Minister is noteworthy. There is clarity with respect to the classification of institutions of HE as tertiary institutions vis-à-vis post-secondary education and training. The Minister has responsibility for maintaining and sustaining tertiary education to meet the requirements for growth and development in Jamaica (Box 4) and taking actions in relation to tertiary education.

The governance arrangements for all public educational institutions, including HE, are outlined in the Education Act. The Act requires the establishment of a board of management to govern public educational institutions. The Act also empowers the Minister, through the provision of a scheme of arrangements, to grant special powers and duties to the board of management of any institution for the advancement of education which it deems to be of vital importance to the socio-economic growth and development of Jamaica.

Box 3. Definitions taken from the Education Act, 1965 (and amended in 1980)

‘*Community college*’ means any educational institution providing tertiary education and offering a wide variety of professional, para-professional, vocational and academic programmes, or any of them, based on the needs of the community in which the college is based.

‘*Educational institution*’ means any school, technical institution, training centre, teachers’ college, community college, institution of higher education or such other institution as may be prescribed.

‘*Public educational institution*’ means any educational institution which is maintained by the Minister and includes any aided educational institution.

‘*Secondary school*’ means a school (or department of a school) that offers not less than a five-year course of educational training and experience for students who have attained the age of 11 years.

‘*Teachers’ college*’ – means any institution established for the purpose of training teachers for service in public educational institutions.

‘*Technical institution*’ – means any college, high school or other institution established for the purpose of providing for studies, training or research in technology, science, dance, music or art, or such other discipline as may be prescribed.

‘*Training centre*’ means any institution established for the purpose of providing education and training in any vocation requiring manual skill.

PART III. The Statutory System of Education

The statutory system of public education shall be organized in three stages:

- a) primary education, which shall consist of full-time education generally suitable to the requirements of students who are not over the age of 12 years and, for the purposes of this Act, shall include education at a pre-primary school;
- b) secondary education, which shall consist of full-time education generally suitable to the requirements of students who have attained the age of 11 years and are not over the age of 19 years;
- c) tertiary education, which shall consist of (i) full-time education other than primary or secondary education; (ii) part-time education; and (iii) leisure-time occupation in organized cultural training and recreative activities, available in pursuance of any provision made under this Act for further education for students who have attained the age of 15 years.

Source: Government of Jamaica, 1965

This scheme of arrangements has been exercised by the Minister and is reflected in the degree-granting authority given to the College of Agriculture, Science and Education, The Mico University College, and the College of Arts, Science and Technology (now UTech). The title of ‘university’ is granted to tertiary institutions using a charter and an Act of Parliament. This is only for public entities as there is a clear definition of ‘university’ which is attached to the quality assurance process. This anomaly needs correction as it can impact the quality process in the institution.

Box 4. Powers of the Minister of Education, Education Act, 1965

4. (1) Without prejudice to the generality the Minister shall have power:
- a) to establish schools in such places as he may think fit and to determine the classification of such schools;
 - b) to maintain or assist in maintaining schools, whether established by him or otherwise;
 - c) to establish, maintain and assist in maintaining such teachers' colleges and other institutions as he may consider necessary for the training of teachers and to take such other action as he may consider necessary to ensure that the requirements for teachers in public educational institutions will be satisfied;
 - d) to establish, maintain and assist in maintaining such technical institutions and training centres as he may consider necessary to fulfil the requirements for technical and vocational education;
 - e) to provide or assist in providing such facilities as he may think fit for tertiary education;
 - f) to provide, subject to such conditions as may be prescribed, such number of places in public educational institutions as he may from time to time determine;
 - g) subject to such conditions as may be prescribed, to render to any student or class of students such forms of assistance as may be necessary to enable such student or class of students to take full advantage of the educational facilities available;
 - h) (h) to provide for the grant of scholarships, exhibitions, bursaries and other financial assistance including loans for tertiary education.

Source: Government of Jamaica, 1965

The powers of the Minister of Education extends to the funding of HE. Public tertiary institutions are granted a subvention by the MOEY&I, which is based on the type of the institution and the approved positions and programme offering, and are accountable based on provisions of the Public Bodies Management and Accountability (PBMA) Act, 2017.

The vision of the MOEY&I is conveyed in the statement 'Every child can learn, every child must learn.' The Ministry policies and processes are aligned to this vision and are geared at ensuring that each learner in Jamaica maximises his/her potential in an enriching learner-centred environment, where there is maximum use of learning technologies, and a cadre of committed, qualified, competent, effective and professional educators and staff. The MOEY&I has maintained its goal of providing universal access to primary and secondary education.

The MOEY&I executes its administration of tertiary education in Jamaica through the Tertiary Unit and the Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission (J-TEC). The Tertiary Unit is responsible for the supervision of tertiary education institutions and ensures that their operations are cost effective, efficient, and at the level required of a first-class education and training institution. The unit plays a role in the appointment of staff and the management of the budget at public tertiary institutions. J-TEC was established as the national oversight body for the Jamaican tertiary education system. The commission was envisaged to perform regulatory, development, and

planning functions for the sector. Among the functions listed are the review and provision of advice on the financing of the sector, as well as the promotion, marketing, and dissemination of information about tertiary institutions in Jamaica. The J-TEC was responsible for the development of the NQF-J.

The Education Act therefore represents forward thinking and, through its provisions, allows for flexibility in the growth and development of HE, as the Minister deems fit and necessary. Apart from the MOEY&I, two other national bodies were established by law to provide governance of HE in Jamaica. They are the Human Employment and Resource Training Act (HEART Act, 1982) and the University Council of Jamaica Act (UCJ Act, 1987).

2.3.1. Human Employment and Resource Training/National Service Training Agency Trust (HEART/NSTA Trust)

The Human Employment and Resource Training/National Service Training Agency Trust (HEART/NSTA Trust), branded Jamaica's *human capital development agency*, was established through the HEART Act of 1982 to provide technical and vocational education and training. The Act, amended in 2019 as the HEART/NSTA Act, created a trust to finance the training and certification of persons for the purpose of improving national productivity and competitiveness and reducing unemployment in Jamaica. The Trust is funded through a 3 per cent payroll deduction levied on the payroll of qualified firms. This funding is used to finance and develop employment training programmes, assist in placing graduates, and promote employment projects. A list of some of the functions contained in the amended Act is provided in Box 5.

The 2019 amendment of the HEART Act facilitated the merger of the Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning (JFLL), the National Youth Service, and the Apprenticeship Board with HEART Trust/NTA. As stated earlier, the JFLL provides learning opportunities for adults who were not able to successfully complete secondary school education, including CSEC certification. The National Youth Service (1974) and the Apprenticeship Board (Apprenticeship Act, 1959) were established to address the high level of unemployment and academic underachievement among unattached youth. This merger allows for better coordination of all education and training and lifelong learning programmes offered to the unattached youth and adults.

Box 5. Some of the functions of HEART/NSTA Trust - extracted from Section 4 of the HEART/NSTA Act

The functions of the Trust shall be:

- a) to provide financing for technical and vocational education and training schemes for trainees;
- b) to develop technical and vocational training guidelines;
- c) to approve and certify courses to be pursued by persons pursuant to this Act;
- d) to take such steps as it considers necessary to establish and maintain high standards in technical and vocational education and training;
- e) to promote access to technical and vocational education and training
- f) to ensure that there an adequate number of persons trained for employment in the technical and vocational fields;
- g) to collaborate with other organizations and bodies in matters relating to technical and vocational education and training;
- h) to institute, review and maintain a system of assessment in relation to trainees;
- i) grant certifications and other awards or distinctions and to make reports on persons who are assessed pursuant to paragraph (h);
- j) to provide or assist in providing employment opportunities for trainees or the deployment of trainees in employment programmes to influence and implement Government policy through the Board to enable interventions to promote lifelong learning.

Source: Government of Jamaica, 2019

The HEART/NSTA Act also makes provision for the Trust to provide education and training as well as internship experiences, and ‘to establish an effective system to align the workforce to industry and national development needs, through the provision of education, training, character development, national service and work experience for trainees’ (Government of Jamaica, 2019, p. 4). The recent merger certainly lends itself to efficiency and a more structured funding model for CAP, adult education, and lifelong learning, as well other post-secondary education and training targeting unattached youth.

The HEART Act, which was previously amended in 1991, facilitated the entity’s former branding as the National Training Agency (HEART Trust/NTA). This National Council on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET) was established (1994) and operated under the auspices of HEART. The NCTVET had responsibility for developing competency standards for TVET programmes, accrediting programmes, developing assessments, and awarding certificates and diplomas to individuals who have demonstrated competence in vocational areas. These competency standards were industry-determined specifications for performance and state the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required by a worker in the execution of a particular role in the workplace. Competency level certifications, called the National Vocational Qualifications of Jamaica (NVQ-J), were also developed by NCTVET. These are

awarded from levels 1 to 8 as shown in Box 6 and are aligned to job responsibilities in the workplace.

Box 6. Levels of the NVQ-J certification

NVQ-J certification awarded according to the levels	
Level 1	Directly supervised worker
Level 2	Supervised skilled worker
Level 3	Supervisor
Level 4	Middle manager
Level 5	Manager
Level 6	Specialist
Level 7	Specialist/Multi-disciplined professional
Level 8	Specialist

Source: NCTVET, 2013

The NVQs have been used to develop a common Caribbean qualification known as Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQ). The CVQs, which are currently being awarded by CXC, are not equivalent to NVQs. The NVQ-J thus forms part of the TVET strategy in Jamaica, which is to expand the TVET sector in order to upskill the labour force and reduce youth unemployment.

The decision to establish the HEART Trust catapulted opportunities for education and training in Jamaica, although many may not have seen that link. The HEART Act was clear, including the following emphasis: ‘for employment *in Jamaica*.’ This is significant because the HEART/NSTA Trust is funded by a 3 per cent cess³ on private sector employers in Jamaica. The emphasis on training *in Jamaica* shows the link between the training it offers and the labour market. The political directorate at that time (1982) was prudent in providing education and training for the many people who had not completed secondary education and needed employability skills. The 1991 amendment was to account for certification; the latest adjustments created a seamless system based on access, equality, and equity, downplaying but not removing certification.

For many years, HEART Trust/NTA operated as an agency within the MOEY&I. It is significant that HEART/NSTA Trust now falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation. This enables a direct link to the economy and labour market.

In 2009, the then Board of Directors commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Jamaica to conduct a study on the future of HEART Trust/NTA. The report outlined the future through three

³ A form of tax charged/levied over and above the base tax liability.

lenses: today, tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow. The scenarios illustrated HEART's situation then (defined as 'today'), and its position within the subsequent five to 10 years ('tomorrow'). This new revision creates the third element, HEART's 'day after tomorrow', where HEART funds a seamless education and training system financed by employers and supporting their needs. Political administrations changed and the HEART mandate changed but the seeds of possibility had been sown in the minds of both the community colleges and the tertiary institutions. From all indications, this set the stage for HEART Trust/NTA to play a pivotal role in the integration of TVET in HE, thus creating a seamless HE and training system (Hayle, 2013).

2.3.2. University Council of Jamaica (UCJ)

The establishment of the University Council Jamaica (UCJ), the national external quality assurance agency (EQAA) for Jamaica, represented another significant development in tertiary (higher) education in Jamaica. The agency was established in 1987 through an Act of Parliament (Government of Jamaica, 1987) as a statutory body of the Ministry of Education. The mission of the UCJ was to 'increase the availability of university level training in Jamaica.' The functions (Box 7) and powers were written to reflect this mission. There have been mixed interpretations of the provisions of the UCJ Act. However, a legal opinion sought by the UCJ indicates that the Act as worded allows the UCJ to be responsive to any future needs of the HE sector. This research has substantiated those findings.

Box 7. The functions of the UCJ (extracted from the UCJ Act, 1987)

The function of the Council shall be to promote the advancement in Jamaica of education, learning and knowledge in the fields of science, technology and the arts by means of the grant of academic awards and distinctions and for that purpose:

- (a) to determine the conditions governing such awards and distinctions; and
- (b) to approve courses of study to be pursued by candidates to qualify for such grants, including, where appropriate, arrangements for training and experience in industry or commerce associated with such courses.

Source: Government of Jamaica, 1987

In the initial years, the UCJ worked with colleges and institutes to upgrade their diploma programmes to the level of a baccalaureate degree and, by doing so, ensured that the features and management of the institutions were appropriate to facilitate the delivery of programmes at the bachelor's level. These included the mission, governance and management, and quality of

programmes, including teaching and learning, assessment methods, the quality of students (and admission requirements), and learning resources. Essentially, the UCJ promoted the development of a functional internal quality assurance (IQA) system which ensured that bachelor's programmes offered at the institutions meet required standards of quality. The functions of the national body are consistent with that of an external quality assurance agency (Box 8).

Box 8. Roles of an external quality assurance agency

1. Assessments related to the initial opening of programmes and institutions (commonly called 'licensing' (or registration in some jurisdictions) and leading to the status of a publicly recognized entity);
2. Supervision of current functioning (commonly relating to minimum standards, also including the supervision of administration and finance);
3. Accreditation (frequently of advanced levels of quality);
4. Professional certification of graduates in chosen professional fields; and
5. The provision of information on the recognition and accreditation status of both institutions and programmes.

Source: UNESCO, 2006

The agency developed standards for its registration and quality assurance and accreditation processes, as well as standards for the respective disciplines. These standards are applied to both private and public HE providers and focus on institutional effectiveness and students' success. The UCJ uses accreditation as its method of quality assurance. This process involves both a self-evaluation of the institutional systems and a peer review by an external team. There are two aspects to judging the quality of an institution and a programme; the appropriateness of the institution's mission and programme/s (fitness of purpose); and the extent to which the internal systems and processes of the institution ensures the quality of its programmes (fitness for purpose). Therefore, the QAA process of the UCJ makes for an equitable HE system as each institution is evaluated against its mission. The mission of each institution is different, and as a result, there can be no comparison of institutions. Another commendable feature of the QAA process is its voluntary nature. However, by virtue of the local and international recognition and acceptance accorded to QAA, the process is mandatory.

It is important to note that the UCJ does have the authority to grant academic awards (Box 7). This power has been exercised and applied to public HEIs that do not have the authority to award degrees. A case in point is The Mico University College, which offered UCJ-approved degree programmes prior to being granted a scheme order by the MOEY&I. Similarly, Caribbean Maritime University degrees were offered as UCJ-approved degree programmes before the

institution was granted ‘university’ status. The UCJ uses its QAA process to validate these programmes for the UCJ-approved degree status.

The UCJ developed the Tertiary Qualifications Framework (TQF) for its QAA process. The revised TQF (Table 9) mapped all types of existing tertiary education programmes at the time of development as well as some post-secondary programmes based on the level of programme offering and admission requirements.

Table 9. The revised Tertiary Qualifications Framework (TQF)

Level	Qualification	Description	Minimum (Min.) requirements	Duration (full time)	Minimum credits assigned	Exceptions
8	Doctoral degree	Typically, a post-master's degree qualification. (I) Research doctorate assesses the quality and originality of research conducted in a written thesis. (II) Professional doctorate often combines lectures, seminars, assessment, and a dissertation/thesis.	Master's degree	Min. 3 years	Research doctorates – not typically credit-rated. Professional doctorates may carry a credit rating.	For learners accepted with bachelor's degree, minimum number of credits: 120+. Degree classification (1st class or upper second class) may be used as an admission requirement in some cases.
7	Master's degree	Postgraduate qualification. Taught and/or research-focused learning modalities may apply in some contexts. The taught mode normally combines lectures, assessment, and project work. The research mode may include taught components (often with an emphasis on research methodology) and a research thesis/dissertation as the main assessment.	Bachelor's degree	Min. 12 months	30	MPhil typically bears a target number of credits. Credit weightings may vary from one discipline/subject to another.
6	Postgraduate Diploma/ Certificate	Postgraduate qualification. Denotes competence in a specialized field.	Relevant bachelor's degree or equivalent	1 year	30	Legal Education Certificate MIND – Diploma in Tax Audit and Revenue Administration.

Level	Qualification	Description	Minimum (Min.) requirements	Duration (full time)	Minimum credits assigned	Exceptions
5	Bachelor's degree	An undergraduate qualification. Traditionally termed the first degree. Denotes completion of a university-level programme, 4 years beyond CSEC level.	5 CSEC passes (typically: mathematics and English) or the equivalent	4 years	120	UWI – 3 years post-A-level/CAPE admission requirement. UWI/UTech - BEng
4	Associate degree/applied/ Occupational Associate degree	Tied to a particular profession or occupation. In some cases, this qualification is equivalent to years 1 and 2 of a 4-year bachelor's.	5 CSEC passes (typically: mathematics and English) or the equivalent	2 years	60	Applied Associate of Science Degree in Engineering
3	Diploma (undergraduate)	Normally a stand-alone credential. Differs from the associate degree in that a larger proportion of the credits is assigned to the practical component.	5 CSEC passes (including Mathematics and English) or the equivalent	2 years	60	Teachers' Diploma – 3 years; UTech Diploma – 3 years; Edna Manley Diploma – 3 years (these diplomas, if still in use, may be ascribed up to 90 credits). 30 credits may be used in diplomas with shorter cycles.
2	Certificate	First-level qualification. May be assessed by institutions for acceptance to another level. Could also be a subset of a level, e.g., the first year of a bachelor's degree. May also be a specialized qualification, acquired by persons who already have qualifications at a higher level.	5 CSEC passes (typically: Mathematics and English) or the equivalent	1 year	30	Nursing Certificate – 3 years. Below 30 credits may be used in some subject-specific cases. Certificates may ascribe Continuing Education Units (CEU's) in certain subjects. Common in the US.

Source: UCJ, 2003, 2019

A credit system as well as a credit transfer (CT) system was also developed and applied to the various programmes contained in the TQF. The '2+2' model for a bachelor's degree (Box 9) was also introduced, where students complete the first two years at a college for the associate degree and then another two years of upper level courses for a bachelor's degree. The progression was based on student learning outcomes (SLO) and the CT system. The '2+2' model, the CT system,

the entry requirements and student learning outcomes developed for each level of academic programme are features of the TQF.

Box 9. '2+2' model for a bachelor's degree

In this model, students would pursue the first 2 years for the award of an associate degree (minimum of 60 credits), and then an additional two years of upper-level courses leading to a bachelor's degree (another 60 credits or more).

Source: UCJ, 2003, 2019

The TQF clearly presents a pathway for students to enter based on the formal entry requirements for tertiary education and to progress through HE up to Level 8 along the regular academic track. The entry and re-entry points at each level are clearly articulated on the framework. Both quality assurance and the qualifications framework go hand-in-hand to ensure recognition and acceptability of HE institutions and programmes. The nature of recognition and acceptability therefore requires that QAA and QF are used together.

The UCJ also facilitated the networking of registered private and public HEIs through the establishment of a committee of the MOEYI, named the Joint Committee for Tertiary Education (JCTE). This committee, which consists of HEIs, conducted regular meetings and professional development workshops covering areas relevant to capacity-building of the institutions themselves and the overall sector. This forum fostered communication and common understanding among institutions and allowed for seamless articulation of students from one institution to another, or from one programme to another, based on the TQF. The community colleges and teachers' colleges used this framework to guide the development of their bachelor's programmes.

Reclassification of the HE sector

More recently, the UCJ conducted a re-classification of HEIs (Box 10), therefore broadening the scope for its quality assurance of HE institutions and programmes. The addition of the *General Providers and Brokers* category has accounted for HE providers which offer post-secondary education and training such as CAPE units and associate degrees as well as CAP. This classification also accounts for workforce colleges and accredited training organizations (ATOs) offering NCTVET programmes.

Box 10. The four categories of HEIs: UCJ's classification system

- (i) **University:** A university is a HEI providing academic programmes leading to awards at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. They have and execute a research (pure and applied) agenda. These institutions may have a focus on teaching across general disciplines, or in limited, specialist programme categories or have a technological/technical-vocational emphasis.
- (ii) **University colleges and specialized institutions:** A university college is a HEI which offers academic, vocational, technical, and professional programmes, and confers awards ranging from certificate through to the master's degree level. It differs from a university by focusing primarily on teaching and the transmission of knowledge and less so on research, although some research and public service activities may form part of its mandate.
Specialized institutions have a teaching and basic research focus on a single academic field (or, as the Carnegie Classification notes, where the majority of its degrees are awarded in a specialized discipline/area). This category includes medical schools, law schools, teachers' colleges, arts and culture institutions, and theological schools where programme offerings may include awards at the highest postgraduate levels.
- (iii) **General academic and applied institutions:** HEIs offering undergraduate programmes with varying qualifications ranging from certificates to bachelor's degree level. The academic emphasis may include general academic, professional, and continuing, and/or technical and vocational fields. Entities such as colleges, institutes with limited focus, career training colleges, and the professional arms of corporate entities would be included.
- (iv) **General providers and brokers:** This is a new category added in 2018 to allow for the incorporation of non-traditional providers. This category facilitates the registration of institutions which do not provide academic awards independently of an awarding body. Brokers (providing tutorial support for cross-border higher education providers) and traditional sixth forms (grades 12 and 13) are included.

Source: UCJ, 2017

Over the years, the UCJ has, through its quality assurance functions, facilitated the development of an integrated and coherent tertiary education system in Jamaica. It has fostered a HE system that is responsive to the workforce needs of the country and increased the availability of bachelor's degree programmes in Jamaica (UCJ's Listing of Registered Institutions, and the Listing of Accredited Institutions and Programmes).

2.3.3. Governance in relation to the labour market and equity considerations

A component of this project looks at the influence of FLPs on transition into the labour market and disadvantaged groups. The MLSS is the arm of government with responsibility for the provision of an efficient and effective labour and social security system in Jamaica.

PATH is one of the social assistance programmes implemented by the Government of Jamaica which forms part of its strategy for stemming poverty. PATH, which is administered by MLSS, targets poor families and provides benefits for children (0 –18 years or the age of leaving secondary school), the elderly (persons aged 60 years and above), persons with disabilities, pregnant women and new mothers, and disadvantaged adults aged between 18 and 59 years. The

programme supports improvements in health and education by way of cash grants to the poorest and most vulnerable in society. One of the objectives of PATH is to increase the educational attainment and improve health outcomes of the poor and by extension break the intergenerational cycle of poverty (JIS, 2019). More than 50 per cent of PATH beneficiaries are persons pursuing education and training. The programme enables the participation of individuals from disadvantaged groups (low socio-economic status) in education starting from the primary education stage up to HE. An educational grant is awarded to the level of a bachelor's degree. The grant is paid directly to the institution at which the student is enrolled. Students are not constrained to pursue their studies at a public institution but can register at a private institution once it is recognized by either the UCJ or the MOEY&I. This investment in education, and specifically post-secondary education, addresses equity issues and increases the participation of those from the lower socio-economic group in HE. The programme is monitored by the MLSS based on total expenditure. However, given the cost associated with pursuing HE, the grant is insufficient and could benefit from an increase. MLSS also has a Steps-to-Work programme that facilitates on-the-job training for vulnerable students with a view to honing their soft skills for employment.

In relation to the labour component of its mandate, the MLSS recognizes that education and training are necessary for the labour market and, therefore, publishes information on the overall labour market needs of the country. A Labour Market Information System (LMIS) that documents information on the demand and supply of labour, and demographics of the labour market, as well as opportunities for jobs and career development, is available online. On a periodic basis, the MLSS conducts a labour market survey to determine the quality and quantity of human capital in the Jamaican. The information forms a valuable tool for decision-making from the perspective of both training needs and trends in careers within the labour market. The labour market survey published in 2018 (MLSS, 2018) showed that most people seeking employment have no form of certification, and that the greatest percentage of unemployed persons are those without any form of certification. The implementation of options for study pathways for students, including unattached youth, is critical, particularly in enabling greater participation in HE, which ultimately will help realize the goal of reducing poverty in Jamaica.

2.4. Transformation of the HE sector in Jamaica

These three pieces of legislation (Education Act, 1965; HEART Act [1982, 1991 and 2019]; and UCJ Act, 1987), which set the framework for governance of HE in Jamaica, have been critical to the development and transformation of the HE sector. This development occurred along two pathways, namely ‘post-secondary’ and through TVET and ‘tertiary’ education. At the same time, the HE sector experienced significant growth in demand, participation and types of institutions. This expansion led to heightened concerns regarding the coordination, regulation, funding, and accountability, as well as, the extent to which the outputs were aligned to national priorities. These issues seemed to have been the driving force for the ensuing deliberations and activities geared at reforming the sector. The following are noteworthy:

- (i) The Taskforce on Educational Reform focused on universal access at primary and secondary education levels. The report recommended the establishment of a Tertiary Education Commission to give oversight to the tertiary sector (Taskforce on Education Reform, 2004), as well as a national external quality assurance authority. This goal was to ensure that the quality of programmes delivered was appropriate to the developmental needs of the country. Quality assurance was identified as a specific action for the commission in the final draft of the *Vision 2030* education sector plan. The role of the UCJ in this instance seemed to have been relegated to its degree-granting authority despite the fact that, since 1991, the UCJ had been expanding tertiary-level programmes, particularly at the bachelor’s and master’s levels through its quality assurance processes.
- (ii) Research conducted by the Caribbean Policy Research Institute (CAPRI) focused in a more comprehensive way on the integration of academic, vocational and professional education and training at both secondary and higher education levels (CAPRI, 2007). The report recommended the expansion of TVET, as well as access to high-quality education at all levels of the education system. CAPRI also made comparisons to the education systems in Finland, Singapore, and Ireland (ibid.). The report concluded that vocational education had not penetrated the mainstream education system in Jamaica despite the vocational offerings by a number of HEART-operated institutions, as well as community-based providers and private-training institutions. The concept of complementing the

CSEC certification at secondary level with the NVQ-Js would provide an avenue for creating a more rounded, skilled and adaptable individual for the workplace.

- (iii) Deliberations and the preparation of the *Vision 2030* education sector plan (PIOJ, 2009) built on the work of the Taskforce on Education Transformation. The plan reflects the importance of an integrated education and training system for the development of Jamaica's human capital, particularly the knowledge, skills and attitudes, for the global economy. In 2015, only 22.3 per cent of 25-34 year-olds who were employed were deemed 'high skilled', while 86.5 per cent were deemed 'medium-skilled' (World Economic Forum, 2015). Therefore, there is indeed a need to improve Jamaica's human capital, and address the mismatch between the skills and competencies required for the jobs and the qualifications that these workers possess. It was also observed that 17 per cent of persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years were overeducated for the job they had, while 18.2 per cent were undereducated.

The plan has promulgated goals and strategies geared at addressing access, equality, equity, quality, lifelong learning, and funding with regards to HE. For example, a key strategy identified was to ensure that students leaving the secondary level of education attained the standards required for further education and training or decent work.

- (iv) The Minister of Education in 2009 expressed concern with the approximately 12,000 students who on an annual basis 'disappear' from the secondary system without a trace. He gave HEART Trust/NTA a mandate to:
- a) develop a programme for at-risk youth (14-29 years of age);
 - b) implement the senior school programme (CAP);
 - c) within two to three years create two to three workforce colleges;
 - d) rebrand the HEART Trust (to position technical and vocational training as a viable alternative);
 - e) reposition HEART Trust/NTA as the National Training Agency.

All five mandates influenced policies that have led to the acceptance of flexible pathways leading to HE and the TVET strategy. Additionally, the Minister of Education visited

Australia, which is well known for its approach to technical and vocational education as a tool for national development. That Minister is now the Prime Minister and is responsible for the HEART/NSTA Trust under the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation.

Another major area of reform being pursued by the MOEY&I is the restructuring of HE in Jamaica and the development of a HE legislation. The MOEY&I, through J-TEC, conducted a series of consultations involving national bodies and entities involved in HE, administrators of HEIs, students, and representatives from the MOEY&I to explore issues relating to governance, structure and funding for HE, which culminated in the 2018 HE Summit. There was extensive discussion on optimizing the governance and oversight arrangements for HE (Box 11).

Box 11. Excerpt from the article 'Blueprint for HE delivery'

The Education Minister said the Summit was staged to address issues relating to the management and regulation of the higher education sector. 'We've been talking about quality assurance. We've been talking about registration, regulation, access, financing of the tertiary sector [and] how, as a Ministry, we are organised so that we can have all these things done,' he explained.

According to the Minister, "It was important to have full consultation among the stakeholders, get wide participation of these varying interest groups, and so we come to one consensus, which is what this declaration is about; how we move the education sector forward through tertiary education." The Minister also reported that the document, which came out of the suggestions by the various stakeholders, would help chart a course for students to have better access to education at universities.

Source: Gleaner, 2018

The plans to develop legislation for HE, despite provisions already existing in the Education Act, will need to be carefully examined in order to prevent any confusion. The Minister of Education also announced plans to restructure the HE system in Jamaica to one that will comprehensively integrate academic, vocational and professional education and training, and lifelong learning. The sector, he said, would be referred to as 'higher education' (Box 12) and the necessary legislation would be put in place (*Jamaican Observer*, 2018).

Based on the announcement, there is an indication of administrative tensions regarding the role of the UCJ vis-à-vis the establishment of a body to carry out QA functions. It is evident that the government is seeking to address quality assurance and the integration of academic education with TVET, as well as lifelong learning, by establishing another piece of legislation to give teeth to J-TEC at the peril of making the UCJ redundant.

However, with the introduction of fiscal constraints, the International Monetary Fund's intervention in the Jamaican economy resulting in the implementation of public sector reform,

the establishment of a HE Commission to accomplish these already-executed functions became moot.

Box 12. Announcement by the Minister of Education on the restructuring of tertiary education

Minister of Education, Youth, and Information, Senator Ruel Reid, says the tertiary education system is being restructured in order to meet the demands of the 21st century and beyond. He said the objective is to better enable the sector to “lead the way in positioning the rest of the education system to prepare for the future, as well as retrofitting and realigning its programmes to meet the needs of the labour market over the short and long term.”

Senator Ruel Reid informed that a draft policy has been prepared, outlining the necessary steps towards the establishment of a Higher Education Commission, which will provide oversight of the sector. “This arrangement will see a full restructuring of the bodies that currently provide oversight and will also call for new legislation,” he indicated. As part of the reorganisation, the sector will be referred to as the ‘higher education’ system and will incorporate academic, vocational and professional education and training, as well as lifelong learning in a more comprehensive way.

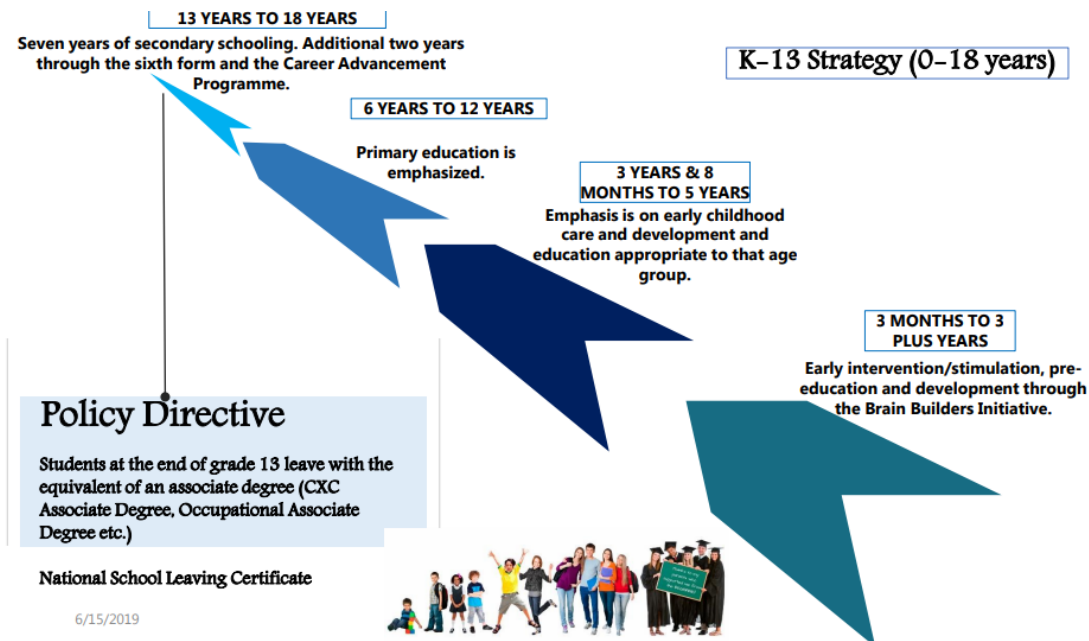
Source: Jamaica Observer, 2018

This research has also shown that there are three pieces of existing legislation that govern this particular aspect of higher education in Jamaica. These, as previously discussed, are sufficient and effective. They address adequately the risk of elitism, but also equity and inclusiveness with regard to disadvantaged segments of the population.

2.5. National policies for FLPs in HE

The current policy for FLPs in HE is being driven by the *K-13 strategy* (Figure 4), which makes provision for seven years of compulsory secondary education. The guiding principles underscoring the K-13 strategy are access, equity, quality, inclusiveness, and accountability. This strategy starts at Level 0 (early childhood education) and goes up to NVQ-J Level 4 (an associate degree). It reflects the national strategy of ensuring that secondary-school leavers have the required education and training to enable them to transition into the world of work or pursue further education.

Figure 4. K-13 Strategy



Source: McLean, 2019

2.5.1. Alternative Pathways in Secondary Education (APSE)

As the name indicates, this programme is being implemented at the secondary level of the education sector in Jamaica. The Alternative Pathways in Secondary Education (APSE) programme (MOEY&I, 2016) provides three options for entry to secondary education which are based on students' scores in the Grade 6 Achievement Test (ibid.).

Not only does ASPE (Box 13) form part of the Ministry's strategy to ensure that each student in the secondary system has the opportunity to learn and succeed, but it also allows for greater opportunities to infuse technical and vocational education and training into the mainstream education system. The options for certification indicated can be used by students as a pathway to access HE. While the implementation of the strategy is not yet complete, it is well advanced and does support the FLPs concept (Gleaner, 2016). This programme coincides with the International Standard Classification for Education (ISCED) Level 2. As early as Grade 7 students are given the option of certification. Students are able to select a pathway that is aligned to their areas of

strength and compatibility with the academic track, the technical and vocational track, or a combined academic and technical and vocational track.

Box 13. Pathways provided in the Alternative Pathways in Secondary Education programme

Three pathways for students to progress through secondary education:
(i) Pathway 1 where students would follow the national standard curriculum up to Grade 13, and sit the standard exit examinations that best aligns to their ability.
(ii) Pathway 2 where students who have not mastered the Grade 4 literacy and numeracy tests are placed in a two-year transitional programme between grades 7 and 8.
(iii) Pathway 3, which forms 80 per cent of the cohort entering secondary education annually, will see students pursuing basic academic instruction in mathematics, English language, communication, social studies and science. These students would receive training in vocational skills, personal empowerment, performing and creative arts, and other areas.

Source: Linton, 2019

Both CAP and the OADs have been enabling FLPs in HE as well as serving as a conduit for the integration of TVET in HE. These two programmes therefore form a major part of this project.

2.5.2. Career Advancement Programme (CAP)

The Career Advancement Programme (CAP) was introduced through the establishment of grades 12 and 13 in non-traditional high schools in 2010 (MOEY&I, 2009). The goal of CAP is to ensure that students completing secondary education have been imbued with job-ready skills, technical and vocational skills, citizenship knowledge, apprenticeship and community service. On exiting Grade 13, the student is equipped with the skills for the workplace and/or qualifications to transition into another level of higher education in line with his/her personal goals. Students are therefore able to leave secondary level education system with dual certification. CAP addresses individual student's capabilities and personal goals by providing options for students leaving the secondary school system to attain the necessary qualifications for HE or for the job market (NVQs, CSEC, and CAPE). The programme was expanded to include public and private post-secondary and tertiary institutions across the island, such as teachers' colleges and community colleges.

The implementation and intake of CAP was negatively impacted by the perception that it was a 'second chance' programme. It was interpreted as a programme for students who had failed academically. This poor branding led to a low take-up rate. The 'second chance programme' label caused the administrators to treat it as an 'add on' as they did not want CAP to 'water

down’ the perceived quality of their institution. It is important that the use of the words ‘second chance’ be addressed as it fosters the notion of elitism in higher education. This, in turn, becomes a barrier to tertiary education for those who are not confident or who lack knowledge of the programmes and the HE system.

The APSE programme also increases the opportunities for students to attain certification in TVET and ultimately complements the CAP programme. This should also help to improve the perception of CAP as a ‘second chance’ programme and, in theory, would eliminate elitism in HE by introducing alternative pathways within institutions.

2.5.3. Occupational Associate Degree (OAD)

Another initiative aimed at boosting the skilled workforce in Jamaica and integrating academic study and TVET was the introduction of occupational associate degrees (OADs) by the MOEY&I. These programmes, for which CAP graduates are provided scholarships, are managed by the Centre of Occupational Studies (COS) within the MOEY&I. Curricula and staff development matters relating to OADs are coordinated by the COS. These OADs, which were launched in December 2016, offer a wide variety of industry-specific training at tertiary level (Hunter, 2017). These include logistics, business process outsourcing (BPO), knowledge process outsourcing, manufacturing, agriculture, hospitality, and renewable energy technology. Those individuals with NVQ-J or CVQ certification at levels 2 or 3 are able to matriculate into these programmes (JIS, 2016). The strength of the OADs lies in its application of knowledge and skills being taught to real-life situations. This should allow students to seamlessly transition into the world of work. The pilot programme started in January 2018 with 457 students. These programmes are also offered in both public and private HEIs. Lecturers and administrative staff appear to be employed for the programme on a part-time basis. The UCJ, in conjunction with subject-matter experts from industry, has developed generic standards for OADs.

These three policy directions form part of the government strategy for increasing the participation of graduates from the secondary level of the education system to HE. For the purpose of this study, focus was given to the regulations and role of national bodies in implementing the national policy direction in relation to the CAP and OADs as the government seeks to ensure that there is equity in HE and that disadvantaged groups participate. As was

stated earlier, the disadvantaged group identified for this study are those who are on PATH. CAP and the OADs also position TVET programmes as central to FLPs in HE.

2.6. National instruments for FLPs in HE

The two main instruments for enabling and facilitating FLPs in Jamaica's HE sector are the NQF-J and QAA. There is a third instrument, career and academic advising and guidance (CAAG), that is at a stage of infancy and needs to be developed. These are explored in the next section.

2.6.1. National Qualifications Framework of Jamaica (NQF-J)

A major achievement in the transformation of the HE system in Jamaica was the development of the National Qualifications Framework of Jamaica (NQF-J) by the Jamaica Tertiary Education Commission (J-TEC). The NQF-J is essentially an integration of the TQF and the NVQ-J framework (Figure 5).

Figure 5. National Qualifications Framework of Jamaica

Jamaica Tertiary Education Sectors					
Levels	General education	Technical and vocational	Occupational degrees	Tertiary education	Lifelong learning
8		C/NVQ 8	Applied doctorate	Doctoral degree	Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR)
7		C/NVQ 7		Master's degree	
6		C/NVQ 6	Occupational master's	Postgraduate certificate/diploma	
5		C/NVQ 5	Occupational bachelor's	Bachelor's degree	
4		C/NVQ 4	Occupational associates	Associate degree/advanced diploma	
3	Certificate (upper secondary)	C/NVQ 3		Diploma	
2	Certificate (upper secondary leaving)	C/NVQ 2			
1	Certificate (lower secondary)	C/NVQ 1			

-	Access point 2				
	Access point 1				

Source: J-TEC, 2015

It shows clearly the mapping of both frameworks to form a unified system (Box 14). OADs have also been included in the NQF-J. This framework outlines all types and levels of HE programme offerings in Jamaica, and is a road map for students, employers, and institutions for the skills and competencies required for each level of qualification. It demonstrates the multiple pathways for entering, progressing, transferring, and completing HE and transitioning into the labour market.

Box 14. Alternative pathways described by the NQF-J

- (a) Matriculation into HE based on PLA and formal requirements.
- (b) Articulation through PLA and progress from one level to another.
- (c) Articulation from vocational and technical educational programmes to ‘academic-type’ programmes and vice versa.
- (d) Transfers from an associate degree to a bachelor’s degree up to the master’s and doctoral degree.
- (e) Articulation from occupational associate degree programmes to academic-type programmes and vice versa.

Source: Elaborated by authors

The NQF-J is ‘the leveller’ in that it accounts for equivalences between academic streams and technical and vocational streams. This is a significant departure from the normal course of doing business in HE. It brings equity and respect to all forms of learning.

One component of this framework is the multiple access points at various levels based on prior learning. The framework therefore places the responsibility for enabling FLPs squarely within the admissions system at the HEIs. As part of the accreditation process the institution must be able to demonstrate an effective governance and management system.

However, there is a need for the NQF-J to be fully developed into a comprehensive framework. As outlined, there are components which are required for the NQF to be considered a complete framework (UNESCO, 2006):

- modular/unitized qualifications;
- assessment based on explicit criteria;
- a national system of credit accumulation and transfer;

- a common approach to describing qualifications;
- a common classification system for subjects and occupational sectors.

Currently, NVQ-Js are not based on a credit system and may pose a challenge for persons transferring from a TVET track to an academic track. In light of the foregoing, it is reasonable to expect that responsibility for the NQF-J should be transferred to the UCJ and fully developed for use by all relevant stakeholders in HE (students, institutions, government). There is also a need for standardization on its use across institutions. These components have been fully developed and form part of the TQF that is used by the UCJ for its QAA functions. The NQF-J and matriculation are inextricably linked, as explained above.

At the moment, there are no linkages between the NQF-J and the regional and international frameworks. The Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) has a framework that spans Levels 1- 8 and two additional access points below Level 1. The information on the CARICOM framework had been incorporated into the design and development of the NQF-J. The European Union, the Commonwealth of Learning, and CARICOM, as well as transnational frameworks, all informed the development of the NQF-J.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is not new to Jamaica. NCTVET has a fully developed system for RPL which requires students to present evidence of any formal and/or informal learning that he/she may have achieved. The evidence is assessed against the performance standards for the respective level. The interviews seem to reveal that institutions have used the NCTVET's RPL system as a guide to developing their own RPL policies.

The UCJ's standards make allowance for mature entry for matriculation into HE. This is limited to 10 per cent of the intake per academic year. As part of the mature entry, institutions can consider applicants who are 25 years or older and have been working for five years or more. Institutions are expected to have developed their own mechanisms to evaluate prospective students as mature students.

With the inclusion of City & Guilds certification, Jamaica has signalled the use not just of CSEC, CAPE, NVQ-J, and CVQ but also of international certification systems for matriculation into HE. City & Guilds, which is an English organization that helps people and countries to develop their skills, has been contributing to TVET in Jamaica for several decades and, since 2011, they

have been working with the MOEY&I in recognizing its certification in mathematics and English. The UCJ evaluated the City & Guilds Level 3 qualifications for both mathematics and English. While the City & Guilds mathematics qualification was not found to be equivalent to a Level 3 pass at CSEC, City & Guilds English was equivalent. In the case of City & Guilds mathematics, the receiving institution must satisfy the UCJ of its policy to bridge the student into its academic programmes. This bridging policy is important as it is necessary for accommodating transfers from one type or level of a programme to another.

The NQF-J should be supported by policy and procedures that require institutions to develop a comprehensive PL system that evaluates non-formal, formal and informal learning for entry into HE. This, along with the CT system, would be used to map a flexible pathway for the prospective student to access, progress through and complete a HE degree, and transfer into the workforce and may entail bridging courses or programmes.

2.6.2. Quality assurance and accreditation (QAA)

Quality assurance and accreditation are important in ensuring that HEIs and their programmes meet required standards of quality. As such, they have the potential to support FLPs. As stated, above, the UCJ provides accreditation of institutions, programmes, and short courses which are deemed ‘academic’ in nature. The NCTVET, on the other hand, was established to develop and accredit TVET programmes.

University Council of Jamaica

The University Council of Jamaica (UCJ) exercises its quality-assurance role through three main processes:

- (i) Development of standards and criteria for the establishment and operations of a HEI, discipline-specific standards, and standards for accreditation;
- (ii) Evaluation of institutions and programmes for accreditation; and
- (iii) Assessment of credentials.

Consistent with international practice, the UCJ quality assurance process consists of three main steps (Box 15). The UCJ conducts both programme accreditation and institutional accreditation. Programme accreditation (PA) is essentially a programme review and covers the extent to which

the institution's internal quality assurance (IQA) system is applied to the programme being evaluated.

Box 15. Main steps in the QAA process

- Step 1: Self-evaluation by the institution of the effectiveness of its internal quality assurance (IQA) process using the requisite published standards and criteria. The institution documents the findings in the form of a self-study report which it submits to the UCJ. The UCJ guides the institutions through this step.
- Step 2: Peer review of the institution and its programmes by an external team consisting of experts with the required qualifications and professional experience. This stage also includes an evaluation of the institutions' self-study report and a site visit to garner evidence of the effectiveness of its IQA system in ensuring the quality of the educational courses and programmes delivered by the institution. The findings and judgement of the external peer review team (referred to as the evaluation team) is documented in the form of an accreditation report. This report is shared with the institution, which is invited to submit a response report addressing the findings contained in the accreditation report.
- Step 3: Decision-making regarding accreditation. The accreditation report, institution's response and other documentation are used by Council to make a decision. The UCJ's list of accredited institutions and programmes are updated accordingly.

Source: UCJ, 2016

Institutional accreditation (IA), on the other hand, gives focus to the IQA process of the institution in ensuring *fitness-of-purpose* and *fitness-for-purpose*.

The UCJ has an approved degree process which is used for academic awards and distinctions that are conferred by the entity. The UCJ-approved degree, as it is named, is applied to degree programmes that are offered by institutions which do not have degree-granting authority. The quality assurance process for the UCJ-approved degree mirrors programme accreditation except that the programme is normally evaluated before the institution enrolls students into the programme, and the institution is granted approval to begin accepting students. The UCJ-approved degree has the same recognition status as that accorded to an accredited programme.

Although accreditation of institutions and programmes by the UCJ is a voluntary process, it signals recognition and acceptability of the graduates, and the qualifications gained *de facto* make it mandatory. Institutions use the various standards as a guide in developing the institution and its programmes of study. Accreditation is therefore quasi-mandatory and self-regulatory. This was a major impetus to the development of the University of Technology, Jamaica and

Northern Caribbean University, which, over time, upgraded a number of their diploma programmes into four-year bachelor's degree programmes and began offering master's degrees. These two institutions were respectively granted university status by the Government of Jamaica, through the UTech Charter 1995 and NCU Charter 1999.

Accreditation has enabled the recognition and acceptability of institutions and programmes of study by the government, employers, and institutions, both locally and internationally, and has resulted in an increase in the availability of bachelor's and master's programmes offered in Jamaica. This serves an important function as Jamaica is one of the few countries that has fully liberalized its higher education sector as part of a World Trade Organization agreement.

However, accreditation alone cannot ensure the recognition and portability of HE. There is a need for a qualifications framework that describes the types of qualifications, and how the different qualifications connect with each other. The TQF, which was previously explained, was developed as a tool for the quality assurance and accreditation functions of the UCJ.

National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET)

The National Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET) conducts accreditation of TVET programmes that lead to the CVQ and/or NVQ-J certification. The accreditation process (Box 16) mirrors that of the UCJ, except that a self-study report is required for the UCJ's process. Once the programmes are accredited, the institution is recognized as an Accredited Training Organization (ATO). Currently, there are 26 public ATOs and five private entities offering a plethora of NVQ-J certifications. In some cases, the ATOs offer assessments only for the NVQ-J certification, which forms the RPL system.

Box 16. Steps in the NCTVET's accreditation process

1. The organization must complete and submit an application for accreditation of the programme(s) for evaluation (or reaffirmation) to the Registrar of NCTVET.
2. Upon receipt, a quality-assurance specialist from NCTVET will visit the organization to conduct a technical workshop.
3. At the point of readiness, the organization must complete and submit a policy and procedure manual and agree on evaluation dates.
4. The Quality Assurance Unit of the NCTVET will schedule evaluation activities and the organization will be informed of all evaluation arrangements.
5. A visiting team of professionals will conduct the accreditation evaluation exercise.
6. An evaluation team report will be prepared by the Quality Assurance Unit and submitted to the organization.
7. The organization must submit a written response to the evaluation team report to the Quality Assurance Unit.
8. The team report will be submitted to the Quality Assurance Committee of the Council for review for decision-making on accreditation.

Source: NCTVET, 2012

Transfer of the accreditation functions of NCTVET to the UCJ

Consistent with the Cabinet decision of 2011 and policy direction articulated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (MOEY&I), the accreditation functions of the NCTVET are to be transferred to the UCJ. This forms part of the integration of TVET into the mainstream higher education sector. Therefore, the UCJ will assume all external quality assurance responsibilities for all HEART training entities and organizations offering the National Vocational Qualification of Jamaica (NVQ-J) levels 3 and above. This will not only reduce and eventually eliminate the barriers to skills development and TVET in Jamaica but will also provide access to quality-assured TVET programmes up to university level, resulting in a seamless system.

There has been much debate on whether UCJ would accredit just levels 3 to 5 of the NVQ-J but that has created a dilemma as to which agency would accredit and certify levels 1 and 2. It is suggested that UCJ be given oversight of the full range of standards from level 1 to level 8 on the NQF-J (Figure 6) to ensure consistency and quality over higher education. Currently, however, levels 1 and 2 are not the remit of the UCJ.

The UCJ has accepted that the ATOs are government entities and that, over a period of time, they have been quality-assured by the NCTVET. In light of this, the ATOs have been granted registration status by the UCJ and are listed in the UCJ's list of registered and accredited institutions and programmes, as of 31 March 2020.

For consistency, an amendment to the HEART Act, along with the NQF-J policy, resulted in the removal of fragmentation in the system by allowing the UCJ to extend its QAA functions to TVET programmes. The new name of the HEART/NSTA Trust provides the opening for a focus on the unattached and at-risk youth and widens the range of training and education to include adult learning as well as lifelong learning. It also establishes a path to funding for all training entities on the NQF-J, provided they are registered and quality-assured by the UCJ. This new arrangement establishes a monitoring and evaluation process, which is the desired outcome for the labour market. It closes the education, training, and labour market loop through quality assurance.

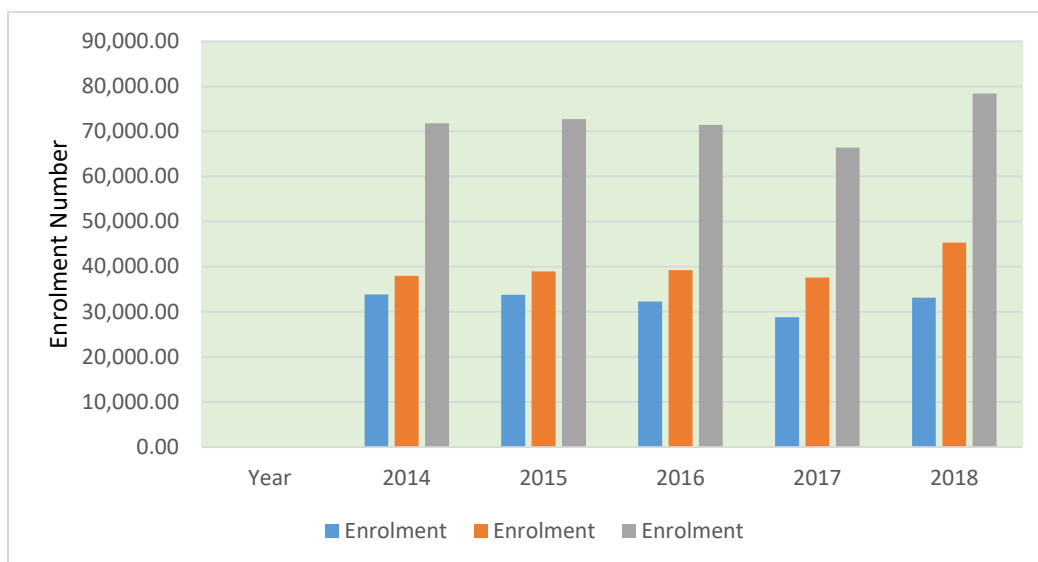
2.7. Enrolment in HE

In exploring enrolment in HE, the distinction made between post-secondary education and tertiary education in the annual censuses conducted independently by the PIOJ and MOEY&I is important. This is discussed in the next section.

2.7.1. Enrolment: Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ)

The enrolment in post-secondary education forms part of the annual census conducted by the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ). Available data show that approximately 70,000 persons are trained in institutions providing post-secondary education and training on an annual basis (Figure 6). The duration of these training programmes may be as short as six weeks and can last up to one year. Of note is the inequality in enrolment between males and females, with females recording a higher level of participation. The gap in participation had increased during the period indicated. Although CAPE and CAP are offered in grades 12 and 13 and form part of post-secondary education, the enrolment census of secondary level education in Jamaica is conducted by the MOEY&I. It is to be further noted that these programmes are also offered at community colleges and private HE providers. This means that there are gaps in the data collection process.

Figure 6. Enrolment of skilled and non-skilled workers from non-formal and HEART Trust/NTA programmes

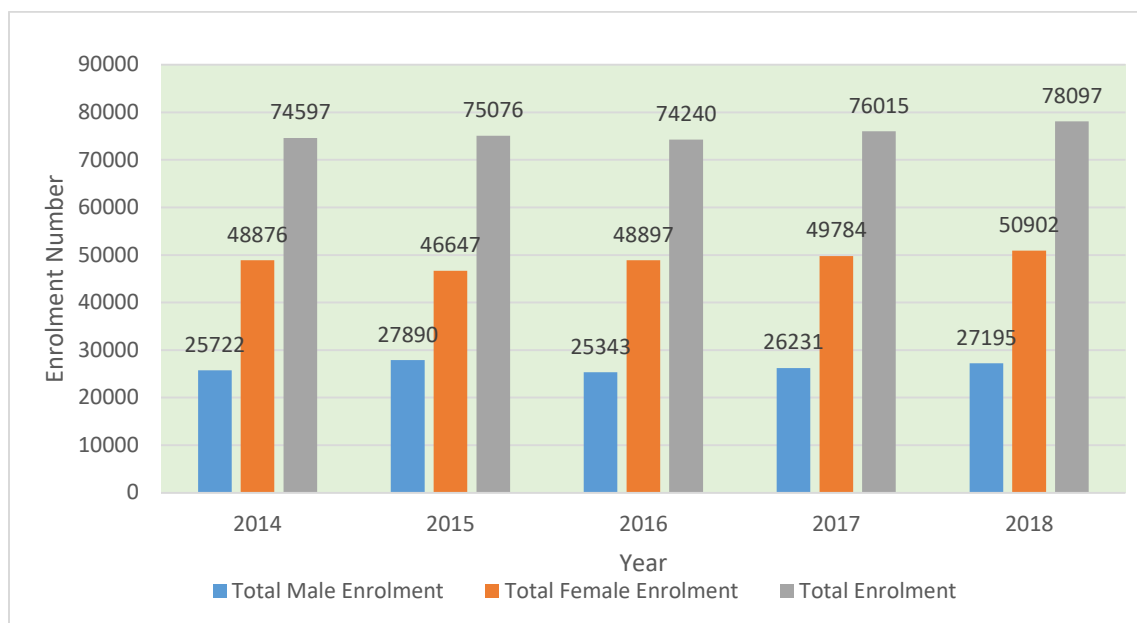


Source: Elaborated by authors

In line with the 2018 Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica (ESSJ) report (PIOJ, 2018), while CAP was introduced as a two-year programme with participants receiving skills training at NVQ-J certification, the programme has grown to include additional opportunities for students aged 16 to 18 years. The report also notes that the CAP programme was recently rebranded, which seemed to have resulted in a growth in the certification, from 37 per cent in 2013 to 57 per cent in 2018.

The PIOJ also conducts an annual census of enrolment across 35 tertiary institutions. This census is conducted in February of each year and captures enrolment for both public and private tertiary institutions, with the information presented in its annual ESSJ report. The enrolment for the period 2014–2018 is provided in Figure 7 (PIOJ, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018).

Figure 7. Gross enrolment in tertiary education, 2014–2018



Source: Elaborated by authors

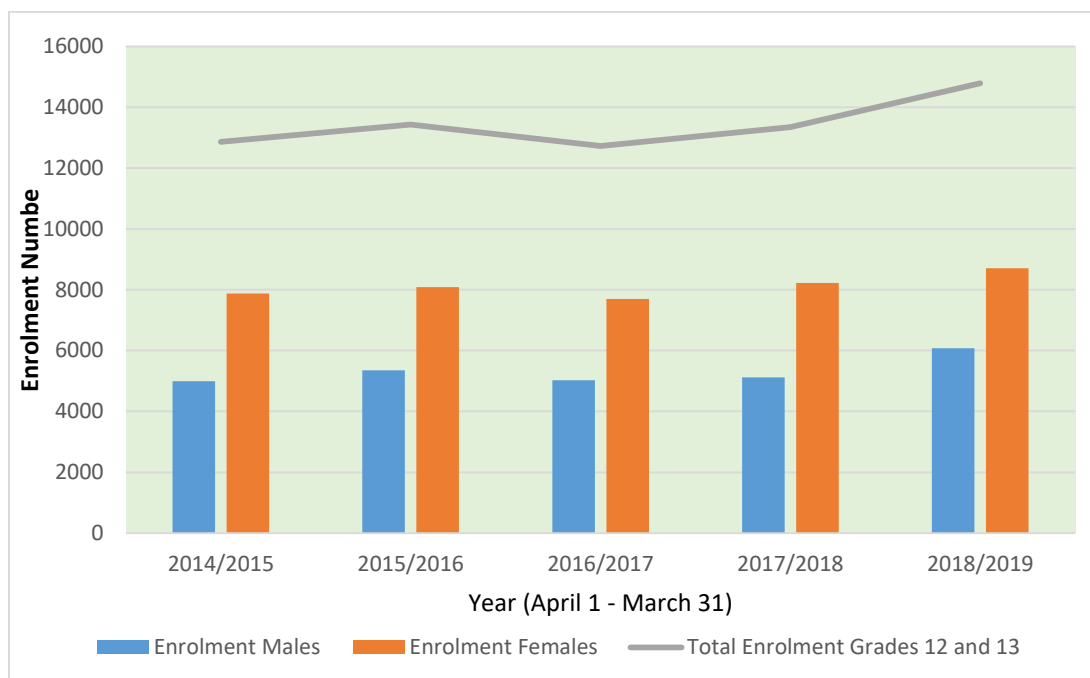
Overall, the gross enrolment ratio for the period has been relatively stable, fluctuating marginally between 27.6 per cent and 29 per cent.

2.7.2. Enrolment: Ministry of Education, Youth and Information (MOEY&I)

The MOEY&I conducts an annual census of enrolment in public education institutions, including tertiary institutions. This information is published in its annual Education Statistics report. The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is referenced in this report; however, Jamaica has not yet begun to adopt the UIS data template.

The enrolment for grades 12 and 13 (Level 3 of the NQF-J), which is reported in the data for secondary education, fluctuated between 12,500 and 14,500 in the period 2014 to 2018. The enrolment of females exceeds that of their male counterparts, reflecting a male to female ratio of 2:3 (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Enrolment in grades 12 and 13 for the 2014–2019 period

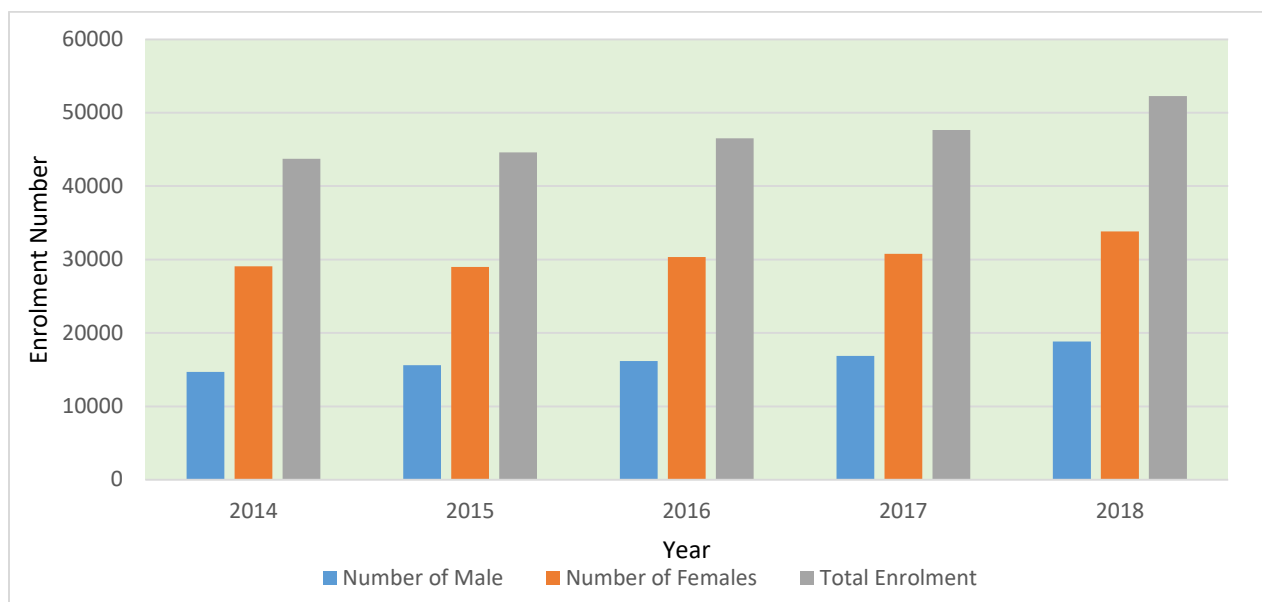


Source: Elaborated by authors

Enrolment data for public tertiary institutions disaggregated into male and female categories for a similar period are provided in Figure 9. The trend shows a gradual increase over the period with the greatest increase occurring between 2017 and 2018. This increase could include graduates from occupational degrees and needs to be further explored. Notably, the participation of females varies between 65-70 per cent, compared to 30-35 per cent for the males, which seems to suggest that the participation of males in HE is an area for attention.

The report also contains total enrolments for other public institutions located in other Government Ministries or units (such as the Management Institute for National Development (MIND), HEART College of Beauty Services (HCBS), and the Vocational Training Development Institute (VTDI), to name a few), as well as private institutions.

Figure 9. Trend in enrolment in public tertiary institutions



Source: Elaborated by authors

These are listed as independent tertiary institutions. The data reported includes enrolment of students in selected HEART training institutes.

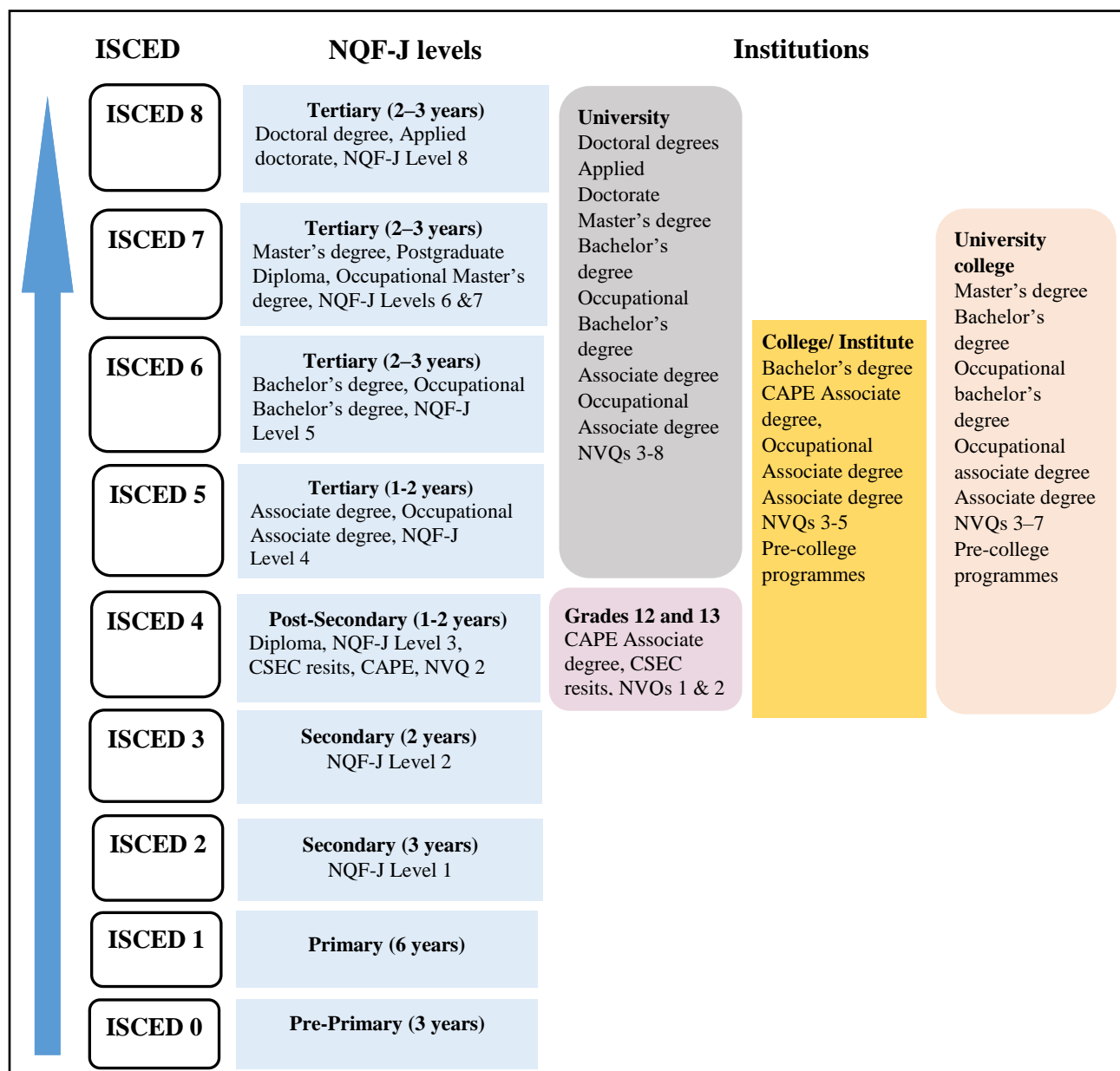
3.7.3. International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)

The International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is applied worldwide with the purpose of assembling, compiling, and analysing cross-nationally comparable data. ISCED is the referenced classification for organizing education programmes and related qualifications by levels and fields. The basic concepts and definitions of ISCED are therefore intended to be internationally valid and comprehensive of the full range of education systems (UNESCO, 2011).

ISCED has not yet been fully adopted in Jamaica's education system although the classification is certainly referenced by the MOEY&I and the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN). Jamaica has not yet adopted the UIS data template. A comparison of the NQF-J with ISCED shows that there is general alignment (Figure 10).

The levels of programmes that are offered by HEIs are apparent. Based on the literature review, the community colleges and teachers' colleges that are classified as public tertiary institutions not only offer programmes spanning Levels 3 and above, but also TVET programmes in the form of OADs. Students may also resit their CSEC subjects or pursue CAP through the pre-college programme offerings.

Figure 10. A comparison of higher education programmes offered in Jamaica with ISCED



Source: Elaborated by authors. Note: CSEC and NVQ Levels 1 and 2 are offered as pre-college programmes.

The CAP and OADs have also been integrated into the university colleges and some of the universities. The universities are distinct through their offering of doctoral programmes. Suffice to say, the classification of institutions mirrors that of the UCJ's classification system for HE in Jamaica. Grades 12 and 13 would form part of the *General Providers and Brokers* category.

2.8. Vulnerable groups in Jamaica

A component of SDG4 is ensuring that vulnerable or disadvantaged groups participate in HE. The vulnerable groups vary across countries and takes into account persons with disabilities, indigenous people or children in vulnerable situations. While one of outcomes of the Sustainable Development Goals is the elimination of poverty, poverty is a factor that limits participation in HE. Persons living in poverty is therefore a vulnerable group. It is imperative that the vulnerable groups are identified and the requisite measures implemented to promote their participation if the goal of eliminating poverty is to be achieved.

People with disabilities may be classified as one of the most vulnerable groups in Jamaica. The unemployment rate among persons with disabilities is very high and many of them have low levels of literacy, education, skills and training (World Bank, 2017). The Disability Act (2014), which falls under the MLSS, makes provision for the right to an education. However, this is challenged by the limited resources and systems available at institutions to facilitate the special needs of these persons (Gayle, 2015). It is reported that, in 2001, just over 6 per cent of the population in Jamaica were people with disabilities and fewer than 1 per cent of this total were in paid employment (World Bank, 2016).

Whereas, in some countries, females are considered a disadvantaged group in terms of their participation in HE, females in Jamaica participate more than their male counterparts. An analysis of the enrolment rate shows that, on average, the student population comprises 65 per cent females and 35 per cent males. Males are therefore considered a disadvantaged group in the Jamaican HE system. A report by UNESCO, which analyses these gender inequalities in Jamaica, found out that males' poorer academic performances are deeply rooted in the education system and the societal context and are perpetuated until their entrance to HE. Violence at school through insults and fights particularly demean boys, while, at the same time, males tend to define themselves as 'irresponsible, unreliable, and uninterested in academic work' (UNESCO, 1999). Interventions are needed to ensure equity in participation by gender.

Another vulnerable group in Jamaica consists of persons from low-income households that form the lower quintile of the population. These persons are normally participants of the PATH, which is essentially a social-welfare programme implemented to replace food stamps, outdoor poor relief, and public assistance programmes. The programme, along with a rehabilitation

programme, is administered by the Public Assistance Division of the MLSS and targets people from the poorest quintile in society.

Unlike the rehabilitation programme, which addresses immediate needs, PATH is long term and is geared at human capital development through education and training. Currently, the programme offers education grants for early childhood education up to post-secondary education and funds are disbursed to the educational institutions.

2.9. Funding for HE

The matter of funding for HE has been a central barrier to participation in higher education. The MOEY&I receives an average of 13.4 per cent of the total Estimate of Expenditure which forms the largest allocation from the Government of Jamaica's average budget of approximately JA\$800 billion (Ministry of Finance, 2017, 2018, 2019). All public tertiary institutions are financed through a subvention of the Ministry's annual budget. The allocation for tertiary is disaggregated into line items such as tertiary education, university education, tertiary agricultural education, multi-disciplinary colleges, scholarships and educational grants. The basis for the allocation is not clear.

The shortfall in the funding allocated to public tertiary institutions by the MOEY&I is subsidized by students' tuition fees (cost-sharing). Cost-sharing, which is a feature of public institutions, is essentially a system in which students contribute to assist in defraying operational costs and forms one of the recommendations contained in the research conducted by CAPRI (CAPRI, 2007). This takes the form of tuition fees in public tertiary institutions, which are approved annually by the MOEY&I. Many of the public institutions also pursue other funding avenues to cover their operational costs, such as consultancies, research, and post-secondary programmes. For private institutions, funding is covered by tuition fees mainly, and may be complemented by donations through scholarships or endowments. This concept of cost-sharing also promoted elitism in HE as those persons at the lower quintile level are less likely to be able to participate due to very low-income levels.

HEART/NSTA Trust provides funding for TVET and covers persons who are not in the formal education system. The monies are disbursed to the institutions, which are a part of the National

Training Agency network and whose programmes have been approved by the HEART/NSTA Trust Board. Funding for CAP is provided by the HEART/NSTA Trust to the MOEY&I, which is then disbursed to the respective HEIs. The OADs are funded by the MOEY&I. These funds are designated to the payment of lecturers and administrative support for all post-secondary programmes. All training entities may apply to HEART/NSTA Trust for funding of training programmes that lead to employment in Jamaica. These applications go through a thorough vetting and approval process.

The tuition for CAP and OADs is free to the students and is geared at providing equal opportunities for students; there are no provisions for equity in the allocation of funding. The monies allocated to the institutions for these programmes are based on the number of students enrolled in the programmes. There appears to be an approval system for the number of students each institution can accept into the OADs. The additional administrative duties for CAP and OADs are treated as part-time work. These programmes apparently are not integrated into the mainstream activities of HEIs. This is an area for development.

The Tertiary Unit (in the MOEY&I) administers a number of scholarships that are consistent with national imperatives and the aims of the Government of Jamaica. As explained earlier, PATH provides funding to its beneficiaries to pursue HE through its post-secondary and tertiary grants in Jamaica for HE. The private HE entities rely mostly on student fees for their funding. In a few faith-based institutions, the parent church provides endowment to off-set the costs of operating an institution.

Funding continues to be a challenge to participation of Jamaicans in HE. Though tuition for the CAP and OAD programmes is free (funded by the MOEY&I), there are costs associated with personal activities, transportation, and meals that do impact participation in HE and normally negatively affect attendance and completion rates in the programmes.

2.10. Model for HE in Jamaica

This research project is timely and covers the national imperatives identified by the Minister of Education in 2017 (Box 17). The findings will certainly inform the Ministry of Education of the effectiveness of its policies and initiatives with respect to alternative pathways for accessing HE,

integration of the HE sector and ensuring that the education and training meets the requirements for employment (Box 17).

Box 17. Minister of Education address: Creating an integrated HE system

In his address, the Minister of Education, Senator Ruel Reid, highlighted the importance of higher education to the development of the country. He cited the following national imperatives to:

- (a) increase the percentage of eligible cohort holding the minimum of a bachelor's degree from 15 per cent to 80 per cent;
- (b) remove barriers to access;
- (c) ensure that institutions are responsive to the changing dynamics and requirements of the labour market.

According to the Minister, 'This integration is expected to be supported with policies and systems to support greater autonomy, greater alignment to industry and a flexible approach to funding to support the needs of the institutions, while ensuring that students are being trained in areas that are required by industry and will ultimately impact the economy'. The Minister said that despite deliberations over the years, limited progress has been made in addressing the need for greater integration of education and training.

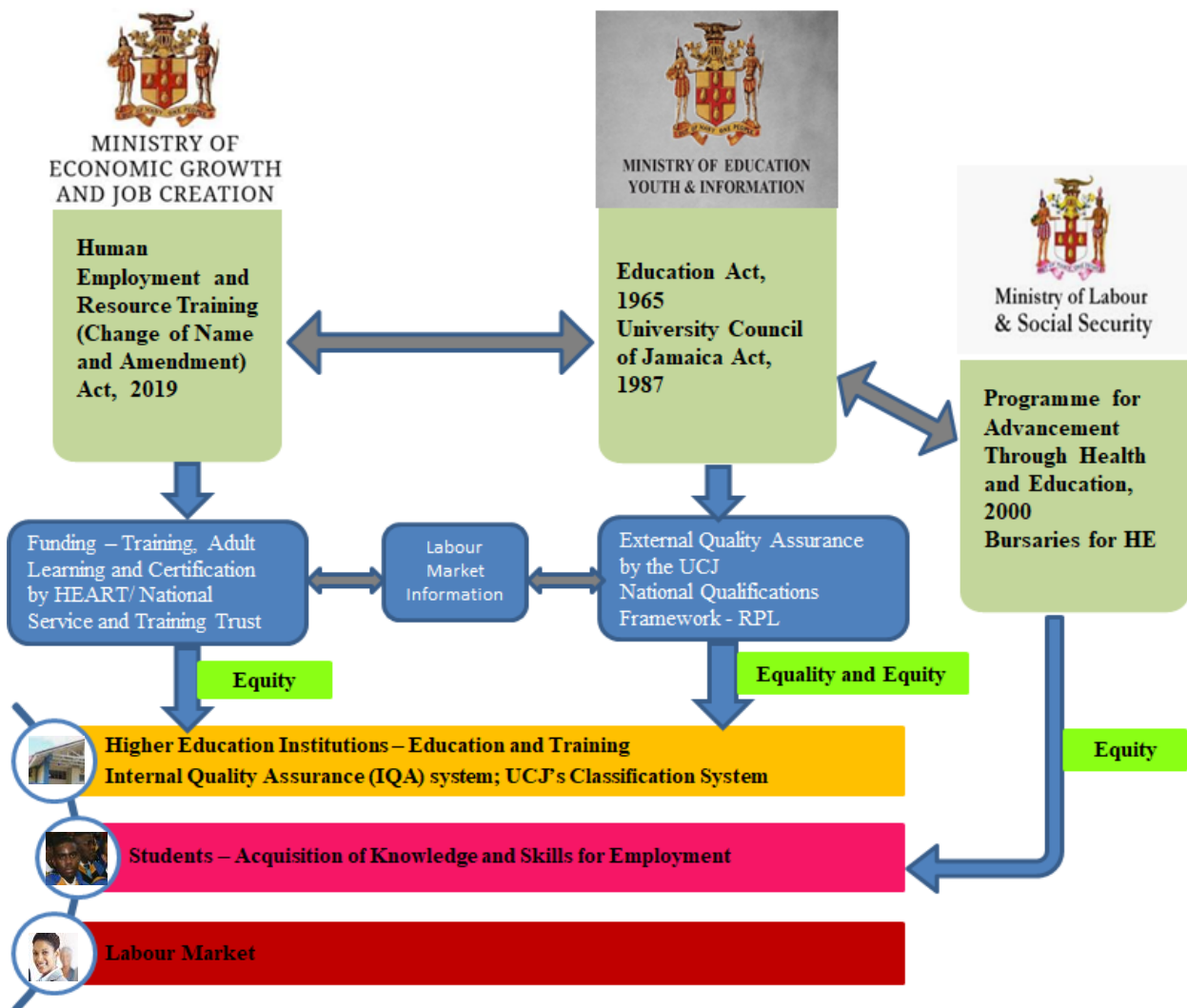
Source: Reid, 2017

Figure 11 provides a model that reflects the existing policy and regulatory arrangements in relation to the provision of equitable and quality HE in Jamaica. This model proffers a coordinated system involving three Ministries, namely, Education, Labour and Economic Growth and Wealth Creation. The nexus of education and training, labour market and funding illustrated in the model is necessary to ensure that students pursue studies that are consistent with national imperatives and the needs of the labour market. The NVQ-J, which is central to FLPs in HE and contained in the model, is an essential tool for leveraging financing of HE in Jamaica based on the level of qualifications of human capital that is required to drive economic growth and development.

The model also underscores the role of the UCJ in assuring the quality of HE providers and programmes offered in Jamaica; the HEART Trust (now HEART/NSTA Trust) in financing and coordinating TVET and lifelong learning opportunities for all including the unattached youth; and the MLSS in providing funding for vulnerable segments of society through the PATH. This model illustrates a seamless system for ensuring equality and equity in access to, progression through, and completion of a HE degree and transition into the labour market.

This project is timely, and the findings will provide useful information to the Government on the effectiveness of the current model as the country gives effect to its strategy for achieving a world-class education and training system.

Figure 11. Model for HE in Jamaica: Equity and equality



Source: Elaborated by authors

The structure of HE at the policy and regulatory levels as well as the national instruments in enabling increased access to equitable and quality education in Jamaica as depicted in the model (Figure 11) are examined in the next chapter. The findings from the interviews with representatives of national bodies are presented.

Chapter 3. Investigating national policies and instruments in Jamaican HE

This chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the policy and policy directions that guide the implementation of FLPs in HE in Jamaica. It covers an analysis of the system-level policies, instruments, and practices that support FLPs in HE that were delineated in the study. The findings are derived from a literature review, interviews with the national stakeholders, and national-level statistics on FLPs. The following four aspects are covered:

- (i) A description of the interviews conducted at the national level.
- (ii) National policies and key instruments supporting FLPs.
- (iii) Evaluation of the practices supporting FLPs.
- (iv) Priorities for the future.

3.1. Description of interviews conducted at the national level

As part of this study, interviews were conducted with the MOEY&I as well as with other national bodies that give effect to the implementation of these policies. The purpose of the interviews was to get an understanding of how FLPs support all students (including disadvantaged groups) to access, progress, and complete a HE degree, and transition into the labour market.

All interviews with the national stakeholders were conducted face to face by the project team. The project team consisted of two members: a consultant and a research project officer. Table 2 provides a detailed listing of the national bodies and the format of the interviews. One member conducted the interview while the other took in-depth notes. The audio of the interviews was also recorded. The in-depth notes were compared with the audio recordings in order to ensure accuracy and validity.

3.2. National policies for FLPs

Currently, there is no policy explicitly stating the aims for FLPs in HE in Jamaica. However, the project team was informed of the Ministry's implementation of its K-13 strategy, which offers new pathways at grades 12 and 13, particularly new opportunities to pursue TVET programmes. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that the students leaving secondary education are sufficiently qualified to access HE or transition into the workplace. This was explained in the interview with senior administrators at the MOEY&I:

The Ministry's strategy/policy at this time is being implemented through the K-13 strategy. The K-13 strategy actually starts from 0 and it takes the student to the level of [at least] an associate degree at the end of secondary level, which is seven years and then moving into HE. (MOEY&I, in-person interview)

Over the last couple of years, nine years or more, we [MOEY&I] have taken some deliberate steps to ensure that greater focus is placed on those who are leaving the secondary level system. Our code of regulations speaks to five years of secondary. While the code does not specifically highlight seven years of secondary education, it allows us to offer at least the additional two years at secondary based on how it is worded (MOEY&I, senior administrator, in-person interview).

The FLPs in terms of how it is defined here does not only start at Grade 12. The MOEY&I has introduced the APSE, which starts at Grade 7, and based on that approach to education the student can be placed on a different pathway which is referred to as alternative pathways. This is a more customized approach to education where the needs of the students can be identified and they can be treated ... specifically so they [the students] can be aligned to a certain career path (MOEY&I, senior administrator, in-person interview).

It is apparent from the foregoing that the provision of secondary education suitable to students between the ages of 12 and 19 years, contained in the Education Act, has been utilized to facilitate the addition of Grades 12 and 13 to a number of secondary schools. Though this level is really post-secondary education, it is offered in secondary schools in Jamaica. The enrolment data by age of students pursuing secondary education shows that most students enrolled in Grade 12 are 18 years old and for Grade 13 most of the students are 19 years old (MOEY&I, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018). It was made clear that though the two additional years are not yet

compulsory, the MOEY&I intends to change the legislation to reflect seven years of compulsory education at the secondary level.

The CAP has been utilized by the Government to extend education at the non-traditional high schools by the additional 2 years. It is therefore a critical component of the efforts to reform HE in Jamaica over the last 12 years. The genesis of CAP related to concerns that the Minister of Education had, at that time (in 2009), with the large number of students who dropped out of the educational system.

The CAP, which initially was under the management of HEART/NTA Trust, has facilitated the implementation of Grades 12 and 13 in a number of secondary schools that had been upgraded to high schools. The following was shared in the interview conducted at the MOEY&I:

The reason CAP was developed 10 years ago was that there were 12,000 students leaving Grade 9 of the secondary system and we could not account for them. We are trying to ensure that every single student that leaves the secondary level has opportunities to move into higher education or the world of work. Everyone will do seven years and have the qualifications [and] skills to move into higher education and do something with their lives. CAP provides access for the 100 per cent leaving the secondary level to qualify and move on to tertiary or into the world of work (MOEY&I representative, in-person interview).

The impact of the CAP, from the perspective of the Ministry officials, was the removal of the stigma of elitism associated with grades 12 and 13, which were, at one time, a feature of only the traditional high schools in Jamaica. This was clearly outlined by the senior officials in the MOEY&I:

We had an elite system where only 12,000 students out of a total of 40,000 got a chance to move onto sixth form [grades 12 and 13]. We have created some sixth forms with different students on different pathways. It is no longer seen by the students as elitist (MOEY&I, senior official, in-person interview).

The concept of CAP as being a ‘second chance’ programme was evident in two of the HEIs that were involved in this project. While conducting interviews at one of the institutions, this sentiment was expressed more than once and the interviews with the staff and students suggest that the CAP is treated as an ‘add-on’ at the tertiary institutions. It is important that this problem

be addressed and eradicated. It is also important to note that twice during this research two administrators, from different institutions, both older men, voiced their ‘concerns’ about this programme being offered at their institution. The interviews conducted with the students confirmed this finding of prejudice against this programme.

Overall, CAP has provided increased opportunities for students who completed the standard five years of secondary-level education to pursue the additional years to gain the relevant education awards (such as NVQ, CSEC, or CAPE passes/associate degree) necessary to access HE, or to transition into the labour market.

It emerged from the interviews that CAP is currently being managed and coordinated by the Chief Education Officer in the MOEY&I. Support is provided by the regional offices of the MOEY&I. Prior to 2014, CAP was also under the management of the Ministry of Education but staffed by personnel seconded from the then HEART Trust/NTA. The programme now is being integrated into the regular framework of the Ministry and is being offered in high schools and HEIs.

The MOEY&I has also introduced occupational associate degrees in order to provide a pathway for the graduates of the CAP programme with NVQ-J levels 1 and 2 (which are TVET certifications) to progress through HE both at post-secondary and tertiary levels. This programme, as previously stated, is managed by the COS in the MOEY&I in association with the Joint Committee for Tertiary Education (JCTE). The management structure is not clear. It was explained that the occupational programmes differ from the normal TVET programmes in that a general education component has been added which renders the programme a bridge between the academic-type programmes and TVET (NVQ-Js) programmes. Clarification on the occupational degrees in relation to TVET as well as academic-type programmes was provided in the interview with the MOEY&I:

The Occupational Associate Degree was developed based on the NQF-J. COS is trying to bridge the gap between the academic degree and the regular NVQs level 1–8. As part of COS, there is a literacy assessment that students do to bridge [the] gap [sic]. The development of the OAD is based on the credit system and not just the NVQ system. The curriculum is developed based on the standards of the UCJ. The tertiary institutions do the administration of this aspect (MOEY&I representative, in-person interview).

The MOEY&I is also exploring other associate degrees as alternative pathways. The City & Guilds and CXC associate degrees were cited by one of the MOEY&I representatives in the interview:

There are other associate degrees, such as those offered by CAPE and City & Guilds. We have worked with CXC and UCJ to increase the number of credits to 60 so that students can apply for the associate degree. Students can pursue the associate degree based on the cluster of courses. CXC is working with a number of institutions to accept the degree to move straight into a degree programme (MOEY&I representative, in-person interview).

It was noted that CXC introduced its associate degree in 2005 and the first awards were made in 2006. The UCJ facilitated a peer review of these programmes and it was determined that additional credits were needed to make it a fully-fledged associate degree based on the UCJ's credit system.

Educational reform initiatives, such as the establishment of grades 12 and 13 and the implementation of CAP and OADs, have enabled the acceptance of TVET certification as an alternative form of qualification for HE. CAP has also enabled greater flexibility in access to HE and progression through HE, as students are no longer limited to the formal entry requirements of CSEC passes for HE. This will be elaborated on in the next chapter at the institutional level.

However, it seems that the lack of a documented policy or a clear framework, as well as accreditation for these programmes, could limit their sustainability and full realization of a TVET integration strategy in Jamaica. The OADs are being offered in both public and private HEIs. To date, none of these programmes has been quality-assured, which will again impact the take-up by the students.

3.3. National instruments for FLPs

This section will examine the contribution of the national instruments in enabling FLPs in HE, namely the NQF-J, QAA, and CAAG. The interviews with national bodies sought to identify the areas that have worked well. The findings with respect to the NQF-J, QAA, and CAAG are presented in the next sections.

3.3.1. National Qualifications Framework of Jamaica (NQF-J)

The NQF-J is important to the implementation of FLPs in the Jamaican HE sector. It accounts for the various levels and types of HE programmes that exist in the sector. The framework articulates an integrated system for providing access to and completion of a HE degree, and clearly shows equivalence and comparability of standards of the NVQs, OADs, and the ‘academic’ type programmes within each level of the framework. However, this can only be validated and recognized through QAA. The multiple entry points and PL allows for both adult learning and lifelong learning opportunities.

The NQF-J was described in the interview with J-TEC as a comprehensive framework designed to incorporate placement of qualification in TVET, professional, and academic programmes. The framework is intended to facilitate flexibility in pathways to obtaining HE certification, whether within a particular track (academic or vocational) or across tracks. The following examples of the potential of the NQF-J to guide transfer up the levels or across the levels were shared with the team in terms of access and transfer:

There are individuals in the skills and competency area who have not had access to transitioning into the general academic stream with any acknowledgement of what they have done before. For example, persons in the workforce such as in mechanic shops or in cooking establishments. They may want to progress upward in terms of training, but they do not have certification or the qualifications. NCTVET has a process for assessing wherever you are [PL]. The NQF-J would supplement [and] augment this, and allow for the coordination of the learning. The NQF-J has two access points, [which] takes into consideration persons that have functioning literacy and numeracy. So [the NQF-J] ensures that you can map everyone using the associated learning outcomes (J-TEC representative, in-person interview).

A component of the NQF-J is access to HE through recognition of prior learning (RPL). Currently, there is no overarching national policy regarding RPL which gives credit to an individual’s formal and informal education through an assessment process. There is a concern that this is not reflected in the K-13 strategy. The need for a PL policy was underscored by J-TEC. This PL aspect of the NQF-J was stated as being critical in relation to promoting adult and lifelong learning opportunities.

It was noted that whereas some institutions/entities have a system for RPL there is need for an overarching policy. This was stated by the J-TEC team as being necessary for its use within the institutions:

It [the NQF-J] needs [a] policy that will ensure that there is standardization across institutions. Rules are needed on how it should be used, so that it is understood by each institution. For example, how a student moves from one institution to another or even within the same institution (J-TEC representative, in-person interview).

The assessment for RPL should ideally be based on student learning outcomes and result in a determination of the level of that individual's learning on the NQF-J. This is an area that was identified by policy-makers in the MOEY&I as not only critical but also required for FLPs. Such a policy is necessary to guide institutions in evaluating an individual's PL not only for admission purposes, but also to inform progression through HE. The representatives from the MOEY&I expressed the view that RPL is a model to be developed and should become a way of life when it is developed:

It [RPL] is an interesting model to be developed, and when it is fully developed it should become a way of life. And, in terms of how we introduce RLP to complement what we do here [MOEY&I], there is some amount of development that is needed there (MOEY&I representative, in-person interview).

It should, however, be noted that some HEIs do have a system for facilitating access to HE based on RPL. The comprehensiveness and systematic application of the system varies from one HEI to the other. It was observed that two of the institutions involved in the study had a PL system in place. There were no documented policies to guide the implementation of this assessment system. However, the PL system was used mainly for access to HE, and students were able to obtain exemptions from specific courses.

The UCJ has, as part of the standards for admission into tertiary education, a mature entry clause which is a form of PL. This clause, which is applicable to 10 per cent of the cohort, allows for institutions to accept students with at least five years' working experience and without the obligatory formal entry requirements (five CSEC passes, including mathematics and English) and a minimum age of 25 years. According to the UCJ, its mature entry clause has been accepted and routinely used by institutions. One of the UCJ's representative stated that:

The mature entry for admission has been accepted by all institutions as a means for older persons or persons who have been working for at least five years to matriculate into programmes. That has worked well. And, there is a common understanding among tertiary institutions in terms of mature entry. What has not worked well is perhaps an absence of support for those students who were admitted through the mature entry process. So, we are not sure of the throughput where those students are concerned (UCJ representative, in-person interview).

However, this mature entry system is only applicable to academic-type programmes. This was explained by the representatives from UCJ as follows:

If we go back to what [sic] we mentioned about using the mature entry admissions requirement, the CT system assists in that respect in that you can determine whether it is the general education courses that you will be giving credits for or if there are some specialized courses that you are going to be giving credits to, and that's on the academic track. You can work the system in facilitating that type of FLPs. However, if you were to do it on the vocational track, we would not be able to say at this stage (UCJ representative, in-person interview).

The NQF-J has been used in guiding the development of OADs, which were implemented in January 2018. According to the MOEY&I, the occupational degrees were developed based on the NQF-J. The NQF-J is also a useful instrument for enabling transfers from one programme to another or from one institution to another. However, there was no evidence to verify the usage of the instrument in this regard. One policy-maker shared the following:

The NQF-J is what [sic] is supposed to allow this [transfer] and I cannot say in the affirmative that I have seen this kind of transfer working. That is why the COS is important because it allows the students to make the transfer. There is work to be done in this area. When you have an NQF-J Level 1, it is difficult to determine where the student is at [sic]. Someone has to work it out. When there is credit [system] it is easier to make the transition. It [transfer] should be seamless (MOEY&I representative, in-person interview).

The UCJ stated that the NQF-J is used in the development of generic and discipline-specific standards. These standards are used as a reference by institutions in the review and development of programmes at various levels (for example, associate or bachelor's degree).

From the interviews, it was clear that while the framework was launched in 2017, it was not being used by the national bodies to guide access to, progression through, and completion of a HE degree and transition to the labour market. Both the Jamaica Employers Federation (JEF) and the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ) were unaware of the NQF-J. The team from STATIN was also not conversant with the NQF-J. Actually, the students and some members at the institutions which form part of this study were unaware of this framework.

There appeared to be apprehension about the use of the NQF-J due to its identified incompleteness. This concern was articulated in the interview with the UCJ:

When the TQF was being developed we did have persons from various sectors to be part of that committee and similarly when the NQF was being developed we were part of that committee – at the policy level. The revised TQF is aligned to the NQF-J. We were deliberate in ensuring that there is that alignment. The NQF-J is also very important in the development of the standards. The programme standards that guide the institution in the development of its programmes and the development of their own IQA system. Those standards are developed through guidance from the NQF-J. So, for example, the learning outcomes that are stated in those standards are developed based on the NQF-J. So, the learning outcomes that are recommended to the institution by levels actually come from the NQF-J. The NQF-J, however, is not complete. It is still being revised and developed (UCJ representative, in-person interview).

Another reason for the general low take-up of the NQF-J was the lack of autonomy within the tertiary public institution. This was raised by representatives from J-TEC during their interviews:

The limitation for this take-up was institutional autonomy. We are aware of the sensitivity in the landscape and there are institutions that do not wish to lose it, and others want it. We need them to build their own procedures and policies while meeting the required standards. This has to be perfectly balanced. Critically, why it is in fact most lacking has primarily to do with the public education institutions, teachers' colleges and community colleges [sic]. [These institutions] cannot offer programmes outside of their remit. Additionally, they are constrained by the requirements [for entry] that are stipulated by the awarding bodies that are external to the institution (J-TEC representative, in-person interview).

This seems to point to the franchise arrangements that exist among the teachers' colleges, as well as the community colleges. In the case of the teachers' colleges, the Joint Board for Teacher Education (JBTE) sets the matriculation requirements for entry (the formal entry requirements are used) into the programmes offered. Students who present alternative qualifications are routed through JBTE.

The MOEY&I raised the matter of the NQF-J not benefitting the ordinary Jamaican. According to the representatives, the NQF-J should be published in a format that anyone taking it up can understand. The following was shared by the MOEY&I representatives:

The only concern is that the NQF-J has not been rolled out to benefit the man on the street. In the end, if you are developing these policies and it is not serving the man on the street, then it is not serving its purpose (MOEY&I representative, in-person interview).

There is apparently much needed work to be done so that the framework can be accepted and utilized in enabling FLPs into and through HE and into the labour market. A stakeholder survey may be beneficial in determining the factors that may have limited the full implementation of the NQF-J.

Both UCJ and J-TEC stated that there are linkages between the NQF-J and QAA. When the matter of linkages between the UCJ's QAA process and the NQF-J was raised, the UCJ team spoke of the alignment of the recently revised TQF to the NQF-J and the participation of the UCJ in the development of the NQF-J. It was evident that the UCJ used the TQF in its QAA processes.

However, these linkages do not appear to be always streamlined. The practice of requiring the programme to be quality-assured does not seem to be consistently followed by J-TEC. The institutions and their programmes are sometimes registered and then encouraged to seek accreditation by UCJ or NCTVET, where applicable. This is an area for improvement as it can create problems for the HE entity. The NQF-J needs to be located within the UCJ, which uses the features as part of its QAA processes.

3.3.2. Quality assurance and accreditation (QAA)

Jamaica has well-developed systems for QAA of HE that provide local and international recognition of accredited programmes and institutions. Accreditation of 'academic' programmes

is the remit of the UCJ, which is the national EQA body for Jamaica, while TVET programmes are accredited by the NCTVET.

The UCJ quality-assurance process plays a vital role in facilitating and supporting the implementation of FLPs and the international recognition of awards, degrees, and certifications. Quality assurance enables entry into, progression through, and completion of a HE degree. However, the comparability of standards indicated on the NQF-J has not been evaluated. This is an area for development which will be enabled through the transfer of the NCTVET accreditation functions to the UCJ. This change process is in its infancy. It must be noted, however, that in 2011 a team from HEART Trust/NTA and the community colleges assessed the Level 4 programme in electrical installation and determined it to be equivalent to an associate degree, which would be in keeping with the ISCED indicators.

The QAA system of the UCJ incorporates a number of areas, including the development of standards (for accreditation and discipline-specific) and the use of these standards in its registration, as well as its accreditation processes. It covers both public and private institutions. The system was described as being well-developed and fully mature as it relates to the academic track, which, as stated earlier, is defined as tertiary. However, the area of TVET is in its earliest developmental stages. This was shared with the project team during the interview:

The UCJ is the national EQA. We are governed under the UCJ Act. We are a Statutory agency of the MOEY&I. The primary functions of the UCJ are external QA, we register and accredit programmes and institutions. We quality assure institutions and their programmes. We develop standards and we provide the necessary equivalency evaluations for individuals. We provide a developmental role. The quality assurance system is mature, particularly as it relates to the academic portfolio; the vocational is being worked through or being incorporated in the system. That might be in its embryonic stage (UCJ representative, in-person interview).

The admissions criteria provided in the UCJ's standards is one way in which the UCJ incorporates flexibility in access to HE. However, the QAA policies and practices do not include movement between vocational and academic tracks. At the time of interviews, the OADs had not been subjected to the UCJ's QAA process.

Another strength of the QAA process with respect to FLPs is the facilitation of transfers from one level of a programme to another or from one institution to another. The CT system is predicated on the TQF, which defines each level of qualification based on the entry requirements, the total credit hours, and the duration for each qualification. A good reference is the ‘2+2’ model where students can complete the first two years of a bachelor’s programme for at least 60 credits to be awarded the associate degree and then pursue another two years of upper-level courses totalling at least 60 credits to be awarded the bachelor’s degree. This was articulated by the UCJ’s representatives in the interview:

What we have is a credit system that is enunciated in our TQF. It speaks to identifying student learning outcomes, it provides descriptors of the types of courses required; the number of credits at the various levels, the contact hours, and it speaks to what [sic] the profile of the graduate should look like. So, those are some critical issues that are covered in the tertiary qualifications as it relates to credit accumulation and transfer. The TQF articulates the system but it is managed at the institutional level. They [the institutions] decide who they will accept, who they won’t, and so on. It is monitored at the level of programme accreditation, which considers the credit structure of those programmes. You can work with the system in facilitating that type of FLPs (UCJ representative, in-person interview).

However, the QAA and CTs are limited when it comes to TVET programmes. While the OADs have not yet been subject to the UCJ’s QAA process, because of the requirement of at least one set of graduates for accreditation, the UCJ will need to develop its system to quality-assure TVET-type programmes. This was articulated by the UCJ in the interview:

However, if you were to do it on the vocational track, we would not be able to say at this stage. The political leadership is there for us to go that way; any discussion is at the embryonic stage. We now have the occupational degrees that we are working through and, as those become more developed, we anticipate that then we will be at the place to say that it allows FLPs. But, at this point in time, again we would have to say the credit transfer system on the side of the TVET would not be as strong in facilitating FLPs. [For] the institutions that are offering CAP on behalf of the Ministry, the students enter with that [CAP] for the occupational programmes. The fact is that some of these other pathways have not really been the remit of the UCJ until more recent times. We will have to say that any work in that area is more embryonic. It is not as articulated as we would

have for the academic track. The TVET aspect was not the remit of the UCJ. But now that the remit has been expanded, it has to be incorporated (UCJ representative, in-person interview).

It is to be noted that the UCJ has been pivotal in developing generic standards for the occupational degree which have been shared with the respective institutions. The QAA system of the UCJ in relation to TVET will need to be further developed.

3.3.3. Career and academic advising and guidance (CAAG)

There is no overarching policy or procedure at the national level in relation to career and academic advising and guidance (CAAG). This was identified by officials in the MOEY&I as a crucial area for development as Jamaica embraces FLPs in HE.

This is the weakest area I have to admit. We have a lot of work to do on this. I am not satisfied that we are doing enough. We really have few career counsellors. We have guidance counsellors at all levels [in the system] and they may do a little career in their programme, but we do not have the kind of structured career counsellors required to support the system. So, it is a weak area; so, the students who go into the programmes, they go into not because this is what they want to do, but based on what is available, and opportunities are scarce. We have to do some further work both on the career side as well as just the general personal development side. We have a lot of work to do, especially at the tertiary level (MOEY&I representative, in-person interview).

There is a need to develop policy and to ensure that students who enter especially through CAP, matured entry requirements, and other alternative pathways are provided with this kind of support. The provision of career guidance and support is relevant to supporting students in their decisions regarding career paths as they navigate the diverse programme offerings, modalities, and types of institution. Individuals who are financially constrained may need academic guidance on alternative pathways towards realizing their fullest potential and completing a HE degree. This support is also needed by students contemplating programme transfers within the same institutions or from one institution to another. CAAG is an invaluable asset for supporting the progression of students through HE, and should therefore be structured.

Both the MOEY&I and the UCJ expressed concern about the availability of support for persons who access HE outside the formal entry requirements. It was noted that academic advising is one

of the areas that has been accepted as a necessary component for teaching and learning. However, while there are some aspects of this within tertiary institutions, it is clearly insufficient and will need to be structured and made mandatory. There are guidance counsellors in the system that appear to do little by way of career advising, as explained earlier in the report. As more persons, including those on PATH, participate in HE, targeted CAAG is necessary to reduce drop-out rates.

The MLSS has developed a labour market information system which seeks to link certified persons with local and overseas employers. It includes an employer's page (listing employment opportunities), a careers page (providing information on institutions and their programmes), and a scholarship page. This was shared in the interview with the MLSS:

There is a career ladder that we have on the website that facilitates individuals getting the kind of information [they need] to make informed decisions. There is also an employers' page that will help individuals understand some of the critical information that they should know to gain that employment opportunity. There is a scholarship page that facilitates the opportunities that are there and how they will access these opportunities. In terms of flexibility, it is driven by an understanding that persons know where to go for the information and we are wrapping up that drive through a public-awareness campaign that we are launching with JIS [Jamaica Information Service]. Currently, we have roughly 24,000 persons registered to do the interviews. We have a mobile app on the website. We have, since our launch, 520 persons who have downloaded our mobile app, and there are 411 persons who are actively using the app (MLSS representative, in-person interview).

The MLSS also shared its coaching programmes that it offers to members of PATH households, such as Steps to Work and the Path to Success Model. These facilitate transition into the workplace for PATH household members:

We are moving to promoting our on-the-job training programme. This programme [on-the-job training] facilitates internship opportunities for PATH household members within the labour market and is funded through an IDB [Inter-American Development Bank] loan. We started in 2015 and would have had 2000 members who would have gone through that programme. The Path to Success model facilitates interaction, team building and pulling from them [members of PATH household] conflict resolution, an understanding of the self and the usual thing such as how to write a résumé or dressing

for the interview and how they do an interviews – stuff like that – not only utilizing at this particular timing, but also if even they are not retained, they would have acquired the skills (MLSS representative, in-person interview).

This intervention by the MLSS is critical in ensuring that students and graduates are provided with training on interpersonal skills and attributes necessary for transitioning into the workplace. This is another instance where the programmes of the MLSS, though relevant to ensuring FLPs, are completely independent of those of the MOEY&I.

It is evident from the foregoing that CAAG is an area for development. The implementation of a coherent system that incorporates academic advising and career guidance is necessary, especially with increased heterogeneity in the student population.

3.3.4. Role of the labour market

The project also sought to explore the involvement of the labour market in HE at the policy level. In this regard, in addition to the MLSS, interviews were conducted with the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ) and the Jamaica Employers Federation (JEF). There was no apparent programme within the PSOJ or JEF that addressed or contributed to FLPs in HE. However, there was an expressed willingness to participate by having their employees benefit from FLPs. This was raised in the interview with the CEO at JEF:

One of the things we have been doing is working very closely with HEART. Why we are getting involved in FLPs is because we want to ensure that our human resource which comes to the workplace is work ready and trained sufficiently, and so when we have our discussions with the policy-makers, it is to ensure that the endgame is sufficient for the world of work. If that does not happen what we find is that there is extra time and resources that have to be expended to bring them [employees] up to speed. Ideally, the employers would love to have work-ready persons who can hit the ground running (JEF, CEO, in-person interview).

The concept of graduates ‘hitting the ground running’ has been a major strength for TVET programmes, and, therefore, there is greater need for recognition and acceptance of these types of programmes. JEF also indicated that it is aware of FLPs, but it has not been involved at the policy level. JEF makes its own contribution by providing flexible working hours for staff

members pursuing HE. The entity also offers professional training programmes based on requests from companies.

The MOEY&I, the UCJ, and J-TEC alluded to the involvement of labour-market players in the development of the programmes and the NQF-J. However, there appears to be a lack of engagement at the level of leadership in the organizations (that is, PSOJ, JMEA, JA, JEF, the Master Builders, and the Electrical Engineering Institute of Jamaica) with which these entities directly interface. COS meets with industry and it is this information that is utilized to align the programmes to labour market needs. It was also stated that the courses in CAP and OAD are aligned to labour-market needs. For example, there are few schools offering garment construction because that is not a growth area. On the other hand, there are a lot of programmes in hospitality and business process outsourcing and, now, cyber security. These are areas we have to report on in relation to *Vision 2030* and the growth agenda.

3.3.5. Equity considerations

Equity considerations were raised in the interviews with the MOEY&I, as well as the MLSS. Whereas there are no policies or framework with respect to addressing equity and inclusiveness in the provision of HE in Jamaica, HEART/NSTA Trust and MOEY&I had programmes in place that addressed the very issue.

According to the MOEY&I representatives, there are no specific equity considerations with regard to the CAP or OADs. However, it was noted that CAP was developed to provide learning opportunities for the large number of students who had been dropping out of high school, particularly those who attended secondary schools which were upgraded to high schools. The following remark was made in the interview with the MOEY&I representatives:

The reason CAP was developed 10 years ago was that there were 12,000 students leaving Grade 9 of the secondary system and we could not account for them. CAP is an opportunity ... to ensure that all young people are engaged in some kind of learning activity and make good of their lives. Everyone will do seven years and have the qualifications [and] skills to move into higher education and do something with their lives (MOEY&I representative, in-person interview).

CAP provides access for the 100 per cent [of students] leaving the secondary level to qualify and move on to tertiary or into the world of work. CAP allows for a number of

opportunities for student to complete. You are targeting the entire Grade 11 cohort where 60 per cent will do one or more CSEC subjects (and move into sixth forms) and the other 40 per cent will go into workplace. We open the door and the persons apply for the programme; and we find places to put the students (MOEY&I representative, in-person interview).

The very nature of both the CAP and OADs qualify them to address equity in the HE sector in Jamaica. These programmes are free of cost and accessible to all. This was conveyed in the interview with representatives from the MOEY&I:

The programme is free and it is offered to those who apply [sic]. The Government takes care of tuition and examination fees; they [the students] only have to turn up. The socio-economic situation may stop them from coming. The Ministry focuses on access and is not able to provide a stipend. There is no assessment to determine who needs lunch and fare [transportation] (MOEY&I representative, in-person interview).

It is noteworthy that while CAP was used to introduce grades 12 and 13 in the upgraded high schools that were formerly called secondary schools, the students at these secondary schools were mainly from the lower social strata of the country (Miller, 1999). The establishment of secondary schools in the 1970s formed part of the reforms designed by UNESCO to address equity and was financed by the World Bank. However, the intended goals were not realized. For many years, it was said and accepted that secondary schools (which were also called comprehensive schools) provided training in vocational areas and were seen as schools for students who were not able to achieve placement in the traditional high schools based on their performance in the Common Entrance Examinations. This negative labelling may have limited the acceptance of TVET as an alternative and legitimate pathway for accessing HE.

It was acknowledged that the socio-economic conditions of some students could further limit their participation. Therefore, within this context, both CAP and the OADs are providing the opportunity for students who did not attain the formal entry requirements for tertiary education and are unable to afford HE education to access and progress through HE. It is therefore serving to address equity in HE.

CAP continues to be funded by HEART/NSTA Trust which, based on the recent amendment, provides TVET programmes for unattached youth who dropped out of secondary education.

Many of them are not able to afford HE and lack the required certifications to access tertiary education. According to the MOEY&I, it is not in the business of turning back students from accessing HE. CAP is being integrated into the regular Ministry of Education system so that some of the funds can be used for the private system. It is to be noted that, as the literature review highlighted, the recent merger of HEART Trust/NTA is specifically geared at providing increased certification for the workplace and now includes individuals without any formal qualifications. This is an area to be explored further.

Equity in terms of access and participation in HE is also facilitated by the MLSS through PATH. While there is no policy or formalized arrangement with the MOEY&I, this funding allocation plays a role in enabling disadvantaged people to pursue HE. PATH, which is enshrined in policy, is aimed at providing opportunities for ‘needy’ students to pursue a HE degree. This was explained as follows:

We are not in the business of education and training. We provide the means to access whatever it is out there that they [PATH beneficiaries] want to access. We help them to go to HEART, redo CSEC, or go on to tertiary. It does not matter whether the institution is private or public, once the institution is registered with the MOEY&I or UCJ, and the institution is offering post-secondary or tertiary education (MLSS representative, in-person interview).

PATH is essentially a welfare programme that is aimed at breaking the intergenerational poverty cycle through education. This was noted by officials at the MLSS:

We [MLSS] see education as the means to break that poverty cycle. Your income-earning potential to be able to truly break that cycle of poverty changes dramatically once you have tertiary level qualifications. So, at the heart of PATH is the Government’s commitment to provide for the needy. I am going to give you the true means in which to break you from a cycle of dependence to [one of] independence [sic]. We are not looking at what the demand is, we are looking at what the data shows us [in relation to] who are in poverty and who are not in poverty. What is your income level or your quintile level, who has a high level of education as opposed to those who have a lower level of education? This is what the policy is built around [sic] (MLSS representative, in-person interview).

It was made clear in the interview that PATH only provides a grant up to the bachelor's level. According to the MLSS representatives, "once you have a bachelor's degree you do not qualify for a bursary to do another bachelor's degree." The MLSS has a Step-to-Work programme which targets working-age members of families who are on PATH and provides them with on-the-job experience and training to enable them to gain and retain employment.

3.4. Evaluation and monitoring of the implementation of FLPs

The MOEY&I has not only promulgated FLPs but has implemented strategies to ensure that Jamaicans have greater access to HE while, at the same time, integrating TVET in HE. The strategy has been to ensure that more persons leaving the secondary education level have the required certification to access HE and transition through HE. The major programmes driving this are CAP and OADs. CAP has enabled the extension of secondary-level education in the upgraded high schools to seven years, which has been a longstanding feature of only the traditional high schools. It serves as an alternative pathway and valuable option for accessing HE through the incorporation of TVET. The NVQs have therefore been authorized as a valuable certification option and pathway at the secondary education and HE levels. Another strategy for FLPs that has been pursued by the MOEY&I is the development of the NQF-J which provides a mapping of pathways to access and progress through HE inclusive of academic-type and TVET tracks.

However, the implementation of a system to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of these programmes is a handicap. Although financial resources have been expended in implementing CAP and the OADs, there was no information on the throughput of the programmes or the overall performance of the students. The only available information was on enrolment. The need for an evaluation of the performance of students having matriculated with TVET certifications (NVQ levels 1 and 2) is evident.

As Jamaica seeks to reform its HE system, evaluation and monitoring of enrolment and completion, including for disadvantaged groups, needs to be given priority. While two annual censuses are conducted, one by the PIOJ and the other by the MOEY&I, the data collected are limited to enrolment by gender and total enrolment at an institution. The data collected by the PIOJ reflects enrolment in tertiary vis-a-vis enrolment in post-secondary education and training,

while that of the MOEY&I is restricted to tertiary education. None of this data can be effectively used to determine the participation of equity groups in FLPs, nor the throughput for those persons who entered via an FLP.

A similar trend in limited data was also delineated in the interview with the MLSS. The MLSS collects data on the number of PATH scholarships based on expenditure but not based on the number of recipients, the levels of the HE programmes, or the completion rates. Though there is information, any analysis to determine effectiveness appears to be limited. The measurement of the effectiveness of the HE sector is essential at this time and would provide information needed to guide the much talked-about reform of the sector. For example, how many students are accessing the various programmes and completing them? What is the performance based on the various pathways? What is the completion rate for the NVQ Levels 1 and 2? How many students are accessing the credit transfer system? How many students successfully complete and transition into the labour market? What are the demands of the labour market? How is this information used to inform areas of focus for the HE sector? Where should funding be allocated to ensure better performance? Which national body should collect what data? These issues can only be addressed if there is an effective data collection and analysis system to inform necessary interventions and improvements.

3.5. Priorities for the future

The priorities for the future were outlined by the stakeholders in the interviews conducted. Political will and leadership, and institutional autonomy were identified by the Ministries and the national bodies as the main enablers to the implementation of FLPs in HE. There was also the general view that an enabling culture within HE, as well as adequate resources, would facilitate the implementation of FLPs. These features present a major opportunity that should be exploited by national bodies to ensure equity and inclusiveness in HE and thereby contribute to the actualization of the national outcome of *world-class education and training*. Political will and leadership, certainly within the national bodies, as well as policy coherence, are critical.

Both the MOEY&I and J-TEC identified a policy and legislative framework for HE as a short-term priority, specifically the creation and development of the HE Act and a body that will give the Act teeth. However, equity and equality in access to quality HE and lifelong learning

opportunities are addressed by the current legislation framework covering the structure of HE contained in the Education Act, funding for TVET set out by the HEART/NSTA Act, the social programmes implemented by the MLSS including PATH, and the QAA functions of the UCJ. An area for enhancement is the amendment to the UCJ's Act to specifically align the provisions therein to the QAA functions being undertaken and to cover post-secondary education and TVET provisions.

Another priority identified was the widening of access to HE through FLPs. Individuals in the workforce who are desirous of entering HE should know that opportunities exist for the recognition of their PL for entry into and/or progression through HE.

The MLSS highlighted the evaluation and monitoring of throughput of students on PATH and the progression from primary education through to HE as areas for strengthening. While it has some information on the impact of PATH, there is need for a more extensive monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme in enabling persons from the lower socio-economic groups to participate in HE and complete a degree. Data on how many started, transferred from primary education through secondary to HE, and completed HE and transitioned into the labour market are required. Collaboration between the Tertiary Unit of the MOEY&I and the MLSS with respect to data collection, monitoring, and evaluation becomes necessary.

The Statistical Institute (STATIN) indicated that it is moving over to adopt the ISCED system in its data collection. The urges from its stakeholders to utilize ISCED have impacted this decision. This forms its short-term priority, especially as the entity is preparing for another census. Once STATIN moves over to ISCED it would be able to determine employment rates based on levels of education. In the medium term, emphasis will be given to obtaining comprehensive data on enrolment, progression, and completion in HE, spanning both the public and private institutions.

The PSOJ has identified the need for better alignment of the training and education of the graduates leaving HE and the needs of the labour force. The representatives alluded to greater engagement of the PSOJ in the development of programmes.

The JEF has indicated an interest in implementing a credit system for a number of its professional development training programmes that it offers to different businesses and bodies in Jamaica.

Chapter 4. Investigating the practices of selected HE institutions in implementing FLPs

This chapter provides an analysis of policies, instruments, and practices that support FLPS at the institutional level. The findings from the desk research, and the interviews with the stakeholders are included. Key aspects to be covered are:

- a brief description of the HEIs selected for this research;
- a brief description of the interviews conducted;
- an outline of the findings in relation to policies and practices for FLPs within these selected institutions;
- an account of the findings as to the extent to which the national policies and instruments are used to support the implementation of FLPs within these selected institutions;
- an evaluation of the effectiveness of these practices;
- an analysis of the priorities for the future.

4.1. Brief description of the selected HEIs

The selection of the HEIs to participate in this project was guided by the following parameters:

- (i) type of the institution (public or private);
- (ii) classification of the institution (university or college);
- (iii) size of the institution, based on enrolment (large or small);
- (iv) location of the institution (urban or rural);
- (v) authority of the institution to award HE degrees;
- (vi) modality in delivery of the programmes;
- (vii) quality-assured by the UCJ.

The types of institutions selected for the project were a public university, a private university, and a public college, all of which differed in their governance arrangements (Table 10). There

was also variation in student enrolment, programme offerings, teaching modalities, and funding arrangements, to name a few.

Table 10. Profile of the three institutions selected for the project

Institutions	Profile
Public university: The University of Technology, Jamaica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance: Charter and Act of Parliament • Multi-disciplinary with enrolment of approximately 12,000 students • Wide range of degree programmes, including doctoral, master's, bachelor's, and associate degrees • 8 faculties • Programmes for specific professions as well as STEM programmes. This include programmes of closed government training units which were subsumed into the institution's suite of programmes • Franchise programmes to colleges • Quality-assured – institutional accreditation • Funding: Subvention from MOEY&I, student fees, consultancies, and research • Extension sites
Public multidisciplinary college (rural): Moneague College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance: Education Act • No authority to award degrees • Multidisciplinary with enrolment of approximately 2,000 students • Associate and bachelor's programmes, as well as CAP and occupational associate degrees • 3 faculties • Offers franchise programmes – awarded by CCCJ and TCJ/UWI • Quality-assured – programme accreditation • Financing: Subvention, student fees, and consultancies • Extension sites
Private university: Northern Caribbean University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance: Charter and Act of Parliament • Faith-based with enrolment of approximately 4,000 students • Wide range of degree programmes including doctoral, master's, bachelor's, and associate degrees. Offers certificates and diplomas, including CAP • Programmes of liberal nature, for specific profession as well as STEM programmes • Quality-assured – institutional accreditation • Financing: Student fees, endowment, research, and consultancies • Extension sites

Source: Elaborated by the authors

A formal letter was sent to each institution informing of its selection and providing a brief overview of the project. The list of persons, based on portfolio responsibility, to be interviewed

as required for the project (by UNESCO) was shared with the institutions. The schedule and a copy of the questionnaire for the respective interviews were sent to each institution ahead of the meetings.

The interviews were conducted on the main campus of each institution. The project team presented an overview of the project to the executive team at each institution to include the president/principal, vice/deputy president/principal, deans, heads of department, registrars, and librarians. A shortened version of the presentation on the project preceded each face-to-face interview. A summary of the interviews at each institution is provided in tables 5, 6 and 7.

4.1.1. Public university: The University of Technology, Jamaica

The University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech), one of the three public universities in Jamaica, was established in 1958 as a post-secondary institute, the Jamaica Institute of Technology, providing training for school leavers from the technical high schools. Consistent with its mandate, it trained technicians for the labour market. The name of the institution was changed to the College of Arts, Science and Technology (CAST) by scheme order in 1964. At that time, the institution was offering three-year diploma programmes in the areas of the arts, sciences, and technology. CAST became renowned for preparing technicians for industry through its engineering programmes, and for preparing teachers of technical and vocational education (mainly secondary and technical high schools), as well as architects.

UTech was granted the authority to confer degrees (by scheme order) in 1986 and upgraded its programmes to bachelor's level. The institution was later granted 'university' status by the Government of Jamaica (UTech Act, 1995). The institution has grown significantly from an institution offering four programmes and with an enrolment of over 50 students to one that offers over 32 graduate programmes and 54 undergraduate programmes, from the level of a certificate programme up to doctoral studies. With an average enrolment of 12,000 students, the institution provides education and training for varied professions, such as health sciences, architecture, engineering, computing, and law.

Initially designed based on the polytechnic model, UTech now boasts a number of colleges, faculties and schools which offer a very expansive range of technical and vocational type courses of study (programmes) in key professional areas covering business, hospitality, engineering, law, nursing, allied health, and architecture, to name a few. Included in UTech's offerings are

programmes that were offered by training units (now closed) in the Ministry of Health and Wellness, such as the Nursing Schools, the Dental Auxiliary School and the School of Public Health. UTech also has a department that prepares teachers for delivering TVET courses in high schools.

In addition, the institution has a few extension sites and franchise arrangements for delivering some of its programmes at select HEIs. For the franchise arrangement, the partnering institution is provided with the curriculum for the programme and, under the management and oversight of UTech, recruits students and assigns lecturers for the courses. The examination is prepared by UTech and is administered at the college at the scheduled time communicated by UTech. Unlike the other HEIs, UTech uses the term ‘module’ to refer to a course, and ‘course of study’ to refer to programmes.

UTech, for just under 30 years, has been quality-assured by the UCJ. Over that time span, a number of its programmes were accredited and in 2018 the institution was granted institutional accreditation. The governance arrangements, as per the Education Act, include a board of management. The accountability for its performance is embedded in the funding provided by the government and accreditation by the UCJ.

4.1.2. Public college: Moneague College

Moneague College is a public tertiary college that was established as a teacher-training institution in 1956. The institution was upgraded to a multi-disciplinary institution providing programmes responsive to the education and training needs of the community. In 1993, the institution expanded from a teacher-training focus to a broader multidisciplinary offering, including CCCJ programmes. From all indications, the institution is etched in the life of the community and has a strong, positive reputation in teacher training.

The college has since expanded the range of programmes offered and forged local and international relationships with community colleges and universities. Moneague College also has off-campus sites in other rural areas, which enable access to HE. The institution has a number of programmes which have been accredited by the UCJ. The college is classified by the MOEY&I as a multidisciplinary institution and is one of those public tertiary institutions that does not have degree-granting authority.

In an effort to increase access to diverse education and training opportunities in the rural community where it is located, the college has entered into franchise arrangements with other HEIs. Unfortunately, some are not awarding bodies so the problem has not been solved. These partners include the Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica, the Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica (CCCJ), the Centre of Occupational Studies (in the MOEY&I), the Caribbean Maritime University (CMU), and the Jamaica Theological Seminary (JTS). Based on the franchise arrangements, the college provides and coordinates the teaching and learning, as well as the support services, and manages the registration of students and the delivery of the programmes to its students. The curriculum, assessments, admission requirements, and granting of the academic award are the responsibility of the entity from which the programme is franchised. This arrangement attracts a franchise fee, which is based on the enrolment number in the respective programme offerings. This was explained in the interviews with the Head of Teaching and Learning and the Deans:

We work with Teachers' Colleges of Jamaica/Jamaica Board for Teacher Education and Council of Community Colleges of Jamaica, so we [Moneague College] are constrained by what they have [sic]. In the teacher education programmes we are told of the sequencing of the programme. We get the exams from them [CCCJ and TCJ]. For the programmes we franchise from other institutions like CMU and JTS we also go by the spread that they provide because they want all the students to take the examination across the different locations at the same time. So, we have to offer the courses at the same time they [the franchising entities] are offering it at the different locations. We are very [sic] constrained when it comes to FLPs (Moneague College, in-person interview).

From all indications, the entry requirements, assessment instruments and schedule for the teaching and learning of the franchised programmes are dictated by the awarding entities. The example of the CCCJ programmes were cited where the examination schedule and actual examinations/assessments are sent to the institution by the CCCJ. Moneague College, therefore, tries to adhere to the structure and requirements of the programme as dictated, however this does not necessarily facilitate FLPs for its students. This was explained as follows:

Once we deviate from that [schedule] we have to apply for special permission. [We] have asked for an examination for a certain semester and the institution was advised that if it is the only college requesting that exam, it is going to cost so much. That is why we try as

much to stay within the structure they have given us (Moneague College representative, in-person interview).

CCCJ and JBTE were invariably referred to as the governing bodies in the interviews. This was also due to the limited role of Moneague College in the development and review of the curriculum, the admission of students with alternative qualifications, the setting of the assessments, and the granting of awards. In order to bring clarity to this matter, the research team conducted an interview with one of the franchising bodies, the coordinating unit for the TCJ/UWI arrangement at UWI. Based on the findings, the administrators at Moneague seemed to have imposed the reported constraints on themselves. The project team was unable to get clarification from the CCCJ.

The issue of governance is a challenge for the college. One of the interviewees insisted that the college could make no decision about its internal processes without the permission of the *governing body*. However, the Executive was clear that these ‘governing bodies’ had no jurisdiction over the internal workings of the institution. Moneague College has its Board of Management, which is a requirement by law under the Education Act (Education Act, 1980). This board is responsible for determining the internal mechanism used in its institution. The franchise rules only apply to the franchised programmes, which is but one component of the total programme offering.

It was observed that the certifications for all post-secondary and tertiary programmes offered at the college are awarded by an external body. Moneague College reflects the seeming confusion around governance in public tertiary institutions. Some of the colleges do not have degree-granting authority, and hence rely on the CCCJ and/or the TCJ/JBTE/UWI arrangements to award degrees for programmes offered at the institution. This appears to be impacting the FLPs process and expansion of access to the college by potential candidates from its communities. In light of the foregoing, and based on the UCI’s new classification system, Moneague College seems to be operating as a broker.

A review of the CCCJ Act (2001) shows that it only addresses the remuneration of staff. CCCJ does not have degree-granting authority. On the other hand, JBTE exists as a unit within UWI, and there is no evidence regarding the authority of UWI to award degrees for programmes

offered by another entity. In the past, institutions such as the Mico University College have offered its bachelor's and master's level programmes as UCJ-approved degrees until the institution was awarded its own scheme order.

The perceived lack of institutional autonomy has seemingly led to confusion around the governance and autonomy of Moneague College. There needs to be an urgent review of the governance arrangements in relation to institutional autonomy. Consideration should be given to those public educational institutions that have gone through several iterations of programme accreditation and have strong IQA systems. Failure to do so will limit the scope for expanding the CAP and the OAS at the community level.

4.1.3. Private university: Northern Caribbean University

Formerly West Indies College, this university is the oldest private institution operating in Jamaica. It is faith-based and offers programmes that are of a liberal-arts nature. NCU had its origin as a training institution, which prepared students for a specific profession, and was renamed a college in 1959. It began offering its first baccalaureate programme as early as 1954 and was awarded a charter as a university in 1999. Like UTech, the institution had a number of its programmes accredited, and was awarded institutional accreditation in 2018.

Historically, NCU prides itself on providing opportunities for students without the formal entry requirements of five CSEC passes. The mission as articulated is the provision of quality Christ-centered education, thereby equipping each student for committed professional service to all people, and to God. The enrolment of NCU has grown from 1,200 in 1999 to an average of 4,000 students in 2019. Currently, the institution offers a plethora of programmes, ranging from certificates up to doctoral degrees, which are housed across the 18 departments. The programmes offered are varied and include areas such as allied health, education, liberal arts, biological sciences, communication, and business management.

The institution has two extension sites, one in Kingston and the other in Montego Bay. The only franchise arrangement that NCU has in place is for the OADs. Otherwise, the programmes delivered are those of the university.

NCU is autonomous and awards its own degrees. As a private entity, accountability for its performance is monitored through quality assurance and accreditation by the UCJ.

4.2. Policies and practices for implementing FLPs in HE

All three HEIs in this case study embrace FLPs in HE. The main goal of FLPs at these institutions is to increase access for students to complete a HE degree. FLPs also allow the institutions to respond to the diverse needs of students. A common practice among all three institutions is the offering of preliminary courses and programmes of study for students who do not meet the formal matriculation requirements of five CSEC passes, including mathematics and English. This pre-college programme is aimed at enabling students to attain the standards for entry into the tertiary-level programmes. This provision has been a practice of all three institutions for a number of years. The name and structure of these programmes may have changed over the years but the practice has continued. For example, UTech transformed its continuing education department into an academy which offers preliminary/bridging courses to students without the formal requirements for tertiary education and takes these students up to the standards required for entry. The following was shared by an interviewee at UTech:

I remember way back in the days when we were CAST (now UTech), we used to have a range of courses that persons who did not have O-levels or CXC's at the time could do to matriculate into the diploma programmes. And, we had PEC [pre-engineering course] where persons who did not have CXC's would do those courses and articulate into the regular diploma courses of study. And then [move] from the diploma to the degree. So that [pre-college] has been part of our tradition ever since. I believe that national policies would have helped to strengthen the continuation of such opportunities (UTech representative, in-person interview).

Moneague College offers pre-college programmes for a similar purpose where students are able to resit CSECs and NVQs. This purpose of these post-secondary offerings was explained by an institution's representative as follows:

The objective for the pre-college programme is to capture those persons who have completed high school and were not successful in the subjects that would allow them to matriculate into our [tertiary programmes] ... Before the pre-college programme we had the continuing education programme (CONED), which was basically persons coming to do their CSEC, and afterwards they would apply for the [tertiary] level programmes. But afterwards we recognized that we have students with three CSEC subjects and we did not want them to get lost in the space. So, we developed an option targeting those persons

who have three CSEC passes. These students were given exposure to college level courses while pursuing the outstanding CSEC subjects. It is a kind of way to bridge and take them from where they are up to the college level (Moneague College representative, in-person interview).

A similar pre-college programme exists at NCU. It was explained as follows:

We have a mature age exam once applicants do not have their formal qualifications. We had it at the undergraduate level for many years but now the graduate programmes started 15 years ago. If the student is very young, we do [sic] pre-university and take them through CXC's. And we help them to get the rest that they want (NCU representative, in-person interview).

It is noted that apart from the formal entry requirements, the other alternative admission pathway was mainly through mature entry provision. However, based on the franchise system at Moneague College, the evaluation of mature-entry applications is done by the franchising body. This was shared by a representative from Moneague College:

We have mature entry requirements also, where persons who have a certain number of years in the industry, we will accept them. We go by the guidelines of the 'governing body' as well. This is not a discretion we have. We have to go by what TCJ or CCCJ is saying [sic] (Moneague College representative, in-person interview).

Unlike UTech and NCU, Moneague College is constrained with respect to FLPs because some of its administrators believe that the franchisers have greater power than the administrators themselves in fact have at the Institution. However, the interview with JBTE revealed that FLPs are managed at the level of the vice-principal and registrar at college, in collaboration with JBTE. The following was shared in the interview with the JBTE representatives:

After the applicants present their portfolios, they are assessed by the VP of Academics at the colleges before coming to us. Some of these persons would have years of experience in exactly what the programme requires, and so up on that revision then they send it to us for further review to see what our final decisions are and where these persons are going to be placed (JBTE representative, in-person interview).

The practices in relation to PL systems, CAP, and the OADs are explored in the next section.

4.2.1. Access to HE

The system in place for access to HE varies among the three institutions. The two universities (UTech and NCU) have in place a system for PL. However, CAP and the OAD were offered by the private university and the public tertiary college. The practices within these institutions were evaluated.

Prior learning assessment (PLA)

Both UTech and NCU have a structured PLA system, even though there was no policy at the national level. This was not the practice at Moneague College, which relied on the entities from which the institution had franchised programmes to conduct the evaluation.

The University of Technology, Jamaica (UTech)

The primary policy that UTech has for FLPSs is its PLA policy. UTech has in place a PLA unit which is staffed by a coordinator. The following was shared in the interviews with the Head of Teaching and Learning and confirmed by the Deans:

The primary policy we have for FLPs is our PLA policy, which is geared primarily to facilitate persons with prior learning experiences to matriculate into both undergraduate and graduate courses. It is also used ... for course exemption. So, persons who have done various courses or have had PL experiences can challenge an examination to demonstrate that they have mastered certain course content that should be considered towards granting them exemption. It is for matriculation as well as course exemption, both at the graduate and undergraduate level. (UTech representative, in-person interview)

UTech boasts of having had a PLA system for 15 years, and that it was only recently, about two years ago, that a policy had been implemented. This policy is used primarily to facilitate persons with PL experience to matriculate into the undergraduate and graduate programmes. It is also used for course exemptions. Persons with PL qualifications can apply to challenge a course by examination to demonstrate that they have mastered the course content and should be considered for exemption. This system as it is currently configured at UTech was explained to the project team (Box 18).

Box 18. Outline of the PLA system at UTech

Applications that vary from the formal requirements are routed through the PLA office. The PLA office evaluates the qualifications of those prospective students without the formal requirements to determine the gaps, if any, and to recommend the bridging modules that these prospective students would need to complete. Persons who have done various courses based on that process may sit a challenge examination to demonstrate that they have mastered certain course content that should be considered to grant them exemption. The relevant faculty to which the course of study being applied to by the student is a part of the process. The student's file is sent to the respective academic unit for curriculum-based assessment used to determine the level at which the student may enter the programme. After the PLA is completed a listing of the gaps is generated. Sometimes the UCJ is contacted to determine if there are established equivalencies (to avoid the student having to repeat courses). Maturity of the individual is also a factor that is used in the assessment. Where there is a need for bridging courses to be taken as an entry requirement, the student is referred to the academy which was established specifically for facilitating FLPs for entry purposes.

Source: In-person interviews, UTech, 2019

It was revealed in the interviews that prior to the development of its four-year bachelor's programmes, UTech had in place a PLA system which was applied to a special summer programme that provided opportunities for students to upgrade their diploma certification (which was obtained at UTech) to a bachelor's degree. Summer programmes were offered to working professionals. This PLA system worked especially for those persons in the allied health profession. Many of these students working in the profession had pursued the diploma and/or certificate at the institution. The university had developed discipline-specific programmes (such as medical technology, environmental health, pharmacy, and diet and nutrition) tailored to taking the students up to the bachelor's level. As one representative in the meeting with the deans stated:

It was really the PLA that worked for us, to an extent. Many of our students in the allied health profession had started out with these diploma and certificate programmes that used to be offered by the university. Over the years, the summer courses of study would facilitate those students, in particular, to do [sic] the general health sciences courses; the discipline specific courses [such as medical technology or environmental health] in the last summer semester. And they could qualify with a health science degree with the discipline specific specialization (UTech representative, in-person interview).

However, this seemed to have worked in particular for some areas of study. One of the interviewees from another faculty had this to say:

The university was big on the PLA a few years ago – it was being highly promoted. We in the [science] faculty came to the conclusion that, based on the nature of science and

[because] many of these persons were disconnected from the actual science-based courses for a number of years, it was very frustrating for them. [This is] because a number of the fundamentals of science were very lacking. As such for them [those students] to survive when they matriculated using PLA – they struggled a bit and at that time we [the institution] did not have the necessary support system in place to assist them (UTech representative, in-person interview).

These programmes have since then been developed and offered as ‘full-fledged’ bachelor of science degrees.

Based on the current policy at the institution, course/module exemptions are granted based on RPL. An assessment is made of the student’s relevant work experience and other certification/s presented. UTech accepts TVET certifications (NVQ-J Level 4) for course exemption and plans to work on a system for seamless transfer. Already, one of the faculties has been accepting these qualifications through the PLA system. Students sit a practical-based challenge examination and are also required to submit a portfolio. This evaluation is routed through the PLA Unit. The following was shared by the Head of School for Hospitality and Tourism Management.

We find that we have some students from HEART with NVQ-J Level 4 who are now applying to do the degree programme and so we accept them through the PLA. However, we would give them what we call a challenge practical exam. The institution has a formal PLA unit which manages the process. Because the programme is predominantly management modules, then most times they [students with NVQ-J Level 4 certification] would start in Year 1 but we would have taken into consideration for transfer of credits their practical courses they have already done. The students can apply for exemption from the equivalent practical courses. We have recognized that those practical courses have met the 80 per cent equivalency (UTech representative, in-person interview).

There is the pre-university course of study that students can use to enhance their qualifications for admission into the tertiary-level programmes. Some of the students interviewed had pursued this programme. One student said:

I completed high school with nine CSEC subjects then went and did two more subjects [chemistry and physics] before coming to UTech to pursue the electrical engineering programme. When I came in, they [UTech] had a diploma programme (engineering) which required five CSEC passes to start. But you can matriculate from the diploma

programme into the degree programme if you obtain a minimum GPA [grade point average] 3.05 in the first year. So, I got the 3.05 GPA and then I transferred over into Year 1 of the bachelor's degree in electrical engineering (UTech, student, in-person interview).

While some of the students had applied for an assessment of their PL, at the time of the visit (five weeks into the semester) the outcomes had not been communicated to the students. In one case, the student was not aware of the facility for PLA at the institution prior to the interview. As a result, that student had not included certificates gained for other higher learning training and education in the application to the institution.

I am a second-year student who matriculated with seven CSEC passes and five CAPE Units. I actually did two certificates before coming here, one of which was an NVQ-J certification and the other was done at a university. When I applied to UTech I submitted my CSEC and CAPE certificates. I have not used my [other] certificates to matriculate. I have not asked about it (UTech, student, in-person interview).

It was reported that there is a fee per module/course for each module for which a student is granted exemption. The use of the PLA for advanced placements was identified by institutional stakeholders as an area for improvement.

From all indications, UTech is very aware of developments at the national level regarding the CAP programme, OADs, City & Guilds and other programmes that aim to create a bridge between traditional HE programmes and other forms of post-secondary training. The evidence collected suggests that the PLA system with regards to these alternative admissions pathways is still at an embryonic stage. At the time of the interviews, neither CAP nor OADs were being offered at UTech.

Northern Caribbean University (NCU)

The PL system at NCU is undergirded by the institution's philosophy that 'all are equal', which has been translated down to the educational provisions of the institution. As stated by one of the interviewees:

We know that not everybody has a good start so consequently the denomination [Christian sub-groups] has had, as a part of its thinking, the acceptance of students from high school without the required formal requirements for tertiary education and enabling

their participation in higher education. Age is not a limiting factor. This is what the institution has been, and this has been practising over the years [sic] (NCU representative, in-person interview).

Initially, students who were accepted under the mature entry clause would have been able to sit an entrance examination. It was explained that when it was a college, most of the students entering the institution were applicants that other institutions would not have accepted. NCU saw that as a matriculation pathway. It was after 2003 that things began to change. An example was given of a student who had not met the matriculation requirements until the UCJ raised the issue prior to the student graduating. It was reported that NCU changed its matriculation requirements to align with admission criteria for accreditation in the mid-2000s and discontinued FLPs. According to the interviewee, “We are going full circle.”

NCU’s system for PL is outlined in Box 19. Students may be required to sit pre-qualifying examination/s or to present a portfolio for evaluation.

Box 19. Outline of the PLA system at NCU

There is an examination in place for mature applicants without the formal entry requirements. There is an assessment for English language and one for mathematics, as well as one from the unit or department that offers the specialization in which the student has an interest. Applicants also have the option of submitting a portfolio for mature entry. This has been the practice for the undergraduate programmes, but this was recently extended to the graduate programmes. The system for entry has not been fully centralized. The respective faculties/colleges within the institution make the decision regarding exemption and transfers. At the graduate level, there are conditions regarding the acceptance for graduates of the bachelor’s programme with a grade point average between 2.7 to 2.9 or persons who have experience but no qualifications. These students are required to complete two or three courses at the undergraduate level before they can get full acceptance. There are other requirements at the graduate level that are assessed. For example, [a] student’s writing skills are monitored, and that student may be required to complete a course in technical writing in order to show that he or she can write at the graduate level.

Source: In-person Interviews, NCU, 2019

Therefore, while the NCU does not have an explicit policy to guide PL, there is a well-understood practice that is followed.

Career Advancement Programme (CAP)

Another alternative pathway into HE is the attainment of CVQ and/or NVQ-J Level 2 certification. This has been facilitated through the CAP, now synonymous with NVQs. Once a student has completed CAP it is taken to mean that he/she has earned the NVQ levels 1 and 2

certifications. The NVQs awarded for TVET programmes are used to matriculate into the OADs. This was clarified in the interview with the representatives at Moneague College:

Once the students have completed CAP at Level 2, they have access to any of the programmes we offer in the occupational associate degree. We have persons doing CAP who gained the required CSEC passes that qualifies them to matriculate into our [tertiary] programmes (Moneague College representative, in-person interview).

This was confirmed in interviews with the students who were enrolled in OAD courses. Many of them had completed their CSECs and pursued the NVQs in grades 12 and 13 as a pathway to HE, due to free tuition for CAP. The following experiences were shared:

I have seven CSEC passes but at that time, financially, I did not have the money to attend college. CAP gave me the opportunity to attend college. The experience so far has been great. Skills-wise it is very important (HEI, student, in-person interview).

I have my CXC and a diploma. My experience [on the CAP and OAD programmes] here has been a tremendous one. Where it is a financial concern [for individuals], it is very good, especially to get an associate degree [sic]. For the government to implement such a programme, it is a plus. You can reach where you want [in HE] without the burden of student loans (HEI, student, in-person interview).

Even though I had CSEC passes, I got into the programme based on my Level 2 HEART certificate. I have seven CSEC passes (HEI, student, in-person interview).

It was noted that all the students interviewed were graduates of non-traditional high schools. Therefore, while the programme was initially intended to provide options for post-secondary education, it is largely recognized as enabling NVQ-J levels 1 and 2 certifications. One student reported pursuing CAPE units along with the NVQs (levels 1 and 2) in Grades 12 and 13.

In light of the foregoing, the perceived notion that CAP is a ‘second chance’ programme seems to be unwittingly promulgated, and could be a factor limiting the number of students accessing and successfully completing the programme. The following comments were shared by the students:

When I started the CAP, it was not that great because it was the first time that the CAP was being offered at that [high] school. It was actually like a sacrifice. Some of the other students would actually discriminate against us. Sixth-form students would actually

classify us as being a little illiterate. It was not that great. It was the first time the CAP was at that school so you had to actually prove to them that we can do it (HEI, student, in-person interview).

When I was doing CAP, I am telling you [she pointed to another student in the focus group], we were so confused during the first week because the other students were like ‘they are CAP’. You see, once the students knew that you were doing CAP, they would give you the bad shoulder. They called us dunce. When we were changing classes, they would direct questions at you such as: ‘You have a baby yet?’ ‘You pay your school fee?’ (HEI, student, in-person interview).

It was after I graduated from high school, I heard of the CAP. At high school they focused on the students with ability. Certain things were not brought out. (HEI, student, in-person interview)

This points to the misconception that students generally have in relation to CAP, and in particular the TVET programmes that are certified by NCTVET. These are regarded as options for persons who may have dropped out from secondary education and had failed to obtain the necessary formal requirements for tertiary education.

Notwithstanding, the findings clearly substantiate that CAP has been impactful and that it served two positive purposes, despite the ‘second chance’ labelling, namely:

- 1) Addressing equity by enabling students who could not normally afford to access HE due to financial constraints to pursue a HE degree.
- 2) Facilitating the integration of TVET as an option for HE.

Another finding from the interviews was that some students had accessed the CAP programme in the additional two years that were added to the non-traditional high schools, while others had accessed CAP at HEIs, including tertiary institutions. CAP is offered at the tertiary institutions as a pre-college programme and is used to qualify students for HE.

The findings from the project have also revealed that although the NVQ-J levels 1 and 2 certifications are accepted for matriculation into HEI, students entering via this route were accepted for admission only into the OAD. It emerged from the interviews at Moneague College that graduates of the CAP with NVQ-J certification matriculated into the tertiary level

programmes based on their CSEC passes. This was noted by one of the institution's representatives:

We have persons pursuing CAP who gained the required CSEC passes that qualify them to matriculate into our [tertiary] programmes. We have had students who started out in CAP and they are into the classical academic programmes. But it wasn't based on their NVQ Level 2 [certification]; it was based on their CSEC passes (Moneague College representative, in-person interview).

This indicates that both the formal requirements of five CSEC passes and the NVQ certification at levels 1 and 2 are legitimate pathways to access HE. However, they are confined to specific programmes. Students with the formal requirements are able to use these to access tertiary-level 'academic' programmes while students with NVQ-Js (levels 1 and 2) are only able to matriculate into the OADs.

4.2.2 Progression through HE

Several arrangements for flexible study are in place at all three institutions. The primary type is 'semesterization', which allows students to pursue a set of courses suitable to their requirements. It also provides flexibility in the number and the selection of courses, particularly for part-time students. However, semesters generally follow the pattern of the academic year, with limited opportunities to begin courses at times other than September, when teaching and learning traditionally starts.

Again, practices at the three institutions vary. So, for example, at the two universities, students are allowed to select a 'diet' from a pool of courses each semester. The pool includes general education courses, specialization courses, and adjunct courses; terminology used in standards developed by the UCJ for the structure of degree programmes. While there is flexibility in the selection of courses based on time of delivery, there are other parameters, such as prerequisites and the minimum number of credits, that must be followed. On the other hand, students are presented with a fixed diet of courses at Moneague College, as set out by the 'governing body,' which in this case is either the CCCJ or the TCJ/UWI. With the semesterization system, UTech also allows for independent study and facilitates 'specialized admission' also referred to as 'credit banking' for working adults.

There are also other options for flexible modalities at all three institutions, which include extension campuses, blended, face-to-face, distance learning, and dual mode. The extent of face-to-face to online delivery varies for both UTech and NCU. There is no programme that is online for more than 80 per cent of the time and that is at both the graduate and undergraduate levels at NCU. This institution reported plans to implement asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities; something that is already in place at UTech. At the time of the interviews, Moneague College was not offering any online programmes. However, one of its franchised programmes was being delivered online by the awarding institution.

Another form of flexibility in progression through HE is achieved through the CT system and OADs. The effectiveness of these two pathways is explored in the next subsection.

Credit transfer (CT) system

As stated, above, the CT system is a component of the TQF that was developed by the UCJ as it sought to integrate the HE sector in Jamaica. A widely used CT system is based on the ‘2+2’ model where students complete two years of an associate degree and then an additional two years of upper-level courses to be awarded the bachelor’s degree. The interviews indicated that all three HEIs have adopted and used this model to enable articulation.

University of Technology, Jamaica

The university has two types of franchise agreements with the community colleges. Both arrangements follow the ‘2 +2’ model. In one type, the university offers the first two years of its programmes at the community college. The students therefore pursue the first two years at the community college and then transfer to UTech to complete the additional two years. The institution assigns franchise coordinators and specific officers (in the faculty) to manage these arrangements.

Alternatively, students have the option to pursue the first two years of the CCCJ’s four-year bachelor’s degree programme at the community college and then articulate into a similar programme at the university. An example was given by one of the Deans:

The university has an ... MOU [with the community colleges], where we facilitate the [teaching and learning] through franchise arrangements. For the Hospitality and Tourism Department, it is like a seamless process because the students pursue courses at the

university for the first two years and then they transfer to UTech for the other two years. You will find that there are some students pursuing the community college's programme and they will seek transfer to UTech. We do acknowledge and take them in. The policies of the university allow us to take students, once there is an 80 per cent minimum equivalency then we can go ahead and accept those students [through] ... credit transfer. They [the students] would go to Year 3. There are a few courses unique to the university that the students would do at the lower level, but that is a minimum (UTech representative, in-person interview).

One student who had completed the first two years of UTech's programme at a community college under the franchise arrangement shared the following experience:

I went to Montego Bay Community College where I did [sic] an associate degree in engineering. Some of the courses that I did in the associate degree were modules that were taught here, so, when I applied to UTech, I was able to have ten credits transferred into the programme. So, instead of starting in first year I went over into second year (HEI, student, in-person interview).

Students are also able to transfer from one programme to another within UTech. There are general education courses that the students access across the programmes, which makes this type of transfer seamless. This process is outlined in Box 20.

Box 20. Outline of the process for transfer at UTech

This is initiated through an application by the student. If the student meets the criteria of a 'B' average, then he/she can apply. The receiving programme does an assessment to decide based on what the student has presented and the space availability. Students are free to transfer. The institution provides counselling and does not prevent the students from transferring from one programme to another.

Source: In-person interviews, UTech, 2019

One of the students in the focus group had transferred between programmes within UTech. The student apparently had the expectation that exemptions would have been granted for the courses completed and sought the assistance of a lecturer who was unable to provide guidance. The programme coordinator assisted in providing guidance on the transfer. The student shared the experience of having selected a module which he/she had completed. However, at the time of the interview, the process for exemption had not been completed.

My transfer from the diploma into the engineering [programme] was time consuming. I did not understand the process overall; I went to my programme advisor. I had to go back

and forth enquiring when it would be done and how long the process would take. For some courses, I think I should be getting some exemptions but, based on the rules of the institution, I cannot get exemptions for that. But, most of all, it was a back-and-forth process just trying to get the exemptions done as I wanted to get ready to select some courses (UTech, student, in-person interview).

On the other hand, a student recounted his/her experience in applying for exemptions. According to the student, although the transfer process may take two months, it was worthwhile:

I hear that you have to do three more years after completion of the Diploma programme, so you would end up doing six years. Because I was able to transfer this year, I will only be required to complete five years for the degree. Rather than spending six years to complete the bachelor's programme I will only now spend five years. This will redound to a saving of time and money. (UTech, student, in-person interview)

In another case, there was apparently an oversight system in the processing of the student's qualifications. One student reported having an associate degree and that it may have been overlooked. The process was tedious and involved contacting the institution where the student had previously studied. After three weeks the matter had not been resolved.

Another UTech student reported being very proactive and, therefore, 'always asking questions.' The student has an academic advisor who provides guidance each semester to support movement to the next course. The flexibility in the programme offer enabled the student to address a hiccup in her approved study 'diet':

The way the system is set up I did all that was required of me. So, there was this course I needed. In order to get into that course, I needed 59 credits but how my programme diet is set I could only do 58. So, when I did 58 [credits] and I was ready to choose my third year courses I was unable to register for a particular course in Semester 1 because I had only 58 credits. I said, 'Where would I get the extra credit from, you set up this programme for me'. So, I had to switch courses. I had to move that course to the second semester and move up a course from second semester to first semester. That allowed me to get the opportunity I needed and the next semester I did that course (UTech, student, in-person interview).

Overall, UTech has a flexible system that incorporates credit transfer. The findings identified the timeline for processing transfers as an area for improvement.

Northern Caribbean University

NCU also facilitates transfer from one programme to another and from institution to institution. It prides itself on being the first institution to sign up with the CXC for the associate degree as part of this '2+2' model. The institution formalized this arrangement with CXC in 2018. One of the senior academic members shared the experience of benefiting from the '2+2' model. This individual, having had GCE A-Level passes and completed two years at a teachers' college, was able to complete the bachelor's programme at NCU in two years. At that time, there were no formal policies regarding transfers. At present, recommendations for transfer are being made at the college level and sent to the admissions team for action.

Over the past few years, NCU has had relationships with teachers' colleges and community colleges, with transfers completed according to formal arrangements. The university has MOUs with local and overseas universities. NCU uses its standards and policies to guide transfers where there are no formal arrangements with institutions. NCU expressed the need to assign an individual to be responsible for articulation, and a unit to drive the process. When a case is uncertain, the practice has been to send it to the UCJ. At the graduate level, the university facilitates transfers from a taught master's to a research master's programme, and from one specialty to another within the master's programme. The institution also uses credits and learning outcomes to make decisions on transfers.

The students who had benefited from the CT process commended the practice:

To me, it is worth it. It takes the burden off me. To be honest, I was a bit worried when I was doing the transfer. Suppose they don't take it? I am going to have to start over again (NCU, student, in-person interview).

I did feel welcome when I applied for the transfer of credits. The personnel in the department's office helped me tremendously (NCU, student, in-person interview).

The students were also able to realize cost-savings from the CT system as a result of being able to articulate into their respective programmes at NCU. They were not required to repeat courses that they had done in a previous programme completed at another HEI.

Some of the students interviewed at NCU were completing the final year of the OAD. They had expressed interest in articulating into the mainstream bachelor's programmes at the institution.

However, as explained by a senior administrator, the bridging courses had not been worked out yet. The following was noted in the interview:

The students who are now completing the OAD have made enquiries on how they can articulate into the bachelor's degree. The bridging courses have not yet been worked out for the student to transfer into the bachelor's programme (NCU, senior administrator, in-person interview).

This represents an area for development.

Moneague College

The system at Moneague College for transferring students from one type of programme to another, or one institution to another, is guided by the franchising entity or the *governing bodies*. For example, CCCJ (one of the *governing bodies*) uses the '2+2' model where students may complete the first two years of a four-year programme and be awarded an associate degree. Students may opt to pursue additional two years of upper-level courses for the bachelor's degree. Students may transfer from the two-year associate degree into the bachelor's programme within the same discipline or across disciplines. Students are also able to transfer from one community college to another using the '2+2' module which is a feature of CCCJ's programmes. These transfers are facilitated through the CT system and student learning outcomes (Box 21).

Box 21. System for credit transfers, Moneague College

The system for students to transfer from one programme to another involves the completion of a transfer form. Authorization is provided by the college from which the student is transferring. In those cases, the students are given exemption for courses they have already completed. In general, students are exempted from courses of the same nature. The exemptions are guided by an evaluation of the student learning outcomes for equivalency to determine articulation based on the '2+2' model. Transfers are approved by the awarding bodies.

Source: In-person interview, Moneague College, 2019

Two of the students who had completed an associate degree in culinary arts at another community college shared their experiences:

I was at another community college where I did a programme in culinary arts [CCCJ programme]. I was working for two years. I applied to Moneague College to do a bachelor's programme. I was accepted into Year 3 of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Programme. I just transferred as part of the '2+2' model – but the transfer has not yet been finalized (Moneague College, student, in-person interview).

There are a few courses [for which] I am eligible for exemption, but they have not finalized it as yet. The Registrar has been trying to communicate with CCCJ. We haven't heard about our bridging courses as yet. So, I was told to continue going [to classes]. I am not yet at the place where I need to pressure [the institution]; I have two years to go in the programme. I am currently doing [the] hospitality and tourism management programme. (Moneague College, student, in-person interview)

The students were able to articulate into Year 3 of the bachelor's programme. However, the transfer process had not been completed at the time of the interviews. Moneague College had a student who transferred from the OAD into the CCCJ bachelor's programme. The student shared the following experience:

I did the associate in restaurant operations and management [OAD] at another community college. I am to graduate next month. I applied to this college to do a BSc in Hospitality and Tourism Management. I do not know the bridging courses; I am worried that it may take a longer period, 2 ½ years to 3 years [to complete the programme] (Moneague College, student, in-person interview).

At the time of the interview CCCJ had not yet completed the evaluation to determine exemptions and the required courses. This is currently being processed by the CCCJ.

Occupational associate degree (OAD)

Both Moneague College and NCU offer OAD programmes; they are offered on a part-time basis. Students were accepted into the programme based on NVQ-J certification at levels 1 and 2 gained from enrolling in the CAP programme. The following experience was shared by a student:

This is my first semester in BPO, a specialization in the OAD programme. I got through based on my Level 2 NVQ-J certification. I am grateful for the occupational associate degree; this is how I was able to study as I could not afford the bachelor's programme (HEI, student, in-person interview).

The emphasis on practical or hands-on skills in the programme was highlighted by the students interviewed. The consensus among the students was that the programme is not theoretically based and speaks to the practical area. The students expressed confidence in the training they

received in the OAD. According to the students, both CAP and the OAD focus on industry standards, and therefore represent an advantage for them in the working world:

For the government to implement such a programme, it is a plus. You can reach where you want [in HE] without the burden of the student loan and all of that. I most definitely would recommend it. I have a great experience in the hospitality field, but the way the [OAD] programme is formulated, it is tremendous. It is mostly hands-on training. And I sense that teenagers and young youth learn practically more than theory. I think this is a programme that will capture all the youth. We are climbing up the ladder where education is concerned (HEI, student, in-person interview).

The students indicated that they pursued the programme as they were not required to pay tuition fees. One student noted:

We heard about it during our graduation from CAP. The Centre for Occupational Studies called and informed us of the scholarship that Moneague College is providing. I saw it fit because I was working in the BPO industry after completing the CAP. I really didn't know much about it [BPO] even, but I was working in that area. That is why I said this is actually good. Funny enough, you can be working somewhere, and you are trained to work in that department, but you don't know much. Coming to this school gave me a lot. It taught me so much that I can now apply it to the future (HEI student, in-person interview).

The OAD programmes are offered as franchised programmes. Each institution is provided with funding per student, and the number of students that each institution accepts into the programme is dictated by the MOEY&I. It was explained that institutions pay a franchise fee out of the funding that is received. The institutions use the remaining monies creatively to cover expenses in offering the programme. An 'add-on' model is used where the lecturers teaching in the programme are paid on a part-time basis, and any administrative requirements are also executed as a part-time responsibility.

The provision of TVET programmes by institutions that were once considered tertiary 'academic-type' institutions is a major achievement in enabling the integration of TVET in HE. This has allowed for the 'levelling of the playing field' with regards to the perception of TVET. However, the current construct where the CAP and the OADs are managed and administered on a 'part-time system approach' does not lend itself to sustainability of these programmes at the

HEIs. This arrangement does not promote efficient use of resources, as any work conducted by members of staff at these institutions are undertaken outside of regular work hours and are compensated on a part-time basis. This kind of system will only promote the ‘second chance’ and ‘add-on’ stigma, which will limit the growth and development of TVET. Said differently, the successful implementation and integration of the TVET strategy can only be achieved if there is full integration at the levels of administration and the teaching and learning at the institutional level.

The restriction in matriculation requirements only to TVET also risks the sustainability of the programme. It is evident that elitism with respect to academic-type programmes vis-à-vis TVET programmes seems to have been maintained despite the fact that both types of programmes are being offered at both Moneague College and NCU. This is another area that should be addressed.

This problem can be corrected by ensuring that the governance arrangements, policies and procedures in every institution registered with UCJ is fully developed and implemented, and there is a clear understanding of the procedures necessary for applying the NQF-J.

4.3. Participation of the vulnerable in HE

The SDG4, particularly the Education 2030 agenda requires countries to build systems that provide inclusive and equitable access to quality learning. Attendant to this goal, is Target 4.5 which commits governments to ensure equal access for the vulnerable to access HE. Socio-economic factors are among the factors that limits participation in HE. Notwithstanding, Jamaica has made strides in addressing equity through the funding provided by MLSS and the HEART/NSTA Trust.

The next two sections will explore the effectiveness of the funding arrangements in enabling the participation of the vulnerable ones in Jamaica.

4.3.1 Programme for Advancement through Health and Education (PATH)

The variation in the participation of disadvantaged groups defined by PATH (funded by the MLSS) was also noticeable. For example, whereas both NCU and UTech had students who had accessed funding from PATH, it appeared that none of the students at Moneague College had accessed PATH. Neither the administrators nor the students interviewed were aware of PATH. One of the focus groups interviewed at UTech included students who had benefited from PATH.

These students expressed gratitude to the Government of Jamaica for this funding. They reported avoiding deregistration (being asked to leave the university) as a result of the financial support from and efficiency of the PATH system.

One of the two students had been on the programme while pursuing grades 12 and 13. The student interviewed had registered in the Social Intervention Programme (SIP) prior to being enrolled in university and used the opportunity to enquire about scholarship opportunities. The following was noted by the student:

I received a payment from PATH towards my school fee for grades 12 and 13. I did not have any money to go to university. I went around finding out all the other things I could do. There was this Social Intervention Programme where I had to do 40 or 30 voluntary hours. I went to the PATH office (Savanna-la-mar) and asked if they had scholarships and what I would have to do to qualify. They said they had no scholarships, but they had a grant. They said that I had to be a second-year student or further with a required GPA. I enquired if I am not a university student what could I do as a first-year student [sic]. I was informed that I could apply at the university for the bursary and they would give me a grant of \$100,000 for a bachelor's degree. When I came here and enquired at the university, I was told I had to go back to Savanna-la-mar [place of residence outside of the capital city] to apply for it. I contacted the MLSS and was directed back to the office; the MLSS representative on the phone clarified for the personnel in the office. I completed and signed the required form and was awarded the grant (HEI, student, in-person interview).

Another student shared her experience of PATH. Two of the student's siblings had benefited from the programme. Her older brother completed his engineering degree at UTech and had been funded by PATH. Her younger sister had received a sports scholarship at UWI, along with funding provided by PATH. This was shared in the interview:

I knew about it from primary school. When I was in high school, my brother was on PATH, and he got \$100,000 for university. I actually followed his steps by applying for sponsorship. Each year he applied for the grant. For sixth form I applied for it and I got it. It paid half and my mother paid the rest of the sixth-form school fee. Here at university, it came through for me. I did not know I got the grant until I went to pay the ECF [Enrolment Commitment Fee]. I looked at my account and then I saw that PATH had given me a grant which allowed me to get financial clearance. I almost cried because, initially, I was so worried as [my] student loan was taking a while. If I didn't get it, I

would still be running up and down. It was worth my while and I would recommend it. It would be good if more persons knew about it. It is pretty good. It [PATH] helped me a lot in high school, and it is now helping me (HEI, Student, in-person interview).

PATH therefore has been beneficial in enabling students from the lower socio-economic groups to access HE. The student also highlighted the flexibility of the PATH programme as a strength. Her sister, she said, was able to go through the university, and even though she received a sports scholarship from another source, she received PATH funds to cover her meals and personal expenses.

The lack of awareness among students and institutions regarding PATH was identified as one of the reasons why many disadvantaged students were not accessing this programme. The following comments were made:

But you have persons that need it; but some of them don't know and some of them are scared of being turned down so they don't apply. (UTech, student, in-person interview)

They [the university] did not mention PATH in orientation ... I think that if that was a part of orientation then a lot of people would have known (HEI, student, in-person interview).

The above student learned about the PATH programme serendipitously, having been referred to the office by the programme director. According to the student:

Last semester when I was having [financial] issues, I went to my director, and she was the one who actually advised me about it. So, when I went to the office [financial aid] that is when they told me, yes, I could get a grant. So that is what I did. The money from PATH goes to the institution. I try to tell persons that there is no shame with PATH. It is a good thing. Anytime I hear persons complain and say that they cannot start university because of financial issues, I always tell them about PATH. Persons used to have issues with it in high school because persons look down on them and say you are poor. But it benefits you in the long run because it helps you in university (HEI, student, in-person interview).

The student opined that MLSS needs to increase awareness of PATH within institutions.

NCU also has a programme in place which is geared to students coming from extreme poverty, unattached persons, and persons at risk. Some of the budget goes to these sets of students. The institution has scholarships and student aid for individuals from disadvantaged groups. NCU also had students who were on PATH. The Office of Scholarship and Financial Aid facilitates students' access to PATH. The Head of the student body at NCU shared the following:

We have quite a few students who are on the PATH programme. The Office of Scholarship and Student Aid will send out the application forms for those persons who were on the programme in high school to complete the form and provide the necessary supporting documents and submit them to the office. They are then sent off to the MLSS (HEI, Head of student body, in-person interview).

PATH is a missed opportunity at all three institutions. Efforts should be made to increase access to and participation of the vulnerable in society through the programme. This is certainly an area that needs to be highlighted and championed by the HEIs. PATH is essential to enabling the participation of the most vulnerable in society and is an initiative that needs to be expanded and monitored. Improvements are required with respect to its promotion and visibility within the HEIs. Additionally, implementing an ongoing evaluation system to determine the effectiveness of PATH in facilitating progression through and completion of a HE degree by vulnerable students in Jamaica would be very beneficial in improving the impact of the programme.

4.3.2. Funding for CAP and OADs

The CAP and the OAD have provided opportunities to those from lower socio-economic groups to complete a HE degree. While the CAP is funded by the HEART/NSTA Trust through the MOEY&I, the OADs are funded by the MOEY&I.

All the students pursuing the OAD who were interviewed indicated that they would not have been able to pursue a HE degree had it not been for the scholarships that were offered. The students highlighted the benefit of pursuing a HE degree which is normally not affordable to them. As one student reported, ‘Not everybody can find the \$300,000 to get an associate degree’ (Moneague College, student, in-person interview). This student had attained eight CSEC passes and had chosen to enrol in the CAP programme due to financial challenges. This student completed the CAP programme, got the NVQ-J certifications, which was used to matriculate into an OAD.

The experience was similar for the other students interviewed at both the public tertiary college and the private university. They had attained five or more CSEC passes (formal entry requirements) and were enrolled in the OAD having completed CAP and acquired NVQ-J levels 1 and 2 certifications. These students indicated that they would not have been able to enter into HE had it not been for the opportunity obtained through CAP, which was free of cost.

This points to the need for a more coordinated approach to ensure that the most vulnerable students in Jamaica are able to benefit from FLPs in HE. These funding arrangements should be targeted at persons with disabilities as well. While funding has been allocated to enable access to HE and a few vulnerable students have benefited, a more deliberate approach is required. In other words, Jamaica already has a system for facilitating the participation of vulnerable and at-risk students to access, progress through, and complete a HE degree, and transition into work. The strength of this lies in the approach used to attain integration of TVET and, at the same time, enable increased access to HE. The tertiary institutions are already functioning as dual-sector institutions by virtue of the offering of both CAP and OAD programmes along with the regular tertiary academic-type programmes. This removes the concept of elitism and allows for ‘massification’ of HE. However, greater structure is required in order to yield the optimal results and attain the goal of equity and inclusiveness. An organized CAAG component should feature as part of the organization structure within these institutions. This is explored in the next section.

4.4. Impact of national instruments in facilitating FLPs within selected HEIs

As noted, the NQF-J, QAA, and CAAG are national instruments essential in enabling FLPs in HE. However, based on the interviews conducted at national and institutional levels, QAA and the TQF have been extensively used to enable FLPs in HE.

4.4.1. Role of the National Qualifications Framework of Jamaica (NQF-J)

Findings from the interviews indicated that the NQF-J is not being used at any of the three institutions, possibly due to the lack of information on the framework. Whereas students had matriculated into the OAD based on the NVQ-J levels 1 and 2 certifications, the institutional administrators were not conversant with the NQF-J nor the ISCED. This is a missed opportunity, especially in facilitating access to HE through the implementation of a formal system for PL. While the framework clearly shows the pathways for access, progression through, and completion of a HE degree, whether in the academic or technical and vocational areas, the NQF-J is not being used and therefore could not support the expansion of enrolment. There is, therefore, a need to build confidence and increase acceptability of the framework.

Further work is needed in ensuring that all stakeholders, including the students, institutions, national bodies and the labour market, are able to utilize the instrument and clearly understand the knowledge, skills, and competencies of a student based on the level of the qualifications

reflected in the framework. This also will strengthen the use of RPL by HEIs, not only for matriculation purposes, but also for flexibility in progression through and completion of a HE qualification.

4.4.2. Role of Quality assurance and accreditation (QAA)

The QAA system of the UCJ has worked very well for increasing access to and enabling greater participation in HE. It has, along with the TQF, played a pivotal role in enabling access to and progression through HE, especially in the public and private tertiary institutions that offer academic-type programmes. It is noteworthy that both accreditation and the TQF have not only served as tools for mobility through HE but have also been used for articulation from one programme to another or from one institution to another through the CT system and student learning outcomes. QAA has been instrumental in expanding the number of bachelor's programmes that are offered at all types of HEIs in Jamaica on the basis of established standards.

The OADs have not been accredited. The requirement of a set of graduates before a programme can be reviewed for accreditation may have been a factor. This is an area for development. A review of accreditation would be beneficial and allow for an evaluation to determine comparability in standards to an 'academic-type' associate degree programme as predicted by the NQF-J.

There is an area for improvement with respect to increasing FLPs in HE through the quality assurance of TVET institutions and programmes. The decision to move the accreditation functions of NCTVET to the UCJ is a case in point. This lends itself to a unified system for establishing comparability in standards as well as an integrated sector, and will ultimately result in more FLPs for entering and completing a HE degree that is recognized and accepted.

4.4.3. Role of Career and academic advising and guidance (CAAG)

Lecturers and programme directors provide academic advice to students at the three institutions. Academic advice is limited to monitoring the students who are performing at an acceptable standard. While lecturers include office hours in their schedule, these are not always fully utilized. This too is an area requiring improvement. A comprehensive and systematized CAAG system that monitors students from the point of entry would enable students to navigate the

institution's policies and procedures. It would also foster student success in their learning experience at the institution.

On the other hand, there is a structured programme for placement of students, which includes activities such as jobs fairs. Sometimes HEART/NSTA Trust is invited to provide employability skills training to the students. However, these activities are largely organized for final-year students and are more beneficial in the search for jobs. The students are timetabled for these sessions. That is 'the extent of it' as it relates to career guidance. There is apparently a lack of policy at the institutional level that addresses the inclusion of disadvantaged groups. This is an area for growth and development within the institutions. There is equality in the services rendered.

University of Technology, Jamaica

UTech has a Centre for Career and Placement that provides placements geared towards students in the final year of their studies. The institution also provides psychometric evaluation to determine students' fitness for the job. As part of the self-development component of the programme, students in the final year are provided with coaching in résumé writing. To supplement that approach, there is also a mentoring programme conducted by industry personnel. This is very active. Career advising is linked to career guidance. The following was shared with the team:

Ultimately for us [UTech] career advising should lead to employment. That is ultimately where you want to go. You want a career, a life-long opportunity to work and grow in a particular career field. The university offers flexible hours; you choose your modules based on the time you are able to attend and how many modules you want to do for a particular semester. There are persons who are working and only want this formal qualification to support whatever they are doing. So, they may not necessarily need to access career advising (UTech representative, in-person interview).

The Career and Placement Unit conducts training sessions on networking, attire, and how to speak to a supervisor if there is a dispute. There is also a yearlong workshop called Employment Empowerment Sessions for students, particularly those nearing graduation. This forms part of the corporate education programme. Final-year students must take these sessions in order to get into the internship programme; so, this is entrenched in the system.

CAAG are also provided to applicants who were not accepted into the programme of their choice. These students are referred to the UTech Academy where one-on-one conversations provide them with alternative pathways or options.

There is no distinction in the career placement service UTech provides for its students; there is equality in the service offered. However, there is a bit of coaxing of employers with respect to those students with disabilities:

Career guidance for us is the same for everyone in the sense that you are undertaking a course of study at UTech. Once you are through, the assumption is that you would like to have employment in the area or [close to it] and you want to excel. The guidance would be more general. How do you seek a job? How do you network (UTech, student, in-person interview)?

The disadvantaged students are for us those persons with disabilities [special needs]. Most times you find that we have to negotiate on their behalf. For example, you would have a person in a wheelchair, or one that may have a speech impediment or visual impairment. You may find that that person would not be able to apply for a job the typical way that the average person can. We call the company and negotiate on their behalf (UTech representative, in-person interview).

An academic policy through which every student is assigned an advisor on entry who remains with them throughout their journey, exists. This is coordinated at the faculty/college level. Generally, each faculty member is assigned a set number of students. Actual implementation is dependent on the availability of faculty members and may vary across each faculty. There are opportunities for improvement with academic advice in relation to accessibility. There may be instances where students complete a programme without meeting with a supervisor.

Northern Caribbean University

Both academic and CAAG are provided. The Career Unit tries to achieve a more integrated approach. The university helps students who have not completed their programme of study and need a job, to acquire one. The students need to perform and complete their academic work. At the time of the interviews, the Career Unit had recently been established. This was outlined in the interview as follows:

The Career Unit is at an infancy stage and there is a lot of work to be done to have career services embedded in the curriculum. There is a perception that the office is here to facilitate cover letters and résumés and job placement. We are pushing for partnership and embedding career services into the curriculum (NCU representative, in-person interview).

The interview indicates that the unit started to communicate directly with students through email and WhatsApp on its services. This has increased awareness of the career services offered by the unit. Already, students are visiting the unit for career testing. This is an area which is showing potential for growth.

From the academic advising aspect, the institution has an academic/career success programme and, between the fifth and seventh week, a progress report is generated for those students who are performing poorly. This is an alert for the institution and all efforts are made to provide the student with the support they need. There are no micro-barriers to learning and the barriers that do exist may be financial.

Moneague College

Limited career advice is provided to students enrolled in the CAP and OAD programmes. The interviews that form part of the admission system are used to discuss preferred career paths with prospective students. This is an important area for development.

4.5. Evaluation of the effectiveness in implementing FLPs

The monitoring of FLPs at all three HEIs in this study was in its infancy stage. For the most part, data collected are guided by the template provided by the MOEY&I and the PIOJ. None of these censuses required data on the throughput of the sector or on completion rates. It was also observed that none of these entities had yet adopted the UIS data template. The lack of monitoring of performance and completion rates to determine the effectiveness of programmes is a weakness within the system. This is an area for development if institutions are to realize optimal performance and improve the quality of their graduates. All three institutions have recognized the importance of evaluating and monitoring FLPs in HE. The development and implementation of a unified system for data collection modelled on the UIS template and the monitoring of such a system is now required.

As part of the project, representatives of the institutions identified key enablers and factors lacking for the implementation of FLPs in HE. A review of these shows variation with respect to the enablers. UTech identified professional bodies of practitioners (for example, management associations and networks, teaching unions, and academic networks) as the major enabler. This is consistent with the types of programmes offered by the universities, which are responsive to the labour market needs of a skilled workforce.

NCU identified an enabling culture and appropriate management structure, supporting its philosophy of equal opportunities for all.

Both political will and determination, and leadership in HE were identified as enabling the implementation of FLPs at the college level. However, as discerned from the study, institutional autonomy is essentially negligible, in particular when HEIs do not have degree-granting status. As noted in the interviews, some institutions are limited in the implementation of FLPs due to the perceived constraints imposed by the awarding body for the franchised programmes.

The lack of resources was identified as a factor inhibiting the implementation of FLPs for all three institutions in the study.

4.6. Priorities for the future

A number of priorities, mostly in the short to medium term, were identified by the institutions during the interviews. These are elaborated on in the next subsections.

University of Technology, Jamaica – UTech

A number of priorities with respect to FLPs have been identified by UTech, chief among these is the need to be more purposeful in providing greater opportunities for HE. This reflects a recognition that while students have the ability/potential, the opportunities are lacking. In this regard, UTech will explore additional opportunities for students to access its programmes. One area for expansion is partnering with other private and public entities whereby graduates from those institutions can seamlessly articulate into UTech programmes.

Other short- to medium-term areas of priority include:

- Increasing awareness among students of the options for FLPs. The institution recognizes that this aspect of provision is not communicated adequately to its students and plans to address this issue.
- Exploring opportunities for funding, particularly PATH, for its students and appropriately guiding them. Students currently do not access information on PATH at the institution. There is no monitoring of students on PATH by the institution nor are the students with financial constraints adequately guided to that opportunity. There is a Debt Management Unit, which should provide students with information on JAMVAT and PATH; yet, students drop out because of financial reasons.
- Using the ‘2+2’ model to provide an exit point at the associate degree.
- Monitoring the implementation of academic advising and providing CAAG from as early as when that student enrolls at the institution.
- Increasing the leverage of the online platform for its courses.

Northern Caribbean University – NCU

The priority for the future identified by NCU is the development of its policies and guidelines for PLA by the end of this strategic planning period. Efforts will also be focused on growing enrolment, especially for the graduate programmes, as well as increasing the number of students with access to workplace readiness skills training. Another area identified for attention is digital badges and micro-credentials; the need for resources to support this thrust was acknowledged.

Moneague College

Priorities identified by the institution included:

- Greater flexibility in study arrangement allowing students to access classes online and at weekends to complete programmes.
- Promoting FLPs at the institution and securing time and resources to assist students with challenges.
- Giving greater attention to NQF-Js and learning outcomes.
- Offering short courses.

Chapter 5. Linkages between national bodies and selected HEIs in implementing FLPs

At the core of the HE sector in Jamaica is the development of human capital for the world of work. It is undergirded by legislation that addresses equitable and inclusive access to quality HE, including for persons in the lower socio-economic quintile in Jamaica. The HE system has developed over the years and provides for local and international acceptance of institutions and programmes that are quality-assured and accredited. While Jamaica has no documented policy for FLPs in HE, strides have been made with regard to the implementation of programmes geared at increasing participation at the HE level. A few of these dimensions are discussed below.

First and foremost, Jamaica has legislation that governs its HE sector and has guided the development of the sector. The primary legislation for HE is the Education Act, 1965. The governance, management, and structure of the HE sector, including post-secondary education, are clearly articulated in the Act. The types of public tertiary institutions are delineated as well as the delivery of academic programmes and vocational programmes. The Education Act allows for regulation of the sector, which is important in ensuring that the institutions are aligned to the national priorities, while simultaneously promoting institutional autonomy.

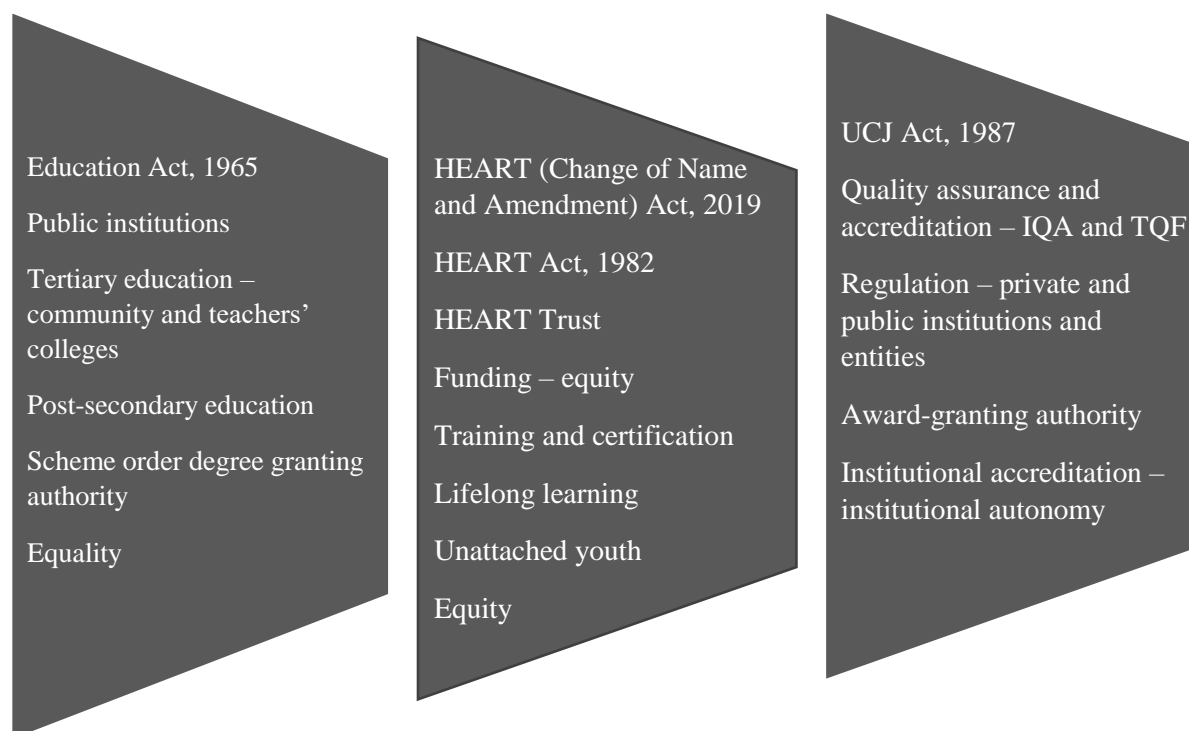
The Education Act is supported by the HEART/NSTA Act (amended in 2019) and the University Council of Jamaica Act, 1987, which, taken together, address the provision of equitable access to quality education and training in Jamaica (Figure 12). The HEART/NSTA Trust was established to provide funding for TVET for unattached youth. The Trust finances the CAP. The amendment of the HEART Act (1982) now extends its training in particular to at-risk youth, adult learning, and lifelong learning. HEART/NSTA Trust has recently been transferred to the Office of the Prime Minister. This move extends the reach from education only and links it more firmly in Jamaica's broader long-term strategic vision.

The UCJ Act supplements the Education Act by vesting authority in institutions to grant academic awards and distinctions to candidates who would have completed courses of study that have met required standards. This authority is given to institutions without degree-granting

status. The UCJ has implemented QAA as the condition for the conferment of academic awards and distinctions, and has built the capacity of institutions to offer bachelor-level programmes that meet required standards of quality. This promotes the development of a robust IQA system responsible for ensuring that programmes offered by the institutions (public and private) meet acceptable standards of educational quality.

Another important player in facilitating equity in HE is the MLSS in the form of PATH. While not a policy directive, this programme is geared at breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty through education. Through PATH, the Government of Jamaica provides funding for persons in the lowest poverty levels to pursue post-secondary education up to a bachelor's degree. The only limitation is that the funding granted is relatively small compared to the current costs for HE in Jamaica.

Figure 12. Aspects of the three legislation for HE in Jamaica



Source: Elaborated by authors

Certainly, the linkages and policy cohesion among all four entities are critical to transforming the HE sector into one that enables greater inclusiveness and participation in HE, including the most disadvantaged segments of society.

Notwithstanding these provisions, there appears to be a perception that greater regulation is required in order to address the seemingly uncoordinated nature of the HE sector resulting from:

- (i) the expansion in the number of public and private institutions that emerged to meet the demand for highly skilled employees for the labour market;
- (ii) the widening of access and increased participation in HE through FLPs;
- (iii) the concern that the output from HE is not consistent with investment in HE as well as national priorities.

The research unearthed issues relating to equality that created barriers to participation in and access to HE, and, at the same time, promoted control through elitism rather than equity. The main barrier to access and participation that emerged from the research was elitism that fostered through the formal requirement of five CSEC passes, accompanied by CAPE units for entry and completion of a university degree. These barriers to participation have been addressed through the CAP, OADs, QAA, and the NQF-J.

Equity in the HE sector

The MOEY&I has, over the years, taken actions aimed at actualizing equity and addressing elitism in Jamaica. These are outlined below.

First, equity in HE is addressed through the QAA functions of the UCJ. The UCJ has for over 30 years promoted the development of a robust IQA system that ensures the quality of programmes offered by the HEIs and students' success. This it has done in two main ways:

- (i) The establishment of standards and the assessment of the IQA system using these standards. The UCJ has developed standards for different types of HEIs, levels of programme, and various disciplines for the labour market, and conducted its QAA functions against these standards. HEIs have used these standards to develop their internal systems and processes to offer a HE degree, and to implement measures that ensure mission effectiveness and institutional effectiveness. This has led to a significant increase in the availability of university degrees and, at the same time, promoted the competitiveness of institutions based on the quality of the education and training provided.
- (ii) The development of a well-articulated tertiary sector through the TQF. As outlined earlier, the '2+2' model and the CT system that form part of this framework are used for

their QAA function. Both features have been used by students to articulate based on the transfer of credits and the level of qualification obtained, from one programme to another and from one institution to another.

Another way in which access and equity is being addressed is through the NQF-J. This is accomplished through the following:

- (i) The NQF reflects a widening of the formal admission requirements for HE to include NVQ levels 1 and 2, and promotes the PLA at each level of the framework. PLA provides for the validation of the learning acquired by individuals through formal, non-formal, and informal methods, and therefore facilitates increased access to HE and lifelong learning. It also addresses the learning needs of each student by enabling each individual to map their learning pathways for entry into and progression through HE.
- (ii) Another important feature of the NQF-J that also addresses equity, is the comparability in levels of qualifications across TVET, professional and academic programmes that are indicated in the framework. This, along with the fact that the NQF-J is undergirded by student learning outcomes, allows for students to transfer across types of programmes and to progress from one level to another. The NQF-J is also a useful tool for employers in determining and defining the knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes of each qualification in the framework. Given the comprehensiveness of the NQF-J in accounting for the levels of education and training for technical and vocational, occupational degrees, and academic programmes, it is a more useful instrument for FLPs and for supporting the QAA function of the UCJ. The only limitation to the NQF-J is that it does not allow for the recognition and acceptability of each qualification. Recognition and acceptability of the qualifications are achieved through the QAA mechanism.

More recently, the MOEY&I made strides in addressing elitism and equity through the development and implementation of the CAP and OADs at HEIs, including private entities. These two programmes provide a pathway for access into and progression through HE and, at the same time, allow for the acceptance of TVET as a recognized option for entry into HE. Prior to CAP, the opportunity to pursue tertiary education was only provided to the top-performing students who, having excelled in the exit examinations for primary education, were placed into the traditional high schools which provided seven years of education at the secondary level. The

lower-performing students were placed in the non-traditional high schools, which until the implementation of the CAP in 2010, offered only five years of education at the secondary level.

Additionally, it was observed that a high number of the students that were being lost from the education system were those placed in the non-traditional high schools. Though the MOEY&I had introduced the Reform of Secondary Education (ROSE) programme which provided for a standard curriculum up to ISCED Level 2 within all high schools, the curricula provided at the non-traditional high schools were skewed towards TVET programmes, which seemed to have contributed to the ‘second chance’ stigma associated with TVET programmes. CAP has provided students in non-traditional high schools with an additional two years and options to pursue academic, professional or TVET programmes.

The implementation of OADs in colleges and universities is a major achievement towards integrating TVET in HE. However, the current construct where only NVQ levels 1 and 2 certifications are considered for matriculation into the OADs promulgates elitism within the sector.

The foregoing discussion demonstrates how the CAP, QAA, and NQF-J promote equity and allow for widened access and participation in HE. Having a robust IQA system enables institutions to coalesce around determining effective and efficient systems and processes for quality programmes and students’ success while, at the same time, facilitating competition among institutions based on quality. There is more work to be done with respect to the validation and recognition of levels 1 and 2 of the NVQ-J as a flexible pathway to enter HE.

Administrative fragmentation and the lack of cohesion

Despite these commendable features supporting FLPs, there are tensions in the sector with regards to governance, management, and funding. There are also issues around administrative fragmentation which impact the sector. Perhaps, the lack of understanding of all aspects of HE, coupled with the need to control, may explain some of the activities of the last 15 years which run counter to self-regulation. For example, the MOEY&I has been pursuing the establishment of a commission for tertiary education, which would give direct attention to the development of the sector. To that end, the MOEY&I sought to create a new entity to regulate the sector.

However, the articulated role for J-TEC being pursued by the MOEY&I appears to be in conflict with established and the internationally recognized roles and function of the UCJ in the development of the HE sector through its QAA processes. There is an apparent thrust to have the UCJ, which is a legal body, relinquish aspects of its QAA functions to J-TEC, a division of the MOEY&I. The role of J-TEC would be more regulatory and would be supported by a HE Act. This effort suggests that some of Jamaica's HE own players lack understanding of the sector itself. Nor do they grasp the role of HE, in the broader context of development for Jamaica, and the nature of UCJ's reputation in the context of Jamaica's economic competitiveness in the global arena. The QAA functions of the UCJ promote self-regulation by fostering competition in the sector based on the quality of academic programmes and students' success.

The second issue relating to administrative fragmentation that has impacted the sector is the seemingly limited institutional autonomy of public HEIs compared to private entities. Jamaica is one of four countries that, under the General Agreement on Trade in Services, has liberalized HE. In trade, state control and liberalization are incompatible. The lack of autonomy hampers the ability of institutions generally to respond to local and international market forces. The literature review and the interviews suggest that the universities in this research were able to exercise greater administrative power over their systems and processes in relation to the provision of FLPs through their respective acts of parliament. It is to be noted that both hold institutional accreditation and institutional autonomy. The public entity that lacked the authority to award its own degrees, on the other hand, reported being limited in implementing flexible pathways for students to enter into and progress through HE. The entity was of the view that it is answerable to an 'awarding' authority. This limitation appeared to have been self-imposed, partly because of a lack of understanding of: its own governance structure, institutional autonomy, the non-existent awarding power of both of its franchisors and the QAA functions of the UCJ.

Whereas with institutional autonomy, powers conferred on the entity by the owner(s) gives it the power to determine its strategic, operational and administrative path (internal operation), the power conferred on the entity by UCJ, the national external quality assurance agency, through institutional accreditation gives it academic credibility, recognition and international competitiveness (external operations).

Administrative fragmentation in this particular instance may be strategic in terms of maintaining control but it perpetuates elitism by offering ‘second chance’ programmes. In response, the entity treated these programmes as ‘add-on’ and refused and/or neglected to mainstream them into its regular offerings. Some administrators interviewed saw these ‘second chance’ programmes (CAP and OADs) as having the potential to ‘water down’ their brand. This sentiment was expressed at both a public and a private entity. This underscores elitism in the system notwithstanding the government’s efforts to provide equity. In order to eliminate this prejudice, the UCJ should apply a PLA and recognition policy review as part of its QAA process.

Another form of administrative fragmentation revolves around the QAA functions of the UCJ. In 2016, it became evident, in one of many discussion forums, that many stakeholders lacked a clear understanding of quality assurance and the role of accreditation within that process. Several attempts were made to remove essential components of quality assurance from the UCJ in an effort to accommodate a perceived need for or deprivation of autonomy within institutions. There was also the perception that institutional autonomy could be achieved through institutional accreditation and could not be had without it. At that time, only one institution had been granted IA by the UCJ. The tension in the system surrounded the belief that IA was being denied to other institutions by the UCJ, when in fact the (sitting) Minister had (and has) the power to grant autonomy to public HE institutions. The angst spanned several Ministers because no one fully understood quality assurance and/or governance so the UCJ became the source of the problem. Once other institutions received institutional accreditation, and this research was undertaken, it became apparent that the IA that was being sought by public entities could only be granted through the discretionary powers of the sitting Minister of Education, and not the UCJ. At the same time, this discretionary power provides for the balance between IA and regulation by the Government. The confusion persists and must be dispelled. The Minister can draw on data from the UCJ relating to programme accreditation to determine the entities that are eligible for a grant of IA through a scheme order.

Another area of fragmentation is created by yet another tension, that is, the NQF-J vis-à-vis the TQF. Whereas the NQF-J clearly addresses all types and levels of programmes offered in Jamaica in a framework, the TQF is limited to institutions and programmes of the academic type. The NQF-J is a commendable instrument which reflects FLPs and therefore enables access to,

progression through, and completion of a HE degree, and transition into the labour market. It shows how different qualifications at each level and across each type of programme relate to each other and can be combined to build FLPs towards obtaining certifications. So, one system, the TQF, is internal to the institution, while the other, the NQF-J, is national and addresses equity outside of the control of the education system and linked to funding of the poor.

The linkages between the NQF-J and QAA need to be strengthened if the qualifications presented on the NQF-J are to have local and international acceptance and recognition. In other words, the qualifications will need to be quality-assured through the UCJ's quality-assurance processes. Given the on-going expansion of the HE sector and the NQF-J's link to matriculation through PLA and recognition, it would be prudent for the NQF-J and the CTS to be combined and administered by one entity. This would also serve to support the transfer of the accreditation functions of NCTVET to the UCJ and enable a unified QAA system that brings recognition to both TVET and academic type programmes. The coordination of both the NQF-J and QAA will also provide for a more efficient use of the existing resources in providing quality HE. The projected transfer of the accreditation functions of NCTVET to the UCJ will further provide recognition and acceptability of TVET programmes, which should also augur well for the ongoing integration of TVET into HE. Both types of programmes would be quality-assured by a uniform process.

A fourth area of fragmentation became apparent during this research was the lack of full acceptance of TVET as another option for obtaining a HE degree. For many years, the HEART/NSTA Trust, which was established to fund the training and certification of TVET in Jamaica, was under the direct portfolio of the Minister of Education. Whereas a number of TVET institutes had been established and provided greater access to mainly post-secondary education and training, the accreditation and recognition of these programmes resided with NCTVET, a division of HEART Trust, and not with the UCJ. This perpetuated an elitist system wherein the traditional academic-type programmes were regarded as the preferred choice for HE. The NQF-J addresses this problem of elitism by showing comparability of qualifications across the framework. In a similar manner, as was the case with QAA and IA, the NQF-J is not fully understood and/or applied throughout the system. It also has been separated administratively from the QAA process. By moving the HEART/NSTA Trust to the Office of the Prime Minister

and the accreditation functions of the NCTVET to the UCJ, the barriers to entry to HE have been further eliminated.

The CAP and the occupational degrees were developed to provide alternative pathways into and through HE for students with TVET certification (NVQs). However, the lack of a policy or an overarching framework to guide implementation appears to have resulted in a fragmented system. A case in point is the reference to the equal opportunities provided by the CAP as articulated by the MOEY&I representative. The matter of some students not being able to access these opportunities due to an inability to cover costs of meals, uniforms, and transportation was raised as a limiting factor to their participation. Although the PATH programme does provide financial support targeting persons in families from the lowest socio-economic quintile of the population, it is not connected to CAP or OADs. There is a need for a framework that substantially allows for cohesion across Government Ministries and encapsulates a coherent system that is effective in addressing FLPs and equity in HE.

Further, the current model for implementation of CAP and the OADs in tertiary institutions as an ‘add-on’ positions them as ‘second chance’ programmes. Once again, an example of a good policy put forward by the Ministry losing traction because of misunderstanding in implementation. This too needs to be addressed. Having both CAP and the OADs integrated into the mainstream management and operations of an institution, as is the case for other tertiary level programmes at HEIs, would be ideal. The introduction of these two programmes into the system augurs well for an integrated HE sector in Jamaica and the total removal of elitism.

Overall, it is evident from this research that the QAA functions of the UCJ, along with its authority to grant academic awards and distinctions, leverages both international competitiveness and academic authority within the HEIs, while simultaneously providing for a self-regulated HE sector. Overall, the governance arrangements for a regulated yet competitive HE sector in Jamaica is provided through the Education Act and supplemented by the UCJ Act. Before considering and undertaking any measures aimed at reform, it is very important to fully understand the contextual and legislative framework, the mandate of each entity, the changing landscape of the HE sector, and the national imperatives. A systematic approach to HE would have reduced the ensuing melee that promoted elitism. A misstep may cause irreparable harm to Jamaica’s global competitiveness at a time when human capital is at a premium.

Linkages with the labour market

The findings from this research revealed that the linkage between the labour market and HE is an area in need of development. While there was some involvement on the ground (inputs into the development of standards by industry), the involvement of industry was not substantiated in the field interviews with the industry itself. The full understanding and use of both the NQF-J and QAA would no doubt prove useful in guiding employers in the selection of suitable individuals based on qualifications presented. Implied in this is the need for employers to understand the NQF-J and to be able to determine the skills, knowledge, and competency of the prospective employee. This is another area where policy coherence is critical to ensuring that the education and training provided are consistent with the productivity needs of the labour market. The competitiveness of industry itself is dependent on gaining a much better understanding of the tools available to employers through education and training.

5.1. Linkages with HEIs

Information obtained from the interviews shows limited routine use of the NQF-J across national bodies and institutions. Many of the stakeholders interviewed were aware of the framework but were not familiar with its purpose, and therefore the NQF-J was not being used to inform pathways for prospective applicants to matriculate into and progress through HE. For the most part, acceptance was based on the formal requirements for tertiary education. The full recognition of PL and mapping out a learning pathway for each student to obtain a qualification is still in its infancy.

QAA has been instrumental in the recognition of qualifications gained from an institution or a programme that is quality-assured. The QAA process evaluates both *fitness of purpose* and *fitness for purpose*. It gives credence to the mission of the institution and evaluates the extent to which its systems and processes give effect to its mission. Each institution is responsible for its quality and promotes the collective action of faculty members in ensuring academic quality within the institution. With regard to the CT, the TQF established a minimum number of credits necessary at each level and type of qualification offered by HE entities in Jamaica. Learning

outcomes were delineated for each level of the framework. QA requirements for entry and the CT system have been extensively utilized by HEIs operating in Jamaica to facilitate access to HE and the transfer of students from one programme to another. Evidence of this was garnered from the interviews held with the institutional stakeholders, including the students. Of note is the ‘2+2’ model, which is routinely used by institutions for transfers within the institution or from another institution. This model is also used by UTech for its franchise arrangements with community colleges. Students are able to complete the first two years in programmes that are offered at community colleges and then transfer to the UTech main campus to complete the additional two years.

The issue of the recognition of the NVQ-J certification at HE level needs to be resolved. The transfer of the accreditation functions of NCTVET and the widening of the UCJ’s QAA scope to include NVQ certifications will bring equality in the acceptance of the NVQ-J as a flexible pathway for obtaining certification at the HE level.

Another finding from the research was that the institutions without degree-granting status have been operating as ‘brokers’, as defined by the UCJ classification system. This provides opportunities for these institutions to offer programmes not just from Jamaica but also from across the globe, once quality-assured. This broker status allows colleges without degree-granting authority to truly serve their community stakeholders by applying the NQF-J and enabling access to the HEART/NSTA Trust programmes. In the absence of a scheme order, those HEIs can rely on the UCJ powers to give their programmes legitimacy. Only the Education Act 1965 or the UCJ Act of 1987 have degree-granting powers. An education minister can use the UCJ’s power to cover institutions which are not quite ready for IA. It is a developmental pathway and tool and should be used as such.

Another area identified for improvement is the implementation of CAP and, certainly, occupational degrees in tertiary institutions. Currently the programmes are treated as ‘add-ons’ rather than being fully integrated into the governance and management of the HE. The study is proposing that the subvention system be extended to the institutions. This will also enable further diversification of the programme offerings of the institutions and increase efficiency in the management of programmes.

Funding for HE

It emerged from this research that funding is another critical factor that impacts access and equity and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups in society. Funding for HE is provided by the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation (MEGJC), MLSS, and MOEY&I, which all address the participation of the most vulnerable in society and support them in accessing and progressing through HE and breaking the poverty cycle. PATH, which is administered by the MLSS, offers tertiary bursaries as well as post-secondary grants to resit CSECs, sit CAPE units, or pursue certificates, diplomas or associate degrees.

Yet, there is no coordination between the programmes of the MOEY&I, in particular the CAP and OADs, HEIs, and PATH. The interviews suggest that students had challenges with paying their tuition, which impacted negatively on completion rates. However, this was alleviated for some programmes through the funding provided by PATH. The findings show that not all the HEIs were aware of the PATH programme and that students from the lowest socio-economic groups in those institutions were not being encouraged to access this opportunity.

Another source of funding for post-secondary education is the HEART/NSTA Trust, which provides financing in full or in part for NVQ certifications up to Level 5. The CAP, including the NVQ levels 1 and 2, is financed by the Trust. The OADs, on the other hand, are financed by the MOEY&I.

The matter of fragmentation at the level of the Ministries is an area for attention. While both MOEYI and MLSS have implemented strategies and initiatives for increasing access to HE to include the participation of disadvantaged students, there is a lack of an integrated approach, especially to funding and monitoring. This needs to be undergirded by a policy and a comprehensive framework in order to ensure that these initiatives are effective and sustainable.

The findings indicate that the funding provided is not linked to labour-market needs within the country and is more geared to providing opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged segments of the society to participate in HE. The NQF-J is a useful instrument that can be used to leverage funding for HE and ensure that financing is consistent with national imperatives and the long-term goals contained in the National Development Plan. Based on the foregoing, a combined approach across the three ministries (MEGJC, MOEY&I, and MLSS) is necessary to

capitalize on the returns on investment in HE and ensure the attainment of national long-term development plans.

5.2. Recommendations

The Government of Jamaica, by way of legislation, policies, and funding, has a fully developed system for enabling FLPs in HE. The HE sector is sufficiently regulated through the application of the three previously mentioned Acts, intended to address specific purposes, but on their own they are insufficient to address broad national goals. Jamaica uses FLPs, even if this is not the terminology used to describe the intention of the government to address equity and poverty alleviation through access to HE and training. There is evidence that, though the policy decisions with respect to alternative pathways are mainly geared to supporting unattached youth, the strategies and practices being employed are pivotal to reducing poverty and empowering the most vulnerable in society. The NQF-J and QAA are important instruments in facilitating FLPs. The NQF-J closely reflects the policy direction in enabling FLPs, while QAA provides for competitiveness and control of HE through international acceptance and recognition of qualifications gained formally, informally, and non-formally.

However, from interviews conducted for this research there appear to be several stumbling blocks, namely: administrative incoherence, poor communication regarding the NQF-J and its influence of individual choices and pathways to HE; lack of understanding regarding governance, in general, and governance within institutions, in particular; and poor allocation of functions among regulatory entities. These obstacles have been:

- Elitism demonstrated through a desire to control the landscape by limiting access to both individuals and institutions.
- Weak governance within institutions.
- A need to compare institutions.
- A weak understanding of the international landscape with respect to certification systems.
- Lack of acceptance of QAA as the gateway to international recognition, acceptability, and portability of qualifications gained from the education and training received in

Jamaica and ultimately meeting the demands for a qualified labour force to drive economic development.

These matters need to be addressed by taking clear and decisive action with respect to the CCCJ and NCTVET and by removing third parties from overseeing and coordinating the CAP and OADs and putting these functions in the Tertiary Unit of the MOEY&I. These programmes (CAP and OADs) should be expanded to all higher-level institutions by way of subvention from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information. The NQF-J needs to be moved to the UCJ and fully developed as a necessary instrument for quality assurance.

Further rationalization of the system would require that decisions be taken regarding the CCCJ. The CCCJ's existence seems to cause governance confusion in the minds of public entities. It diminishes their confidence to offer a wide variety of programmes and to broaden their clientele. Members of this network of institutions have applied individually to the UCJ for institutional accreditation or programmatic accreditation. Once institutions have been awarded accreditation, they have legitimacy and will no longer be tied to the CCCJ. The Cabinet decision of 2011 to close CCCJ should be executed as, based on its own Act, the entity does not have any power to award degrees. The Act speaks only to the financing of the administration of the entity itself and not its functions. Closing it removes an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy and confusion, and provides the path to governance.

Public HEIs, such as the community colleges, can apply to the Minister for a scheme order which gives them the institutional autonomy they desire (Education Act 1965). In the interim or in its absence, the UCJ degree-awarding authority can be extended to these institutions and their programmes, once they are found to meet established standards of quality.

The development of an effective CAAG system to support increased participation and the diversity of learners pursuing HE is a necessary area for development. In some instances, students are confused or undecided about study pathways and the careers that best suit their personal goals. Additionally, students sometimes need guidance on emerging careers, the relevance of a chosen career, and the employment prospects associated with a given programme. Combining the efforts of the MOEY&I and the MLSS can create an effective CAAG system that enables students, particularly vulnerable students, to actualize their fullest potential and attain a recognized qualification.

The findings in this study showed the male population to be a vulnerable group requiring intervention. Strategies geared towards promoting greater participation and attainment of males in HE are critical at this time. An effective CAAG programme, coupled with funding, would certainly enhance the enrolment of males in HE. This is a perfect target group for the government to demonstrate the relationship between funding mechanisms, the NQF-J, subventions to HE and broader national imperatives.

The adoption of the term ‘flexible learning pathways’ to replace the term ‘alternative pathways’ in referring to secondary education and HE presents another area relevant to increasing the participation of students in HE. As previously demonstrated, the term ‘alternative pathways’ creates the perception of a ‘second chance’ opportunity. To the Jamaican mind-set, this term has a negative connotation. Vulnerable groups may believe that such a perception may filter down to employers and parents and so limit their participation in these HE programmes. ‘Second chance’ is shunned by Jamaicans and is interpreted as inferior. This undermines efforts to promote access and equity and perpetuates elitism. There is a need for this negative connotation to be removed, and focus be given to communicating programmes such as CAP, APSE, and OADs as FLPs that provide opportunities through the application of TVET. Already the negative stigma associated with TVET is being erased through the offering of both TVET and ‘academic-type’ programmes at grades 12 and 13, and within the tertiary institutions. Validation of NVQ-J levels 1 and 2 as entry requirements and the accreditation of OADs are necessary steps to address the negative ‘second chance’ stigma associated with TVET programmes.

Attention will need to be directed at getting ‘buy-in’ from the national bodies on the implementation of TVET certifications as a pathway for entry into and progression through HE. This includes stakeholders’ acceptance of the NQF-J, which clearly shows the classifications of qualifications based on levels and the attendant learning outcomes. The utility of the NQF-J is that, similar to other NQF-J, it indicates comparability of the different qualifications existing in the HE sector and highlights pathways on which an individual can progress from one level to another, within or across disciplines as well academic and vocational tracks/fields. However, the NQF-J needs to be further developed into a complete framework to include a credit system and to make it usable for HE stakeholders. Pathways for access to HE using PL also need to be developed.

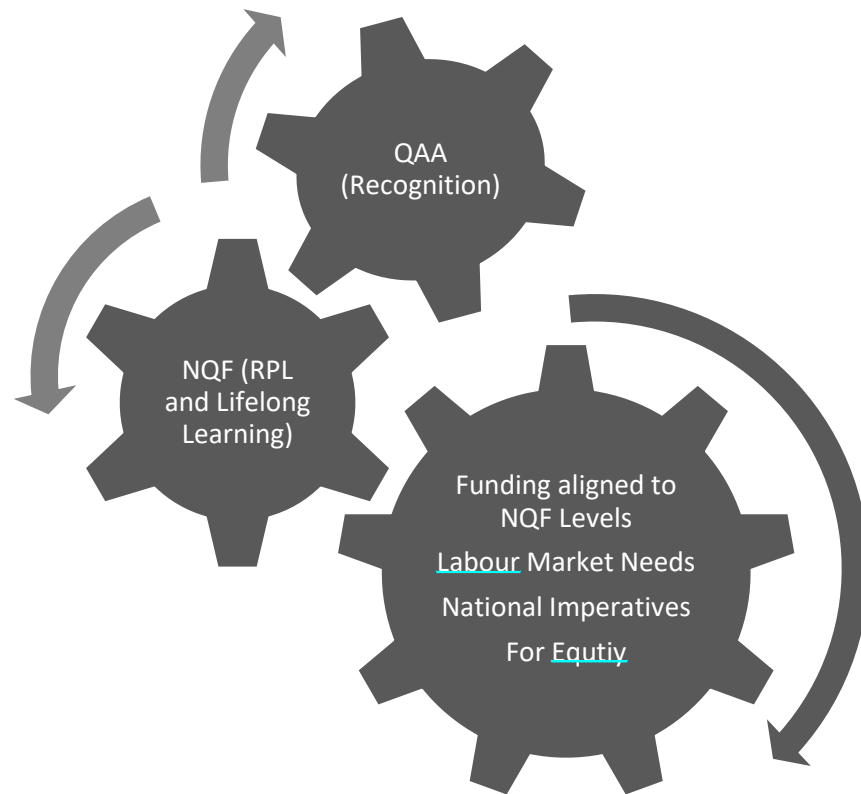
Emphasis must also be given to monitoring and evaluating participation and completion rates in HE. It is recommended that the UIS data template be fully adopted by Jamaica. The UIS data template is comprehensive and allows for international comparison. The collected data would provide the necessary information for STATIN, PIOJ, and the MOEY&I to use for monitoring, planning and continuous improvement purposes.

Funding

Funding for equity and equality in HE through PATH, HEART/NSTA Trust, and the MOEY&I enables the participation of persons from lower socio-economic groups in Jamaica. It is also an example of an effective public/private partnership. The HEART/NSTA Trust is funded by employers. However, the seeming disjointedness in the financing of HE in relation to ensuring equity and inclusiveness by the MOEY&I, MLSS, and MEGJC (parent Ministry for HEART/NSTA Trust) lends itself to inefficiency and limits accountability for the resources spent. The precarity of such a situation needs to be addressed to ensure that optimal value is obtained from the resources allocated and spent. This requires coherence and a systematic approach to the implementation of a policy for funding.

The NQF-J is a useful instrument to guide the funding model for HE in Jamaica as its structure allows for the evaluation of the educational attainment of the Jamaican populace based on the levels of qualifications, the types of programmes (whether TVET, OAD or academic), and the disciplines/fields of study necessary to support economic growth. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the human-capital needs of the country, considered together with the PATH, would inform the allocation of funding to HE. The HEIs receiving funding would be evaluated based on data gathered and evaluated through the quality-assurance process (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Model for leveraging funding and control of the HE sector



Source: Elaborated by authors

Regardless of the name used to describe the policy actions taken by the Government of Jamaica, the country has in place the required legislation, regulations, and key national bodies and instruments to enable achievement of its own *Vision 2030* outcome of world-class education and training and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8, and 10. The following features are commendable:

- (i) The Education Act, UCJ Act, and HEART (Change of Name, Amendment) Act, 2019 are pivotal and sufficient to effect the regulations and policies necessary for HE.
- (ii) The NQF-J provides for equity and equality in attaining a quality HE degree, as well as seamless pathways to access, progress through, and complete a HE degree, and transition into the labour market. This framework covers all types and levels of HE and training, certifications, and qualifications. Institutional accreditation, granted to two private institutions, has removed the need for external control.

- (iii) The power of self-determination for institutions, coupled with access to fully funded CAP and occupational degrees, have removed institutional elitism.

The next effort must be to make access and equity a reality in HE by removing latent prejudice that masquerades as a need to control the system. Control, for HE, is through the quality-assurance mechanism.

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