

Education in Haiti **The Way Forward**



Partnership for Educational
Revitalization in the Americas

by Laurence Wolff

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The report can be downloaded from www.preal.org/publicacion.asp.

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Citation: Wolff, Laurence. 2008. *Education in Haiti: The Way Forward*.
Washington, DC: PREAL

ISBN: 0-9800777-1-0
First edition
Published in the USA

Book design: Studio Grafik
Cover design: Chloe Brown
Photo credits: Chantal Regnault

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September 2008

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CINDE	Corporation for Development Research
DAEPP	Office for Support to Private Education
EFA	Education for All
FOCAL	Canadian Foundation for the Americas
FOKAL	Foundation Knowledge and Liberty
FONHEP	Haitian Foundation for Private Education
IAD	Inter-American Dialogue
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
INFP	National Institute for Professional Training
MENFP	Ministry for Education and Professional Formation
ONAPE	National Office for Partnership in Education
PREAL	Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas
PRONADE	National Program for Educational Development (of Guatemala)
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper benefited from two roundtable meetings of analysts in Washington, DC, the author's visit to Haiti in December 2007, and an ongoing series of discussions with many experts listed in Annex I.

The author would like to thank Jeffrey Puryear and Michael Lisman for commissioning this paper and for commenting on and helping to revise drafts, Peter Hakim and Dan Erikson for their guidance and for helping to establish key contacts, and Chantal Regnault for her invaluable assistance while in Haiti.

PREAL's activities are made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the GE Foundation, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), and the World Bank, among others. The contents of this document are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of PREAL or any of its donors.

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Education in Haiti

The Way Forward

This report seeks to identify the principal issues and policy options that can help to guide those who are seeking to improve education in Haiti. It emphasizes clarifying and strengthening the role of the state—and of key non-state actors—in education. It begins with a summary of current education conditions and recent developments, and ends with a discussion of what the state and other actors might do to help ensure that education begins to meet the needs of the Haitian population. Rather than replicating existing sector analyses, the report seeks to identify proven and potential approaches for progress, and to provide a view of education development possibilities based on international experiences that are independent of any particular donor agency or government.

Summary and Key Recommendations

The parents of Haiti's more than two million students make extraordinary economic sacrifices to help fulfill the thirst for learning that is deeply rooted in Haitian society. Many other parents would make similar sacrifices if they had the resources to do so. Against this backdrop, it is disturbing that Haiti's education system is so deeply deficient.

Though accurate and updated statistics are unavailable, Haiti has, by far, the lowest enrollment, completion, and literacy rates of any country in the Western Hemisphere. More than ample anecdotal evidence suggests a lack of learning and achievement. Haiti is also unusual in that nearly 80% of enrollments are in private schools, which range enormously in quality. Moreover, the obstacles to change are great, especially since special interests have incentives to resist changes which could affect their relative positions.

Despite poor living conditions and a host of other urgent priorities for the Haitian state, there is good news that can help point the way forward. Government officials increasingly recognize the need for fundamental change and the role they must play in bringing it about. The Haitian private school sector has begun to organize to improve its own management and to enter into a constructive dialogue with the government. The business sector has become interested in assisting education, and is poised to play a larger and more significant role. Donor agencies are increasingly willing to invest in Haitian education provided that the policy framework is adequate. New and promising initiatives are underway.

To achieve the goal of an education system that meets Haiti's needs, every effort must be made to create an effective government presence that focuses fundamentally on increasing learning and achievement. There is no substitute for an effective and strong government role in education, based on leadership, consistency in policy, commitment to implementation, and effective management of the education system.

At the same time, the government must recognize that – at least for now – the preponderance of its education goals are most effectively met through increased engagement with and oversight of the private education sector. Other key actors, such as the business community and international donors, should coordinate and assist in this transition, and should be prepared for the long-term process it entails.

To this end, this report offers the following key recommendations:

Strengthen the capacity of government. The government should become a facilitator of quality education by defining and effectively implementing sound, long-term policies relevant to all schools, public or private. Policies and programs should emphasize transparency and consistency in funding and decision making, setting and enforcing standards, assessing progress, using financial incentives to encourage school improvement, and promoting quality and equity. The government should define realistic intermediate goals based on expected financial resources and the extent to which it is meeting those goals should be independently monitored.

Commit to a public-private system. The government should recognize that it does not need to be the sole, or even the main, provider of education. The private sector, predominant in Haiti, can provide cost-effective education services if accompanied by proper public oversight, incentives, and accountability. Under such a framework, public funds can and ought to be used to support private institutions. Many educational services often thought of as publicly provided, such as testing, statistics, teacher training, and distance education, can be outsourced on a contractual basis. When the government does support public institutions, it should institute management policies that make public institutions more efficient and effective, using many of the accountability, oversight and incentives approaches normally used in the private sector.

Expand and improve information. The government should strengthen the education statistics and student assessment systems. The assessment system should be modernized and computerized, and more emphasis should be placed on sample-based diagnostic tests in early grades. Many of these services can be provided through private contractors via a competitive bidding process. Statistics, particularly on individual school performance, should be made widely available to the public.

Take successful pilot programs to scale. The government and donors should expand to the national level successful pilot programs that have already been developed, such as radio education, short-term teacher training, and accelerated learning programs for over-aged children.

Regulate appropriately. The private education sector should go beyond acting as a lobby for its own interests. It should help set minimum standards for its education providers and develop a capacity to objectively measure overall progress in education. Parents should get reliable consumer information, government funds should be awarded on the basis of transparent and competitive bidding processes, and non-profit institutions should learn to compete effectively and to develop an entrepreneurial mentality.

Experiment with public-private models developed elsewhere. The government, private sector and donors should test and evaluate within the Haitian context successful public-private models developed elsewhere, including community run but publicly financed schools, concession schools, performance contracts, business management of vocational/technical training, public scholarships for study in private schools, and competitive funding mechanisms.

Establish an education "think-tank." The private sector should establish an independent, non-partisan institution that provides objective diagnoses of education—and education policy—in Haiti. Its chief purpose would be to monitor progress beyond the current low baseline and to hold the government as well as the private sector to meeting their own objectives.

Support the entire education system. While basic education should continue to receive top priority, government and donors should give greater attention to policy reform and targeted investments in vocational/technical, secondary and higher education. Particular

emphasis should be placed on expanding public-private partnerships at these levels.

Focus on learning. Every action of all stakeholders should be focused on a single objective: that of increased student learning, particularly "higher order learning" which links the theoretical with the practical and encourages innovation and cooperative problem solving. If these improvements do not occur, then any restructuring, reorganization, or partnership will have failed.

Develop a long-term perspective. Lasting progress in Haitian education will take years, if not decades, and requires substantial oversight and continuous evaluation. Donors should encourage competing channels of service delivery and provide steady, long-term support. Donors should provide steady, long-term support, better coordinate policies and approaches, and encourage alternative means of service delivery.

Education in Haiti Today

Overview

Haiti's development level is similar to that of some of the poorest countries in Africa. It is estimated that 54% of its population exists on less than \$1 per day. The recent surge in international food prices has made the lives of ordinary citizens even more difficult, and the prospect of starvation is a reality for many of the poorest. For decades, the country has been beset by political instability and violence. Over the past few years, the security situation has improved somewhat, to a great extent because of the performance of over 9,000 UN soldiers stationed in Haiti, but also because of increasingly effective governmental leadership. Much remains to be done, however, to promote continued human and food security as well as political and economic stability.

Not surprisingly, Haiti has by far the worst-performing education system in the Americas (see **Tables I & II**). Its education indicators resemble those of a few countries in Sub-Saharan Africa more than those of any of its neighbors in Latin America or the Caribbean. Less than half the adult population is literate (compared to 69% in Guatemala—the next least literate of the hemisphere) and only two-thirds of children complete primary school. Though the available data on education is generally old and of questionable accuracy, there is little debate on the generally low levels of enrollment, learning, and effectiveness.

In 2006 Haiti's total recurrent budget for an education system serving over 2 million children was estimated at \$83 million overall, or the equivalent of \$41 per student. **Tables III** and **IV** provide a summary of the financing and costs of education. They show that public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, around 2%, is among the lowest in the world. This is mainly a result of the low mobilization of fiscal resources by the government. On the other hand, private expenditures on education, at 6.6% of

Table I: Education Quality Indicators, 2006 (estimated)

Percentage of over-aged primary students	72%
Literacy rate for population aged 13+	43%
Percentage of over-aged secondary students	78%
Estimated primary completion rate	67%
Percent of primary school teachers with training	20%
Percentage pass rate in 6th grade	66%
Student-teacher ratio, primary level	46:1
Percentage pass rate in 9th grade	57%
Length of school year	142 to 185 days

Source: MENFP 2007, World Bank 2007

Table II: Gross and Net Enrollment Ratios¹ (Public and Private)

	Gross	Net
Preschool	67%	56%
Basic education	136%	76%
Upper and Lower Secondary	46%	22%

Source: MENFP 2007

Table III: Financial Indicators for Haitian Education
Prices in US Dollars, and based on official estimates for 2006

Total population	8.7 million
GDP Per Capita	\$414
Public spending on recurrent education costs	\$82.9 million
Estimated total annual spending on private education	\$ 276 million
Public spending on education as a percentage of GDP	1.97%
Total private spending on private education as percentage of GDP	6.57%
Total spending (private and public) on education as a percentage of GDP	8.54%
Percentage of public spending going to recurrent education costs	18.5%

Source: MENFP, 2007

1. Gross enrollment rates divide the total enrollment by the school age population for each level of education. Net enrollment rates are calculated as the number of enrolled students within the appropriate age cohort divided by the number of children of the appropriate school age. The marked difference between the two rates in Haiti is the result of repetition and massive over-aged enrollment.

Table IV: Breakdown of Per-Student Expenditure by Level
All prices in US Dollars, and based on official estimates for 2006

	Public	Private
Pre-school	\$81	\$63
Basic education (<i>Fondamental 1-2</i>)	\$136	\$109
Lower Secondary (<i>Fondamental 3</i>)	\$65	\$90
Upper Secondary (<i>Secondaire</i>)	\$69	n/a
Higher Education	\$248	n/a
Vocational/Technical	n/a	n/a

Source: MENFP, 2007

GDP, are the highest in the world. It is also worth noting that most of this public money is not spent on the vast majority of children in the system (those attending private schools).

Pre-School and Primary Education

Pre-school gross enrollment is estimated at 67%, virtually all of it private. Provision of any kind is almost universally of very low quality, and with neither oversight nor minimum standards.

At the primary level, Haiti is far from reaching the Education for All (EFA) goal of providing six years of quality education to all children by the year 2015. At present, it is estimated that only two-thirds of children who enter the system complete primary education and many (though it is difficult to ascertain exactly how many) never begin. Enrollment in first grade is 574,000 compared to 204,000 in sixth grade. While total primary repetition is officially estimated at 13%, the real figure is probably double.² Nearly three-quarters of primary students are two years older (or more) than their grade level would indicate, and only two-thirds of sixth graders pass the national sixth grade exam. Nearly 80% of primary teachers hold no official teaching certificate.

As noted, there are significant long-term financial constraints to the provision of free and adequate quality primary education to all students. For example, even at an under-estimated cost of \$100 per student, the Haitian government would have to spend over \$200 million per year to support every one of its primary school students. This sum would be more than double what the Haitian government currently spends.



Private elementary school, Cité Soleil

There is anecdotal as well as increasingly documented evidence that many children learn very little in Haitian schools.³ While learning does take place in some primary schools, most have the following characteristics: extensive overcrowding, precarious physical conditions (e.g. private homes, tin-roofed shacks), overwhelming noise, disorganization and extensive milling around, large numbers of over-aged students, and teachers with no more than a partial secondary education. No overall estimates are available of how many schools offer a minimally adequate education.

Secondary and Vocational/Technical Education

Though less accessible to Haitian children, secondary and vocational/technical education are nonetheless of very low quality. The public schools are usually grossly overcrowded, poorly managed, and lack effective personnel and government oversight. Public “lycées” (or high-schools) have no laboratories or libraries; often the teacher has the only textbook in the classroom. Technical/vocational schools, both public and private, have little or no equipment. An earmarked tax on businesses for technical/vocational training now goes directly into public coffers rather than to support training efforts. Teaching and learning, even in vocational schools, are most often based on repetition and memorization.

2. Experience around the world has shown that repetition in very poor countries is underestimated because children change schools or drop out and then return to school, and because school directors have no incentive to accurately report repetition.

3. A recent study of learning in the town of Maissade (DeStefano and Miksic) showed that 60% of third graders could not read more than thirty words per minute of text in Creole. This compares with the accepted criterion of literacy as the ability to read a text at a minimum of sixty words per minute.

Higher Education

Public higher education is currently provided by the National University of Haiti, with 28,000 students scattered in and around Port-au-Prince. It graduates only 600 a year. This institution is constitutionally autonomous, though there is ambiguity over whether the public university or the state has oversight over the entire post-secondary system. An estimated 12,000 students are enrolled in private higher education institutions, only three of which are officially recognized by the government and of any quality. The total higher education enrollment ratio in Haiti is among the lowest in the world, and many with the requisite education (and funds) to enroll in higher education choose to do so in the Dominican Republic, Canada, or the United States.



Students at a private high school, Jacmel

Public vs. Private Education

With the exception of higher education, private schools in Haiti account for 80% of total enrollments and serve the vast majority of Haitian students (see **Table V**, below). Just thirty or forty years ago, the private sector was important but did not constitute a majority of student enrollment. With continued political instability and economic downturn, private education became the default substitute for a faltering public sector. Since 1970, while private school enrollment has steadily risen, enrollment in public institutions has stagnated and the overall school-aged population has increased rapidly.

Management of the public education system is deeply deficient at each level. Teachers are not paid on time (some have not been paid in over a year), the selection process is precarious, school directors play little or no significant role, and there are few sanctions and little oversight. Education statistics are still gathered manually and the latest set available is from 2002.

Table V: Public / Private Enrollment, 2006 (estimated)

	Public	Private	Total
Basic education (Fondamental 1-2)	390,000	1,716,000	2,106,000
Lower Secondary (Fondamental 3)	87,400	248,900	336,300
Upper Secondary (Secondaire)	55,400	181,800	237,200
Higher Education	28,000	12,000	40,000

Source: MENFP, 2007.

Note that these figures are estimated for 2006 but reflect 2002-2003 data, the last year for which education statistics are available.

While the government has exercised little quality oversight of the public schools, it has exercised almost no oversight of the vast majority of the country's private schools. Three-fourths of all private schools operate with no certification or license from the ministry of education. In practice, this means that anyone can open a school at any level of education, advertise for students and hire teachers without having to meet minimum standards. Quality control agencies such as the National Pedagogical Institute, established 30 years ago, or the National Institute for Professional Training (INFP) have disappeared or nearly ceased to function because of lack of funding or interest.

In the private education sector, three predominant subsets of school models have emerged. The first and perhaps largest subset is for-profit private schools run by entrepreneurs, which features little pedagogical understanding, precarious physical facilities, few or any books, and untrained teachers and school directors. They are popularly known as "écoles borlettes," or "lottery schools," perhaps because "only by chance do the children learn anything," as some suggest. Catholic and Evangelical churches, as well as some non-sectarian schools, run a second set of private schools. Some of these offer a quality (though traditional) education, where discipline is emphasized and adequate learning takes place. Some of these institutions also have precarious conditions and staff with little or no professional capabilities. A third subset is composed of "community schools," which are financed by whatever funds a given local community can mobilize. They tend to charge very low fees, and are of very low quality.

Only a handful of private schools, mostly clustered around the capital and accessible to the rich (except for limited scholarship funds), offers education with international quality standards.

The Teaching Profession

Many argue that the poor quality of teachers is the main cause of the low quality of education in Haiti. Lack of minimal levels of teacher education and training may be the biggest problem. An estimated 79% of primary school teachers have no formal teacher training. Of those 79%, 10%, mostly in rural areas, have no more than a lower secondary (ninth grade) education. Teacher training is provided by unsupervised private institutions.

Private school teachers are paid much less than those in the public sector. In 2004, average public school teachers' salaries were equivalent to twice⁴ the average GDP per capita of \$450, and two to three times greater than that of private school teachers. It is reported that many trained teachers opt to remain unemployed while they wait for better paying opportunities in public schools. Public school teaching jobs are, however, much more difficult to obtain than private teaching jobs.

Teachers, in both the public and private sectors, face major obstacles in conducting their work, and receive little to no support, supervision, or evaluation. Even those Haitian teachers with an adequate professional training are often burdened with more than 50 students per class, a lack of materials or curricula, and chronically late wage payments. Haiti's five teachers' unions have had major tensions with the government, characterized by numerous strikes, missed salary payments, and high teacher absenteeism.

Testing

While many observers question how much is learned in Haiti's schools, and in spite of decades of instability, the ministry of education has consistently implemented national "high stakes"⁵ tests given to all students in recognized public and private institutions completing sixth, ninth, eleventh and twelfth grades. The tests are similar in content to those given in France forty years ago and still given in francophone African countries today.

This census-based testing system is in marked contrast to sample-based systems that characterize most of the rest of the hemisphere.

While there may be too many of these tests for the system to make meaningful use of, they constitute a potentially positive element of the education system, with potential use in policy, planning, and accountability, provided they are significantly improved. Currently the tests are hand corrected by select teams of teachers, who are often paid long after their service. The ministry of education reportedly shuts down for three months in the summer while the tests are being corrected. There are anecdotal reports of cheating.

Language of Instruction

While the initial language of instruction in Haitian primary schools is Creole, it is not clear when and how instruction switches to French. The national examination in the sixth grade is given entirely in French (with the exception of the subject of Creole), and secondary instruction is, in principle, conducted completely in French. By most accounts, the quality of French language instruction, writing, and speaking has deteriorated significantly over past decades, and there is vast inconsistency in the language of instruction by region, level, and subject matter. This matters because French remains the "official" language of Haiti and formal communications in government and the private sector are in French.

Demand

In spite of these system-wide problems, there is a demonstrable thirst for learning among all Haitians, who recognize that education is a means of escaping poverty. This can be seen in part by the willingness of poor parents to spend the relatively large sums of money to send their children to school. It is estimated that the average cost of private primary school tuition is \$85; with books and uniforms, the cost rises to \$135—an enormous burden in a country with a per capita income of \$450. The demand for learning can also be seen through visits to schools where, when they are effectively being taught, Haitian youths pay rapt attention.

4. Notably, this percentage—while mostly reflective of the substandard Haitian GDP—is nearly twice the OECD average.

5. "High stakes" testing refers to tests that students must pass in order to move to the next level of education.

Obstacles to Improvement

Why is education in Haiti so poor? Clearly, problems are not endemic to education alone, but are more systematic, and rooted in Haiti's political instability, poverty, and lack of economic growth. In the face of economic stagnation, some argue that the only game in town has been "rent seeking." That is, retaining one's portion of the meager available resources pays off more consistently than seeking to increase those resources. It is said that, in Haiti, there is an aversion to innovation and/or transparency, which have in the past turned out to be financially or even physically dangerous.

Part of the problem comes as a result of the government's inability to mobilize fiscal resources in a subsistence economy. Security and governance problems have also caused many foreign donors to shy away from supporting the education sector. The burgeoning needs of the sector, however, cannot be ignored: children and youths aged 0-14 make up 43% of the population—much higher than the average for the region—which makes the financial burden of improving education particularly acute.

One glaring problem is that the state has been minimally active in both providing and overseeing education, which has left Haiti devoid of any standard of educational quality. For decades, there has been little focused public sector interest in education, and a constant shuffle of education ministers and personnel who may have come to see education posts as part of an entrenched spoils system, rather than as a critical social service. Within this inadequate system of oversight, special interests—teachers and their unions, private school managers and their owners, education authorities and bureaucrats—have resisted change because it might negatively affect their relative positions.

Promising Developments

In spite of these overwhelming difficulties, promising developments have emerged. Over the last two years, Haiti has experienced increased political stability, including a major reduction in violence, to a great extent aided by the United Nations presence. The president has shown himself to be prudent, and the new parliament, despite some setbacks in early 2008, can be seen as beginning to exercise its functions. International organizations, foreign governments and private donors are moving forward with economic aid since they now believe that the government's capacity to manage external funding may have significantly improved. While the economic boost from sustained relative stability has yet to be felt on the ground, it may be on the horizon.

With support from external agencies, both the government and the private sector have started to move on improving the education system. The highest priority of the government and external donors has been improving primary education. A number of international agencies are willing to invest heavily in achieving Education for All (EFA)⁶ in Haiti by the year 2015, despite the near impossibility of reaching this goal. The objectives are to retain all children (particularly the poorest) in the school system and at the same time encourage systemic quality improvement.

The government appears to be committed to establishing "public-private partnerships" (PPPs) to expand and improve basic education. The World Bank has taken the initial lead in funding; increased support for both public and private schools is expected from Canada and Europe. Currently, a ministry department (DAEPP - Office for Support to Private Education) has begun in the province of Nippes to assess and accredit private schools that offer "adequate" quality, and offer support to the neediest students and distribute the related funds, which are provided through a World Bank loan.

Likewise, legislation is being debated in parliament to establish an autonomous public agency (ONAPE – National Office for Partnership in Education), which would be the vehicle for channeling public and international funds to private primary education institutions, as well as for establishing policy dialogue. It is not clear, however, when or if ONAPE will be created, or how much money it would administer.

Currently, there are now several promising small-scale and/or pilot projects focused on boosting the quality and effectiveness of primary education, including the following:

- A program for accelerated one-year pre-service teacher training has just started, with World Bank financing, to begin to address the fact that 48,000 out of 60,000 current primary school teachers have no training in education. The objective is to train 2,400 teachers per year, compared with the current output of 400. Since most teacher training programs are for three years but at half-time, this full-time, one-year program does not reduce the real time for training but instead concentrates it. This program faces a number of implementation challenges, including managing the proposed two years of supervised initial teaching as well as finding the funds to pay trained teachers an adequate wage in private schools.
- Radio education programs, underway in Haiti for some time on a small scale through the Haitian Foundation for Private Education (FONHEP),⁷ seek to improve the teaching of Creole and mathematics. The possibility of French language instruction via radio is also under discussion. While good evaluations of these programs in Haiti are not available, radio education has been shown to be a cost effective way of improving quality in many developing countries.⁸

6. UNESCO considers EFA the completion of six full years of education of quality.

7. FONHEP is a private non-profit foundation providing training and applied research in Haiti. It has been supported by USAID since the 1980's.

8. The use of television or Internet for quality improvement, while feasible and cost effective elsewhere (e.g., Telesecundaria in Mexico), requires management skills, human resources, and infrastructure which Haiti does not yet have.

- Pre-schooling is critical in order to help ensure that children enter school on time (age 6) and with adequate readiness for schooling, as well as to start verbal French learning. The Foundation for Knowledge and Liberty (Fondation Connaissance et Liberté, or FOKAL)⁹ has developed an innovative pre-school curriculum which it is implementing in a small number of private schools. At the same time the ministry is considering options to expand public pre-schooling.
- Pilot accelerated learning programs, in which habitual repeaters are pulled out of regular classes and given special intensive classes, are being supported by Canada and the EU. Evidence around the world shows that, when effectively implemented, these programs can provide two years of learning within a one-year span. Successful implementation of an accelerated learning program would free up at least 15% of enrollment to take in new students, keep them through sixth grade, or reduce student teacher ratios.

Efforts are also underway to reinvigorate technical/vocational education and training and to restructure secondary education. With support from the IDB, public training institutions are being upgraded and a competitive process is underway to select public and/or private institutions for training programs, based on the Chile Jóven experience. This will take some time, however, since at least 90% of the 800 training proposals received in the first round were from unqualified institutions. Other promising developments include a new law now under discussion that would reinvigorate the National Institute for Professional Training (INFP), which would provide oversight and support for technical/vocational training. Likewise, a new secondary education reform that divides secondary education into a lower and upper “diversified” level and reduces the number of subjects studied is being implemented in selected schools.

Perhaps more importantly, there is increasing national debate on education policy issues. Public fora have been held on issues such as public/private relations and on the structure of higher education. A new presidential commission was established in late 2007 explicitly to guide the government in making education policy decisions. It includes significant representation of business leaders and leading educators, had its first meetings in late December. The commission has a challenge and opportunity—to show that real policy change can be identified and will occur.

With support from the Unibanc Foundation, a new private sector consortium has been established. It has a full-time director and staff, and is the principal private sector interlocutor with the government. It links the private commercial and manufacturing sector, such as banks, which have a vested interest in education quality so that their employees are more productive, with private education providers.

9. This private nonprofit community development organization is supported by the Open Society Institute.

Priorities for the Future

TOWARD AN EFFECTIVE STATE

Relative political stability, the creation of new programs, and increasingly open debate on the future of education offer solid bases from which to advance the long process of educational revitalization. As education authorities and civil society debate how best to proceed, perhaps the most important question has to do with the future role of the Haitian state in the education sector. Until recently the state has been nearly absent from education, given its lack of institutional capacity and the small percentage of enrollment in public institutions. But in fact there is no substitute for an effective and strong government role in education, based on leadership, consistency in policy, commitment to implementation, and effective management of the education system.

One key to effective management and decision-making is the availability of updated and reliable information. Improving education statistics (including school mapping, which can help to improve local management and priority setting) and student assessments should be prioritized, and are relatively inexpensive. Testing can be improved through computerization, better pre-testing, feed-back to individual schools on their performance, diagnostic testing in the earlier grades, and public disclosure of school-by-school results.¹⁰ Worth noting is that the state does not have to provide these services itself, and ought to seek private contractors (for-profit or non-profit) to provide professional and highly accountable services.

A stronger, more effective state does not mean that government should be the sole, or even the main, provider of schooling. Leading Haitian economists and businessmen today are emphasizing the “need to build effective public-

private partnerships.” They argue that “le gouvernement doit faire faire” (the government should “make things happen” rather than do everything itself). Their perception is in accord with recent world-wide experience, where increasingly there is a recognition that private provision of education can serve public goals, often more cost-effectively than the public sector, provided that it is accompanied by effective public oversight. Thus moving towards a cohesive, efficient, and strategic state will be of paramount importance for the development of Haiti’s education system.

This does not imply abandoning or curtailing the government’s current network of public institutions. In fact, there may well be contextual and political rationales for increased public provision of education—particularly in rural areas where there are few or no providers at all. If and when this is done, however, it should be accompanied by effective management policies that make public institutions more efficient and effective, using many of the accountability, oversight and incentives approaches normally used in the private sector.

Based on recent global experience, there does not have to be a “dichotomy” between public and private provision of education. In many of the world’s most successful education systems, public institutions increasingly have greater autonomy and parents have more choice. Often, public institutions compete with each other and with private institutions for students and funding. Government’s role, whether in the public or private sphere, ought to be to establish and enforce minimum standards, assess quality, increase access and equity, collect and disseminate information so that parents and students know what they are getting, and seek the most cost-effective use of public funds to achieve public goals. A critical task is to get parents more involved in their children’s schooling, and to show them how to insist on decent quality, beginning with such basics as teacher attendance.

10. The IDB is supporting the application of the UNESCO regional test of language and mathematics learning to be given at third and sixth grade on a sample basis; the World Bank is supporting a simple oral reading test to be given at first or second grade level.

Perhaps most importantly, effective (versus cosmetic or bureaucratic) changes to the role of the state must mean that every action of the state should be focused on a single objective: that of increased student learning, particularly “higher order learning” which links the theoretical with the practical and encourages innovation and cooperative problem solving. If these improvements do not occur, then any re-structuring, re-organization, or partnership will have failed.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS, PUBLIC GOALS

Effective and efficient public-private partnerships are possible in Haiti at all levels of education, and models developed elsewhere can be adapted to the Haitian context. While primary education in both the developing and developed world is usually provided by public institutions, there are examples of countries where private schools are predominantly financed by their governments. In the Netherlands and Lesotho, for example, the government provides nearly all of the funding for private primary and secondary schools. Chile has a mixed system of public municipal schools, publicly-supported private schools, and fully independent private schools.

The worldwide partnership experience is much more common in vocational/technical education and training, where participation of the private sector is fundamental, as well as in higher education where, around the world, public support to private education in the form of scholarships, loans and grants is increasing. Finally, and not least important, many functions which at first may seem to belong to government, such as testing, statistics gathering, and training, can effectively be contracted out, provided that oversight is adequate.

This view of a new and more integral role for the government is not universally held in Haiti. Some argue that education should be provided principally by the government, and others that public education should continue to be centrally controlled. Their conviction may stem from a lack of understanding in Haiti of how public sector management as well as public-private relations have developed and deepened in the last thirty years around the world. Or it may be caused by perceived

exploitation of students by the Haitian private sector. The result may be a kind of “split personality” among government officials: when there is no external pressure, the government may appear to want to exclude rather than cooperate with private sector efforts—or to expand the public sector without establishing appropriate management and/or incentive systems.¹¹

The difficulty in making such partnerships work in Haiti should not be underestimated. Without adequate oversight, the private sector can misuse funds, both public and private, provide false or misleading information, and offer meaningless or totally inadequate educational services (as has been the case innumerable times in Haiti). At the same time, these criticisms can be applied to Haiti’s public school system as well. Thus building up the government’s capacity for oversight is important for improving both private and public schools. It requires a significant change in mentality and attitude, as well as a willingness to select the most qualified public officials and to pay them an adequate wage. Equally, there is a need to reform the private education sector, improve the functioning of the market for education by providing parents with reliable consumer information, and foster fair and competitive bidding processes for government contracts. In turn, private non-profit institutions such as FONHEP, which has been supported for 20 years by USAID and others, will need to learn to compete effectively for contracts and to develop an entrepreneurial mentality.

SUGGESTED GOALS BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION

While both the government and external agencies give top priority to basic education, a broad and balanced approach is essential. Policy changes and investments are needed as well in vocational/technical education and training, and in higher education. Government officials and leading economists have urged foreign assistance institutions not to restrict their assistance to basic education. This does not mean that vast amounts of funds should be re-channeled to higher education or technical training as a result, but rather that structure, institutions, and incentives should be well-designed and accompanied by targeted investments in critical areas.

11. For example, the government may be considering re-establishing the currently moribund public radio education department rather than building on FONHEP’s existing capacity in this area.

Basic Education

With assistance from the World Bank, DAEPP has begun to certify private schools and provide government funds to finance government scholarships to needy children aged 6-8 who were not previously attending private schools. Local oversight committees are being set up to combat the inevitable threat of corruption and favoritism. The process has only recently begun and may have some drawbacks; it will be difficult to identify the “neediest” in a country where there are so many poor and few reliable proxies of relative need. Furthermore, as has occurred elsewhere, a supply-side focus on remaining in school may result in overlooking quality and increased learning.

Haiti should continue to experiment with other public-private options that go beyond reaching out-of-school children. The government could directly subsidize private schools that are confirmed to be of acceptable quality, with funds going to such agreed-upon purposes as lower overall tuition, improved teacher salaries, scholarships, increased enrollment, or textbooks and other quality investments, depending on circumstances. Some private confessional schools have long had agreements for the government to pay teachers salaries; these programs could be significantly expanded. The government should seriously consider an upgrading program for “community schools,” which are organized by local mayors but currently receive no central government support. Because these schools have very low tuition, they attract many students. But teachers are paid very little, facilities are deplorable, and the quality is very low.

The need for decent physical facilities is enormous, and the government, with external assistance, is expected to build new schools to meet the growing demand for education. These new schools, whether public or private, will need to be more effectively supervised in terms of teacher selection and contracting, financial management, and pedagogical oversight. One possibility is for the government to finance construction of new primary schools and then to sign long-term contracts with private providers to run them. This approach would be similar to the “concession” school program in Bogotá, Colombia.

Another option is to expand public schools in rural areas where there are currently no providers, but to be sure to give them adequate flexibility and management autonomy, while still providing oversight and technical assistance. A good model is the original PRONADE



Public elementary school, Port-au-Prince

program in Guatemala, where community schools were publicly funded and given strong central administrative oversight.

Nonetheless, there is an increasing risk that Haiti will be overwhelmed with pilot programs. While it is appropriate to begin in areas with more reliable human resources and with interest in change, promising pilot projects ought to be rapidly expanded to the national level. The most promising initiatives include radio education, new approaches to pre-schooling, accelerated teacher training, and accelerated learning programs for over-aged children. To this end, increased and more effective coordination of the donor community should be sought. In most cases, NGOs and other private providers such as FONHEP and FOKAL can be contracted to handle implementation.

Secondary Education

The task in reforming secondary education is particularly difficult because of increasing demand for places, a near total lack of adequate facilities in both public and private institutions, an untrained teaching staff, and the current justifiable preoccupation with basic education. The short-term goal should be to more effectively implement what appears to be a well-intentioned curriculum reform, and to begin a process of certification and assessment of schools, both public and private.

Eventually, as in primary education, private secondary schools of adequate quality could be subsidized, provided they admit increasing numbers of needy students, and public institutions could be restructured so as to reward good performance. Pre-service training of secondary teachers, which currently only takes place at the Higher Normal School, should be strengthened and diversified. To meet needs in rural areas, a distance program for lower secondary education could be started.

Vocational/Technical Education and Training

Haiti drastically lacks skilled workers such as plumbers, bricklayers, concrete workers, among others, who will be needed for an expected \$1 billion infrastructure overhaul to be financed by international agencies. Computer and cell phone use as well as Internet access have recently begun to increase rapidly with accompanying needs for technological capabilities. Parents and youths seek out and pay for vocational/technical training, even of the worst quality, to compete for these jobs. Though it should not be seen as a panacea, vocational/technical schools should be expanded and improved.

Today, there is a world-wide consensus on the fundamentals of an effective vocational/technical education and training system in a developing setting. Such a system begins with establishing an autonomous agency managing the system, with the private sector holding a voice in management at least equal to that of the public sector. Public institutions must be freed of bureaucratic constraints so that they can freely contract for provision of services. As has begun with support from the IDB, competition for training grants should be open to both public and private institutions.

All such institutions should emphasize competency-based training rather than formal certification. New programs could be developed to strengthen training for the private informal sector. A labor information system would enable training institutions to respond agilely to changes in labor market demands. Finally, technical/vocational education and training should, with just a few exceptions, be de-linked from the formal education system. In the Haitian context this means complete reengineering of the existing public institutions so that they become agile competency-based training institutions. In addition, the out-of-date youth training programs of the Ministry of Social Affairs could be replaced by mainly privately managed and labor market-

based programs. Successful models exist through the region, including in the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Brazil. A draft law establishing some but not all of these elements is currently under discussion, and should be given strong consideration.

Higher Education

Across the developing world, higher education is increasingly promoted through public-private partnerships. States increasingly manage from a distance through oversight, incentives, contractual relationships with the private sector, and based on the precepts of autonomy and accountability. In this approach, the state focuses more intensively on the cost-effective use of public funds to achieve its goals, as well as on diversification in sources of financing for both public and private institutions.

In Haiti, a new model of public higher education should mean a “social contract” based on accountability between the state and public institutions, as well as increased tuition, strong and independent oversight of the private sector including accreditation, and, eventually, student loans and scholarships as a means of tackling equity issues as well as improving quality. This may prove politically difficult at the National University, but ought to be the model in the new public regional universities which the ministry of education plans to establish.

Given the importance and complexity of higher education reform, it would be appropriate to invite a select group of international experts, who have been involved in reform in places such as Chile and Colombia, to visit Haiti, and, in collaboration with Haitian leaders, design a feasible higher education reform program. This should include establishing a post-secondary education and training system based on or similar to the community college model. This process is particularly urgent because of plans to establish regional public universities across Haiti.

The Challenges for Stakeholders

FOR GOVERNMENT

Even if the enabling environment (political stability, security, and economic growth) improves, the process of quality improvement and retention in school in Haiti will be difficult and long-term, requiring leadership, commitment and effective management. Haiti is replete with education plans that have not been implemented. It is essential, therefore that the Government take steps that show both its short-term resolve and its long-term commitment. In particular it should make a clear statement about its future role in education and its relationships with the private sector. It should establish realistic intermediate goals based on expected financial resources.

The Presidential Commission has an opportunity to capture the informed public's attention and re-establish trust. This commission should not restrict itself only to setting out long-term goals, but should spend a great deal of time identifying immediate actions which would illustrate government resolve and commitment, including that of shaping the new role of the state in education. In fact, enunciating broad goals without implementing practical and real changes would be deeply discouraging to those who seek to improve education in Haiti.

Short-term actions will have to be discussed and agreed upon over the next few months. This might include paying public sector teachers on time, as part of the start of improved financial management of the public sector. Another option would be to make the public aware that the process of accrediting private schools is underway by publicly announcing that a number of superior private schools will be subsidized, as well as closing a few egregiously inadequate private schools. Another short-term and relatively inexpensive measure would be to widely publish school-by-school results of the sixth grade national exam, with demographic or geographic comparisons between students enrolled in sixth grade, the

overall number taking the exam, and the number and percentage of overall passes.

FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The newly formed consortium of private education providers and the commercial and productive sectors can play an important role in defining the policy dialogue. In particular this consortium should make sure that it goes beyond acting as a lobby for the interests of private education providers and that it acts to assist in policing its own providers. The role of the commercial and productive sectors in emphasizing the importance of education quality for economic growth will be of particular importance.

A second equally important role of the private sector could be to create a capacity to provide objective diagnoses of education in Haiti. The purpose would not be to document the ills of education (which are already known) but rather to measure progress beyond the current low baseline and to hold the government as well as the private sector to meeting their own articulated objectives. A "think tank" of this sort would need a few young but respected economists and educators, a modest budget to undertake analysis of data, and an ability to bid on and implement internationally financed projects in areas such as project evaluation, monitoring, testing and assessment. There are successful ongoing models of such organizations in many Latin American countries, including in Guatemala (CIEN) and in Peru (GRADE).

FOR DONOR AGENCIES

As foreign donors increasingly move into the education sector, they will have to be aware of the necessity of playing a positive, consistent and long term role. It is

reported that, while donor agencies have a well functioning system of coordination among themselves, there is inadequate Haitian participation (in spite of efforts to get Government officials involved), apparently a result of the limited number of capable high level officials. As Haiti is increasingly inundated with visits from international agencies, it will have to play an increasingly active role in donor coordination.

Coordination does not simply mean sharing information. It also means coordinating strategies and approaches, which is a far more difficult task, especially considering the bureaucratic, legal, and institutional constraints of each of these agencies. In this respect donor agencies should support reform efforts with an emphasis on the approaches outlined in this paper—those that foster a more effective role for the state and engage the relative strengths of the private sector. When public institutions are supported, donor agencies should especially insist that policies are in place to increase transparency and accountability. Particularly important will be helping the country to establish a reliable education statistics system, as well as improved learning assessments.

While the emphasis should be on basic education, donor agencies should sympathetically consider government requests for support at higher levels of education, but should link any such support to the implementation of fundamental policy reforms.

Annexes

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Annex III. SCHOOLS VISITED

CITÉ SOLEIL, PORT-AU-PRINCE*

Elementary: Ecole Pasteur Joel (private)

Location: Wharf Jeremi

Elementary: Ecole Fondamentale Laronde (private)

Location: private home in Sarthe

Elementary: Ecole Notre Dame du Sacre Coeur (private)

Location: Cité Soleil 21 / Wharf

Elementary: Ecole national de Cité Soleil (public)

Location: in front of city hall / mayor's office

Elementary and Secondary: École Eloim (private)

Location: Cité Soleil 10 / Wharf

Elementary and Secondary: École Ste. Alphonse (private)

Location: Ti Haïti

Secondary: Lycée de Cité Soleil (public)

Location: Cité Soleil 4

JACMEL

Primary: Jacmel Public School (public)

Primary: Private School in Jacmel (private)

Primary and secondary: Lycée Alcibiade (private)

Secondary: Lycée Pinchinat (public)

**(Author's note: with one or two exceptions schools in Cite Soleil were not overcrowded since much of the population had not yet returned because of last year's violence)*



Partnership for Educational
Revitalization in the Americas

The Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL) is a joint program of the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington, DC, and the Corporation for Development Research (CINDE) in Santiago, Chile.

PREAL seeks to improve the quality and equity of education by helping public and private sector organizations throughout the hemisphere promote informed debate on education policy, identify and disseminate best practices, and monitor progress toward improvement.

PREAL's activities are made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the GE Foundation, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), and the World Bank, among others. The contents of this document are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of PREAL or any of its donors.



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