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## Equity and Quality in Private Education: the Haitian paradox

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**ABSTRACT** *Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere, has a unique education system. The overwhelming majority of children are enrolled in private schools. In the absence of a functioning system of public schools, religious communities and private operators have become the main providers of educational services. This situation raises the question of the fairness of a system in which the quality of the education children receive is directly related to the level of tuition their families can afford. This paper assesses whether private education is playing an appropriate role in a poor country like Haiti in terms of providing quality education and promoting equity. It also reviews strategies which could allow the government to use its limited financial resources in a more cost-effective and equitable manner.*

### Introduction

With a per capita income estimated at 270\$ in 1994, Haiti is the 14<sup>th</sup> poorest country in the world and has become the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. It has limited natural resources, a relatively unproductive agriculture and an embryonic industry. After several decades of government neglect during the Duvalier era, economic and social conditions worsened as a result of the September 1991 coup and the ensuing international embargo (1992–1994). Falling incomes and government inaction have led to an alarming situation in which nearly 70% of the rapidly growing population (2% per annum) lives in deplorable conditions while the richest 5% own half of the country's wealth.

At the same time, Haiti has a unique education system where the overwhelming majority of schooled children are enrolled in private schools (75% and 82% at the primary and secondary levels, respectively) [1]. This lies in sharp contrast to most countries in the world. In Cummings and Riddell's (1994a) sample of 127 countries, 72% of the nations had 80% or more state-provided primary education places and in 70% of the countries, the public share of secondary education was greater than the private share [2]. Haiti is one of the few cases where the private sector predominantly funds and supplies education. It has the second highest proportion of private school enrolment in the world.

This paradoxical situation reflects the historical fact that, in the absence of a well developed and functioning system of public schools—only 63% of the 6–12 year old children attend school—religious communities and private operators have filled the

void and gradually become the main providers of education services in the country. This trend has accelerated in recent years. Under the *de facto* government (1991–1994) and during the embargo years, the absence of public resources for education was partly compensated by the continuing growth of private schools.

As Cummings & Riddell (1994a) note, Haiti does not fit Estelle James' (1987, 1989, 1994) patterns of private education concentration: 'excess demand' and 'differentiated demand'. 'Excess Demand' for education due to limited public spending is characterised by an emphasis on private secondary and tertiary education, and 'differentiated demand' is due primarily to cultural heterogeneity and is characterised by an existence of private schools at all levels, creating a more balanced distribution of private schools at the primary and secondary levels. Estelle James predicts that the former pattern, excess demand, is more prevalent in developing countries and the latter, differentiated demand, in industrialised countries. Haiti's educational system would thus be expected to resemble an 'excess demand' pattern with limited private primary education. Haiti's reality, none the less, is quite different.

This paper will examine in more detail the causes and consequences of Haiti's distinct and paradoxical situation, which raises the question of the fairness of a system in which, in most cases, the quality of the education children receive is directly related to where they live and to the level of tuition their families can afford to pay. Is private education playing an appropriate and desirable role in Haiti? Should the government expand public education to reduce existing imbalances? How can the government best use its limited financial resources to ensure that the poor have access to education? Is continued reliance on private schools a viable strategy, considering the weak institutional and financial capacity of the Ministry of Education to monitor the quality of schooling and to offer incentives for improvement?

To answer these questions, the paper will start with an overview of the current education situation in Haiti and a presentation of the relevant historical background. It will then analyse the positive and negative features associated with the unusually strong presence of private education in the context of a poor country, and assess their implications for the public education system. Finally, it will consider different options for fostering a more balanced and harmonious development of private and public education in Haiti, including the feasibility of institutionalising demand-side financing.

## **Overview of the Haitian Education System**

Haiti was, after the USA, the first nation in the entire American continent to gain its independence (in 1804). Right from the beginning, the importance of education was recognised and the first Constitution, promulgated in 1805, noted explicitly that '... education shall be free. Primary education shall be compulsory. State education shall be free at every level' (Salomé, 1984).

But these principles were never put into practice. Only a small number of primary schools and high schools were built by the government to serve the children of the political elite, predominantly in urban areas. These schools were patterned after the French and British models. At the end of the nineteenth century, there were only 350 public schools. The number had risen to 730 by the eve of the American Occupation in 1917 but the proportion of children attending these schools represented only 11% of the reference age group. During the 1940s, the government started to define educational policies better adapted to the Haitian context and efforts were made to expand public education coverage. However, the policy of relative neglect continued during the

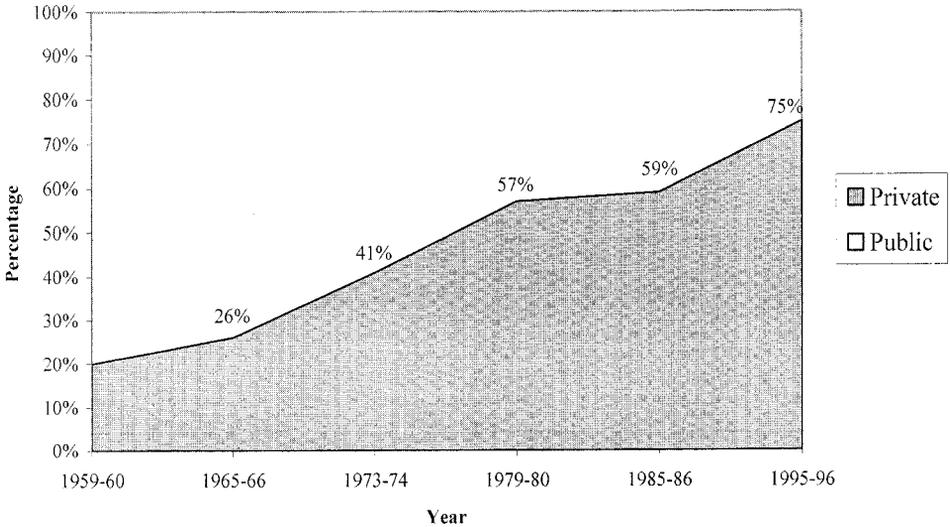


FIG. 1. Proportion of students in private primary schools (percentage).  
 Source: World Bank data.

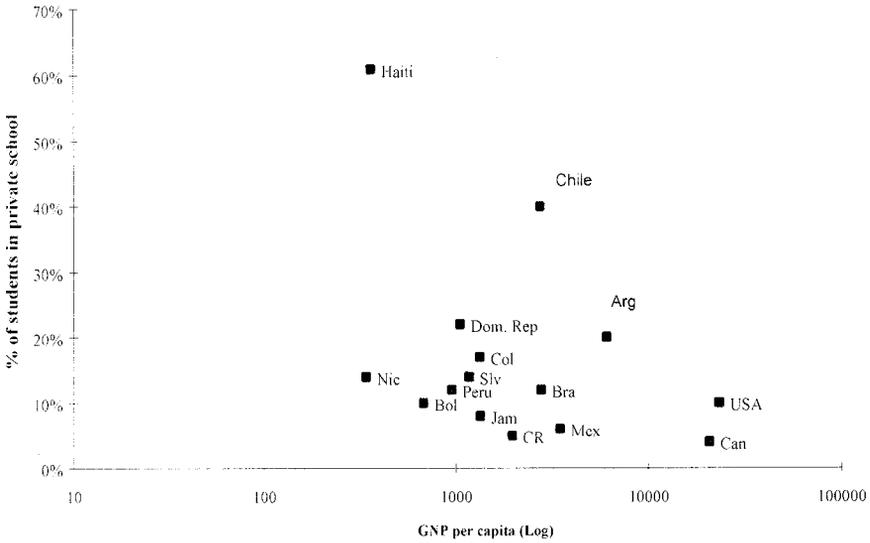
Duvalier era and there was even a deterioration of conditions in public schools as many qualified teachers left the country to escape political repression.

To compensate for the slow growth of the public school network, many religious communities established their own educational institutions. In most recent years, a number of non-denominational, for-profit schools were also started in the cities. While private education represented only 20% in 1959–1960, in 1979–1980, private schools accounted for 57% of enrolment in primary education, and 80% in secondary education. Between 1960 and 1971, enrolment stagnated in the public sector, as only 158 new schools were built during the entire period, mostly with external financing. During the 1980s, the average annual growth rates in private and public enrolment were 11 and 5%, respectively. Today, private education represents about 75% of primary school enrolment and 82% at the secondary level, as illustrated by Figure 1.

This situation calls for two observations. First, for all practical purposes, private education is the norm in Haiti while public schools, which cater for less than 10% of the school age population, are the minority. Second, it should be emphasised that the Haitian private education system has grown by default, one could almost say by despair, rather than by deliberate intention of the State.

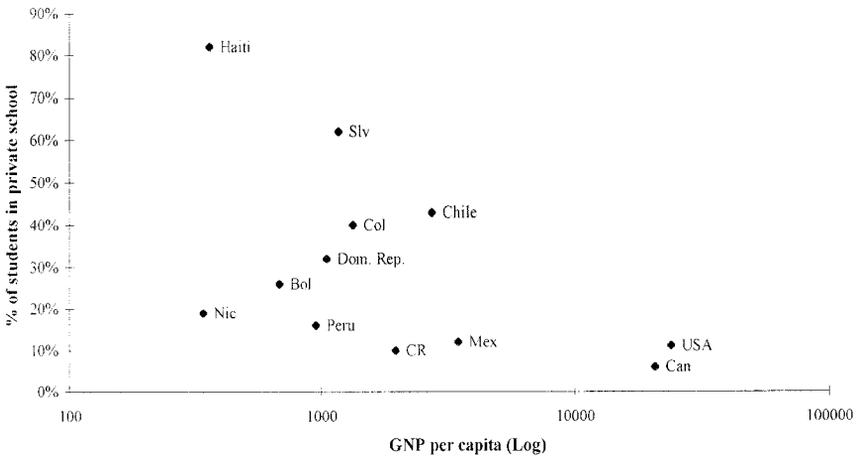
The Haitian education experience is rather unique in a worldwide perspective, especially considering the level of absolute poverty of the country. Of the 20 poorest countries in the world, Haiti is the only one with more than 50% of children enrolled in the private sector. In the African countries that have inherited a European type model with strong public systems, private education is relatively small and is either confessional or remedial. A few exceptions are found in Francophone Africa and in Southern Africa. In the former, a few countries (Burundi, Chad, Gabon, Mauritania and Togo) have followed the French variant of the Continental model with a relatively larger private share of private schools at the primary level (Cummings & Riddell, 1994a, p. 762). In Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Swaziland, private schools are also quite prominent and benefit from public subsidies for the payment of teacher salaries. In the more diversified systems of Latin America and Asia, private education is more important but

Primary Education



Source: World Development Report, 1994 and World Education Report, 1995

Secondary Education



Source: World Development Report, 1994 and World Education Report, 1995.

FIG. 2. Share of private education and per capita GDP in Central and South America.  
Source: World Development Report, 1994; World Education Report, 1995.

essentially in secondary and higher education, and it is usually reserved to medium and upper income groups. In the European countries where there is a high proportion of private school enrolment, such as Ireland, the Netherlands or Belgium, the private schools are usually religious schools entirely funded by the government. Figure 2

TABLE I. Distribution of private schools by affiliation

Type of private school	Number of schools	Percentage
Catholic	1150	10.0
Protestant	3470	30.2
Non-denominational	3350	29.2
Not affiliated to FONHEP	3520	30.6
Total	11,490	100

Source: FONHEP and World Bank estimates.

illustrates, in the context of North and South America, how much the Haitian case stands out.

The only significant exception, among the 40 poorest countries in the developing world, is Zimbabwe which has an 88% proportion of children enrolled in private schools at the primary level. But even there, the private schools receive government subsidies. All private school teacher salaries are paid by the Ministry of Education, unlike in Haiti.

The Haitian private education sector is quite diverse. Two-thirds of the private schools are religious schools. The Catholic schools have a long-standing reputation, with some of the best schools established in Port-au-Prince and in the main provincial towns. The mission schools (Baptist, Protestant, Adventist and Pentecostal) represent a second group of institutions that have traditionally received significant foreign support. A third group, the Presbyterian schools, are generally poorer and vary a lot in quality. In the category of non-denominational schools there are two main groups: community schools and commercial schools. The community schools, established and supported by NGOs and local associations, are a relatively recent phenomenon. Also fairly recent, but growing rapidly in numbers, are the commercial schools which in practice escape any form of government control. These schools, called *écoles borlettes*, are named after the local lottery, because it is assumed that children attending these schools have the same probability of graduating as winning the lottery.

The private schools have been traditionally fragmented. However, in the late 1980s an umbrella association of Catholic and Protestant schools was formed under the Haitian Private School Foundation (Fondation Haïtienne d'Enseignement Privé—FONHEP), under the impulsion of USAID. It is estimated that more than two-thirds of the private schools belong to associations affiliated to FONHEP. Table I presents the distribution of schools falling under the authority of FONHEP.

The main functions of FONHEP have been to channel external funding, offer in-service teacher training, and provide school furniture and instructional materials. Neither the FONHEP nor the vast majority of private schools receive any government subsidy. The only form of financial support is a salary subsidy covering approximately 500 teachers working full-time in private religious schools. These represent only 2.5% of the private sector teaching force.

How can the contribution of private education be assessed in the Haitian context? Its value can be measured along three main dimensions of performance: the extent to which access has increased in an equitable manner, the impact on quality of learning in the system, and the efficient use of available resources.

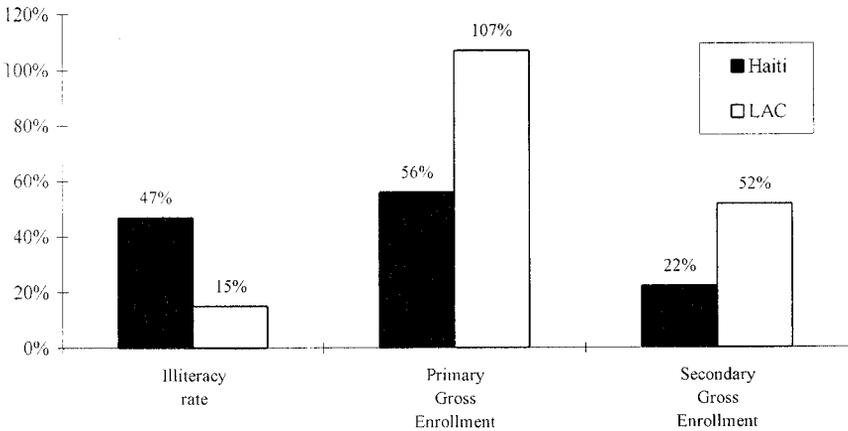


FIG. 3. Haiti's educational achievement in a regional perspective.

Source: World Bank data.

### Access and Equity

In terms of coverage, government neglect has been so great that, despite the heavy involvement of the private sector, less than half the population can read and write and Haiti has the lowest enrolment rate for primary education in the Western Hemisphere (63%). Almost half of the primary school age population (1.3 million children) is still out of school. The situation is worse today than it was in 1986, as a direct consequence of the coup years. Naturally, the non-schooling gap is more acute in the rural areas where the enrolment rate is only 23%. At the secondary level, the gross enrolment rate is 22% and 55% of all secondary school students are in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area.

This makes Haiti an anomaly in the regional context, as demonstrated by Figure 3. On the average, the illiteracy rate for Latin America and the Caribbean is 15%; the primary and secondary gross enrolment rates (including overage students) are estimated at 107 and 52%, respectively.

The failure of Haiti's strategic choice—by default—of over-reliance on private education is even more evident when comparing indicators for Haiti and the other poor countries of the region where more orthodox policies in favour of public education have been followed. Figure 4 shows the level of educational development of the 10 poorest Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Advocates of the market as a better mechanism for the allocation of educational services recommend a reduced role for the state when the budgetary resources needed for the expansion of the system are limited. For a comprehensive review of the pros and cons of private financing and provision of education, see Colclough (1996). They justify the growth of private education on both equity and efficiency grounds, arguing that excess demand can be better accommodated through private provision. Those willing to pay for the education of their children put them in private schools, thereby freeing up space in public schools. But in the case of Haiti, it is difficult to speak of excess demand when the public schools constitute a relatively marginal system that can receive only 10% of the school-age population. Most Haitian families do not have any choice because the capacity of public schools is largely insufficient and access to them is therefore restricted. For the majority of Haitian children, private schools are the only remaining option.

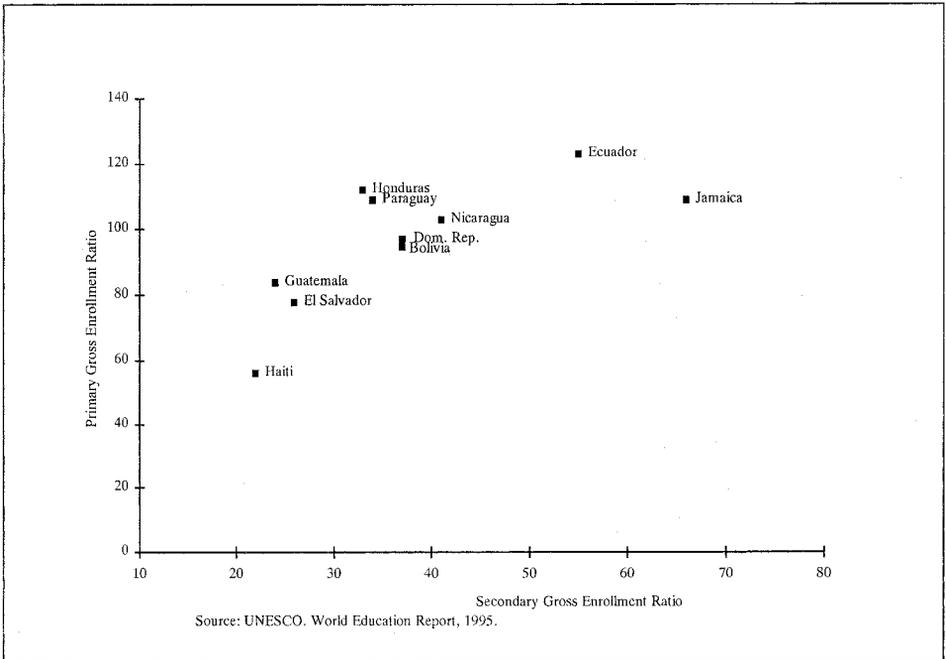


FIG. 4. Educational attainment in the 10 poorest Latin American and Caribbean countries.

In practical terms, this means that education represents a heavy financial burden on many poor families, especially in the rural areas where only 23% of the school-age population actually has access to any type of formal education. In 1980, the direct cost of schooling (registration, tuition and exam fees, uniform, textbooks and other supplies) was calculated to represent, on an average, 11 to 13% of per capita income, not to mention the high opportunity cost in an economy where most employment is in agriculture or the informal sector. By comparison, the average share of educational expenditures in low income countries is 3 to 4% of household income. In 1995–1996, it was estimated that households spend 12.5% of GDP for education while the government contribution represents only 2.5% (83.3% versus 16.7% of educational expenditures, respectively). Only 20% of the educational expenditures go to the rural areas where 70% of the population lives.

A livelihood security study conducted in 1996 in north-west Haiti confirms the heavy weight of schooling on household budget and reveals that many families are forced to sell livestock, their principal form of savings or assets, to finance the beginning of the school year [3].

The 1994 private sector survey carried out by FONHEP, which provides figures on the private costs of schooling (Tables II and III), reveals significant regional and social inequalities.

There is no government scholarship programme to alleviate the burden on poor families. The only help available comes from the Fonds de Parrainage, a private sector foundation that offers scholarships to needy children enrolled in eligible private schools. The annual number of beneficiaries is around 13,000, representing a mere 1.3% of the student population enrolled in private schools.

TABLE II. Annual direct cost per student by type of school (1993 Gourdes)

Province	Catholic schools	Protestant schools	Non-denominational schools
Artibonite	75.00	83.00	125.00
Centre	43.00	41.00	55.00
Grand' Anse	56.00	59.00	53.00
Nord	170.00	89.00	111.00
Nord' Est	67.00	64.00	105.00
Nord' Ouest	76.00	86.00	129.00
Ouest	226.00	191.00	341.00
Sud	76.00	79.00	75.00
Sud' Est	49.00	64.00	74.00
Ensemble	108.00	100.00	167.00

Source: FONHEP (1994).

The high level of private sector development in the midst of poverty not only reflects the absence of sufficient places in public schools, but also the fact that the latter were also relatively costly in reality, despite the constitutional guarantee of free education. In the absence of regular budget allocations for non-salary expenditures from the Ministry of Education, it had become common practice for school principals to require a parental financial contribution. Hence, for many parents, it did not make as much financial difference to put their children in public or in private schools, thus obscuring the assumed private/public dichotomy. Upon his return from exile, President Aristide personally decided that public schools would not collect fees anymore. But without compensatory public resources to fund non-salary education expenditures, the sad irony is that public schools have been deprived of the only source of income which allowed them to purchase a minimum of education supplies.

It should also be mentioned that, in many cases, the schools supported by religious groups and non-denominational NGOs owe their success at least as much to the humanitarian assistance offered as to the educational experience itself. In the marginal urban and poor rural areas, the existence of a food distribution programme is a determinant factor of attraction for many parents. It is estimated that 360,000 students are dependent on such feeding programmes, out of a total of over 1 million enrolled in private schools.

Another contributing factor has been the curriculum backlash in preschools, an indirect but potentially damaging consequence of the lack of capacity in the public sector. Access to public primary education has become so competitive that, over the

TABLE III. Rural/urban differences in annual direct cost per student (1993 Gourdes)

Area	Annual cost per student
Rural	68
Urban slums	213
Urban	256
National average	128

Source: FONHEP (1994).

years, it has become standard practice to require that children entering first grade already know how to read and write. This curricular deviation has resulted in a powerful incentive in favour of commercial private kindergartens that teach basic reading and writing skills to give young children higher chances of being admitted into the better primary schools. In fact, the best preschools are even more expensive than the top private primary schools.

Thus is created a true vicious circle of social injustice whereby access to preschools is reserved to medium and high income layers and which contributes to strengthening their privileges by making opportunities of access to a good primary school more unequal. (Lofficial, 1996, p. 59)

Notwithstanding the adverse equity implications of private sector development in Haiti, one positive dimension which deserves to be underlined is the absence of significant gender differences between public and private schools. Here again, Haiti displays a very atypical pattern for a country that has many dimensions of inequity otherwise. Not only are the enrolment rates by gender similar, attesting to the fact that there are no negative values attached to female education, but the promotion and dropout rates at both the primary and secondary levels support the notion that Haitian schools do not discriminate against girls. In fact, the proportion of overage girls is slightly smaller (by 3%) than for boys. (Lofficial, 1996, p. 28)

### **Quality and Efficiency**

As far as the quality of learning is concerned, the situation is alarming throughout the education system. Despite the lack of quantitative data on learning achievement, it is widely acknowledged that the quality of education is below international standards and that the majority of students are enrolled in facilities that do not provide a suitable learning environment.

An indirect indicator of poor quality is the low internal efficiency in primary and secondary education and the resulting high proportion of over-age students. According to the diagnosis document of the National Education Plan, only 43% of students entering Grade 1 ever reach the Grade 5, and only 29% make it to Grade 6. Only 38 out of 1000 children who enter the first year of the primary cycle finish secondary school. Repetition rates are around 12% per Grade and drop out rate between 10 and 15% per Grade. Half of the primary school students are over-age. The proportion is as high as 89% in Grade 5, with an average age of 15.3 compared with a theoretical age of 11 (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Jeunesse et des Sports (1995). Internal efficiency is also poor at the lower and upper secondary levels (pp. 30–31).

The quality of instruction is deficient in most private and public schools because of unqualified and unmotivated teachers, lack of textbooks, unco-ordinated development of curriculum and instructional materials, and poor facilities. The results of a test administered in March 1996 to a representative sample of 1200 public and private school teachers are dismal. The French language test, designed by a team of the Ministry of Education experts assisted by a small group of French specialists, revealed that one-third of the primary school teachers did not know how to rank words alphabetically. Eighty per cent of the teachers could not use the passive form in French. Only 41 of the 1200

teachers (3.5%) were able to perform basic arithmetic operations from the Grade 4 programme (Ministry of Education data). With such poorly qualified teachers, it is hardly surprising that less than 20% of the candidates passed the baccalauréat examination in June 1996.

Some micro-level studies in developing countries have purported to show that private education produces higher achievement at a lower cost even when controlling for socio-economic background and selectivity bias (Cox & Jimenez, 1990; Jimenez *et al.*, 1988; Jimenez *et al.*, 1991a; Jimenez *et al.*, 1991b). However, Riddell's (1993) critical review concludes that there is no overwhelming conclusion regarding the greater efficiency and effectiveness of private schools in comparison to public schools. Furthermore, as Cummings and Riddell (1994a) point out, micro-level findings cannot necessarily be generalised to the macro-level and conclusions for one national setting may not be relevant for a different country with a dissimilar context.

The latter statements are pertinent to the evidence regarding the quality and efficiency of private versus public schools in Haiti. The majority of Haitian private schools are not more effective and efficient than public schools. A three-tier hierarchy has evolved over the years, with a small group of elite private schools establishing itself at the top, the public schools occupying the middle range, and finally the vast majority of private schools being at the bottom of the scale. According to the results of a 1994 survey, 85% of the latter operate in inappropriate facilities (FONHEP, 1994). Two-thirds of these schools do not have the basic pedagogical materials required to teach the curriculum. The best schools, representing approximately 5% of total enrolment, are mostly religious schools located in the main cities. The latest baccalauréat examination results (June 1996) confirm this pattern, as illustrated by Figure 5. In the private sector, 7.6% of the schools have a pass rate of 50% or more. In the public sector this is only 1.4%.

The chaotic growth of the private schools has been a direct result of the absence of control by the Ministry of Education. It is estimated that only 10% of the private schools have been licensed at the primary level, and not more than one-third at the secondary level (Table IV).

TABLE IV. Proportion of licensed schools

Type of Private school	Percentage
Catholic	22.3
Protestant	21.0
Non-denominational	15.6
Not affiliated to FONHEP	2.0

Source: FONHEP 1994 survey and World Bank estimates.

On the average, private school teachers are less qualified than their public sector colleagues. One-third of public school teachers are graduates of teacher training colleges whereas, in the private schools, only 19% have equivalent qualifications. This could help explain the poor performance of many private schools, especially in the rural areas. A diagnosis test administered in 1991 by FONHEP to a sample of 2000 teachers from poor private schools revealed that the large majority did not have the academic level of a Grade 5 student (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Jeunesse et des Sports, 1995, p. 36).

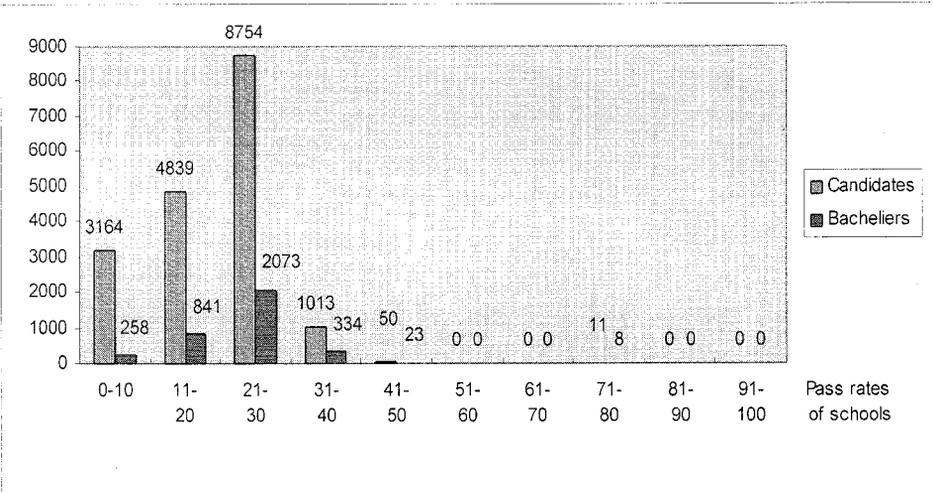
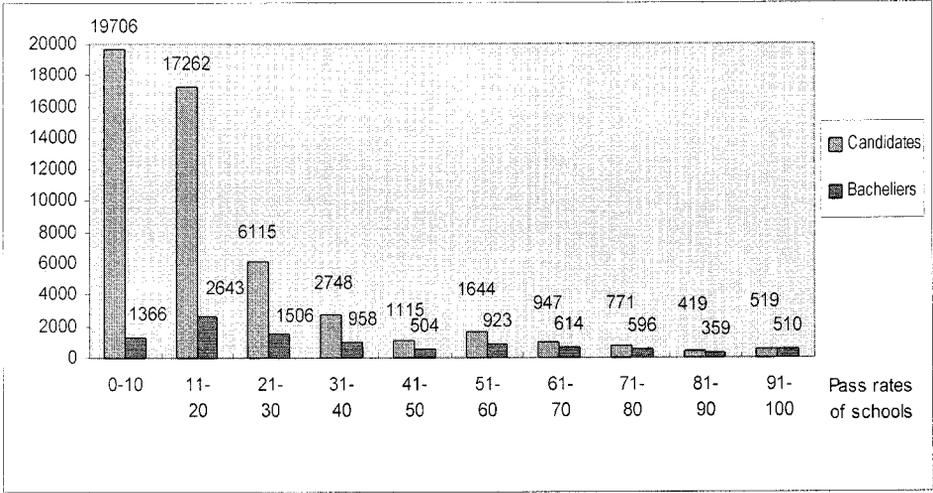


FIG. 5. Private/public school comparison by level of high school diploma results, private lycées and public lycées. Source: Unpublished study by A. Solano, French Co-operation team, Ministry of Education, Haiti, May 1997.

The prevalence of less qualified teachers is a direct consequence of the lower salaries paid by most private schools whose income is constrained by the prevailing social and economic situation. Private school teachers are paid significantly less than public school teachers who receive four times less than a police officer. The average monthly salary of a primary school teacher is 60\$ compared to 150\$ for a public school teacher. In the private sector, salaries range from 15\$ in preschool rural schools to 118\$ in urban secondary schools (Ministry of Education statistics, 1996–1997)

Available data on internal efficiency confirm the relatively better performance of public primary schools, especially in the rural areas. The proportion of Grade 1 students that eventually reach the top grade is twice as high in public rural schools than in private schools. At the secondary level, however, the proportion of repeaters is less than 10%

in the private lycées, but closer to 15% in the public sector. The proportion of students entering secondary school who reach the last grade (baccalauréat) is markedly different: only 24% in the public lycées versus 79% in private institutions.

Finally, from a cost-effectiveness viewpoint, most private primary schools have a small number of students. In 1996, 75% of the schools had less than 200 students, with an average number of 142 students per school (FONHEP Annual Survey, 1996). This phenomenon, coupled with the fact that there is no control of school localisation, reflects an inefficient use of available resources.

To summarise, it is undeniable that, in the absence of active government policies in the education sector, private schools have been positive elements in Haiti. Many religious schools offer subsidised education to low-income children for whom it means the difference between no schooling at all and some kind of education. But as a national strategy of education development, the passive reliance on private schools has undoubtedly had adverse consequences on both equity and efficiency grounds. The growth of private schools has been a substitution for public investment, not an addition. Moreover, in the absence of model schools in the public schools sector and of pedagogical norms defined and monitored by the Ministry of Education, the entire education system has been allowed to operate without minimum quality standards.

### **Options for the Future Development of Haitian Education**

What are the implications of this situation for the future development of education in Haiti? Three broad alternative strategies can be identified:

- Continuation of recent trends, i.e. predominant role of the private sector, not as a result of a deliberate government policy, but by default as has happened until now.
- Growing public sector presence in the financing and provision of education. The Ministry would build more public schools and take an increasingly large share in the delivery of educational services.
- Concentration of the Ministry on quality assurance and compensatory functions, and reduced role in the direct management of educational services. The Ministry would actively promote the development of good quality public and private education through financial incentives and technical support.

One of the first decisions of the Minister of Education, after the re-installation of the legitimate government in October 1994, was to reinitiate the process of preparation of the National Education Plan started two years earlier under the *de facto* regime of General Cédras. The Plan is meant to provide a framework for the definition of a long-term education development strategy, its translation into concrete sector policies and investment programme, and the attainment of a consensus among the various stakeholders (administration, political parties, unions, teachers, parents, private sector).

After a first phase of technical studies conducted by a team of Haitian and foreign experts, a consensus-building phase was launched in mid-1995. A series of regional workshops was organised throughout the year to discuss the first draft of the Plan. The process culminated in January 1996 with the 'Etats Généraux de l'Education', a national conference bringing together more than 1000 teachers, school administrators, government officials, representatives of trade-unions, Parliament and various civil society associations to debate the future of education in Haiti and make recommendations to be incorporated in the final version of the National Education Plan.

Despite the frequent turnover at the head of the Ministry of Education (three ministers

between November 1994 and February 1996), preparation of the Plan has continued steadily. The draft National Education Plan emphasises the following priorities for basic education: (i) expansion of access, especially in the rural areas; (ii) improvements in the quality of basic education through curriculum reform (application of the 1982 Bernard reform), teacher training and provision of educational materials; and (iii) strengthening of the management capacity of the Ministry of Education.

The Plan also makes explicit mention of the need to build an effective partnership with the private sector. However, in practice, the signals given by the government have been rather contradictory with respect to the collaboration strategy likely to be actually implemented *vis-à-vis* the private sector. During the *Etats-Généraux*, the representatives from the private sector were marginalised and the role of private schools was largely ignored during the debates. Since resuming its work, the Parliament has given clear indications that resources should go as a matter of priority to the public schools.

Finally, the relationship between the Ministry of Education and the private sector has been uneasy. There has been little private sector consultation in the finalisation of the Plan documents and many Ministry of Education officials perform their duties as if the Ministry's mandate were to work exclusively on behalf of the students enrolled in public schools rather than for 'national education'. For instance, the 1997 school census, which was the first one implemented by the Ministry in many years, was initially planned only for the public sector. Similarly, the textbook distribution programme which in 1995–1996 had reached the poorest primary schools of the country, regardless of institutional affiliation, was aimed only at the public schools in 1996–1997.

One complicating factor has been the policy of certain donor agencies which have displayed a tendency to work only with the private sector. In the case of USAID, for instance, the Helms/Dole Amendment explicitly prohibits any funding for the public sector. As a result, not only has USAID been unable to provide direct support to the Ministry of Education, but it has directed its financial and technical assistance almost exclusively to FONHEP and other education NGOs, without prior consultation with the government. Another related dimension of the problem is that individual NGOs have established schools in various parts of the country without any school mapping consideration.

This contributes to reinforce the prevailing perception that the donors in general are biased in favour of the private sector. It is not surprising, as a result, that Parliament has adopted a very negative attitude towards donor-funded activities in the education sector. For example, in 1996, Parliament voted twice against a proposed emergency loan from the Interamerican Development Bank (IDB) which aims at providing textbooks, teacher training and scholarships for poor students. One of the bones of contention was the scholarship programme for underprivileged children because the *Fonds de Parrainage* had been proposed as the administrative agency in charge of implementing the programme.

In any event, it is clear that the present government has no intention of allowing the status quo to continue along the pattern of the last decade, described as option number one. Recognising that investment in education is indispensable for sustainable economic development and effective poverty alleviation, the government is keen on playing a more proactive role to reconstruct the educational infrastructure and establish acceptable learning conditions throughout the education system. What remains to be seen, however, is whether the government's strategy will eventually fall under the second or the third option.

Even if the government decides to build up a strong Ministry of Education along the

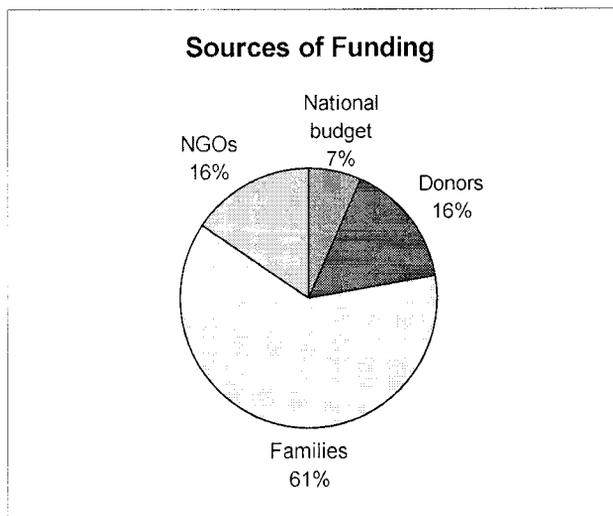


FIG. 6. Distribution of educational expenditures in Haiti (1996-97).

lines of a traditional French-type education system (option number 2), it is doubtful that the necessary budgetary funds could be found to support a more extended network of public schools. It does not mean that the government does not want to allocate a large share of the budget to the education sector, but merely that it has very limited resources as a result of the structural weaknesses of the Haitian economy. The Ministry of Education receives slightly more than 20% of the national budget, but in absolute terms the level of funding remains limited. For 1996-1997, it is estimated that, out of a total of 161\$ million spent in the education sector, only 11\$ million will come from the national budget, representing a mere 7%. By contrast, parental spending amounts to 100\$ million, donor and NGO support for private schools is approximately 25\$ million, and the public sector receives another 25\$ million from bilateral and multilateral donors (Figure 6). In public primary schools, the unit cost is around 35\$ a year, compared to an average of 120\$ in the Caribbean region.

In addition to the acute financial constraint, the institutional capacity of the Ministry is very weak. There are very few qualified professionals overall, and no management systems (information, personnel, pedagogical monitoring, etc.). The National Pedagogical Institute, formerly responsible for curriculum development and educational research, was shut down in the late 1980s. At the present time, the only institution doing test elaboration, in-service teacher training and pedagogical research is FONHEP, not the Ministry. The problem is intensified by inadequate sector management resulting from the lack of clearly defined national educational priorities, policies and standards, the weak institutional capacity of the Ministry of Education, and the low level of public investment in the education sector. Moreover, resources are used inefficiently due to a lack of efficient management and supervision by the central and provincial authorities.

In recent months, there have been positive indications of a firmer commitment to developing an effective working relationship with the private sector. In April 1997, the Minister of Education appointed a Director of Private Education and Partnership and announced the establishment of a mixed committee to draw up a convention defining new areas of co-operation and criteria of eligibility of private

schools for public funding. The Ministry is already exploring with FONHEP ways of extending its in-service teacher training programme to public school teachers. Finally, in the context of preparing a basic education project for World Bank and IDB financing, the Ministry is considering different formula that would allow children enrolled in private schools to benefit from funding for school improvement grants to ameliorate learning conditions. To expand the overall capacity of the education system, the Ministry is even looking at the possibility of subsidising the construction of non-profit private schools.

A partnership which would bring together the public and private segments of the Haitian education system in a joint strategy could generate significant benefits for the entire society. To begin with, it would allow a better use of available public resources. The Ministry could devote a larger share of public investment to compensatory programmes, especially in the rural areas where the private presence is less important. Furthermore, public funding could be leveraged to induce quality improvements in the private sector through the proper balance of financial incentives and norm setting measures. Since the better private secondary schools are markedly more efficient than the public ones, the Ministry could intervene more directly at the primary level while using more indirect support mechanisms (scholarships, subsidy of teacher salaries, vouchers) to stimulate quantitative growth and qualitative changes in secondary education.

## **Conclusion**

Over the past 15 years, the fiscal crisis of many national governments and the shortcomings of public education in many developing countries have generated a heated debate over the potential merits of private education and decentralisation as alternatives to traditional, centralised public education. There are many countries where the failure to adequately supply public schooling has led to increased demand for private schooling. However, as a recent study of parental and community financing of education in East Asia has revealed, the fact that households are willing to pay for education does not necessarily mean ‘that they should be encouraged or permitted to do so’ (Bray, 1996). The Haitian case offers a powerful illustration of the likely adverse equity and quality outcomes when the government is almost totally absent from the education scene. From an international perspective, Haiti is a statistical aberration—an extremely poor country with an exceptionally high proportion of private school enrolment—that has tragic social and human implications. While the growth of private education has undeniably been the main vehicle for expanding access to education, the cost to families, and the resulting degree of social injustice, have been very high. Moreover, there is still significant under-provision of schooling, considering that the private sector has grown as a substitution for public investment rather than as a complement. Finally, most private schools remain of very poor quality as the Ministry of Education has not had either the financial or the technical capacity to play a significant quality assurance role.

The problems of the Haitian private sector cannot be seen in isolation from the rest of the education system. They are not intrinsic to the private schools but are rather the direct results of many decades of government neglect, the absence of a national education strategy, inadequate levels of public funding for education development, and the lack of technical standards and quality promotion mechanisms.

For both equity and efficiency reasons, there is an obvious case for stronger intervention of the Haitian state in the education sector. What is less clear, however, is what form this intervention should and could take, considering the acute resource constraints faced by the government. Should there be more public provision of education

to bring schools to the most under-privileged areas of the country and to provide models of good quality schools to be emulated by the rest of the education system? Or should Haiti follow a different approach, and rely more on financial incentives and pedagogical norms to promote expansion of coverage and quality improvements? Hopefully the National Education Plan will help formulate a satisfactory answer, based on a careful assessment of the technical feasibility and financial implications of each option. In any event, it seems unlikely that much progress could be achieved without a real partnership between the public and private sectors in the search for appropriate strategies that would allow extending basic education, reduce inequalities and improve quality.

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## NOTES

- [1] The term 'private' used in this paper refers to schools that are privately funded and managed. It encompasses religious, commercial, and community schools. A very small proportion of private schools in Haiti receive a government subsidy. These 'aided' schools are also categorised as 'private' since, as Cummings and Riddell (1994b) point out, it is best to note their private nature 'until rules can be agreed on that clarify which aided schools are totally devoid of autonomy' (p. 827).
- [2] Due to data limitations, Cummings and Riddell's (1994a) sample was based on 1975 data.
- [3] University of Arizona, BARA—A Baseline Study of Livelihood Security in Northwest Haiti, April 1996.

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