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Education in Haiti and the Caribbean: A Literature Review

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Abstract

How we educate our youth is something that is constantly changed and altered in order to achieve greatness. Throughout the Caribbean there are countries with significantly lower educational "greatness", leading to significantly high poverty and illiteracy rates. This literature review seeks to compare and contrast three countries in the Caribbean -- Haiti, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic -- and analyze how they educate their youth both with and without disabilities. It is found that Haiti is both the poorest, and has the least educated population. Haiti also has the fewest number of government funded and regulated schools (Dupoux, Wolman, & Estrada, 2005). None of the countries serve students with disabilities well. Some have policies in place, but no real way to ensure completion. Both Haiti and the Dominican Republic have poor educational facilities, inadequate supplies, and under-trained teachers. In order for children of all ages and a abilities to receive the education necessary to thrive and bring change for the future in all three countries, but especially in Haiti, education needs to be both regulated and financially feasible.

Literature Review: Education in Haiti and the Caribbean

Throughout history, being "able-bodied" was one of the requirements for survival in the Caribbean due to the enslavement and indentureship of its inhabitants (Lavia, 2007). Because of this, people with disabilities in this region were isolated, hidden away, exploited, and abused (Lavia, 2007). Up until the 1960s no formal or regulated education was offered to persons with or without disabilities; the only type of care or institutional attention was offered through voluntary or private organizations (Lavia, 2007). These organizations were privately funded and run, and were largely "philanthropic endeavors" (Lavia, 2007, p. 191). The Haitian government did make an attempt to create a more universal primary education system by enacting Haiti's *Education For All* act, but their goal of creating this by 2015 drastically fell short (Sider & Jean-Marie, 2014). Their attempts did, however, develop some learning support for students with disabilities, however, the stigma surrounding disability, and the actual implementation of this type of agenda continually falls short (Sider & Jean-Marie, 2014).

The author of this literature review is focusing on three countries in the Caribbean -- Haiti, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic. The focus country is on Haiti, a country the author spent some time in during the summer of 2016. The other two countries were chosen because they will bring in history, beliefs, and educational practices from both British/English and Spanish influences, along with the French influences that Haiti possesses. This paper is an exploration on the above stated countries' past and present educational systems, how and if they include students with disabilities, the conception of disability as a whole, and the opportunities and lifestyle that persons with disabilities currently have. The author will include information gained through events and interactions she experienced with Haiti's educational system during her two month

stay in Haiti during the summer of 2016. The author was there volunteering in schools, teaching

Bible clubs, and practicing English with a group of girls at a local orphanage. The three counties

will then be compared against each other, followed by a discussion and conclusion.

Haiti:

The country of Haiti shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic. Haiti

is the poorest country in the western hemisphere (Sider & Jean-Marie, 2014). By the late 1700s

Haitian ancestors were involuntarily brought from various parts of Africa to the island of Hispan-

iola by the thousands to serve as slaves to the French (Nations online). In 1803 the Haitians won

independence from the French and became "the first modern state governed by people of African

descent" (Nations online). After gaining their independence they did whatever they could to sur-

vive. One of their primary sources of income came from making charcoal (Jacobson, 2008). In

the process they deforested their mountainous island, leading them down a path to a detrimen-

tally affected economy (Jacobson, 2008). The country speaks Haitian Creole, which is a French-

based Creole language only spoken in Haiti, as well as French (Jacobson, 2008). The country is a

very religious nation, with 90% being Catholic per French influence, and 10% Protestant with a

mixture of Voodoo (Jacobson, 2008). This religious ideology largely influences how the country

as a whole functions. From their children's education, to supernatural spirits, to how they view

another person's life, religion depicts the frame of reference Haitian's tend to use to form beliefs

and make life decisions (Jacobson, 2008).

The government involvement in Haitian education is very limited. The government funds

about 10% of the nation's schools, with the majority of this 10% residing in the nation's capital,

Port-au-Prince (Richardson, 2014). Because of the government's lack of involvement, private

schools provide education to the majority of Haitian Children (Richardson, 2014). This puts

Haitian children in the highest percentile of children in the world who attend private school (Sider & Jean-Marie, 2014). This lack of government involvement in Haitian's school system is largely due to the "political turmoil, economic instability, and limited government leadership and support" (Sider & Jean-Marie, 2014). Their educational policies, such as the *Education for All* act mentioned above, are universal primary education failures with limited finding and a magnitude of government oversights resulting in inadequate schools with inadequately trained leadership (Sider & Jean-Marie, 2014). In 1987 the Haitian government guaranteed nine years of free public education to all children, however, "only 20% of Haitians have any schooling beyond 6th grade, and only 1% ever attend college" (Richardson, 2014, p. 76). Even if the Haitian government did begin to make educational regulations, the sheer volume of private educational institutions would make their regulations nearly worthless unless they put forth true free public education. The country's track record has led to a lack of trust in the government and its officials which would make these regulations highly problematic (Richardson, 2014). According to Richardson (2014), a better system of government accountability would lead towards a climate of trust that would make regulated public education possible (p. 77).

Private education in Haiti ranges in price anywhere from $50US to $500US per school year (Richardson, 2014). This would include a student's uniform, books, and tuition (Richardson, 2014). The former price ranges are often located in more rural area, although it is still often too much for families (Richardson, 2014). The average annual salary for working Haitians is $418US, which would create an obvious problem, considering some private schools cost more than that for only one child to attend (Dupoux, Wolman, & Estrada, 2005). However, even though it is financially difficult, many families understand that the future of Haiti relies on their children, and this keeps many families enrolling their children in school despite the high costs

(Richardson, 2014). Private education in Haiti is expensive, and according to Richardson

(2014), even then education does not lead to better economic outcomes.

Only about 60% of students of school age attend some portion of primary school (1st-6th

grade), and about 20% attend secondary school (grades not specified) (Dupoux, Wolman, &

Estrada, 2005). It is not documented what percentage of students with disabilities attend or com-

plete these grades. Of the 20% of secondary school attendees nationally, 55% attend school in

Port-au-Prince with very few going on to completion (Dupoux, Wolman, & Estrada, 2005). This

speaks to the great lack of secondary school options and opportunities -- especially in rural Haiti.

With 39.3% of Haitians being illiterate, it is very apparent that the education system as a whole

is in dire need of attention (The World Factbook: Haiti, 2017).

With Haiti's general education system in shambles, it is impossible to imagine what the

Haitian constitution stated when it promised "free public education to all". The government is

quite obviously not giving public education to all students. If the general population of Haitian

children are not being educated, what can be said about the population of students who need ex-

tra help? Although with low identification and diagnosis it is hard to be completely accurate, ac-

cording to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor in Haiti, it is estimated that 10% of the popu-

lation, (currently about 1 million persons), have disabilities in Haiti (Jacobson, 2008). This is

roughly 8% of Haiti's population. It is estimated that 2% of students attending school have a dis-

ability, although the accuracy of this statistic is not complete due to the lack of testing for poten-

tial disabilities within the classroom (Jacobson, 2008). Students with minor disabilities are often

not identified (Jacobson, 2008). This suggests that to be identified in Haiti means that students

must be seriously impaired.

Disabilities are perceived as "mysterious and dangerous" by Haitians, often leaving disabled people them out of conversation and most social situations (Jacobson, 2008). Many Haitians see disabilities as a negative result of the interaction between the natural and the supernatural world (Jacobson, 2008). They are seen as the result of a curse, a punishment for disobedience, or the result of a cast spell (Jacobson, 2008). This widely held belief results in a heavy stigma surrounding disability as a whole. This stigma often leads to parents keeping their children with disabilities at home, or even locking them inside of a small closet, in order to avoid public ridicule (Jacobson, 2008). Because there is no system to respond to poor performance, the low achievement or ability of a child is solely the responsibility of the family unit (Dupoux, Hammond, & Ingalls, 2006). This belief system places the blame on the child or family, which could have detrimental effects on the progress of guaranteeing educational services for students with disabilities. Public acceptance of disability is another great divide that needs to be overcome in order to adequately educate all Haitian children.

Because there is no regulated system for identifying children with disabilities, it is difficult to document how many are served in public or private schools. Low-performing students are rarely, if ever, tested, leaving students who would be classified in developed countries with "speech and language, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, (and) emotional disorders" remain in general education classrooms, if they are receiving education at all (Dupoux, Wolman, & Estrada, 2005, p. 45). This lack of intervention leads to students with mild disabilities eventually failing or dropping out due to lack of funds or lack of success. Haitian classrooms have an average of forty students per classroom, limited resources and materials, and little to no teacher educational training making it very difficult to provide services for students who are at risk for

failure due to their disability (Dupoux, Wolman, & Estrada, 2005). It is often viewed as just an-

other added burden on a teacher's already heavy workload (Dupoux, Wolman, & Estrada, 2005).

In an investigation comparing teachers' attitudes towards students with disabilities, Haitian

teachers reported that they did not feel adequately prepared to accommodate students with visual

or hearing disabilities, and students with emotional or behavioral disabilities (Dupoux, Wolman,

& Estrada, 2005). This could be partly due to teachers in Haiti not having any formal special ed-

ucation training (Dupoux, Wolman, & Estrada, 2005). Any services that students do receive are

offered in alternative educational settings for students with disabilities (Dutpoux, Wolman, & Es-

trada, 2005).

After primary school, the country of Haiti does constitutionally support the idea that per-

sons with disabilities should have autonomy, education, and independence, however, there are no

policies in place that require a specific level of services, or any continuing education for adults

with disabilities (Jacobson, 2008). The country of Haiti does have a program called the Ministry

of Social Affairs that helps provide services to families with children with disabilities, and the

Ministry of Public Health and Population which is responsible for providing care and housing for

adults who are not self-sufficient or those with intellectual disabilities (Jacobson, 2008). Unem-

ployment in Haiti is at 40%, with higher numbers among certain populations, such as young men

and women, or in certain locations, such as in rural Haiti (CIA). Since it is extremely difficult for

Haitians without disabilities to make a living and support themselves, it is quite possible that

such outcomes are even harder for adults with disabilities.

Jamaica

Jamaica gained independence from Britain in 1962. Prior to their state of independence, they were largely influenced by colonialism, and the consequences have carried on and are evident in their education systems to date (Chunnu, 2016). Colonial schools had no formal education system or curriculum through the government (Chunnu, 2016). Education was instead regulated and operated by churches (Chunnu, 2016). Jamaica is quite a religious nation with 64.8% identifying as a variation of Protestant (The World Facebook, 2017). Also, because the Jamaicans were involuntarily brought to the island during the 1700s as slaves to the British, the value of education was at a very low level (Chunnu, 2016). To this day the value of education continues to remain at this decreased level, even post-independence partly due to their lack of attendance during their years of slavery (Chunnu, 2016). Some of the same factors true of Jamaicans in slavery continue to hold true in Jamaica's educational system to this day. Because very few slaves, mainly house slaves, were permitted to attend school of any kind during their enslavement, school began as a foreign and largely undervalued concept (Chunnu, 2016). Part of this could also be attributed to the very few high schools and secondary schools available (Hutton, 2014). It was only recently that Jamaica introduced a "junior primary school" that allowed a greater number of students to be educated past primary school (Hutton, 2014, p. 3). This late introduction to educational options combined with the history of slavery and a lack of value placed on education has led Jamaica to possessing an educational system that struggles with sporadic attendance, inadequate building maintenance, and problems with staffing (Chunnu, 2016).

Jamaica's public education system is largely influenced by a common British class system where there is a definite division between the education of the rich and the poor (Cook & Jennings, 2016). When students enter the secondary level (identified in Jamaica as entering the 7th grade), they must take a placement test to determine which type of school they will attend

(Cook & Jennings, 2016). Students who score well on their sixth grade achievement test attend the Traditional High School (modeled after the British grammar school) where they are rigorously academically challenged (Cook & Jennings, 2016). Students who do not score well on their sixth grade achievement test, and tend to come from families with fewer economic resources, attend the Upgraded High Schools where they are placed on a track learning vocational skills (Cook & Jennings, 2016).

Jamaica also struggles with improving overall social conditions leading to the home environment, nutrition, and community relations negatively impacting the education of young Jamaican children (Chunnu, 2016). Because education is not one of the chief values of many parents, advocates for education have to fight for equal education for all children (Chunnu, 2016). Many communities as a whole do not place much value on education, which in turn creates communities where attendance and dedication to schoolwork is not encouraged. "Friday absenteeism" is a regular practice of many students whose families are farmers. They use these days to help their families sell goods at the market, or look after younger siblings (Cook & Jennings, 2016).

The price of education has also been a constant struggle for many developing countries. The decision to offer a cost-sharing or free-education program has been of constant debate in Jamaica (Hutton, 2014). A cost-sharing educational program would require the parents and families to pay tuition fees in order for their children to attend public schools (Hutton, 2014). They have gone back and forth in the last twenty years, currently landing on free-education as of 2007 (Hutton, 2014). A few of the purposes in doing this was to encourage both enrollment and school attendance, however, after three years of free tuition, the net enrollment rate is still under 80%, with only about a 3% increase after having free education for three years (Hutton, 2014). This suggests that cost is not as much of an issue as was thought.

Although Jamaica does achieve very high primary and secondary education enrollment, more than 60% of students do not achieve mastery on fourth grade literacy tests (Chunnu, 2016). There is an underlying belief that education is not for everyone. As previously stated, parents and communities often do not believe that much value should be placed on education at all (Cook & Jennings, 2016). Education began with churches educating the "elite slaves", house slaves, and leaving the rest uneducated due to their lack of interaction with their owners (Chunnu, 2016). This is a key place where the country's racism and racial-class system is seen very clearly. Many families and communities undervalue education mainly because it has never been a part of their lives up to this point, and so they are unaware of its true value (Chunnu, 2016; Cook & Jennings, 2016).Because of historic treatment, many "working class" Jamaicans do not fully grasp how important education is to the upward mobility of a person, and of a country as a whole (Chunnu, 2016). It is proven time and time again that education will pave the way to prosperity (Chunnu, 2016). It is often only the upper class that recognizes the true importance of education, thus increasing the education gap between classes (Cook & Jennings, 2016). If more lower to middle class people understood the true value that education possesses, the country of Jamaica would greatly benefit (Chunnu, 2016).

There are many changes that are taking place in order to improve the effectiveness of Jamaican education. Today there are many policies and plans to ensure that "every child has access to early childhood development", as well as ensuring "access to education and training opportunities for disadvantaged groups including unattached youths and persons with disabilities" (Education for All, 2015, p. 3). On paper these policies and corresponding strategies look promising; however, there are many challenges that make these policies appear to be only a dream for the

future (Education for All, 2015). Jamaica has many economic difficulties which affect the education of children. The economic state of families often leads to a lower value placed on education which affects how a student performs in the classroom (Cook & Jennings, 2016). There is also inadequate equipment, space, teachers, and support materials for schools and classrooms (Education for All, 2015). If schools do not have enough teachers to teach classes, a large enough building to accommodate the students, or enough materials to teach with, the education of the students will continue to be greatly hindered. There is also insufficient system supervision (Education for All, 2015). On paper the government's education system seems great, but because of the government's lack of enforcement the Jamaicans are not taking advantage of the system (Cook & Jennings, 2016). The government of Jamaica could outline a flawless education system, but if there is no one to implement it, it will do the country and its citizens no good.

Of the students who completed 6th grade, 85% transferred on through 10th grade. Schools at this level place an emphasis on vocational, technical, and community involvement (Education for All, 2015).   In 2016 it was mandated that all students must exit the system possessing a marketable skill -- regardless of their academic inclination (Education for All, 2015). This ensures that all students who complete school will exit their education possessing a skill that will help them obtain and keep a job in the future. This mandate implicitly gives students with disabilities the right to learn and be successful.

One of the people groups that Jamaica does outline in its educational plan is "disadvantaged groups including unattached, or orphaned, youths and persons with disabilities" (Education for All, 2015, p. 3). The educational leaders promote and support an "inclusive educational environment" (Education for All, 2015, p. 3). The only problem is that the limited number of accommodating institutions and trained personnel make it extremely difficult for schools to address the

needs of such children (Education for All, 2015). Due to the lack of properly educated teachers

and appropriate school buildings, it is already difficult to serve children who do not need special

attention and services. The government is making strides to meet the needs of youths with disa-

bilities (Education for All, 2015). There are currently "Special Education Units -- . . . strategi-

cally located primary level schools across the country to cater to students with exceptionalities"

(Education for All, 2015, p. 12).

Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic is located on the East side of the island of Hispaniola, opposite

the country of Haiti. After the island's discovery in 1492 by Christopher Columbus, the first

Spanish colony was established in what is now known as the Dominican Republic (Morris, Mor-

ris, & Ismail, 2004). They maintained their control until 1865 following a revolt (Morris, Mor-

ris, & Ismail, 2004). It is then occupied by the United States until 1924 when the constitutional

government assumes control (Morris, Morris, & Ismail, 2004).

The Dominican Republic, like Haiti, is very religious with 95% identifying as Roman

Catholic (The Worldfactbook, 2017). The Dominican Republic (DR) relies largely on the service

industry and tourism for its economic stability (Kolivras & Scarpaci, 2009). Migration to urban

areas has decreased economic conditions as unemployment, underemployment, and low wages

increased (Foxworthy & ERIC Clearinghouse, 1976). Youth, ages 15-24, unemployment is at

31.4%, with 30.5% living at or below the poverty line (CIA). Despite the high poverty levels,

however, the DR has always had an overall positive attitude towards education (Nelson, et. al.,

1969). This could be due to the fact that their ancestors were never enslaved (Nelson, et. al.,

1969). They seem to have understood for decades that education is, in fact, "one of the most im-

portant of numerous variables that have been involved in stimulating the development of highly

industrialized societies" (Nelson, et. al., 1969, p. 1). This is further confirmed by the fact that

only 7% of primary aged children are out of school (Dominican Republic Profile, 2014). Alt-

hough the majority of Dominicans in poverty are socially immobile, they see the world around

them progressing and desire a bright future for their children and for their nation.

Compulsory education with coeducation school classrooms began in 1918 while the DR

was still under US occupational force (Foxworthy & ERIC Clearinghouse, 1976). These new

laws caused a huge strain on the existing educational system and its facilities (Foxworthy &

ERIC Clearinghouse, 1976). Due to the huge influx of students, there was not enough school

buildings, classrooms, or teachers (Foxworthy & ERIC Clearinghouse, 1976). The teachers were

now required to teach two sessions to two different sets of students each day (Foxworthy &

ERIC Clearinghouse, 1976). As a result of this strain, the US began to quickly train high school

graduates to be teachers, which resulted in undertrained, underprepared, and overwhelmed teach-

ers (Foxworthy & ERIC Clearinghouse, 1976).

The current education system in the DR shows just how far they have come. 93% of chil-

dren are now being educated in primary school, with about 80% moving on to attend secondary

school (Dominican Republic Profile, 2014). Although there is still a disparity between the at-

tendance of the rich and the poor in secondary school, 97% of youths are literate, and 91.8% of

adults are literate (Dominican Republic Profile, 2014). Public education is still free and availa-

ble to all in the DR with full government regulation. 90% of students enrolled in primary school

go on to complete it, with 87% transitioning on to secondary school (Dominican Republic Pro-

file, 2014).

According to the Constitution of the Dominican Republic, article 39 outlines the rights of

persons with disabilities to equality, article 58 outlines the protection of persons with disabilities,

and article 60 outlines the right to social security (Dominican Republic, 1964). Although the constitution contains these rights, according to the report from the United Nations there has yet to be any regulations passed to ensure their implementation (United Nations, 2016). There are no regulations or laws in place to ensure that persons with disabilities receive the education, training, or accommodations they require to be able to fully participate in and contribute to society. In the United Nations' 2015 review of the Dominican Republic's "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities", they recommend that the DR incorporate regulations and laws to ensure that the constitution is followed and persons with disabilities are respected and valued (United Nations, 2016).

The committee fighting for the rights of persons with disabilities in the Dominican Republic is concerned with the efforts that are being made to include children and adults in regular education (United Nations, 2016). They feel that any strides being made are inadequate at best (United Nations, 2016). The committee also highlighted their concern regarding the segregation of students with disabilities, and the inadequate training of the current special education teachers. They feel it is inconsistent with the "inclusive education" that is stipulated in the constitution (United Nations, 2016). Even though the overall conception of disability is not completely negative in the DR, the laws and rights of persons with disabilities greatly reduce their ability to thrive and shine in the world.

In regards to life after school, adults with disabilities are often denied reasonable accommodations at places of employment, denied health and rehabilitation services, and are more often than not living in extreme poverty (United Nations, 2016). They have no accessibility to the community or public life, and are often institutionalized without any hope of ever achieving independent living housing (United Nations, 2016). There is currently no formal identification of

Dominican Sign Language as an official language, and no certified trainers or interpreters

(United Nations, 2016). This is detrimental to adults and children with disabilities alike who are

being left with no formal or taught way to communicate with those around them.

Author's Observations:

The author spent seven weeks in Haiti during the summer of 2016 doing mission work,

working with schools and orphaned children, and working with churches doing day camps and

Bible clubs. While there she visited a variety of schools, and witnessed special education ser-

vices in action which included a school for the Deaf, orientation and mobility instruction, occu-

pational therapy, and a few inclusion-like educational situations. The author spent the majority of

her time in rural Haiti in the city of Les Cayes. Because of this, most of the schools were small,

private schools with no obvious government influence. A majority of the schools in this area are

located in churches, with a few exceptions of schools that have their own building located next to

the churches.

The school for the Deaf visited was located a mile-or-so outside of

Cayes, accessible by motorcycle or ATV. Education took place in a build-

ing that was made out of wooden pallets. The building was being held up-

right by a rope tied to the tree on the right side of the building. The

School for Deaf
children in Rural Haiti
visited by author

school was run by a Jamaican missionary

and her husband. The students at the

school represented a variety of ages and disabilities, all of which

are unable to speak or hear. The students who attend the school

live on the property in dorm-style rooms miles away from their homes and families in a secluded

Inside of school for Deaf children in Rural Haiti visited by author

and rural area. The author was also informed that this is the only school for the Deaf that the missionary knew of outside of Port-au-Prince.

The author witnessed a few private church schools that served students with disabilities. One of the students, a young girl with both a physical and cognitive disability, was carried two miles down a mountain to school by her aged grandmother daily due to her inability to walk. Although this little girl did necessarily not receive individualized education, she was able to attend the school and claim her place in the community. Another school the author visited served two students with physical disabilities: a young woman in a wheel chair, and a young man who was missing a leg. In rural Haiti navigating the rocky terrain is very cumbersome when a person has two working legs as the majority of travel occurs by walking or by motorcycle. The author observed these students as they were

included by their peers not only inside of the classroom, but also during recess and during after school activities. All three of the discussed students were attending school on scholarship from a school-sponsorship program.

Discussion:

It is apparent that there are some definite similarities, but also some obvious differences between these three countries. The biggest variance is seen in Haiti. They have experienced multiple natural disasters in the last couple years that have delayed progress, as well as experienced some government disunity (James, 2011). In order to move Haiti's economy and country

forward, they will need to begin moving towards an understanding of the benefits of a well-educated country, the necessity of government funded public education for all, more organized and structured teacher training programs, and more structured education guidelines. As of now the United Nations has not responded to Haiti's educational problems, although they are seen throughout Haiti monitoring and keeping the peace.

There are so many positive things associated with possessing an education, it is nearly impossible to argue otherwise. "Although the denial of a meaningful education is not immediately life threatening, it deprives people of an 'immense power to transform'" (Kim, 2013). Education gives generations of people the ability to transform their own lives, as well as the lives of people and communities around them. If many educated people work together they can achieve greater feats than one could if tried alone. One of the ways these countries are going to overcome the odds stacked against them and move towards reducing the overwhelming poverty surrounding them is to expand and diversify their trade creating economic growth (Trading out of Poverty, 2010). This is only possible if educated and knowledgeable men and women work together.

One of the differences between the two countries that share the island of Hispaniola is the percent of people that possess an education. This discrepancy is potentially explained by the amount of public and private institutions. Because public education in Haiti is minimal at best, there are little to no regulations in regards to curriculum and teacher training programs (Richardson, 2014). The author observed this in rural Haiti during the summer of 2016. The author observed, and was informed about, the minimally-at-best trained teachers. During a few different occasions schools were visited that were deep inside rural Haiti. In the midst of extreme poverty, very minimal school supplies, and teacher and building shortages, schools were often a feeble attempt at best. The author observed kids sitting shoulder to shoulder crammed on benches in

unbearable heat for hours at a time listening to teachers with no individual writing utensils, pa-

per, or books. With an estimated 90% of students attending private schools in a nation that is

well below the poverty line, this is continual issue (Richardson, 2014).

Accessible public education will be a huge step in the right direction for Haiti. Public ed-

ucation will help ensure that all students are being taught -- regardless of their location or finan-

cial status. Improvement is possible if the government of Haiti creates standards that will lead to

the enforcement of laws and regulations for school buildings, teacher preparation programs, and

public education to every student in the nation (Education for All, 2015). This would open the

door for Haiti to not only be able to better educate their students in the deepest, rural poverty, but

also for students with disabilities to receive appropriate education.

Comparison of Caribbean Nations:

	Jamaica	Haiti	Dominican Republic
Rates of Literacy:	<10%	53%	<10%
Unemployment:	13.8%	40.6%	13.8%
Below Poverty:	16.5%	60%	30%
Primary School Attendance (per eligible students):	80%	60%	93%
Primary School Completion:	<5%	59%	<5%
Population:	2,970,340	10,485,800	10,606,865

	Jamaica	Haiti	Dominican Republic
Education expenditures:	5.4% of GDP	NA	2.1% of GDP

(The World Factbook, 2017)

All three countries, being located in the Caribbean, have struggled throughout their existence in a fight to obtain both freedom and education. All of these countries are putting forth some level of effort, but are continually falling short. Although Haiti is the poorest of the three countries with close to 60% of its population living below the poverty line, 30% of the Dominican Republic and 13.8% of Jamaica are also below the poverty line (The World Factbook, 2017). Haiti's educational system is majorly behind both Jamaica's and the Dominican Republic with only 60% of their students attending, and even fewer completing, primary school (Dupoux, Wolman, & Estrada, 2005). The Dominican Republic Profile (2014) reports 93% of eligible students are attending primary school, and Jamaica's enrollment is just under 80% (Hutton, 2014). Haiti's illiteracy rates are at 47%, whereas Jamaica and the Dominican Republic are both below 10% (Dupoux, Wolman, & Estrada, 2005). Haiti's unemployment is twice that of the Dominican Republic (CIA).

The Dominican Republic, who shares an island with Haiti, educates 93% of their children through primary school, with 80% moving on to secondary school (Dominican Republic Profile, 2014). In comparison, Haiti only educates 60% of children in primary school, with only 20% of them receiving any education beyond sixth grade (Dupoux, Wolman, & Estrada, 2005). This lack of education is evident across other areas as well. For example, both the Dominican Republic and Jamaica have 13.8% unemployment rates, where Haiti's is significantly higher at

40.6% (The World Factbook, 2017). According to the Education Policy an Data Center's

National Education Profiles, a small percentage of Jamaican and Dominican children fail to

complete primary school, less than 5%, where an estimated 41% of Haitian children fail to

complete primary school (2014).

Conclusion:

It is very clear that education in the Caribbean is highly in need of some intervention.

Uneducated children are held back from achieving their highest potential because of their poor

education systems. Because the foundation of their education system needs so much attention,

they have the potential to hit the ground running with an education system that is fit for all. It

would require each government to believe in the benefits of educating their children enough to

be willing to put in the time, effort, and money to make it possible.

The only way children with disabilities are going to receive an education is if the educa-

tion system as a whole receives a renovation. All students, but especially those with disabilities,

need a learning environment that fits their needs. Crammed benches with untrained teachers are

not going to get the job done well. With that being said, free education would open the door for

parents to be able to send their children to school more freely. Without the cost burden, parents

could potentially be more willing to send their students with disabilities to school. This could

help lift the stigma and begin to create a desire in teachers to help students with disabilities more

thoroughly and effectively. Collaborative networks with countries who currently have successful

public education for all could greatly benefit teachers and administration in Haiti as they move

towards improving their current education.

Although there are a lot of negatives to having to virtually start from scratch, there are

some benefits as well. A few of the benefits would include being able to rely on the research and

successes of nations around them, and the ability to create an inclusive environment in public schools from the beginning. For example, learning from other nations in the Caribbean who have successful public education systems would give them a "jumping off point" in order to help them move forward more successfully. This would give Haiti and surrounding nations in the Caribbean a chance to wipe out some stereotypes by opening wide the door to the education of all students. If the government of Haiti chose to believe in the dynamic power of education, they are simultaneously empowering their youth by believing in them enough to make sacrifices to better their lives and their futures.

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