

## EQUITY AND QUALITY IN PRIVATE EDUCATION: THE HAITIAN PARADOX

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### Introduction

1. With a per capita income estimated at 270 dollars in 1994, Haiti is the 14th poorest countries 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 (1992-94). Falling incomes and government inaction have led to an alarming situation in which nearly 70 percent of the rapidly growing population (2 percent per annum) lives in deplorable conditions while the richest 5 percent own half of the country's wealth .

2. At the same time, Haiti has a unique education system where, in sharp contrast to most countries in the world, the overwhelming majority of schooled children are enrolled in private schools (75% and 82% at the primary and secondary levels, respectively). This is the second highest proportion of private school enrollment 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 percent of the 6-12 year children are schooled--, 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 and during the embargo years, the absence of public resources for education was partly compensated by the continuing growth of private schools.

3. This situation 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?

4. 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 analyze the positive and negative features associated with the unusually strong presence of private education in the context of a poor country, and asses 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 institutionalizing demand-side financing.

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

5. Haiti was, after the United States, the first nation in the entire American continent to gain its independence (in 1804). Right from the beginning, the importance of education was recognized 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"<sup>1</sup>.

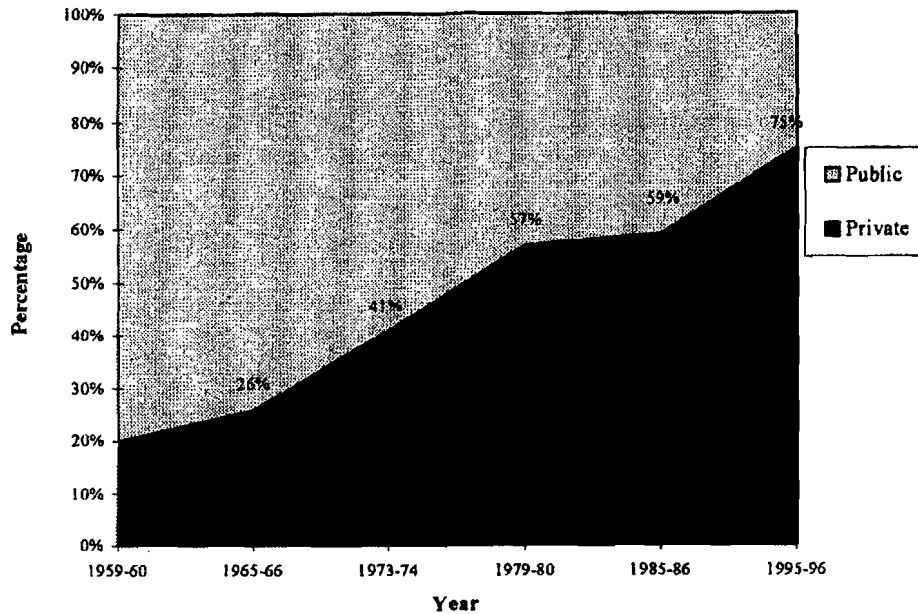
6. But these principles were never put into practice. Only a small number of primary and high schools were built by the Government to serve the children of the political elite, predominantly in urban areas. These schools were patterned after the French and British models. At the end of the 19th century, 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 percent 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 Duvalier era and there was even a deterioration of conditions in public schools as many qualified teachers left the country to escape political repression.

7. 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 percent in 1959-60, in 1979-80, private schools accounted for 57 percent of enrollment in primary education, and 80 percent in secondary education. Between 1960 and 1971, enrollment 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 enrollment were 11 and 5 percent, respectively. Today, private education represents about 75 percent of primary school enrollment and 82 percent at the secondary level, as illustrated by Graph 1.

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<sup>1</sup> Salomé, B. (1984). Education and Development: the case of Haiti. Paris, OECD, p. 26.

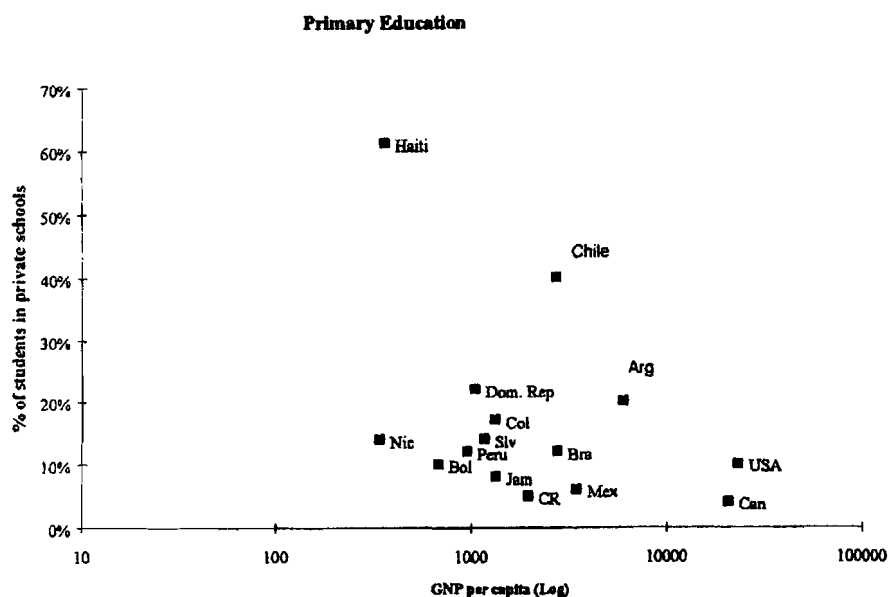
**Graph 1 - Proportion of Students in Private Primary Schools (%)**



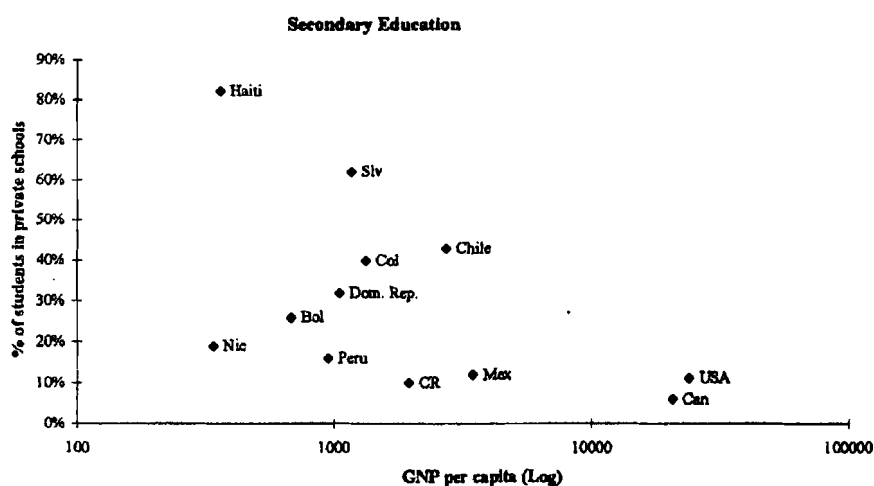
8. This situation calls for two observations. First, for all practical purposes, private education is the norm in Haiti while **public schools, which cater to less than 10 percent of the school age population, are the minority**. Second, it should be emphasized that the Haitian private education system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

9. The Haitian education experience is rather unique in a worldwide perspective, especially considering the level of absolute poverty of the country. Of the twenty poorest countries in the world, Haiti is the only one with more than fifty percent 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. In the more diversified systems of Latin America and Asia, private education is more important but 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 enrollment, such as Ireland, the Netherlands or Belgium, the private schools are usually religious schools entirely funded by the government. Graph 2 illustrates, in the context of North and South America, how much the Haitian case stands out.

**Graph 2 - Share of Private Education and Per Capita GDP in Central and South America**



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



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

10. The only significant exception, among the forty poorest countries in the developing world, is Zimbabwe which has a 88 percent 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.

11. 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 which 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.

12. The private schools have been traditionally fragmented; but in the late 1980s an umbrella association of Catholic and Protestant schools was formed under the Haitian Private School Foundation (Fondation Haitienne 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 1 presents the distribution of schools falling under the authority of FONHEP.

**Table 1 - Distribution of Private Schools by Affiliation**

Type of Private School	Number of Schools	Percentage
Catholic	1,150	10.0%
Protestant	3,470	30.2%
Non-Denominational	3,350	29.2%
Not Affiliated to FONHEP	3,520	30.6%
Total	11,490	100.0%

Source: FONHEP and World Bank estimates.

13. 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 percent of the private sector teaching force.

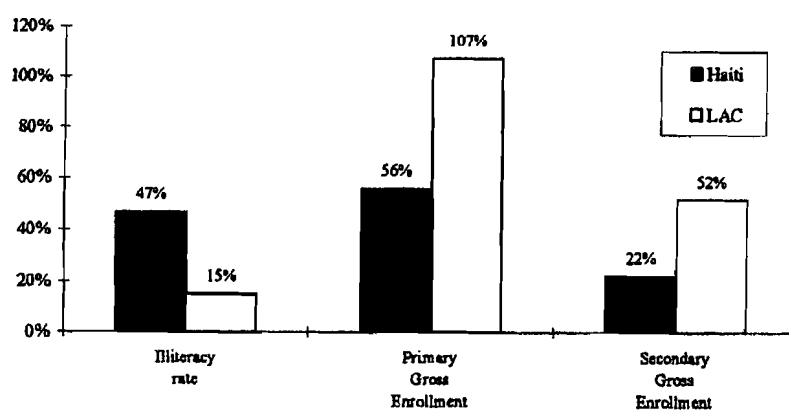
14. How can the contribution of private education be assessed in the Haitian context? Its value can be measured along three main dimensions of performance: the extent to which access has increased in an equitable manner, the impact on quality of learning in the system, and the efficient use of available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

### **Access and Equity**

15. 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 enrollment 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 enrollment rate is only 23 percent. At the secondary level, the gross enrollment rate is 22 percent and 55 percent of all secondary school students are in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area.

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

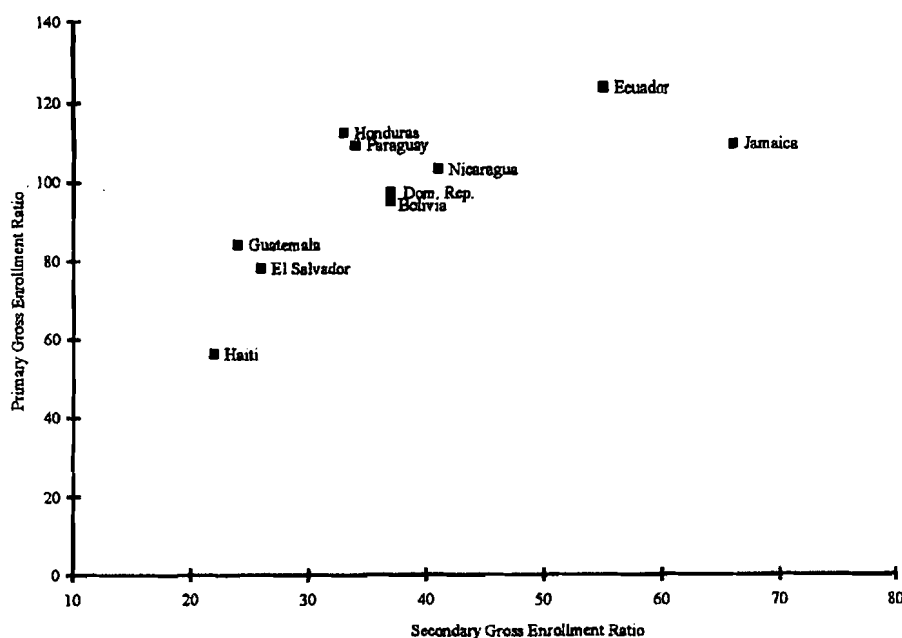
**Graph 3 - Haiti's Educational Achievement in a Regional Perspective**



17. 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 favor of public education have been followed. Graph 4 shows the level of educational development of the ten poorest Latin American and Caribbean countries.

**Graph 4 - Educational Attainment in the Ten Poorest Latin American and Caribbean Countries**

**Educational Attainment in the Ten Poorest Latin American and Caribbean Countries**



Source: UNESCO, World Education Report, 1995.

18. 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<sup>2</sup>. They justify the growth of private education on both equity and efficiency grounds, arguing that excess demand can better be 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 is the only remaining option.

19. In practical terms, this means that education represents a heavy financial burden on many poor families, especially in the rural areas where only 23 percent of the school age population actually has access to any type of formal education. Already 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 percent 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 percent of household income. In 1995-96,

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive review of the pros and cons of private financing and provision of education, see Colclough, C. (1996). "Education and the Market: Which Parts of the Neoliberal Solution are Correct?", in *World Development*, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp. 589-610.

it was estimated that households spend 12.5 percent of GDP for education while the government contribution represents only 2.5 percent (83.3% versus 16.7% of educational expenditures, respectively). Only 20 percent of the educational expenditures go to the rural areas where 70 percent of the population lives. A livelihood security study conducted in 1996 in north-west Haiti confirms the heavy weight of schooling on household budgets and showed that many families are forced to sell livestock, their principal form of savings or assets, to finance the beginning of the school year<sup>3</sup>.

20. The 1994 private sector survey carried out by FONHEP, which provides figures on the private costs of schooling (Tables 2 and 3), reveals significant regional and social inequalities.

**Table 2 - Annual Direct Cost per Student by Type of School (1993 Gourdes)**

Province	Catholic Schools	Protestant Schools	Non-Denominational Schools
Artinonite	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). Cahier des Etats et Besoins. Port-au-Prince

**Table 3 - 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). Cahier des Etats et Besoins. Port-au-Prince.

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

22. The high level of private sector development in the midst of poverty does not reflect only 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

<sup>3</sup> University of Arizona, BARA - A Baseline Study of Livelihood Security in Northwest Haiti - April 1996.

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. Thus, for many parents, it did not make as much financial difference to put their children in public or in private schools. 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 from the only source of income which allowed them to purchase a minimum of education supplies.

23. 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 food distribution programs are a determinant factor of attraction for many parents. It is estimated that 360,000 students are dependent on such feeding programs, out of a total of over a million enrolled in private schools.

24. 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 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 favor 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.<sup>4</sup>*

25. 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 which has many dimensions of inequity otherwise. Not only are the enrollment rates by gender similar, attesting to the fact that there are no negative values attached to girl 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 percent) than for boys<sup>5</sup>.

### **Quality and Efficiency**

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<sup>4</sup> Lofficial, F. (1996). "L'Ecole Haitienne: Evolutions et Tendances Récentes". Port-au-Prince, UNICEF, p. 59.

<sup>5</sup> Lofficial, F. (1996). "L'Ecole Haitienne: Evolutions et Tendances Récentes". Port-au-Prince, UNICEF, p. 28.

26. 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 which do not provide a suitable learning environment.

27. An indirect indicator of poor quality is the low internal efficiency in primary and secondary education and the resulting high proportion of overage students. According to the diagnosis document of the National Education Plan, only 43 percent of students entering first grade ever reach the fifth grade, and only 29 percent make it to grade six. Only 38 out of 1,000 children who enter the first year of the primary cycle finish secondary school. Repetition rates are around 12% per grade and dropout rate between 10 and 15% per grade. Half of the primary school students are overage; the proportion is as high as 89 percent in Grade 5, with an average age of 15.3 as compared with a theoretical age of 11<sup>6</sup>. Internal efficiency is also poor at the lower and upper secondary levels<sup>7</sup>.

28. The quality of instruction is deficient in most private and public schools because of unqualified and unmotivated teachers, lack of textbooks, uncoordinated development of curriculum and instructional materials, and poor facilities. The results of a test administered in March 1996 to a representative sample of 1,200 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 percent of the teachers could not use the passive form in French. Only 41 of the 1,200 teachers (3.5%) were able to perform basic arithmetic operations from the fourth grade program<sup>8</sup>. With such poorly qualified teachers, it is hardly surprising that less than 20 percent of the candidates passed the baccalauréat examination in June 1996.

29. In many countries where public and private schools coexist, it is often argued that the quality of education is better in the private sector<sup>9</sup>. In Haiti, however, the opposite seems to be true. A three-tier hierarchy has evolved over the years, with a small group of elite private schools establishing itself at the top, then 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 percent of the latter operate in inappropriate facilities<sup>10</sup>. Two-thirds of these schools do not have the basic pedagogical materials required to teach the curriculum. The best schools, representing approximately 5 percent of total enrollment, are mostly religious schools located in the

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<sup>6</sup> Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Jeunesse et des Sports (1995). Diagnostic Technique du Système Éducatif Haïtien. Port-au-Prince, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, pp. 30-31.

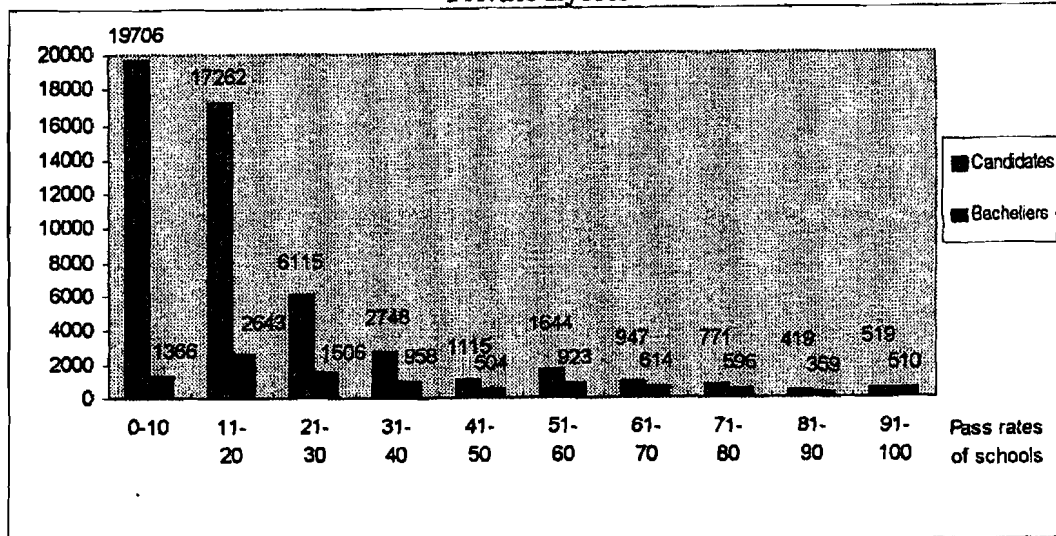
<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Education data.

<sup>9</sup> See for instance a comparative review of Colombia, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Tanzania and Thailand in Jimenez, E., M. Lockheed, and V. Paqueo (1991). "The relative efficiency of private and public schools in developing countries", The World Bank Research Observer, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 205-218.

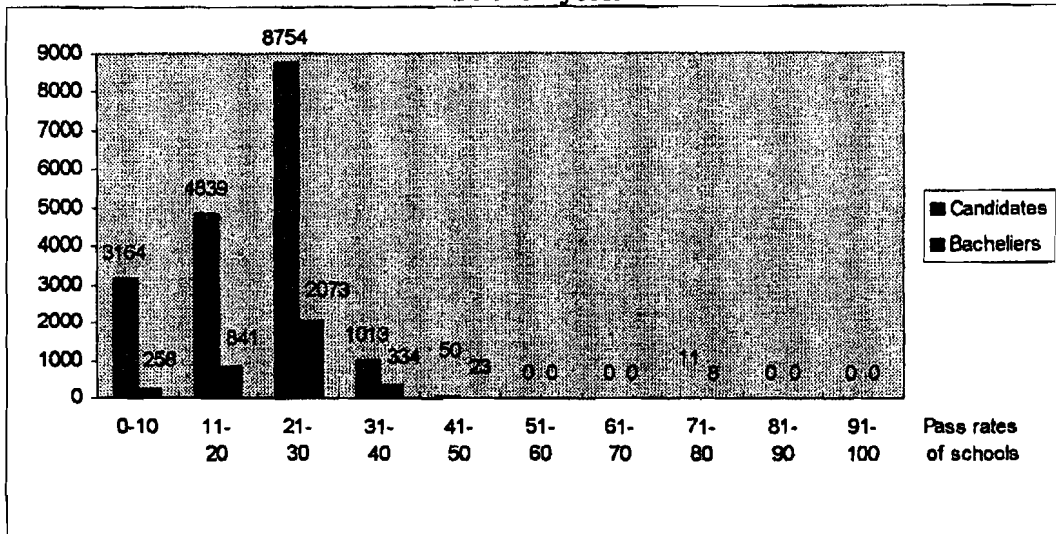
<sup>10</sup> Fondation Haïtienne de l'Enseignement Privé (FONHEP) (1994). "Cahier des États et des Besoins". Port-au-Prince.

main cities. The latest baccalauréat examination results (June 1996) confirm this pattern, as illustrated by Graph 5. In the private sector, 7,6 percent of the schools have a pass rate of fifty percent or more, compared to 1,4 percent in the public lycées.

**Graph 5 - Private / Public School Comparison  
by Level of High School Diploma Results  
Private Lycées**



**Public Lycées**



Source: Unpublished study by A. Solano, French Cooperation team, Ministry of Education, Haiti, May 1997.

30. 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 percent of the private schools have been licensed at the primary level, and not more than one-third at the secondary level (Table 4).

**Table 4 - 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.

31. 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 percent have equivalent qualifications. This explains the poor performance of many private schools, especially in the rural areas. A diagnosis test administered in 1991 by FONHEP to a sample of 2,000 teachers from poor private schools revealed that the large majority did not have the academic level of a fifth grade student<sup>11</sup>.

32. 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 themselves 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<sup>12</sup>.

33. Available data on internal efficiency confirm the relatively better performance of public primary schools, especially in the rural areas. The proportion of grade one 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 percent in the private lycées, but closer to 15 percent in the public sector. The proportion of students entering secondary school who reach the last grade (baccalauréat) is markedly different: only 24 percent in the public lycées versus 79 percent in private institutions.

34. Finally, from a cost-effectiveness viewpoint, most private primary schools have a small number of students. In 1996, 75 percent of the schools had less than 200 students, with an average number of 142 students per school<sup>13</sup>. This phenomenon, coupled with the fact that there is no control of school localization, reflects an inefficient use of available resources.

35. To summarize, 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 subsidized 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

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<sup>11</sup> Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Jeunesse et des Sports (1995). Diagnostic Technique du Système Éducatif Haïtien. Port-au-Prince, p. 36.

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Education statistics for 1996-97.

<sup>13</sup> FONHEP Annual Survey, 1996.

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 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**

36. 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.

37. 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 programs, and the attainment of a consensus among the various stakeholders (administration, political parties, unions, teachers, parents, private sector).

38. 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 organized 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 1,000 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.

39. 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 emphasizes 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.

40. 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 marginalized 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.

41. Finally, the relationship between the Ministry of Education and the private sector has been uneasy. There has been little private sector consultation in the finalization 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 is the first one implemented by the Ministry in many years, was initially planned only for the public sector. Similarly, the textbook distribution program which in 1995-96 had reached the poorest primary schools of the country, regardless of institutional affiliation, was aimed only at the public schools in 1996-97.

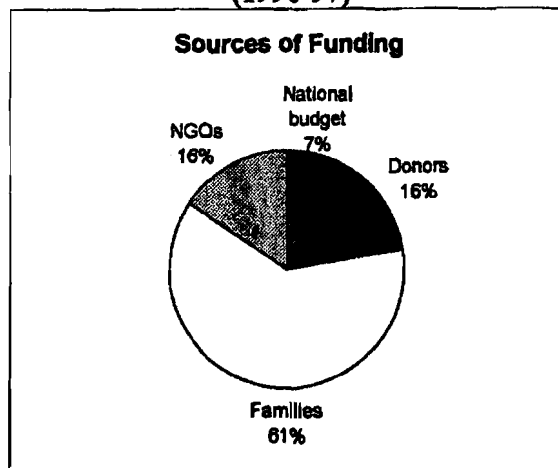
42. One complicating factor has been the policy of certain donor agencies who have displayed a tendency to work only with the private sector. In the case of USAID, for instance, the Helms/Dole Amendment explicitly prohibits any funding for the public sector. As a result, not only has USAID been unable 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.

43. This contributes to reinforce the prevailing perception that the donors in general are biased in favor 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 program for underprivileged children because the Fonds de Parrainage had been proposed as the administrative agency in charge of implementing the program.

44. 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. Recognizing 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.

45. Even if the government decides to build up a strong Ministry of Education along the lines of a traditional French-type education systems (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 percent of the national budget, but in absolute terms the level of funding remains limited. For 1996/97, it is estimated that, out of a total of 161 million dollars spent in the education sector, only 11 will come from the national budget, representing a mere 7 percent. By contrast, parental spending amounts to 100 million dollars, donor and NGO support for private schools is approximately 25 million dollars, and the public sector receives another 25 million dollars from bilateral and multilateral donors (Graph 6). In public primary schools, the unit cost is around 35 dollars a year, compared to an average of 120 dollars in the Caribbean region.

**Graph 6 - Distribution of Educational Expenditures in Haiti (1996-97)**



46. 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.

47. 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 cooperation and criteria of eligibility of private schools for public funding. The Ministry is already exploring with FONHEP ways of using its in-service teacher training program 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 subsidizing the construction of non-profit private schools.

48. 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 programs, 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**

49. Over the past fifteen 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 decentralization as alternatives to traditional, centralized 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"<sup>14</sup>. 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 enrollment--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.

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<sup>14</sup> Bray, M. (1996). *Counting the Full cost: Parental and Community Financing of Education in East Asia*. The World Bank, Washington, D.C..

50. 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.

51. 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, relying 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 which would allow to extend basic education, reduce inequalities and improve quality.

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# Haiti

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