

**EDUCATION FOR ALL IN THE CARIBBEAN: ASSESSMENT 2000
MONOGRAPH SERIES**

Series Editor: Lynda Quamina-Aiyejina

**The Problem of Over-Age Students in the Haitian Education System
An Overview**

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS
DIRECTORATE OF PLANNING
AND
EXTERNAL COOPERATION**

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FOREWORD

Education for All in the Caribbean: Assessment 2000 is a remarkable output, which is the culmination of intensive collaborative efforts between the countries of the Caribbean sub-region, the Regional Advisory Technical Group and the EFA Forum Secretariat, and relevant agencies and institutions.

The Country Reports, Monograph Series, and Case Studies highlight and pinpoint, in an extremely effective manner, some of the issues and concerns that drive education policy and action in the Caribbean. At the same time, the documentation presents a balanced and informed overview of the rich and varied educational and cultural experience of the sub-region; a knowledge which is critical to the understanding of the unfolding social and economic developments.

UNESCO is pleased to have been associated with this endeavour, particularly through our regional office in Kingston, Jamaica which, as co-ordinator of the Regional Advisory Group for the Caribbean Sub-region, was integrally involved in every aspect of the exercise. We look forward to continued collaboration with the Caribbean on activities of a mutually rewarding nature as the consequences and implications of the EFA Assessment become manifest.

Colin Power
Deputy Director-General for Education
UNESCO

SERIES INTRODUCTION

At Jomtien in 1990, member states of the United Nations adopted the *Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs* and created the International Consultative Forum on Education for All (EFA Forum). One decade later, the EFA Forum embarked on an assessment of this initiative, intended to assist member states in examining their education provisions to inform the formulation of policy. Once the Caribbean EFA Regional Advisory Group had embarked seriously on the assessment, it was quickly realised that it would be difficult to capture, in any one place, an assessment of all that had transpired in education in the Caribbean during the period 1990-1999. Moreover, the technical guidelines constrained assessors to specifics within quantitative and qualitative frames. However, because it was felt that education in the Caribbean is too dynamic to be circumscribed, the idea of a more wide-ranging monograph series was conceived.

Researchers, education practitioners, and other stakeholders in education were invited to contribute to the series. Our expectations were that the response would be quite moderate, given the short time-frame within which we had to work. Instead, we were overwhelmed by the response, both in terms of the number of enthusiastic contributors and the range of topics represented.

Caribbean governments and peoples have invested in the *hardware* for education--buildings, furniture, equipment; in the *software*, in terms of parent support and counselling services; and they have attended to *inputs* like books and other teaching/learning resources. They have wrestled with ways to evaluate, having gone through rounds of different national examinations, and modifications of ways to assess both primary and secondary education.

But, as the efforts to complete the country reports show, it has been more difficult to assess the impacts, if we take the eventual aim of education as improving the quality of life--we have had mixed successes. That the sub-region has maintained relative peace despite its violent past and contemporary upheavals may be cited as a measure of success; that the environment is threatened in several ways may be one of the indicators of how chequered the success has been.

Writers in the monograph/case study series have been able to document, in descriptive and analytic modes, some of the attempts, and to capture several of the impacts. That this series of monographs on Education for All in the Caribbean has been written, edited, and published in nine months (from first call for papers to issue of the published titles) is itself an indication of the impact of education, in terms of human capability and capacity.

It reflects, too, the interest in education of a number of stakeholders without whom the series would not have been possible. Firstly, the work of the writers is acknowledged. All worked willingly, hard, well, and, in most cases, without material reward. The sterling contribution of the editor, who identified writers and stayed with them to the end of the process, is also recognised, as is the work of the printer, who came through on time despite the severe time constraints. The financial contribution of the following agencies also made the EFA assessment process and the publication of the monograph/case study series possible: Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Department for International Development (DFID), International Labour Organization (ILO), Sub-Regional Headquarters for the Caribbean of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill; the World Bank, and the UN country teams based in Barbados, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

We invite you to peruse individual titles or the entire series as, together, we assess Caribbean progress in education to date, and determine strategies to correct imbalances and sustain positive impacts, as we move towards and through the first decade of the new millennium

Claudia Harvey
UNESCO Representative and Coordinator, Regional Technical Advisory Group (RTAG)
EFA in the Caribbean: Assessment 2000

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PREFACE

This monograph was prepared by an ad hoc group composed of technical staff of the Directorate of Planning and External Cooperation of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. It is a brief description of the problem of over-age students; a prelude to a more thorough study to be carried out as part of the implementation of the Basic Education Project (PEB). It has been produced as a result of a commitment made by Haiti during the World Conference on Education held in Jomtien, Thailand.

Despite its shortcomings, this monograph could not have been prepared without the help of Mr. Charles Levelt Joseph, Director of Planning and External Cooperation and Mr. Jacques Georges Reid, Consultant, Directorate of Planning and External Cooperation.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BRIF	Integrated Research and Pedagogical Training Office
CEP	Primary Studies Certificate
CFEF	Training Centre for Primary School Teachers
CPI	Preparatory Course I
DESRS	Directorate of Higher Education and Scientific Research
CFCE	Training Centre for Education Managers
DPCE	Directorate of Planning and External Cooperation
ENI	Primary School Teacher Training Institute
ENS	Secondary School Teacher Training Institute
EPT	Education for All
IHSI	Haitian Institute of Statistics
IPN	National Pedagogical Institute
ITAP	Initiation to Technology and Productive Activities
MENJS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
ONG	Non-Governmental Organisation
PEB	Basic Education Project
PNEF	National Education and Training Plan
UEH	University of Haiti
VASJA	Validation of Knowledge and Skills for Over-Age Students Within the School System and for Young Adults

Introduction

For close to two decades, Haiti has been carrying out extensive reform of its education system. This reform, the “Bernard Reform,” named after the then Minister of Education, was authorised by the Schools Act of March 1982. Lack of participation on the part of beneficiaries, as well as misunderstanding, and even hostility, on the part of the public led those in charge to make major changes to the context of the project in an effort to make it more acceptable.

Shortly after the introduction of this reform, following the fall of the Duvalier regime in February 1986, the country found itself facing a serious socio-economic and political crisis which affected all Haitian institutions. The education sector was not spared; in fact, it was severely hit. This explains why the system functioned without any real operational guidelines until the adoption of the constitution of 1987, and the drafting of the Status Report on Education, which resulted in the preparation of the National Education and Training Plan (PNEF) in 1995, based on a thorough diagnosis of the education system.

The Plan, to be implemented over a 10-year period, has four general objectives: reinforcement of the quality of education; improved external efficiency of the education system; increased access to education; and improved governance of the system. Once these objectives are met, the education system should be able to foster, among Haitians, awareness, a sense of belonging to their country, and the capacity to ensure its economic and social development.

The PNEF should differ from previous reforms in that it advocates concrete actions, avoiding procedural complications and sterile ideological confrontations. Among the problems identified, which the PNEF aims to solve, is that of over-age students--a major source of concern and a serious handicap to the improvement of the Haitian education system. According to statistics gathered between 1994 and 1998, over-age students represent almost 50% of the school population in the first two phases of primary education. At such a high percentage, this phenomenon has become too prevalent, and is likely to limit the scope of all future efforts of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MENJS) which are aimed at improving and consolidating the education system in general, and basic education in particular. In addition, the Basic Education Project (PEB) provides for the development and implementation of learning mechanisms, making it possible to exercise a positive influence on the quality of education and enhance student performance, while improving both the internal and external efficiency of the system.

As a prelude to a more thorough study of the problem of over-age students, and the subsequent implementation of an appropriate programme of action aimed at eradicating this problem, the Directorate of Planning and External Cooperation (DPCE) of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has prepared this monograph on the specific problem of over-age students, which supplements the Education for All (EPI) 2000 assessment, and will form the basis for planning future actions. It is also intended to inform decision makers, national players, partners, and international stakeholders as well as national and international organizations of the scope of the problem of over-age students, in order to stimulate reflection and, undoubtedly, help to identify and propose possible solutions.

The monograph basically contains a description of the main aspects of the problem regarding over-age students. It is based on statistical data available from the MENJS and from the Haitian Institute of Statistics (IHSI), supplemented with information from other sources and direct observations. Following the overview of the Haitian education system, statistics and comments on the main aspects of the problem are presented, after which an attempt is made to describe the emergence of this category of students in the education system. Some of the effects of this

phenomenon on the proper functioning of the education system are also presented. Finally, major observations are presented, pending a thorough study of the determinants of this phenomenon in the education system.

Overview of the Haitian Education System

All education systems are subject to constant change, dictated by society, which is, in turn, itself undergoing constant change. In fact, everywhere, education remains the key element for preparing men and women who are called upon to ensure the development of a country at all levels: political, social, economic, and cultural. This can be achieved only by reconciling identity and modernity and by capitalizing on the participation of society as a whole.

The Haitian education system, through PNEF, is built on this framework and aims to meet the challenge of education for all and, at the same time, facilitate the advent of a modern society equipped to face the future with confidence. Although it is being undertaken in a difficult economic and financial context, this major project, with its far-reaching objectives, seeks to maximize the productivity of the system and also improve the Haitian environment, with a view to making the population better able and more confident to embrace the new millennium. This can only be possible if Haiti develops particularly effective strategies for using its human resources, develops its infrastructure, and makes financial resources available.

Theoretical Structure of Education in Haiti

The formal system of education consists of:

1. Early Childhood Education
2. Primary Education
3. Secondary Education
4. University Education
5. Technical and Vocational Education

Early childhood education

Spread over three years, early childhood education ensures the child's transition from the family environment to its initiation to pre-learning activities. At the age of three, the child is placed in a pre-school environment which provides a period of sensitization and early learning. In most cases, this form of education takes place in pre-school centres commonly called kindergartens. The child completes this level at age five and is ready to proceed to the primary level.

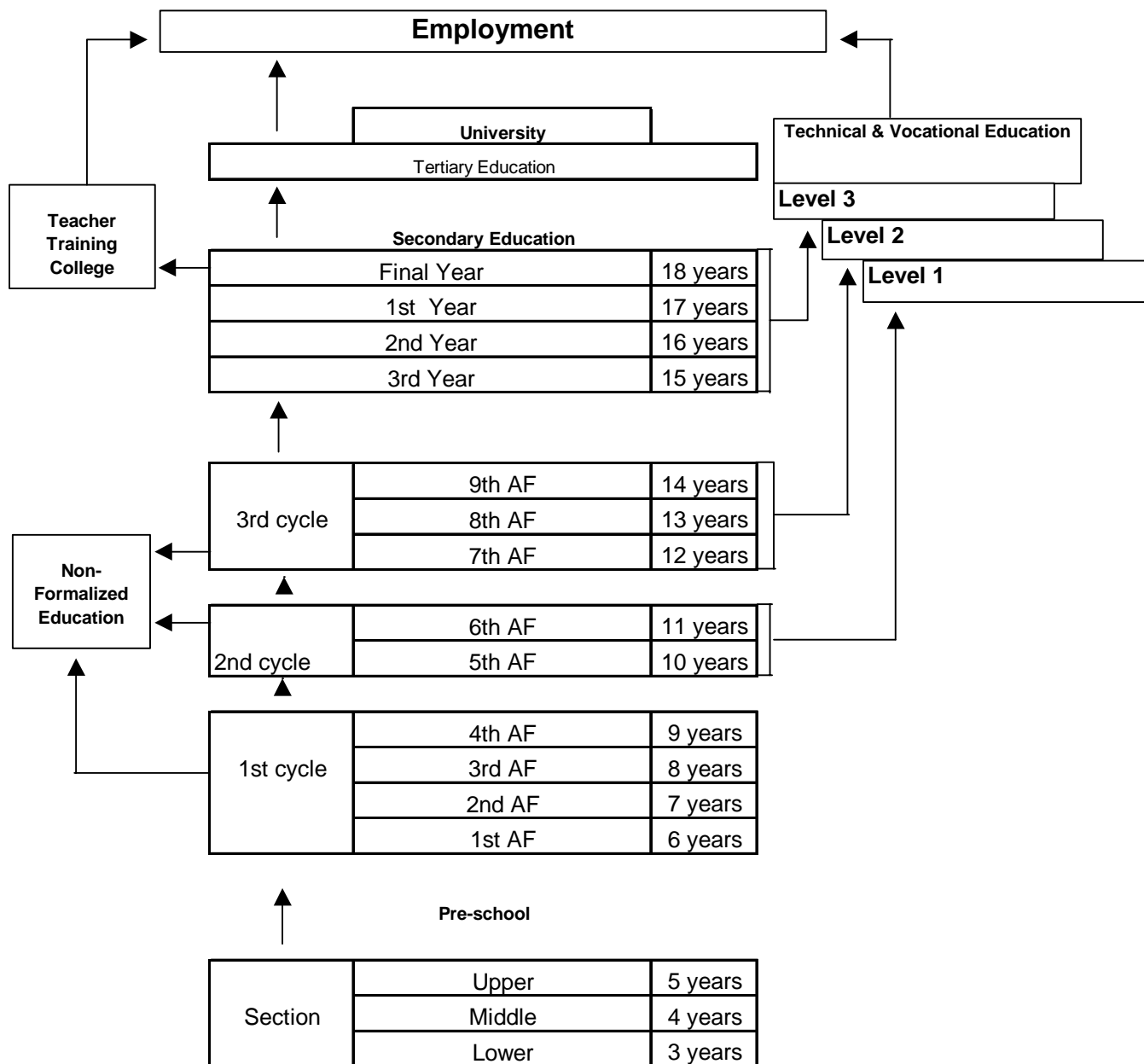
Primary education

This level takes nine years to complete and is divided into three cycles: a first cycle of four years, a second of two years, and a third of three years.

1. The first cycle provides for integration of learning activities by introducing inter-relationships between content and methodologies of the main disciplines taught
2. The second cycle consolidates the content of the first and also embraces pre-vocational areas, such as Initiation to Technology and Productive Activities (ITAP). On completion of this phase, the student may choose a general, academic, or vocational option. These first two phases of primary education constitute basic education.

3. The third cycle, lasting three years, offers thorough intermediate training, and leads to the secondary level, consisting of:
- traditional teaching, spread over four years, on the completion of which the student is ready for the university level.
 - vocational training leading to a technical ‘baccalaureate.’ This option is currently under consideration and should be operational when the new secondary education plan is implemented.
 - university teaching, which is provided by faculties and institutes of higher learning in the Haitian university system or in private institutions recognized by the University of Haiti (UEH). To be eligible, students need to have completed the 2nd part of the baccalaureate. On completion of this phase, they leave with a certificate, or with a bachelor’s degree, if they submit a thesis.
 - technical and vocational education, which includes three years of technical training, on the one hand and, on the other, vocational training open to students of all academic levels (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Structure of the Haitian school system.



Aim of Education in Haiti

In Haiti, education is a global and continuous humanist training process adapted to the individual; a process which integrates all aspects of a complete and harmonious education. It is national, democratic, scientific, adapted to the Haitian environment, and open to the world.

The PNEF thus proposes quality education for all Haitians, without exception, while promoting equal opportunity for all, and the participation of women in development. As a result, it seeks to make a concrete contribution to the democratic process impelled by recent struggles, and reinforced by the Constitution of 1987. The National Plan is linked not only to the principles of the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, but also more directly to the outcome of the 1990 Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand, which declared: "Every child, youth and adult shall have access to basic education," in the sense that no individual in the world, regardless of his status (nomad, worker, immigrant, refugee, poor, peasant, street kid, displaced person because of war, etc.) should be discriminatorily excluded from school.

Based on a humanist and pragmatic philosophy, education affirms the identity of the Haitian citizen. It is an element of integration and social cohesion and, as such, aims at putting young Haitians in touch with their cultural, social, and economic environment. To this end, the mission pursued by the new Haitian education system is to develop a sense of responsibility and community spirit among Haitians. It must, therefore, draw on Haitian reality while effecting the necessary changes and improvements to the environment.

In a wider sense, Haitian education seeks to foster the development of productive citizens capable of bringing about change in their physical environment, creating material wealth, and contributing to the development of cultural, moral, and spiritual values.

Objectives of Basic Education

Based on the fundamental principles of Haitian education, basic education should enable the Haitian child to:

- assimilate general, scientific, and technical knowledge in order to develop his/her learning abilities and capacity for adapting to new areas of study;
- master essential tools for basic communication, such as oral and written expression, calculation, drawing, and so forth;
- develop faculties of scientific observation, analysis, and synthesis as well as critical thinking and a sense of initiative;
- develop positive attitudes and behaviours with regard to changing environmental and socio-economic development;
- become acquainted with the working world and prepared for active life;
- assimilate high moral, social, and spiritual values.

Teacher Training and Pedagogical Research

Early childhood teachers are trained exclusively in private training institutes, and training lasts three years. In their final year, candidates must pass an examination set by the MENJS, and are granted a Kindergarten Teacher's Certificate or an Assistant Kindergarten Teacher's Certificate, depending on their academic level on admission to the institution.

Teachers for the first two cycles of basic education are trained at (public) Primary School Teacher Training Institutes (ENI) and in primary sections of a few (private) training institutes for kindergarten teachers. For a long time, the entry to ENI called for third class level schooling. This

requirement was raised to the level of philosophy (Baccalaureate – 2nd part) in 1999-2000. The programme lasts three years, after which there is an official examination, upon successful completion of which a Teacher's Diploma is granted. Candidates who are unsuccessful at the examination are granted a Certificate of Teaching Aptitude.

Secondary school teachers for the various disciplines are trained at the Secondary School Teacher Training Institute (ENS), a public institution. With respect to technical and vocational education, there is no formal framework for training teachers and supervisors in this sector. They are chosen on the basis of their professional experience.

For both primary and secondary school teachers, the MENJS and operators of private educational institutions organize seminars and professional improvement workshops. Given new plans for transforming ENIs into Training Centres for Primary School Teachers (CFEFs), and the launching of the Training Centre for Education Managers (CFCE), the MENJS plans to systematically develop refresher and professional development courses.

Since the disappearance of the National Pedagogical Institute (IPN) in 1992, the MENJS no longer intervenes directly in the conduct of pedagogical research. For the moment, research appears to be limited to theses produced by students at the ENS and private work conducted by individual researchers or those associated with a research institute, for example, the Integrated Research and Pedagogical Training Office (BRIF), which was founded in 1995 and recognized by the MENJS in 1997. As a result, the MENJS has adopted a policy whereby it supports private research through a multi-dimensional programme which awards scholarships, incentive grants, or dissemination grants. This programme is administered by the Directorate of Higher Education and Scientific Research (DESR).

Design and Dissemination of Teaching and Learning Material

A vast amount of teaching and learning material is produced in Haiti itself. In addition to manuals produced by the Frères de l'Instruction Chrétienne and/or the Henri Deschamps Publishing Company, many books are produced by individual teachers who, after a certain number of years, offer the fruit of their experience to their colleagues and students. This situation explains why, in many cases, the quality of textbooks is so poor. Although a unit (attached to the General Directorate within the MENJS) for approving manuals already exists, through the PEB, the PNEF intends to tackle the problem of the quality of textbooks by first defining standards and orientations for producing learning material, while attempting to harness the skills available.

Monitoring Strategic Management of the System

The MENJS is responsible for the development and application of education policy in the country. This mandate confers the vital responsibility of monitoring strategic management of the education system. The preparation of the PNEF, based on the Report on the Status of Education and departmental diagnostic studies, afforded the Minister the opportunity to test the basic principles of the reform of the management system: participation and harmonization, decentralization, and close management.

According to the new structure, a Higher Education Council, representing various sectors of Government and Haitian society, is to meet regularly to discuss compliance with the education policy and methods of enforcement. The Council is supported by a pilot committee for the operationalization and implementation of objectives, the plan, and projects. This structure will be permanently in place. In addition, strategic management mechanisms will include teams of project coordinators and monitoring groups.

Informal Education and Special Education

Informal education covers all forms of organized learning outside of the formal structure of the formal system. It deals with the specific training needs of any particular sub-group of adults or children, that is, groups formed to accomplish specific learning tasks. Government intervention in the area of informal education is not limited to literacy issues, even though the scope and persistence of illiteracy constitute a serious problem. There is an Informal Education Unit within the Directorate of Basic Education of the MENJS, which is responsible for traditional evening courses and domestic science courses. Most of these programmes take place in ignorance of each other's existence. There is, therefore, no common approach to curriculum, evaluation, or pedagogical standards. Individual needs and programmes are established separately for target populations, and this reduces the opportunities for communication. However, other methods of informal education are frequently used, for example:

- rural animation
- distance education
- mass media initiatives for the purposes of education

Special education covers all aspects of education, within or outside the school situation. Activities in this area also concern the handicapped, and students with physical or mental disabilities who are unable to participate in a formal programme.

Admission Requirements for the Haitian Education System

The idea of reforming the Haitian education system was born in 1980. In fact, two years later, in March 1982, a law officially launched this reform which outlined the implementation of basic education spread over a 10-year period: one year devoted to early childhood education and three cycles of three years each, which would enable the student to proceed to secondary school for three years, leading to a general or specialized baccalaureate.

Compared to 1982, the current situation has changed only slightly: preference is given to basic education spread over nine years, after which the student is entitled to proceed to the 4-year secondary level. One cannot help but notice that, thanks to the reform, a new dynamic has been brought to the educational environment, thus demonstrating the will to produce a system which is much more efficient.

Admission requirements for the various cycles

Among the requirements for admission to the various cycles, the most important are:

1. age set by the MENJS
2. successful completion of end-of-cycle examinations (6th AF, 9th AF) organized by the Ministry
3. successful completion of official baccalaureate (Parts 1 and 2) examination set by the Ministry, leading to the university phase.

- **First cycle**

The legal age for admission to the first phase of schooling is fixed at 6. Therefore, every 6-year old is entitled to be admitted to the first year of basic education, even if that child has not had early childhood education.

- **Second cycle**

For the second phase, the only condition which applies is successful completion of the final first-cycle examinations organized by individual institutions.

- **Third cycle**

For admission to the third phase, successful completion of official examinations organized at the end of the second cycle (6th AF) is compulsory.

- **Higher education**

Once the third phase of primary education has been attained, the student is officially evaluated at the Rhetoric level, then at the Philosophy level. Successful completion of this last examination entitles the student to proceed to the following stage--higher education. It is worth noting here, however, that for the last four years, examinations have been organized, nationally, on a trial basis, by the MENJS for final year third-cycle students (9th AF).

It should be pointed out that the admission requirements for these cycles, as set out by the 1982 Act, are merely theoretical and do not reflect the current reality of the system. In fact, with regard to age groups, be it at the early childhood level or at the end of the second cycle, there are teenagers to be found. Moreover, of the total number of new students admitted to the first year of primary education, Preparatory Course I (CPI), in 1997, only 21% fell within the required age group--6 years of age. Considering that almost 78% of students in 1st AF in 1997 were between 7 and 11+ years of age, it is clear that they did not all benefit from early childhood education.

Evaluation and Certification Procedures

Early childhood

Evaluation of children in early childhood is based on an assessment of skills acquired throughout the year in each level or section (lower, middle, upper). Within the early childhood phase, promotion to the upper level is automatic, and completion of the third section entitles the child to proceed to the first year of primary education (CP1).

First and second cycles of primary education

Throughout these two phases, with the exception of the sixth year--the last class of the second cycle, evaluation of the students is carried on during the school year. Unlike the early childhood phase, promotion to the upper level is subject to successful completion of the final term examination administered by each teaching institution. At the end of the sixth year, promotion to the third cycle is subject to an official evaluation.

Third cycle and secondary education

With regard to evaluation and certification, the third cycle and the secondary level are not different from the two first cycles. The students' knowledge, however, is tested by means of an official two-part examination. The first part is taken at the Rhetoric level and the second at the Philosophy level. Successful completion of the latter entitles the student to proceed to higher education.

Higher education

In higher education, evaluation is based on semester examinations set by each institution. However, students must obtain the average score established for each course of the curriculum of the chosen discipline, as well as the overall average for proceeding to the next level. At the end of the programme, the student is required to submit a thesis. This condition must be fulfilled to obtain a bachelor's degree. Moreover, for the last three years, certain government-run and private universities have been offering two-year master's degree programmes for which a thesis is a requirement for completion.

Quantitative Aspects of the Problem of Over-Age Children

One of the greatest problems facing the school system in Haiti is that of students who exceed age limits. This phenomenon, which to a significant degree affects all geographic areas of the country, irrespective of the nature of the environment, is the result of two major sets of factors: (a) factors peculiar to the system itself, and (b) factors which relate to specific features of the environment.

A large number of students cannot begin their schooling at the required age because of the limited availability of education in the country. With regard to those who have the opportunity, it often happens that, because of interruptions in their schooling or repeating successive grade levels, they have difficulty completing the two cycles of basic education within the time allowed and become over-age students. They may have exceeded the age appropriate for their present level of achievement or the age appropriate for the two cycles. Thus, it is mainly because of late entry into school and poor academic results that age limits are exceeded, resulting in the phenomenon of over-age students.

To illustrate the phenomenon in quantitative form, two groups of over-age children were identified: students over-age in the relative sense and students over-age in the absolute sense. The student who is over-age in the relative sense is between 7 and 11 years old, and is above the normal age for his particular grade. The student who is over-age in the absolute sense is one who on his last birthday was above the age range defined by law for a particular stage of schooling. Thus, any student 12 years old or older is overage in the absolute sense for the first two cycles of basic education.

Number of Over-Age Students Within the National Education System Over the Period 1994 – 1998

The significance of this phenomenon lies in the fact that almost half of the students in the first two cycles of basic education are above normal age. The remarks which follow describe, in quantitative terms, the development of the phenomenon over the period 1994 to 1998, particularly from the point of view of peculiarities which relate to geographic area, location of institutions, sector (government, private sector), cycle (1st, 2nd), and gender.

Table 1. Number of Over-Age Students by Year and as a Percentage of Total Numbers

(Basic – 1 st and 2 nd Cycles)			
Year	Total	Age 12 and Over	Percentage
1993/94	1,090,366	556,811	51.07
1994/95	1,192,986	609,633	51.10
1995/96	1,305,620	667,646	51.14
1996/97	1,429,280	682,263	47.73
1997/98	1,485,722	703,650	47.36

School year 1993/94

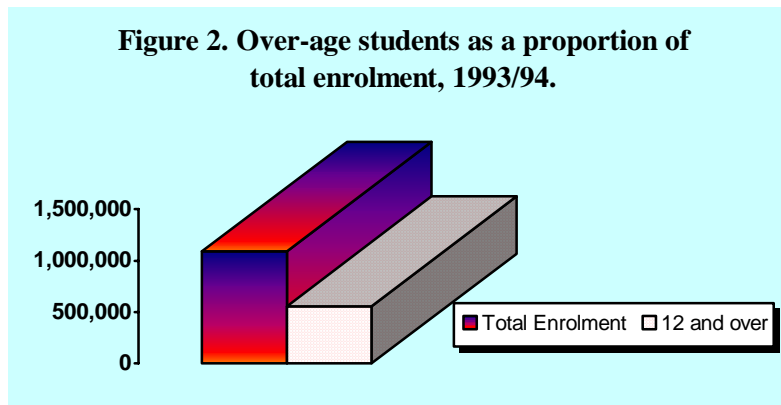
The national statistics for 1993/94 for the 1st and 2nd cycles of basic education show a total of 556,811 students 12 years and over, of which 253,808 were girls and 303,003 were boys. For that year, over-age students accounted for 51.07% of total enrolment. Of the total number of over-age students, 40.4% were found in government sector schools while 59.6% were in private sector schools.

Table 2. Number of Over-Age Students by Gender and Sector, 1993/94

	Total Number	%	Government	%	Private	%
Female	253,808	45.6	64,533	11.6	189,275	34.0
Male	303,003	54.4	160,279	28.8	142,724	25.6
Total	556,811	100.0	224,812	40.4	331,999	59.6

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of over-age students.

With regard to location, fewer over-age students were found in rural areas--271,207 or 48.71% as opposed to 285,604 or 51.29% in urban areas.



School year 1994/95

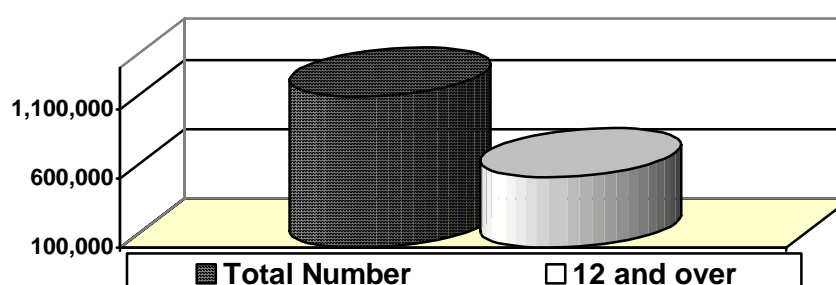
Data provided by the statistical unit of the MENJS on the first two cycles of basic education show that, at the national level, there is a total of 609,633 over-age students, 51.10% of total enrolment. This is a slight decline in comparison with the previous year. Of the 609,603 students aged 12 years or more, 277,777 were girls and 331,856 were boys. An examination of their distribution by sector reveals that the private school system accounted for 59%; this sector once again outstripping the government schools which accounted for 41.0% (see Table 3).

Table 3. Number of Over-Age Students by Gender and Sector, 1994/95

	Total Number	%	Government	%	Private	%
Female	277,777	45.6	70,439	11.6	207,338	34.0
Male	331,856	54.4	179,188	29.4	152,668	25.0
Total	609,633	100.0	249,627	41.0	360,006	59.0

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of over-age students.

Figure 3. Over-age students as a proportion of total enrolment, 1994/95.



With regard to location, as in 1993/94, urban areas reported a greater number of over-age students; 312,745 students as opposed to 296,886 in rural areas, that is, 51.30% and 48.70% respectively.

School year, 1995/96

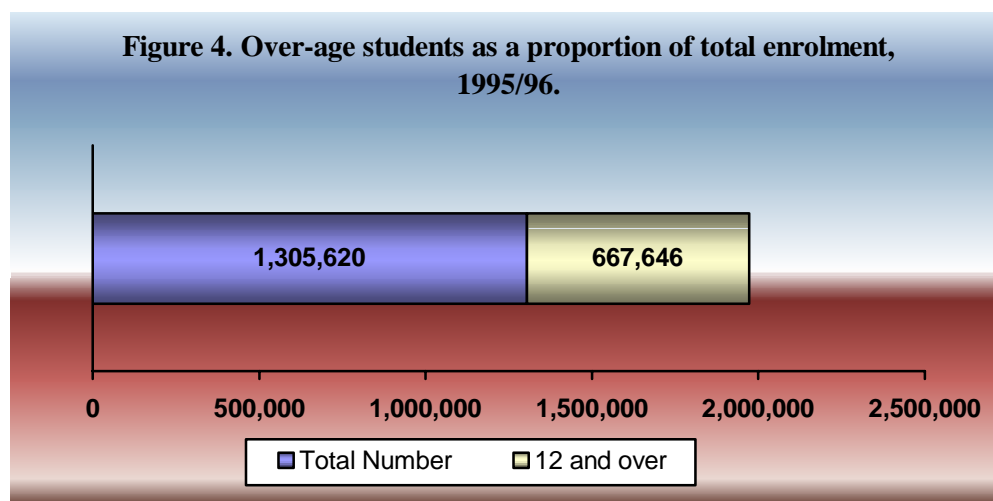
The figures for the 1995/96 school year once more provide evidence of a further increase in the number of over-age students within the school system. These statistics include a national total of 667,646 over-age students of whom 304,090 were girls and 363,556 were boys, accounting for 51.14%. This represented an increase of 0.07% over 1993. Sector figures show a smaller number of over-age students for that year in the government sector.

At 40.9%, this figure was 18% less than the private sector's 59.1%. It should be noted that the percentage, by sector, of over-age students remained stable over the period 1994-1996. This relative stability is demonstrated by the figures for total student numbers in the three school years, 1993/94 - 1995/96. Table 4 shows the number of over-age students by gender and sector for 1995/96.

Table 4. Number of Over-age Students by Gender and Sector, 1995/96

	Total Number	%	Government	%	Private	%
Female	304,090	45.5	76,920	11.5	227,170	34.0
Male	363,556	54.5	196,328	29.4	167,228	25.1
Total	667,646	100.0	273,248	40.9	394,398	59.1

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of over-age students.



For the third consecutive year, urban areas accounted for the greater portion of the total number of over-age students--51.31%, while rural areas accounted for 48.69%. Statistics for the first two cycles combined, covering the period 1995–1996, reveal a still disproportionate distribution of over-age students within the school system in terms of sector, environment, and gender.

School year 1996/97

The data gathered during the 1996/97 school survey revealed a significant number of over-age students within the Haitian school system. Despite an overall reduction of 3% in comparison to 1995/96, the total percentage of over-age students--47.7%, representing a total of 682,333, was no less significant. Of this number, 322,981 were girls and 359,282 were boys. Moreover, the figures make it clear, as they have done since 1993/94, that a greater number of over-age students is always to be found within the non-governmental sector. For the year 1996/97, therefore, students 12 years or over in government schools accounted for 24.7% of the total number of over-age students. Private schools accounted for 75.3% (see Table 5).

Table 5. Number of Over-age Students by Gender and Sector, 1996/97

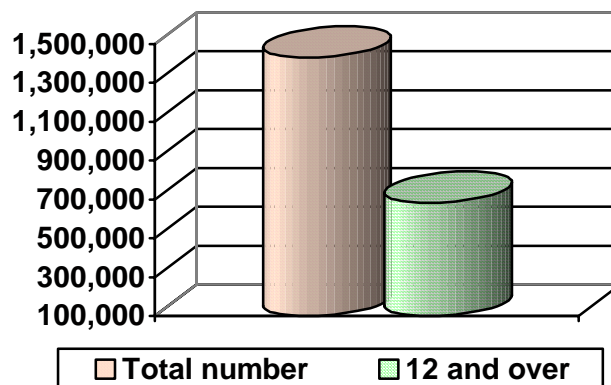
	Total Number	%	Government	%	Private	%
Female	322,981	47.3	77,775	11.4	245,206	35.9
Male	359,282	52.7	90,791	13.3	268,491	39.4
Total	682,263	100.0	168,566	24.7	513,697	75.3

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of over-age students.

In comparison to 1995/96, the percentage of over-age students in government schools was significantly lower, moving from 40.9% to 24.7%, a decline of 16.2%.

With respect to location, it was noted that in 1997, there was a greater number of over-age students in rural areas, a total of 395,954 or 58.04%, compared to 41.96% in urban areas. As of 1996/97, therefore, the trend noted in the number of over-age students in relation to school location was reversed. Despite the overall reduction noted in 1997, however, the disparity in numbers of over-age students in terms of sector, location, and gender was again observed in the first two cycles of basic education.

Figure 5. Over-age students as a proportion of total enrolment, 1996/97.



School year 1997/98

In 1997/98, the number of over-age students within the Haitian school system again decreased, but only slightly, moving from 47.74% in 1996/97 to 47.36%, or 703,650 students. This figure comprised 335,201 girls and 368,449 boys.

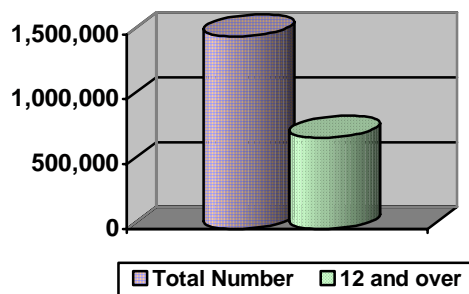
Table 6. Number of Over-age Students by Gender and Sector, 1997/98

	Total Number	%	Government	%	Private	%
Female	335,201	47.6	79,282	11.26	255,919	36.34
Male	368,449	52.4	91,564	13.0	276,885	39.4
Total	703,650	100.0	170,846	24.26	532,804	75.74

Note. Percentages are based on the total number of over-age students.

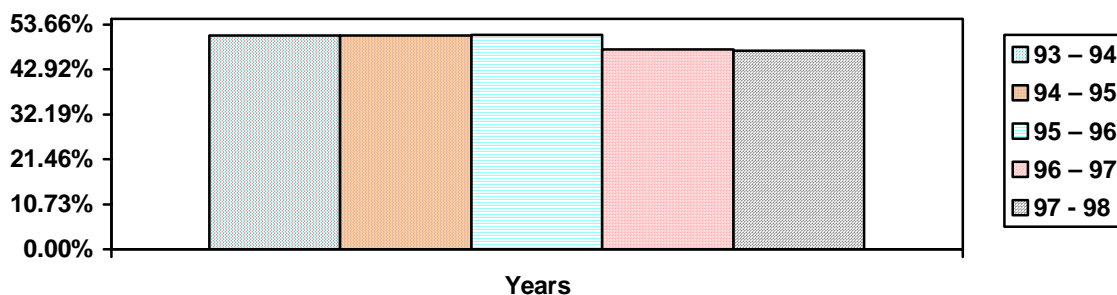
It should be noted that of this group, the private school system, which recorded 75.74% or 532,804 over-age students, still accounted for the majority of over-age students. In terms of distribution by location, rural areas once again recorded the majority of over-age students; 416,852 or 59.24%, as opposed to 286,798 or 40.76% for urban areas.

Figure 6. Over-age students as a proportion of total enrolment, 1997/98.



Despite the disparities noted in respect of over-age students during the four years under review, taken together, the statistics gathered during the period provide evidence of the shrinking, with effect from 1997, of this category of student within the Haitian school system. In 1998, the percentage of students in the school system who were over-age again decreased. This decrease was very slight and was noted for only two consecutive years. It would therefore be premature to interpret this adjustment as an irreversible downward trend. It is, however, a positive sign.

Figure 7. Change in percentage of over-age students, 1994–1998.



Over-Age Students by Region, Sector, and Gender

The problem of over-age students, as described in this monograph, affects both sectors of the system, both genders, and all geographic regions of the country. However, despite the large numbers noted at the national level during the period under consideration, some lessening of the problem was noted. The development of the various disparities which are a feature of this situation deserve attention.

Regions

An examination, by region, of the 1994-1998 statistics shows that the Nippes school district accounted for the largest percentage of over-age students during the period under consideration. The North West, the Centre, l’Artibonite, and the South East followed with 60.60%, 60.51%, 55.26%, and 52.04% respectively between 1994 and 1996. The remaining five Departments, on the other hand, did not exceed national averages which, between 1994 and 1996, fell to between 51.07% and 51.14%.

In 1997, with the exception of the Nippes, the South was the Department which recorded the highest number of over-age students, with 55.21%. It was followed by l'Artibonite (52.73), the North (49.47), the South East (49.39) and the Centre (48.85). In that year, only four Departments fell below the national average of 47.73%. In 1998, again, with the exception of les Nippes, three Departments recorded a rate of over-age students higher than the national average: the South (54.77%), l'Artibonite (52.15%), and the North (49.42%).

It should be noted that despite accounting for the largest segment of total school enrolment, the West always recorded the lowest percentage of over-age students for the entire period 1994-1998.

Sectors

An examination of the data for 1994-1998 reveals the following in respect of sectors: Although the number of over-age students in government schools had grown smaller, the opposite happened in private schools. In government schools, in fact, the total numbers for this category had fallen by 24%, moving from 224,812 to 170,846. In the non-governmental sector, the number grew by 60.48%, moving from 331,999 in 1994 to 532,804 in 1998. This represents an average annual increase of 12.01%. Despite a slight overall decrease in total percentage in 1998, this group still accounted for a significant proportion of the private school population.

Figure 8. Percentage of over-age students in government schools, 1994–1998

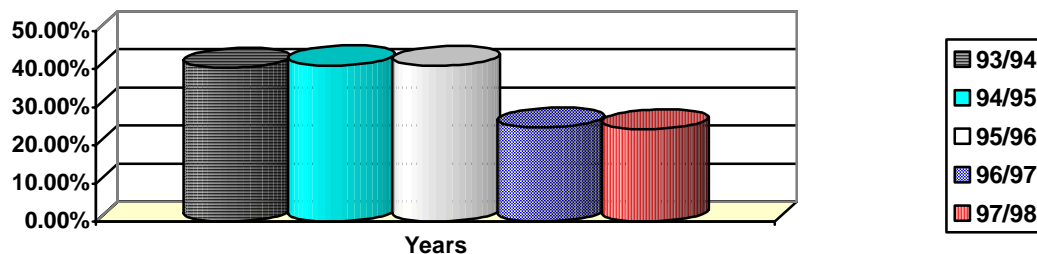
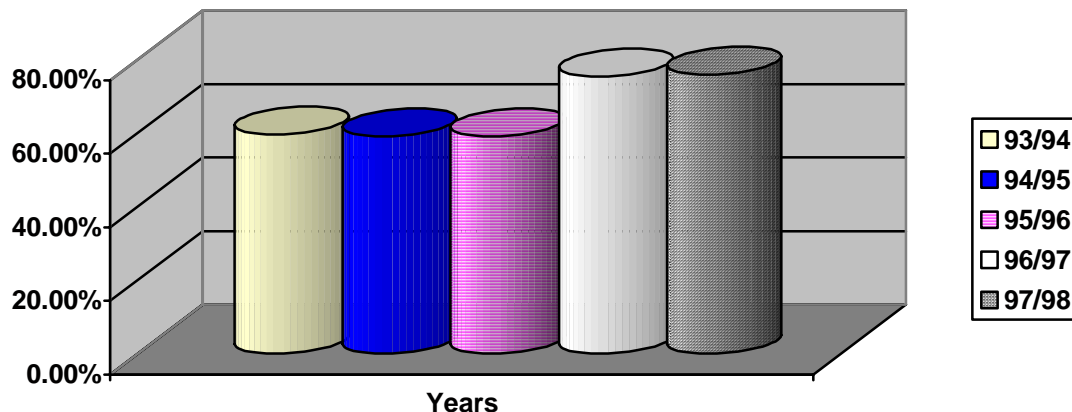


Figure 9. Percentage of over-age students in private schools, 1994–1998



The high proportion of over-age students in the non-governmental sector can be attributed to the proliferation of private educational institutions which do not observe the operating standards set by the MENJS; institutions which also exploit the weaknesses of the existing monitoring systems. In addition to this, difficult socio-economic conditions affect the behaviour of most parents causing them to delay their children's enrolment in school. The higher the cost of schooling, the more parents who lack financial resources will put off sending their children to school.

There is, however, evidence that in the government sector efforts have been made to conform to, and enforce, the operating standards of the MENJS, in particular, those pertaining to age of enrolment. This is borne out throughout the period under review by the lower number of over-age students in the government sector as opposed to the private school sector.

School location

The disparity observed in relation to sectors also exists in respect of location of educational institutions. Despite the disparity noted during the period under consideration in respect of location, there was relative stability in the distribution of over-age students between 1994 and 1996 in both urban and rural areas. This is in contrast to 1997 and 1998 when numbers fell in the urban areas from 51.31% in 1995/96 to 40.76% in 1997/98. In rural areas, the opposite occurred, with an increase from 48.69% to 59.24%.

Figure 10. Percentage of over-age students, 1994–1998 – Urban

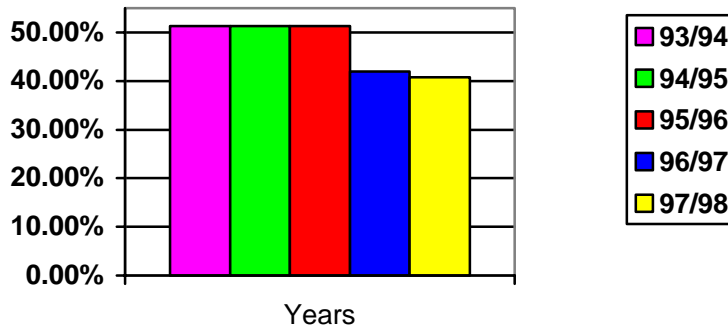
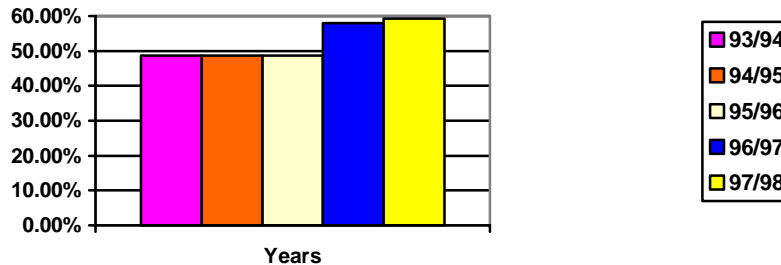


Figure 11. Percentage of over-age students, 1994–1998 – Rural.



The strong showing of over-age students in rural areas can be explained by several factors, including: (a) accessibility (distance, lack of infrastructure, limited space); and (b) use of children by parents, namely, as agricultural labour in fields, to assist with household chores or care of younger children, and in small commercial activity

The gap between availability of and demand for schooling is more marked in rural areas than in urban areas. Thus, parents often find themselves compelled to keep their children at home for want of functioning educational institutions within reach. In those areas where government-operated schools do not exist, the low income level of the peasantry forces parents to keep their children at home for lack of the means to finance a private education.

Gender

It is important to emphasize, as well, one other aspect of the development of this phenomenon during the period under review. This is the matter of the trend in the number of over-age students by gender. In the first two cycles of basic education, there was, until 1996, relative stability among both girls and boys, with the disparity between males and females remaining throughout in favour of girls. In 1997 and 1998, on the other hand, the number of boys fell slightly while the opposite was true of girls.

Figure 12. Percentage of over-age students, 1994–1998 – Male.

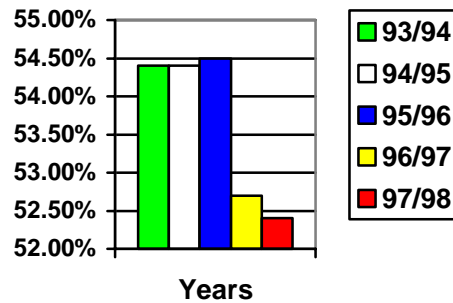
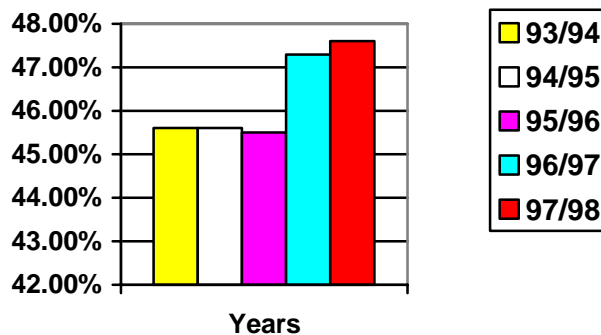


Figure 13. Percentage of over-age students, 1994–1998 – Female.



The Emergence of Over-Age Children in the Haitian Education System

Among the factors that have encouraged the presence of over-age children in the Haitian education system, late entry into school, repetition, and interrupted schooling (refers to students who are absent from school for at least one year because of illness, change of address, or other problems) are considered to be the most important. Although statistical studies have thus far failed to identify the number of temporary dropouts, the number of children who enter the school system late or the number repeating the first two grades, particularly the first grade, are plausible explanations for the presence of over-age children in the Haitian education system.

Late Entry into School and Exceeding the Age Limit

Late entry refers to those children who entered school for the first time at age seven or older. This phenomenon is common in the Haitian education system which, each year, absorbs a significant number of children aged six and older. This poses major problems in the first two phases of the primary level, as the number of school places for children aged six years and younger entering school for the first time becomes limited.

By law, children must complete the first two phases of basic primary education between the ages of 6 and 11 years. Consequently, children who are 7 years old in their first year of primary education, who were enrolled one or two years later than the age permitted by law, are over-age. Similarly, children are over-age when they are older than the legal age limit for the grade in which they are registered. In this context, the concept of being over-age must be understood as delay at the start of the school career, in other words, as late entry of children into school. How can this be explained?

Many school-aged children are not in school and there are many reasons for this. One can cite, among other reasons, a lack of understanding on the part of many parents of the need to enrol their children in school on time. There are also those who give priority to the education of boys over girls and, as has already been stated, the fact that some parents simply refuse to send their children to school because they wish to keep them at home to do domestic chores, or they need them in the fields for agricultural work, or they consider them to be too young to travel long distances to get to school (causing them to be far from home at late hours).

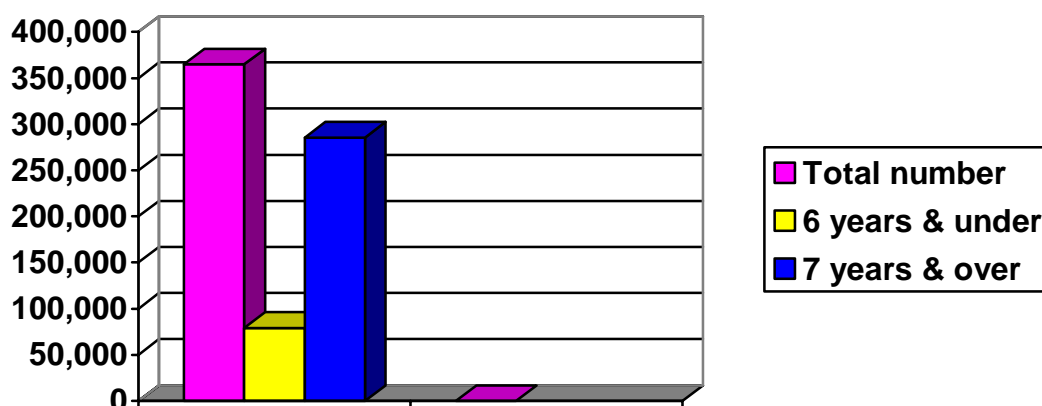
In other instances, the parents may not have the financial means to send their children to a private school in their neighbourhood, which often does not have a public school. This results in the entry of these children into the first year of school one or two years above the legal age limit. Although these children may cover the first two phases of their primary education without repeating, they will definitely be above the age limit of 11 years at the end of the primary level.

The following results highlight the problem of exceeded age limits resulting from late entry into school, and its extent with regard to the first six years of basic education. In 1997, of a total of 364,934 children registered in the first year, only 79,294 were within the legal age limit, that is, 21.73%. Therefore, on entering the school system, 78.27% of students were already over-age.

Table 7. Number of Over-Age Students as a Percentage of Total Admission in Year 1, 1996/97

Age Group	Total	Percentage
Total All Ages	364,934	100
6 years and under	79,294	21.73
7 years and over	285,640	78.27

Figure 14. Number of over-age students as a proportion of total admission - 1st AF, 1997.



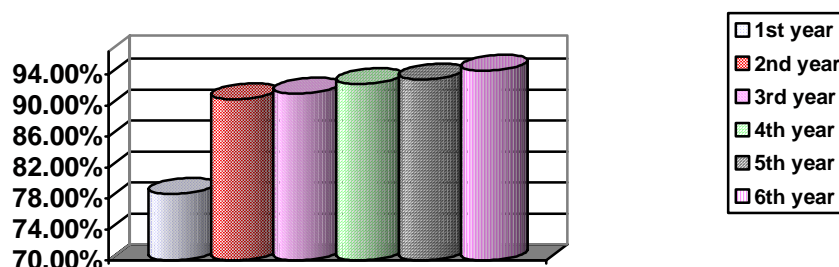
Over-Age Students by Grade

Significant numbers of over-age students are enrolled at all levels within the Haitian school system. The statistical survey of 1997 revealed that, between the first and sixth years of basic education, the percentage of over-age students in each level fell between 78% and 94%. If there are over-age students (12 years or more) between the first and fifth year, as well as students who are over-age for their grade, then by the sixth year the population will be composed exclusively of students who are over-age in the absolute sense.

Table 8. Number of Over-Age Students (Absolute and Relative) in Comparison to Total Enrolment and by Grade, 1997

Level	Total Enrolment	Number Over-Age	Percentage Over-Age
1 st Year	437,132	343,488	(7 years or over) 78.58
2 nd Year	354,895	322,279	(8 years or over) 90.81
3 rd Year	238,153	217,944	(9 years or over) 91.51
4 th Year	187,945	174,355	(10 years or over) 92.77
5 th Year	140,991	131,639	(11 years or over) 93.37
6 th Year	121,793	115,073	(12 years or over) 94.49

Figure 15. Number of over-age students in comparison to total number enrolled by grade.



The ascending nature of the histogram shows the general trend from the first to the sixth year. Indeed, with the 78% over-age children added to the repeaters accumulated throughout the system, a total of 94% in the sixth year is predictable.

The number of over-age children in 1997 also shows an increase as early as year two, and by year four, only 7 children out of 100 were at the required age for this grade. On the other hand, in the sixth grade, the final grade of the second cycle, not even 1 in 10 children was at the legal age for this level.

Over-Age Children (Absolute) in Both Cycles

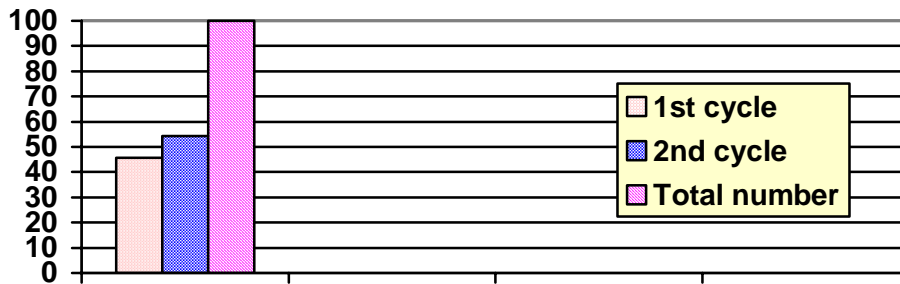
Mastery of the language of instruction (Creole and French, or both together) is fundamental for acquiring other contents of the programme and related skills. In the first cycle (years 1-4), certain difficulties make it impossible for children to meet the necessary requirements to enter the second cycle (years 5 and 6).

In 1996-1997, the first cycle accounted for 45% of the total number of over-age primary level children (12 years and over). In the second phase, with a total number of 370,987, over-age children accounted for 54.38%. This increased number can be explained by the fact that, as early as the third year, more than 50% of students are already over-age in the absolute sense.

Table 9. Number of Over-age Students in the First and Second Cycles

Cycle	Total	Percentage
1 st Cycle	311,274	45.62
2 nd Cycle	370,989	54.38
1 st + 2 nd Cycle	682,263	100

Figure 16. Status of over-age children within the first two cycles of basic education.



School Results and Exceeding the Age Limit

The school system is characterized by very poor results: low promotion rates, large numbers of repeaters, and a high dropout rate in the first and second cycles of the primary level. According to a study carried out by the Research Triangle Institute, in 1995, on a sample of 1,000 students entering the first year, only 434 actually complete the first two phases of basic education. Of this number, 288 go on to the first phase of the secondary level (third phase of the basic level), and only 131 of these would have completed the primary phase without repeating. Of the 712 unsuccessful students, 696 drop out along the way, while 16 others do so after the Primary Studies Certificate (CEP), for various reasons. It, therefore, takes 16 years of effort and resources at the primary level to produce one entrant into the secondary level, the third level of basic education. An efficient system would have produced the same results in six years.

The data, therefore, which raise questions regarding the functioning of the education system, as well as the fact that the under-privileged social categories and rural populations have long been abandoned by the system, lead one to consider a certain number of factors beginning with those of a geographical nature. A child who has been sent to school in a region that is not the one in which he was raised, finds himself in a milieu that is ill-adapted to his basic instincts and is, therefore, disadvantaged vis-à-vis his schoolmate who was born, has lived, and is schooled in the same neighbourhood. Before adapting to his new environment, he has perhaps repeated a class and his age has therefore increased. The organization of the educational product is, therefore, not without a link to the problem of repeating and to the emergence of the problem of over-age children within the system.

Another factor which is of equal importance relates to the socio-economic reality. Falling production, unemployment, and migration (internal and external) are all reasons for temporary breaks in the schooling of children. When they resume classes, they are quite naturally over-age; the problem is worsened by repetition of successive grades.

A high proportion of repeaters within the school system leads to an excessive number of over-age children in the classes. During 1993-1994, there were 103,035 repeaters in the first two phases of the basic level. In 1996-1997, about 74% of children in the first two phases of the basic level were at least two years above the normal age required for their levels. Therefore, of a total school population of 1,429,280 students in the two first phases, 1,058,870 were over-age and 241,622 were repeaters. These figures relating to repeaters lead one to question the modalities of evaluation. Under these circumstances, isn't the education system itself contributing to a culture of failure?

Generally speaking, having observed the emergence of the over-age student phenomenon and its significance as an inhibiting factor in education, one may conclude that it is urgent that Haiti, on the eve of the bicentennial anniversary of its independence, develops a strategy for combating this phenomenon. The consequences of this problem have been brought to the attention of successive governments over the past few years, and they have encouraged the development of the PNEF, the final version of which was published in 1998. This plan outlines and defines a radical transformation of education in Haiti which, over the next ten years, will allow the country to maintain its chances for sustainable development.

Effects of the Phenomenon of Over-Aged Students on the Education System

The phenomenon of over-age children, as outlined in the preceding pages, could not help but have consequences for the Haitian school system. In an effort to ensure that the standard age range is respected, certain schools emphasize the time spent repeating grades. This phenomenon and its negative effects on the system, therefore, create no difficulties for them. Nonetheless, schools which do not take this into consideration are faced with tremendous difficulties, and the disadvantages which stem from such difficulties do not in any way benefit the system.

Among the problems which have surfaced is the restriction of access to education for children within the correct age limit. In fact, the statistics reveal that private schools alone held back 35.94% of over-age children in 1996/97; this represented 513,697 of the total number of children attending school. Had these places not been occupied by over-age children, it would have been immediately possible to take in an equal number of 6-year old children. Moreover, another problem linked to the presence of over-age children in the system is the difficulty of classroom management. In fact, teachers are often swamped with problems when they are required to control children of different age groups. This is especially so when this age difference exceeds five or six years.

In light of this, teachers must be able to create a differentiated strategy, which takes into account the individual psyche of each group, not only in order to convey their message but also to avoid offending any student, over-age or otherwise. Equality of treatment is not always evident, if only because of deficiencies in the professional training of certain teachers, and/or as a result of the differences in the behaviour of the children themselves. Furthermore, there is the general issue of teaching methods which are not often adapted to the characteristics and needs of the student.

If the problem of over-age students also results from repeating grades, it is also clear that over-aged students may be demotivated in the classroom context, especially if the majority of their classmates are younger than them. In the last two years of the second cycle of primary school, students may become aware of their situation and a difference in age, especially a significant one, can easily create a block in the learning process, dampen the students' enthusiasm, and impair their ability to work as diligently as they must if they are to move to the third cycle.

The problem of over-age children has an effect on the dropout rate, in addition to causing the problems referred to above. This is explained by the fact that de-motivated students repeat successive grades, and end up not simply over-age but saddled with complexes which drive them to drop out of school. Moreover, in the rural areas particularly, many over-age children leave school temporarily during the rainy season, in order to engage in agricultural activities (they work as farm labour, help their parents in the fields, or tend their own gardens). The result, therefore, is that students abandon their studies, even if only temporarily.

On a positive note, the state and parents have put large amounts of money into the education of children, namely, financing of all students in the government sector and the majority of those in the private sector by means of: (a) scholarship programmes for students or grants for schools; and (b) programmes by which school supplies, teaching, and other material may be distributed. The state and the communities, therefore, regularly spend significant sums to provide facilities for the education of many more children.

Since provision must be made for over-age children in calculating the cost of education, it can be concluded that the state and Haitian families must bear high additional costs for the education of over-age students. Therefore, a more in-depth analysis is necessary if solutions are to be identified which may guide educators towards decisions which will lessen the negative impact of this phenomenon on the school system.

Conclusion

In closing this presentation on the problem of over-age students, it would be inappropriate to end the monograph, which is only a preliminary examination of the problem, without focusing the attention of educators on its very negative consequences for the Haitian school system. Not least among these consequences is reduced access to education for children within the correct age limit.

When it is considered that, of the 1,485,722 students who comprised the total number of students in the first two cycles of basic education for 1998, over-age students represented 47.36% or more than 703,000 occupied places, and that of a population of 382,746 children within the correct age limit for school enrolment, 175,214 (25% of the total number of over-age children) were unable to get into school, and if the notion of “*ceteris paribus*” is ignored, one may be tempted to say that if the problem of over-age students did not exist, the system could at that point have absorbed all children aged six years, and still have had a good number of places left over. A problem of this magnitude cannot be ignored.

This brief examination of the problem of over-age students has disclosed the fact that this group is more heavily represented in the private sector than the government sector. Between 1994 and 1997, their number increased at an annual rate of 8.84%, while the government sector experienced a decrease of almost 9%. Despite the reduction seen in 1997, the situation is still alarming and the country must pay special attention to this issue. This problem has a negative effect on the internal efficiency of the system and also gives rise to additional expenses. Children who fall into this category because of poor results use up more resources than they would have if they had not been made to repeat.

Despite the pressure exerted on the system by students who are over-age in the absolute sense, this group cannot be neglected. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Haitian Constitution of 1987, and the International Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand, March 1990), all grant them the right to an education. Therefore, everything must be done to ensure that they are provided for, through programmes specially designed for them. Every encouragement should be given to the initiative by MENJS through the DESRS which is now testing the VASJA project (Project for the Validation of Knowledge and Skills for Over-age Students Within the School System and for Young Adults). It is hoped that such initiatives will multiply for the greater benefit of the system.

Furthermore, education training modules adapted to their particular circumstances: age, academic needs, employment, and so forth, must be put in place. Structures must be introduced for the development of special study programmes, at the level of the first two cycles, which will allow more gifted children to make up for their late start within the allotted time, thereby clearing the way for children who are at the right age for school.

With the alarming state of education in Haiti, the MENJS must guarantee efficient management and better control of the school system. It is, therefore, imperative that a thorough study of this phenomenon be conducted. This will facilitate the identification of the primary factors which must be addressed, in order to establish clear perspectives for solutions. This would necessarily involve the strengthening of the regulatory role of government, through a redefinition of new education policies and the establishment of mechanisms for ensuring their strict observance.

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The Cayman Islands
Dominica
Grenada
Guyana
Haiti
Jamaica
Montserrat
The Netherlands Antilles
St. Kitts-Nevis
St. Lucia
St. Vincent and the Grenadines
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