

# EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES IN JAMAICA

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## BACKGROUND

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### DEFIANCE COLLEGE AND HIGHGATE, JAMAICA 1999 – PRESENT

The McMaster School Fellow and Scholars project in Jamaica grew out of an ongoing connection between Defiance College and Highgate, St. Mary's Parish, Jamaica. St. Mary's is one of the most impoverished areas in Jamaica and is the site of Defiance College's most sustained international service project. Every year beginning in 1999, Defiance College has sent its Service Leaders – now Bonner Leaders – to build houses and visit schools in the Highgate area.

During the seven annual trips from 1999 through this last Christmas, the students and the accompanying staff and faculty have developed lasting relationships, and have become engaged in the Jamaican culture. Some changes have occurred during the last six years that reflect the evolution from an emphasis solely on service learning to the integration of service and research through the McMaster School. More energy and effort is going into preparing each group for the experience by examining the culture and the environment of Highgate, Jamaica. The people of Highgate, especially the residents of the nine or ten homes that have been built by Defiance College students and faculty, have developed relationships that carry forward both with individual faculty and students and with the new group that comes down each December. There is also an ongoing connection with three schools in the Highgate area, including Marymount, a high school for girls. A Defiance College faculty member,

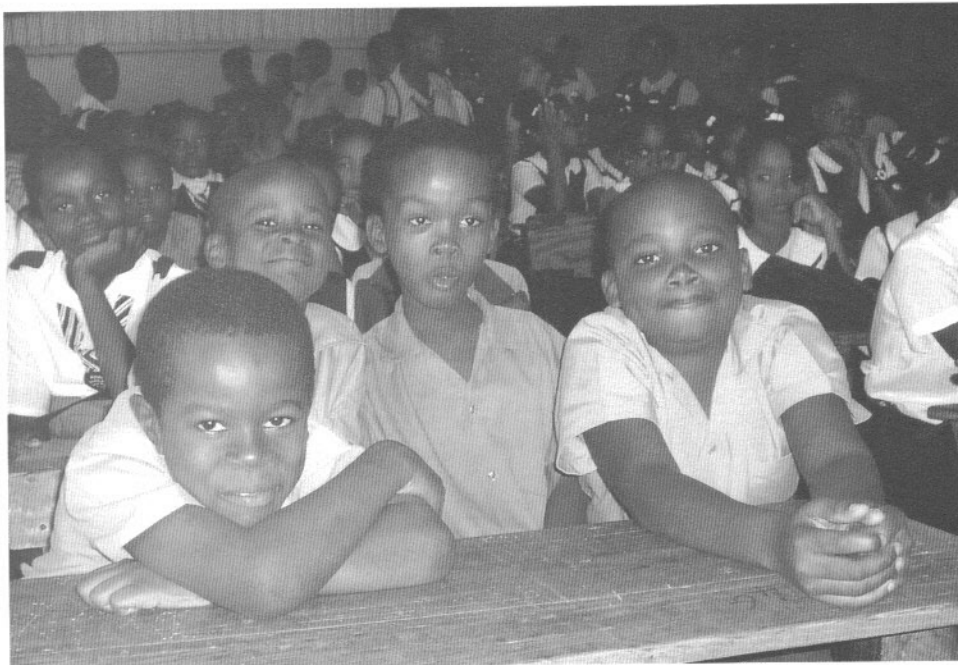


PHOTO BY CRAIG RUTTER

Craig Rutter, taught at Marymount during his sabbatical and one of Marymount's graduates is a current Defiance College student who has served as a Bonner Leader and McMaster Scholar.

Defiance College partners with Christian Service International in Jamaica, and we have worked closely with Mission Director Mike Ginter for the last several years both to coordinate the service experience and to ensure that there are ongoing and mutual cultural and interpersonal exchanges. This ongoing relationship with Highgate has had a dramatic effect on the Defiance College family. Over a dozen faculty and staff members have participated in the project over the seven-year span as well as numerous administrators including the President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Associate Academic Dean, Dean of Students, and Vice President for Finance, among others. This engagement has deeply affected many lives here and in Jamaica and we hope it will continue to do so.

## A STUDY OF A CARIBBEAN UNIVERSITY'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Wayne (Buck) Buchanan

### INTRODUCTION

In the global marketplace, countries are faced with enormous pressure to ensure that their citizens are employable. Economic competitive advantage cannot be solely based upon geography as employees work for any company, from any location. Increasingly, everyone competes on a global scale for their livelihood.

Two actions countries can take to help their citizens compete in this global environment is to inform them about career options and teach them how to better market their skills, experiences, and talents to gain long-term employment within this global context.

In an effort to identify, within an educational context, what can be done to help students, collaborative projects were inaugurated with the University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica, and the McMaster School for Advancing Humanity at Defiance College. Through these efforts, various career issues were studied with middle school, high school and college students and their respective educational centers.

The Jamaican educational system differs from the American system in several key areas impacting career preparation. Students are tracked in ways that determine eventual career options at a relatively young age. Jamaican students are put on a career track in the sixth grade. This track is initially dependent upon a student's preference of career field. Upon completion of primary education, students must take an examination and be financially able to attend high school. The career choice a student has made will directly affect which examination he/she will take. Students who wish to progress to the college or university level must take three or more of eight tests available from the Caribbean Examination Council. If the performance on an examination does not indicate sufficient aptitude for entrance, the students are not permitted to pursue their area of study. Little room exists for flexibility in allowing students to change tracks (Murphy, 2003).

### OVERVIEW

In March 2002, the Office of Placement and Career Services at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus in Kingston, Jamaica, joined

our study on what career-oriented services to add or to improve. The study was based upon a jointly-prepared questionnaire specifically tailored for UWI and randomly given to 756 students in November and December 2002. The Mona campus has approximately 11,000 students, 4,950 (45%) of whom are traditional students.

Research revealed five significant findings: (1) excellent service and counseling are provided by the Office of Placement and Career Services to students who *enter or marginally participate* in the system (up to 70% pre-graduation placement rate); (2) the percentage of all students who are individually counseled by appointment is less than 5% of the student body; (3) knowledge of services does not, in and of itself, result in better outcomes; (4) a comprehensive marketing program for the Office of Placement and Career Services is needed; and (5) the current program is U.S. based and not Caribbean oriented.

After analyzing the results of the study, UWI Mona agreed that by implementing a mandatory first-year course on career issues, the career development program at UWI Mona could evolve to a program that better meet the needs of all three of its constituents: students, alumnae, and businesses throughout the Caribbean Community.

#### **CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

UWI is an autonomous regional institution serving 20,000 students via funding through 15 West Indian countries – Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts/Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. This project has the potential to impact over 25,000 college students and alumni in the Caribbean Basin. One crucial goal is to formulate the basis of creating or redesigning a career development program that is most appropriate for the Caribbean student. This phase of the project has a potential direct impact on approximately 11,000 students on the Mona Campus in Kingston.

#### **CAREER DEVELOPMENT: THE “FOUR CRITICAL YEARS”**

A study of the literature suggests that career development during the collegiate years will take place with or without focused and intentional career development services. In fact, Herr, Rayman, and Garis (1993) believe that career development *is* the undergraduate experience. Everything a student does, every experience a student has during the undergraduate years, will have an impact on the student’s career destiny. Given the importance of this function, it is the responsibility of Offices of

Placement and Career Services to enhance the value of the undergraduate experience as a vehicle for personal career development—to show students how decisions they are making, activities in which they are engaged, and courses in which they are enrolled affect their career destiny.

Griff (1987) and Herr (1989) each listed 10 categories of “best practices” for career guidance that make placement and career development offices one of the dynamic centers of a college or university. By combining their lists, a comprehensive program can be created to ensure that all students are provided superior career development activities. Combined best practices include:

1. Infusing academic subject matter with career development information;
2. Providing credit courses that have personal development and career information components;
3. Using external resources (e.g., speakers, field trips) in classes;
4. Integrating recruitment and placement in support of career planning;
5. Providing opportunities for work-study/cooperative education with career information;
6. Decentralizing counseling facilities;
7. Offering seminars on college life and educational and career planning;
8. Focusing personal and group counseling on self-awareness and career planning;
9. Offering human potential seminars;
10. Using interactive, computer-based guidance systems;
11. Educating about realities of the current job market and future needs;
12. Providing career resources and materials including updated practical information about various careers;
13. Utilizing telephone and advising networks;
14. Offering topical workshops in career planning and job search techniques;
15. Leading support groups;
16. Providing individual counseling for job searching, interviewing, and resume writing skills;

#### **CAREER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WEST INDIES**

The Office of Placement and Career Services at the University of the West Indies offers a comprehensive career planning, development, and job

placement programs to its students and alumni with a staff of six and an annual budget of \$1,000,000JMD (Jamaica dollars, equivalent to about \$16,000.00 U.S. Dollars or USD). This represents an outlay of \$90JMD or about \$1.45USD per student per year (personal communication, M. Henry, March 11, 2003). Job placement services are delivered throughout the year, but largely through an Annual Graduate Recruitment Program, an undergraduate Summer Employment and Work Study Program, and the Alumni Placement Program. Career development and planning services are offered on a daily basis (UWIM, 2001).

In spite of these limited resources, the UWI Office of Placement and Career Services provides most of the services on the "best practices" list above. Notable exceptions include the lack of credit courses with personal development and career information components; infrequent use of external resources (e.g., speakers and field trips) in classes; and little in the areas of human potential seminars or telephone advising networks. Services offered above and beyond the "best practices" list include academic advising for specific educational requirements and recruiting and job placement services for returning students and alumni (personal communication, M. Henry, December 9, 2002; personal communication, C. Hayle, December 10, 2002; personal communication T. Reynolds, March 9, 2003; UWIM, 2001).

#### **COUNSELING PROCEDURES**

Counseling is provided on a combined personal and computerized basis. Students can walk in and utilize the U.S. based SIGI+ (System of Interactive Guidance and Information Plus More) and/or a one-to-one meeting with two career counselors. SIGI+ is the premier self assessment program that provides personalized information on career interests, possible occupations, required skills, education and training needed for a particular career or job, and other critical career data. Once a student enters the system, they are given a tour of the facility, provided personalized career services, monitored for progression and kept informed of career oriented activities on and off campus (personal communication, M. Henry, December 9, 2002; UWIM, 2001).

Students can also access Caribbean Community job openings via computer services in the Office of Placement and Career Services. Additionally, monster.com, careerbuilders.com, and other websites provide access to many international openings. A career library holds corporate histories and job descriptions within the Caribbean Community, and a meeting room is available for mock interviews and other group activities. Collaboration between UWI staff and business professionals has also

facilitated career-planning orientations for first-year students; "World of Work" seminars; a "Career Awareness Week;" and at least ten annual Career Expos with as many as 39 "booth holders" and participation by over 500 UWI students (4.6% of the student body) and students from 77 high schools.

### **JOB PLACEMENT**

The University of West Indies Mona Campus Office of Placement and Career Services does a good job filling job openings given the economic conditions of this Caribbean country. The office provides a comprehensive career services program and a wide variety of activities throughout the academic year that integrate career services with community corporations and organizations. A 2002 Career Services Survey showed that 203 participants at the 2001 Spring Job Fair found 158 jobs for a success rate of 62%. Summer Job Fair numbers were 622 participants and 256 filled positions for a success rate of 41%. 542 alumni were served that year with 377 finding jobs for a success rate of 69%. And the New York City Board of Education placed 375 teachers from 600 applicants for a success rate of 63%.

### **PROGRAM REVIEW**

UWI has a very strong and organized career development program. It provides a comprehensive and personalized program to its students and alumni within the professional structure of career services. For those who participate in the program, success in job obtainment is excellent. With a minimum of 15% unemployment nationwide (CIA, 2003), and higher for 18 to 24 year olds, a success rate of 70% prior to graduation for those seeking its services is excellent given the current economic conditions of Jamaica. Service is the hallmark of the program.

Nevertheless, the study revealed that there are issues that need addressing. The data do not indicate a specific negative trend in one particular career development issue, but comments from the students do give a glimpse of what they feel is lacking. Access to counseling and the timing of the counseling seem to be the dominant themes.

The program is heavily centralized. There are peer counselors, but the only location for obtaining career development processes is in the Office of Placement and Career Services. Information and one-on-one counseling is not provided in the residence halls or other locations around the campus. The need to increase marketing of services was one of the most important results to emerge from the survey. Only five percent of the total student

population seeks career services. With the success rate of on-campus recruiting and employment, many more students might be able to find employment if they were to become connected to the program. There is an advertising plan in place, and information is disseminated around the campus. However, far too many comments from first-year students indicate that they do not know about the program.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The first challenge for the program is to engage more students to enter the Office of Placement and Career Services. The National Association of Colleges and Employers posed the following question to more than 8,000 students in the United States, from the smallest liberal arts schools to the largest public universities: "At what point do you think colleges should begin getting students interested in career issues?" More than half (52 percent) of the student respondents said colleges should start career education efforts *during the freshman year* (one percent said the senior year). Ninety-seven percent of them said it was the college's job to get students interested in career issues (Patterson, 1995). UWI must improve its engagement with its first-year students.

Engagement with students can be addressed with a single action: instituting a career development course. The course should be an examination of individual career planning and action strategies with outcomes including greater understandings of 1) the connection between work and the individual's personality; 2) how work and the wider society interact within the scope of cultural perspectives, job equality, and the sociology of everyday life; 3) the forms and the future of work in relation to human potential; 4) the politics of work and unemployment; 5) the essential components required to design, implement, and sustain effective career development systems; 6) an awareness of the linkage of career development with society's views on work trends and productivity; 7) an awareness of career development as an individual and organizational change strategy; 8) individual career planning including the appropriate use of career assessment instruments and feedback about performance and others; and 9) possible career options and goals and the role of a career development plan.

Another challenge for the Office of Placement and Career Services is the availability of jobs, summer internships, temporary positions, and co-ops. The office cannot create positions for students and is dependent upon the economic conditions of Jamaica and the Caribbean community. The University already does an outstanding job in identifying potential and



actual job openings and provides listings for its students. Marketing of these openings is the key to this challenge. As stated above, a career development course can help solve this problem.

A major remarketing effort needs initiating. New ways are needed to provide information to every student about the services available. The business program would be a great internal resource to help formulate a marketing plan for the Office of Placement and Career Services. Again, a career course would automatically market the services to first-year students and other participants.

None of the above improvements can be done without a capital investment in program and personnel. Innovative methods and direct funding support from corporations and alumni need to be investigated, implemented and supported to ensure that students know how the university can support their future career endeavors.

Lastly, UWI is an institution of optimism for its students and graduates, as well as for the island of Jamaica. Students believe that by getting a good education, their lives will improve. UWI tries to meet this hope by providing programs and curricula that meet the needs of its students based upon current and future economic conditions impacting Jamaica and its region. Career development is a tool that can help students to realize their dreams.

## **CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN JAMAICAN HIGH SCHOOLS**

Jeremy Ball

### **BACKGROUND**

The study of the University of West Indies Career Development Program prompted this study on the same topic at the high school level. Jamaican students are tracked according their career interests during secondary schooling. Both educators and guidance counselors assisted in and provided logistical support for the formulation of the study. The question that prompted this study is: do the services provided at this level of education make a difference?

### **OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS**

Despite advancements in the Jamaican education system, the findings of this study show more is needed in the career development arena. These

findings are based on observations of first-hand teaching of career development in Jamaican high school classrooms, discussions with teachers, and a survey administered to 700 Fifth Form high school students (equivalent to the United States high school senior). The survey was administered in January of 2003, just months before their scheduled graduation date in June. Time was given for instruction and completion plus a question and answer period for any necessary clarification.

Completed surveys were collected, numbered and tabulated. After tabulation the results were analyzed, cross-referenced, and analyzed again. On the second visit to Jamaica we were able to speak with educators and guidance counselors about our findings. The following is a synopsis of the research findings found to be most significant.

#### *Finding #1*

Of students surveyed, 91% were able to identify one career goal. Fewer than 5% stated more than two career goals. Many of the answers given were vague. For example, a student stated she wants to "help people."

#### *Finding #2*

When asked if they had a resume, 72% of the students answered "no." Most students who had completed resumes were enrolled in the business school at Marymount High School where the focus on career development is more defined and encouraged. One guidance counselor also stated that the resume is valued in the Jamaican culture as a vital tool in the career development process (Murphy, 2003).

#### *Finding #3*

Seventy percent of the survey respondents said they knew what employers look for in an employee in a specific career field. The breakdown by career field choice of this seventy percent is as follows: technology, 42%; education, 16%; medical, 40%; and other, 2%.

When the opportunity presented itself to discuss this finding in depth with a sample of the students, most students were not able to provide information beyond a general understanding of what employers expected. Typical answers were, "A hard worker, good grades, someone who looks nice."

#### *Finding #4*

Students were asked to identify methods for overcoming obstacles that may be presented when addressing career goals and aspirations. A

majority of students listed praying and more studying as the two methods of overcoming obstacles. Relatively few students mentioned more direct methods such as on the job training, internships, and further specialized education. As a cross reference, the students listing the latter responses were also the ones who had resumes and were enrolled in the business school.

#### *Finding #5*

Of all students surveyed, 73% identified that financial assistance was the only type of assistance needed to attain a career of choice. Discussion with Jamaican career education officials clarified the centrality of financial concerns for Jamaicans given the poverty rates, especially in the area where this research was conducted. When asked why other forms of assistance were not listed, the educators offered that these types of assistance are not readily available. Students do not typically have opportunities for internships or on the job training. The need for development of these aspects is very great.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Career education is vital to the success of students. Improvements to the Jamaican education system have been successfully implemented since the island became independent from Great Britain in 1962. Nonetheless, a great need still exists, particularly in the area of career development.

## **THE DELIVERY OF SERVICES TO DISABLED INDIVIDUALS IN JAMAICA**

Rebecca L. Sanford

#### **ABSTRACT**

No country is free from the burdens of providing necessary services to those in need, including the disabled. This study examines social services to the disabled in Jamaica. A discussion of the relevant literature examines issues faced by other countries in the provision of services to clients. Results obtained from interviews with personnel at 12 Jamaican agencies that provide services to disabled clients are analyzed under the theoretical frameworks of social policy evaluation described by Gilbert and Specht.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2002, with the full cooperation and concurrence of the Social Work Department of the University of the West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica, a study was conducted concerning Jamaica's disabled population obtaining governmental services for their disabilities. The 1991 Jamaican census revealed that 5% of the general population, or 111,000 people, have a disability. According to Jamaican policy, the general term "disabled" includes individuals who have a speech, sight or hearing impairment, learning delay, physical disability, mental retardation, or mental illness.

Agencies that provide services to the disabled population exist throughout the island of Jamaica. However, most of them are based in Kingston. These agencies include, but are not limited to, the Jamaica Council for People with Disabilities, School of Hope, the Disabled Peoples Organization of the Caribbean, Jamaica Society for the Blind, Jamaica Association for the Deaf, Jamaica Association for Persons with Mental Retardation, the Abilities Foundation, Private Voluntary Organization, Carberry Court Special School, Hope Valley Experimental School, Sir John Golding Rehabilitation Centre, Salvation Army School for the Blind, Combined Disabilities Association, 3D Projects, and the Clarendon Group for the Disabled. These agencies represent all levels of governmental sanctioned service providers.

The services available through these agencies satisfy the requirements necessary to meet the goals for disabled individuals set forth in the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities. The primary goal is as follows:

*To improve the status and conditions of persons with disabilities so that they can enjoy a better quality of life in areas such as education, employment, health, housing, transportation, and accessibility to all areas of the society.*

However, the way in which those disabled individuals are identified, referred to, and connected with the appropriate services and the extent of coverage are not clearly stated in this policy. Important questions exist concerning the provision of these services: How are disabled individuals connected to resources necessary to aid their functioning? What is the referral method for specialized services? What factors impede progress toward independent functioning? What gaps exist in the service delivery system that may obstruct client participation in services?

The purpose of this research is to determine the effectiveness of the Jamaican system for connecting disabled individuals to the appropriate services, and to identify any gaps in the process of connecting clients to services.

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Problems in the delivery of social service benefits occur in all countries regardless of economic status or level of technological and social development. The scope of the problems and issues, however, may differ. Where possible, studies conducted in developing areas of the world were utilized.

Rural populations are known for being at a disadvantage in the receipt of services, especially disability services. Limited resources and lack of finances are cited as factors contributing to the poor quality of services provided to individuals with disabilities in many rural areas.

Judd and Humphrey (2001), writing about rural and remote Australia, discussed specific issues along with suggestions for future improvements in the services provided to those in need of mental health care. Information regarding mental health was collected by the Australian National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing in 1997. One finding of importance was that 62% of individuals with mental disorder did not seek professional assistance.

McConachie et al, (2001), focuses on Bangladesh and measured the factors related to the frequency with which mothers brought their children with cerebral palsy to receive services.

The results indicate that rural families were poorer and had younger mothers who also lacked education. More difficulty in adapting to the disability of their child was reported for rural mothers. As for the attendance of children at the DTP sessions, boys were more likely to attend the sessions than girls. Higher attendance also related to a higher stress level and lower adaptation level of the mother.

De Silva (2000) discusses the need for a more adequate method of service delivery in Sri Lanka. She lists several factors which must be considered with regard to the treatment of the mentally ill. The factors include organizational aspects; persistent inequities in the system; a shift to a more bio-psycho-social model of psychiatric service delivery; human resource development; mobilization of available resources; research and development; and cultural sensitivity.

Rieper and Mayne (1998) examine the concept of public service quality and its evaluation. Four primary strategies to improve public service quality were identified: 1) increasing the professional standards for administering service such as setting codes for treatment; 2) empowering clients through education about their rights and choices; 3) providing evidence of excellence in the service; and 4) supporting groups of consumers who press for quality in the services they are provided.

#### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

Gilbert and Specht (1974) provide definitions for distinct problems in the delivery of social services. These include fragmentation, discontinuity, inaccessibility, and unaccountability. Recent research on service delivery within developing countries indicates recurrent problems in these areas. Evidence points to fragmentation as the largest obstacle to receiving services. Judd and Humphreys (2001) state, "In rural areas in particular, access to services is limited primarily as a consequence of workforce shortages and maldistribution" (p. 256). Fragmentation is also seen in the psychiatric services provided to the mentally ill in Sri Lanka. De Silva (2000) states that claims of inadequate facilities are substantiated by the fact that mental hospitals have a bed occupancy rate of 118%. Inadequate staffing and facilities are both related to the fragmentation of services.

Problems of discontinuity arise when the agency fails to connect an individual to the necessary services. Inaccessibility is defined as the barriers a person encounters when attempting to reach services. Inaccessibility refers to barriers that are based on individual characteristics of the person seeking services such as economic class, racial identity, and other personal characteristics of the individual seeking services. Unaccountability concerns relationships between persons served and decision-makers in service organizations including lack of communication between persons receiving services and the persons making decisions regarding the services.

This study used interviews with agency personnel in twelve organizations as the operational method of collecting data. Both closed choice (yes or no) and open ended questions were used to gain an understanding of specific problems in the delivery of service as well as the overall context within which the agencies functioned.

Accessibility questions focused on how individuals are referred to the agency for services; what populations are served; any ethnic or social restrictions on service; and issues related to transportation and funding.

Accountability questions focused on how feedback from the clients is received and used by the agency; whether clients are involved in the decision making process regarding the services they use; and whether the agency has a standard procedure for clients to follow when they are dissatisfied with a service or how they were treated.

Fragmentation questions covered the range of services provided by the agency; the staff composition of the agency including any areas of specialization led by trained professionals; collaboration with any other existing agencies that serve the same population; and factors such as the location(s) where service is administered and the presence or absence of regular business hours.

Continuity issues included how referrals are made from other agencies; the presence or absence of a system of ensuring that clients follow through with suggested services; and whether the agency takes responsibility to follow up with the client after referral to other agencies and/or after termination of the client from services.

A final open ended question asked agency personnel about their perceptions on the overall effectiveness of service delivery including gaps they perceive in connecting individuals to the services.

#### **SAMPLING PROCEDURE**

Altogether, twelve agencies were visited and one employee was interviewed at each agency. Agencies participating in interviews include: University of the West Indies – Office of Special Student Services; the Abilities Foundation; the Jamaica Society of the Blind; the Jamaica Association for the Deaf; the Jamaica Association for People with Disabilities; the Jamaica Association for Persons with Mental Retardation; the School of Hope; the Carberry Court Special School; the Hope Valley Experimental School; the Sir John Golding Rehabilitation Center; the Salvation Army School for the Blind, and the 3D's Project. All but one of the agencies is based in Kingston, Jamaica, and primarily serve residents of Kingston.

#### **THE RESULTS**

Only four agencies will be reported in this article. The Jamaica Society of the Blind operates out of Kingston, Jamaica. This agency offers community based services that are provided by a trained Field Officer. Field Officers meet with clients in the client's home environment to teach new methods of living and coping with the visual impairment. Employment assistance and Braille education are also provided by this agency. Vision screenings

are also provided by this agency. This agency frequently performs vision screenings for primary school students who may not have the financial resources to visit an ophthalmologist. Clients are referred for services through ophthalmologists. Field Officers also visit eye clinics and hospitals in an attempt to reach clients who may be eligible for services.

The Jamaica Society of the Blind is funded through specific fundraising projects. It is a non-governmental agency and, therefore, does not receive financial support from the government. Services are generally provided free of charge. Clients are, however, asked to pay for adaptive appliances such as hearing aids, audible watches, and canes. Grants are available to clients who are unable to raise the money to buy the devices. An identified gap in services is location – the agency only provides services in Kingston. Visually impaired individuals residing outside of Kingston are forced to find transportation to Kingston to receive services. Many lack the financial resources to obtain the necessary transportation.

The Jamaica Association for the Deaf is also located in Kingston. The agency is non-governmental. Funding for this agency is provided primarily through grants and charitable organizations. JAD provides educational services in three rural locations outside of Kingston and five educational programs in Kingston. All of the schools specialize in the education of deaf individuals. JAD also provides services such as hearing assessments and screenings; adaptive aids such as hearing aids, job placement and training; interpretation services in court cases and medical visits; and education of the public on issues unique to the hearing impaired.

The location of JAD may be identified as a potential problem for those seeking its services. It is located at the end of a one-lane, pothole filled road in an obscure location far from the main roads of Kingston. No identifying features can be found outside of the agency that might indicate its purpose or mission.

Jamaica Association for People with Disabilities (JAPD) is the overarching agency that unites the agencies that provide services for specific disabilities. This agency does not provide services directly to individuals. Rather, it is responsible for referring clients to the agency or service most appropriate for their needs. The agency also conducts research on the nature of disabilities in Jamaica. Valerie Spence, an employee with JAPD, identified social attitudes as the biggest obstacle faced by individuals with disabilities. This is also a challenge for the staff members who provide services to those individuals.



Jamaica Association for Persons with Mental Retardation (JAPMR) is located in Kingston and operates twenty-eight schools, all called School of Hope, in Kingston and throughout the parishes on the island. Schools of Hope currently serve over 1300 intellectually impaired children in Jamaica. The educational emphasis of the School of Hope is the attainment of daily living skills. Vocational training in areas such as cooking, sewing, childcare, and agriculture is provided to adolescent youths attending School of Hope.

In addition to the School of Hope, JAPMR offers several other services to mentally disabled clients. These services include job placement, social programs, guidance and counseling, early intervention services, and education of the public on issues relating to disabilities. JAPMR is a non-governmental agency that operates on grants, fundraisers, and donations from the general public. As is true of most agencies previously discussed, JAPMR requests a fee from clients for the services provided. However, clients are not denied services if they are unable to pay the fee.

Salvation Army School for the Blind is a boarding school that serves 110 visually impaired students between ages 5 and 18. Students enrolled at the school are from the entire island of Jamaica and typically return home at midterm and occasional weekends. Students are referred to the school through community service clubs. Referrals are also made to the school by an outreach teacher who travels throughout Jamaica to educate about visual impairments and the services offered by the Salvation Army.

Salvation Army School for the Blind is funded primarily by the government. Families are also asked to pay a boarding fee of \$3000 Jamaican dollars, or about \$60 U.S. dollars, every three months. The school employs 23 teachers and 45 ancillary staff members who perform duties such as preparing meals and cleaning the facilities.

A problem area defined by the director of the school is the lack of support provided by the families of children enrolled at the school. Since children must be sent away from their families in order to attend the school, many families lose contact with their child after he or she is sent to the school. Another identified weakness is the lack of knowledge the general public has about the school. Countless children eligible for the services provided by the school do not receive the needed services because their families do not know that it exists.

## **DISCUSSION**

Services for disabled individuals in Jamaica certainly exist. As is common for many developing countries, however, Jamaica struggles with the delivery of these services to individuals in need. Three primary factors contribute to the problem of service delivery to disabled individuals: limited information about what is available; difficult or non-existent transportation to get there; and stigma associated with the word "disabled." Several interviews revealed that many parents resist seeking services for their disabled child to avoid the embarrassment and shame they and the child would face as a result.

Contrary to prior expectations, funding did not appear to be a major problem. Clients are rarely turned away due to an inability to finance the services or resources. Charitable organizations, fundraisers, and donations from the public are the primary sources of funding of many agencies not subsidized by the government.

Of the potential problem areas as defined by Gilbert and Specht, those most affecting the delivery of disability services in Jamaica are inaccessibility and discontinuity. The location of many of the agencies in Kingston contributes creates major transportation issues for clients outside of the Kingston area. Discontinuity of services is indicated by the lack of follow-up to ensure that clients referred for assistance actually seek the services. Follow-up after clients exit services are also lacking.

## **ART INTEGRATION IN THE JAMAICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM**

Megan Frazier

### **BACKGROUND**

Integrating art into the educational curriculum at an early age allows students to become actively involved in their learning process. Many students are visual learners and art is a key element in overcoming the challenges they face with standard lecture-style learning patterns. In early childhood, children learn many concepts by looking at pictures or by drawing pictures of what they have learned. Beyond visual stimulation, teaching art can open doors to continuing education. Students become more conscious of their strengths and weaknesses as they grow into the middle childhood stage of their education and beyond. At this pivotal point of the education process, art can be used as a positive motivator for students who may lack listening and learning skills. Can students with strong artistic abilities use art to push themselves through the subjects



PHOTO BY CRAIG RUTTER

they struggle with the same way a star baseball player uses the big game on Friday as incentive to make the grade? How relevant is this “subjective” subject in the school system? Do students realize that they can go to college and study art as a career? These were the questions that formed my investigation of Jamaica’s process of integrating art into the educational system.

#### **MY OBSERVATIONS OF JAMAICAN ART EDUCATION**

My research began in Highgate (one of the poorest areas in Jamaica) and expanded across the island into Kingston, the capital. With every school I visited I learned that the teachers understand the need for visual learning in the classroom but lack the resources needed to keep art as an individual subject thriving in their schools. These schools are not sufficiently funded to provide the basics for education. One textbook to teach 22 students was not uncommon. If the schools cannot afford textbooks the odds of fitting markers and paint sets into the list of supplies for the year is slim. The children are therefore not experiencing art firsthand.

I discovered that even in the schools that are fortunate enough to receive minimal financial support to include art in the curriculum, the students see

no particular benefit in the subject and choose not to pursue it. If a student decides he or she wants to be an artist, or even an art teacher, he or she is not encouraged to do so. Most mentors in the system would discourage students from focusing on art. Impressionable young children will not take as much interest in something that is deemed to be irrelevant by their elder mentors.

There is a second barrier against continuing art education. Students are asked at the young age of thirteen to choose what subjects they want to focus on until they graduate from secondary school. Upon graduation, they have a very slight chance of going into higher education (depending on family financial status) in the subject area they chose. At this young age, students make decisions based on very limited, and often misleading, information about career possibilities.

These are the circumstances for the most destitute parts of Jamaica. Like other countries, Jamaica has areas where people are wealthier and have more opportunities. As I researched the University of West Indies and Edna Manley School for Arts in Kingston, I discovered that the children who grew up with financial stability were encouraged to pursue art as an area of academic specialization. Some of them went on to teach art at the less fortunate schools in Jamaica. Many of them found work in textiles, screen printmaking, painting and pottery. Tourism is Jamaica's main industry and there are opportunities for artists to service the tourist population. Unfortunately the number of students who reach the state of their life where they can teach or sell art is still very small.

#### **CHANGING THE SYSTEM: A PERSONAL APPROACH**

The sad thing about the information I found was that many teachers would like to expose their students to different ways of learning such as integrating art into their programs, but have no money to do so. Many students would love to learn about art, but do not have the opportunity. As an art lover, and a personal example of how the discovery of art can save a student from leaving school, my heart was broken when I experienced the joy of teaching a class new art techniques, knowing that the teaching would not be continued after I left and that the skills would be lost within a short period of time. Spending a few days in a classroom with these children was not enough for me. Their enthusiasm and skills were unlimited but I knew that more was needed.

After spending three weeks in Jamaica studying the system and meeting the administrators and students, I went home with a longing to further their knowledge about art education. With a year of college left I was not

financially able to send money to the people I met and I was left feeling as though I had not done enough to advance humanity aside from the growth in my own heart. I spent my senior year obsessing over my experience in Jamaica – and saving money from my part time job to go back after graduation to further the work I had started through the McMaster School. This was the only way I could continue my work as my time was the only thing I had to give.

Upon graduation I spent two months in Highgate as a teacher of students at the primary level. I brought a lot of art supplies with me. However, they did not last long as I had up to 1,500 students in and out of my room every day eager to use the “toys” I had brought for them to color and experiment with.

My project with the McMaster School of Advancing Humanity changed my life and will, I hope, continue to change the lives of many students in Jamaica. It has become my dream to bring art education to the children of Jamaica.

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