

Higher Education, Human Development, and Growing Inequality in Pre-and Post Pandemic Haiti

Louis HERNs Marcelin ^{a,b}, Toni Cela ^{a,b}, Mário da Silva Fidalgo ^b & Christopher Zuraik^b

^aUniversity of Miami, Florida, USA

^bINURED, Haiti

*Corresponding author (Louis HERNs Marcelin): Lmarcel2@miami.edu
Address: University of Miami, Florida, USA

This article was not written with the assistance of any Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology, including ChatGPT™ or other support technologies

Abstract

For almost four decades, Haiti has been engaged in the tenuous process of democratization, exacerbated by political, economic, social, climate, and more recently the COVID-19 crises. With each crisis, efforts are made to reimagine national development and revitalize the public sphere, with limited success. Yet, largely absent from these debates is the higher education sector. We argue that the neglect of higher education since Haiti's transition from dictatorship to democracy is a result of the nation's failure to articulate a clear vision for the sector. In this article, we ask: How has the failure to articulate a clear purpose for the higher education sector in Haiti exacerbated the country's systemic crisis amid the COVID-19 pandemic? In order to answer this question, we provide a sociohistorical examination of the role of power and politics in Haitian higher education beginning in its founding in the 19th century culminating at the time of the pandemic. We explore how the absence of a strategic vision for higher education institutions in Haiti and ad-hoc neoliberal policies have impacted the professoriate and students while impeding the sector's potential contributions to society in a time characterized by systemic and uninterrupted crises including the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19, Haitian youth, higher education, human development, inequality

Resumen

Durante casi cuatro décadas, Haití ha estado inmerso en un tenue proceso de democratización, exacerbado por las crisis política, económica, social, climática y, más recientemente, por la crisis del COVID-19. Con cada crisis, se realizan esfuerzos para re-imaginar el desarrollo nacional y revitalizar la esfera pública, con un éxito limitado. Sin embargo, en gran medida ausente de estos debates está el sector de la educación superior. Argumentamos que el abandono de la educación superior desde la transición de Haití de la dictadura a la democracia es resultado de la incapacidad del país para articular una visión clara para el sector. En este artículo nos preguntamos: ¿Cómo ha exacerbado la crisis sistémica del país en medio de la pandemia de COVID-19 la falta de articulación de un propósito claro para el sector de la educación superior en Haití? Para responder a esta pregunta, proporcionamos un examen sociohistórico del papel del poder y la

política en la educación superior haitiana desde su fundación en el siglo XIX y culminando en el momento de la pandemia. Exploramos cómo la ausencia de una visión estratégica para las instituciones de educación superior en Haití y las políticas neoliberales ad hoc han impactado al profesorado y a los estudiantes al tiempo que han impedido las contribuciones potenciales del sector a la sociedad en una época caracterizada por crisis sistémicas e ininterrumpidas, incluida la pandemia de COVID-19.

Palabras claves: COVID-19, juventud haitiana, educación superior, desarrollo humano, desigualdad

Introduction

In this article, we provide an analysis that centers around the following research question: *How has the failure to articulate a clear purpose for the higher education sector in Haiti exacerbated the country's systemic crisis amid the COVID-19 pandemic?* Given that Haiti's higher education sector has been relatively understudied and, in many regards, remains opaque, this article draws on document analysis to examine its history and two ongoing studies that focus on the state of higher education after the 2010 earthquake, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. We intentionally draw from the sector's history in moments of crisis culminating with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic as we deem it necessary to contextualize the sector's current challenges with respect to its past development and ongoing evolution.

The article is divided into two sections. Section One examines the sociohistorical and political contexts of the sector's evolution. Section Two draws on a national study of the higher education sector conducted by the Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED) between 2013 and 2022. It uses transdisciplinary theoretical constructs to frame the challenges inherent to institution-building and governance in countries such as Haiti and analyzes the sector's failure to contribute to positive societal change. We highlight the higher education sector as a case study, interrogating its role in a Haitian reality characterized by systemic and uninterrupted crises and how Haiti's failure to establish a clear purpose for higher education has contributed to insufficient investments in the sector, poor governance, and a vacuum in leadership and accountability that has perpetuated societal inequalities particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as higher education can contribute to development, this article demonstrates how a higher education system disconnected from a society in crisis can perpetuate longstanding social inequities.

Higher Education Institutions: Purpose, Vision, and Policy Frameworks

Historically, higher education institutions (HEIs) have been critical to national development as they produce wealth by enhancing physical capital through knowledge. In addition to providing skills-based training, higher education should advance and disseminate knowledge that fosters innovation and promotes civic education necessary for any healthy democracy (Bowen et al., 2005). According to Chantler (2016), HEIs have three fundamental mandates: 1) producing a well-educated workforce, 2) knowledge production through research, and 3) community engagement. Articulating the purpose of higher education in any society is a challenging and contentious matter. Since the mid-twentieth century, human capital theory has informed much of higher education policy. Yet, beliefs regarding the value of higher education vary among stakeholders with some privileging the production of new knowledge for knowledge's sake, others seeking to foster (civic, political, and/or religious) leadership, some emphasizing its role in facilitating economic growth, while other stakeholders see higher education as serving a complementary role to the state by providing a public good that benefits all of society (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). For example, Arthur and Bohlin (2005) contend that universities should serve as a public good by promoting a "citizenship culture" among its students (p. 2). Shapiro (2005) is more definitive declaring that "all higher education institutions [...] serve a public purpose" (p. 13). He argues that as societies face or are transformed by crises, educational institutions are compelled to "question many existing ideas regarding central issues of knowledge, culture and society" and, in so doing, revisit their own values and commitments (Shapiro, 2005, p. 16-18). As critical actors in society, these institutions may serve democratic processes, acknowledge

Received July 30, 2022; revised September 1, 2022; revised April 1, 2023; accepted June 1, 2023

the challenges associated with them or even undermine them (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). As universities produce and disseminate knowledge, they can serve as the institutional space where democratic policies are enacted through discussions about public affairs (Pusser et al., 2012). It is precisely its role as a site of reflection and critique that positions these institutions to generate public goods that promote public welfare (ibid). In this manner, HEIs can play a critical role in challenging dominant institutions just as they may reinforce status quo arrangements that destabilize democratic processes (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). And in the absence of any public contribution, HEIs run the risk of becoming irrelevant to society (Marginson, 2012).

It is our contention that Haiti's history provides clear indications of the role higher education should play in society. Building on Haiti's revolutionary legacy and the nation's founding on the fundamental principle of equality of all "man"¹ as well as its more recent transition from dictatorship to democracy, the higher education sector should serve as a public good that promotes equality within Haitian society through civic engagement as well as economic and human development. In this article, we argue that the neglect of higher education since Haiti's transition from dictatorship to democracy is a result of the nation's failure to articulate a clear vision for the sector, the consequences of which were evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Crisis of Governance and Proliferation of Higher Education Institutions in Haiti

Haiti's higher education sector remains an enigma to many, including Haitians. As very little is known about the sector and the institutions that comprise it, we deem it necessary to provide a brief overview of its founding and evolution in order to appreciate the sector's functioning during and after the pandemic. From its inception in the early 19th century, the sector was dedicated to the country's elite, reproducing French-inspired curricula, with no focus on either Haiti's human development needs nor its sociopolitical, economic, or security issues (GTEF, 2010; INURED, 2010; Pamphile, 2008; Pierre-Charles, 1988). The 20th century saw the sector's rapid expansion. François Duvalier would strategically use the public university system, the State University of Haiti (State University), to create a relatively loyal black middle-class while placing supporters in positions of leadership, a practice that continued under Jean-Claude Duvalier (Bernard, 1989; Pierre-Charles, 1988). In 1983, the State University became an independent entity, though the President retained the right to nominate its Rector (Romain, 1987). Three years later, the sector further expanded to include the State University's 11 schools and 5 institutes/centers and 8 private HEIs (ibid).

Post-dictatorship expansion of the sector would grant access to segments of the urban working class and poor converting the public university into a site of struggle over political control through student resistance and protests (Bernard, 1989; GTEF, 2010; Pierre-Charles, 1988; Romain, 1987). In 1987, a new constitution was introduced with reforms primarily aimed at thwarting future authoritarian control while failing to articulate the relationship between the sector and Haitian society. The State University was granted autonomy and given sector governance authority, the parameters of which were unclear (GTEF, 2010; INURED, 2010; Romain, 1987). With the adoption of the new constitution, the State University claimed autonomy with no accountability to any entity including the state which funded it. The State University also claimed sole responsibility for sector governance, a position that has been contested (INURED, 2010; Jacob, 2020). The constitution also reflected the neoliberal policies adopted throughout the region during that time which encouraged competition through the establishment of private institutions (GTEF, 2010; Romain, 1987). Haiti has a largely symbolic process through which private institutions obtain government recognition to operate, however failure to obtain it rarely results in sanctions of any kind (INURED, 2010). As a result, weak regulatory measures due to disputes regarding governance authority and increased demand have given rise to the unwieldy expansion of institutions of varying, generally poor, quality (Cela, 2021; GTEF, 2010; INURED, 2010; Jacob, 2020). Between 1985 to 2015, Haiti experienced a more than tenfold increase in the number of tertiary institutions (USAID, 2018).

While massification responds to demand, it often comes at the expense of quality (Pierre et al., 2018; Torres & Schugurensky, 2002; Urzúa, 2002). In the Global South, where resources are often limited, budget allocations are not on par with increased enrollments. The 1990s and 2000s saw increased funding of higher education globally, yet stark differences can be seen in how these resources have been allocated. Additional funds in the Global South have supported

¹ We acknowledge that despite Haiti's role in advancing the cause of equality, women were not considered equal.

sector expansion through increased capacity and access whereas in the Global North, these resources represent additional investments per student, exacerbating the North-South quality gap in higher education (ibid).

Health, Higher Education, and the COVID-19 Pandemic in Haiti

Haiti's health indicators reveal the failure of HEIs to create knowledge-based preventive interventions in health and agricultural production that can promote health and well-being. While in the post-Duvalier context, Haiti's human development index showed steady increases through 2019, since then it has progressively fallen, ranking 163 out of 191 countries in 2021 (UNDP, 2022). With only one doctor or nurse per 3,000 individuals (Gage et al., 2017), Haiti lags behind its regional neighbors in most health indicators (Cela et al., 2022). Some estimates suggest that there are only 2,000 physicians in Haiti, 90% of whom work in Port-au-Prince, contributing to the scarcity of medical services in provincial and rural areas (Kirk, 2015). At birth, life expectancy is 65 years (Gage et al., 2017) well behind its regional neighbors (Fene et al., 2020). A 2013 national study found that less than one-quarter (23%) of the population had access to good quality healthcare (Gage et al., 2017). In addition, Haiti has some of the lowest improved water source access rates, at 73% and 47% in urban and rural settings, respectively (WHO & UNICEF, 2014), with decreasing levels of access to improved sanitation over the last several decades (Gelting et al., 2013). Further, Haiti's health indicators have only worsened in the context of its most recent disasters (ASFC, 2019; Gelting et al., 2013; Marcelin & Cela, 2017).

Despite being an agrarian society, Haitian investments in agriculture and extension services have been modest (Goertz, 2016). Haiti's meager agricultural production and high level of food insecurity attest to this fact. Agricultural production has been in sharp decline for several decades due to unfavorable national and international policies (Goertz, 2016) such as the disruptive effects of food aid on local markets (USG, 2011) and adverse environmental degradation (USG, 2011). Haiti's hunger index is described as "serious," ranking in at 116 out of 121 countries (Global Hunger Index, 2022). The country is experiencing a severe food crisis with nearly half the population (4.7 million) facing acute hunger. Food insecurity is exacerbated by year-on-year inflation at 63%, the price of petrol doubling (FAO, 2022), below average rainfall, and the 2021 earthquake (UN News, 2022). In addition to these factors, Haiti's low levels of agricultural production can be linked to the higher education sector's fragility. One study of agricultural researchers in the LAC region found that smaller countries are largely dependent upon foreign researchers' agricultural expertise (Stads & Beintema, 2009). In Haiti specifically, low investments, the absence of a curricular focus on extension methods (Pierre et al., 2018) and sustainable agricultural development (Pierre, 2015) and the disconnect between employment opportunities and training (Alford et al., 2020) are evidence of the sector's neglect of the agricultural needs of the country. This suggests that the sector has remained on the margins of solving the nation's agricultural production and food security issues (Pierre et al., 2018) rendering the population even more vulnerable during health crises. To address these, and other challenges, the international community has stepped in to fill the void.

Serial, complex crises have increased the nation's dependence on international and humanitarian aid (Klarreich & Polman, 2012). To provide basic healthcare, Haiti relies on foreign entities such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Médecins sans Frontières*, and Partners in Health. Notably, the Cuban Medical Brigade, which began operations in Haiti in 1998, has been providing free, quality healthcare to underserved and impoverished communities in urban and rural areas, providing more than 300,000 operations and training nearly 900 Haitian physicians (Grogg, 2013; Kirk, 2015). According to official reports, the Cuban Medical Brigade has served over 18 million patients in Haiti filling a deep void in access to quality care among its most impoverished and marginalized populations (Grogg, 2013).

The higher education sector's limited impact on health and agriculture may be attributed to the sector's fragility, limited resources, and the overly centralized system that reinforces health inequities (Cela, 2021; Cela et al., 2022). We argue that it is the absence of a clear purpose for higher education that has fostered societal indifference toward the needs of the majority of Haiti's population which has exacerbated inequalities during the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged after months of civil protests against government corruption and political violence (INURED, 2020). Faced with its newest public health emergency in the context of ongoing sociopolitical unrest, Haitian universities remained largely absent in discussions regarding the pandemic, the structural violence that limited access to healthcare, and the sociopolitical context that exacerbated government mistrust while compromising public health campaigns. By February 25, 2023, the Ministry of Health reported 860 deaths, 5,685 hospitalizations, and 34,214 confirmed cases of COVID-19 (MSPP, 2023). Of note is that the Ministry reported that only 230,000 tests had been administered

(ibid). Yet, by mid-November 2022, Haiti's neighbor, the Dominican Republic, reported just under 650,000 confirmed cases, and over 4,300 deaths (WHO, 2022b) despite having a more robust healthcare system than Haiti. Haiti's surprisingly low COVID-19 numbers are more indicative of its lack of healthcare infrastructure, insufficient testing, and the paucity of reliable data. These are issues a robust higher education sector should be highlighting and reflecting upon to prepare for the certainty of future health crises such as the reemergence of cholera (WHO, 2022a) which, after declarations of its eradication in 2019, has now become endemic in the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic unveiled longstanding and entrenched health inequalities and inequities across many societies, offering the possibility for reflection and reevaluation of public health and healthcare access. In Haiti, the pandemic "serve[d] as both an indicator and magnifier of existing marginalization and structural violence in the country" (INURED, 2020, p. 5). In fact, during the pandemic HEIs and research centers were largely absent from the public discourse, with few exceptions (INURED, 2020; Lumarque, 2020), producing limited knowledge and homegrown solutions. In fact, most public health publications and research on COVID-19 in Haiti have been produced outside of its own universities and research centers (e.g., Cenat, 2020; DeGennaro et al., 2021; Faure et al., 2022; Price et al., 2022; Tagliamonte et al., 2022). The absence of local institutional engagement in public health campaigns allowed misinformation to prevail. From the onset, COVID-19 deniers dismissed the virus as one introduced by and only affecting foreigners, others viewed the government shutdown as a political stunt to distract from the government's PetroCaribe scandal (Nugent, 2019), while scientific examinations of immediate threats to human security (e.g., poverty, hunger, violence, etc.) in the context of the pandemic remained few and far between (INURED, 2020; Rouzier et al., 2020).

Methods

The data presented in this section are drawn from a multidisciplinary study, National Study of Higher Education (NSHE), implemented in Haiti from 2013-2017 and 2019-2022. The NSHE consisted of integrated quantitative and ethnographic approaches whereby data were obtained from a variety of methodological tools at different time points. Implemented by the Interuniversity Institute on Research and Development (INURED), this national study of the higher education sector in Haiti included document analysis, multiple national surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, GIS mapping of HEIs, and ethnographic observations. As data on Haiti's higher education sector remain sparse, our study aimed to a) identify the public and private institutions that form part of this sector, an aspect of the study that remains ongoing as the sector continues to expand, b) provide general characterizations of its main stakeholders (e.g., students, faculty and business leaders) through surveys that were implemented prior to the pandemic and c) capture stakeholder perceptions of the sector through pre- and post-pandemic ethnographic interviews. This article draws exclusively from GIS mapping of HEIs and survey data.

To select professors and students, the study used a three-stage random sampling strategy. Of more than 180 known higher education institutions operating in Haiti at the time of the survey, a sample of 75 institutions were selected using the following criteria: year of founding; geographic location; number of students; institutional status (public or private); and legal status (government authorization). The national survey of 982 enrolled university students intended to capture their perceptions of the quality of instruction and learning and the role HEIs play in Haiti's long-term development and reconstruction. The survey of 94 members of the professoriate aimed to capture faculty members' perceptions of higher education in Haiti, their working conditions and level of satisfaction, as well as the sector's role in reconstruction and development. The survey included full- and part-time faculty from public and private institutions.

As the link between higher education and the economy requires collaboration with the private sector, we also surveyed 155 business leaders to understand their perceptions of the workforce the sector produces. To select businesses, they were segmented into the following categories: hotels, restaurants, financial organizations, services, and industries. The categories were then stratified by region to be selected using snowball sampling within each stratum.

Quantitative data were analyzed using univariate descriptive statistics (IBM SPSS Statistics for Mac Version 23.0). Multiple response questions are indicated and allow the individual to select more than one answer to each question. For multiple-response questions, percentages are shown as the proportion of total respondents relative to each category. Survey

tools were developed in French and Haitian Creole and tested for clarity. Study protocols were reviewed and approved by INURED's Institutional Review Board².

Findings

Higher Education in Haiti Today: A View from the Ground Up

Poor governance continues to impact every aspect of the sector, the quality of higher learning institutions, instructor credentials, the quality of training, institutional infrastructure, as well as the sector's impact on and relevance for Haitian society. Geographic information system mapping of HEIs operating in Haiti between 2013 and 2022 yielded 337 results ranging from universities to tertiary professional training programs. However, there are two caveats to be made here: 1) not all operating institutions have secured (or sought) government recognition and 2) due to Haiti's multiple crises, including the pandemic, some of these institutions may no longer exist. However, the Ministry of Education acknowledges that a number of institutions are currently operating without government recognition³.

Characterizing the Professoriate: Teaching for Supplemental Income

Haiti's professoriate is predominantly male at 82.8%, which is consistent with gender disparities across Haiti's institutions (INURED, 2017b). Almost half (48.3%) of participants were full-time employees, working at least 9 months during the year. Most (47%) instructors hold a bachelor's degree, followed by 42% with a master's degree, and only 11% possess a terminal degree. Whereas 86.1% of undergraduate diplomas were earned in Haiti, only 30% of master's and no terminal degrees were completed in Haiti. Outside of coursework, only 19% of instructors reported conducting research. The data revealed that monthly earnings varied greatly with 10.8% of participants (full-time and part-time) receiving less than USD \$200, one-fifth receiving between USD \$200 and \$399, 9.5% reporting between USD \$400 and \$599, 8.1% between USD \$600 and \$799, 2.8% ranging from USD \$800 to \$999, 13.5% USD \$1,000 or more, and almost one-quarter (23%) refusing to respond to the question.

More than half (55.8%) of all instructors reported teaching 21 or more hours per month and almost one-third (32.4%) between 9 and 16 hours. Class lecturing was the most frequently used method of instruction, followed by group projects. Half of the respondents spent 1 to 8 hours per month advising and mentoring students; 26.4% 9 to 16 hours; 11.8% 17 or more hours, and 2.9%, none. Further, 53.1% of respondents spent 1 to 8 hours per month on research and scientific writing, 18.8% 9 to 16 hours, 12.5% 17 or more hours, and 3.1%, none. Slightly more than two-fifths (43.8%) of part-time instructors held full-time positions elsewhere. When asked about their preferences in terms of employment status, 39.2% did not want full-time university employment, 37.3% would prefer full-time status, 15.7% were unsure, and 7.8% refused to answer. The study data revealed that compensation in higher education is not competitive with more than half (54%) of professors reporting that they were unsatisfied or only somewhat satisfied with their salaries and only one-in-five reporting satisfaction with their benefits package. They also reported limited opportunities for full-time employment. Therefore, many instructors view their positions as part-time employment through which they can earn supplemental income.

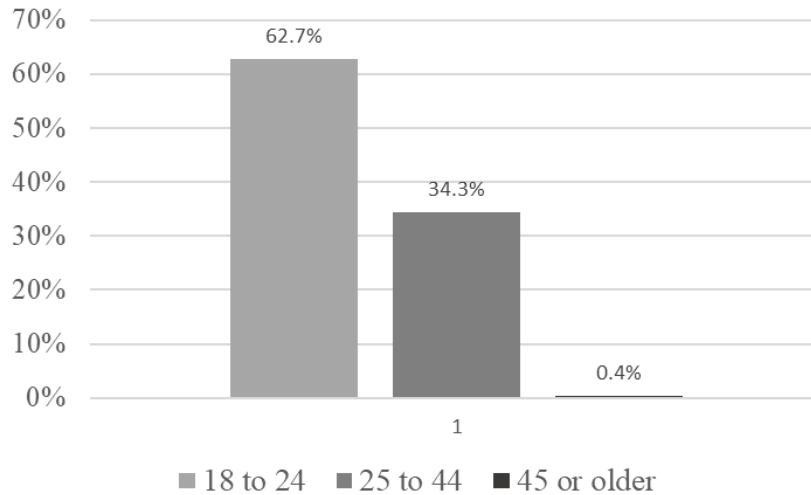
² Study protocol # HE 2014 007

³ By August 2023, the Ministry of Education (MENFP) had officially recognized 40 public institutions and 138 private institutions.

However, conceding that this number did not reflect all HEIs operating within the country they noted their expectation that "all other Higher Education Institutions [apply for regularization]." Announcing that "[a] general census is planned for the first quarter of the academic year 2023-2024 to update this list" (MENFP, 2023).

Figure 1

Reported Age of Sampled Students



Haitian University Students' Perceptions of Higher Education

The gender distribution of university students surveyed was as follows: 54.1% male, 45.3% female, 0.4% did not declare. Further, 62.7% of participants were between the ages of 18 and 24, 34.3% between 25 and 34, 1.8% between 35 and 44; and 0.4% were 45 or older. Most (91.5%) were single, with only 5.1% reporting being married. Most student participants, 72.7%, were pursuing an undergraduate degree, 19.1% a certificate, 3.2% doctoral degrees, and 2.1% master's degrees. With regards to their chosen major or discipline, 23.4% were studying social sciences, 23.3% medical sciences; 21.8% business, marketing, or accounting, 7.1% agronomy, environmental sciences, or natural sciences, 6.3% architecture or civil engineering, 2.5% Information Technology, and 14.2% selected other.

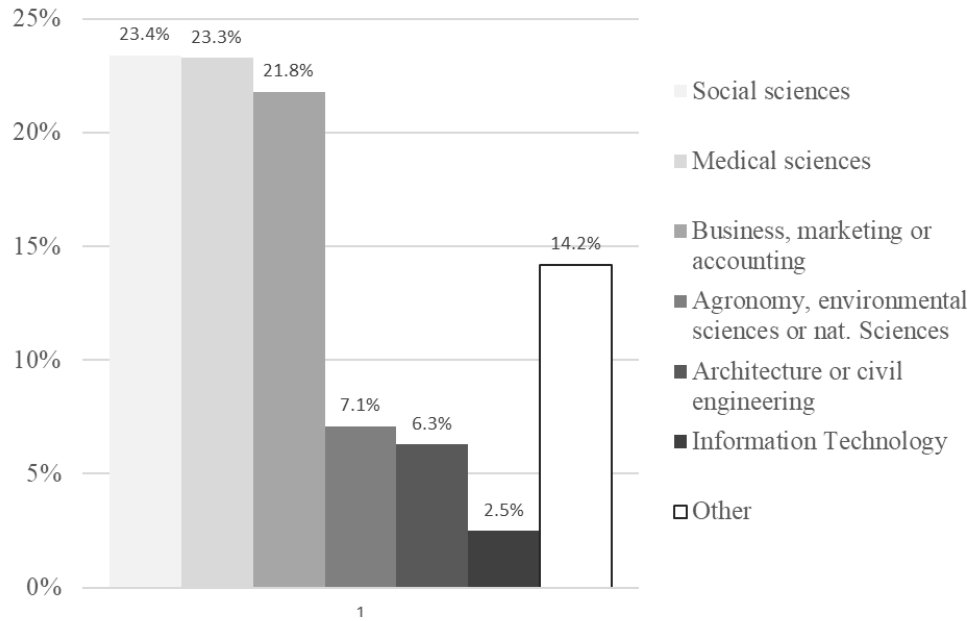
In terms of having sufficient information regarding college selection, 20.2% of respondents strongly agreed that they possessed sufficient information, 25.3% agreed, 29.4% disagreed, 20.2% strongly disagreed, 5.0% were unsure, and 10.6% were neutral. The data revealed that 30.5% of respondents strongly agreed that independent reports on institutional and program quality would help students select their institutions, 39.8% agreed, 7.9% disagreed, 1.5% strongly disagreed, 7.0% were unsure, and 8.9% were neutral. Furthermore, 37.1% of respondents strongly agreed that university and program performance rankings would help students select a university, 39.3% agreed, 6.8% disagreed, 3.3% strongly disagreed, 4.9% were unsure, and 7.3% were neutral.

The existence of student services varied by institution but suggested that there was a paucity of services. Just over one-quarter (26.5%) of students indicated that their university offered career services while 31.9% reported that no such services were provided, and 33.2% were unsure. Additional services reported included internships (46.5%), professional training opportunities (14.4%), assistance with summer employment (9.5%), and employment assistance (6.9%), while more than one-quarter (27.1%) reported that no additional services or assistance were provided. The study revealed that 52.8% of students were very confident in securing employment after receiving their diplomas, 22.0% were confident, 10.2% had little confidence, 3.1% were not confident at all, 2.4% were unsure, and 4.7% were neutral. More than three-quarters (76.7%) of students expressed a desire to study abroad.

Students were asked about the role of higher education in Haiti's development. The overwhelming majority (92.6%) of students agreed that quality HEIs are necessary for Haiti's economic and social development (91.7%), post-earthquake reconstruction (89.8%), and political development (85.8%), while 90.2% attributed Haiti's underdevelopment to the poor management of HEIs. Almost all students (99.8%) believe it is important that HEIs promote civic education, specifically developing a critical spirit and promoting an active citizenry. Eighty-eight percent (88%) believe higher education should provide students with the competencies needed to succeed in the labor market, and 77.7% believe HEIs

Figure 3

Reported Chosen Major/Discipline of Sampled Students



should facilitate students' personal development. Students were asked to identify all non-academic factors that influenced university grading. The question allowed them to select multiple responses including one response which stated that grades were not influenced by non-academic factors. The most common response selected among the 477 who reported that non-academic factors influenced grades was sexual favors at 45.9% (219 of 477), followed by payments or gifts to professors at 44.7% (213), and social class at 39.8% (190). Notably, only 7% (33) of student participants reported that grades were not influenced by non-academic factors.

The Private Sector and Higher Education in Haiti

Most enterprises included in the survey operate in the areas of retail, hotel, restaurant, and marketing services. When asked how businesses identify and recruit employees, 81.6% of respondents recruited through personal networks (e.g., family, friends, and colleagues), with only 4.6% recruiting directly from HEIs. Many managers in the private sector had some formal higher education training, with 62.3% of respondents revealing that most of their managers had attended a local vocational school, 29.8% local public university, and 29.8% local private university.

When evaluating the relationship between the private sector and HEIs, 83% of participants revealed that their business had no direct relationship with any HEI. Among the few that did, one had commissioned research, 4 participated in advanced training programs, 8 recruited employees, 3 provided student scholarships, and 9 offered internships. In one multiple-response question regarding what HEIs should offer students, 55.6% believed they should provide skills and training to prepare them for the workforce, 54.6% believed students should be encouraged to engage in internships or apprenticeships while studying, 48% advocated for continuing education courses for established professionals and 40.1% endorsed establishing short courses to meet market needs. More than one-third (36.2%) believed HEIs should consult private

sector representatives when developing curricula. However, 7.9% agreed that the two entities should operate autonomously. When asked if HEIs generally respond to the needs of the private sector, only 31.8% responded in the affirmative.

Unlike the GIS mapping data which was collected over a period of almost a decade, the survey data presented herein were collected prior to the pandemic. However, there have not been significant changes in the sector- investments or otherwise- over the past decade. Therefore, we conclude that by and large, the articulated challenges persist in the sector.

Discussion

According to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, higher education is vital to a nation's long-term development (HESI, 2021). Historically, countries in the Global North have injected significant resources into higher education to promote industrialization, incentivize research, and facilitate extension in agriculture and the applied sciences. In these countries, higher education was transformed by re-orienting its purpose from theoretical to applied knowledge while making it accessible to the masses (Altbach et al., 2011; Collins, 2011; 2012). For many countries in the Global South, however, such investments have been marginal despite unprecedented expansion (MacGregor, 2022). Between 2006 and 2018, the number of HEIs in the Global North remained constant at 20,000 as enrollments steadily declined while the number of HEIs in the Global South rose from over 40,000 to 70,000, mirroring student enrollments which nearly doubled (ibid).

In times of economic decline, private sector expansion has been the solution put forth to increase access (massification) while responding to individual demand for training that would lead to gainful employment, particularly in the Global South. Yet despite private institution expansion, public institutions continue to maintain higher absorption capacity. Unprecedented growth in student enrollments introduced quality control issues, particularly at newly established private institutions, that many states in the Latin America region have aimed to address through various regulatory models that implicate the state, universities and, in varying degrees, local markets (Espinoza Diaz, 2010; Jarvis, 2014; Jordana, 2021). Haiti, however, has increased access to a sector that has been in steady decline over the past several decades due to governance failure (INURED, 2010). That Haiti has been unable to revise its higher education policy since 1987, despite facing innumerable political, economic, social and environmental crises suggests that there are entrenched, powerful interests resistant to reforming a sector critical to the nation's development and the establishment of democracy.

Haiti has neither made the transition from its elitist origins to an applied model that is relevant to bringing about its social, political, or economic transformation. We contend that this is the result of the failure to articulate a clear vision for the sector. Does the sector exist to promote economic development, individual social mobility, a combination of both, or is its mandate to bring about social transformation by being an engine of democracy and development? At present, there is no articulated vision and requisite governance structure to orient the various institutions and stakeholders in the sector around it. The private sector's reluctance to recruit employees from Haiti's universities and perceptions of universities as irrelevant call into question the training and preparation of students. However, we must also factor in the phenomenon of brain drain which has drained Haiti of much of its human resources (e.g., doctors, nurses, engineers, policymakers, etc.), particularly in times of crisis. Instructors are poorly compensated and teach many hours that more than likely preclude them from engaging in research while drawing qualified instructors to more competitive employment such as international aid work (Lemay-Hébert et al., 2020). It is no surprise, then, that instructor credentials are not on par with international standards. More broadly, Haiti's poor development outcomes, health indicators, and struggling agricultural sector are an indictment of a sector with over 300 institutions of higher learning, only 178 of which are officially recognized by the Haitian government. Based on these factors, we can conclude that Haiti's higher education sector is not contributing to economic growth, nor is it producing new (endogenous) knowledge through research, engaging communities or producing the leadership that Haiti so desperately needs.

In light of these factors, we must consider what role higher education has played in Haiti? The inaccessibility of HEIs in Haiti reinforces historic inequalities that have socially, economically and politically excluded the vast majority of Haitian citizens and relegated them to a life of poverty. Higher education remains largely inaccessible to the vast majority of Haiti's youth due to the limited absorptive capacity of public institutions, exorbitant fees charged by private institutions and the absence of student financial aid schemes. In this manner, HEIs play a limited role in serving democratic processes while poor governance and lack of transparency in the sector destabilize such processes. Given these realities, university education in Haiti provides training to a small segment of the population who remain disconnected from society and its

needs. Its limited contributions to Haitian society have HEIs to the brink of irrelevance, making it a product of consumption with potential individual benefits that exacerbate inequalities rather than position the sector as a steward of development for the country. In fact, as this and other studies have found (INURED, 2010; Lemay-Hébert et al., 2020; OECD & INURED, 2017) as Haitian youth obtain higher levels of education, their desire to migrate- whether for further study or employment-increases facilitating the migration of Haiti's most educated (Lemay-Hébert et al., 2020; OECD & INURED, 2017) while exacerbating the conditions of poverty in the homeland. This is evident from the low ratio of health professionals available to the population.

The lack of leadership connecting higher education to the private sector could be felt prior to, during and even after COVID-19. Failed governance has contributed to severe mismatches between sectoral and human resource needs. In the absence of any efforts to identify sectoral needs and ensure that Haiti's higher learning institutions are meeting them by providing quality training to a sufficient number of young talent in specific domains, Haiti's downward spiral accelerates. The failure to incentivize certain areas of training, such as health and agronomy exacerbates vulnerability in Haiti.

In the absence of a vision and clear leadership, the higher education sector largely exists as an entity unto itself, in furtherance of its own existence and as a training ground for other nations seeking to recruit professionals from abroad. During COVID-19, as the population rejected government guidance on the pandemic, HEIs remained marginal to discussions of the health crisis. As rumors regarding the virus' origins, transmission, and impacts circulated among the general population, HEIs were largely silent. COVID-19 was an opportunity; to question issues of healthcare access, health disparities, healthcare infrastructure, and the data regarding infection, testing and mortality rates. It was an opportunity to act; to engage in health campaigns, encourage testing, and advocate for equitable access to health services. And, as debates regarding the many forms of structural and physical violence faced by Haitians raged on, there were few institutions to help society examine the intersectional vulnerabilities of poverty, urban population density, the cultural configurations of family homes, lack of access to water, sanitation, food that rendered the average Haitian extremely vulnerable to infection. The opportunity to find an alternative model of health care that was more accessible to most Haitians, in light of the pandemic, emerged and dissipated further vulnerabilizing the poor and those living on the margins. During the pandemic, Haitian citizens were largely left to fend for themselves as they navigated information about an unknown virus in the midst of much social, political and economic turbulence.

We argue that in order to reform the sector, higher education's purpose in Haiti must be clearly articulated. Until a clear vision for the sector is developed and there is the political will to shepherd the sector toward the realization of that vision, higher education will remain unresponsive to societal needs exacerbating the suffering of Haitians in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the Haitian context, the role of a higher education sector concerned with public welfare would be to educate the public, maintain transparency, report what is known and encourage the adoption of precautionary measures in spite of the unusually low infection and mortality rates. In fact, the higher education sector should position itself to increase access by bringing health information and encourage testing among Haitians in underserved areas. As always, Haiti's most vulnerable are most affected, and as they are "Othered" in times of normalcy, they are often ignored in times of crisis. As a result, many of Haiti's poor have or will perish undiagnosed, with no official cause of death and without any public outcry, as happened during the cholera epidemic (ASFC, 2019).

Conclusion

Haitian higher education's viability as a sector requires that it become locally relevant before it can be outwardly facing. The contextual factors and descriptive findings presented herein reflect the sector's fragility as elucidated by various stakeholders. The failure to articulate a clear purpose for higher education has contributed to its tenuous link to the real-life challenges faced by Haitian society. University students believe that quality higher education should be linked to economic, social, and political development and that it should promote civic engagement. Yet, the sector's exclusivity and lack of community engagement allow these institutions to function outside the reality of average, impoverished citizens thereby reproducing social inequalities in Haiti.

Haiti's failure to establish a clear purpose for higher education has contributed to insufficient investments in the sector, poor governance, and a vacuum in leadership that has limited accountability and perpetuated societal inequalities. This has contributed to widespread disillusionment among youths whose dominant aspiration is to leave the country. Just

as higher education can contribute to development, this article demonstrates how a higher education system disconnected from a society in crisis can perpetuate existing social inequities. Nowhere is this more evident than during a public health crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we question the contribution of the higher education sector to public welfare in Haiti, we do so not to challenge its existence but as a call for stakeholders to reflect on what the sector must become if Haiti is to emerge from these perpetual crises. Haiti's deteriorating sociopolitical situation, continued economic stagnation, and the increased frequency and ferocity of disaster events alert us to the need for a vibrant and engaged higher education sector. Haiti can no longer afford to neglect higher education; it is an investment in the nation's future- its youth; it is an investment necessary for rebuilding and to address longstanding inequalities that have plagued Haitian society since independence.

Acknowledgements

We are thankful to the International Development Research Centre in Canada who provided partial funding for this study (Grant #106216-004). Additional financial support was obtained from the Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED) and a 2013-2014 US Fulbright Scholar award granted to Dr. Toni Cela. We are grateful to INURED's research team, whose hard work and integrity was critical to the data collection process. Finally, we thank the reviewers for their critical feedback and April Mann for her review of the final manuscript.

References

- Alford, K., Bunch, J. C., Pierre, A., Anglade, B., & Roberts, T. G. (2020). Employer expectations for graduates from Haiti's agricultural universities. *Advancements in Agricultural Development*, 1(3): 27–41.
- Altbach, P. G., Gumpert, P., & Berdahl, R. (2011). *American higher education in the twenty-first century: Social, political, and economic challenges* (3rd ed.). The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Arthur, J., & Bohlin, K. (2005). *Citizenship and higher education: The role of universities in communities and societies*. Routledge Falmer.
- Avocats sans Frontières Canada (ASFC). 2019. *Comment répondre aux besoins des victimes de choléra en Haïti? Faisabilité d'une approche individuelle d'assistance pour les personnes les plus affectées par la maladie*. ASFC.
- Bernard, J. J. (1989). *Higher education in Haiti, 1958-1988: An analysis of its organization, administration and contributions to national development* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of North Texas.
- Bowen, W., Kurzweil, M., & Tobin, E. (2005). *Equity and excellence in American higher education*. University of Virginia Press.
- Cela, T. (2021). Higher education reform and diaspora engagement in post-earthquake Haiti. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 3(2), 239–266 DOI: 10.1080/09620214.2021.1927381.
- Cela, T., Marcelin, L. H., Fleurantin, N., & Jean Louis, S. (2022). Emergency health in the aftermath of disasters: A post-Hurricane Matthew skin outbreak in rural Haiti. *Disaster Prevention and Management*, 31(4), 398–410.
- Cenat, J. M. (2020). The vulnerability of low-and middle-income countries facing the COVID-19 pandemic: The case of Haiti. *Travel Med Infect Dis*, 37, 101684. DOI: [10.1016/j.tmaid.2020.101684](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmaid.2020.101684)
- Chantler, A. (2016). The ivory tower revisited. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 37(2), 215–229.
- Collins, C. (2011). Cross-border collaboration in the service of human capacity development. In R. Sakamoto, & D. Chapman, D. (Eds.), *Cross-border partnerships in higher education: Strategies and Issues*. (pp. 228–247). Routledge.
- Collins, C. (2012) Land grant extension as a global endeavor: Connecting knowledge and international development. *The Review of Higher Education*, 36(1), 91–124.
- DeGennaro, V., Schwartz, T., Henderson, R., & Elie, M. (2021). *A cross-sectional cohort study of prevalence of antibodies to COVID-19 in Port-au-Prince, Haiti* [PREPRINT] medRxiv. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2021.06.30.21259815>
- Espinoza Díaz, O. (2010). Los sistemas de aseguramiento de la calidad en la educación Superior en América Latina. *Akadeimeia*, 1(1), 7–22.
- Faure, J. A., Wang, C.-W., Chen, C.-H. S., & Chan, C.C. (2022) Assessment of the functional capacity and preparedness of the Haitian healthcare system to fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic: A narrative review. *Healthcare*, 10(8), 1428.
- Fene, F., Ríos-Blancos, M. J., Lachaud, J., Razo, C., Lamadrid-Figueroa, H., Liu, M., Michel, J., Thermidor, R., & Lozano, R. (2020). Life expectancy, death, and disability in Haiti, 1990-2017: A systemic analysis from the global burden of disease study. *Rev Panam Salud Publica*, 44(e136).

- Gage, A. D., Leslie, H. H., Bitton, A., Jerome, J. G., Thermidor, R., Joseph, J. P., & Kruk, M. E. (2017). Assessing the quality of primary care in Haiti. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 95, 182–190, doi: 10.2471/BLT.16.179846.
- Gelting, R., Bliss, K., Patrick, M., Lockhart, G., & Handzel, T. (2013). Water, sanitation and hygiene in Haiti: Past, present and future. *American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*, 89(4), 665–670, doi: 10.4269/ajtmh.13-0217.
- Global Hunger Index (2022). Haiti. <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/haiti.html>.
- Goertz, H. (2016). *Integrating gender and nutrition within agricultural services: Haiti landscape analysis*. USAID and INGANAES.
- Grogg, P. (2013, August 28). Cuban doctors bring eyesight, healthcare to Haiti. *Global Information Network*. <https://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/cuban-doctors-bring-eyesight-healthcare-haiti>
- Group de Travail sur l'Éducation et la Formation (GTEF). (2010). *Pour un pacte nationale sur l'éducation en Haïti: Rapport au Président de la République*. GTEF. https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/haiti_pacte_national_education.pdf
- Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI). (2021). *Assessments of higher education's progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals- Volume 2: For higher education institutions participating in assessments*. <https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-09/HEI%20assessment%20for%20the%20SDGs%20-%20Volume%202%20HEIs1.pdf>
- Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED). (2010). *The challenge for higher education: A post-earthquake assessment of higher education institutions in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area*. http://www.inured.org/uploads/2/5/2/6/25266591/the_challenge_for_haitian_higher_education.pdf
- Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED). (2017b). *Republic of Haiti: Country of origin information paper*. http://www.inured.org/uploads/2/5/2/6/25266591/unchr_coi_haiti_final_redacted_report_inured.pdf
- Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development. (2020). *Post-Earthquake Haitian migration to Latin America*. http://www.inured.org/uploads/2/5/2/6/25266591/mideq_inured_2020_post-earthquake_haitian_migration_to_latin_america_v1.pdf
- Jacob, S. (2020). Massification and the public financing of higher education in Haiti: Issues and challenges. *International Review of Administrative Services*, 86(2), 349–367. doi.org/10.1177/0020852318781457
- Jarvis, D.S.L. (2014) Regulating higher education: Quality assurance and neo-liberal managerialism in higher education – A critical introduction. *Policy and Society*, 33(3), 155–166.
- Jordana, J. (2021). Introduction: Regulatory governance of higher education in Latin America. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 40(4), 483–486.
- Kirk, J. M. (2015). *Healthcare without borders: Understanding Cuban medical internationalism*. University of Florida Press.
- Klarreich, K., & Polman, L. (2012). The NGO republic of Haiti. *The Nation*. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/ngo-republic-haiti/>.
- Lemay-Hébert, N., Marcelin, L. H., Pallage, S., & Cela, T. (2019). The internal brain drain: Foreign aid, hiring practices and international migration. *Disasters*, 44(4), 621–640.
- Lumarque, J. (Ed.). 2020. *Haïti et le Covid-19. Des outils pour comprendre et agir*. Université Quiqueya.
- Marcelin, L. H., & Cela, T. (2017a). *After Hurricane Matthew: Resources, capacities, and pathways to recovery and reconstruction of devastated communities in Haiti*. Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED). http://www.inured.org/uploads/2/5/2/6/25266591/reportonline__051117.pdf
- Marginson, S. (2012). The “Public” contribution of universities in an increasingly global world. In B. Pusser, K. Kempner, S. Marginson, & I. Ordorika (Eds.). *Universities and the public sphere: knowledge creation and state building in the era of globalization* (pp. 7–25). Routledge.
- Ministère de la Santé Publique et de la Population (MSPP). (2022). *Situation épidémiologique de la COVID-19 a la 8 SE 2023, Haïti*. <https://www.mspp.gouv.ht/>
- Nugent, C. (2019). Why a Venezuelan oil program is fueling massive street protests in Haiti. *Time*. <https://time.com/5609054/haiti-protests-petrocaribe/>.
- OECD & INURED. (2017). *Interactions entre politique publiques, migration et développement en Haïti*. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED).
- Pamphile, L. D. (2008). *Clash of cultures: America's educational strategies in occupied Haiti, 1915-1934*. University Press of America.
- Pierre, A. (2015). *Propuestas de reestructuración curricular de dos facultades de agronomía haitianas relacionadas al desarrollo sustentable* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Chapingo Autonomous University.

- Pierre, A., Calixte, M. C., Moore, K., Bunch, J. C., Koenig, R., Delva, L., & Roberts, T. G. (2018). Haitian agricultural faculty preparation for their academic roles. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 25(1), 1–15.
- Pierre-Charles, G. (1988). *Université et démocratie: L'université et les universitaires dans la lutte pour la démocratie et le changement*. Centre de recherche et de formation économique et sociale pour le développement.
- Price, R., Cho, J., & Nelson, S. (2022). SARS-CoV-2 seroprevalence at an urban hospital in Haiti. *Cureus*, 14(8), e27690 DOI: [10.7759/cureus.27690](https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.27690)
- Pusser, B., Kempner, K., Marginson, S., & Ordorika, I. (Eds.). (2012). *Universities and the public sphere: Knowledge creation and state building in the era of globalization*. Routledge.
- Romain, J. B. (1987). *Situation de l'enseignement supérieur en Haïti*. Impr. des Antilles.
- Rouzier, V., Liautaud, B., & Deschamps, M. M. (2020). Facing the monster in Haiti. *N Engl J Med*; 383, e4. DOI: 10.1056/NEJMc2021362.
- Saltmarsh, J., & Hartley, M. (2011). *“To serve a larger purpose”: Engagement for democracy and the transformation of higher education*. Temple University Press.
- Shapiro, H. T. (2005). *A larger sense of purpose: Higher education and society*. Princeton University Press.
- Stads, G.-J., & Beintema, N. M. (2009). *Public agricultural research in Latin America and the Caribbean: Investment and capacity trends*. Inter-American Development Bank.
- Tagliamonte, M. S., Mavian, C., & Zainabadi, K., et al. (2022). Rapid emergence and spread of severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2 gamma (p.1) variant in Haiti. *Clin Infect Dis.*, 74, 2057–2060. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cid/ciab736>
- Torres, C. A., & Schugurensky, D. (2002). The political economy of higher education in the era of neoliberal globalization: Latin America in comparative perspective. *Higher Education*, 43(4), 429–445. doi: 10.1023/A:1015292413037.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2022). *Human development reports: Haiti*. <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/HTI>.
- MacGregor, K. (2022, March 12). Higher education report charts rise of the Global South. *University World News*. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20220311151815827>
- Urzúa, R. (2002). Regional overview: Latin America and the Caribbean. *Higher Education Policy*, 15(3), 277–290.
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID). (2018). *Public financing of education in Haiti, 2010-2018*. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00TQSG.pdf.
- U.S. Government (USG). (2011). *Haiti: Feed the future FY 2011–2015 multi-year strategy*. <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/44991296/feed-the-future-multi-year-strategyhaiti-public>
- World Health Organization. (2022a). *Cholera-Haiti*. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/disease-outbreak-news/item/2022-DON427>.
- World Health Organization. (2022b). *Coronavirus (COVID-19) dashboard*. <https://covid19.who.int/>.
- World Health Organization & UNICEF. (2014). *Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for water supply and sanitation Haiti: Report on the estimates on the use of water sources and sanitation facilities (1980–2012)*.
-

Louis HERNS MARCELIN is a professor in the departments of Anthropology, Public Health Sciences and International Studies at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida, and Chancellor of the Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED) in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. His research examines questions of health and human security and has been published widely. He is a recipient of numerous awards and fellowships including, but not limited to: the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center’s Academic Writing Residency fellowship, the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) fellowship, and the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study in South Africa’s Future of Democracy Residency award. LMarcel2@miami.edu.

Toni CELA is the Coordinator of INURED and affiliated faculty in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida. Her research interests include anthropology of education, anthropology of disaster and recovery, and migration, diaspora and development. She was a 2013-2014 US Fulbright Scholar in Haiti. Toni.Cela@inured.org.

Mário da Silva Fidalgo is an Assessment Officer at IMPACT Initiatives in Geneva, Switzerland and affiliated Data Officer at INURED. He has worked on issues of migration and health at multilateral institutions and humanitarian NGOs including the UNCHR, IOM, and PAHO. M.Fidalgo1@umiami.edu.

Christopher Zuraik is a Senior Research Associate at INURED and Market Access and Health Economics and Outcomes Researcher at Novartis in Canada. Christopher.Zuraik@mail.mcgill.ca.