



Haiti's Economic Growth Initiative and CTE

BY CARA DIMATTINA

Foreign aid has been very instrumental in bolstering career and technical education (CTE) programming in impoverished nations. In the past, international agencies like the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labor Organization have advocated for organizations providing foreign aid to increase funding for CTE programs to help foster economic development; this resulted in “unusually high levels of funding by international development agencies,” according to a 1983 report, “The Rise and Fall of Vocational Education.” In the mid-1960s, for instance, the World Bank had the same number of loans out for CTE programs in developing countries as it did for general education.

The report noted “the historical record suggests that the first half of the 20th century witnessed a general, though variable rise in the number of vocational schools and the proportion of secondary vocational students. The introduction of vocational instruction in public schools followed closely the restructuring of national economies under industrial and corporate capitalism. By World War II, vocational education had become a central and legitimate element in the educational policies of development-oriented international agencies.”

In the 1970s, World Bank support for career and technical programs grew and CTE programs in developing countries were receiving 53 percent of all education funding from the agency (Benavot). More recently, funding for CTE programs as foreign aid has dissipated, but studies show that organizations are looking to provide funding for such programming more efficiently and effectively.

In a study by the World Bank in 1993, “Skills for Productivity: Vocational Education and Training in Developing Countries,” researchers found that skill training in the rural and urban informal sectors in developing countries may contribute more to the alleviation of poverty than training for modern sector wage employment (Middleton). They also found that

in small low-income countries a strong participation by workers and employers in training and education was an effective way for programs to better respond to the needs of local businesses.

An example of a program that has begun to put these principles into action is the Economic Growth Initiative for Haiti (EGI), a non-governmental organization (NGO) that offers a business development and mentoring program for university graduates just outside of Port

the poorest children in Haiti. It was his job to help graduating students apply to university or find jobs.

“In 2004, Haiti’s economy was at a standstill due to a coup d’état. There were not enough jobs to meet the needs of the qualified and educated young Haitians who were going out into the workforce,” Keppel said.

But even before the coup d’état, Haiti’s situation was dire. According to the CIA World Fact Book, in 2003, 80 percent of



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au Prince. Its goal is to create and expand local entrepreneurship while also increasing opportunities for networking between the students and current local business owners.

The idea for this project came about when Stephen Keppel began working as the director of external affairs for the Louverture Cleary School, an NGO that provides secondary education to some of

Haiti’s population was living below the poverty line and 54 percent were living in abject poverty. It was also noted that two-thirds of the population did not hold formal jobs. So Keppel talked to Patrick Moynihan, president and founder of the Louverture Cleary School, about some ideas he had to create opportunities for the graduates, and the two founded EGI shortly thereafter.

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“We never believed that EGI would create jobs on a massive scale, but in order for Haiti’s economy to grow, a lot needs to be done on the local level,” Keppel said.

Getting Businesses Involved

EGI offers two tracks for students, one for management and another for entrepreneurs. All of the students accepted into EGI’s program have already graduated from a university or college. Classes are taught in a factory outside of Port au Prince. Both programs require that students take business courses from current business professionals for a full year, during which they are taught how to apply the lessons they learn to their current business plan or job. The classes cover a range of topics, such as marketing, finance and accounting, and are taught voluntarily by local Haitian business owners. When local business professionals are not available for a specific course, American professionals often volunteer to teach classes over Skype.

At the end of the year, students on the entrepreneur track go through a business incubator. This is a short program that helps the entrepreneur to further develop a business plan and connect to a mentor

that is already running a similar business in the private sector. By the end of the program, those on the entrepreneur track should have a solid business plan that will secure them a small business loan. EGI’s first classes began in 2006. Within three years several businesses have been developed. Abraham Pierre-Mary and Minel Loffical are among two of the success stories.

Pierre-Mary and two other recent graduates began a computer services business. From their marketing courses they came up with a strategy to offer basic computer skill courses to local residents to attract business and build relationships with clients. These graduates still return to the school to take refresher courses and network in order to further improve their business.

Loffical is the current director of external affairs for the Louverture Cleary School and began working with EGI as a volunteer coordinator. After about six months, he decided to enter the program

in an effort to get his peanut butter business off the ground.

“EGI taught me how to write a business plan and be a leader,” Loffical said. “I was surprised and amazed. Shortly after I wrote my first plan I was offered a small loan from an individual investor.”

To grow the organization, EGI uses a great deal of grassroots marketing among the Haitian community and engages a core of business professionals. This has attracted many local Haitian investors to support the program and is now attracting many of them to begin investing in the graduates.

“We never believed that EGI would create jobs on a massive scale, but in order for Haiti’s economy to grow, a lot needs to be done on the local level,” Keppel said.

One factor that has helped this program to succeed is the emphasis on the community. It has made it the responsibility of community members to act as mentors and guides. With business plans that suit the needs of the Haitian culture and opportunities to network with community and business leaders from abroad, EGI participants become empowered and in control of their futures. Down the line this may help to attract foreign investment which could, ultimately, lead to increased prosperity for more Haitians. ■

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