TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN HAÏTI

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After conducting a thorough review of the state of inclusion of students with disabilities in Haïti, the authors present a study that investigates the attitudes of urban and rural teachers in Haïti toward inclusion. Participants were administered the Opinions Relative to Integration (ORI) of Students with Disabilities instrument. Reliability of the ORI for Haitian teachers was .68, as determined by the Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient. Teachers' attitudes toward integration were not associated with years of teaching experience, education was positively associated with attitudes, and teachers in rural Haïti did not differ from teachers in urban Haïti. Other findings indicated that variables representing teachers' cognitions and beliefs were more important in predicting attitudes than variables related to the teachers' actual experiences of teaching.

Estimates of global populations indicate that more children with disabilities live in developing and third world countries than in industrialized countries (UNESCO, 1996). In 1995, the Ministère de L'Éducation Nationale of Haïti estimated that 11% of the population had a disability, of which 15% (120 000) were children of school age; this percentage is about 5% greater than the estimate of the incidence of disabilities in a school age population in the USA and Canada, for example (Landrum, 1999; Mallory, Charlton, Nicholls, & Marfo, 1993; Nkabinde, 1993; Scheer & Groce, 1988; Weintraub, 2005). In May 2005, the enrolment of students with disabilities in school was about 2%, almost double the previous percentage reported in 1995 by the Ministère de L'Éducation Nationale (Personal communication with Dr. Michel Peant, Haïti's National Coordinator for the Society of the Blind and National Secretary for the Integration of the Handicapped People , May 6, 2005). However, since lack of identification affects prevalence figures, it can be assumed that the percentage of school-aged children with disabilities is even greater, either because they are not currently attending school in Haïti or are struggling in regular classrooms without the appropriate services. In 1993, of the 54 000 candidates who participated in the final examination for a high school certificate, only two students with identified disabilities (visual impairments) participated in that testing (Ministère de L'Éducation Nationale, 1995).

Presently, Haïti is in the unenviable position of being the country with the second highest proportion of students in private schools, while also carrying the stigma of being one of the poorest countries in the world (Background Notes on Countries of the World, 2003; Salmi, 2000). The average Haitian family earns $425 in US currency per year (Background Notes on

Countries of the World, 2003). Overall, about 40% and 80% of students of school age do not attend primary and secondary schools, respectively, which may explain the high illiteracy rate of 47% in Haïti. Education in Haïti is essentially a private enterprise with little control from the government. Seventy-five percent of primary students and 82% of secondary level students are enrolled in private schools (Salmi, 2000). Less than 10% of the school age population is enrolled in public schools. At the elementary level, only 65% of those eligible for primary education are enrolled in schools, although public education is free from first to sixth grade (Background Notes on Countries of the World, 2003).

In the rural areas, the enrolment rate is about 23%. Overall, across areas, 63% of those enrolled will complete elementary school (Salmi, 2000). Beyond the primary level, from 15 to 22% of those eligible for secondary education are actually enrolled in schools (Background Notes on Countries of the World, 2003; Salmi, 2000). Fifty-five percent of those attending secondary schools live in Port-au Prince, the capital of Haïti. Only 38 students will graduate from high school for every 1000 children who begin first grade (Ministère de L'Éducation Nationale, 1995).

Concerning students with disabilities, it was reported that less than 1% (600) of this population was identified and were receiving special services, and most were enrolled in private schools (Ministère de L'Éducation. 1995). One of the structural problems is that low performing students are not routinely tested; thus, many students who would be classified in the high incidence categories (i.e. speech and language, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, emotional disorders) in a developed country are an integral part of regular classrooms in Haïti. However, while the regular setting seems to be *integrated*, it is not so by design but rather by default. Many teachers indicated that they would welcome a formalized process of testing to help them target those students who need specialized instruction.

Arbeiter and Hartley (2002) reasoned that a lack of general knowledge about disability, as well as a lack of access to special programs that exist in the most populated cities in third world countries, seem to act as barriers to enrolment. Miles (1985) surmised that since many students with disabilities are not identified, it follows that they are *casually* integrated in regular classes. While school systems around the world have spent vast resources in labeling and classifying students to provide them with a segregated education, Haïti's response to low achievement and poor performance clearly reflects a medical model of disability (i.e. personal handicap and deficiency). Academic failure is blamed on the student, while remediation of low achievement is solely the responsibility of the family unit.

Limitations

Haïti has been affected by many of the factors confronting developing countries: severe economic limitations, shortage of trained personnel, and geographic isolation of a large sector of the population. By and large, these are the results of the incidence of poverty and unemployment. The main features of schools in Haïti are a reliance on a rigid curriculum, rote learning, and a resistance to experiential and cooperative learning approaches (Ministère de L'Éducation. 1998).

There are three categories of schools in Haïti: public schools, private schools, and humanitarian organizations. Only humanitarian schools provide free of charge basic reading and writing for students with disabilities, especially those with visual and hearing impairments, as well as those who are taught vocational skills. Across the three category of schools, a significant number of teachers do not possess teaching credentials. Moreover, there are no meaningful teacher in-service programs to upgrade teacher methodology and knowledge of subject matter (Ministère de L'Éducation. 1998). Special education training is not part of the courses offered or degree conferred by any of the universities. In terms of space and infrastructure, schools are chronically overcrowded and lack electricity, water, and the necessary hygienic facilities.

Overall, students with special needs have not been formally tested and classified. They are left to fend for themselves within the regular setting. Usually, the main reason is a lack of funding, since most schools operate on a tuition basis. This relieves the parents from the shame of failure, and the school from evaluating the delivery of education to all students. Currently, students with severe disabilities are served in a number of government residential institutions that house mostly adults with psychiatric disorders, and in private schools. In general, students' institutionalization or placement in special programs depends on the financial means of the parents.

Readiness and Culture

It has been suggested that integration in developing countries can be facilitated much more easily and successfully than in North America and Western European countries, because in the former, students with disabilities are already in the mainstream, unlike in countries with a dual system of regular and special education (UNESCO, 1997, 1999). Recognizing that schools in developing countries have large class sizes, untrained teachers, inadequate teaching techniques, transportation problems, and lack of resources and facilities (Baine, 1993), Mushoriwa (2001) commented that one of the arguments put forward by policy makers pertaining to facilitating inclusive education in poor countries is to consider the regular classroom as the mainstream model. This position takes into consideration the prohibitive costs associated with implementing the inclusive model, which is expected to meet the needs of a small number of children, as opposed to additional services provided to the existing regular classroom for low achievers, regardless of the shortcomings of such a model. There is an urgency to address the educational needs of students with disabilities; however, there is a major crisis in general education. Among some policymakers and the educational elite in Haïti, special education is considered a luxury or a benefit that only industrialized nations can afford. To paraphrase the former Secretary of Education for Haïti, an advocate for special education: When the main house is on fire, who cares about what would become of the guest house? (Personal communication with E. Buteau, Haïti's former Secretary of Education, September 26, 2003).

The Haitian Constitution sets out that the first six years of education are compulsory. This statement has never materialized in any other legislative mandates for many reasons, not the least of which has to do with the role that children of the poor play in providing for the comfort of middle and upper classes of Haitian society (Gibbons & Garfield, 1999; Janak, 2000). Many parents in the provinces place their children with wealthier families in the cities in order to ensure that they get food and shelter. In return, these children work from sunrise to sundown at various household chores. At times, they are sent great distances to buy the necessities for the household. Usually, they get ready the school uniforms for the wealthier children their age who attend school, while they stay back to prepare food or clean the house to facilitate the comfort of the sons and daughters of the house as they return from school and attend to their homework. These children can be found even in the houses of the framers of Haïti's latest Constitution. Obviously, compulsory education would destroy a source of cheap labor in Haïti (Janak, 2000).

Beginning Steps Toward Integration

Although special education in Haïti has a solid history in a few expensive private schools under the administration of teachers with Master's degrees in special education, obtained mostly from universities in the United States, public schools lack any formal response to students' failure to learn. However, public education's response to the needs of children with disabilities is in a state of transition. Based on protocols agreed upon by the country's leadership, and a deadline of 2004 imposed by international organizations supporting equality of education for children (Personal communication with E. Buteau, Haïti's former Secretary of Education, 2003, September 23, 2003; Organization of American States, 1999), there is a

movement in the executive branch to recognize that low-performing students need extra help through identification, and possibly special services.

While as of 2004 the legislature had shown no urgency in passing legislation to reform education with regard to quality education for all students. By contrast, the Office of Special Education has been expanded, with branches located in the two most populated provinces outside of Port-au-Prince, the capital, in order to pilot an integration program in a few public schools. In this pilot program, mainstreaming classes largely resemble the current regular setting, except that students with disabilities may have been identified. This design is receiving international support in order to ascertain the feasibility of expanding such a model to other Haitian schools and provinces. Foreign organizations have given extensive start-up funding for many educational projects related to special needs, in addition to educational ideas and methods (UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, World Bank). Such programs rely on foreign financial assistance and therefore espouse foreign strategies and concepts (e.g. rehabilitation), without questioning the feasibility of implementing them in the Haitian context and maintaining them within severely limited local resources. It has been the case in Haïti that foreign donors often do not sustain their efforts over long periods of time.

Inclusion/Integration in the International Context

As Smith, Polloway, Patton and Dowdy (2004) conceptualized the term inclusion, it refers to students with disabilities becoming part of the general education classroom, receiving a meaningful curriculum with necessary support, and being taught with effective strategies. In contrast, integration refers to educating students with disabilities in close proximity to students in regular classrooms (Arbeiter & Hartley, 2002). Although the term inclusion is more widely accepted in the USA and the UK, internationally, the term integration is more preferred (Booth, 1996; Pijl & Dyson, 1998). For the purposes of this paper, inclusion and integration will be used interchangeably for the following reasons: (1) to encompass the range of programmatic models in Haïti used to integrate students in the general track; and (2) because participants in the study do not distinguish between the two terms.

Since the mid- to late-1980s, there has been a strong international movement to include students with disabilities in the general setting (UNESCO, 1994, 1999). This is evident within the literature for the following continents and geographical areas: Europe (Ainscow & Haile-Giorgis, 1999; Didaskalou & Millward, 2001; Flem & Keller, 2000; Pijl & Dyson, 1998; Senel, 1998), Australia-Oceania (Campbell, Gilmore, & Cuskelly, 2003), Asia (Clarke & Nomanbhoy, 1998; Kataoka, Van Kraayenoord, & Elkins, 2004; Poon-McBrayer, 2004), Africa (Arbeiter & Hartley, 2002; Barnartt & Kabzems, 1992; Engelbrecht, Oswald, Swart, & Eloff, 2003), the Americas (Clark & Artiles, 2000; Hammond & Ingalls, 2003, Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Woloshyn, Bennett, & Berrill, 2003), the Middle East (Alghazo & Naggar Gaad, 2004; Gumpel & Awartani, 2003; Heiman, 2001), and the West Indies (Dupoux, Wolman, & Estrada, 2004; Hall & Dixon, 1995; Lambert, Lyubansky, & Achenbach, 1998; Newton & Brathwaite, 1987).

Historically, educational researchers have taken varied positions regarding inclusion or integration as programmatic model. Supporters point to academic and social gains of the student with the disability, as well as acceptance of diversity among fellow students and community members, as benefits of inclusion (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996; Whitaker, 2004). Opponents note concerns about the lack of training, personnel and administrative support and the uncertainty of academic and social gains through adopting such model (Lewis & Doorlag, 2003; Peterson & Hittie, 2003; Salend, 2001, 2005). Although these issues are important, one of the critical factors determining the success of the inclusionary program is the attitudes of the teachers who are involved in the program (Bruneau-Balerrama, 1997; D'Alonzo, Giordano, & Vanleeuwen, 1997; Hammond & Ingalls, 2003; Lanier & Lanier, 1996; Lewis & Doorlag, 2003; Olson, Chalmers, & Hoover, 1997; Peterson & Hittie, 2003; Salend, 2001,

2005; Smith, et al., 2004; Stoler, 1992; Waldron, McLeskey, & Pacchiano,1999). Issues of access and integration are strongly related to teachers' attitudes toward inclusion (Welch, 1989). The Salamanca Report suggested that attitudinal factors could affect and influence integration of students in the general classroom (UNESCO, 1994). Cook and Gerber (1999), Larrivee and Cook (1979), Lewis and Doorlag (2003) and Salend (2005) stated that teachers' attitudes are a prerequisite to successful integration of students with disabilities and the cooperation and commitment of those directly involved in implementing policies are essential (Avramidis, Bayliss, & Burden, 2000).

Teachers' Attitudes Toward Inclusion or Integration of Students with Disabilities

Research on teachers' attitudes has been carried out in most regions of the world and mirrors the political agendas of these countries in focusing attention on the exclusion of children from educational opportunities (UNESCO, 1994). Globally, some countries have enacted legislation pertaining to integration of students with disabilities (Abosi, 2000) and some are just beginning the process of implementing these programs and/or policies (Meijer, 1998; UNESCO, 1994). Overall, research seems to support the notion of a general culture of teaching (Lortie, 1975), in that teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities are consistent and similar irrespective of the different national cultures in which teaching takes place (Thematic Group 9, 1996). For example, a cross cultural study conducted on teachers' attitudes in Haiti and the USA revealed that teachers had similar attitudes toward inclusion (Dupoux et al., 2005).

In many areas of the world, special education is provided as a supplement to or parallel to general education. In other regions, countries are just meeting the basic learning needs of their populations with special needs (Ainscow & Haile-Giorgis, 1999). Dissatisfaction with the integration model has led to the emergence of an inclusive orientation practice that broadens the range of children to be served in general settings (Meijer, 1998; UNESCO, 1994). However, professionals continue to debate integration pertaining to placement of pupils in general settings, since these students require differentiated and individualized teaching (Kauffman, Landrum, Mock, Sayeski, & Sayeski, 2005; Hornby, 1999; Stainback & Stainback, 1984). Typically, general educators find it difficult to respond to the mandate to integrate students with disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate in general settings. They may perceive this as an additional burden on their already stressed workloads (Meijer, 1998; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).

One of the most important factors affecting teachers' attitudes toward integration or inclusion is the type and severity of disabilities. Research has revealed that, irrespective of teaching experience, severity of disability shows an inverse relationship with positive attitudes such that as the perception of severity increases, teachers' positive attitudes decrease (Forlin, Douglas, Hattie, 1996). A cross-cultural study of fourteen nations found that teachers favored certain types of disabilities for integration in the regular setting (Bowman, 1986). This is supported by other research showing that teachers are more disposed to accept students with mild disabilities than students with behavioral-emotional disabilities (Dupoux et al., 2005; Ward, Center, & Bochner, 1994). Generally, teachers find it difficult to teach students with more severe disabilities, particularly students with social maladjustments and emotionally disturbance, due to a lack of training and support and large class sizes (Leyser & Tappendorf, 2001; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).

Other factors that have been studied with regard to how they affect teachers' attitudes toward integration include gender, teachers' experiences and contacts with students with disabilities, level of education, training, administrative support, and class size. With regard to gender, Alghazo and Naggar Gaad, (2004) report that male teachers' attitudes toward integration are more negative than female teachers, while no gender difference was reported by Berryman (1989). Studies that examined teachers' experiences noted that teachers' acceptance of integration is related to previous experience with children with disabilities (Taylor, Richards,

Goldstein, & Schilit, 1997). According to Leyser, Kapperman, and Keller (1994), overall teachers' contact and interactions with people with disabilities promote positive attitudes towards integration. While some studies have indicated that individuals with a higher education level were more negative toward integration (Antonak, Mulick, Kobe, & Fiedler, 1995; Stoler, 1992), other studies found the opposite trend (LeRoy & Simpson, 1996; Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996).

Teachers' attitudes also appear to vary based on integration inservice training. Stoler (1992) and Leyser et al. (1994) reported positive teacher attitudes after inservice training, while other studies found that staff development failed to improve teachers' attitudes (McLesky & Waldron, 1995; Wilczenski, 1993). Factors related to administrative support have been linked to teachers' commitment to integration. Teachers consider the presence of organizational support and resources as critical in forming positive attitudes toward integration (Kruger, Struzziero, & Vacca, 1995). An additional component of positive attitude is related to class size. General educators reported that reducing class size to 20 students would facilitate their integration effort (Pollard & Rojewski, 1993; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996).

Theoretical Background

Theories and values held by teachers strongly shape their teaching practices and preferences for students (Kagan, 1992). Pajares (1992) pointed out that all teachers hold beliefs about their work, their students, and in a broader context, their confidence to affect student performance. There is potential for conflict as teachers respond to school's expectations that are different from their beliefs, and in turn try to reconcile them in their classroom practices (Macnab & Payne, 2003). It is well established that teachers' expectations about students will affect their instructional goals and methods (Mavopoulou & Padeliadu, 2000). Moreover, teachers' instructional tolerance (the range of variance in disabilities a teacher can effectively accommodate) necessitates the exclusion of some students with disabilities because, since teachers' knowledge is finite, some students fall outside of teachers' unique stocks of pedagogical knowledge and skills. As a result, teachers simplify their instructional tasks to target the range of students with similar instructional needs that fall within their instructional tolerance (Gerber, 1988, 1995; Gerber & Semmel, 1985). In view of the many responsibilities imposed on teachers, Lampert (1985) described teachers as "dilemma managers with ambiguous identities." In such environments, teachers' beliefs are situational because they are consumed with a variety of implicit and explicit mandates that define and limit their instructional practices (Duffy, 1982). In order to cope with these pedagogical dilemmas as well as variance in students' instructional levels (Gerber, 1988, 1995), teachers seem to agree with the philosophy that schools should provide benefits for all children, but seem to disagree that the general classroom is the only avenue (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Zigmond & Baker, 1996).

The Present Study

This follow-up study was undertaken to examine the attitudes of urban and rural teachers in Haïti toward integration of students with disabilities. A comparative study of urban teachers in Haïti and the USA revealed that urban teachers in both countries support the philosophy of integration while recognizing that it is not realistic for all students with disabilities (Dupoux et al., 2005). The present study investigated teachers' attitudes toward inclusion in Haïti at a time when the Haitian government is forging ahead with a new programmatic model to bridge the gap between the current system and an integrated program. The predictive variables used in this study included gender, education level, years of teaching experience, number of students in the classroom, type of teacher (regular or special education), number of students with disabilities taught, categories of disability served, range of effective accommodation, and teachers' perceptions of other teachers' attitudes.

The following hypotheses guided the research:

1. On average, the attitudes of teachers toward integration in Haïti will be similar in urban and rural areas.
2. Attitudes toward integration will be positively associated with the number of years of teaching experience.
3. Teachers with higher levels of education will have more positive attitudes toward integration than teachers with lower levels of education.
4. On average, teachers' actual teaching experiences will be less powerful predictors of attitudes toward integration of students with disabilities than teachers' cognitions and beliefs.

Method

Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 183 elementary and secondary urban and rural teachers in Haïti. The sample of teachers was recruited from three public schools, five Catholic schools, and six nondenominational private schools. One of the two public schools in Haïti included in the study is currently piloting mainstreaming classes.

Instruments

Participants were administered the Opinions Relative to Integration (ORI) of Students with Disabilities. The instrument is a modified version of a questionnaire originally constructed by Larrivee and Cook (1979), and revised by Antonak and Larrivee (1995). This rating instrument measures teachers' attitudes toward the integration of students with disabilities in regular settings by presenting statements such as "Integration of special needs students will require significant changes in regular classroom procedures," or "The integration of special needs students can be beneficial for regular students." The ORI contains 25 positively and negatively worded statement options rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from disagree very much (-3) to agree very much (+3).

Reported psychometric characteristics for the ORI have been satisfactory (Antonak & Livneh, 1988); a split-half reliability as determined by the Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient of 0.92 was reported in 1979 and 1982. With the latest revision of this instrument in 1995, the mean of the Spearman-Brown corrected split-half reliability estimate was 0.87, and a Cronbach's alpha homogeneity coefficient of 0.83 was reported. The ORI was field-tested in a previous study with teachers in Haïti. The Pilot study indicated that no changes or revisions were necessary even after translation into the French language and modifications (e.g. handicap instead of disability) to establish concept equivalence for the Haitian linguistic context. Reliability of the ORI for Haitian teachers in a previous study was determined to be 0.76 using a split-half procedure (as determined by the Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient), and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.67 (Dupoux et al., 2005).

In this study, a factor analysis indicated that there is only one dimension of attitudes for this sample, as opposed to the four factors proposed by the developers of the ORI (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995). Consequently, only the total score of the scale was used in the analyses. The sum of responses of the scale ranges from 0 to 150, with a higher score indicating a more favorable attitude (Antonak & Livneh, 1988).

In addition to the ORI, a background instrument, developed by the first author, requested information about gender, level of education (bachelor's, master's or above), total number of years of teaching experience, average number of students in the classroom, type of teacher (regular or special education), number of students with disabilities taught during the past three years if the teacher was a regular teacher, categories of mild to moderate disability (Learning Disabilities, Physical Disabilities, Emotional Problem, Deafness or Blindness) that teachers had served over the years, categories of disabilities (Mobility, Visual or Hearing, Learning Disabilities, Emotional Problem) that teachers thought they could effectively accommodate,

and teachers' perceptions of other teachers' attitudes toward integration (favorable, neutral, or unfavorable).

Procedures

Survey packages were distributed to teachers by the school principal or an assigned teacher during staff meetings. The school principal or the assigned teacher collected the sealed envelopes at the end of the faculty meeting and mailed them to the first author. The entire package required about 15 minutes to complete. All responses were anonymous. The survey packet had three sections. It began with a cover letter describing the purpose of the study and the rights of the participants. The second section addressed general background information about teachers. The last section included the ORI (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995).

Results

Description of the Sample

Overall, the return rate was 72%. The number of urban respondents (n = 114) was greater than the number of rural respondents (n = 70). Of the 184 participants, females represented 52% (n = 95) of the sample. Only 13% of the respondents (n = 23) reported a graduate degree as the highest level of education attained. The average years of teaching experience was 13.1 (SD = 6.60) and the average class size was 40.1 (SD = 11.94).

With respect to mild to moderate categories of disability that teachers have dealt with over the years, teachers were much more likely to have had experience with the learning disability category (64%) than with any other disability. Teachers reported less experience with physical disabilities (44%), deafness or blindness (19%), and emotional problem (10%).

The learning disability category was the easiest item endorsed by teachers as a category of disability they believed they could effectively accommodate (73.9%). Mobility impairment was the category next most frequently endorsed by teachers (47.3%). Less than a quarter of the respondents did not believe they could effectively accommodate students with visual or hearing disabilities (22.8%). Even fewer teachers believed they could effectively accommodate students with emotional disorders (13.6%). Teachers more commonly perceived their colleagues' attitudes toward integration as neutral (48.9%), while reporting that other teachers have a favorable attitude (28.3%) slightly more often than an unfavorable attitude (22.8%) toward integration.

Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes

Reliability of the ORI for Haitian teachers was determined to be 0.68 using a split-half procedure (as determined by the Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient). Twelve items on the ORI had reverse wording and were recoded so that higher scores represented more favorable attitudes toward integration. In order to proceed with the scoring, each respondent's responses were summed, and a constant of 75 was added to the total to eliminate negative scores. As a result, scores could range from 0 to 150.

Teachers in rural Haïti (M = 80.19, SD = 16.69) on average had similar attitudes toward integration to teachers in urban Haiti (M = 77.80, SD = 15.65), t (182) = 1.03, p = .31. Contrary to predictions, attitudes were uncorrelated with years of teaching experience, r = .07, p = .33. Results indicated that on average, teachers with Master's degrees have more positive attitudes toward integration (M = 86.43, SD = 15.37) than teachers with less than a Master's degree (M = 77.60, SD = 12.47), t (182) = 2.63, p = .009.

A series of four items was used to assess teachers' attitudes about their abilities to effectively accommodate students with mild to moderate disabilities (mobility, visual/hearing, learning, emotional disabilities). Collectively, these items were statistically significant predictors of teachers' attitudes, F (4, 183) = 2.47, $p < .05$, in a regression equation. An index of teachers' tolerance was created from the predicted value for attitude based on this regression,

combining the four items. The index was used as the dependent variable in the subsequent multiple regression analysis.

A multiple regression was conducted to assess whether the actual experience of teaching (years of teaching experience, class size, special education or regular teacher, and number of special education students a regular teacher has had in class) has less influence on a teacher's attitude than the variables representing teachers' cognitions and beliefs (instructional tolerance, education level, teachers' perception of colleagues' attitudes). The variables representing the actual experience of teaching were entered as the first block in the regression model and they explained only 2.8% of the variance in attitude, $F(4,179) = 1.29$, $p = .28$. The variables representing the teacher's cognitions and beliefs were entered as the second block and they explained an additional 5.3% of the variance in attitude, $F(3,176) = 3.40$, $p = .02$. Therefore, teachers' cognitions and beliefs explained almost twice as much of the variance in attitude as teachers' actual experience of teaching.

Discussion

There have been unprecedented efforts by world organizations (UNESCO, 1994) to encourage governments around the world to provide equal access to education to students with disabilities, as part of a broad human rights agenda (Chow, Blais, & Hemingway, 1999). One of the main objectives of this study was to understand how urban and rural teachers in Haïti, a country in the beginning stages of formulating a national policy for integrating students with disabilities in the regular classroom, respond to the demands of providing the same educational experience to all students.

Findings indicated that teachers in rural areas did not differ from teachers in urban areas in their attitudes toward integrating students with disabilities. In fact, both groups of teachers had a moderate level of acceptance of students with disabilities. Contrary to expectations, years of experience was not correlated with attitudes toward integration. This finding supports the regression analysis conducted in this study, which showed that the actual teaching experiences of teachers were less important in predicting attitudes than the teachers' owns ideas and beliefs.

Although years of teaching experience was not associated with attitudes, having a higher educational degree was positively correlated with attitudes toward integration. This finding underscores the importance of education in implementing changes, and in this particular case, in acceptance and willingness to accommodate students with disabilities.

Predictors of attitudes toward integration of students with disabilities were grouped into the categories of actual teaching experience and teachers' own cognitions and beliefs. Out of almost 9% of the variance in teachers' attitudes, 5% was explained by variables representing the teachers' cognitions and beliefs. Nevertheless, almost 90% of the variance in teachers' attitudes remained unexplained in this study. Teachers' thinking is complex as they consider multiple factors in determining how they should respond to the integration movement. There might be unobservable personal variations that cannot be captured by administering a survey of teachers' attitudes.

Teachers' own cognitions and beliefs, in part, may have their sources in their experiences while they were students, they may be the product of their teacher training (Pajares, 1992), or they may be a combination of their training and falling in-line with the prevailing ideas or beliefs within the context of the school (Acker, 1990; D'Andrade, 1981). Greene (1973) suggests that because teachers are isolated in their classroom, they are estranged from the importance of school policies over the day-to-day realities of their particular classrooms. In this fragmented reality, grand ideas such as integration seem less of a concern, and therefore appear as an estranged collective process and added burden.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future research on teachers' attitudes should be related to teachers' personality characteristics, such as locus of control, and to behavioral indicators of attitudes, such as pursuing an advanced degree in special education (Antonak & Larrivee, 1995). Teacher attitude is a multidimensional construct; for example, introducing the predictor teacher efficacy in the study design may help generate a teacher profile that aids in selecting teachers who may successfully carry the educational reform into their classroom, especially in countries in the beginning stages of integration.

Practical Implications

Two findings in this study, the positive correlation between education and attitudes as well as the role of teachers' beliefs and ideas, indicate the need to educate teachers before acceptance and accommodation of students with disabilities can really occur. The authors recommend the development of workshops for teachers in Haïti about students with disabilities and instructional strategies to support these students. Increasing teachers' knowledge and awareness about these students could be an important step in implementing integration in Haïti, and other third world countries. Moreover, developing in the near future a degree program in special education in one of the universities in Haïti could be a fundamental step toward providing a thorough education to the future teachers of students with disabilities, thus changing and improving attitudes toward this population of students.

Moreover, there is an assumption that a mandate codifying the rights of students with disabilities has the potential of affecting teachers' attitudes in a positive way. The legislature in Haïti can emulate disability legislation in the USA and Canada by enacting a law that provides the basis for classroom practices and that relates to the rights of students with disabilities to be educated in the least restrictive environment.

Additionally, in the Caribbean region, educators uninformed about the integration movement can be exposed to this educational reform movement. To accomplish this, political leaders in countries in the area can move in the direction of integrating students with disabilities, as in Haïti, or can adopt supportive policies of countries with a substantial political influence in the region, such as the USA and Canada. Examples of integration models in the USA and Canada can be emulated until nations in the region can design a system that fits their culture, and implement a financing scheme that can be sustained in the midst of severe economic limitations.

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