

Education and production: the major solutions to jamaicas developmental dilemma e...

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Figure 1: Map of Jamaica (Source: en. wikipedia. org)

" Jamaica is in the position of a drowning man, treading water to keep afloat, but slowly drifting ashore."—Professor Kari Levitt, University of the West Indies, Jamaica

Although the above statement has some validity to it as it relates to some criteria related to the core developmental issues concerning the economic and social progress of Jamaica, the recent report conducted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has revealed that Jamaica has made certain improvements in its Human Development Index (HDI) values and rank during the year 2012; thus, allowing it to be placed 85 out of 187 countries and territories, according to the recent report conducted by UNDP, entitled, Jamaica: HDI Values and Rank Changes in the 2013 Human Development Report (para. 6). Nevertheless, Jamaica's foreign debts (which had amounted to a total of US\$14. 5 billion at the early nineties) had placed such an enormous burden on Jamaica's ailing economy (Bayer 31). Marcel Bayer noted in the text, In Focus Jamaica: A Guide to the People, Politics and Culture, that annually " Jamaica pays back to international financiers more than it receives from new loans and gifts" (31). Bayer added that the " economy is heavily dependent on imports of raw materials (oil) and component parts as well as technology, capital, management and various kinds of consumer products" (32). These imports must then be " paid for with the returns from tourism and exports of bauxite, sugar and bananas", which, sadly, Jamaica is not currently producing enough of. In addition, the unequal

distribution of educational opportunities, which ensures the upward social mobility of individuals as well as the availability of an equipped and knowledgeable labor force, impedes the overall development of the country. Although increased access to educational opportunities as well as manufacturing or production of goods for export will not instantly improve the country's development status because there are many systemic forces at work which do not allow the solutions to the barriers facing Jamaica's developmental process to be viewed in such a simplistic manner, Jamaica should focus more on initiatives supporting increased access to educational opportunities and the manufacturing and export of locally produced goods to boost its economy. This is because the manufacturing or production of goods in Jamaica will ensure the availability of job opportunities, and this would, in turn, contribute to the reduction of crime and provide much needed capital for the country's failing economy; while increased access to educational opportunities will ensure the development of Jamaica's human resources, which will subsequently facilitate the development of other areas of the society.

Figure 2: Jamaica Within the World (Source: [www. solarnavigator. net](http://www.solarnavigator.net))

According to the UNDP report entitled, Jamaica: HDI Values and Rank Changes in the 2013 Human Development Report, Jamaica increased its human development index value to 0. 730 from 0. 612 during the year 2012 (para. 6). Jamaica is now ranked 85th " out of 187 countries and territories" (para. 6). The report notes that this rank was shared with Brazil (para. 6). The report also indicated that the values and rankings of previous reports are misleading because different methodologies were used to obtain that

data (para. 7). Jamaica's HDI ranking was influenced by the calculations of the following indicators: life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling, mean years of schooling and gross national income (GIN) per capita. The report revealed the following findings: " Between 1980 and 2012, Jamaica's life expectancy at birth increased by 2. 8 years, mean years of schooling increased by 4. 4 years and expected years of schooling increased by 2. 0 years. Jamaica's GNI per capita increased by 43 per cent between 1980 and 2012 (para. 8). Although Jamaica achieved a certain amount of success related to the assessment of its development indicators, its ranking was still " below the average of 0. 741 for countries in Latin America and the Caribbean" (para. 10). It was also still " below the average of 0. 758 for countries in the high human development group" (para. 10). Additionally, it should be noted that after the inequality adjusted HDI was calculated (that is, the calculation which " takes into account inequality in all three dimensions of the HDI by 'discounting' according to its level of inequality") Jamaica's HDI value fell from 0. 730 to 0. 591 (para. 12). This is an indication of unequal distribution of resources as it relates to the development indicators of health, education, and income. The greatest loss was revealed by the development indicator of income with 30. 1 per cent loss being recorded (para. 12).

The increased access to educational opportunities will not only foster the development of Jamaica's human resources, but it will also ensure the availability of a skilled and knowledgeable labor force. For instance, a webpage from the site of Caribbean Education Foundation, which is located at URL , noted that "[u]nderprivileged children in rural and poor urban areas

particularly suffer from unequal access to quality education" (para. 2). It added that issues being faced by students at the primary level include: "[c]hronic poor attendance at all levels, leading to high illiteracy"; "[o]ne out of two primary children is illiterate" and "[u]nderachievement is greater among boys" (para. 7). Additionally, the literacy issues related to secondary school children include the following: "[o]verall attendance is only 65%, leading to chronic underachievement"; " 40-50% of students in the system are below their grade level (approximately 300, 000 children); "[b]y Grade 9, hundreds of thousands of students, especially boys, cannot read or write"; "[m]any students are functionally illiterate; "[o]nly 20% of secondary students are qualified for meaningful employment and/or entry to post secondary programs" (para. 8). One can deduce that students' limited access to quality education and important educational resources is linked to the very unequal distribution of income, which is indicated by the UNDP's report on the human development index of Jamaica. When parents have inadequate income to provide for themselves and their children's needs, their children's literacy levels suffer as a result. Subsequently, the workforce is unable to hire persons who have the competencies, skills, and abilities to function meaningfully in the workplace. This is noted by the website of UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning located at URL , which states the following: [T]he levels of functional literacy among the national workforce remain low: about 70% of workers with basic literacy and numeracy skills are unable to use these skills to function effectively and competitively within a global economy. In short, low levels of functional literacy skills among Jamaican workers have been a major barrier to workers' productivity and national

development. (para. 2)

Therefore, increased access to affordable educational opportunities, especially for the most economically vulnerable in the society, will ensure that the Jamaican workforce will have a pool of qualified laborers, who would, in turn, contribute productively and effectively to the various sectors and industries within Jamaica; subsequently, this would positively impact on the nation's development.

The production or manufacturing of goods, along with the utilization of Jamaica's natural resources, need to be encouraged more by the nation's government at the policy levels. The production or manufacturing of goods, along with the utilization of Jamaica's natural resources, need to be encouraged more by the nation's government at the policy levels. This point is further elucidated in an article published by The Jamaica Gleaner and written by the Jamaica Manufacturers Association (JMA), and which is entitled, " Manufacturers Make Their Mark," noted that,

For all of Jamaica to achieve the [development] goals of Vision 2030, the supportive environment [for manufacturing] must continue to be improved. This will require the Government, civil society, the people, and the private sector working together to address issues of competitiveness and productivity. Jamaica must address issues surrounding its chronic problems of an unstable macroeconomic environment; the lack of financing, especially to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; high levels of crime and violence; an unreliable justice system; high energy costs; an unjust and punitive tax system; and a broad-based resistance to adopt modern governmental, educational, social, environmental, and business systems.

These are issues that continue to affect our level of productivity and competitiveness as a country. (para. 24)

The above mentioned statement by the JMA reveal that systemic issues which impede the development and growth of the manufacturing sector, such unavailability of financing, crime and violence, and the high cost of energy, has impeded the growth and development of the nation as a whole. Additionally, the article indicated that " a recent study by the University of the West Indies showed that over 40 per cent of the change in GDP for Jamaica could be attributed to the changes of performance of the manufacturing sector" (para. 25). It also postulated the importance of the sector for earning foreign exchange, providing jobs, and enabling poverty reduction (para. 25).

In response to statements similar to the ones expressed by the JMA in The Jamaica Gleaner, the Jamaican government has decided to launch a pilot project in October of this year which would involve the extraction of rare earth minerals from bauxite waste, as reported by the article, " Commodities Update: Jamaica Opens Rare Earths Extraction Plant; Greenland Allows Uranium Mining" (para. 1). The Japanese company, Nippon Light Metal Company, has agreed to partner with the Jamaican government to fund the US\$500 million dollar project (para. 3). The article noted the following: " Rare earth elements are used to manufacture a number of high-tech gadgets and equipment, including smartphones, plasma screens, DVDs, rechargeable batteries, digital cameras, hybrid cars, wind turbines, and satellite" (para. 6). Jamaica could potentially earn billions of U. S. dollars from these very lucrative resources. Dr. Parris Lyew-Ayee, executive director of the Jamaica

Bauxite Institute is quoted as saying the following in the article, " A Rare Find: Japanese Firm Says Earth Minerals Could Help Them Break China's Hold on Market", which was published in The Jamaica Observer: " [It is] to get the value-added products as far down as we can in Jamaica, which would mean more jobs, more industry, more support services that would support a brand new industry that would be adjunct to the bauxite and alumina industry."

The successful extraction and production of rare earth minerals for use by the global market will ensure job creation and will ensure the country's ability to much needed foreign exchange to stimulate economic growth and development.

Adam Braun stated the following, and was found at the URL, :

Global poverty is a complex web of interlinked problems. There is no one 'silver bullet' that will solve global inequality. Multiple contributing factors must be tackled in parallel. Yes, education alone is unlikely to lead to employment without economic reform to address the demand side in much of the developing world.

Indeed, Adam Braun is correct. Poverty in developing states such as Jamaica cannot be pin-pointed to one or two causes. Poverty and issues of underdevelopment in Jamaica are created by a multiplicity of issues which are all interconnected, and, to an extent, interrelated. Certainly, education and the improvement of literacy rates, in a developing state like Jamaica, is not enough. Policy reform, especially that which would potentially benefit the manufacturing sector, is definitely needed to ensure the job security of Jamaica's employable citizens as well as to ensure its economic growth and

development. This would definitely move Jamaica forward from being in a 'state of dependency' to being a truly independent nation.

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