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CHAPTER FOUR

Saint Lucia

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Overview of Country

Historical Information

Saint Lucia is an island nation in the West Indies surrounded by the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The first inhabitants of Saint Lucia were the Amerindians (the Caribs and the Arawaks) who called the island *Iouanalao* and *Hewanorra*, meaning “Island of the Iguanas” (interKnowledge Corp., 1996–2015). Around 200 CE, the Arawak Indians were forced off the island by the Caribs. In 1499, the Spanish first explored the island with Amerigo Vespucci and Juan de la Cosa thought to be the first Europeans to discover the island; the latter drew a map featuring Saint Lucia. By 1511, it was considered Spanish domain with the British, French, and Dutch influence to follow. The Caribs survived two British attempts at colonization in the 1600s but were later conquered by the French; by 1732, it was estimated that less than 8 percent of the population was Amerindian (Harmsen, Ellis, & Devaux, 2014).

For more than a century, Great Britain and France fought for Saint Lucia, with 13 exchanges of control of the country. By 1803, Saint Lucia was under British control, and, in 1814, it became a British colony, which it remained for 165 years (Harmsen et al., 2014). Nevertheless, French customs lingered, and it was not until 1842 that English became the official language. Two hundred years after France departed from Saint Lucia, the French influence remains apparent with the majority of the population being Roman Catholic and with French names of many families and multiple cities and villages. Further, many persons speak a French (Creole) patois.

The British House of Commons approved Saint Lucia's application for independence in December 1978. Then on February 22, 1979, Saint Lucia achieved full independence (Harmsen et al., 2014).

The first schools in Saint Lucia can be traced to 1836 when educational programs began to be provided to the children of freed slaves, with multiple schools opening soon thereafter. In 1846, parish priests in the capital of Castries invited the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny to establish Catholic schools, and the Catholic educational system spread quickly throughout the country with numerous schools opening before government management of education subsequently became predominant. Saint Joseph's Convent, a Roman Catholic secondary school for girls located in Castries, the capital, was founded in 1853 while Saint Mary's College, a secondary school for boys, opened in 1890 (Harmsen et al., 2014).

Early childhood education for children ages 3–5 years has been primarily a private initiative. However, the government's involvement increased during the 1980s after receiving assistance from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In 1985, the Ministry of Education (MOE) established a unit responsible for developing and implementing preschool education. In 2013, there were 96 preschools, 75 primary schools (grades K–6), and 23 secondary schools in Saint Lucia (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014). All students have traditionally had access to primary schools, although Universal Secondary Education (USE) did not occur until provided by law in 2006.

Structure of Country

Saint Lucia has a Parliament consisting of two legislative chambers, a Senate (11 members) and a House of Assembly (17 members). Saint Lucia is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations with Queen Elizabeth II as the current sovereign. The queen is represented by the governor-general, who is the titular head of state. However, the actual head of the executive body is the prime minister. Elections are held at least every five years using the "first-past-the-post" or "winner-takes-all" system. Political power lies with the prime minister and the cabinet, who typically come from the majority party in the House of Assembly.

Saint Lucia covers 238 square miles (616 sq. km) and is divided into 17 districts (Pan American Health Organization [PAHO], 2012). The French colonial government named these districts in the 18th century, and the names continue today.

Population

The large majority of Saint Lucians are of African descent. The three most common ethnic subgroups are black 85.3 percent, mixed 10.7 percent, and East Indian 2.2 percent (Central Statistics Office, 2011b) (see Table 4.1).

According to the 2010 census, the total estimated population of Saint Lucia was 165,596, including 50.2 percent females and 49.8 percent males. The population is relatively young with approximately 77.2 percent under 50 years of age, and youth from 15 to 29 years making up 26.2 percent of the population (Pan

Table 4.1 Saint Lucia Population by Ethnic Group

Ethnic Group	Population	Percentage
African descent/black	141,218	85.3
Indigenous people	951	0.6
East Indian	3,575	2.2
Chinese	85	0.1
Portuguese	23	0.0
Syrian/Lebanese	143	0.1
White/Caucasian	991	0.6
Mixed	17,965	10.7
Hispanic	116	0.1
Other or not stated	529	0.3
Total	165,596	100

Source: Adapted from Central Statistics Office (2011b, January).

American Health Organization, 2012). The population density per that 2010 report was 796 persons per square mile, with the largest proportion living in Castries, which comprised about 40 percent of the population (Central Statistics Office, 2011b).

Literacy/Numeracy Data

The adult literacy rate for the population of Saint Lucia over 15 years of age has been estimated at 90.1 percent (Ministry of Health, Wellness, Human Services and Gender Relations in collaboration with PAHO/World Health Organization [WHO], 2012). According to the National Education for All (EFA) 2015 Report (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014), although no recent formal survey has been conducted, there has been an estimated 50 percent increase in levels of adult literacy since 2000 and a 43 percent increase in postsecondary education. In particular, Chitolie-Joseph (2014, p.14) noted that “the literacy levels for females 15–24 years was [estimated at] 99.3 percent.” She found further that “literacy levels did not vary by geographic location, education, age, wealth index or ethnicity of household head” (p.14).

Public Education System Overview

Description of Compulsory Schooling

Saint Lucia's educational system is based on the British system, and, for the most part, students progress based on perceived ability (Donnelly, 2006). Schooling is divided into three main levels: preschool, primary, and secondary education.

Preschool education is voluntary, and most preschools are privately owned, as previously noted. Students commence compulsory education at five years of age at the primary level, which is organized into the two phases of an infant program for the three grades of K–2, followed by a four-year primary education, comprising grades 3–6. Secondary school education spans five years, organized into forms 1–5 (grades 7–11) (Ministry of Education, 1999).

According to the Education Act of 1999, Section 27 (1), children between the ages of 5 and 15 “are entitled to receive an educational programme appropriate to their needs” (Ministry of Education, 1999). Following the establishment of Universal Secondary Education (USE) in 2006, this age span was increased, and the education cycle for a child in Saint Lucia now typically includes seven years at the primary level and five years at the secondary level. Schools (i.e., primary, secondary, and special needs) are situated geographically in eight districts around the island.

Saint Lucia has 134 early childhood education centers, 5 special education centers, 75 public infant/primary schools and 6 private infant/primary schools, 23 public secondary schools and 3 private secondary schools, 2 public postsecondary/tertiary institutions, 4 private universities, 3 public skills training institutions, and several distance education providers (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014). After graduation from secondary school, students who succeed on the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) have the option of moving into tertiary education (discussed further later in this chapter).

Funding

Saint Lucia’s 75 public primary schools are predominantly managed by the MOE with a small minority managed through private church boards. As stated in the previous section, there are 23 public secondary schools. Saint Lucia has 5 special education centers that serve students with a wide variety of needs, including hearing and visual impairment, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and intellectual disabilities. These schools serve students of both primary and secondary school age.

Schools are funded by the government through the MOE, which is the main provider at all levels except preschool education. The Saint Lucian government spends approximately 14.9 percent of its annual budget on education. Churches (primarily Roman Catholic and Seventh Day Adventist) share the management of many of the primary schools and two of the secondary schools, but the responsibility for educational policies and programs remains vested in the Ministry of Education (1999). Churches are represented by denominational boards and have authority to approve the appointment of principals to church-affiliated schools.

The MOE depends in part on donor and funding agencies as well as regional and international agencies such as the European Union, the Caribbean Development Bank, the World Bank, and UNESCO to provide grants, low-interest loans, technical expertise, and emergency relief (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014). The Ministry collaborates with regional bodies such as the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean

States (OECS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), of which Saint Lucia is a member of both, to seek solutions as a region (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014). The Ministry seeks to provide students with technological resources, an up-to-date education sector, and well-trained teachers and administrators.

Organizational Structure

As noted, public schools typically have two levels: primary education, which includes infant and primary (age 5–11 years), and secondary education (ages 12–17 years). These two levels are discussed next.

Primary Education

Primary education marks the beginning of formal and compulsory education in Saint Lucia and comprises the infant cycle of grades K–2 and the primary cycle of grades 3–6. Progress and achievement are monitored through the National Assessment (formerly called Minimum Standard Exam/Test [MSE/T]), which is an examination administered to students in grades 2 and 4 to test their competencies in various subject areas based on concepts that should have been learned (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014; Lesforis, 2011). First implemented in 1998, a School Based Assessment (SBA) component was added to the MSE/T in 2010, and the exam was renamed as the Grade 2 and Grade 4 National Assessment. The SBA component is in language arts and mathematics and involves projects and report writing (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014).

Primary education begins at age 5 and ends at 11 when students write the primary school exiting test (Common Entrance Examination, CEE), a national examination taken toward the end of grade 6 as students move from primary to secondary school (Lesforis, 2011). The CEE was instituted in 1970 as the national standardized secondary school entrance examination (Donnelly, 2006). This exam initially was used to determine placement in secondary school, especially when such placements were limited. However, with the implementation of USE in 2006, every child now has access to secondary school. Nevertheless, the CEE is still used primarily to differentiate students based on academic ability. Students' secondary school placement is determined largely by the CEE.

The Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC) has introduced the Caribbean Primary Exit Assessment (CPEA), which assesses the literacies required by all pupils exiting the primary school system. The MOE has stated there are plans to pilot test the exam at some point in the future (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014).

Secondary Education

Secondary education typically commences at age 12 and ends at 17. Entry into secondary school is now automatic, but a parent may choose to allow his or her child to repeat grade 6. The distribution of students into secondary schools is done based on students' scores in the CEE, the number of spaces in the various

schools, and parents' choices of schools (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014). From 1998 to 2010, students in grade 9 (form 3) were required to write the Form 3 Minimum Standard Test (MST). However, after a pilot program in 2010, the Form 3 MST was replaced with the Caribbean Certificate of Secondary Level Competence (CCSLC) exam, a competency-based qualification that aims to certify that students have the basic knowledge, skills, values, and competence of secondary school graduates. A student must successfully complete a minimum of five subjects over a period of five years to receive a certificate (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014).

At the end of five years of secondary education, students write the secondary school exit exam, the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) (formerly the CXC), a regional secondary school exit exam taken in multiple subject areas (Caribbean Examinations Council, 2011). Students' performance on this exam determines their options of moving into tertiary education or seeking employment.

Tertiary Education

The country has one tertiary education institution—Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC). At SALCC, students can pursue full-time studies at the certificate and associate degree level in areas such as arts, sciences, and general studies (or A Levels); technical vocational; management; business studies; teacher education; nursing; and agriculture. The MOE also introduced a form 6 option (i.e., 12th grade) in 1995 at the Vieux-Fort Comprehensive Secondary School to open places for students in the south (Ministry of Education, 1999).

Five private universities are functioning on the island: one general institution (Monroe College), one providing training primarily for educators (Lynchburg College), and three U.S.-based medical universities (American International Medical University, American University School of Medicine, Spartan Health Sciences University) (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014). In addition, the University of the West Indies provides distance education programs in Saint Lucia. Those students who want to pursue more advanced studies may, of course, choose to attend colleges and universities outside of Saint Lucia.

There is also a "second chance" education available to students who dropped out of primary or secondary school or who did not perform well on their CSEC examinations. This opportunity is available at two centers: Centre for Adolescent Renewal and Education (CARE, established in 1993) and National Skills Development Centre (NSDC, established in 2001) (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014).

Graduation Rate

By gender, 85.74 percent of males and 91.26 percent of females graduated from secondary school in academic year 2014–2015 (Ministry of Education, 2015). However, according to data from the 2010 Population and Housing Census, 61 percent of the overall population have no academic (secondary completion) certificate, 15 percent have their highest level of education at the secondary school

level, and 4 percent have obtained an undergraduate or higher degree; the remaining 20 percent have unknown status (Saint Catherine, 2011). Note that these data largely reflect a general population in which the majority of persons exited school prior to the provision of USE in 2006.

Although the school attendance rate in 2009 was 87 percent and had been at that level for three consecutive years and school completion rates have climbed after USE passage in 2006, school dropout rates continue to be of concern (Bailey, 2014). According to the Central Statistics Office of Saint Lucia (2011a), the number of students who dropped out from 2005 to 2006 almost doubled from 112 to 219 with males accounting for 54 percent of this population. In 2010, the number of dropouts continued to increase with up to 268, or an increase of 5 percent from the prior year, with 90 percent of all dropouts from grades 10 and 11.

Private School Education Overview

School-Age Population Who Attend Private Schools

Private school enrollment continues to form a small percentage of the total primary school student enrollment on the island. However, this percentage has increased slightly from 2 percent in 2000–2001 to 5 percent in 2012–2013. The six private primary schools recorded an increase in their total enrollments from 710 in 2001 to 967 in 2013 (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014).

Private secondary enrollment in Saint Lucia accounts for an average of 343 students (or 3 percent of all students) on an annual basis. The total enrollment has fluctuated between 452 and 234 during 2001–2013. This enrollment was initially spread among three private secondary schools, but two schools closed down and two new ones opened during that period (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014).

Types of Private Schools

Private schools refer to any schools that are not funded by publicly generated revenue. Some private schools have no identifiable affiliation, whereas others have religious affiliations. Of the six private primary schools, three are owned by the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and the other three are owned by private organizations/individuals. One of the three private secondary schools is owned by the Seventh Day Adventist Academy Church, while the two others are owned by private individuals (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014).

Description of Who Attends and Services Provided

For the most part, families make the decision to have their children attend a private school. In so doing, they are required to pay the tuition for this schooling. For a private school to be accredited, the school must offer a curriculum that is similar to that offered by the public school and must meet the content and performance standards dictated by the MOE.

Special Education/Special Needs Education System

Current Legislative Mandates

In 1981, special education became an official part of Saint Lucia's education system (Lubin, 2004). At that time, students with significant disabilities were educated in separate special schools. Later in the 1980s, special education was introduced in primary schools, and general educators were assigned classes with students who were unable to progress at commensurate academic pace with their typically developing peers. Special education teachers in these initial years commonly had been general education teachers and volunteers who initially were not prepared, supported, and equipped to handle the new challenges of an inclusive school and classrooms. The assignment as a special educator was based on teacher interest and/or principals' perception of a general educator's ability in instructing "slow learners" (Lubin, 2016).

In 2014, approximately 1.93 percent of total education expenditures were allocated to special education. This figure represented 0.34 percent of total government expenditures and 0.09 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014).

The Constitution of Saint Lucia (2006) mentions disabilities (i.e., special needs) under the "Protection from Discrimination" section. It emphasizes that individuals should not be treated differentially due to their disability.

The Saint Lucia Education Act of 1999 refers to disabilities under the education of students with special needs. Specifically, Section 83 (1) stipulated the following: "The Chief Education Officer shall provide special education programmes for students of compulsory school age who by virtue of intellectual, communicative, behavioural, physical or multiple exceptionalities are in need of special education" (Ministry of Education, 1999). Further, such education is to be provided within the least restrictive and most enabling environment to an extent that is both practical and within resources. The Act also suggested that education should be personalized to the individual needs of the student (Bailey, 2014). Further, the rights of children with disabilities to special care, financial assistance, education, training, health care services, rehabilitative services, preparation for employment, and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and development was recognized and promoted.

Age Range for Special Education/Special Needs Education

Special education is provided to students from school age through age 18.

Population of Students Eligible to Receive Special Education/Special Needs Education

The Special Education Unit of the MOE identifies students with disabilities. Their guidelines are as follows:

The various types of disabilities that qualify individuals for special education programs include specific learning disabilities, speech or language impairments, [intellectual disability], emotional disturbance, multiple disabilities, hearing impairments, orthopedic impairments, visual impairments, autism, combined deafness and blindness, traumatic brain injury, and other health impairments. Students are classified under one of the categories, and special education teachers are prepared to work with specific groups. (Ministry of Education and Culture, Special Education Unit, n.d., p. 3)

How Students Are Identified

Students are referred both to the chief education officer to determine the assessments that may be required and to the multidisciplinary team (MDT) for assessment, recommendations, and placement. According to guidelines from the *Special Education Student Support Program* document (developed early in the 21st century), the following steps are taken to determine which students are served in the special needs student support program:

1. The classroom teacher identifies students with learning difficulties by noting when there is a discrepancy between proficiency level and performance level.
2. The classroom teacher attempts various approaches to help the student deal with difficulties.
3. If there is no significant improvement, the classroom teacher consults the Special Education Needs (SEN) teacher and discusses interventions used to support the student. The class teacher and special educator complete the prereferral form and compile an intervention plan for that student. The SEN teacher is responsible for providing additional advice and suggestions as necessary and to document all interventions used.
4. The classroom teacher is responsible for using the approaches suggested by the SEN teacher for approximately two weeks. Careful records of the student's performance and samples of work are kept during this period. The prereferral intervention can be implemented by a combination of a modified classroom learning environment and pull-out services from the SEN teacher.
5. If no significant improvement is realized, the SEN teacher assesses the student to determine baseline functional performance.
6. When a student's performance remains unchanged, even after implementation of the Prereferral Intervention Plan, the parent/guardian of the student will be called in, apprised of the need for further assessment, and asked to give consent for the required assessment. This will also be done if the student is assessed as functioning two or more grade levels below his current grade.
7. The MDT referral process will be initiated when the parent/guardian completes and signs a consent form, which grants permission for the student to be assessed for specific educational needs, including placement.

8. During the MDT referral process, information will be gathered from and about the student (background data; vision, hearing, and medical status; and psychoeducational data). The MDT will make a recommendation for the most appropriate academic placement of the student.
9. When the recommendation of the MDT results in the retention of the student at the same school, the SEN teacher is responsible for managing and coordinating the implementation of MDT recommendations. The SEN teacher will work in conjunction with the classroom teacher, the principal, the parents, and any other concerned person.
10. Parents/guardians have the right to appeal the decision of the MDT. A Ministry representative from the Special Education Unit will be the arbitrator. (Ministry of Education: Special Education Unit, n.d., p. 7)

Where Special Education/Special Needs Education Services Are Provided

Special education is provided both in special schools and throughout regular primary and secondary schools. The five special education centers are the Blind Welfare Association, Lady Gordon Opportunity Centre, Dunnottar School, Soufriere Special Education Rehabilitation Centre, and Vieux Fort Special Education Centre. These schools serve students with learning, intellectual, visual, and hearing disabilities. The total enrollment at these five centers increased from 227 in 2001 to 315 in 2013. The pupil/teacher ratio is kept small, at about 6–1, to provide individual education to the students. Approximately 50 percent of students in special education schools are identified as having an intellectual disability (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014).

Students with special needs in regular primary and secondary schools have disabilities ranging from mild to moderate (e.g., students with learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities). Students at both school levels are identified as in need of special education services based on general and special education teachers' evaluation of below-average academic ability. Students may not necessarily be formally diagnosed with a specific disability to be placed in a primary special education program. The students may possess physiognomies similar to students with learning disabilities and/or those on the upper end of the spectrum of intellectual disability, without a formal label (Lubin, 2016). Further, secondary school students in Saint Lucia are not generally assigned special needs designations (e.g., learning disability, intellectual disability) (Bailey, 2014). Lubin (2016) identified 84 special educators serving in primary and secondary schools. In 2005–2006, there were approximately 1,500 (6.26 percent of the total school population) special education students being supported in the primary schools (Weekes, 2007).

The MOE also works with other organizations to assist students with disabilities. In 2013, for example, 21 students (15 males, 6 females) with visual impairments were enrolled in 10 regular primary and secondary schools, and they were supported by special needs teachers from the Blind Welfare Association. In an effort to remove the barriers that impact on these students'

performance at national examinations, the Special Education Unit provides exam accommodations for students facilitated by teachers trained for that purpose.

Focus of Services/Intervention/Curriculum

The *Special Education Student Support Program* document states that students with special needs should be taught in small groups of approximately six students (Ministry of Education, Special Education Unit, n.d., p. 8). However, there is no delineation of the type of structure special education programs have to assume in each setting.

Based on anecdotal records, the average individual class size in a primary special education classroom (e.g., resource rooms) ranges from 5 to 10 with much larger overall caseloads. The roles of primary special educators in Saint Lucia include primarily teaching academic skills of reading, writing, and math. Instruction may take place in the general education classroom or in the resource room. Other roles include assessing students, managing behavior, and completing paperwork (Lubin, 2016).

The presence of special educators in secondary schools is a relatively new phenomenon in Saint Lucia. As noted earlier, in 2006, the Saint Lucia government implemented USE, in which every child in a primary school automatically entered secondary school (Weekes, 2007). Before 2006, only students who had obtained a passing mark on the grade 6 standardized exam (CEE) would have had access to secondary schools. Students denied placement in a secondary school before 2006 due to limited academic performance are now part of mainstream secondary schools; this group definitely includes students who were part of the special needs programs in primary schools. As a result, a need for special educators at secondary schools developed. Similar to special educators in primary schools, these educators typically teach in partially inclusive settings, as students with special needs spend part of their day in the general education classroom. Their roles include assessing students, teaching content and skills, managing behavior, providing accommodations during assessments, and completing paperwork (Lubin, 2016).

In Saint Lucia, there has been a gradual shift to the use of inclusionary practices. Many schools have moved to partial inclusion, where students with special needs spend part of the day in the general education classroom and part in the special education classroom. The change in instructional practices and setting has altered the roles of special educators. Primary and secondary school special educators' roles are slowly shifting to now including managing special education activities at their school, engaging in professional development, and training colleagues on ways to work with students with special needs (Lubin, 2016).

Related Services

In terms of related services for students with special needs, the nation of Saint Lucia provides support that includes the following. First, speech-language services are under the supervision of a speech-language pathologist within the

central administration (Special Education Unit) who provides consultative support throughout the schools across the country, which is also provided through volunteer support. Second, vision services are provided through the MOE in conjunction with the Saint Lucia Blind Welfare Association for students with visual impairments. Third, many of the schools within the country (and all districts within the country) are staffed with school counselors who have received graduate-level training and support students in general, including students with special needs. Fourth, a school psychologist provides assessment and consultative services to teachers, and additional psychological services are available within the community. Fifth, the MDT, including teachers, pediatricians, and hearing disability professionals, provides assessment and planning services for students with disabilities. Teaching staff provide physiotherapy and audiology services on a limited basis within special schools. Private physiotherapy is available in the community while support from the international community, via organizations such as the Peace Corps and Lynchburg College, provide physiotherapy/physical therapy services intermittently.

Graduation Rate for Students with Disabilities

The prior discussion highlighted school completion rates for individuals in general in Saint Lucia, including the overall graduation rate for 2014–2015. There are no precise figures available for the graduation rates of the students with special needs subset.

Prevalent Practices Used in Special Education/Special Needs Education Services

Special educators in Saint Lucia engage in multiple roles, including providing academic instruction, nonacademic instruction, instructional support, responsive behavior management, special education assessment, classroom assessment, special education paperwork, and attendance of SEN teacher meetings. Teachers perceive all of these roles to be from very important to extremely important (Lubin, 2016).

In terms of instruction, there is anecdotal evidence that common classroom practices include direct instruction, rote memorization, and drill and practice. Teachers are reported to use various techniques to promote learning, including individualized instruction, problem-solving assignments, and small group work (Ministry of Education: Special Education Unit, n.d., p. 4).

Postschool Options for Students Who Received Special Education/Special Needs Education Services

Limited data exist regarding postschool options for students with special needs in Saint Lucia. Further, there is no official mandate for secondary school transition

planning and assessment in St Lucia. The following discussion highlights available information concerning postschool considerations.

The outcome data that exist suggest that Saint Lucia's youth struggle in a number of key areas regarding postschool adjustment. Many students—that is, young adults—leave school without a clear idea of what direction their lives are going to take (Bailey, 2014). Based on a recent study (Bailey, 2014), it may be inferred that secondary school teachers believe their students who struggle in secondary school and may have special needs were at least somewhat deficient in the skills necessary to successfully transition into adult life. Data from the students themselves and their parents supported this assessment. Bailey concluded that Saint Lucian students would benefit from transition assessment and planning. She further noted that students who received practice in the acquisition of vocational and employment skills, including job search skills and career education, have a higher chance of successfully transitioning after high school.

The importance of transition planning can be placed in the context of employment opportunities in Saint Lucia. Although these data are not specific to students with special needs, they point to areas of concern that are likely relevant to this group of students. A 2008 report revealed that youth aged 15–34 accounted for 22 percent of the unemployment figure in Saint Lucia, up from 19.8 percent (Central Statistics Office, 2011a). The overall unemployment rate for youth ages 15–29 in the 2010 Housing Census was 34 percent (Saint Catherine, 2011).

The employment rate for students exiting secondary school in 2009 was 84.3 percent, leaving 16.6 percent of school graduates unemployed. This represented an increase from 2008 and 2007 when the unemployment rates for students exiting school were 14.6 percent and 13.8 percent, respectively (Central Statistics Office, 2011a; Bailey, 2014).

Teacher Training/Preparation

Minimum Requirements to Be a General Education Teacher

The Teacher Training Division of the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC) is the primary agency for preparing educators in Saint Lucia. It undertakes training at the local level through a two-year program. According to the MOE, a trained teacher is one who has successfully completed “a recognized program in teacher education” (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014, p. 39). In 2012–2013, approximately 90 percent of teachers in Saint Lucia were considered trained (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014).

The minimum qualification for entry into teaching at the primary level is four subject passes on the Caribbean Secondary Education Certification exam at the General Proficiency Level to include English language and mathematics. These teachers are classified as untrained and then must subsequently move to the level of qualified teacher, which is obtained after completion of the two-year teacher education program offered by SALCC. The minimum entry requirement for secondary school teaching is one or more advanced-level passes on the Cambridge

exams (now replaced by Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examinations [CAPE]). These teachers can also become qualified teachers following education courses as part of the completion of the two-year program of studies at SALCC.

Minimum Requirements to Be a Special Education/Special Needs Education Teacher

It is assumed that special education teachers have prior teaching experience as a general educator. A general education teacher who shows interest in or has attended in-service training in this area may be assigned to the role of special education teacher. The MOE has used the following working criteria to select a person as a special educator:

1. Be a permanent, trained teacher
2. Have at least five years teaching experience posttraining
3. Have at least a "good" rating on the teacher appraisal form
4. Have an interest in special education
5. Have a background in special education or attend training workshops regularly
6. Have a good track record in assisting weak students
7. Have good people skills
8. Maintain an approachable atmosphere, especially to children
9. Have good management skills (time and resources)
10. Be selected in consultation with the Special Education Unit. (Ministry of Education: Special Education Unit, n.d., p. 5)

Types of Special Education Personnel

In keeping with the delivery of special education within the schools, special education personnel include individuals who serve as co-instructors within general education classrooms, resource teachers functioning in pull-out programs, teachers of self-contained special education classes, and special education teachers who work in special schools (centers) serving only students with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities. Special education teachers also serve students with hearing and visual impairments. Special education teacher assistants serve students with disabilities only in special schools. As noted earlier, a speech-language pathologist housed within the MOE serves on a consulting basis throughout the country.

Nature of In-service Training/Professional Development Provided to Special Education/Special Needs Education Teachers

In her recent study of special educator roles in Saint Lucia, Lubin (2016) reported that 91 percent of the special educators who responded to the survey had more than seven years of teaching experience as a general educator, while 35 percent had been a special educator for that same period of time. Almost half of participants had one to seven years of experience as a special education teacher. While 56 percent stated that they had training in special education, only 26 percent had an undergraduate and/or graduate degree in the field.

In the past decade, St Lucia teachers for the first time have been seeking formal training in special education, thus making a certificate or higher levels of training a more desirable prerequisite for becoming a special education teacher. For example, in 2004–2006, Lynchburg College trained 40 teachers in a pre-baccalaureate certificate program in conjunction with the MOE and subsequently 30 at the baccalaureate level and 15 at the master's level. Since 2014, the College has run two special education on-site training programs (BS, MEd) in Saint Lucia. Teachers have also sought training at Mico University College in Jamaica as well as at other institutions.

The MOE provides ongoing training through its monthly SEN teacher meeting programs, which are well attended by most special education teachers (Lubin, 2016). These meetings expose teachers to innovative practices and current trends, as well as provide opportunities for collaborative work. In addition, periodic workshops and summer institutes provide further opportunities for training.

Barriers/Issues to Providing Quality Special Education/Special Needs Education Services

A number of barriers can be identified to providing quality special needs education in Saint Lucia. First, in spite of the training noted previously, there remains a lack of special education training for all teachers. Lubin (2016) reported that many untrained teachers have been in the field of special education for more than three years.

Second, the MOE in Saint Lucia has gradually moved toward inclusive education. Support structures need to be put in place to ensure that the special needs of students are met. To increase the effective use of inclusionary practices, further training would be beneficial for principals, special education teachers, and general education teachers on how to work together to support students with special needs in inclusive settings (Lubin, 2016). Such work for principals is currently in progress.

Third, the Special Education Unit of the MOE has limited ability to directly enact and enforce policies. As a result, this centralized office must work within the framework of the primary and secondary schools, which has slowed down the process of policy change to improve practice. Research has shown a need for a

clearer depiction of the roles of special educators in order to standardize those roles and specify the type of practices expected (Lubin, 2016).

Fourth, there is also a need for increased focus on transition education, as teachers need to be trained on how to embed transition instruction into their teaching so that students are taught the skills for life after high school (Bailey, 2014). Although needed, these changes may be delayed due to the complex bureaucratic nature of policy change.

Promising Trends in the Future

The future trends of note and promise include in part the MOE's recently promulgated (2015) national targets. A first goal is to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children (Chitolie-Joseph, 2014).

Second, a national target to ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs addresses the concerns noted earlier about transition. Third, there is a commitment to increasing the integration of special education into regular education. Relatedly, many government and education professionals are becoming aware of the importance of making special needs an integral part of existing teacher education programs.

Further, there is an emphasis on creating more possibilities for equal access for children with special needs, underscoring the importance of human development for all. A policy on the rights of persons with disabilities is in preparation to ensure that education is provided for all children.

Country-Specific Resources

- *Annual Statistical Digest: Past Trends, Present Position, and Projections up to 2015/16*, Ministry of Education, <http://www.oecs.org/index.php/edmu-resources/slu-digest-2012>
- *Education for All Assessment: St. Lucia Report*, Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002195/219508eo.pdf>
- *The Regular Classroom as Battleground for Inclusive Special Needs Education: An Assessment of Options of Special Needs Education in the Commonwealth Caribbean*, UNFPA Caribbean Regional Office, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001364/136466e.pdf>
- Saint Lucia Educational Digest 2012, <http://www.oecs.org/edmu-resources?task=document.viewdoc&id=85>
- Saint Lucia Education Statistical Digest 2012, <http://www.govt.lc/publications/2012-education-statistical-digest>
- *A Study of Child Vulnerability in Barbados, St. Lucia and St. Vincent & The Grenadines*, UNICEF, www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/cao_resources_vulnerability.pdf

- *World Data on Education*, 6th edition 2006/7, Compiled by UNESCO-IBE, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/Countries/WDE/2006/LATIN_AMERICA_and_the_CARIBBEAN/Saint_Lucia/Saint_Lucia.pdf
- *World Data on Education 2010/11*, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Saint_Lucia.pdf

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