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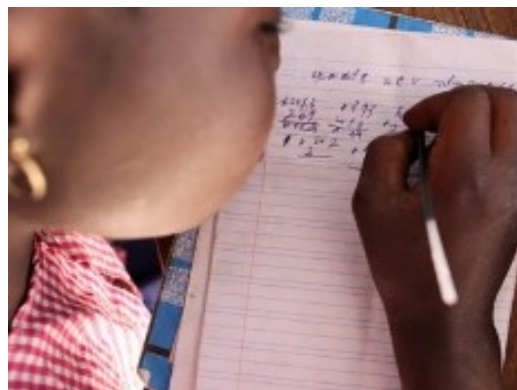
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Haiti - Education : The postponement of the school year is controversial...

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The decision of Ministry of Education (at the request of President Martelly), to postpone the school year to October 3, continues to raise concern of some observers, including parliamentarians, representatives of the civil society and the education sector.

Rosny Desroches, Representative of the Civil Society Initiative (ISC), sees a "big mistake". For him this postponement is "a considerable disadvantage on the school calendar, already late compared to the number of days provided..." stressing that this decision will have negative consequences on the budget of school principals and teachers who plan their expenditures according to the school year.

For the Senator Jean Hector Anacacis, this decision is primarily political and will have serious consequences on the mandate of the Head of State which seems trapped in his electoral promises...

The Deputy of Borgne/Port-Margot, Jude Charles Faustin, described as "fanciful" the decision of the Head of State. "There is no new budget and under these conditions, the postponement will not change many thing to the situation."

Teachers' unions estimate that the postponement will change nothing to the economic difficulties of the parents, referring to the "purchasing power" as the main cause of the situation. They claim that one month more, will not allow parents to find the means that they did not have one month before.

The Senator Edmonde Supplice Beauzile (Centre) wondered on this decision "if the President Martelly speaks of targeted subsidies, because now, he speaks only of 146.000 children, we need to know [...] the Millennium Development Goal [whose the Haitian state is involved] is that all the children of Haiti, outside the system, integrating the system in 2015, this is a priority that exist since over 10 years [...] So if it's a concern of the state, since we are in the continuity of the state, we can not agree in the way of doing things, but we agree in the strategy employed.

But [...] the Ministry of Education is able or not to tell us if they are street children, children in rural areas, which age groups and tell us where we are going to place them ? With which teachers ? What program ? What strategy will be used ? For me it is a concern, this postponement should not only provide us answers in terms of positive actions, but allow us to comment on these questions. I think that this should help to relieve initially the disadvantaged Haitian families... many questions that remain, for now, unanswered.

I see that there are other groups in the sector that discusses on this postponement. I think there was a necessity to make this postponement but if no response is given to these concerns, such a decision has been futile [...] Perhaps that the President Martelly did not know what in terms of budget represented to send children to the school for free [...] for me it's like a challenge, any head of state should have this as a challenge: how to make education the engine of sustainable development [...] Now he [the President] has the desire to enforce what the Constitution already says, this is not new..."

Françoise Gruloos Ackermans, the Representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) welcomed the measures adopted by the presidential team to send a maximum number of children to school this year in order to guarantee the rights of children in the country. She does not think the postponement of the new school year is dramatic underlining that "this can give to the partners the opportunity to better support the authorities" remembering that UNICEF will distribute this year 750.000 school bags.

Many families are satisfied with the President's decision to postpone until October 3 the new school year, affirming that this will enable them to be better prepared.

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