

**LANGUAGE POLICY IN HAITIAN EDUCATION:
A HISTORY OF CONFLICT OVER THE USE
OF KREYÒL AS LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION**

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Abstract: Language-in-education policy in Haiti has historically favored French as the *language of instruction* from the earliest levels of primary school. This has contributed to preventing most children from the monolingual Kreyòl-speaking majority from receiving a quality education, succeeding in school, and accessing the means for socioeconomic progress. Though this has been recognized as a problem since the nation's independence from France in 1804, this language-based exclusion has yet to be properly addressed. Through an analysis of publicly available documents produced by the Ministry of Education and relevant stakeholders, this article provides a historical overview of Haitian language-in-education policy followed by a critical evaluation of the documents' contents. The historical overview is split into two parts. First, we summarize policy from independence through 1979, when Kreyòl was first legalized as both *language of instruction* (LOI) and as *object of instruction* (OOI). Second, we consider major education-policy documents starting from the pro-Kreyòl reform of Minister of Education Joseph C. Bernard (1979–1982) through November 3, 2022, when we submitted this article for review toward publication. Our evaluation of these documents reveals that, while Kreyòl has made gains from a longitudinal perspective, Bernard's famous reform has been repeatedly mischaracterized to justify policies that promote French as LOI. Moreover, the Ministry has tended to adopt *early-exit transitional* language policies (early transition from Kreyòl to French as LOI) that are known to fail (as opposed to more successful *additive* approaches, such as *mother-tongue-based multilingual education*), and student success is often predicated on quickly achieving the unrealistic

second-language-attainment goal of *balanced bilingualism*. This goal favors children from elite francophone households, whereas the goal of *functional bilingualism* is more well-adapted and realistic in the context of a student population that is essentially monolingual in Kreyòl. This article aims to inform stakeholders of the history and challenges surrounding Kreyòl as LOI—a task given new importance in view of the efforts currently being put forth by the present minister of education, Nesmy Manigat, to implement key aspects of the Bernard Reform and valorize Haiti's national language in the school system. Our primary objective here is to help break, at long last, Haiti's pernicious cycle of exclusion based on language and education.

Rezime : Politik lang nan sistèm lekòl ann Ayiti te toujou valorize franse kòm lang ansèyman depi nan ti klas primè yo. Preferans sa a kontribye nan mete baboukèt sou pifò ti moun ki soti nan majorite sa a ki pale kreyòl sèlman : baboukèt sa a anpeche yo resevwa yon bon edikasyon, sa anpeche yo reyisi lekòl epi sa anpeche yo jwenn mwayen pou avansman sosyal ak ekonomik. An 1804, Ayiti te bat Lafrans pou n te rive jwenn endepandans nou. Se depi lè sa a lidèchip peyi a te rekonèt baryè lengwistik la. Malgre sa, nou pa ko janm rive kaba esklizyon sa a. Nan atik sa a, nou analize yon seri dokiman ofisyèl ki soti nan Ministè Edikasyon Nasyonal ak lòt enstitisyon k ap ferye nan sektè edikasyon ann Ayiti. Dokiman sa yo disponib devan piblik la epi yo pèmèt nou trase yon itinèrè istorik nan dosye politik lang nan sistèm edikasyon ann Ayiti. Epi, tou, nou evalye kontni dokiman yo pou n byen konprann lojik ki ladan. Nou divize itinèrè istorik la an de (2) pati. An lagan, nou rezime politik lengwistik peyi a soti 1804 jiska 1979 lè leta te premye legalize kreyòl kòm lang ansèyman (LA) e kòm objè ansèyman (OA). Ann apre, nou konsidere dokiman sa yo ki pi enpòtan nan politik edikasyon ann Ayiti soti nan refòm Minis Joseph C. Bernard nan peryòd 1979–1982 rive nan dat 3 novanm 2022 lè nou te soumèt atik sa a pou evalyasyon nan kad pwojè piblikasyon. Evalyasyon nou sou dokiman sa yo montre ki jan, malgre mouvman kreyòl te rive fè pwogrè nan istwa peyi a, gen otorite k ap plede defigire reprezantasyon refòm Bernard 1982 a pou yo kore yon politik ki ankouraje lang franse kòm LA ; epi, tou, Ministè a te vin gen tandans adopte yon politik tranzisyon rapid—soti nan kreyòl kòm LA rive nan franse kòm LA—ki souvan kreye echèk, olye pou yo adopte yon apwòch aditif ki gen plis chans pou reyisi, tankou edikasyon miltileng ki baze sou lang matènèl ; epi se kon sa siksè elèv yo souvan vin bloke an ba yon objektif *bilengwis ekilibre*. Objektif sa a se pou avantaj ti moun ki soti nan elit ki pale franse a. E poutan, objektif *bilengwis fonksyonèl* la pi byen adapte e li pi reyalis nan kontèks yon popilasyon kote se kreyòl la ki rele pifò aprenan

chè mèt chè mètrès. Ki fè n ekri atik sa a gen pou n enfòmè moun ki konsène yo sou istwa ak defi ki antoure lang kreyòl la kòm LA. Jounen jodi a, analiz sa a vin pi enpòtan toujou lè n konsidere jefò Minis Edikasyon Nasyonal la, Nesmy Manigat, k ap feraye pou l enplemante kèk aspè fondal natal nan Refòm Bernard 1982 a, pou valorizasyon lang nasyonal la nan sistèm lekòl peyi a. Objektif prensipal pa nou se ede kraze kokenn chenn baryè sa yo ki, depi digdantan, ap sèvi ak lang ansanm ak edikasyon pou konsolide apatèd nan peyi a.

(N ap prepare yon vèsyon kreyòl atik sa a k ava parèt nan yon pwochenn nimewo *Journal Etid Ayisyen — Journal of Haitian Studies*.)

Ever since Haiti became an independent country in 1804, French-dominant language-in-education policies have favored a small Francophone elite and contributed to blocking the monolingual Kreyòl-speaking¹ majority from succeeding in early education and thus accessing subsequent academic and socioeconomic opportunities. At the end of the 1970s, Haiti entered a new phase in its education policy when the Haitian parliament overturned a ban on the use of Kreyòl in school by legalizing the language as both *object of instruction* (OOI) and *language of instruction* (LOI) (Haitian Government 1979). This Law of September 18, 1979, opened the door for every Haitian child to potentially access a quality education through instruction in the mother tongue. The opportunity was seized by the policies and decrees made in 1982 by Minister of Education Joseph C. Bernard. Since then, Haitian language-in-education policy has largely been one of retrenchment with regard to the use of Kreyòl, offering vague guidance for classroom practice, ill-conceived academic targets, misrepresentations of past pro-Kreyòl legislation, and disregard for the advice of education experts. These policy failures have occurred despite the fact that over the past four decades both the Haitian government and supranational development agencies have made explicit commitments to provide all Haitian children with a quality education through initiatives such as the Education for All program of the 1990s, the Millennium Development Goals from 2000 through 2015, and the current Sustainable Development Goals (UN 2016, 2008; UNESCO 1990, 2000; UNESCO et al. 2015). As presaged by the Bernard Reform, these documents and commitments recognize that in order to achieve the goal of universal quality education, “language policies to address exclusion” are needed; thus, “teaching and learning in the first or home language should be encouraged” (UNESCO et al. 2015, 32, 37).

In the past few years, however, the Haitian Ministry of Education has proposed and initiated the most progressive pro-Kreyòl education policy

since Bernard—notably under the tenure of Minister Nesmy Manigat, who initially served in this role from 2014–2015 and then again from November 2021 to the present. Since Manigat’s reinstatement nearly two years ago, the ministry has worked to expand the role of Kreyòl in primary education through a number of tangible deliverables.² Some of these initiatives in favor of the mother tongue as LOI are, however, in direct contradiction with the government’s own most recent major policy document, the *Cadre d’Orientation Curriculaire* (COC) (MENFP, 2021), which proposes a French-dominant curriculum whereby Kreyòl is entirely removed as a LOI after fourth grade. At the time of this article’s completion, the Ministry of Education has produced a draft of a revised COC, which expands the role of Kreyòl but still sets the unrealistic attainment goal of *balanced bilingualism* in French and Kreyòl (as discussed in detail below).³

The current situation is extremely dynamic, and there are many opportunities and challenges. To help stakeholders understand the complexity and history surrounding the pursuit of quality education for all Haitian children through their mother tongue, this article reviews LOI policy in Haitian education-policy documents from 1804 through 2021. First, we provide a brief overview of policy prior to the official legalization of the use of Kreyòl in schools in 1979. Second, we review the Haitian Ministry of Education’s major policy documents from 1979 until 2021 as well as many of the preliminary reports and recommendations that were specifically intended to inform the language-in-education policy of the major documents. We then discuss some of our most significant findings:

1. From a long-term perspective, the role of Kreyòl in the Haitian education system has made significant gains. Kreyòl is now recognized, at least on paper, as a perfectly normal language and as the primary means of communication of the Haitian people—the one single language that unites all Haitians together (Haitian Government 1987, Article 5). It has entered into the Haitian school system as its own separate academic subject, although what status it should have as LOI is still debated.
2. Haiti’s most famous pro-Kreyòl LOI policy initiative, the Bernard Reform (1979–1982), has been so completely mischaracterized or misinterpreted that it is frequently used to justify French-dominant LOI policies that directly oppose the actual rationale, objectives, and details of the Bernard Reform.
3. Haitian schools, by and large, continue to adopt *early-exit transitional* language policies that are known to fail. One such policy is the 2021 version of the COC.

4. The goal of *balanced bilingualism*, as privileged by current policy including the new 2022 draft version of the COC, is unobtainable for all but children of the elite, thus contributing to the reproduction of Haiti's inequitable social hierarchy.

We furthermore discuss how modern studies on the science of learning and on second-language acquisition continue to support the basic rationale of the 1982 Bernard Reform, which proposed an additive language policy (i.e., *mother-tongue-based multilingual education*) with the ambitious but achievable goal of graduating *functionally* bilingual students. Such approaches offer many benefits for improving general learning outcomes, increasing the successful learning of second languages such as French, and establishing a school system that celebrates and validates Haitian identity.

At this point, a few caveats are in order about the scope of the current study. We have endeavored to summarize and analyze Haitian language-in-education policy from 1804 through 2021, a task that has encompassed a wide range of both legislative documents and accompanying materials. For the most part, however, we have not been able to discuss the complications of implementing these policies, to investigate the details of actual classrooms practices, or to address the influence that foreign governments and institutions have exercised in shaping Haitian education policy. All of these are issues of critical importance that merit careful study and discussion, but these complex questions are outside the scope of this article.⁴

We do point out some of the barriers to policy implementation that have been previously discussed in the literature, including the political instability and revolving door of Haitian policy makers (notably ministers of education); lack of support from state actors (Alexandre 2013; Prou 2009); insufficient number of adequately trained teachers (RTI et al. 1995; MENFP 2020, 22); insufficient funding (ECOSOF 2018; Paul 2016); the fact that the majority of schools are private with minimal oversight (Hadjadj 2000); negative evaluations of Kreyòl in education by micro-level stakeholders (teachers, administrators, and parents) (DeGraff and Stump 2018; Hittenberger 1987; Jean-Charles 1987; Jean-François 2006; Frager forthcoming); lack of materials in Kreyòl (Smith 2016); and top-down resistance by francophone Haitian elites who use French language and culture as their “spoils of war” (“butin de guerre), granting themselves exclusive socio-economic advantages.⁵

Actual natural classroom practices are difficult to directly record. In a survey conducted by the Ministry of Education, teachers self-reported to predominantly use French with their students, even though they felt

the students learned better when they used Kreyòl (GTEF 2010, 82). In another survey (Frager 2018), high school students in their terminal year reported that both their primary and secondary school teachers used far more French than Kreyòl—though the students themselves would prefer Kreyòl to be the primary LOI of education in Haiti.⁶ While these results indicate that Haitian teachers are in fact predominantly using French, the vast majority of them have only a basic level of the language (IFADEM 2013; see Discussion section below). This likely contributes to Haitian pedagogy being rooted in rote memorization (Dejean 2010), as active learning and critical thinking require students and teachers to freely and creatively converse and debate academic concepts in a language that they are fluent in.

Apart from the spoken-language practices of teachers, the practice of punishing and shaming students who speak in Kreyòl has been reported in many schools (Bruny 2021; Fot Wobo 2021). Such systematic mistreatments of Kreyòl-speaking children in schools undermine their sense of dignity, self-esteem, and cultural identity; they constitute violations of human rights and can lead to long-term psychological and emotional harm (D. Dupuy 2022). As such, they can be viewed as patterns of torture that enforce structures of violence (cf. Roth 2013) as part of a larger situation of “linguistic apartheid” (DeGraff 2017).⁷

Throughout Haitian history, foreign institutions and governments have shaped much in the nation’s policy, whether through direct force, soft power, or international development programming.⁸ Although in this article we are able to provide only an intermittent and incomplete description of this, the significance of the issue should not be understated. Already in 1825 the French consul Gaspard Théodore Mollien sought for France to maintain domination of the Haitian economy through the use of Haitian newspapers and French teachers and priests whose mission would be to maintain and promote the dominance of French culture in Haiti as a means to preserve French “influence and supremacy” and to “subjugate [the Haitian people] entirely to the consumption of the products of our industry” (Brière 2007, 74; also see Tontongi 2008 for an extensive critique of Francophonie in Haiti).⁹ As recently as 2015, French president François Hollande—avoiding calls for the French government to repay the ransom they extracted from Haiti following its independence—proposed to send retired French teachers to Haiti “to diffuse the French language . . . in this great francophone country” (*France 24* 2015; DeGraff 2015).¹⁰ Today, a cacophony of foreign NGOs and private establishments operating in the education sector place different emphases on the roles of French and Kreyòl—as well as English, Spanish, and other languages—in both their school programming and the projects they select to fund (DeGraff 2017).

The current study does not intend to dismiss the significance of the above issues. Understanding current practices, being aware of obstacles to implementation, and evaluating the influence and interventions of foreign actors are all key to addressing the challenges facing the Haitian education system. In this article, we restrict our primary focus to the history and consequences of formal language-in-education policy in Haiti. In doing so, we hope to help interested readers and stakeholders understand the role of Kreyòl in the history of these policy documents, and the crucial importance of *mother-tongue-based multilingual education* and *functional bilingualism* for breaking pernicious cycles of excluding the Haitian majority from quality education. This exclusion and the concomitant reproduction of socioeconomic inequality are caused in part by poorly conceived curricula that favor French as the LOI.

PART I: HAITIAN EDUCATION BEFORE THE LEGALIZATION OF KREYÒL IN 1979

1804 TO EARLY 1900S: THE INVISIBILITY OF KREYÒL AND ITS SPEAKERS

In the years immediately following Haiti's 1804 independence, the new government had to decide on the operational language of the state. For the powerful francophone elite, maintaining French in major public institutions such as schools and universities was the preferred choice. There were notable exceptions, such as Haiti's first head of state, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who would insist even before 1804 on the local population speaking their "own language" (i.e., Kreyòl) when addressing him (Descourtiz 1809, 281). Dessalines was aware of the importance of language as a weapon for soft power: The 1804 Declaration of Independence warned that Haiti's anticolonial revolutionary army had been victim not only of French military might but also of the "deceitful eloquence of proclamations by French agents."¹¹

Another voice of support among the elite came from General Étienne Gérin, a contemporary of Dessalines, who proposed that Kreyòl should serve as the school system's LOI to allow broad access to education. For Gérin, such use of Kreyòl was indispensable to maintain Haiti's sovereignty against the "technology" of the French language as neocolonial tool for empire. To demonstrate the possibility of this goal, he wrote a Kreyòl grammar book intended for use in primary schools (Saint-Remy 1864, 2). Ultimately, however, his initiative did not gain traction.

Dessalines was assassinated on October 17, 1806, amid protracted race and class struggles that go back to the colonial era. Following this, the country split into the Republic of Haiti under President Alexandre Pétion in the South and the Kingdom of Haiti under King Henry Christophe in

the North. Both favored the use of European languages in education, with Pétion employing French and Christophe employing English. Following Christophe's death in 1820, Pétion's successor, Jean-Pierre Boyer, reunited both halves of the country and established French as the dominant language of education throughout the national territory.¹²

Among the policy makers of the Haitian elite from this period, pro-Kreyòl voices such as those of Dessalines and Gérin were rare outliers. One of the most striking features of nineteenth-century Haitian language-in-education policy documents is the invisibility of Kreyòl and thus of the educational needs of the monolingual Haitian majority (Vincent and Lhérisson 1895).¹³ The dominance of French was so extensive that it was not uncommon for documents to fail to specify language altogether, as it could be taken for granted that the elite's tongue was the *de facto* language of education. For example, the Law of July 4, 1820, required students entering public high school to be able "to read, to write, . . . and [to understand] the elements of grammar" without bothering to specify the language.¹⁴

This disregard for the monolingual Kreyòl-speaking majority was pushed even further in a memorandum dated August 11, 1822, written by the Commission of Public Instruction. Assembled only months after the Haitian government took control over the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo to the East, the Commission envisaged a new shared Haitian identity whereby every citizen of the newly unified island would be able to freely communicate with each other:

As all Haitians have to communicate with each other, from one end of the island to the other, it is necessary for them to speak the same language in order to better identify their customs and habits. If by frequent and constant communication most of them manage to speak both languages [French and Spanish], it is none the less suitable that they can read and understand them perfectly. A professor of French at the University of Santo Domingo is, therefore, of the greatest urgency, as well as teachers from Lancasterian schools who can teach the language which we use in the various cities of the East. (Memorandum of August 11, 1822, as cited in Vincent and Lhérisson 1895, 422)¹⁵

Thus the Commission sought French language teachers for the East but not Spanish language teachers for the West. Their plan was for the residents of the former Spanish colony to learn French—"the language which we use"—which would in turn permit citizens "from one end of the island to the other" to speak to each other. As the vast majority of the western

population spoke only Kreyòl, it appears as though these individuals did not factor into the government's vision of a new Haitian identity.¹⁶ It is in the same vein that the elite's language was presented as though it were the universal language of the entire Haitian population. For example, the 1830 and 1838 admission requirements to the public school of medicine required students to write correctly in "their language" and "the language in usage in the republic" (Vincent and Lhérisson, 1895, 307, 327).

An education report from 1860 written by the Haitian Minister of Public Instruction, François-Elie Dubois, to President Fabre Geffrard reveals a different and more honest assessment of the sociolinguistic landscape of Haiti and also shows the elitist and discriminatory nature of the school system:

In general, we conceive primary school education very poorly in Haiti. Many people believe that it is a path to secondary school and that children leaving one of these establishments, where they are inculcated with a few notions of the French language, arithmetic, history and geography, should go to a high school to gain deep and solid knowledge. The intelligence of the elite alone should enjoy this privilege. If, at the annual primary school exams, we notice a few students capable of following the advanced courses of a high school, we will send them at the government's expense, as I have recently done for three such children. (Minister Dubois's 1860 Report to President Geffrard, reproduced in Vincent and Lhérisson 1895, 443)¹⁷

The minister's report reveals several important facts about Haiti at this time. First, many children were going into school without knowing French—although what they were speaking in their homes and communities was not identified. Second, these children would only learn "a few notions" of the French language from their schooling. Third, the only way for them to advance to secondary school was through performing well on school examinations, which were undoubtedly conducted in French, and thus by implication the language would act as an academic barrier for the vast majority. Finally, the minister felt free to express the view that this was an acceptable state of affairs, as it is primarily children of the elite who should enjoy the "privilege" of education.

A significant factor in the invisibility of Kreyòl during this period was its uncertain and secondary ontological status with respect to French. A prevailing belief at the time was that Kreyòl should be understood as merely a *broken* or *inferior* form of French (DeGraff 2005). Pierre Larousse (1869,

490) defines “créole” in its linguistic sense as “corrupted French spoken by the inhabitants of current and former French American colonies.”¹⁸ Such pejorative assessments of languages named “Creoles” are unfortunately still all too common in even modern linguistic discourse (DeGraff 2005).

Complementing the perception of Kreyòl as a lesser and corrupted variety of French, most Haitian intellectuals of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sought to prove the nation’s worth through the mimicry of European artistic expression and culture (Robertshaw 2019b). Accordingly, they sought to minimize the significance of African influences on the Haitian people and their linguistic production. Intellectuals were thus inclined to insist that “this country speaks French” (Delorme 1870, 183) or to insist on the close proximity between Kreyòl and French. For example, the Haitian diplomat, lawyer, and author Dantès Bellegarde (1934, 12) opined that Kreyòl differed from French only with respect to pronunciation and certain meanings of words, ignoring their vastly different grammatical systems:

When you have arrived in Port-au-Prince, you will hear French sounds ringing in your ears, which might surprise you: there are still so many people in France who do not know that French is the national language of Haitians! The porters who will rush around you to take your luggage will speak to you in a language that you will not immediately understand. But pay attention: you will soon realize that this language is a simple patois made up almost entirely of French words altered in their meaning or only in their pronunciation. Kreyòl—as we call it—is closer to French than some patois in France.¹⁹

If Kreyòl is accepted to be an approximative and “lesser” version of French, then it would follow that French, not Kreyòl, should be the language of education as it would both be quickly assimilated by Kreyòl speakers and allow Kreyòl-speaking students to “improve” their linguistic production. As discussed below, the earliest legislation that sought to expand Kreyòl’s role in education insisted not only on it being the sole means of communication of the Haitian majority but also on it being a language in its own right (Haitian Government 1979, 1987).

1919–1934: HEGEMONY SHAKEN; REACTIONS TO THE ENGLISH OF THE US OCCUPATION

For the first century following Haitian independence, the political, economic, and formal institutional domination by the Haitian elite and

the French language over the monolingual Kreyòl-speaking majority was firmly secure.²⁰ Accordingly, there was no need to officialize the language of privilege in any form of legislation. During this period French served as the *de facto* language of all formal institutions, whereas Kreyòl officially did not exist in Haitian policy.²¹

In the early twentieth century, however, political upheaval would rattle both the political and linguistic order of the country. Between 1911 and 1915, Haiti's head of state changed seven times, and on July 28, 1915, US marines began what would ultimately become a nineteen-year occupation (Heinl, Heinl, and Heinl 2005). Ostensibly, the US government's mission was to bring stability to the country. In actuality, they were concerned by imperial Germany's growing commercial and military interest in Haiti—an act of European expansionism inconsistent with the enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine. During the two decades that followed, the United States faced and violently suppressed armed popular resistance from Haitian militias, never gaining the support of either the elite or the general population. The US troops ultimately withdrew on August 1, 1934.

This occupation influenced Haiti's sociolinguistic landscape in several ways. Foremost, in an effort to win over the elite and allay fears that French might be supplanted by English, the elite's language was officialized for the first time in the 1918 Constitution: "French is the official language. Its use is obligatory in administrative and judicial matters" (Haitian Government 1918, Article 23). The occupation did, however, expose the marginalization of the monolingual majority to the eye of critical foreign observers. James W. Johnson, an African American diplomat, educator, and early civil rights activist, traveled through occupied Haiti and summarized the linguistic situation as follows:

The upper Haitian class, approximately 500,000, speak and know French, while the masses, probably more than 2,000,000, speak only Creole. Haitian Creole is grammatically constructed, but has not to any general extent been reduced to writing. Therefore, these masses have no means of receiving or communicating thoughts through the written word. They have no books to read. They cannot read the newspapers. The children of the masses study French for a few years in school, but it never becomes their every-day language. In order to abolish Haitian illiteracy, Creole must be made a printed as well as a spoken language. The failure to undertake this problem is the worst indictment against the Haitian Government. (Johnson 1920, 30)

In order to communicate with the general population, the US marines created some of the earliest grammatical descriptions and instructional books for Kreyòl. As no official orthography had been developed, Kreyòl words were written using a mix of French spellings and phonetic approximations (Gendarmerie d'Haïti and Service Medical 1921).

At the same time, the US troops exhibited blatant racism toward Haitians from all walks of society, which in turn led to a wave of nationalist discourse and writing among Haitian intellectuals (Y. Alexis 2021). In order to defend their homeland from this foreign invader, these writers first had to determine exactly what it was that they were defending. What was the Haitian identity and culture that was under threat? What did it mean to be Haitian?

Among Haiti's earliest Kreyòl-language proponents and authors, we find Georges Sylvain (1866–1925), Félix Morisseau-Leroy (1912–1998), and Jacques Stephen Alexis (1922–1961).²² Starting in the 1920s, the Indigenist School adopted the rural peasants' culture and Kreyòl language as national symbols to rally the people against the occupation. Then, in the larger Négritude movement of the 1930s, authors and intellectuals of this period focused on themes of anticolonialism and transnational Black identity (Nzengou-Tayo 2010). The pro-Kreyòl sentiment and advocacy of these intellectuals would continue for decades after the departure of the US soldiers.

1940S–1960S: KREYÒL MAKES ITS FIRST APPEARANCE IN POLICY AS INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LITERACY CAMPAIGNS TAKE OFF

After the end of the US occupation, French persisted as the sole official language. The mid-twentieth century, however, saw a continual exchange between Haitians and foreign actors that would lead to the first attempts at a standardized written Kreyòl.

In the 1940s, an Irish missionary by the name of Ormonde McConnell partnered with US linguist Franck Laubach to create a phonemic orthography for Kreyòl that would be easy for people to learn and use (Govain 2014). The Haitian elite, however, showed disdain toward the McConnell-Laubach spelling system, viewing it as too “Anglo-American,” but failed to supplant it with a more French-inspired alternative (Govain 2014, 14).

While McConnell's intent was to spread the gospel, the international development agencies that were created after WWII also took an interest in written Kreyòl, as they had identified literacy as one of their primary education targets. In 1947, less than two years after its creation, UNESCO

launched its first pilot project in “fundamental education”—a program including “some sort of instruction in basic literacy skills” in order to create “practical social improvements” (UNESCO 1949, 1953; Watras 2010, 220–221). The chosen site was the Marbial Valley in the South-East Department of Haiti. The project involved a Kreyòl-based education program that would lead to the eventual learning of French as a second language. The effort was hampered by disagreements with the country’s elite, ostensibly regarding the spelling system, with an ongoing debate on whether Kreyòl should be given a phonemic spelling, developed with the intention to accelerate literacy acquisition, or a French-based spelling, intended to serve as an initial step toward a subsequent transition to the country’s language of privilege (Lundahl 2015). The project ended after a few years, before any definitive consensus was reached.²³

In September 1957, a medical doctor named François Duvalier became president. That December, after over a century and a half of invisibility in major policy documents, Kreyòl made its first appearance in a major legal document, the Haitian Constitution of 1957:

French is the official language. Its use is compulsory in public services. The law will determine the cases and the conditions in which the use of Kreyòl will be allowed and even recommended to safeguard the material and moral interests of citizens who do not sufficiently know the French language. (Haitian Government 1957, Article 35)²⁴

Though in several respects quite conservative, this Constitution broke from tradition, not only by explicitly mentioning Kreyòl but also by acknowledging that French is not the universal language of the entire Haitian population (Joseph 2021). The Constitution justifies its modest policy of permitting future laws to allow or even recommend Kreyòl as a protection of the “material and moral interests” of those who do not speak French. Although the Constitution is unclear about which people would be potentially harmed by the obligatory use of French and what portion of the population they represent, the inclusion of this article seems to represent a concession to the Haitian people by Duvalier. Going even further, he initially proposed a literacy campaign that would start with Kreyòl, although this project never came to fruition (Robertshaw 2019a). Yet, in spite of such apparent pro-Kreyòl initiatives, these relatively progressive policies were blatantly contradicted by other legal actions such as Duvalier’s *Code rural*, which enforced the exclusive use of French in all work contracts. This epitomizes a use of French that, according to the 1957 Constitution, would constitute a threat to “the material and

moral interests” of monolingual Kreyòl speakers who need Kreyòl as “safeguard.”²⁵ Duvalier soon became an oppressive dictator, and many Haitian intellectuals and pro-democracy advocates who supported the Kreyòl movement were forced to flee the country (Robertshaw 2019a).²⁶

In spite of Duvalier’s domestic oppression, Kreyòl’s place in education made certain gains. In 1961, Haiti participated in the Addis Ababa UNESCO conference, which served as an inspiration for many postcolonial nations, particularly in Africa, to promote the cause of universal, mother-tongue education (Locher 2010, 178). This same year, the Haitian government launched the National Office of Community Education (ONEC),²⁷ and in 1969 the National Office of Literacy and Community Action (ONAAC)²⁸ (Lundahl 2015, 477–480). The goal of these two government agencies was to increase literacy (i.e., Kreyòl literacy) in both children and adults. The programs made some impact, increasing the countrywide literacy rate from 10 percent to 20 percent by 1971 (Lundahl 2015, 477). At the same time, such initiatives elicited questions regarding the usefulness of Kreyòl literacy, as there was very little written in the language at the time and the education system still prioritized French as the LOI at all levels.

In 1964 the government adopted a new constitution allowing Duvalier to be president for life (Haitian Government 1964). This was then amended in 1971 to allow his young son, Jean-Claude Duvalier, to assume power after him. These constitutions maintained the article that banned Kreyòl in public services unless specified by further law.

1970–1979: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PRESSURE FOR LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION REFORM

Jean-Claude Duvalier assumed power in 1971 and immediately worked to improve relationships with the United States, which began making significant financial contributions to the Haitian government (Prou 2009; Robertshaw 2019a). Under pressure to keep aid money flowing from the United States, a display of government effort to improve Haiti’s abysmal academic record was called for.

In 1972, the government created the National Pedagogical Institute (IPN),²⁹ tasking it with finding ways to revamp the education system. Acting as a pedagogic laboratory for the state’s Department of National Education (DEN),³⁰ the IPN founded a pilot primary school that used Kreyòl as the language of instruction. In the following years, the IPN developed Kreyòl training manuals, textbooks, and other pedagogical materials, as well as radio programming for distance learning (Prou 2009).

In 1979, the IPN presented an astute assessment of the rarity of spoken French, particularly as related to social class and urban/rural distinctions, and gave a scathing critique of the impact of its use in schools for most Haitian children:

For the vast majority of Haitian children, Kreyòl, their mother tongue, is intimately associated with the affective, social, and physical experiences of early childhood and with the influences received from their family environment, particularly maternal. On the other hand, especially for rural areas and disadvantaged urban areas, contact with a second language such as French is infrequent, if not nonexistent. It is therefore Kreyòl that fulfills the necessary and fundamental role of language in the mental development of the child until the age when they must enter school around the age of 6 and 7. . . . The numerous failures observed in schooling during the first two years of primary education are partly linked to a linguistic factor, that of the direct use of French as language of instruction from the start of schooling: the effort of assimilation that the child must make in order to use a poorly known, if not unknown, language slows the development of operational mental structures, especially if one takes into account a separation of the cognitive and affective aspects of the language. The direct use of French does not emotionally motivate the vast majority of children who have been immersed since birth in a Kreyòl-speaking environment which continually nourishes their emotional and social life. (IPN 1979, as cited in DEN 1982a, 38–39)³¹

Contemporaneously, Haitian representatives were participating in conferences abroad that were organized to help improve international education outcomes. In late 1979, Haiti and twenty other nations in the region committed to the Major Project in the Field of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (PROMEDLAC) (UNESCO 2001). With a deadline set for the year 2000, member states committed to improving literacy rates by increasing the accessibility and efficiency of their respective education systems (Hadjadj 2000). It is in this context that the Haitian government launched its most renowned language-in-education policy reform.

PART II: HAITIAN EDUCATION AFTER THE LEGALIZATION OF KREYÒL

1979–1982: THE BERNARD REFORM—HAITI’S FORWARD-THINKING AND FORGOTTEN ADVOCACY OF EDUCATION IN THE MOTHER TONGUE—REQUIRES KREYÒL AS LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION IN THE FIRST TEN YEARS OF SCHOOL

From April 1979 to July 1982, Joseph C. Bernard served as the Haitian minister of education. This period is associated with a bold effort to radically overhaul the Haitian education system and the role of Kreyòl within it. The policies, documents, and decrees passed during this time have become synonymous with Bernard and are popularly referred to as the Bernard Reform (Alexandre 2013; Hadjadj 2000; Prou 2009). As discussed below, there is a great deal of confusion regarding the policies and documents that constitute this reform. To clearly understand it, there are three major policy documents that should be reviewed.

The first of these is the Law of September 18, 1979 (Haitian Government 1979). Passed by the Haitian parliament, the very first article of this law permitted the use of Kreyòl in school as both LOI and OOI. Though a seemingly modest first step, this measure was required given the standing constitutional ban on Kreyòl in all public services unless otherwise stated by law. The document justified itself by claiming Kreyòl to be the “common language spoken by 90% of the Haitian population” (Article 1). While this is inaccurate, as Kreyòl is widely recognized to be known and spoken by *all* Haitians, it is the first major policy document to acknowledge Kreyòl as having an extensive presence in Haitian society and to indirectly suggest that French is the “spoken common language” of only a small minority of the population. The law marked a significant departure from the common nineteenth-century misrepresentation of French as the universal language of the Haitian people.

Its second article appears to legislate Kreyòl to have characteristics that are common to any language: “Kreyòl, as a spoken and written language, is constituted of sounds and signs corresponding to consonants, vowels, semi-consonants and semi-vowels.”³² Why the Haitian government felt it necessary to mandate this by law is unclear, though it was a perhaps a response to the pervasive belief that Kreyòl is not a language but rather a (broken) dialect of French.

The second key document is the *Décret organisant le système éducatif haïtien en vue d’offrir des chances égales à tous et de réaffirmer la culture haïtienne*, or more simply, the Decree of March 30, 1982 (DEN 1982b). In terms of policy reform, this decree is the most significant of Bernard’s tenure. It called for restructuring grade school into a ten-year obligatory program

called Fundamental Education, which would be followed by three years of secondary school (Articles 21, 22). In the Fundamental Education program, Kreyòl was mandated to be both OOI and LOI from first through tenth grade. French was only to be introduced as a co-LOI in sixth grade (Article 29).³³ The document also expressed a need to develop practical and culturally relevant school content, and to shift away from memorization to active learning (Article 4).

The third and final key document of the Bernard Reform period is *La Réforme éducative—Éléments d'information* (DEN 1982a), which elaborated on the motivations, justifications, and goals of the Decree of March 30. Though now four decades old, its arguments for instruction in the mother tongue closely resemble those made by modern advocates. These include:

1. Education systems should be based on science, not preconceived beliefs.

The rare solutions proposed for certain problems are often the result of pure imagination and not meticulous research. (12)³⁴

Again, this is a choice based on reflection, dictated not by simple common belief, but resulting from surveys, research and analyses on the causes of school dropout across the world. It has been clearly demonstrated that no teaching is more effective and leaves a more profound impact than that which uses the mother tongue. (37–38)³⁵

2. Haiti's education system should promote the nation's own culture and identity.

Haiti will serve as the essential foundation of our teaching. To bring to Haitians a culture that is borrowed from industrialized countries is to make them lose awareness of their own identity and to make them aware of foreign matters before awakening their own self-awareness. (10)³⁶

3. The current French-dominant approach causes many problems.

The many failures observed in the first two years of primary education are partly linked to a linguistic factor, that of direct use of French as language of instruction from the start of schooling. (39, citing IPN 1979)³⁷

A pedagogical methodology based on negative traditional attitudes such as the authoritarianism of the master, the

passivity of the student, the memorization of knowledge which we know is forgotten very quickly. (13)³⁸

4. French will be learned better if Kreyòl is used as the main LOI.

On the other hand, the introduction of Kreyòl in our teaching in no way means or implies the exclusion of French. To the contrary, in the spirit of the current reform, the initial acquisition of the operational mechanisms of reading and writing through the intermediary of the mother tongue should facilitate the learning of written French. (39–40)³⁹

The language-attainment goal of the Bernard Reform was clear: by the start of eighth grade, make Haitian students *functionally bilingual* in French (50)—that is, able to use their second language in specific domains or while discussing particular topics.

1983–1987: CONSTITUTIONAL PROGRESS AS A DICTATORSHIP COMES
UNDONE

Bernard faced immediate political backlash for the pro-Kreyòl aspect of the reform, notably from Michèle Bennett Duvalier, the dictator’s wife of elite origins (Alexandre 2013). Bernard was removed from office on July 12, 1982, and replaced with Frank Saint Victor, a classical Latinist and former teacher of the first lady.⁴⁰ A moratorium was issued ceasing all reform activities, and the DEN was restructured into the National Education Ministry of Youth and Sports (MENJS)⁴¹ (Hadjadj 2000; Prou 2009).

Even with the pushback against Bernard’s reform efforts in favor of education based on the mother tongue, Kreyòl made some advances during this time. On August 27, 1983, the Duvalier government adopted a new constitution that gave the dictator the power to dissolve the Senate (Haitian Government 1983, Articles 79 and 177)—a power that he immediately exercised (Heinl, Heinl, and Heinl 2005). Despite the largely antidemocratic nature of this constitution, it removed the general ban on Kreyòl in public services and added the following article: “The national languages are French and Kreyòl. French is the official language of the Republic” (Haitian Government 1983, Article 62).⁴²

Faced with a wave of popular resistance from the Haitian people, Jean-Claude Duvalier was forced to flee the country on January 29, 1986, and the nearly three-decade-long Duvalier dictatorship came to an end (Heinl, Heinl, and Heinl 2005). An interim government was put in place, and the parliament approved a new, pro-democratic constitution on March

29, 1987. This constitution, whose amended version⁴³ is still in use today, elevated Kreyòl's stature in policy in several respects.

First, it recognized the universality of Kreyòl in Haiti and declared Kreyòl to be co-official with French: "All Haitians are united by a common language: Kreyòl. Kreyòl and French are the official languages of the Republic" (Haitian Government 1987, Article 5).⁴⁴ Second, it required all public information be published in both Kreyòl and French: "The State has the obligation to use both Kreyòl and French to publicize in the oral, written and televised press all laws, orders, decrees, international agreements, treaties and conventions on everything affecting the national life, except for information concerning national security" (Article 40).⁴⁵ Third, it called for a Kreyòl language academy—in the fashion of the Académie Française—to promote the language: "A Haitian Academy shall be established to fix the Kreyòl language and enable it to develop scientifically and harmoniously" (Article 213).⁴⁶

The article requiring all state communications to be accessible in Kreyòl and French has never been respected and enforced; a quick review of current Haitian government websites and policy documents will reveal almost everything to be available only in French (J. Pierre 2013). As for the Akademi Kreyòl Ayisyen (i.e., the Haitian Creole Academy), it would have to wait nearly three decades to come into existence, and, even then, its functioning has been marred with various irregularities (P. Pierre 2018; DeGraff, forthcoming).

1988: *KASE FÈY, KOUVRI SA*—MISREPRESENTING THE TRUE BERNARD REFORM
 Reform activities resumed in December 1987, but by then much of the enthusiasm for their linguistic aspects had been lost (Prou 2009). Despite the leap forward made by the 1987 Constitution, many members of the Haitian state felt Bernard's pro-Kreyòl curriculum to be too extreme and sought to roll back the language's role in the new Fundamental Education program (Alexandre 2013). Within this context, the Ministry of Education issued the Decree of December 1, 1988,⁴⁷ which expressed the aim "to define for the Haitian school a curriculum in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Reform of the Educational System [i.e., Bernard Reform] to establish Fundamental Education" (as reproduced in Fombrun 1989, 75).⁴⁸ This decree states that the "aims" and "objectives" of the Bernard Reform include "the necessity of the promotion of a balanced and functional bilingualism" (75).⁴⁹ Though it may appear subtle, there is a critical difference between this policy and that of the original Bernard Reform. As mentioned above, the *Réforme éducative* document defined the language-attainment goal of the Bernard Reform as "*functional*

bilingualism” by the start of eighth grade (DEN 1982a, 50). The 1988 decree restates the reform’s goal as “balanced and functional bilingualism.” In our review of policy documents, this marks the first observed reference to “balanced bilingualism.”⁵⁰ The significance of the differences between these two language-learning goals is critically evaluated in the Discussion section below.

The December 1 decree made other significant changes to the Bernard Reform’s Fundamental Education program. In terms of structure, the program was shortened from ten to nine grade levels (three “cycles” consisting of four, two, and three years), with secondary school consisting of four rather than three grade levels. The decree furthermore provided no details with regards to the LOI policy of the new school program, but announced a forthcoming set of curricular guides (“programmes détaillés”) that all schools would be required to follow.

Our review of subsequent policy documents reveals subtle and not-so-subtle inconsistencies across several LOI policies, all incorrectly attributed to the Bernard Reform (see Discussion section). No clear policy with respect to Kreyòl as LOI was communicated or enforced when the reform was “universalized,” resulting in confusion among teachers and administrators (Saint-Germain 1988). Kreyòl as OOI, however, was broadly and successfully introduced into schools (Prou 2009). This movement was no doubt strengthened by the fact that Kreyòl became a subject of evaluation in the standardized national exams to take place in the sixth and ninth grades (Prou 2009).⁵¹ Still, no uniform policy was put in place. A 1995 report on the state of education in Haiti noted that in order for the reform to be made “more acceptable to all,” schools were allowed “a greater flexibility in the introduction of Kreyòl (certain schools being authorized to introduce it from the 4th year instead of imposing it on everyone from the first year as planned)” (RTI et al. 1995, 30).⁵² It is unclear whether this inconsistency in integrating Kreyòl into schools was referring to it as LOI, as OOI, or both.

1990s AND 2000s: THE SCHOOL SYSTEM EXPANDS WHILE EDUCATION IN THE MOTHER TONGUE FLOUNDERS—UNIVERSALITY WITHOUT QUALITY

Three characteristics defined Haitian education policy in the 1990s and 2000s. First, international development organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and USAID began to have a larger direct financial, technical, and advisory role in shaping Haitian education policy (Hadjadj 2000). In 1983, the total foreign aid given to Haitian education totaled less than US\$9 million, whereas the annual average during the 1990s was US\$17.9 million⁵³ (Hadjadj 2000, 38). Second, access to basic education and the

overall size of the school system rapidly expanded during this period, with net enrollment going from 22 percent of school-aged Haitian children in 1990 to 75 percent in 2003 and 88 percent in 2011 (IHSI 2009). Third, despite consultants and stakeholders flagging LOI policy as a fundamental problem of Haitian education (GTEF 2010; ISOS 2016; RTI et al. 1995), actual policy failed to address these concerns and provided only vague guidelines. As a result, an enlarged school system succeeded in reaching more children but too often failed to provide quality education due to the misalignment between LOI policy and the teachers' and children's linguistic abilities, resulting in what Yves Dejean (2006) called an “upside-down school in an upside-down country.”⁵⁴

THE PLAN NATIONAL D'ÉDUCATION 2004 PROJET

In 1990, Haiti participated in UNESCO's global conference on education in Jomtien, Thailand, and subsequently committed to the resulting World Declaration on Education and its corresponding Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs (UNESCO 1990). The main objectives of the program were to achieve universal enrollment for school-aged children by the year 2000, decrease repetition and dropout rates, and increase literacy rates in both children and adults—irrespective of the language of literacy (UNESCO 1990, 2001). Similarly, in 1993 Haiti participated in the fifth Major Project in the Field of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (PROMEDLAC V), a regional conference aiming to strengthen and expand education systems in Central and South America (UNESCO 2001).

Progress in Haiti toward these internationally recognized goals to improve early education was compromised during this period by domestic political instability. After only a few months in office, Haiti's first democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was overthrown on September 29, 1991 (Heinl, Heinl, and Heinl 2005). Despite the illegitimacy of the ensuing military-led government, in 1993 the Ministry of Education, with the support of USAID, UNESCO, UNICEF, created the Bureau Exécutif du Plan National d'Éducation to elaborate a ten-year education reform plan, titled the *Plan national d'éducation 2004* (RTI et al. 1995). The Research Triangle Institute (RTI) consultancy firm was selected to prepare an assessment of the education system and give recommendations for the reform (RTI et al. 1995).⁵⁵

With respect to language-in-education issues, RTI acknowledged that Haitian teachers have an insufficient level of French to carry out the government-mandated curriculum. This was treated, however, as merely one aspect of teachers being generally undertrained: “Teacher training

should include a strong dose of basic language skills, particularly in French” (RTI et al. 1995, 31).⁵⁶ Other than this brief mention, language played no part in RTI’s eight general recommendations for the school system (71–75).

In October 1994 Aristide was reinstated as president, and in late January 1996 the government held an education conference consisting of several hundred Haitian and foreign stakeholders in Port-au-Prince (Prou 2009; UNESCO 2007). Titled *États Généraux de l’Éducation*, the conference aimed at defining the principal areas of action for a new ten-year education plan. The participants identified language as a major point of reorientation for the education system, resolving: “The Kreyòl language should occupy a privileged place in education; it should be studied as a language and used as the language of instruction from pre-school through university” (UNESCO 2007, 1).⁵⁷ This strong recommendation, which echoed the aspirations of the Bernard Reform, was, however, not incorporated into the subsequent major education plan, the *Plan National d’Éducation et de Formation* (PNEF) 1997–2007 (MENJS 1998), whose authors refrained from offering any clarity whatsoever with regard to the country’s language-in-education policy.⁵⁸

THE 2000s: MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE STRATÉGIE NATIONALE D’ACTION POUR L’ÉDUCATION POUR TOUS

The year 2000 was historically significant for a couple of reasons. Following the expiration of the Jomtien Declaration, the UN launched both the 2000–2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Dakar Framework for Education for All (EFA) (UNESCO, 2000). With respect to education, these again focused on “universal education”—the second MDG—and literacy irrespective of language. Consequently, all education projects sponsored by UN agencies were then oriented within this framework.

In Haiti, Aristide was once again elected president and the Ministry of Education was restructured into the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (MENFP)⁵⁹ (Heinl, Heinl, and Heinl 2005). Aristide was ousted for a second time in 2004; after a period of political turmoil, elections were held, and René Préal was elected for a second presidential mandate from 2006 to 2011.

In 2007, with the PNEF expiring, a new education plan was formulated by the Ministry with the technical and financial support of UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank, titled *Stratégie nationale d’action pour l’éducation pour tous* (MENFP 2007). Produced in the middle of the Millennium Development Goals’ 2000–2015 mission to achieve universal education, the document states that it responds to an “obligation contracted by the

Haitian state at the Dakar global education conference in April 2000” (x).⁶⁰ Its authors call for a “balanced bilingualism approach” (95) to fundamental education with five points of action:

1. Elaborate a coherent language plan
2. Create a Kreyòl Academy
3. Train teachers in methods to teach both languages
4. Run experimental bilingual programs in the Haitian education system
5. Promote the production of adapted works.⁶¹ (95–97)

In February 2008, President Préval created by decree the Working Group on Education and Training (GTEF)⁶² (GTEF 2010). The mandate of the Working Group was to assess the education system and make recommendations directly to the Executive Branch (xxxix). Its first major report was commissioned after the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010, when it was tasked with producing a national education “pact” to address both the current crisis and longstanding structural inefficiencies. The resulting document, *Pour un pacte national pour l’éducation en Haïti—Rapport au président de la République* (GTEF, 2010), made several notable language-related recommendations. It recommended that Kreyòl be “privileged” as LOI through sixth grade and that French be taught as a second language (xli). Returning to the language-attainment goal of the Bernard Reform, the document called for Haitian students to reach functional rather than balanced bilingualism in French, which it aimed to achieve by seventh grade (xli).

Following the production of this document, the MENFP produced a five-year plan ostensibly based on the Working Group’s recommendations, titled the *Plan opérationnel 2010–2015 : Des recommandations du groupe de travail sur l’éducation et la formation* (MENFP 2011). Produced and endorsed during the presidency of Michel Martelly (2011–2016), this “operational plan” ignored the language-in-education recommendation of the GTEF. Particularly of note, the recommendation of “privileging” Kreyòl in the first six grades (i.e., the first two cycles) was rolled back to “set up a system for the balanced use of French and Kreyòl in fundamental [cycles] 1 & 2”⁶³ (MENFP 2011, 68). Then it incorrectly claimed that the Bernard Reform mandated French as the sole language of instruction from seventh grade onward (36).

The mid-2010s marked a change in direction. In April 2014, the Ministry appointed Nesmy Manigat as its new minister of education. His

tenure was characterized by certain steps to advance the role of Kreyòl in school.⁶⁴ For example, Manigat signed an *arrêté* calling for the creation of a partnership between MENFP and the MIT-Haiti Initiative (an “MENFP/ MIT-Haiti Bureau”) in order to produce active-learning resources and methods for the teaching of science and mathematics in Kreyòl (MENFP 2014). He also established a protocol agreement with the newly formed Akademi Kreyòl Ayisyen (AKA) (AKA and MENFP 2015). This document called for the Ministry of Education to work with the AKA to generalize the use of Kreyòl as LOI at all levels of the education system (Article 6) and to promote the use of Kreyòl in classrooms, school curricula, textbooks, state exams, teacher training, MENFP’s administration and communications, etc. (Article 14).⁶⁵ Additionally, the Ministry of Education at this time contracted two consultants, Marky Jean-Pierre and Darline Clothière, to analyze and make recommendations for language-in-education policy (Jean-Pierre and Clothière 2016). Both recommended that Kreyòl should have a more significant role in early education.

Manigat was removed from office in March 2016. During the tenure of the ministers of education that immediately followed him, neither these pro-Kreyòl measures nor Jean-Pierre and Clothière’s recommendations were implemented or referenced in any major education documents. Neither were the MENFP/MIT-Haiti Bureau⁶⁶ or the MENFP/AKA pro-Kreyòl agreements implemented. Instead, policy during this period reversed and Kreyòl’s official role in education was reduced.

2016–2021: MOVING BACKWARD

THE ONAPÉ STUDIES AND THE PLAN DÉCENNAL D’ÉDUCATION ET DE FORMATION

On November 9, 2007, the Haitian parliament passed a law creating the National Office of Partnership in Education (ONAPÉ).⁶⁷ The mandate of this “autonomous organism” was to coordinate exchanges and education initiatives between state and non-state actors (ONAPÉ 2017, 15). It was not until June 2015 that ONAPÉ became operational. Soon thereafter, it launched six studies to assess different aspects of the Haitian education system, which were carried out by various consultancy firms. Two of these studies include discussions pertinent to language-in-education policy. The first, *Déterminants du rendement scolaire en Haïti*, carried out by the Port-au-Prince based Institut de Formation du Sud, describes the significance of language planning to academic success in “postcolonial” settings: “The literature surveyed and the experiences of many post-colonial countries have clearly shown that the language policy in use is one of the important determinants of academic success” (ISOS 2016, 104).⁶⁸ The document goes on to make the following strong recommendations:

Reinforce the teaching of, in and through Kreyòl in all schools (without exception) by actively motivating and promoting Kreyòl as a tool for academic success; Ensure the quality of teaching materials and teacher training; Ensure the quality of teaching of, in, and through Kreyòl; Promote life in written Kreyòl and ensure availability of Kreyòl in all public services at the local and regional levels. (107)⁶⁹

The second pertinent study, *Politique du livre en Haïti*, carried out by the consultant Magny Smith (2016), expressed a need to promote additional written works in Kreyòl (57) and for the state to subsidize the production of children's books in French and Kreyòl (69). Furthermore, it called for the creation, throughout Haiti, of public libraries that would include books in both Kreyòl and French (59–60).

Following the completion of the six studies, ONAPÉ produced a document purporting to be a plan for implementing their recommendations. The *Plan de mise en oeuvre des recommandations des études ONAPÉ* (ONAPÉ 2017) is in effect little more than a brief summary of the studies' findings and recommendations. All of the language policy recommendations emphasizing the importance of Kreyòl are notably absent from this document.

The ONAPÉ office would go on to lead the production of an important education policy document, the *Plan décennal d'éducation et de formation* (MENFP 2020). Produced during the presidency of Jovenel Moïse,⁷⁰ this document presents a major education reform plan situated within both the Incheon Declaration—an international commitment, organized by UNESCO in 2015, to improve education systems across the globe—and the 2015–2030 Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO et al. 2015). Many development actors contributed technical and financial support, including the European Union, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank (5). Its coordination and write-up were done under the leadership of ONAPÉ by a group referred to as the Comité Technique National.

The document acknowledges the scholastic barrier caused by the “Kreyòl-French linguistic conflict” (34)⁷¹ and related issues that should be addressed: “The implementation of bilingualism in early education is still a problematic issue, highlighting problems related to teacher training, pedagogic materials and methodology” (45).⁷² The document furthermore acknowledges the limited language ability of teachers and its impact on actual classroom practice: “Recent qualitative studies such as the observations of the various actors seem to indicate that Kreyòl

and French are used according to the abilities of the teachers” (22).⁷³ The authors express the sentiment that “Kreyòl, the mother tongue that unites all Haitians, must have a better role in order to build social cohesion and develop skills and knowledge” (17).⁷⁴ Oddly, despite this conclusion and the various problems highlighted in the document’s discussion section, the lengthy education plan that follows this discussion contains no concrete actions regarding language-in-education issues. Instead, it states in its opening passage that Kreyòl is the sole language of instruction for first grade, after which Kreyòl and French “co-exist” (22)—incorrectly associating this policy with the 1982 Bernard Reform (see Discussion section below).

2021: CADRE D’ORIENTATION CURRICULAIRE POUR LE SYSTÈME ÉDUCATIF HAÏTIEN—HAÏTI 2054

Despite the *Plan décennal*’s self-description as a ten-year education plan, a year following its publication a second long-term education plan was published—the *Cadre d’Orientation Curriculaire (COC) pour le système éducatif haïtien—Haïti 2054* (MENFP 2021). This document was authored by a branch of MENFP called the Coordination Générale du Pôle Enseignement et Qualité, with the financial support⁷⁵ of the French Development Agency (AFD)⁷⁶ as part of their Project NECTAR⁷⁷ initiative—although no mention of the AFD or NECTAR occurs in the document.⁷⁸ According to the websites of both AFD and MENFP, Project NECTAR aims to fulfill the Bernard Reform for the third cycle of fundamental education and secondary school (grades 7–13).⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the COC document includes significant curriculum planning for the lower grade levels. Of particular concern is that it proposes the most restricted use of Kreyòl in a major policy document since the language was granted a place in Haitian education in the 1980s.

This COC document specifies the introduction of French as LOI in third grade, and completely removes Kreyòl as LOI after fourth grade (i.e., after the first “cycle”) (Table 1). Kreyòl’s only place in the classroom is then as an OOI that is given fewer and fewer hours of study per week as the student advances. In grades 7, 8 and 9, the student would hear their mother tongue in the classroom only during two hours of their twenty-eight-hour school week (MENFP 2021, 44). French as OOI, on the other hand, receives five hours of classroom time during these same years, in addition to French being the sole LOI starting in fifth grade (44).

The document describes this policy with magniloquent language:

Children are welcomed at school in the language spoken in their family, Kreyòl, and it is in this language that they

	LOI Policy of COC 2021	OOI Policy of COC 2021
Preschool	Kreyòl	-
1st Grade	Kreyòl	Kreyòl, French
2nd Grade	Kreyòl	Kreyòl, French
3rd Grade	Kreyòl, French	Kreyòl, French
4th Grade	Kreyòl, French	Kreyòl, French
5th Grade	French	Kreyòl, French
6th Grade	French	Kreyòl, French
7th Grade	French	Kreyòl, French, English, Spanish
8th Grade	French	Kreyòl, French, English, Spanish
9th Grade	French	Kreyòl, French, English, Spanish
10th Grade	French	Kreyòl, French, English, Spanish (+other languages)
11th Grade	French	Kreyòl, French, English, Spanish (+other languages)
12th Grade	French	Kreyòl, French, English, Spanish (+other languages)
13th Grade	French	Kreyòl, French, English, Spanish (+other languages)

TABLE 1. LANGUAGE POLICY OF THE COC 2021 DOCUMENT. TABLE CONTENT REPRODUCED FROM MENFP (2021, 30).

discover the world and accomplish their first learning. Then, based on the skills developed in Kreyòl, they must acquire French in order to gradually make it a language of instruction at school from the 3rd grade onward. The harmonious passage from one language of instruction to the other is decisive for the success of their scholastic journey. (MENFP 2021, 13)⁸⁰

During the “harmonious transition,” which “must be managed with much care and suppleness” (30)⁸¹ the learning of French is involved in every academic subject. Thus, lesson structures and student attention are redirected from all core subjects toward the learning of French, even in classes where the students should be learning mathematics, science and so on:

In this transitional phase, learning French involves all academic subjects. Mathematics, science and history are also language learning situations for children. These contexts should be prepared, conducted and evaluated while taking this dimension into consideration. (31)⁸²

As with several of its predecessors, the language-attainment goal of this document is *balanced bilingualism* in Kreyòl and French (30), rather than the *functional* bilingualism called for by the Bernard Reform. Below we will discuss the consequences of both the COC's pro-French LOI policy and its language-attainment goal of balanced bilingualism.

While this article was in the final stages of revision prior to submission, a new draft version of the COC was publicly released (MENFP 2022).⁸³ In terms of policy, this document notably differs from its predecessor by maintaining Kreyòl as LOI throughout all nine years of Fundamental Education and all four years of Secondary School. French as a co-LOI is still introduced in third grade, and the document still sets balanced bilingualism as its academic target. Education policy in Haiti is currently very dynamic, and it remains to be seen whether the latest COC document will endure and be enforced or whether it will be further revised to bring it closer to achieving the objectives of the Bernard Reform (i.e., the Decree of March 30, 1982) in terms of giving all Haitian children equal opportunity for academic success.

PART III: DISCUSSION

Prior to the Law of September 18, 1979, Haitian language-in-education policy either totally disregarded Kreyòl or officially banned its use. Our review of policy documents since Kreyòl made its official entrance in Haitian schools has revealed three main observations. First, mischaracterizations of the Bernard Reform, whether intentional or accidental, are used, in effect, to shore up language policies that favor the use of French as LOI. Second, the language-attainment goal announced in post-1982 policy documents has shifted from *functional* bilingualism in the 1982 Bernard Reform to *balanced* bilingualism, with the latter greatly favoring children of the Haitian elite. Lastly, language policy itself has shifted from *additive* mother-tongue-based multilingual education as advocated by the Bernard Reform—an approach scientifically demonstrated to work well for quality education and second-language learning—to a *subtractive* transitional early-exit strategy—a common approach that is known to fail in postcolonial contexts.

MISCHARACTERIZATIONS OF THE BERNARD REFORM, TO JUSTIFY MODERN POLICY, THAT CONTRADICT ITS RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES

The most surprising finding of this review of Haitian language-in-education policy documents was the frequent and significant mischaracterization of the Bernard Reform in justifying modern policy choices. As discussed above, there are three documents central to understanding the Bernard Reform. Together, these documents legalized Kreyòl as LOI and OOI (Haitian Government 1979) and made it the obligatory and sole LOI for grades 1–5 and co-LOI with French for grades 6–10 (DEN 1982b). These documents were a first step in an aspirational agenda that sought for Kreyòl to serve as LOI at all levels of education (DEN 1982a, 50–51).

These policies are systematically mischaracterized in modern references to the Bernard Reform. At times, these mischaracterizations are fairly innocuous, such as mislabeling the Law of September 18, 1979, as a decree, or the Decree of March 30, 1982, as a law: “The most recent reform of the education system in Haiti was decreed by the Law of March 1982, preceded by a decree introducing Kreyòl as a language of instruction” (RTI et al. 1995, 31).⁸⁴ Elsewhere, however, the reform’s program and goals are so completely distorted that they serve to justify maintaining a curriculum where French is the primary LOI.

Let us consider the last three major policy education documents: *Plan opérationnel 2010–2015* (MENFP 2011), *Plan décennal d’éducation et de formation* (MENFP 2020), and *Cadre d’orientation curriculaire pour le système éducatif haïtien—Haïti 2054* (MENFP 2021). The *Plan opérationnel 2010–2015* (MENFP 2011) states that French is the only LOI after sixth grade owing to the Bernard Reform:

With the exception of the first two cycles of fundamental education where the text of the Educational Reform of 1982 provides for education in the two official languages (French and Kreyòl) in a balanced manner, the language of instruction adopted in the other levels of the formal system is French. (36)⁸⁵

The *Plan décennal d’éducation et de formation* (MENFP 2020) implies that the Bernard Reform calls for French to be introduced as LOI in second grade:

The 1982 Bernard Reform laid the foundation for two major transformations of the Haitian school system: (i) the introduction of a 9-year fundamental education and a new 4-year secondary education and (ii) the establishment of

a Kreyòl / French bilingualism with the introduction of Kreyòl as the language of instruction alongside French. . . . Kreyòl must be the sole language of instruction of 1st grade, then Kreyòl and French coexist. (25)⁸⁶

Those responsible for the 2021 COC document (MENFP 2021) and the French Development Agency's project NECTAR website laud the Bernard Reform:

By taking up the still relevant key ideas of the Bernard Reform, this curricular orientation framework today offers an opportunity to give the nation a vision of a “Green and Blue Haiti” for the year 2054, the 250th anniversary of our country's independence. (MENFP 2021, 10)⁸⁷

NECTAR is situated in the tradition of the Bernard reform (1982), whose ambition was to create a more dynamic education system built on active pedagogies, on a shared knowledge base constituting the educational foundation of citizenship and on the promotion of the Kreyòl language through the status of language of instruction.⁸⁸

But, then, the COC adopts the most directly anti-Kreyòl language policy in a major policy document since the 1982 reform, removing Kreyòl entirely as LOI after fourth grade. All three of these recent policy documents cite the Bernard Reform as either the direct source or the inspiration behind their policies, despite the radical differences (Table 2).

Similar incorrect descriptions have in fact also occurred in the work of ardent Kreyòl educators and academics (Dejean 2010; Prou 2009). For example, Yves Dejean's (2010, 211) description of the reform is also incorrect:

The fundamental flaw in the Bernard Reform, as I have pointed out previously (Dejean 2006: 237ft), is that it calls for the first four years of schooling in Creole; however, from then on Creole and French are to be fully on the same footing in students' learning. All students are supposed to have two languages after a few years of bilingual instruction. The position of the reform is that the country must speak French and that this will occur as a result of schools producing bilinguals. The key here is that Creole, the native language, is not intended to continue (after these first four years and the following ones during which students learn French) as the primary language and primary vehicle of instruction.

	Bernard Reform (1982)	<i>Plan opérationnel 2010–2015 (2011)</i>	<i>Plan décennal (2020)</i>	<i>Cadre d'orientation curriculaire (2021)</i>
1st Grade	Kreyòl	“Balanced” French and Kreyòl	Kreyòl	Kreyòl
2nd Grade	Kreyòl	“Balanced” French and Kreyòl	French and Kreyòl “co-exist”	Kreyòl
3rd Grade	Kreyòl	“Balanced” French and Kreyòl	French and Kreyòl “co-exist”	Kreyòl, French
4th Grade	Kreyòl	“Balanced” French and Kreyòl	French and Kreyòl “co-exist”	Kreyòl, French
5th Grade	Kreyòl	“Balanced” French and Kreyòl	French and Kreyòl “co-exist”	French
6th Grade	Kreyòl, French	“Balanced” French and Kreyòl	French and Kreyòl “co-exist”	French
7th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French	French and Kreyòl “co-exist”	French
8th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French	French and Kreyòl “co-exist”	French
9th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French	French and Kreyòl “co-exist”	French
10th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French	Not specified	French
Beyond 10th Grade	Not specified, by aspires for Kreyòl to be LOI at all levels	French	Not specified	French

TABLE 2. LOI POLICY OF BERNARD REFORM VS. THREE MAJOR POLICY DOCUMENTS CITING BERNARD REFORM AS THEIR GUIDE OR INSPIRATION.

The error is in believing that Haiti has the resources, educational or other, to produce on a mass level any outcome even approaching competence in French, in addition to competence in Creole.

This confusion may arise from the inconsistent and vague policies of the 1990s following the Decree of December 1, 1988.⁸⁹ Notwithstanding the fact that this decree and the following LOI policies claim to be inspired by the Bernard Reform, they are not accurate representations of its policies.

THE LANGUAGE-ATTAINMENT GOALS OF HAITIAN EDUCATION: *FUNCTIONAL* BILINGUALISM VS. *BALANCED* BILINGUALISM

In addition to the different roles given to Kreyòl as LOI in the actual Bernard Reform of the early 1980s versus the later decree of December 1, 1988, and the resulting policies, there exists a subtle but highly significant change in the two programs' language-attainment goals. The original Bernard Reform called for a fundamental school program where students would achieve *functional bilingualism* in Kreyòl and French by the start of eighth grade: "As far as the linguistic aspect of education is concerned, the general objective is functional bilingualism which should be achieved in the 2nd Cycle of Fundamental Education [grades 5–7]" (DEN 1982a, 50).⁹⁰ The 1988 decree shifted the goal of the fundamental school into one that aims at both *functional* and *balanced* bilingualism.⁹¹ While many Haitian policy documents fail to specify in detail the language-attainment goals of the education system, a similar call for both "balanced and functional bilingualism"⁹² was repeated in the 2007 *National Action Strategy for Education for All (Stratégie nationale d'action pour l'éducation pour tous)* (MENFP 2007, 97). The 2021 COC explicitly states that "balanced bilingualism" is the target (MENFP 2021, 20).

While this change from *functional* to *balanced* bilingualism may appear to be a fairly innocuous shift in nomenclature, understanding the difference between these two language-attainment goals is of critical importance. This wording defines what students, teachers and schools are expected to achieve in the fundamental education program and, moreover, sets the benchmark for who is considered a successful or "good" student. Let us begin by reviewing what these language-attainment goals actually signify. *Functional* bilingualism has been defined as:

- the ability to use bilingual skills to accomplish basic functions (Baker and Wright 2021)
- [the] state of a person who in a second language has a practical knowledge that permits them to get by in the second language (Canadian Translation Bureau n.d.)⁹³

- [a level of ability in which] the second language is used for special purposes, mostly study (Nagel et al. 2015, 219).

In contrast, balanced bilingualism has been defined as characterizing

- a person whose proficiency in two languages is such that his or her skills in each language match those of a native speaker of the same age (APA n.d.)
- an individual who, in addition to their first language, possesses a comparable competency in another language and who is capable of using either one in all circumstances with equal effectiveness (Bilinguisme-Conseil 2016).⁹⁴

The recent COC (MENFP 2021) defines its balanced bilingualism target along similar lines. In a section titled “The Choice of a Balanced and Open Bilingualism,” the document states: “The ambition of the Haitian school is to lead everyone to speak, understand, read and write with equal ease in both languages” (13).⁹⁵ Balanced bilingualism thus clearly surpasses functional bilingualism—making the goal of “balanced *and* functional” bilingualism redundant. Given that the draft of the revised version of the COC, as of July 2022, maintains balanced bilingualism as its target (MENFP 2022, 11), the current goal of the Haitian education system appears to still be to produce children who have “equal ease” in French and in Kreyòl. This prompts several questions: How realistic is this goal? Are teachers equipped for this curriculum? How many children will be able to successfully reach this goal? Which children will be able to reach this goal? We address these questions below.

HAITIAN TEACHERS ARE, BY AND LARGE, BEST EQUIPPED FOR CURRICULA WITH KREYÒL AS LOI, NOT FOR TRANSFORMING STUDENTS INTO KREYÒL/FRENCH BALANCED BILINGUALS

For almost all Haitian children, teachers are their primary point of contact with live spoken French. Kreyòl is what they hear and speak in their homes, with their friends, on the soccer field, and at the market. For most Haitians, as Dejean (1993, 74) puts it, French is “a language as alien to them as Latin was to the Italian masses in the sixteenth century.”

The Haitian education system, with approximately seventeen thousand primary schools and eighty-five thousand people working as primary school teachers (MENFP and DPCE 2015, 134), is thus charged with producing millions of balanced-bilingual children. The vast majority of these teachers, however, have nowhere near the French fluency level that their students are supposed to achieve. This becomes evident in teacher-training programs that employ educational materials in French. For example, the

Francophone Initiative for Long-Distance Teacher Training (IFADEM)⁹⁶ in the late 2010s was immediately confronted by such linguistic hurdles (IFADEM 2013). Directed by the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, this project was intended to develop a teacher-training program that would be delivered long-distance via various media platforms. An initial language test revealed, however, that most of their 367 target participants had less than an intermediate “B1” level of French. These participants nonetheless represented an above-average degree of qualification for individuals working as teachers in Haiti, as they were either graduates or current students of teacher training colleges.⁹⁷ IFADEM’s designers then split the project’s didactic materials evenly between French language reinforcement and pedagogical training. Still, at the end of the project cycle, less than half of its recipients could pass an intermediate “B1” French exam (17), despite the fact that the scaling up of the program was projected to cost 470–1,470 euros per participant (47). Other studies suggest that up to 95 percent of teachers do not have French competency beyond an elementary “A2” level.⁹⁸

If Haitian teachers are going to be the primary means by which millions of children become balanced bilinguals by age fifteen,⁹⁹ then it seems evident that they themselves should be individuals who have achieved this balanced bilingualism by adulthood. As most educators now have a very low level of French, pursuing the current policy requires a complete transformation of the teacher workforce. Tens of thousands of individuals who speak French at a “native level” must first be identified or trained *and* persuaded to work as teachers in largely under-resourced schools despite the social mobility anticipated by people with such linguistic abilities. Given such infeasible requirements, the current language-attainment goals are dramatically misaligned with the reality of who Haitian educators are and who they are going to be in the near future. If students are reliant on their teachers for attaining fluency in French, then the pursuit of balanced bilingualism will guarantee failure by the vast majority of Haitian children.

BALANCED BILINGUALISM ADVANTAGES CHILDREN OF THE ELITE, ENTRENCHING THE SYSTEMATIC REPRODUCTION OF THEIR PRIVILEGED STATUS IN HAITIAN SOCIETY

But what about the 3–5 percent of the population who are bilingual (Saint-Germain 1997)? Coming from privileged backgrounds, members of Haiti’s small elite class initially acquire spoken French in their homes and communities from family members, relatives, friends, neighbors, etc., and then later develop academic language skills in expensive private schools with unparalleled access to qualified teachers with a high level of French

(Dejean 1993). The balanced bilinguals, the “ideal” students of the Haitian education system as presently designed, thus happen to largely coincide with the children of Haiti’s wealthy and powerful.

This outcome aligns with the account of French sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1970, 1964) of how class hierarchies are maintained in part by school systems in societies that have transitioned away from overt titles and privileges, such as lordships, racial apartheid, etc. Bourdieu and Passeron observe that children from advantaged backgrounds acquire certain knowledge and skills in home settings that allow them to disproportionately succeed in schools and receive socially and professionally valuable academic certifications. While state-designed curricula and standardized exams may outwardly appear unbiased, they often reflect the values and knowledge base of the elite. Elites achieve this, consciously or not, through their high position in society by either directly designing curricula or indirectly by promoting certain activities and knowledge as sophisticated, inherently valuable, and worthy of being studied and known.

Bourdieu and Passeron furthermore contend that one’s knowledge of and ability to use language—or *linguistic capital*—is a significant determiner of academic success (Bourdieu 1991; Bourdieu and Passeron 1970). Although all children must develop additional language skills to advance through school systems, children from the dominant class will require less “linguistic correction” than their counterparts from less privileged backgrounds (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970, 144). Furthermore, as they are more easily able to understand their teachers and textbooks, they will be more efficient learners in all subjects.

These observations unfortunately closely align with Haitian language-in-education policy and practice (Charles 2015). Regardless of the community they serve, Haitian schools tend to treat French not as a second or foreign language but rather as the mother tongue of their pupils, communicating to the students that, for academic learning, Kreyòl is inappropriate or at least of lesser value than French (Prou 2009). This is but one aspect of how colonial mentalities and values continue to be manifested and perpetuated in Haitian curricula. As scholars such as Jacques-Michel Gourgues (2014) have observed, curricula that place more value on the language and culture of a former colonizer undermine not only the knowledge of local people’s cultures and self-identity but also their ability to acquire knowledge, resulting in *epistemicide* against these populations. Thus, such ill-conceived linguistic approaches ensure not only that that most Haitian children will never acquire French but also

that they will struggle in all subjects. Setting balanced bilingualism as the goal of Haitian schools all but ensures that only children of the bilingual elite will have any chance of achieving academic success.

As a final note on this subject, the supposed goal of creating “balanced bilinguals” who possess perfectly equal abilities in both languages is a fiction for other reasons as well. The curricula proposed in most recent policy documents do not give Kreyòl any parity with French as either LOI or OOI, and thus most graduates will be weaker in reading and writing Kreyòl than French (Saintil 2021). Given the relative lack of classroom emphasis on Kreyòl, “balanced bilingualism” appears to actually imply “possessing a little academic ability in Kreyòl and as much as possible in French”—again greatly advantaging children from the francophone elite.

KREYÒL AND/OR FRENCH AS LOI—EARLY TRANSITIONS VERSUS LATE ADDITIONS

The Bernard Reform of the early 1980s and the COC from 2021 typify two fundamentally different LOI policies. Let us review these two again side by side (Table 3).¹⁰⁰ The policy of the 2021 COC is typical of a *subtractive early-exit transitional approach* (Ouane and Glanz 2011). In such approaches, students first study core subjects in their mother tongue as LOI while a target second language is taught as an OOI. Soon thereafter the students begin transitioning to the second language, and by fifth grade the students’ mother tongue is completely removed as LOI. Despite being known to be highly ineffective (Benson 2016; Ouane and Glanz 2011), subtractive early-exit transitional policies are widespread in lower-income countries. A major fault of such models is that the students seldom have a sufficient level of fluency in the target second language before the transition occurs. The problem is compounded by teachers who themselves poorly master this other language, resulting in lessons that rely on rote memorization rather than active learning. Despite the sacrifice to their general knowledge, even the rare students who complete secondary school often fall short of achieving anything close to near-native mastery of the target language (Dejean 2010).

In contrast to this, the Bernard Reform’s Decree of March 30, 1982, was ahead of its time in proposing an *additive* approach, today commonly referred as *mother-tongue-based multilingual education* (MTB MLE) (Benson 2016). In such an approach, the mother tongue serves as the sole LOI until at least fifth grade and is *never* removed. MTB MLE has been shown to result in better academic outcomes in low-income contexts such as Ethiopia and Eritrea (Heugh et al. 2007; Walter and Davis 2005). Significantly, it has been shown that students who spend more years with their mother

	Bernard Reform (1982)	<i>Cadre d'orientation curriculaire (2021)</i>
1st Grade	Kreyòl	Kreyòl
2nd Grade	Kreyòl	Kreyòl
3rd Grade	Kreyòl	Kreyòl, French
4th Grade	Kreyòl	Kreyòl, French
5th Grade	Kreyòl	French
6th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French
7th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French
8th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French
9th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French
10th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French
Beyond 10th Grade	Not specified, but aspires for Kreyòl to be LOI at all levels	French
	French is added as LOI in 6th grade; Kreyòl is never removed	There is a transition to French in 3rd and 4th grades, and Kreyòl is subtracted before 5th grade

TABLE 3. LOI POLICIES OF BERNARD REFORM (1982) AND THE COC DOCUMENT (2021).

tongue as their LOI are more successful at learning second languages, as they are able to employ their acquired cognitive and academic abilities for language learning (Benson 2016).¹⁰¹

One could argue that the general failure of early-exit policies like that of the 2021 COC is not inherent to the approach itself but rather attributable to material and human resource constraints of lower-income countries such as Haiti. Indeed, the lack of well-trained teachers who are highly fluent in French and the prevalence of overcrowded and underfunded schools are important factors that should not be ignored in language plans. All the same, even in wealthier countries with highly trained teachers and low student-teacher ratios, like Canada and the United States, students in second-language “immersion” models struggle when they have little exposure to this second language outside their classrooms and when they do not come from higher-economic backgrounds with engaged, educated parents who provide them with additional resources and support (Helle 1995; Ouane and Glanz 2011). Although, in well-resourced contexts, five

to seven years of study is a recommended time period for effective second-language learning and literacy development, Tuija Helle (1995) found that middle-class English-speaking Canadian students who completed their education in French-immersion programs still felt more confident taking their final school-exit exams in their mother tongue. Adama Ouane and Christine Glanz (2014, 123) note that “if the immersion model has not met with the success it promised early on in the well-resourced Canadian conditions, there is no way that it could serve the majority of children in African countries well.”

As mentioned above, while we were making final revisions of this article for submission to the *Journal of Haitian Studies*, the Ministry of Education released a revised draft of the COC (MENFP 2022). This updated COC adopts an *early-additive* approach, whereby Kreyòl is never removed as LOI, but French is quickly added as a co-LOI in third grade—likely too soon for most Haitian children to feel comfortable in this language. The document furthermore maintains the problematic language-attainment goal of balanced bilingualism.¹⁰²

CONCLUSION

Four decades after Joseph C. Bernard was removed as Minister of Education, his reform is still cited as the source and inspiration for modern Haitian language-in-education policy. Despite this, the authors of present-day policy documents either have never read or have chosen to mischaracterize the actual Decree of March 30, 1982. In a tragic and ironic twist, the Bernard Reform, which promulgated a Kreyòl-dominant MTB MLE curriculum targeting *functional* bilingualism, has been repeatedly used to justify early-exit subtractive approaches that favor French as sole LOI as early as possible. These French-dominant approaches purport to pursue *balanced* bilingualism but in truth leave students with underdeveloped academic skills in Kreyòl while greatly advantaging children of the small francophone elite. Rather than allowing Haitian educators and students to employ their preexisting linguistic strengths through active learning via the mother tongue (Kreyòl) as LOI, these recent policies create passive classrooms that use what often amounts to a foreign language (French) as LOI and that fail the majority of Haitian children.

Since the early 1980s, scientific studies have continued to validate the rationale and objectives of the Bernard Reform. In fact, the scientific principles at the core of the Bernard Reform have been tested and confirmed since the early 1950s (UNESCO 1953). Yet, when it comes to challenges to the principled use of the mother tongue as LOI, Haiti is

certainly not a unique case. Compare, say, similar challenges in the greater Caribbean, and beyond in the post-colonies of the Global South (see, among many other cases, Devonish 2007, Belize Ministry of Education 2007; DeGraff 2018; World Bank 2021). The lessons learned through our analysis of these LOI-related struggles in Haiti may, thus, stand to benefit many other communities where students are still disenfranchised in the classroom through the misuse of language. According to Stephen L. Walter and Carol Benson (2012, 282), “more than 2.3 billion people lack access to education in their first language. To the extent that language of instruction matters in education, the data suggests that nearly 40 per cent of the world’s population is potentially negatively affected by official policy on language use in education.”

Bernard’s goal of helping Kreyòl-speaking students employ French for domain-specific functions in their academic study (i.e., *functional* bilingualism) thus remains a feasible and laudable goal in line with available scientific findings. Our review of recent policy documents, however, reveals an unrealistic and unfortunate goal in a very different direction—toward achieving *balanced* bilingualism in Kreyòl and French for all students in a population that, for more than two centuries, has been essentially monolingual in Kreyòl. Accordingly, the vision of the *actual* Bernard Reform remains pertinent today in the promulgation of policies designed to produce a school system that not only generates creative and successful active students but also validates Haitian culture and identity.¹⁰³

Despite the policy backpedaling since the Bernard Reform, there is some reason for cautious optimism. From a long-term perspective, Kreyòl has made considerable gains within both the Haitian classroom and society in general—with written Kreyòl flourishing on social media (DeGraff 2016a, 178), for example. Since Nesmy Manigat’s return to the position of minister of education in 2021, the ministry has moved to revise LOI policy through a new COC document and to encourage production of Kreyòl academic materials. Key among the ministry’s current initiatives is the *Liv Inik* project, whose goal is to provide all Haitian students in the early grades with a series of school textbooks in Kreyòl (but see notes 2, 3, and 102 for some important caveats about areas of improvement).¹⁰⁴ Such projects, if well executed and fulfilled, could represent positive steps toward the mother tongue of the Haitian people one day becoming the primary language of instruction of the Haitian classroom at all levels of the school system, as in Joseph C. Bernard’s visionary agenda in 1982.

Of course one cannot predict whether or not these pro-Kreyòl reforms will be fully implemented. For example, new ministers do not

necessarily honor the vision and work of their predecessors. In fact, the Haitian government has historically exhibited all three dimensions of dysfunctionality: vertically (policies from the top are often ignored), horizontally (parallel agencies often fail to coordinate), and in depth (changes in personnel and policy disrupt continuity).

In this study, we have sought to shed light on the history of Haitian language-in-education policy. In doing so, we have uncovered the fact that the 1982 Bernard Reform is still widely recognized as a turning point in Haitian education, but its visionary content is as widely misquoted and misunderstood. We hope that an understanding of this history will inhibit future misuse of this reform and will guide future policy stakeholders toward the use of Haiti's national language as primary language of instruction, to promote the achievable and laudable goal of functional bilingualism, and to pursue at long last the promise of quality education for all Haitian children.

Notes

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- ¹ Also commonly referred to as "Haitian Creole"; in this article, we adopt the Kreyòl spelling for the name of the language.
- ² In February 2022, the Ministry announced that the state would finance only textbooks in Kreyòl for grades 1–4 of fundamental (primary) education (Sénat 2022). Going further in this regard is the Ministry's *Liv Inik* initiative, which aims to publish and pilot a unique set of textbooks for the first two grades of the fundamental school (Césaire 2022). These textbooks for core subjects are all in Kreyòl, except for the content that is designed for the teaching of French. While this article was under review, we learned of the Ministry's plan, announced on February 21, 2023 (International Mother Tongue Day), to have these *Liv Inik* textbooks in Kreyòl made available through the sixth grade (Manigat 2023). This said, one must note that the *Liv Inik* materials come with their share of limitations, as noted by one of the authors (Michel DeGraff) in social-media

postings.

See Facebook posts on:

November 11, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3NU2uze> ;

January 5, 2023, <https://bit.ly/44w5IhT> ;

February 1, 2023, <https://shorturl.at/kINPZ> .

As we were reviewing the copyedited version of this article, we learned, on June 14, 2023, of Minister Manigat’s decision to make State examinations (apart from language subjects) available in both French and Kreyòl at the end of the Fundamental Cycle (ninth grade) so that candidates can choose which of the two languages to take the exam in. The same ministerial decision also increases the number of points for the Kreyòl exam—making it worth 300 points, on a par with the French exam.

See posts on the MENFP Haiti Official page of Facebook:

June 15, 2023, <https://shorturl.at/gCZ37> ;

June 14, 2023, <https://shorturl.at/jkqJS> .

But, as duly noted by one observer on the Facebook page of the Ministry, the official decision letter by Manigat was published in French only when it should have been published in both French and Kreyòl, as per the very rationale for this decision. It’s also noteworthy that, as of June 21, 2023, twenty-five out of the twenty-nine Facebook comments on that decision were written in Kreyòl, with some observing that the fact that the decision was published in French only (aka “the French problem”) might lead to misunderstanding. The four comments written in French were the shortest—no longer than five words—whereas the twenty-five comments in Kreyòl were, by and large, more substantial—with the longest reaching some six hundred words.

- ³ For more on this document, see this August 25, 2022, tweet from Minister Manigat: <https://twitter.com/nesmymanigat/status/1562783994605092870>. According to this draft document, Kreyòl would be used as LOI throughout all of fundamental education and secondary school (although French would still become co-LOI beginning in third grade, in contradiction with Manigat’s policy of the state financing only Kreyòl textbooks in grades 1–4; see note 2).
- ⁴ See (e.g.) Chéry 2005; A. Dupuy 2007; Hallward 2007; Wagny 2008; Doucet 2012; Katz 2013; Peck 2013; Leak 2013; Arthus 2014; Maguire and Freeman 2017; Étienne 2019; Casimir 2020; Seitenfus 2020; J. A. Pierre 2022; Fatton 2002 for a sample of overviews and analyses from diverse, and sometimes conflicting, theoretical, political, and ideological perspectives. It’s a striking fact that Fabienne Doucet, Wien Weibert Arthus, and Jean Casimir are among the rare scholars in this sample who explicitly analyze the functioning of language, especially the French language barrier, as a key factor in implementing this neocolonial agenda against Haiti’s sovereignty.
- ⁵ For case studies, see Leak 2013; Casimir 2020; Marius 2022; DeGraff 2017, 2019, 2022b, 2023, forthcoming. One of the most recent uses of this “butin de

guerre” metaphor for French as a prized conquest (or “lang achte” according to a Kreyòl proverb) is in a speech at the French Embassy by former Prime Minister Michèle Pierre-Louis (2023) when she received the *Légion d’honneur* medal on March 13, 2023, from French Ambassador Fabrice Maurières. Pierre-Louis’s use of this metaphor at the French Embassy in Port-au-Prince reminds us of Yanick Lahens’s use of that same phrase in the analysis of Haitian literature she presented as part of her lecture series at the Collège de France (Bien-Aimé 2020). Another striking use of “butin de guerre” is by historian-turned-president Leslie François Manigat on June 8, 2010, at the Karibe Hotel in Pétion-Ville, when he went to far as claiming that Kreyòl is an “infirmity” (see Michel DeGraff, “Leslie François Manigat: ‘Ayisyenite’ ak ‘Kreyolofoni,’” Facebook video, December 21, 2018, <https://fb.watch/laf0qUA8q6/>). Hugues Saint-Fort (2010) and Michel DeGraff (2023) demystify this “butin de guerre” concept in the context of Haiti. (Also see note 16 on additional costs of this “butin de guerre” in Haitian history.)

⁶ This was a non-randomized written survey conducted in five Haitian secondary schools in Jacmel and Port-au-Prince, with the survey questions written in both French and Kreyòl. The participants were comprised of the terminal-year (“Philo”) students of these schools. Of the 204 distributed questionnaires, 160 were sufficiently completed to be analyzed. In one question, the participants were asked to report on the language use of their primary school and secondary school teachers. They reported that, of their primary school teachers, 5 percent had spoken mostly Kreyòl, 17 percent had spoken more Kreyòl than French, 23 percent half in Kreyòl and half in French, 31 percent more French than Kreyòl, and 23 percent mostly French (n=158). In their secondary schools, they reported that 3 percent of teachers spoke mostly Kreyòl, 14 percent spoke more Kreyòl than French, 34 percent half in Kreyòl and half in French, 34 percent more French than Kreyòl, and 14 percent mostly French (n=159). The participants were then presented with four different LOI policy options: (A) “Keep school language balance the way it is”; (B) “Use Kreyòl as the language of instruction, do not teach other languages”; (C) “Use Kreyòl as the language of instruction for principal subjects with second language courses”; and (D) “Use French as the language of instruction, entirely remove Kreyòl, and offer other languages.” When asked which of these was the “best choice,” 61 percent selected “C,” and when asked which is the “worst choice,” 61 percent selected “D” (total responses to these questions: n=138) The author intends to make the other principal results of this study available on his forthcoming academic webpage.

⁷ This form of apartheid undermines the pleasure of learning in the classroom; such pleasure is essential for deep learning (Hirsch-Pasek et al. 2022).

⁸ For an introduction to the neocolonial interference of the French state into Haitian education, see the TEDx talk “Language Has Super Powers: It Can Destroy Souls or Build Nations” by Michel DeGraff (2023), available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/-bTVACnH7VM>

- ⁹ Original French: “servir nos projets d’influence et de suprématie”; “soumettre [Haïti] tout entier à la consommation des produits de notre industrie.” All translations by the authors unless otherwise noted.
- ¹⁰ Original French: “pour diffuser la langue française . . . dans ce grand pays francophone.”
- ¹¹ Original French: “Eh quoi! victimes pendant quatorze ans de notre crédulité et de notre indulgence; vaincus, non part des armées françaises, mais par la pipeuse éloquence des proclamations de leurs agents” (<https://haitidoi.com/doi/>).
- ¹² Boyer himself, a mulatto with a French father and an African mother, ushered in French neocolonial domination of Haiti via negotiating the infamous “debt of independence” (a ransom worth more than US\$21 billion today), paid by Haiti to France for the “losses” the colonists had incurred, including the “lost” value of the formerly enslaved Africans whom the French Code Noir of Louis XIV considered as chattel (Casimir 2020, 185, 338, and passim; for recently published details on this financial ransom, see Porter et al. 2022; for an analysis of the cultural correlates of this ransom and their implications for education in Haiti, see DeGraff 2022a, 2023).
- ¹³ This review is cursory. For those interested in a more in-depth study of early Haitian education policy, Sténio Vincent and L.-C. Lhérisson’s *La Législation de l’instruction publique de la République d’Haïti 1804–1895* (1895) is an invaluable resource.
- ¹⁴ Original French: “Article 21—Aucun élève ne sera admis au lycée, s’il ne sait lire, écrire, les quatre premières règles de l’arithmétique et les éléments de la grammaire” (Law of July 4, 1820, as reproduced in Vincent and Lhérisson 1895, 126).
- ¹⁵ Original French: “Car tous les Haïtiens devant communiquer entre eux. d’un bout de l’île à l’autre, il leur est donc nécessaire de parler la même langue, afin de mieux identifier leurs mœurs et leurs habitudes. Si, par une communication fréquente et suivie, la plupart d’entre eux parviennent à parler les deux idiomes, il n’en est pas moins convenable qu’ils puissent les lire et les comprendre parfaitement. Un professeur de langue française à l’Université de Santo-Domingo est, en conséquence, de la plus grande urgence, ainsi que des maîtres d’écoles lancastériennes qui puissent enseigner dans les différentes villes de l’Est la langue dont nous nous servons.”
- ¹⁶ The use of French in legal documents generally would, in effect, become a tool to cement a brutal sort of apartheid wherein the country’s peasantry would have to sign documents in a language that they did not understand—documents that would keep them working in neocolonial plantation-like arrangements for the benefit of the French-speaking elite (Casimir 2020, 175). Here we can see the transformation of colonial *racial* barriers into a sort of neocolonial *linguistic* apartheid (DeGraff 2017, 2019, 2023)—indeed a “butin de guerre” (see note

5) enlisted by some in the elite class as a tool for (low-intensity) war against the *malere* (the unfortunate sufferers in Casimir's (2020) analysis).

- ¹⁷ Original French: "En général, on conçoit fort mal, en Haïti, l'instruction primaire : beaucoup de personnes croient qu'elle est un acheminement à l'enseignement secondaire et que les enfants, au sortir d'un de ces établissements où on leur a inculqué quelques notions de langue française, d'arithmétique, d'histoire et de géographie, doivent passer dans un Lycée pour y acquérir de profondes et solides connaissances. Les intelligences d'élite seules doivent jouir de ce privilège. Si, aux examens annuels des écoles primaires, on remarque quelques élèves aptes à suivre les cours supérieurs d'un Lycée, on les y enverra aux frais du Gouvernement, ainsi que je viens de le faire récemment pour trois de ces enfants."
- ¹⁸ Original French: "Français corrompu que parlent les habitants des colonies françaises d'Amérique anciennes ou actuelles."
- ¹⁹ Original French: "Quand vous aurez débarqué à Port-au-Prince, vous entendrez retentir à vos oreilles des sons français, et vous en serez peut-être étonnés : il y a encore tant de gens en France à ignorer que la langue française est la langue nationale des Haïtiens ! Les portefaix qui se hâteront autour de vous pour vous prendre vos bagages vous parleront un langage que vous ne comprendrez pas tout de suite. Mais prêtez-y quelque attention : vous ne tarderez pas à vous apercevoir que ce langage est un simple patois, formé presque entièrement de mots français dont le sens ou seulement la prononciation a été altérée. Le créole—comme nous l'appelons—est plus proche du français que certains patois de France" (Bellegarde 1934, 12).
- ²⁰ Apart from a handful of poems, political communiqués intended for the general population and George Sylvain's (1901) collection of fables in Kreyòl, French dominated early written production in Haiti. There was, however, one notable exception to this rule at the turn of the twentieth century. From 1901 to 1908, a small group of Haitian authors known as the *École Nationale* gained notoriety for lambasting the country's sociolinguistic order and for incorporating Kreyòl into their work. Its core members included Frédéric Marcelin, Justin Lhérisson, Fernand Hibbert, and Antoine Innocent. However, the cultural and political momentum that the movement may have been gaining was halted by the political instability of the early twentieth century and then by the US Occupation (Robertshaw 2019b).
- ²¹ It should be noted that, in the nineteenth century, life in Haiti's rural areas—the "lakou" of the Haiti's "sovereign people" in Jean Casimir's (2020) analysis—had been, by and large, immune from the influence of French language and culture and from the control of the elite in the Port-au-Prince and other coastal towns.
- ²² Georges Sylvain (1901, 8): "I am readily inclined to believe that [on] the day when, through the recognition of a certain number of good works, Kreyòl will have a place in our primary schools, rural and urban, the problem of popular instruction in Haiti will be quite close to being resolved" ("J'inclinerais

volontiers à penser que le jour où, par l'acquis d'un certain nombre d'œuvres fortes, le créole aura droit de cité dans nos écoles primaires, rurales et urbaines, le problème de l'instruction populaire à Haïti sera bien près d'être résolu"). We thank an anonymous reviewer for sharing with us this quote from Georges Sylvain.

Jacques Stephen Alexis ([1956] 2002, 110–111): "We in fact believe that it is a duty to teach the Haitian people to read in their mother tongue, Kreyòl, and that we should not continue to commit the foolishness that has ruined public education efforts for a hundred and fifty years—that is, to stubbornly persist in teaching illiterate individuals to read in a language that is foreign to them, despite the historical affinity" ("Nous pensons en effet que c'est un devoir d'enseigner au peuple haïtien à lire dans sa langue maternelle créole et que nous ne devons pas continuer à commettre la sottise qui a ruiné pendant cent cinquante ans les efforts d'instruction publique, à savoir s'entêter à apprendre à lire aux illettrés dans une langue pour eux étrangère malgré le cousinage").

- ²³ The first government-sanctioned "official" orthography of Kreyòl was published soon after the Law of September 18, 1979, which legalized the language in school as an OOI and LOI (Haitian Government 1979); see below. For more on the debate surrounding Kreyòl orthography, see Schieffelin and Doucet 1994.
- ²⁴ Original French: "Le français est la langue officielle. Son emploi est obligatoire dans les services publics. Néanmoins, la loi détermine les cas et conditions dans lesquels l'usage du créole est permis et même recommandé pour la sauvegarde des intérêts matériels et moraux des citoyens qui ne connaissent pas suffisamment la langue française."
- ²⁵ We are thankful to an anonymous reviewer for bringing up the relevance of François Duvalier's *Code rural*. This use of French against the interests of the population recalls the use of French in Boyer's *Code rural* against the peasantry: in both Boyer's and Duvalier's rural codes, French serves the State against the Nation (cf. Trouillot 1990; Casimir 2020).
- ²⁶ Fleeing the dictatorship, the Haitian diaspora would come to play a critical role in the Kreyòl movement. Several Haitian scholars made the language the subject of their doctoral studies abroad, and the language became both a means of maintaining a Haitian identity and a tool of popular resistance (Zéphir 1996). See Robertshaw 2019a for further analysis of how the Duvaliers unintentionally contributed to the Kreyòl movement.
- ²⁷ In French: Office Nationale d'Éducation Communautaire.
- ²⁸ In French: Office National d'Alphabétisation et d'Action Communautaire.
- ²⁹ In French: Institut Pédagogique National.
- ³⁰ In French: Département de l'Éducation Nationale.
- ³¹ Original French: "Pour la grande majorité des enfants haïtiens le créole, langue maternelle, est intimement associé aux expériences affectives, sociales

et physiques de la première enfance et aux influences reçues du milieu familial, en particulier celles du maternage. D'autre part, et principalement pour les zones rurales et les milieux urbains défavorisés, le contact avec une deuxième langue comme le français est peu fréquent, sinon inexistant. C'est donc le créole qui remplit le rôle nécessaire et fondamental du langage dans le développement mental de l'enfant jusqu'à l'âge où ce dernier doit entrer à l'école, c'est-à-dire entre 6 et 7 ans. . . . Les nombreux échecs constatés dans la scolarisation pendant les deux premières années de l'enseignement primaire sont liés en partie à un facteur linguistique, celui de l'utilisation directe du français comme langue instrument, dès le début de la scolarité: l'effort d'assimilation que l'enfant doit réaliser pour utiliser une langue méconnue, sinon inconnue, freine le développement des structures mentales opératoires, surtout si l'on tient compte d'une séparation des aspects cognitifs et affectifs du langage. Le français utilisé directement ne motive pas émotionnellement l'énorme majorité des enfants qui baignent depuis leur naissance dans un environnement créolophone qui alimente constamment leur vie affective et sociale."

³² Original French: "Le créole, en tant que langue parlée et écrite, est constitué de sons, de signes correspondant à des consonnes, des voyelles, des semi-consonnes et des semi-voyelles."

³³ Article 29 states: "Le Créole est langue d'enseignement et langue enseignée tout au long de l'École Fondamentale. Le Français est langue enseignée tout au long de l'École Fondamentale, et langue d'enseignement à partir de la 6ème année" (DEN 1982b).

³⁴ Original French: "Les rares solutions proposées à certains problèmes sont souvent des vues de l'esprit et non le résultat de patientes recherches."

³⁵ Original French: "Là encore, il s'agit d'un choix réfléchi, dicté non par le simple bon sens, mais découlant d'enquêtes, de recherches, d'analyses sur les causes de la déperdition scolaire à travers le monde. Il est nettement démontré qu'aucun enseignement n'est plus efficace et ne laisse de traces plus profondes que celui qui passe par la langue maternelle."

³⁶ Original French: "L'enseignement aura pour base essentielle Haiti. Apporter à l'haitien la culture telle qu'elle est distribuée dans les pays industrialisés, c'est lui faire perdre conscience de son identité, lui faire acquérir la conscience internationale avant de l'éveiller à la conscience de soi."

³⁷ Original French: "Les nombreux échecs constatés dans la scolarisation pendant les deux premières années de l'enseignement primaire sont liés en partie à un facteur linguistique, celui de l'utilisation directe du français comme langue instrument, dès le début de la scolarité."

³⁸ Original French: "Une méthodologie pédagogique basée sur des attitudes traditionnelles négatives comme l'autoritarisme du maître, la passivité de l'élève, la mémorisation de connaissances dont on sait qu'elles s'oublient très vite."

³⁹ Original French: "En revanche, l'introduction du créole dans notre enseignement ne signifie pas et n'implique aucunement l'exclusion du français. Au contraire,

dans l'esprit de la réforme en cours, l'acquisition préalable des mécanismes opératoires de la lecture et de l'écriture par l'intermédiaire de la langue maternelle devrait faciliter l'apprentissage du français écrit."

- ⁴⁰ Haiti in the 1980s would have a total of twelve ministers of education. See Wikipedia, "Liste des ministres haïtiens de l'Éducation," https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_des_ministres_ha%C3%AAtiens_de_l%27%C3%89ducation.
- ⁴¹ In French: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale de la Jeunesse et des Sports.
- ⁴² Original French: "Les langues nationales sont le français et le créole. Le français tient lieu de langue officielle de la République d'Haïti."
- ⁴³ It is worth nothing that, in 2011, the amendments to the 1987 Constitution were published in French only (*Haiti Libre* 2011)—even though that very Constitution declared Kreyòl to be the sole national language and co-official with French. In effect, then, these amendments to the Constitution violate the Constitution!
- ⁴⁴ Original French: "Tous les Haïtiens sont unis par une Langue commune: le Créole. Le Créole et le Français sont les langues officielles de la République."
- ⁴⁵ Original French: "Obligation est faite à l'État de donner publicité par voie de presse parlée, écrite et télévisée, en langues créole et française, aux lois, arrêtés, décrets, accords internationaux, traités, conventions, à tout ce qui touche la vie nationale, exception faite pour les informations relevant de la sécurité nationale."
- ⁴⁶ Original French: "Une Académie haïtienne est instituée en vue de fixer la langue créole et de permettre son développement scientifique et harmonieux." See Dejean 2012 for a thorough critique of the scientific basis—or lack thereof—for this article mandating an academy to "fix" the Kreyòl language.
- ⁴⁷ This decree is often cited as the Decree of March 6, 1989; this was the date that it was promulgated in the official newspaper, *Le Moniteur*, over three months after it was passed by the Ministry of Education. It can be found reproduced in Fombrun 1989.
- ⁴⁸ Original French: "définir pour l'École Haïtienne un curriculum conforme aux finalités et aux objectifs de la Réforme du Système Éducatif instaurant l'Enseignement Fondamentale."
- ⁴⁹ Original French: "la nécessité de la promotion d'un bilinguisme équilibré et fonctionnel."
- ⁵⁰ In French: bilinguisme équilibré.
- ⁵¹ At the time of writing this article in 2022, Kreyòl was valued at 50 percent less than French in the official exams. For the ninth grade exam, French was worth three hundred points and Kreyòl two hundred. The national sixth grade exam no longer exists (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle, "Préparations des examens de la 9ème AF [2022]," <https://menfp.gouv.ht/#/documents/exams>, accessed September 3, 2022); however, see note 2 for a recently announced change to this policy.

- ⁵² Original French: “une plus grande flexibilité dans l’introduction du créole (certaines écoles étant autorisées à l’introduire à partir de la 4^{ème} année au lieu de l’imposer à tous dès la première année comme prévu).”
- ⁵³ This figure excludes the three-year embargo on aid from 1991 to 1993, during which the government was run by a military junta (Hadjadj 2000).
- ⁵⁴ This is the English translation of the Kreyòl title of Dejean’s (2006) book *Jon lekòl tèt anba nan yon peyi tèt anba*.
- ⁵⁵ RTI subcontracted two additional firms: the Academy for Educational Development and Educat SA (RTI et al. 1995).
- ⁵⁶ Original French: “la formation des maîtres devrait comporter une forte dose de connaissances linguistiques de base, notamment en français.”
- ⁵⁷ Original French: “La langue créole devrait occuper une place privilégiée dans l’enseignement; elle doit être étudiée en tant que langue et servir de langue d’enseignement du cycle préscolaire à l’université.”
- ⁵⁸ In 1998, a law was drafted titled the Avant-Projet de Loi Organique du MENJS, proposing a policy similar to Bernard’s Decree of March 30, 1982 (DEN 1982b). It appears that this draft law was never passed, and it is unclear which actors within the MENJS were behind it. Its Article 3.2 is particularly noteworthy, as it requires not just Kreyòl-only education through grade 4 (the first cycle), but also Kreyòl to be co-LOI at *all* later levels of education:

La langue d’enseignement au niveau du premier cycle de l’École fondamentale est le CRÉOLE, langue maternelle commune de tous les Haïtiens.

Le FRANÇAIS, langue officielle de la République avec le CRÉOLE, est enseigné comme langue seconde dès la première année de l’école fondamentale et devient langue d’enseignement à partir de la 5^{ème} de l’école fondamentale et aux autres niveaux du système éducatif.

Cependant aux fins d’une meilleure transmission de connaissances, le CRÉOLE reste langue d’enseignement à tous les niveaux du système éducatif.

L’enseignement de l’anglais et de l’espagnol sera renforcé et modernisé. (Accessed through UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning library)

- ⁵⁹ In French: Ministère de l’Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle.
- ⁶⁰ Original French: “obligation contractée par l’État Haïtien au Forum Mondial de l’Éducation tenu à Dakar en avril 2000.”
- ⁶¹ Original French: “Objectif stratégique 4 : Appliquer, au niveau du fondamental, une démarche de bilinguisme équilibré facilitant le développement des compétences linguistiques des élèves en créole et en français.”

“Action 1 : Élaboration d’un plan cohérent d’aménagement linguistique

Action 2 : Création d’une académie de la langue créole

Action 3 : Formation de tous les enseignants du fondamental aux méthodologies d’enseignement des deux langues

Action 4 : Expérimentation de programmes pilotes d’éducation bilingue dans le système scolaire haïtien.

Action 5 : Incitation à la production d’ouvrages répondant à la politique linguistique pour l’école haïtienne.”

⁶² Acronym from the French name: Groupe de Travail sur l’Éducation et la Formation.

⁶³ Original French: “Mettre en place un dispositif pour l’utilisation équilibrée du français et du créole dans le fondamental 1&2.”

⁶⁴ Initially Haitian minister of education from April 2014 to March 2016, Nesmy Manigat was reinstated in this post in November 2021 (Césaire 2021).

⁶⁵ Original articles in Kreyòl: “jeneralize itilizasyon lang kreyòl la kòm zouti ansèyman nan tout nivo nan sistèm edikasyon an” (Atik 6).

“Entèvansyon pou pwomosyon ak itilizasyon lang kreyòl la nan tout enstitisyon piblik ak non-piblik k ap travay nan sektè edikasyon an ; 3. Entèvansyon pou itilizasyon lang kreyòl la nan : a. sal klas yo ; b. preparasyon kourikoulòm ofisyèl MENFP ; c. preparasyon materyèl eskolè ak liv lekòl ; d. sikilè ak enfòmasyon MENFP ap voye bay lekòl yo oubyen laprès ; e. egzamen leta yo ; f. fòmasyon anseyan yo” (Atik 14).

⁶⁶ See Sergy Odiduro’s (2016) article with the telling title “MIT-Haiti Initiative: Another Broken Promise?” about this dead-on-arrival MENFP/MIT-Haiti Bureau.

⁶⁷ In French: Office National de Partenariat en Éducation.

⁶⁸ Original French: “La littérature recensée et les expériences de nombreux pays jadis coloniaux ont clairement fait état de l’aménagement linguistique pratiqué comme un des déterminants importants de la réussite scolaire.”

⁶⁹ Original French: “Renforcer l’enseignement du, en et par le créole dans toutes les écoles (sans exception) par la motivation active et la promotion du créole comme outil de réussite scolaire ; Veiller à la qualité des matériels didactiques et à la formation des enseignants ; Assurer la qualité de l’enseignement du, en et par le créole ; Promouvoir la vie en langue créole écrite et assurer une disponibilité en langue créole dans tous les services publics au niveau local et régional.”

⁷⁰ President from 2017 until his assassination in July 2021.

⁷¹ In French: “Le conflit linguistique créole-français.”

⁷² Original French: “La mise en œuvre du bilinguisme dans les apprentissages de base est une question encore problématique, mettant en exergue les problèmes liés à la formation des enseignants, aux matériels pédagogiques et de méthodes.”

- ⁷³ Original French: “Des études qualitatives récentes comme les observations des différents acteurs semblent indiquer que le créole et le français sont plutôt utilisés en fonction des capacités des enseignants.”
- ⁷⁴ Original French: “Le créole, langue maternelle qui lie tous les Haïtiens, doit occuper une meilleure place pour bâtir la cohésion sociale et développer les compétences et les savoirs.”
- ⁷⁵ This financial support totaled 8 million euros: see AFD, “Projet NECTAR : Pour une éducation citoyenne et tournée vers l’avenir,” June 29, 2017, <https://www.afd.fr/fr/carte-des-projets/projet-nectar-pour-education-citoyenne-tournee-vers-avenir>, accessed March 21, 2022.
- ⁷⁶ In French: Agence Française de Développement (AFD).
- ⁷⁷ Nouvelle Éducation Citoyenne Tournée vers l’Avenir.
- ⁷⁸ See the Haitian Ministry’s page on Projet NECTAR (<https://nectar.menfp.gouv.ht/#/Accueil>) and the AFD’s page on Projet NECTAR (<https://www.afd.fr/fr/carte-des-projets/projet-nectar-pour-education-citoyenne-tournee-vers-avenir>).
- ⁷⁹ In French: “NECTAR se situe dans la filiation de la réforme Bernard (1982), dont l’ambition était de créer un système éducatif plus dynamique bâti sur des pédagogies actives, sur un socle commun d’apprentissages constituant le fondement éducatif de la citoyenneté et, enfin, sur la valorisation de la langue créole acquérant le statut de langue d’enseignement. . . . L’objectif est d’améliorer la qualité de l’enseignement aux niveaux collège (3^o cycle du fondamental) et lycée (secondaire)» (AFD, “Projet NECTAR : Pour une éducation citoyenne et tournée vers l’avenir,” June 29, 2017, <https://www.afd.fr/fr/carte-des-projets/projet-nectar-pour-education-citoyenne-tournee-vers-avenir>, accessed March 21, 2022).

“L’Agence Française de Développement (AFD) a octroyé à la République d’Haïti une subvention de 8 millions d’euros dans l’objectif d’appuyer la réforme curriculaire entamée lors de la Réforme Bernard et visant à améliorer la qualité de l’enseignement du 3^{ème} cycle du fondamental et du secondaire. En effet, cette réforme doit permettre d’aboutir à la mise en place d’un enseignement fondamental complet et de qualité sur 9 années, suivi d’un cycle secondaire de 4 années.

“Le projet NECTAR (Nouvelle Éducation Citoyenne Tournée vers l’Avenir) financé par l’AFD a pour objectif d’accompagner le Ministère de l’Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle (MENFP) durant les 5 prochaines années dans la planification, la coordination, et la mise en œuvre de cette réforme d’envergure. Il est question d’une mesure de fond qui concerne l’ensemble du système éducatif, des enseignants aux formateurs, en passant par les élèves et les outils didactiques.

“Le déploiement du 3^{ème} cycle de l’enseignement fondamental et la généralisation des nouveaux programmes du secondaire permettront d’achever

la Réforme Bernard initiée en 1982. La finalité principale de ce projet est de mettre en place une nouvelle éducation haïtienne résolument tournée vers l'avenir et en cohésion avec l'environnement social, culturel et économique, tout en privilégiant l'intégration des citoyens par une meilleure insertion professionnelle." (MENFP, "NECTAR," <https://nectar.menfp.gouv.ht/#/Accueil>, accessed March 31, 2022)

- ⁸⁰ Original French: "De même, l'une et l'autre langues sont, tour à tour, langues d'enseignement. L'enfant est accueilli à l'école dans la langue parlée dans sa famille, le créole, et c'est dans cette langue qu'il découvre le monde et accomplit ses premiers apprentissages. Puis, en s'appuyant sur les compétences développées en créole, il doit s'approprier le français pour en faire progressivement une langue d'apprentissage scolaire, à partir de la 3^e année. Le passage harmonieux d'une langue d'enseignement à l'autre est déterminant pour la réussite de son parcours."
- ⁸¹ Original French passage for context: "Le créole reste langue d'enseignement en troisième et quatrième années, mais doit s'amorcer la 'transition linguistique' vers le français. Ce passage déterminant doit être géré avec beaucoup d'attention et de souplesse."
- ⁸² Original French: "Dans cette phase de transition, l'apprentissage du français implique tous les domaines. Les situations vécues en mathématiques, en sciences ou en histoire sont aussi pour l'enfant des situations d'apprentissage linguistique. Ces situations doivent être préparées, conduites et évaluées en prenant en compte cette dimension."
- ⁸³ Available on the Project NECTAR website: https://projet-nectar.canoprof.fr/eleve/projet-nectar/res/COC_version_modifiee_juillet_2022.pdf, accessed October 4, 2022.
- ⁸⁴ Original French: "La réforme la plus récente du système éducatif en Haïti a été officiellement décrétée par la Loi de mars 1982, précédée par un décret qui introduisait le créole comme langue d'enseignement."
- ⁸⁵ Original French: "À l'exception des deux premiers cycles de l'enseignement fondamental où le texte de la réforme éducative de 1982 prévoit l'enseignement dans les deux langues officielles (français et créole) et de façon équilibrée, la langue d'enseignement adoptée dans les autres niveaux du système formel est le français."
- ⁸⁶ Original French: "La réforme Bernard de 1982 avait posé les bases de deux transformations majeures du système scolaire : (i) l'instauration d'un enseignement fondamental de 9 ans et d'un nouveau secondaire de 4 ans et (ii) l'instauration d'un bilinguisme créole/français avec l'introduction du créole comme langue d'enseignement aux côtés du français. Le créole doit être la langue d'enseignement unique de la 1^{ère} AF, puis créole et français coexistent."
- ⁸⁷ Original French: "En reprenant ces idées-clés de la Réforme Bernard qui sont encore actuelles, ce Cadre d'Orientations Curriculaires offre aujourd'hui une

opportunité de donner à la Nation la perspective d'une "Haïti Verte et Bleue" dans l'horizon 2054, 250^e anniversaire de l'indépendance de notre pays."

⁸⁸ Original French: "NECTAR se situe dans la filiation de la réforme Bernard (1982), dont l'ambition était de créer un système éducatif plus dynamique bâti sur des pédagogies actives, sur un socle commun d'apprentissages constituant le fondement éducatif de la citoyenneté et, enfin, sur la valorisation de la langue créole acquérant le statut de langue d'enseignement" (AFD, "Projet NECTAR : Pour une éducation citoyenne et tournée vers l'avenir," June 29, 2017, <https://bit.ly/projet-nectar-avenir>, accessed March 21, 2022).

⁸⁹ This can be found reproduced in Fombrun 1989 (pp. 85–89).

⁹⁰ Original French: "En ce qui concerne l'aspect linguistique de l'enseignement, l'objectif général est donc celui d'un bi-linguisme fonctionnel qui devrait être atteint dans le 2^{ème} Cycle de l'Enseignement Fondamental."

⁹¹ See reproduction of Decree of December 1, 1988, in Fombrun 1989 (p. 75): "Considérant qu'il importe de définir pour l'École Haïtienne un curriculum conforme aux finalités et aux objectifs de la Réforme du Système Éducatif instaurant l'Enseignement Fondamental, notamment . . . la reconnaissance de notre langue maternelle comme premier instrument de la promotion d'un bilinguisme équilibré et fonctionnel."

⁹² "Stratégie de mise en oeuvre : 291. Dans le but de faciliter la mise en place, à l'échelle nationale, d'un bilinguisme équilibré et fonctionnel devant répondre aux façons et aux besoins d'apprendre des élèves, il sera implanté, à titre pilote, des programmes d'éducation bilingue."

⁹³ Original French: "État de la personne qui a, de la langue seconde, une connaissance pratique qui lui permet de se débrouiller dans la langue seconde."

⁹⁴ Original French: "Bilinguisme équilibré : Individu qui, en plus de sa première langue, possède une compétence comparable dans une autre langue et est capable d'utiliser l'une ou l'autre en toutes circonstances avec la même efficacité."

⁹⁵ Original French: "L'ambition de l'école haïtienne est d'amener, d'une manière équilibrée, chacun à parler, comprendre, lire et écrire, avec une égale aisance dans l'une et l'autre langue."

⁹⁶ In French: Initiative Francophone pour la Formation à Distance des Maîtres.

⁹⁷ The participants were originally intended to be "capistes"—individuals who completed a portion of teacher college but had not yet received their final diploma. Despite this, some graduates ended up being among the project's participants, and the authors further noted that the sample of participants was likely biased: "The selection of teachers whose level of French was better than what one would expect likely corresponded to the desire of the project framers to guarantee its success" (IFADEM 2013, 12).

- ⁹⁸ From a study cited in the IFADEM report (IFADEM 2013, 23): *Étude 2008 de l'Institut Haïtien de Formation en Sciences de l'Éducation (IHFOSED) réalisée auprès de 1000 instituteurs.*
- ⁹⁹ The age at which a student would normally complete Haiti's fundamental education program.
- ¹⁰⁰ See DeGraff, Frager, and Miller 2022 for a summary of our Bernard-vs.-COC analysis in Kreyòl in Haiti's main newspaper, *Le Nouvelliste*
- ¹⁰¹ In Haiti, the Lekòl Kominotè Matènwa on the island of La Gonâve represents an example of successful Kreyòl-based education in Haiti (DeGraff 2017).
- ¹⁰² It must also be noted that such addition of French as co-LOI, with Kreyòl, as early as in the third grade contradicts other aspects of Minister Nesmy Manigat's reforms such as *Liv Inik*, whereby Kreyòl is cast as the *sole* LOI in the first four grades of the Fundamental School.
- ¹⁰³ See Placide and Sauveur 2012 for an updated proposal in a similar vein, promoting Kreyòl as primary language of instruction while accommodating French and other languages such as English and Spanish as objects of instruction.
- ¹⁰⁴ As we were revising this article for publication, the news came to us on June 6, 2023, that Minister Manigat has now launched efforts to produce Kreyòl materials as part of the *Liv Inik* initiative for third and fourth grades in the Fundamental Cycle (MENFP Haiti Officiel, Facebook post, June 6, 2023, https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=pfbid02N1jH4jJC5bdyp2XUnjCzTp1PF5VCt4p2H1HW3xcpUC7taWL3RcjvFCgimTpd9G7kl&id=100044385341004). Also noteworthy is the fact that this announcement, like many recent announcements on the Facebook page of the Ministry of National Education, was published in Kreyòl. This regular use of Kreyòl for written public communications is a first for the Ministry of Education. This trend has also been set by Manigat himself, the sole minister in the current government to regularly write in Kreyòl on social media. This use of Kreyòl is a concrete example of its valorization as a perfectly normal language, just as suitable for use in formal communication as it is for use in formal education.

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