

'Dissing' early education [JM] ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

It is obvious from the expenditure budget presented to Parliament that the government, ignoring a rising chorus of expert opinion, is not only continuing to starve early childhood education of badly needed funding but has surrendered to political expediency by providing hefty increases to tertiary education. This will allow the University of the West Indies (UWI) to continue subsidising student fees to the tune of some 80 per cent while parents of poor children going to Community Basic Schools have to pay the full costs for what, in many cases, is a sub-standard education.

Wentworth Gabbidon, president of the Jamaica Teachers Association, has bemoaned the fact that within the education budget itself, the early childhood segment gets a disrespectful \$1.36 billion or 4.6 per cent of the total education budget. On the other hand, tertiary education gets (\$5.57 billion or 19 per cent of the budget and, on the face of it, the UWI has been granted a 150 per cent increase to \$4 billion. The amount of the increase may be confused by a change in the accounting of the allocation which, previously consisted of cash and bonds, discountable at a bank, but the UWI should tell the public what the true increase is, and the government needs to tell the public why early childhood education has been short-changed again.

- reprinted from Jamaica-Gleaner

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Tags: affordability ^[3]

funding ^[4]

demand ^[5]

availability ^[6]

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/04/04/dissing-early-education-jm> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/latin-america-and-caribbean> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/affordability> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/demand> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/availability>