CHAPTER 3

Education and Training Inequality

If you don’t have any education, you can’t reach anywhere. PWDs.

Disabled persons should be in all schools. PWDs and Caregiver.

Chapter 3 discusses education and training inequalities affecting PWDs in Jamaica. It unveils the value ascribed to education and training by PWDs and documents the structural marginalization evident in comparatively poorer educational outcomes than nondisabled counterparts, using 1991 and 2001 secondary census data as well 2004 primary data. The education and training advancements made by PWDs are disaggregated by disability type, severity, gender, geographic location, and type(s) of education/training institution(s) attended—that is, mainstream, special, or both are presented. Further, the main barriers that facilitate structural education and training discrimination are identified from which evidence-based strategies to address the educational marginality of PWDs are gleaned.

3.1 Valuing Education and Training

Education and training is a highly valued commodity for PWDs, the majority of whom face formidable socioeconomic entrapment. A sentiment among DPs that resonates is “Education is very important for PWDs.” Indeed, most PWDs (97 percent) interviewed in 2004 accessed some form of education and/or training, at least 75 percent¹ accessed secondary-level education or higher, and two-thirds wanted to pursue further studies/training. Caregivers equally value education: “I am for equal rights . . . I will walk with her [daughter] and I say you have to go in there and talk . . . I took her to HEART [Human Employment and Resource Training Trust/National Training Agency] at Kenilworth, and they said the program is not for her [PWDs] . . . And I sat down and said, “Look here, I am not moving from here. No. So you tell me what’s going on because this institution is for everybody . . . I want her

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to be a part of it.” The desire to succeed educationally was great for caregivers and PWDs alike despite challenges encountered.

Education and training is seen as the single most important tool to optimize full participation “because the society is designed for the accommodation of people without what we call disability and there are more difficulties to overcome for PWDs.” The qualitative analysis strongly projects the economic liberation that education and training provide: “I would like to go back to school again to improve my life . . . and then start to do a trade for myself. And then get a little work and go through life with God.” Indeed, PWDs wanted to pursue further studies mainly for self-actualization reasons (100 percent) and to gain employment or improve employment status (69 percent). The link between education/training and socioeconomics is given high credence, as 58 percent of PWDs are dependent on someone else solely for their sustenance.

Next to equal employment opportunities, PWDs rate access to quality education and training as the most important indicator of equal treatment of PWDs in Jamaican society: “We will all have a better thing going if we have more places for training and training options for PWDs.” Caregivers of PWDs also placed tremendous emphasis on the improved quality of life for PWDs beyond socioeconomic benefits. A caregiver posits:

*The pastor associated with the [National] Youth Service interview down by the SDC [Social Development Commission] came and he said to me, “So, what you expect her to do?” . . . [I said,] “Ask her and she will tell you because she is capable” . . . She was selected for training . . . When she came home she was a totally different person, she was so independent that my mother became so vex because she doesn't have to depend on my mother to do anything or to get her anywhere. Caregiver.*

PWDs similarly profess of the empowering influence resulting from transformed self-value, particularly in mainstream environments. A DP’s assessment of the transition from a special education to a mainstream institution reveals: “In the final analysis you start feeling that you are no different from the nondisabled student and that you are in the real world.” These findings clearly indicate that education and training is a twinned fundamental enabler imperative for the development of PWDs. While this fact is recognized, the experiences of PWDs indicate that urgent policy attention is needed for this to become a reality.

### 3.2 Education and Training Assessment of PWDs and the Nondisabled

Chi-Square tests and multinomial logistic regressions are used to statistically analyze the relationship between disability and educational attainment in