

Strategic Partnership Project



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EDUCATION POLICY REFORM FOR QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY IN HONDURAS

In 2008, the Partnership for Educational Revitalization in the Americas (PREAL) and the Ricardo Ernesto Maduro Andreu Educational Foundation (FEREMA) began the project “Education Policy Reform for Quality and Efficiency in Honduras,” designed to improve education policy in the country. The project contributed two lines of action in the educational development of the country:

- The formulation and implementation of standards for assessing teacher performance.
- The achievement of greater efficiency in educational investment at the municipal level.

In collaboration with the Partnership for the Revitalization of Education in the Americas (PREAL), the Ricardo Ernesto Maduro Andreu Educational Foundation (FEREMA), and the Honduran Ministry of Education, the two-part project “Education Policy Reform for Quality and Efficiency in Honduras” is a joint effort by civil society, government and international groups to support Education for All (EFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction in improving the quality, equity, and efficiency of education in Honduras. It features two distinct initiatives: formulating standards for assessing teacher performance, and efforts to increase efficiency of municipal level investments in education.

HONDURAN CONTEXT

Over the past decade, Honduras has implemented reforms aimed at providing access to a quality education for all children. The development of a national core curriculum and learning standards; new textbooks; innovative teacher training; quality school management; school meals; free tuition and incentive programs for teachers are among the most recent reforms.

Even with these initiatives, however, education quality and efficiency indicators, such as test scores, retention and completion rates, show little improvement. Honduras remains at the bottom of many such indicator rankings in the region. Part of the key to improvement, PREAL and partners have maintained, lies in improving policies and practices that create the framework for the education sector. Considering the broad range of challenges, this project aimed to address two critical issues identified for educational development in Honduras – teacher performance and local involvement:

1. Formulating and implementing standards for assessing teacher performance

Considering that much of the success of an educational system depends on the quality of teacher performance, this topic was identified as both an emerging theme in the region and an opportunity for clarifying expectations of the often conflictive teaching profession in Honduras. Although Honduran law has established a process for evaluating teacher performance and identified the agencies who will participate and what their specific functions will be in the evaluation, the process had not been designed or implemented. The Strategic Partnership Project has aimed to make concrete contributions to progress in this area.

2. Increasing the effectiveness of educational investments at the municipal level

Honduran municipalities generally have a low level of coordination in investment efforts made by the Ministry of Education, but there are still cases of good practices that can provide useful lessons for other localities. The Strategic Partnership Project creates mechanisms that identify, reward, and systemize best practices.



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Box 1

Education Policy Reform for Quality and Efficiency in Honduras

GOAL:

To help raise the quality of education through the formulation and implementation of standards that will permit evaluation of teacher performance and improve efficiency in education by designing a basic education investment and community engagement strategy at the local level.

OBJECTIVES:

To influence decision makers and key groups so that the Honduran Ministry of Education will:

- Develop, disseminate, and apply performance standards for teachers.
- Design and implement a basic strategy to improve efficiency of investment in education at the local level through the coordination between municipal and district education directions.

TEACHER PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

In Honduras, the National Assessment of Educational Quality (SINEC) includes, among various other components, a performance assessment for teachers designed to “determine quality in job performance,” as specified in the Honduran Teachers Statute (Legislative Decree of 1997, No. 136) and in its General Ruling (Executive Decision of 1999, No. 0760-SE). The ruling specifies how the assessment is made and defines who is responsible for applying it, outlining some of its procedures.

In 2008, the General Directorate of Evaluation of Quality Education (DIGECE) developed the first version of a Manual for Teaching Performance Assessment. The manual was completed with wide collaboration amongst project partners and was based on the experience gained from a pilot project on teacher performance assessment developed in several municipalities of the Intibucá department during 2006 and 2007, with technical assistance from GTZ. Complying with the rules of the Teachers’ Statute, DIGECE submitted the draft manual to the National Evaluation Board, a body that provisionally adopted it on the grounds that it was necessary to validate the manual prior to final approval.

Consequently, FEREMA signed an agreement with DIGECE aimed at supporting the development, validation, and implementation of this manual, by means of formulating the teacher performance standards specified in the Strategic Partnership Project. To this end, a Technical Advisory Committee was created composed of FEREMA staff, the Ministry of Education’s departmental officials, and a number of public school teachers, among others. The committee analyzed the draft of the manual and enriched it with region-wide best practices, which PREAL had identified and systematized.

Based on the criteria established to evaluate teacher performance (educational, professional, and personal) in Article 87 of SINEC, the project team developed preliminary proposals for standards. These were divided into two categories:

- Teachers should address four subsets of their performance: personal teaching, professional teaching, institutional teaching, and community outreach.
- Principals should address the following areas of performance: leadership management, institutional management (including teacher, curriculum, resource, administrative, and financial management), and community outreach and involvement.

There is an established criterion for each of these aspects (see Box 2). In addition, the project team developed descriptors for each of them. (see Box 3).

The preliminary proposal of standards was validated by some 100 teachers organized into 11 focus groups and some 50 principals organized into 5 focus groups. These groups represented educational institutions in 30 different regions of the country. The consultation for each standard included:

- Comments about the proposal’s wording
- Interpreting the degree of difficulty in implementation
- Identifying potential resources for and obstacles to implementation

The participating teachers and principals agreed on the validity of performance standards, noting the potential benefits of having their work recognized and identifying paths for sector-wide improvement. They emphasized that they should be sufficiently trained before performance evaluations, and drew attention to the fact that current and traditional teacher training processes have not produced desired results in performance. They noted that the main difficulties for implementation of effective teaching standards are the deficiencies in teacher training, pedagogical aspects of content management, and weaknesses in leadership and curriculum management.

The results of the proposed standards can impact the definition of education policies by producing:

- A study on the rational and legal framework for the evaluation of teaching performance
- A document with the results of the consultation carried out by teachers and school principals
- An outline of the critical path to be followed in order to implement the teacher performance standards and evaluation processes.

EFFICIENCY OF LOCAL INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION

In Honduras, the procedural rules for the departmental directors of education (Decision 1198 of the Ministry of Education in 2004) establish that the municipal director of education in a given city or town should, among other functions, “promote the establishment of a municipal council for educational development, to be planned in a participatory manner and implement national education

Box 2

Characteristics of Teacher Performance Standards

PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS:

1. Plans classes based on the designed curriculum, standards, and schedule, and considers the specific needs of each student.
2. Considers the level of difficulty and content area when asking appropriate conceptual and procedural questions, taking into account both school and community conditions.
3. Masters the content of the discipline taught.
4. Utilizes innovative teaching practices to generate meaningful and relevant learning processes in students.
5. Creates a positive climate for student learning.
6. Implements techniques used to monitor student learning.

PERSONAL/ PROFESSIONAL ASPECTS:

1. Actively participates in evaluations that critically analyze professional practices.
2. Shows interest in and commitment to providing regular progress reports.
3. Shows interest and commitment in research and innovation that improve student learning.
4. Performs all duties demonstrating ethical behavior.
5. Meets standards, principles, and educational policies.
6. Maintains a clean and decent classroom environment
7. Promotes a safe, tidy, and motivational environment for student learning.

INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS:

1. Actively participates in the planning and management of the school.
2. Maintains relationships that promote a positive work environment.
3. Participates in teamwork with colleagues, officials, students, and the local community.

PROJECTED COMMUNITY APPEARANCE:

1. Actively participates in project and community development activities.

programs through the representatives of the council and other social sectors operating in the municipality" (Article 38, No. 3). This requires creating opportunities for joint action between district managers and municipal education (under the Ministry of Education) and the municipal councils. It also established that 3.5% of the national budget to municipalities will be assigned to education.

With this in mind, the PREAL Strategic Partnership Project sought to develop a model to assist in the national objectives, including the Education for All, the Millennium Development Goals, and the National Strategy for Poverty Reduction. The project aimed to create cooperation mechanisms between school districts and

Box 3

Example of Descriptors for Completing Criteria

5. FOSTER A SUITABLE CLIMATE FOR STUDENT LEARNING.

- 5.1 Establish and communicate high expectations for (social and academic) student behavior.
- 5.2 Establish a respectful climate of inter-personal relationships that maintains empathy for students as well as promotes integration and inclusion amongst them.
- 5.3 Work with students to build standards of behavior and self-regulation that encourages learning in and outside of the classroom and school.
- 5.4 Identify reasons for conflict, the context in which they occur, and propose reflective alternatives to reach agreements based on the rules of behavior in the classroom.
- 5.5 Encourage teamwork and facilitate communication through the exchange, confrontation, and discussion of ideas.
- 5.6 Utilize effective communication mechanisms with parents so they can fully support the learning process of their children.
- 5.7 Select strategies involving students to increase equal participation in the teaching-learning process.
- 5.8 Perform activities that promote the social, emotional, and academic growth of students.
- 5.9 Create a reflective environment that includes active participation and joint decision-making.

municipalities in order for them to make more efficient use of education funding and programs. This original motivation evolved into an interest in tackling the issue of quality of educational provision, which is manifest through three major project initiatives:

1. The National Award for Municipalities Supporting Education.

The Award program was established through an agreement with PREAL; FEREMA; the Ministries of Interior, Justice, and Education; the Association of Municipalities of Honduras (AMHON); the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP); and the Coordinating Committee for Educational Networking (COMCORDE). The prizes are awarded through a process whereby municipalities are nominated by a local organization and recognized for actions taken to develop best practices in education over the past two years. In its first year, the categories were:

- *Educational Innovation*, promoting creative social impact practices that help to improve academic achievement, equity, coverage, retention, and continuation in the system.
- *Investment Efficiency*, identifying expected impacts in education investments and the effects of implementing the municipality's strategic plan in the education sector for a set number of years.

Box 4:

Coordination between municipalities and education districts: Best Practices

PREAL and FEREMA have documented an initial set of the award-winning best practices in local education management in the following 12 Honduran municipalities:

- Puerto Cortés: 15 years of local education management committed to the goals of Education for All (EFA), with emphasis on eradication of illiteracy.
- Orocuina: Formation of the Municipal Education Development Council and implementation of strategies for synergizing local, national, and private funding.
- Yamaranguila: Sustained efforts with assisting families to find educational opportunities for children, adolescents, adults with special needs.
- Jesús de Otoro: Forging public-private partnerships with local, national, and international NGOs to increase

efficiency of local investment and programming.

- San José de Colinas: Implementation of strategies to meet the EFA goals, including school construction / improvement, funding scholarships, schools meals, and sustained, marked increases in retention and completion rates.
- Comayagua: Effective management with national agencies and NGOs to begin local investment initiatives for school building improvements.
- Guajiquire: Implementation of strategies for achieving the EFA goals, and effective collaboration with other actors for information gathering and sharing.
- La Ceiba: Implementation of strategies for increased efficiency of local investments geared towards to school building improvements.

- Concepción del Norte: Effective leverage of financial resources for the development of distance learning programs and other alternative models for secondary and post-secondary education.
- Central District (Tegucigalpa): Development of strategies to support early learning options and the provision of access to quality education options to children the city's public markets and city dump.
- Dolores: Leveraged various sources of educational investments, including scholarships for low-income students, prizes and incentives for students leaders,, salary assistance to public school teachers, support for preschool centers, and assistance with improving public school infrastructure.
- Tomalá: Implementation of a municipal strategy for eradicating youth illiteracy.

- *Management*, highlighting the ability to conduct a participatory management, with transparency in financial management, and implementing monitoring mechanisms for evaluation purposes.

2. Study on strategies to support education and ways to cooperate between municipalities and District Directorates of Education. This work identified 21 mayors' offices with educational experiences that support education, and documented their successful initiatives. A document on "Coordination between Municipalities and Education Districts: Best Practices" with this material (see Box 4) was published.

3. A Cross-sector partnership at the local level. Formal partnerships between the district education departments (under the Ministry of Education) and the Municipal Corporations of Puerto Cortes, San Jose de Colinas, Guajiquire Danli Orocuina were established, focusing on strategic education planning

for the municipal education council's Recommendations for Educational Development. To realize this, the project team worked in partnership with local NGOs.

To date, this component of the Strategic Partnership Project has lead to the following results:

- The ongoing national award program to municipalities that promote education, now assumed and operated by AMHON.
- An integrated model of action between divisions of national government, district education offices, and municipal education corporations.
- A growing awareness, set of resources and best practices that municipalities can use to formulate a strategic plan – involving key community stakeholders, targets and indicators – aimed accessing quality education for children and youth.
- Models for efficiently use of resources contributed by the central government, municipal government, NGOs, and projects funded by international cooperation. ©