Rebuilding the Social Contract: School Autonomy in Nicaragua

Gustavo Arcia
Humberto Belli

April 1999

The World Bank
Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office
Rebuilding the Social Contract:
School Autonomy in Nicaragua

Gustavo Arcia
Humberto Belli

April 1999

Papers prepared in this series are not formal publications of the World Bank. They present preliminary and unpolished results of country analysis or research that is circulated to encourage discussion and comment; any citation and use of this paper should take account of its provisional character. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this paper are entirely those of the authors and should not be attributed in any manner to the World Bank, its affiliated organization members of its Board of Executive Directors or the countries they represent.

The World Bank
Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office
Gustavo Arcia is Senior Economist at the Research Triangle Institute, and Adjunct Associate Professor of Public Policy, Duke University; Humberto Belli was Minister of Education from 1991 to 1998. We thank Luis Crouch, Nancy Gillespie, Carlos Gargiulo, and Nora Mayorga de Caldera for their thoughtful comments to an earlier draft. However, the authors remain responsible for the content of this work. Address all correspondence to Arcia@aol.com.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................ 1

II. RESTORING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT: SCHOOL AUTONOMY IN NICARAGUA ........................................................ 2

III. DECENTRALIZATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT ........................................................... 13

IV. THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL AUTONOMY: REMAINING CHALLENGES ........................................ 18

REFERENCES ........................................................................................................................................ 22
I. INTRODUCTION

Since 1993, the Ministry of Education (MED) of Nicaragua has been implementing a program of school autonomy in which each school receives a fiscal transfer that is administered by a local school council in which parents are a majority. In principle, the council has complete authority over the use of the budget, and responsibility for the hiring and firing of teachers and the school director. Parents can reward good teachers directly, and can ask for accounts from the system. For once, parents in a public school can have a voice and the power to make that voice heard. In practice, school autonomy is still at an incipient—albeit promising—stage. Parents are still learning about how to ask for accounts, and untargeted school fees bring forth questions about financial equity. Still, school autonomy is expected to increase allocative and operational efficiency, and contribute to the rebuilding of the social contract between parents and teachers—a social contract based on a teacher’s commitment to make the best effort to educate children, in exchange for a decent salary and the respect of parents and the community.

The key issue in public education in Nicaragua—after a decade of excessive statism and the politicization of the school curriculum—was the restoration of the sovereignty of parents in the education of their children, and the restoration of the social contract between parents and the school. During the Sandinista government there was a significant diversion of accountability away from parents, weakening the social contract; teachers depended on the union and the ministry for their paycheck, and did not have to account to parents. The loss of this link has been found to be a significant—but often overlooked—problem in Nicaragua and in other countries1. As a consequence of a weak social contract between parents and teachers, there was a steady decline in the teaching of values in school—values that parents want their children to learn and practice in school, followed by a steady loss in the social position of teachers in the community, and a corresponding loss of personal commitment to education quality.

This paper describes Nicaragua’s program of school autonomy. First, it relates the issue of autonomy to the decentralization of education, giving the autonomy program a theoretical context. Second, it describes in some detail the components of autonomy and the different levels of responsibility of each stakeholder. Third, it describes the most recent findings on school autonomy performance. At the end, the paper poses some challenges to school autonomy, in the hopes that by responding to those challenges there will be a sustained improvement in the coverage and quality of public education.

1.1 The Loss of the Social Contract

The program of school autonomy was not created in a political vacuum. Public education during the Sandinista years was a central project that, on paper, did not differ significantly from the objectives of any public education system in Latin America: popular participation in education; the elimination of illiteracy; the increased relevance of education to the lives of students, and the integral transformation of the education system. The cornerstone of the system was implementation of massive literacy campaigns that had a large political impact abroad, but a modest internal impact in terms of sustained literacy gains. In the meantime, public education in Nicaragua had become so politicized that career educators had little influence over the design and implementation of education policy. By the mid-eighties, public education in Nicaragua faced significant opposition from many parents, the church, and other groups in society.

The change in educational content brought forth by this environment led to a quick erosion in the fragile social contract that existed between parents and public schools—a social contract defined by a set of mutually agreed roles and expectations between parents and teachers about the education of children, based on a common culture and common standards of behavior. As the Sandinista government felt more threatened by its opposition, the politicization and inflexibility of public education increased, and the social contract was eroded even further.

II. RESTORING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT: SCHOOL AUTONOMY IN NICARAGUA

The change in government in 1990 marked the beginning of a new education policy focused on parental rights and responsibilities, and anchored on the decentralization of the public education system. The decision to decentralize public schools in Nicaragua went beyond the convenience of an independently run school site. At the most fundamental level, the Ministry of Education wanted to give parents a voice in the education content and process, and local control over educational resources in order to foster accountability and competition in the delivery of public education. In Nicaragua, voice and control meant a series of principles for democratic participation in the provision of public education that included:

- an explicit recognition that parents have a natural right in determining the goals in the education of their children
- a role for the state circumscribed to implementing the goals of parents in the provision of public education.
- the right of civil society to ask for accounts in the use of public funds in education
- the provision of public education under the principles of equity, efficiency, and accountability at the central and local levels.

In summary, the Ministry of Education wanted to restore the social contract between the family, the state, and civil society, in the provision of public education. To this end, school autonomy was a key instrument to achieve three operational goals: (i) to include parents and civil society in school management—as a way to reinforce democracy and increase social

---

accountability; (ii) to give parents more voice and control over the education of their children, and (iii) to increase operational efficiency in the face of scarce resources. In essence, by providing financial and operational autonomy to public schools, the MED sought coherence with the principles of equity, efficiency, and accountability. Moreover, school autonomy was considered as a first step for improving education quality by nurturing the personal incentives of parents and teachers to work together, thus helping restore the social contract between them. For teachers, school autonomy could mean a better link between increased pay, recognition, and good performance. In addition, teachers in autonomous schools could be free from political interference from the central MED, and more opportunities for exerting educational leadership and for increasing their capacity for making decisions. For parents, autonomy could mean having a voice in their children’s education, and some control over educational resources.

2.1 Towards Operational, Managerial and Allocative Efficiency

An important technical assumption about school autonomy was that many centralized functions—such as personnel selection and supervision, site maintenance, and minor purchases—could be done more efficiently at the local level. The transaction costs of school administration in 1990 were very high, since at that time banking, transportation and logistics were difficult and very expensive. With the improvements observed in the financial and physical infrastructure in 1992-94, operational costs could be rapidly reduced if the operational responsibilities were apportioned according to comparative advantages, leaving to local schools those functions which would accrue mostly locally and which could be done at a lower unit cost. For example, minimum educational standards, standardized testing, and the monitoring of financial and learning equity could remain centralized, while autonomous schools could take care of staff selection, site maintenance, and individual evaluations, using some basic principles of decentralization as guide. Some of these principles are shown in Table 1.

---


4 For a review of the conceptual framework and recent international experience see Winkler, Donald, 1997. “Descentralización de la educación: Participación en el manejo de las escuelas al nivel local.” Informe No. 8, Grupo de Desarrollo Humano, Región de Latinoamérica y el Caribe, Banco Mundial, Washington, DC.

5 It must be remembered that these savings can take some time to be realized, since institutions rarely change their structure in the very short run to accommodate changes in functions.
Table 1. Summary of Central and Local Functions in a Decentralized Education System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Central level</th>
<th>Local level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financing</td>
<td>Guarantees Minimum expenditure per student; Seeks equity in financing by</td>
<td>Cost sharing; financing of school needs above minimum standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>poverty level; finances most infrastructure.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum/Minimum Standards</td>
<td>Specify basic content and scope; provides basic materials and training.</td>
<td>Adapts curriculum and requirements to local conditions; assists in teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring and firing decisions</td>
<td>Defines standards and regulatory framework; defines contract laws.</td>
<td>Screens, selects, negotiates with, hires and fires teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision, evaluation,</td>
<td>Measures achievement; defines norms; supervises at regional and national level;</td>
<td>Conducts local evaluations; provides data to central level; keeps local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and information on system</td>
<td>provides public goods of a national scope.</td>
<td>accounts; informs parents on local school performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Winkler, 1994, p.23.

Another technical argument for education decentralization was *managerial efficiency*, which means a lower administrative cost per student served, or a lower administrative burden to the school budget. In Nicaragua, there is a need to separate managerial inefficiencies of central functions at the central level, from the management of autonomous schools. As it will discussed later, school management has improved considerably, but central functions remain in need of improvement. The last technical argument for decentralization was *allocative efficiency*, or the ability to combine schools inputs in such a way as to increase education quality and learning. In Nicaragua, there has been significant change in the reallocation of resources, but the evaluation of their efficiency before and after autonomy is still in progress.

Although the academic literature is sometimes critical of decentralization, in most cases the criticism would be better directed to failures in its implementation. Clearly, there is no perfect model for implementation because the principles behind the instrument is what counts, and not the instrument itself. In the case of Nicaragua, the shift from a socialist system to a market economy posed particularly difficult problems for finding the proper instrument because of the strong possibility that a body of theory would emerge only after a body of practice.

2.2 The Characteristics of School Autonomy

School autonomy in Nicaragua is based on three elements: (i) a fiscal transfer to schools based on technical and equity criteria; (ii) the parental control of the fiscal transfer at the school level, and (iii) the complete authority of the local school council over hiring and firing decisions.

---


Each autonomous school is governed by a Local School Council (Consejo Directivo Escolar), composed of parents, the president of the Parent’s Council (Consejo de Padres de Familia), the school’s director, up to three teachers, and the president of the student government.

A summary of the managerial and supervisory functions of the Local School Council is shown in Table 2. Parents have the voting majority. Each public school must have a Parent’s Council, elected by secret ballot among a list of candidates who must have children in the school and the director is selected by the school council among a short list submitted by the MED. The school council meets at least once a month and most decisions are taken by simple majority. All agreements and decisions are reported in writing to make them legally binding. The Council must publish a monthly report on income and expenditures and post it where all parents can see it, and copied to the Municipal Delegation of the MED. All Council decisions must fall within the tenets of the Constitution and the norms and standards of the MED.

As shown in Table 2, the Local School Council runs the school. However, the school director also has a significant role to play in school governance, since much of the information presented to the council, and many of the decisions taken by the council, depend a great deal on the technical capacity, leadership qualities, initiative, and communication skills of the school director. Hence, the managerial quality of the Local School Council depends heavily on the quality of the director.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Managerial and Supervisory Functions of Local School Councils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic management</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic content</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic supervision</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personnel management</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Supervision</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 In addition, candidates for the Local School Council or the Parent’s Council must be literate, must have a good standing in the community, a clean police record, and not have business or family relations with the school. Source: Ministerio de Educación, Secretaria de Coordinación Departamental, 1998. “El Consejo de Padres de Familia.” Managua.

9 Currently, candidates are shortlisted through a transparent scoring system. The candidate with the highest number of points is appointed as director. An alternate selection system being proposed is for the school council to submit a short list, and for the MED to select the director. The differences are operationally subtle, but politically significant in terms of the director’s perception of allegiance to the Minister who named him/her vs. allegiance to the school council.
| Administrative Supervision | - Define regular and extraordinary voluntary fees to be paid by parents, and allocate their expenditure
- Supervise teacher and student attendance
- Resolve appeals on sanctions to students
- Review and approve teacher incentives and sanctions |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Accountability             | - Render financial and administrative accounts to parents and the community in an public and transparent form
- Demand from the director the regular reporting on academic, financial, and administrative performance, including the execution of the budget, payroll composition, and infrastructure maintenance
- Work closely with the Parent's Council |

At the community level, the Parent's Council is the main body representing the interest of parents in the public education system. As such it can elect their representatives in the Local School Council, propose changes and adjustments to the Local School Council, and it can bring to its attention any suggestions for improving school performance. It also is the Council's main sounding board in regards to fees and fundraising activities. Each autonomous school is obligated to form and nurture a Parent’s Council. Any decision taken by the Local School Council or by the MED Central can be appealed by the Parent’s Council to the Municipal Education Council, which is the following level of central authority in the autonomy pyramid. If needed, the appeal can go to the Departmental Education Council, and if needed, to the national Assembly of Departmental Education Councils, or all the way up to the National Education Council, which has final authority over decisions affecting public education. At the school level, the central role of the MED is primarily a supervisory one. To fulfill its supervisory and normative role, the MED may intervene into the affairs of a local school if:

- The school refuses to apply standardized tests to measure student achievement,
- The school refuses to participate in civic activities of obligatory attendance
- The school closes before the minimum number of school days required by the MED
- The school does not enforce discipline or is too lax in the application of sanctions
- The school fails to measure correctly teacher and student attendance
- The school is negligent in its financial and administrative functions
- There is corruption
- The school fails to comply with its informational obligations or its accountability

In any of the above cases the MED can impose sanctions to the school or to the director, or it can even ask for the director’s resignation. However, if the school disagrees with the nature or scope of the MED’s intervention, it has full recourse to the appeal process implemented at the municipal, departmental and national levels, as described above. The entire institutional construct described above was done completely ad hoc because Nicaragua did not have an Education Law governing public education. Clearly, MED authorities and progressive school directors realized that if an Education Law involving autonomy—implying a paradigm change in the delivery of

---

10 The appellate system refers only to matters relevant to the application of education policy. Some problems may be more relevant to the judicial system.
11 A new Education Law, which defines and regulates schools autonomy, has been submitted to Congress in 1998 but is pending debate and approval.
12 The agreement signed between the MED and each school requires the signing of monthly checks from the MED’s account to each autonomous school—a time-consuming task.
public education—had been proposed in 1993, it would have been stalled in Congress for years. Instead, the Minister found it was tactically better to simply implement a program of autonomy and refine its content and grassroots support before submitting it for discussion and approval at the political level. This implementation was possible because, without an Education Law, Ministers enjoyed a great deal of discretionary power. In retrospect, this was an extremely important tactical decision, since it allowed for autonomy to begin, leaving the legislative battles for later.

Complementing the new responsibilities for local schools under the autonomy model, the MED Central concentrates its efforts in the following functions (Table 3):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3. Summary of Functions of the MED Central under School Autonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Basic curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Academic coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Technical assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In-service training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Achievement testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Information systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finance and administration</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National education budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fiscal transfers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Auditing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Financial accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy Design and Supervision</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National education goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National education strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National norms and standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Academic supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Research and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Policy analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 Autonomy in Practice

To become autonomous a school must sign an agreement with the MED by which it receives a monthly transfer of funds based on a formula that takes into account the number of students, the location of the school, and the school record for repetition and dropouts. The school has complete control over the use of the funds, as long as it complies with some technical requirements, such as the maximum number of students per class. Most importantly, the school has complete control over the choice of its staff, being authorized to hire and fire teachers, and run the school as if it were a private school.

The nominal size of the fiscal transfer is determined by a transparent formula, and the control of the transfer is determined by the Local School Council (Consejo Directivo Escolar) in which parents, teachers, and students participate. This simple mechanism allows parents to have a voice and control by giving them a voting majority in the council, plus the legal power to hire and

fire school staff, including the school director. It also gives them the power to establish additional parent contributions and the use of the budget to reward well performing teachers\textsuperscript{14}.

The initial autonomy agreement between the MED and the school has a escape clause for the school. Teachers can elect to go back to its original status at the end of the initial one-year agreement without affecting their seniority within the collective agreement between the union and the MED. This clause gives teachers substantial reassurance about their stability within the system, and helps bring support for participation in the autonomy program.

At the beginning of autonomy, there was significant opposition from unions—especially those from the left—who painted school autonomy as a sinister neoliberal scheme aimed at the privatization of public education. However, their opposition to the program did not have much effect on program growth, since the MED negotiated directly with teachers at each school, without having to deal with union leaders during the negotiation process. As a result, union leaders could not mount an effective campaign against autonomy, since they were late in realizing that participation in the program was not a national issue, but a local one. Moreover, from the point of view of teachers, dealing directly with the MED was seen as a better way to increase their salaries and working conditions than through a collective bargaining process whose benefits would be spread thin among all teachers, regardless of their individual performances.

In 1993 the first 20 secondary schools were enrolled in the program. These schools were carefully chosen to maximize success; their principals were innovative and willing to take risks. They were also very effective in working with their teaching staff to get their approval to participate. Some of these principals were genuinely interested in the concept of school autonomy as a key mechanism for improving school efficiency, education quality, parent participation, and the restoration of the social contract with parents and the community\textsuperscript{15}. Due in great part to the positive response of Local School Councils, teachers’ salaries in these 20 autonomous school increased by more than 50% during the first year of operation. As a consequence, many secondary schools decided to become autonomous (Fig. 1).


\textsuperscript{15} According to Ana Luisa Sánchez, the principal of the first secondary school to become autonomous, many of the improvements undertaken under autonomy—better equipped marching bands; better than average refurbishing of school facilities—had more impact on school morale than on academics, but these changes made parents and students proud of their school. Once this threshold is crossed, parents begin to push for increased academic standards.
The number of students covered by autonomy increased dramatically, especially at the secondary level. Most of the larger secondary schools—those with 500 students or more—are autonomous, and 81% of the secondary school students in the country attend autonomous schools (Table 4). By 1995, some primary schools began to request autonomy (Fig. 2).

Although a significant portion of primary schools have been granted autonomy, many others have not—the MED has been reluctant to grant autonomy to schools with inadequate managerial or human resource capacity to handle autonomy. Another factor affecting primary schools is poverty; the level of poverty among younger parents is higher than among parents of secondary school students, and the resulting support for higher teacher salaries tends to be more modest. Many parents with 3 students in primary school—the number of siblings with the highest frequency—complained about the difficulties they had in paying voluntary monthly fees. Still, both the number of autonomous primary schools as well as their rate of participation, are very significant.

16 The Living Standards Measurement Survey of 1993 shows that—on average—there are three school-age children per household. This correspond with the observations of two elementary school principals interviewed in Ciudad Sandino in August, 1998.
Table 4. Student and teacher coverage under the autonomy program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>1998</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Secondary Students</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Primary Students</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Secondary Teachers</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Primary Teachers</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Dirección Financiera, MED

2.4 The Fiscal Transfer

The basic mechanism for financing autonomous schools is a fiscal transfer determined by a formula which includes a basic amount per student, plus compensatory funding tied to student retention to address one basic aspect of school performance. This fiscal transfer is supplemented by local contributions—both in cash and in kind—the size of which is left at the discretion of local schools. This type of financing mechanism is a key area of contention because of the possibility for inequities in the assignment of fiscal transfers to schools with different financial needs, and because of the danger of putting excessive pressure on local contributions to school funding.

The monthly transfer to autonomous schools is calculated as follows:

Step 1: Enrollment = (Initial Enrollment x (1 - Adjusted Dropout Rate))

Step 2: Assignment of Teaching and Administrative Load. The enrollment figure from step 1 is classified within a range that determines the expected number of teachers and administrators that the MED Central will pay in each school. For example, for a secondary school, the enrollment figure in Step 1 is classified according to the scale shown in Table 5 below:

Table 5. Teaching and Administrative Loads by Enrollment Level in Secondary Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum number of students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>1051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Number of students</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>1350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/Teacher load</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected number of students</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected number of teachers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected number of administrators</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MED, Dirección Financiera.

18 The drop out rate is given a leeway of 5% points; for example, if the drop out rate is 8.5%, enrollment is reduced by 3.5%.
Step three: Fiscal Transfer = (Expected No. of Teachers x Average Teacher Salary) + (Expected No. of Administrators x Salary Scale) + Pro-rated Fringe Benefits + 5.94% of total salaries for school materials.

The resulting transfer can result in significant financial gains to a school if enrollment is classified at the lower limit of a given range, since it gives an incentive to some schools at the upper limit of an enrollment range to increase enrollment (or decrease drop out rates) and cross the threshold into a significantly higher transfer. Currently, the MED does not have an efficient mechanism for spot-checking enrollment, but some sort of verification process will have to start soon to keep the system honest.

As for compensating schools located in poor areas, the MED uses the salary scale for rural areas, plus the number of students per class as compensatory mechanisms. Rural salaries are higher than urban ones, and rural areas tend to have low student/teacher ratios, especially in multigrade elementary schools. In cases where rural schools are grouped around a magnet school (in an arrangement called Núcleos Educativos Rurales Autónomos), the group classifies as a large school, which is favored by the transfer formula also. The current transfer formula can be improved substantially. However, its current design is based on simplicity and transparency which are crucial for gaining the understanding and support of teachers and parents. If this initial formula were more complicated, it would most likely be considered in need of transparency by parents and teachers. Also, the formula makes clear that maintenance, and the financing of additional school materials, is a local responsibility. Most capital investment—such as the rehabilitation of elementary schools—is now under the responsibility of the Investment Fund for Social Emergency (FISE), which has also begun to finance school maintenance in rural areas in collaboration with local governments. As a result, funds raised by local schools go to raise teacher salaries and for additional improvements to the school.

2.5 The Role of Fees in School Autonomy

The biggest complaint from teachers at the time of the change of government in 1990 was their low salaries. By 1993, when the economy was stable and hyperinflation had been controlled, basic teacher salaries ranged between US$40 and US$60 per month, with an average take home pay of nearly US$100 per month. Since personal incentives must be taken into account when

---

20 The salary load for teachers is based on an average. The salary load for administrators is based on the individual average salaries per type of administrator, to differentiate—for example—the salary of a secretary from the salary of the school Principal.


22 Take home pay includes other non-salary items like a 13th month pay bonus, and adjustments to salary due to seniority, location subsidies, on service training bonuses, and other benefits. Total expenditures on teachers include the above items plus fringe benefits. See Arcia Gustavo, and Myriam Quispe-Agnoli, 1994.
designing a policy change that could affect the job stability and tenure of teachers, the MED began discussing the salary issue with school directors from the very beginning. From these discussions it became evident that to gain the support of teachers, the MED had to bring something in exchange for the possible loss in job stability: the potential for increased salaries.

With the support of the initial 20 secondary schools, the MED began the autonomy program during the first year, with the understanding that their directors and the MED would work with the Local School Councils to raise teacher salaries. During this key phase the average salary gain for teachers in these schools was of 50%. Salaries were paid in cash, and collected with much better ease than in centralized schools. Funds for the teacher salary supplement came from fees authorized by the Local School Council. The fee authorized by the Local School Council was 10 Córdobas a month per secondary school student—the equivalent of US$1.7 in 1993, and US$0.93 in 1998. However, the council could authorize the collection of other fees from time to time.

The use of fees to supplement teacher salaries became a key item for gaining the support of teachers in subsequent years, since here there was concrete evidence of the benefits from participation in school autonomy. No matter how well intentioned was the policy debate on financial equity and cost efficiency at that moment, as a point of departure it made eminent political sense to increase salaries first, and fix the process of autonomy later.

On the side of parents, fees have received mixed support. Some parents have complained about fees because of their level of poverty, while others complained to the press for alleged abuses from school directors, who manipulate school councils into authorizing high fees. What seems clear, however, is that the level of opposition to fees is directly related to poverty. The MED has been discussing ways to find a proper equilibrium between the obligation of the state to provide free basic education, and the role of fees in creating a sense of ownership and accountability among parents. In general, the public has remained very suspicious about school fees, since they have been denounced by the left as concrete evidence that the government was promoting the privatization of education or abdicating its responsibilities. The public policy debate on school autonomy in Nicaragua still revolves around the issue of fees.

On the positive side, fees were used to improve the salaries of teachers and the physical conditions of schools at a time when public finances did not allow for increases in educational expenditures. On the negative side, parents often complained that the bad economic situation made fees a large burden to the family budget. Also, there were complaints that Local School Councils were being fooled by school directors, or simply coerced into authorizing fee increases that went beyond the parent's ability to pay. To remedy this situation the MED created exemptions to poor parents, and set fee caps, in order to stop abuse. From a purely economic point of view, fees can be a problem if teachers do not correspond with a better quality of

"Recuperación de Costos para la Capacitación de Maestros y la Producción y Distribución de Material Educativo.” Consulting report presented to the BASE Project, Ministry of Education, Managua.

education. Solely raising fees without raising teacher’s productivity is equivalent to a simple upward shift in the cost curve. In time, an increase in the unit cost decreases the demand for education among the poorest members of society. By setting fee caps and responding to complaints, the MED is slowly developing a recipe tailored to Nicaraguan conditions, without missing the direction of the reform itself. It needs to be remembered that school autonomy is still in its developmental stages, and that the idea is to keep constant the principles behind school autonomy, and not the specifics of a given recipe for its implementation. Still, there is a need to analyze fees and their incidence on financial equity, their impact on family expenditures, and their impact on teacher salaries. So far, the MED has very little information about the role and importance of fees in school finances, and the corresponding impact as a policy component of school autonomy.

III. DECENTRALIZATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Although operational and allocative efficiencies were important reasons for decentralizing education in Nicaragua, the most important reason for giving autonomy to public schools was to democratize education —by promoting increased parent participation—and to reduce the introversion of the State in the rights of parents. School autonomy became a de facto vehicle for increasing the education system’s pedagogical and administrative accountability, and for the restoration of the social contract.

In terms of pedagogical accountability, the MED has realized that a decentralized school must seek relevance in its curriculum, and continuously test student achievement in order to monitor results and be able to render accounts to society. Thus, the MED has begun a process of curricular reform, and initiated the design, measurement, and analysis of school performance, all of which will eventually become part of a national system for measuring and reporting school achievement.

In terms of the social contract, the MED has relied on local control over school resources. The evidence on the incidence and impact of the social contract is incipient in many countries, but judging from the results of evaluations of decentralized schools in El Salvador, and in Fe y Alegria schools in Ecuador, the importance of the social contract becomes very visible. After decades


26 Still, the MED needs to think about assisting local schools in explaining test results to parents, in order to foster a proper climate for pedagogical accountability.

of looking at educational inputs, the educational community now recognizes that the participation of parents and the community is very important in determining achievement.

3.1. A First Look at the Results of School Autonomy

Because school autonomy is still in the process of expansion, and prone to substantive modifications, there are very few formal evaluations about its performance. The methodological problems posed by the evaluation of an ongoing program are many:

- Since autonomy began in the best schools, it is impossible to have a rigorous design with treatment and control groups; program evaluation has to find some quasi-experimental design to evaluate schools before and after autonomy to examine the difference;
- The program is still in its developmental stages, which means that over a short period of time there may have been different perceptions school autonomy among teachers and families, which in turn may pose some problems of comparability during qualitative assessments;
- Some impacts of school autonomy may not be observable yet.

Taking these factors into account, the World Bank began a large evaluation of school autonomy that continues to this day. The evaluation has two phases: the first phase deals with issues of local control and local reactions to the new system, and the second phase deals with student achievement.

The first phase of the World Bank evaluation had three objectives: (i) compare the degree of local control on pedagogy, salaries, infrastructure development, between autonomous and centrally run schools; (ii) the participation of local stakeholders on school decisions, and (iii) local perceptions of change. To this end, the evaluation team surveyed 73 autonomous secondary schools, 43 centralized secondary schools, 80 autonomous primary schools, and 46 centralized primary schools. The data contain information given by 400 teachers, 182 members of Local School Councils, and 3,000 students and their parents. The sample design was drawn to reflect the contrast between autonomous and centralized schools of similar socioeconomic characteristics, with the idea of generating a counterfactual argument to autonomy. As a consequence, schools were matched by enrollment and location to draw comparisons. Although imperfect—because of the problem of adjusting for self-selection—this sample design yields some insight about the impact of autonomy on voice and control at the local level.


29 Self-selection itself is a good indicator of who wants voice and control in public education. The sample shows that parents in autonomous schools were economically better off and better educated than parents in centralized schools, but poorer and less educated than parents in private schools (King, et al, 1996. Op. cit., p.27)
The results of the first phase of the evaluation show that:\(^{30}\):

- Interpretations of school autonomy vary widely among teachers, administrators, and parents. Parents and teachers were more receptive to autonomy when their perceptions of the program closely matched its true characteristics and objectives.
- Differing interpretations of autonomy led to differences in implementation that—in general—made the implantation of autonomy more difficult.
- Schools that were already trying to raise education quality and efficiency were much more receptive to autonomy than schools that were weakly engaged in the provision of public education.
- The ability of parents to pay additional fees to increase school revenues was also a good predictor of support and acceptance of autonomy.
- Despite all its imperfections, school fees have been instrumental in making school finances more transparent.

A second study during this first phase addressed some of the above issues in more detail:\(^{31}\):

- School autonomy has had a positive impact on local control in secondary schools over the choice and remuneration of personnel, the supervision and evaluation of teachers, and the preparation and implementation of the school budget.
- School autonomy had a positive impact on local control in primary schools over budget planning and implementation, and the choice and remuneration of personnel.
- Teachers in autonomous schools feel that they have less influence in school affairs, relative to parents and the director.
- Directors in autonomous schools feel that they have gained influence in school affairs, relative to parents and teachers.
- About 50% of respondents in secondary and primary schools think that autonomy has improved academic performance.
- Most respondents reported an improvement in teacher attendance.

The results show the tentative nature of the program, since there is no strong evidence yet on an improvement in the effective social contract between parents and teachers (Table 6). On the other hand, the perception by teachers that parents now have more voice, and a great deal of control over their salary and performance sets the stage for an institutional social contract between parents and teachers, which had been lost with centralization.


Table 6. Perceived Influence of Autonomy in Secondary Schools (% of respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Influence</th>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>School Council Members</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>57.78</td>
<td>66.12</td>
<td>57.02</td>
<td>49.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worsened</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No effect</td>
<td>42.22</td>
<td>29.68</td>
<td>39.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Attendance</td>
<td>Improved</td>
<td>71.59</td>
<td>71.76</td>
<td>74.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worsened</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No effect</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>25.04</td>
<td>23.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Participation</td>
<td>Improved</td>
<td>66.80</td>
<td>56.53</td>
<td>47.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worsened</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>5.72</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No effect</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>37.75</td>
<td>41.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The information on Table 6 suggests that there is a need to reinforce the informational link between all the stakeholders in the system at the local level. This is clearly a central function at the initial stage—through technical assistance and additional funding. The responses from directors, school council members, and teachers, are fairly similar. However, their response is very different from the response of parents, where the perception of improved conditions and no effect from autonomy is less pronounced than in the other groups.

The second phase of the World Bank evaluation is in its initial stages. However, preliminary results on student achievement are encouraging:

- There is a difference between autonomous schools with only nominal participation in the autonomy program, and autonomous schools in which parents and teachers took control over school decisions.
- There is a direct and significant link between local control and school efficiency. In those secondary schools where parents and teachers had effective control over school decisions, student retention was significantly higher than in those schools where autonomy was just on paper.
- Schools in which parents and teachers had control over school decisions, academic achievement was significantly higher in math and language test scores for primary schoolers, than in schools with less local control over school decisions.
- Language test scores for autonomous secondary schools with more local control were higher than in autonomous schools with less local control.
- Local control over hiring and firing decisions, evaluation, training, and relations with the teacher's union, had more impact over academic achievement than decisions over pedagogical variables, such as class size, curricular adaptations, textbooks, and school hours.

---

Math and language test scores are significantly higher in secondary schools where teachers feel more influential over school decisions.

As an example of the academic impact of autonomy, the World Bank report shows that an increase of 1.38 years in the formal training of primary school teachers was associated with a 4.52% increase in the test mathematics test score of his/her students. On the other hand, an increase of 14 students in the size of a given class, would result in a reduction of 4.79% in the mathematics test score.

A different type of evaluation was conducted under the sponsorship of the InterAmerican Development Bank. The objective of this evaluation was to determine the equity and efficiency impacts of autonomy, the impact of autonomy on school governance, and an analysis of the process leading to the creation of the autonomy program. As such, this evaluation deals more with the political economy of school autonomy—an area considered crucial for the decentralization of public education in other countries. This evaluation was based on extensive interviews with 31 school principals, 23 parents, and 49 teachers in urban and rural areas in the three largest departments in the country.

The main results of the study suggest that:

- The implementation of school autonomy before enacting an Education Law was a very effective mechanism for moving forward a significant reform, since it compels the legislature the approve a reform already functioning.
- From a point of view of legislative approval, the implementation of school autonomy through individual agreements between each school and the MED has allowed for the early elimination of any fatal flaws in the design of a national program, thus improving the probability of legislative approval.
- The self-selection of schools at the initiation of the program is good for insuring initial success; there is no sense in trying to pilot reform among the worst schools—as many innovative development programs tend to do.
- The entire framework for the size and frequency of school fees need significant improvement, since field interviews reflect an ongoing preoccupation with the financial impact of fees on poor parents, and the potential for abuse.
- Improvements are urgently needed in the technical capacity of MED delegates at the department and municipal levels in school management and communication.

The overall message of this evaluation is that there is a need to reinforce the central role in school autonomy. The delegation of powers to the local level needs to be complemented by a well defined role for the Central MED within the tenets of the theoretical framework of a decentralized system. Currently, the Central MED seems to have little understanding of its role within a decentralized system. As a result, there is a strong risk that decentralization remains limited to a fiscal transfer to schools, and an uncertain support from the Ministry of Finance, unless the Central MED reinforces its regulatory and supervisory role.

---

The overall message from the World Bank evaluation is that school autonomy has improved school governance, but has not yet resulted in a new social contract. The evaluations from both banks suggest the need to:

- Monitor and evaluate school efficiency. If there are efficiency gains, and if these gains are mostly captured by local schools, the autonomy program will be sustainable.
- Maintain the improvement of learning as the main goal of education reform, while focusing on parent participation as the base for accountability.
- Use accountability—through improved quality of information among parents and stakeholders—as the engine for the sustainability of reform.

So far, the evidence on increased cost efficiency is mostly anecdotal, and mixed with the savings associated with managerial efficiency. The best example is the monetary impact of days lost due to the use of centralized payrolls. In Nicaragua, where the banking network is still narrow, autonomous schools teachers are paid in cash by the school director, a practice which yields a net saving of 9 teaching days per teacher per year. Under the principle of subsidiarity, responsibilities delegated by the central government were given to the lowest level of government able to do the delegated functions more efficiently. Another piece of evidence on managerial and operational efficiency comes from a quick comparison among two secondary schools in Managua: Modesto Armijo (autonomous), and Maestro Gabriel (centralized). In 1997 the autonomous school had 3,500 students and 89 teachers, while the centralized school had 3,600 students and 149 teachers.

IV. THE FUTURE OF SCHOOL AUTONOMY: REMAINING CHALLENGES

School autonomy shows significant promise as a good instrument for reinvigorating the educational system in more ways than the traditional pedagogical fixes inherent to most educational reform projects. True, it is still imperfect and, as innovations go, in need of further refinement. However, there is a growing sense of recognition among decision makers that the basic problems of education quality are more related to parent participation, the personal incentives given to teachers, and an institutional framework that allows for the development of innovation in the use of limited human and monetary resources. Below is a short list of areas that the current model of school autonomy needs to develop further. This short list is not exhaustive, of course, but highly selective in terms of remaining challenges for education reform within the context of Nicaragua.

4.1 Governing from Below: Local control and the restoration of the social contract

---

School autonomy in Nicaragua started with the premise that parents—and not the State—have the inalienable right to determine the education of their children. The role of the State should be to help parents fulfill their expectations within the cultural and financial constraints of society. Whenever parents lack the fundamental level of education to act in the best interest of their children, the State should mainly play the role of advocate; it cannot undermine democracy—the base of its foundation—and become the de facto parent. The experience of the Sandinista education system, where more than 50% of the content of language, social sciences, and history textbooks was ideological\(^3\), clearly shows the dangers of taking that right away from parents.

With all its imperfections, school autonomy is a mechanism for restoring the right of parents by giving them the legal and financial means with which to exercise some degree of choice. At the very least, it allows for the use of voice—through the Local School Council—and direct control over the budget, to make changes that will benefit their children. The criticism of parents on the size of “voluntary” fees approved by the school council is a clear example where their voice has had an effect on MED policy at the central and local levels. In 1996 the MED sanctioned—and in some cases dismissed—26 school principal who coerced the school council into approving fees above levels that were tolerable to families. Since then, the MED has spent considerable effort in educating parents on the role of fees, and in working with directors to reduce abuse. Now these efforts need to be reinforced by an evaluation of the MED on the incidence of fees, and their impact on equity and enrollment, in order to help schools device a better fee structure. Similarly, the current MED efforts in training Parents Associations and Local School Councils in school management, should continue, so parents themselves can become better consumers of public education.

4.2 Performance Incentives: Linking teacher rewards to teacher performance

Linking rewards with performance is always difficult, but it is also very effective. One always needs to remember that the cost of not linking rewards with performance is indifference and low morale. The key issue is how to reward good teachers within the context of school autonomy. The empirical evidence from the United States—which shows a weak response to merit pay policies\(^6\)—does not necessarily apply to Nicaragua because one could argue that performance incentives for teacher salaries in the United States are tied to a very small percentage of the base salary. As a result, any variation in performance would have only a tiny effect on salary incentives, or no effect at all.


The empirical evidence in Nicaragua consistently shows the desire of good teachers to have larger salaries in exchange for some sort of measure of performance. The key here is to be bold and rely on the Local School Council to determine the type and size of the bonus to be distributed at the end of each school year, and how to allocate the bonus among teachers. The idea is that school councils should guard against linking permanent rewards (such as salary level) to performance, but rely instead on cash or in-kind bonuses that are used to specifically recognize the work of good teachers, and openly express the appreciation of the community. These activities are part and parcel of the social contract. The participation of the Local School Council is crucial because history shows that ministries of education and teacher's unions have been incapable of designing links between rewards and performance.

4.3 Reinforcing Accountability: Achievement testing and parent information

Achievements tests tend to provoke adverse reactions from educators because they elicit a feeling of misguided accountability, and the sense that test results have a big potential for abuse. In addition, there are concerns that teachers will be prone to teach to the test, or allow for testing irregularities in order to show a good student performance. These concerns should dissipate if what counts is year-to-year progress, instead of absolute rankings. As in the case of many evaluation tools, standardized tests and test scores can be abused. However, the potential distortions from abuse pale in comparison with the distortions brought by the lack of accountability in a system that does not use tests at all, since test abuse is likely to be sporadic, while the negative effects of an unaccountable system are felt system wide.

Achievement tests must be set within a MED Central policy of parent information; this is a centralized duty because it has a high content of national public good. A parent information system will allow parents to ask for accounts about the performance of their children relative to the rest of the school, the performance of the school relative to other schools of similar characteristics, and the performance of the system against itself. The remaining challenge in this area is to use achievement testing to reward good schools and good teachers, and to inform parents about the learning achievements of their children.

4.4 Reinforcing Equity: Optimizing fiscal transfers

The funding formula used by the MED is simple and transparent; it also shows that in order to enforce equity or reward education quality, it must be developed further. The experience with the design of fiscal transfers in Latin America still show a learning process at work; countries like Colombia, are still grappling with the design of a formula that complies with the financial

---

obligations of the central government, and that it addresses equity and quality in the simplest possible manner\textsuperscript{40}.

Although there is a poverty map in Nicaragua, which will be updated with new data from the Living Standards Measurement Survey of 1998, the current formula addresses financial equity through the salary differential paid to rural teachers; through the slight preferential treatment in the application of the current formula to rural magnet schools and their associated schools within each nucleus (Núcleo Educativos Rurales Autónomos), and through smaller student-teacher ratios. However, this approach only promotes some degree of financial equity. To remaining challenge is to \textit{use the fiscal transfer as a mechanism for promoting both coverage and education quality}. The current formula rewards coverage and student retention. In the long run, this approach encourages grade and enrollment inflation, since enrollment determines the size of the fiscal transfer. On the other hand, if the formula only rewards school achievement, there would be a perverse incentive for weeding out poor students. One way of achieving coverage and quality is to formulate the fiscal transfer on the basis of net enrollment ratios and on the rate of growth in school achievement\textsuperscript{41}. However, there may be other ways to come up with funding formulas that encourage schools to seek students, as well as providing them with good quality education. What is clear from the above discussion is the need to use achievement testing as a tool for school incentives through the fiscal transfer formula in order to link rewards and incentives.

\section*{4.5 Is More Learning Enough?}

An important reminder for the MED is to always go back to the fundamental issue of learning. Ministries of Education are notorious for emphasizing inputs and for trying to avoid dealing with the issue of learning as the final outcome of the education process. This avoidance of reality has to stop, and that is a challenge. In the case of school autonomy, there is a need for the MED to revisit from time to time the link between the social contract and learning, to see if learning is improving and why. After all, learning is the final goal of the Ministry of Education. Having said that, it is important to point out the use of the autonomy program as an instrument for reinforcing democratic principles and consolidating popular participation in local governance. Although autonomy is intended as a mechanism for improving education and learning, by virtue of its ability to integrate parents in the education system, it is also good for improving the conditions under which good education can flourish: a participatory democracy.

\textsuperscript{40} For the case of Colombia see Wiesner Durán, Eduardo, 1998. "La asignación de recursos por capacitación y la reforma del sector educativo en Colombia.", and Sarmiento Palacio, Eduardo, 1998. "Financiación equitativa y eficiente del sector educativo." Both of these papers were presented at the Workshop on Education Decentralization and the Allocation of Financial Resources, Ministry of Education, Bogotá, Colombia.

\textsuperscript{41} A simple functional form for a fiscal transfer (FT) of this nature would be: \( FT = a + b \frac{(L_{ij} - L_{ij})}{L_{ij}} + c(TNM) + d(CL_{ij}) \), where \( a, b, c, \) and \( d \) are regression parameters, \( L \) is the average level of achievement for school \( i \) in municipality \( j \) on year \( t \); \( TNM \) is the net enrollment rate, and \( CL \) is the percent of locally collected taxes assigned to local education (or the proportion of the school budget coming from local contributions). For a complete derivation of the use of funding formulas to increase learning equity see Arcia, Gustavo, 1998. "Decentralización financiera y equidad en el sector educativo." \textit{Edu.Co}, Vol. 1, 1998.
REFERENCES


Monge, Patricia, Courtney Harold y Gustavo Arcía, 1996. “Hacia la provisión privada de la educación fiscal: El caso de las escuelas Fe y Alegria en Guayaquil.” Fundación Ecuador, Quito, and Center for International Development, Research Triangle Institute, North Carolina, USA.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Van der Gaag and Winkler</td>
<td><em>Children of the Poor in Latin America and the Caribbean</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Schneidman</td>
<td><em>Targeting At-Risk Youth: Rationales, Approaches to Service Delivery and Monitoring and Evaluation Issues</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Harrell</td>
<td><em>Evaluación de los Programas para Niños y Jóvenes Vulnerables</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Potashnik</td>
<td><em>Computers in the Schools: Chile’s Learning Network</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Barker and Fontes</td>
<td><em>Review and Analysis of International Experience with Programs Targeted on At-Risk Youth</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lewis</td>
<td><em>Measuring Public Hospital Costs: Empirical Evidence from the Dominican Republic</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Edwards and Parandekar</td>
<td><em>Primary Education Efficiency in Honduras: What Remains to be Done?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Winkler</td>
<td><em>Descentralización de la Educación: Participación en el Manejo de las Escuelas al Nivel Local</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Meza</td>
<td><em>Descentralización Educativa, Organización y Manejo de las Escuelas al Nivel Local: EDUCO, el Caso de El Salvador</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Espinola</td>
<td><em>Descentralización Educativa, Organización y Manejo de las Escuelas al Nivel Local: El Caso de Chile</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Guedes, Lobo, Walker and Amaral</td>
<td><em>Gestión Descentralizada de la Educación en el Estado de Minas Gerais, Brasil</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Bedi and Edwards</td>
<td><em>The Impact of School Quality on the Level and Distribution of Earnings: Evidence from Honduras</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Duthilleul</td>
<td><em>Do Parents Matter? The Role of Parental Practices on Fourth Graders' Reading Comprehension Achievement in Montevideo Public Schools</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Villegas-Reimers</td>
<td><em>The Preparation of Teachers in Latin America: Challenges and Trends</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Edwards and Liang</td>
<td><em>Mexico's Preschools: Coverage, Equity and Impact</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Soares</td>
<td><em>The Financing of Education in Brazil: With Special Reference to the North, Northeast and Center-West Regions</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Salmi</td>
<td><em>Equity and Quality in Private Education: The Haitian Paradox</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Waiser</td>
<td><em>Early Childhood Care and Development Programs in Latin America: How much do they cost?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Tulic</td>
<td><em>Algunos Factores del Rendimiento: las Expectativas y el Género</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Delannoy</td>
<td><em>Reformas en Gestión Educativa en los 90s</em> (forthcoming UNESCO publication)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Barro</td>
<td><em>The Prospects for Developing Internationally Comparable Education Finance Statistics for Latin American Countries: A Preliminary Assessment</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>El-Khawas, DePietro-Jurand, Holm-Nielsen</td>
<td><em>Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Recent Progress; Challenges Ahead</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No. 25 Rojas, Esquivel, *Los Sistemas de Medición del Logro Académico en Latinoamérica*

No. 26 Martinic, *Tiempo y Aprendizaje*

No. 27 Crawford, Holm-Nielsen, *Brazilian Higher Education: Characteristic and Challenges*

No. 28 Schwartzman, *Higher Education in Brazil: The Stakeholders*

No. 29 Johnstone, *Institutional Differentiation and the Accommodation of Enrollment Expansion in Brazil*

No. 30 Hauptman, *Accommodating the Growing Demand for Higher Education in Brazil: A Role for the Federal Universities?*

No. 31 El-Khawas, *Developing Internal Support for Quality and Relevance*

No. 32 Thélot, *The Organization of studies in the French University System*

No. 33 Thompson, *Trends in Governance and Management of Higher Education*

No. 34 Wagner, *From Higher to Tertiary Education: Evolving Responses in OECD Countries to Large Volume Participation*

No. 35 Salmi, Alcalá, *Opciones Para Reformar El Financiamiento de la Enseñanza Superior*

No. 36 Piñeros, Rodriguez, *School Inputs in Secondary Education and their Effects on Academic Achievement: A Study in Colombia* (available in Spanish)

No. 37 Meresman, *The Ten Who Go To School: School Health and Nutrition Programming in Latin America and the Caribbean*

No. 38 Vegas, Pritchett, Experton, *Attracting and Retaining Qualified Teachers in Argentina: Impact of the Level and Structure of Compensation*

No. 38S Vegas, Pritchett, Experton, *Cómo atraer y retener docentes calificados en la Argentina: Impacto del nivel y la estructura de la remuneración*

No. 39 Myers, de San Jorge, *Childcare and Early Education Services in Low-Income Communities of Mexico City: Patterns of Use, Availability and Choice*

No. 40 Arcia, Belli, *Rebuilding the Social Contract: School Autonomy in Nicaragua*