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Comparing Working Conditions in Rural Honduran Schools with Low and Average Rates of Teacher Absenteeism

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

COMPARING WORKING CONDITIONS IN RURAL HONDURAN SCHOOLS WITH LOW
AND AVERAGE RATES OF TEACHER ABSENTEEISM

By

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This thesis is dedicated to my loving husband who is my greatest support, always there for me with the right words, at the right moment. It is also dedicated to my unborn child and his/her coming siblings; they have been with me in my thoughts and in my heart motivating me to keep moving forward. Finally, it is dedicated to all the children in the rural areas of Honduras, because they deserve a good education.

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ABSTRACT

One of the reported problems in the Honduran education system is teacher absenteeism. Although precise rates have not been provided, it is generally understood that the absenteeism rates tend to be higher in rural schools because of several working conditions. Previous literatures suggests that working conditions such as multi-grade teaching, scarce resources and teacher pay, among others, make rural schools unattractive for teachers to work there. It also suggests that several reasons such as remote location, a recruitment process that fails to place teachers in their desired workplaces and union involvement, specifically in Honduras, are some of the reasons that teachers have to be absent at schools. This case study compares two schools with low and average rates of absenteeism to compare their working conditions such as multi-grade teaching, parental support, resources, government support and teacher pay in relation to teacher absenteeism. It also analyzes the teacher recruitment process, the location of schools and access to transportation, the union involvement and teachers' attitudes and motivations towards work as possible reasons for teacher absences in schools. The study finds that multi-grade teaching is the greatest challenge principals and teachers have in rural school in relation to teacher absenteeism and that scarce resources are very limiting. In this case, the reasons that explained most of the absenteeism patterns observed were union involvement and teachers' motivation and attitude towards work.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Honduras is a developing country in Central America with 52% of its population living in predominantly rural areas (The World Factbook, 2009). In these areas the lifestyle is quite simple and the activities are mainly agricultural. Access to the rural communities is often difficult due to their location and lack of transportation, and some even lack basic infrastructure such as water, electricity and sewage. Data from the Honduran National Ministry of Education (2002) indicates that 19% of the rural population is illiterate, with many of today's parents having not progressed beyond second grade.

Schools in rural Honduras are scattered among remote communities and children must walk up to 3 hours to attend (Herdoíza-Estévez, 2002). According to Carnoy (2002) and McGinn (1992) the greatest problem associated with rural schooling in Honduras is that of grade repetition which leads eventually to high percentages of children dropping out. These studies have found a clear relationship between school attendance, educational attainment and grade promotion, specifically in the rural areas.

In a study of school attendance and student achievement in rural schools of Honduras, Bedi and Marshall (2002) found that a high percentage of the days students missed school was due to the supply side. By supply side the authors refer to the number of school days in session. Another significant challenge faced by rural schools in Honduras is high rates of teacher absenteeism. Honduras standard for instruction time is 900 hours a year. According to Carnoy (2002), schools operate only 57% of this time due to constant teacher strikes, holidays, weather and bureaucratic demands. Along with Carnoy, the Academy for Educational Development (AED) (2007) reports that the rate of school closure is even worse in rural areas due to teacher

absenteeism and scarcity of classrooms in which to teach all the students who attend. According to the Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS) the teacher absenteeism rate is 14% for the country as a whole, a rate that is equal to Ecuador's and close to Peru's (AED, 2007). With research showing that student attendance is significantly and positively related to grade promotion, we can look to teacher absenteeism and other conditions that affect attendance as a way towards school improvement in rural Honduras.

To better understand teachers absenteeism in rural Honduras, this case study uses interviews and documentary evidence to look closely at the working conditions of teachers in two schools - one with normal rates of teacher absenteeism and another with reportedly low levels. It specifically asks: What are the reasons for the observed differences in teacher absenteeism between the two schools? By comparing working conditions, the study aims to help explain the phenomenon of absenteeism among teachers in rural schools of Honduras.

While findings are not generalizable to the rest of the country's schools, they offer a rich description of education in rural areas of Honduras and possible reasons for teacher absenteeism. I will show that working conditions for teachers in rural areas influence teacher absenteeism, and that teachers' attitude towards work, appear at least in part to determine much of the conditions that surround teachers in their jobs.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Teacher Absenteeism in Developing Countries

Teacher absenteeism is a serious problem for any education system. It has been shown to negatively affect student learning (Chaudhury, Hammer, Kremer, Muralidharan, & Rogers, 2005) and is a waste of resources in many developing nations since teachers are paid regardless of their presence in school. According to Usman, Akhmadi and Suryadarma (2007) the importance of teacher absenteeism has escaped attention in many developing countries because of a lack of data and processing systems. Data exists but numbers reported by different agencies often differ, possibly because data are not regularly or reliably kept by authorities.

While the data is limited, the literature in teacher absenteeism shows that rates in developing countries compared to other nations. For instance Arcia and Gargiulo (2010) compare the averages of days taught in a year between Honduras, Argentina, the United States and Japan; each had 125, 185, 220 and 240 days of instruction respectively. Alcazar et al. (2006) found that in six developing countries (Bangladesh, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Peru and Uganda) the average percentage of teachers absent is 19%.

The reasons behind teacher absenteeism need further exploration. Usman, Akhmadi and Suryadarma (2007) argue that they tend to be country –and school- specific. Citing a number of studies (Globerson & Ben-Yshai, 2002; Rosenblatt and Shirom, 2005; Kremer et al., 2005; Brown & Uehara, 1999) the authors show that the rates for absenteeism among teachers sometimes vary by gender and age among other characteristics. Examining the causes of teacher absenteeism in India, Kremer et al. (2005) made unannounced visits to a national sample of 3,700 schools in 20 states. They looked at the number of teacher absences recorded during the visits and analyzed absenteeism rates, working conditions and type of teacher contract (including

pay scales) using a simple regression model. They found that teacher compensation has little effect on teacher absences in India and that working conditions explain more of the variance.

2.2 Absenteeism Rates in Honduras

Arcia and Gargiulo (2010) recently presented a report for the Inter American Development Bank that analyzes the education labor force in Honduras. The study looks at the Honduran teacher labor market, its regulations and the reasons teachers have to get involved in strikes against the government. According to the authors the average number of days teachers taught in Honduras for the last ten years is of 125. National law establishes that students should have 200 days of instruction a year. They identify the reason for most days missed is teachers' involvement in union activity and, specifically, meetings and strikes. Arcia and Gargiulo detail the conflicts between teacher unions and the government over the past ten years. They conclude that unless a series of changes and recommendations are followed the tension between the teacher unions and the government will continue since the basis of the conflict is the monetary compensation. The compensation schedule established in 1997 through the Honduran Teacher Statute has been widely seen as untenable among government officials because of the high pay scales involved within it. Lack of congruence between the 1997 levels and government's inability to pay those levels is the source of the government union conflict. The authors argue that the statute mandates these unaffordable compensations and also establishes teacher evaluation procedures and expectations for them to comply with. Similarly, in their study of student attendance in Honduras, Bedi and Marshall (2002) recommended that policies regarding teacher pay, holidays and teacher meetings, be revised because they dampen the supply of education for children in rural areas.

Beyond teacher strikes and meetings, there may be other factors that contribute to high rates of absenteeism in Honduras and in rural schools there in particular, but relatively few studies have been conducted on the phenomenon in Honduras.

2.3 Student Attendance, Teacher Absenteeism and Student Outcomes

Research has shown that student attendance is related to schooling outcomes. In rural areas of Honduras and other developing countries, parents still make a decision about whether children should go to school or go to work and generate an income for the family. The result is irregular patterns of student attendance, patterns that lead children to repeat grades, not once, but several times. Eventually many end up dropping out of school. In 1994, McGinn et al. studied factors related to repetition in rural elementary schools in Honduras. Their sample included 40 schools randomly selected from lists of those with the highest and lowest repetition rates. Students were interviewed and given a Spanish test; the research team also interviewed teachers and parents. Their results indicated that students who repeat one grade are more likely to repeat again, and the grade repetition is associated with student achievement, student attendance and teacher expectations.

Bedi and Marshall (1999), as mentioned before, also analyzed the relationship between student attendance and academic achievement in rural areas. With a sample of 33 schools in rural areas of southern Honduras and using multiple regression to measure the impact of school attendance and other factors on student achievement, the authors found that school quality has an effect on both student attendance and achievement. Bedi and Marshall imply under school quality those aspects that may influence parents in their decision to send their children to school; these aspects include infrastructure of the school (physical appearance) and the quality of instruction given by the teachers. The quality of instruction was measured by the teachers' knowledge of the subject captured by the years of education, years of experience, seminars attended and test scores on Spanish and Mathematics exams. They also found that the strongest factor influencing attendance and achievement is teacher quality measured through the four factors above mentioned.

In a follow up study three years later, Bedi and Marshall (2002) took a more representative sample of 586 schools spread across 17 of 18 states in Honduras to look again at the relationship between school attendance and academic achievement. This time they divided school attendance into what they call supply and demand side variables to see the differences; by demand side the

authors meant the children's decisions to attend school and by supply side the school services. Using a multiple regression to measure the impact of these factors on the patterns of school attendance, the authors found that a high percentage of missed days can be attributed to the supply side, the number of days schools were in session.

Overall, the evidence, specifically that in the rural Honduran context, leans towards the importance of school provision and teacher quality for improving student attendance.

2.4 Working Conditions in Rural Schools

Studies relate the rates of teacher absenteeism to the working conditions teachers have in schools (Alcazar et al. 2006; Kremer et al. 2005; Usman, Akhmadi & Suryadarma, 2007). They have found that better working conditions lead to lower teacher absenteeism in schools. These working conditions include the schools' infrastructure, location of the schools (how remote they are), teaching conditions and use of supplies and materials among others. To discuss working conditions in rural Honduras, I have divided the sections under multi-grade teaching, parental support, resources, government support, teacher pay, recruitment process, location and transportation, union involvement and teachers' attitude towards work that can also be understood as teacher motivation.

2.4.1 Multi-grade teaching

“Multi-grade teaching refers to the teaching of students of different ages, grades and abilities in the same group” (Angela Little, 1995, p. 11). Multi-grade schools are fairly common in developing and industrialized countries alike. Little (1995) states that any school that has more grades than teachers must organize their learning systems along the lines of multi-grade teaching. This has curricular implications as well as implications for institutions that prepare teachers. According to Little, there is unanimity among experts in the academy and non-governmental organizations (e.g., UNESCO) that in order for children to learn in a multi-grade school, teachers have to be organized, resourced and properly trained. The author states that teachers must also have positive attitudes towards multi-grade teaching in order for it to work. Most of the time,

however, teachers in multi-grade schools tend to be the ones with less resources, less preparation (Little, 1995) and less motivation (Benveniste & McEwan, 2000). Benveniste and McEwan (2000) state that it is challenging for teachers to teach in multi-grade settings since it requires teaching children of different ages and levels in one same classroom. They continue show that teachers in multi-grade schools have lower budgets and salaries in addition to inadequate materials. As a consequence, teachers' motivation is reduced and resistance to multi-grade training and instruction increases.

2.4.2 Parental support

Parents in rural areas have a set of characteristics that condition the kind of support they are able to give their children. Most relevant are their low levels of literacy and their scarce financial and material resources. According to Claudia Fonseca (1982), one of the ways in which parents have an opportunity to become involved in their children's education is helping with homework. The study she did in a rural area of Brazil showed that the parents' illiteracy prevented them from helping their children with homework. She also found that buying school supplies such as uniforms and notebooks placed a significant burden on these parents, and noted apathy from parents whenever schools ask for materials or contributions that they cannot afford.

Another way in which parents actively participate in their children's education is in decisions about whether to send them to school or not (Bedi & Marshall, 2002). Given that the economic activity in the rural areas of Honduras is mainly agricultural, children may be needed to work the fields and their attendance at school has a high opportunity cost. Therefore parents' decision about whether to send their kids to school or have them stay home to help increase income is highly influenced by the teacher and school quality (Bedi and Marshall, 1999; 2002).

2.4.3 Resources

Many teachers in developing countries cite lack of resources, such as adequate facilities, textbooks, and teaching materials, as a primary obstacle to effective teaching (Vegas, 2007). Through his study in different developing countries of Africa, Postlethwaite (1998) shows that rural schools tend to lack useable chalkboards, bookshelves and library corners in which students

could read. Classrooms also lacked a teachers' desk and chair, and children had to sit on the floor in several sites, often lacking proper space to write.

Postlethwaite (1998) also compared the conditions for rural schools to those in urban schools of the same countries. Some conditions, mostly infrastructural, such as space per pupil, were found to be the same for both rural and urban settings. Other conditions like lighting and ventilation were better in rural schools. Finally, conditions such as electricity and use of toilets were better in urban sites than in rural ones. These conditions challenge teachers to find solutions and make their jobs even more complicated.

2.4.4 Government support

Education is often financed and administrated by the government. It is the government who provides for the funding and who establishes the policies for education. Regularly the division designated by the government to administrate education is also in charge of evaluating the system and plan the reforms in response to the needs identified. Usman, Akhmadi and Suryadarma (2007) looked at the patterns of absenteeism in public schools of Indonesia. They indicate that in order to improve schools and address the absenteeism problem, it is necessary that the government restructures their education policy. New policies would need to include increasing teachers' salary and offering financial incentives for teachers who are willing to go and teach in rural schools. The authors state that the government also has an important role in establishing and executing sanctions for teachers who do not comply with what is expected. According to their study, it would be necessary to implement heavy sanctions more often or to increase the quality and quantity of supervision. Finally the authors indicate that it is fundamental to provide teachers with favorable working conditions and maintain the quality of school facilities.

Developing countries' governments still lack the right systems and mechanisms to provide all that they must provide for the rural schools. Their actions and supervisory presence in public education tends to be more evident in urban than in rural schools (Usman, Akhmadi and Suryadarma, 2007).

2.4.5 Teacher pay

The study done on teacher absenteeism in India by Kremer et al. (2005) showed that teacher compensation has little effect on teacher absences. They found that it is working conditions which have more of a significant effect on explaining the variance. As stated above, they conclude that teacher hiring policies should be revised and reconsidered in order to address directly the teacher absenteeism problem. Part of the recommendations was that policies regarding the recruitment and working conditions of teachers in rural areas must be revised in order to find some solutions for this problem. Patrick McEwan (1999) agrees with Kremer et al. (2005). He does an economic analysis of the factors conveying a teacher's decision to work on a rural or urban area and finds that teachers respond more to non monetary incentives than to monetary ones. Agreeing also with Ankrah-Dove (1982), McEwan states that there is a significant gap between policy and research in developing countries, and that as these policies are revised, the embedded assumptions to the incentives must be reconsidered in order to yield the desired effects.

Monetary incentive policies for teachers to work in rural areas do exist, however it has been noticed that they must be accompanied by the improvement of working conditions and other factors in order to attract teachers to work in rural schools. In addition to this, Bedi and Marshall (1999) also refer to teacher pay policies not only recommending to put the right incentives in place but also revising the paying mechanisms since teachers in the most remote communities have to leave the place during working hours in order to pick up and cash their checks. These policies then affect directly the absenteeism issue since teachers must be absent no less than one day to be able to get their pay.

2.5 Reasons for Teacher Absenteeism

Alcázar et al. (2006), who studied teacher absenteeism in Peru and in other developing countries, found that factors related to teacher absences include the poverty and remoteness of the community, teacher demographic characteristics and financial incentives including salary and

type of contract. It also included monitoring from the authorities and from the parents, working conditions and community ties. Ankrah-Dove (1982) suggests that the teacher recruitment process for the rural schools explains much of the quality of teachers assigned to the schools and their performance in their jobs. Arcia and Gargiulo (2010) argue that teachers' involvement in union meetings and strikes is the reason for most absences in Honduras. Finally, Usman, Akhmadi and Suryadarma (2007) make reference to motivation theories that may explain teachers' attitude towards work and the decisions they make on attending schools. Four of the possible reasons for high rates of absenteeism among workers that literature indicates will be described in the following section: faulty recruitment that results in mismatches between employees and places of work; poor access to transportation; involvement of teachers in their unions' activity; and teachers' motivation to work.

2.5.1 Recruitment process

Teacher recruitment and retention for the improvement of the teacher quality is an issue currently debated in the education field. Until now, in general, it has been problematic to recruit high quality teachers, and even more to retain them in the field. It is conflictive for urban schools and even more for rural settings. Linda Ankrah-Dove (1982) presents an analysis of the problems in the recruitment of teachers for rural schools in less developed countries. Ankrah-Dove (1982) along the same lines of Postlethwaite (1998) describes rural schools as located in remote areas, with buildings that often times need to be repaired and that lack basic infrastructure like water and electricity. Because of this, keeping the places under hygienic conditions is difficult; it attracts mosquitoes and flies that tend to spread diseases as well. The author follows to describe also that the children attending these schools often times present bad health and bad nutrition habits. All these conditions together make the rural schools unattractive for teachers to work there making it a crucial problem of recruitment and retention of teachers in these areas. The author also hypothesizes the possible factors that teachers consider prior to taking a determined teaching position. She states that teachers consider personal and family factors, as well as social, economic and professional factors. This being the case, she argues that the rural schools have a high rate of teacher turnover and low quality teachers. Ankrah-Dove (1982) concludes that strategies to recruit and retain high quality teachers in rural areas must be

developed and that teamwork, field-based experience and community involvement are important in order to achieve the objective. In addition to this, she suggests that the recruitment and hiring policies may be revised since often times they lead to place the most inexperienced and unprepared teachers in these positions.

2.5.2 Location and transportation

Rural schools are normally located in the most remote areas. Rural schools that are quite accessible also exist, but that is not always the case. According to Vegas (2007) location also affects teacher supply and their regular attendance. Alcázar et al. (2006) also found that the remoteness of the schools in Peru was one of the reasons for teacher absenteeism.

In most developing countries working conditions tend to be better in urban schools and teachers prefer to work there. One of the reasons they think in this way is the location and accessibility of the school. Schools in urban areas count on the facility of paved roads and public transportation that normally works in most if not all sectors in a city (Vegas, 2007). In the case of rural schools, there are some that demand not only driving for a longer time, either public transportation or personal vehicles, but also walking long distances that are not only exhausting but unsafe as well.

2.5.3 Union involvement

Union involvement in developing countries is a growing concern for education authorities. It regularly implies participating in meetings, rallies and strikes that demand from teachers to leave their work places in order to attend them. According to Arcia and Gargiulo (2010), their study done in Honduras indicated that these participations are motivated most of the time by monetary claims of unpaid salaries or demands for unaffordable raises. The authors explain that there are countries, like Honduras for instance, that make it mandatory to belong to a union in order to be able to exercise the teaching career. When this is the case the power of recruitment that union leaders have grows and the supply of education is threatened more and more every day since the monetary demands will not cease until the problem is not solved from its roots.

Arcia and Gargiulo also point at the fact that the education laws not only establish monetary incentives, but evaluation and supervisions as well, and that those are ignored by the teachers who constantly look for conflict with the government arguing to defend their rights contained in the same law that establishes those disregarded regulations. They finally conclude that policies regarding the constitution and functioning of teacher unions need to be revised by the government in order to improve this recurrent problem.

2.5.4 Teachers' attitude towards work

One last issue to consider is the attitude that teachers have towards work. Some argue that teacher attitudes influence absenteeism, while others argue it does not. Usman, Akhmadi and Suryadarma (2007) refer to theories that relate attitudes towards work to worker absence. One of the examples they provide is Steers and Hodes' (1978) role of personal characteristics. The role of personal characteristics theory states that the demographic variables of an individual indirectly affect absenteeism through the mediating effects of the self constructed concepts of job satisfaction, motivation, and the ability to attend work. The authors also cite Rosenblatt and Shirom (2005) who applied this theory to teachers and found that older teachers and more educated teachers have significantly lower rates of absence. They refer to sociological theories too stating that they take into account the role of culture and social norms that influence the individual's behavior. Lastly they mention the economists who explain individual behavior in terms of incentives. All together the authors conclude that personal, social and economic factors convey in the resulting attitude that teachers have towards work and that those levels of motivation highly influence the absences teachers tend to have.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Context Description

The education system in Honduras is centralized. It is established in the Honduran Education Act (1966) in Title V, articles 52-58, that education is a responsibility of the executive branch through the Ministry of Education. The next immediate unit of government within the education ministry is the unit of Integral Planning for Education under whose jurisdiction are nine intermediate units that take care of different areas, including the Elementary Education Unit, the High School Education Unit, the School Construction Unit, etc. The Ministry has regional offices called departmental directorates geographically located in each of the country's 18 states. These departmental directorates have separate offices in each school district from which they govern a number of schools. The school districts' offices are the closest authorities to schools. Schools are located throughout the country with no less than 3 kilometers between them. According to the official in the Info-technology Office of the Ministry (personal communication, August 17, 2010), there are 19,190 schools in Honduras with 3,926 being located in urban areas and 15,264 in rural settings.

Urban schools are located in the 298 municipalities that exist in Honduras. Rural schools are located in scattered villages throughout the country. According to The World Factbook (2009) 48% of the population in Honduras resides in urban centers; the other 52% lives in rural areas. The schools in rural areas are multi-grade schools with one or two classrooms and one or two teachers. Principals at these schools perform as teachers and principals at the same time. Enrollment is low in these schools since they are located in small villages, and students generally receive their lessons in one classroom regardless of the grade they are in.

The recruitment process for teachers is the same, regardless of whether they will teach in urban or rural schools. Furthermore, according to Article 7 of the Honduran Teacher Statute (1997) all public school teachers must meet the same requirements no matter where they teach. The requirements to exercise the teaching career in a public school, according to the law (1997), include being a Honduran citizen with no criminal records, presenting personal documentation, subscribing to a teacher union and having a teaching degree (or enrolled to get one) on basic education for teachers exercising in elementary school and a degree on high school education for teachers exercising in high schools. The teachers who work in elementary schools can obtain their degrees during their last three years of high school in the institutions called normal schools (escuelas normales); they may also acquire a bachelor's in elementary education in either one of the two public universities that operate in Honduras. For teachers working in high schools, they must have a bachelor's degree in high school education, also coursed in any of the two public universities. They may specialize in any of the areas taught in high school such as mathematics, biology, physics, etc.

Private universities do not offer any education career because, according to the Honduran Education Act (1966), education is to be provided by the state only (except for the private schools); as a consequence, although private universities have attempted to offer the career of Education, only the two public institutions are allowed to form professionals in education. Those two public universities are the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán, which is specialized in education and pedagogy only, and the official national university called Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras.

Article 29 of the Honduran Teacher Statute (1997), explains the process for filling vacant positions. The article states that the order of priority to fill teacher vacancies is 1. teachers requesting transfers; 2. teachers who have been exonerated from contest because of being in the system at least 6 months; and 3. teachers who go through the contest. The teachers who request a transfer are those who are already in the system working in one school, urban or rural, and wish to change their place of work and teach at another school. When considering transfers, the law establishes that teachers requesting transfers from rural areas to urban settings have priority over those willing to move within an urban location. The teachers exonerated from contest are those

who entered the system by temporarily covering someone else's position (e.g. covering a temporary spot due to health reasons, or others) or who have been hired to teach for determined amounts of time through short term contracts. Teachers who are exonerated from contest do not need to go through the official selection contest in order to occupy a position. Finally, after both transfer and exonerated teachers have been placed, new teachers enter the selection contest. These teachers present their documentation in order to enter the system and will be assigned a permanent teaching position wherever a vacancy becomes available. As explained above, they will be placed in a position after the authorities have gone through the requests for transfer and those from teachers exonerated from contest.

In terms of compensation, the national salary schedule is based on years of experience and degrees obtained and there is no salary supplement for teachers working in rural areas apart from expedited pace by which rural school teachers accrue experience. By law, each year worked by rural school teachers equals a year and a half for purposes of transfer benefits and compensation. The law establishes that teachers receive bonus payments every five years of service in addition to other compensations that accrue with years of service. In this sense teachers in rural areas reach those bonus markers faster than those in urban schools.

The Honduran Education Act (1966) and the Honduran Teachers' Statute (1997) that establish and regulate the procedures and practices described above have been approved after petitions put forth by the Honduran teachers' unions. Teachers' unions in Honduras have existed since 1895. Their original objectives were providing professional support to their members and improving working conditions for teachers. The unions became stronger during the 1950's when several social and labor reforms took place. By 1966, their demands were heard and in part codified in the Honduran Education Act which, among other provisions, established union member status for teachers as a condition of work. It was also during the 1950's and 1960's that the unions started to be identified with political parties. As a result, six different unions were created representing different political interests (Arcia & Gargiulo, 2010).

By 1968, unions were pressuring the government to approve a law that would regulate the teacher salary schedule and that would disassociate the assignment of vacant teaching positions from political influences (Arcia & Gargiulo, 2010). A law was passed followed later by

approval of a statute to regulate the law's implementation. Negotiations around the approval of this statute lasted 15 years. For politicians, there were two competing tensions: First, they worried about the fiscal implications of the measure. Second, they worried about losing a significant number of votes in their favor from teachers and their families if they failed to approve it. By 1997, the current president of the Honduran Congress was a presidential candidate too and resolved to finally approve the Honduran Teachers' Statute.

The Honduran Teachers' Statute (1997) governs the conditions for teacher salaries, a fact that was declared as untenable by government officials at the time of adoption. The statute ties the hourly teacher wage to the minimum wage in the country; this generates the base salary for teachers. It is calculated by multiplying the value of one hour of class by 156 hours of class that teachers are supposed to teach in a month. The value of one hour of class is set in the statute to be 0.71132 of the current average minimum wage (Estatuto del Docente Hondureño, 1997; Arcia & Gargiulo, 2010). According to the statute, the resulting base salary for teachers is also the basis for calculating the yearly raises and all bonuses paid to them. According to the authors, in comparison to other government employees' pay schedules and considering the government's financial limitations, this structure has been considered generous and leading to fiscal problems.

One of the arguments against the Teacher Statute relates to bonus payments. The bonus system is seen by some as an obstacle for the design of an incentive system for teachers since the teachers earn bonus payments according to credentials and years of experience instead of education quality and performance. In addition to the pay schedules, the statute also contains regulations, and ethical codes originally created with the purpose of constantly improving the system; however, these sections have been disregarded by the government authorities and the unions (Arcia & Gargiulo, 2010). Efforts are ongoing to try to link bonus payments to classroom performance. To do so, boards have been established to develop performance rubrics to evaluate teachers. Gridlock characterizes these boards since board composition is largely made up of teachers. Thirteen years after the approval of the statute, these rubrics, contained in the manual for the performance evaluation of teachers, has not been approved yet (Arcia & Gargiulo, 2010).

Teachers have several incentives to belong to a union. It is not only mandated by the law that teachers belong to a union, but unions also offer attractive benefits for teachers. They help

members with loans, health and life insurance plans, discounts for funeral and hospitalization expenses, and access to recreation centers. Unions further advocate for educational policies. According to the PETS (Public Expenditure Tracking Service) survey cited by Arcia and Gargiulo (2010), the main reasons that teachers give for belonging to a union are 1. defense of their monetary interests, 2. their representation in academic issues, and 3. their representation in the formulation of educational policies. Along the same lines, principals pointed to the defense of their monetary interests, mandatory affiliation and medical benefits as their main reasons for joining.

The government and the unions have kept an atmosphere of constant confrontation for the last 30 years mainly due to monetary issues. The government, with all its bureaucratic procedures, sometimes delays teachers' monthly payments. The delays are even more critical when it comes to the payment of the bonuses, yearly raises and financial obligations recognized with the approval statute. Government's position has been constantly stating that there are not enough funds to afford what has been established in the statute (Arcia & Gargiulo, 2010). In response to the government's failure to comply with the established payments, the unions have been able to keep negotiations going all this time in spite of unfavorable public opinion. Under the pressure of strikes, the government tends to attempt to solve the problem by negotiating with the unions and resolving to pay part of what has been promised. Instead of solving the problem, this exacerbates it because the teacher unions always come back to ask for the rest of what has been promised. Following this cycle, the conflict between unions and government never ceases.

According to what was reported by one of the main newspapers in Honduras, *El Heraldo*, the most recent conflict between the government and the teachers' unions took place last August, 2010. It coincided with the time that the data collection for this study took place. On this occasion the conflict was mainly due to money owed by the government to the institution that handles the teachers' pensions, INPREMA (Instituto para la Previsión Magisterial). Other labor unions and interest groups joined the teachers in their fight and the conflict turned violent between protesters and national police officers during two of their rallies. The education authorities reacted by announcing that they were not going to pay the teachers who were absent to school on the days of the strike. In support to the authorities, parents associations made formal

petitions to fire the teachers that do not attend schools. The conflict was finally resolved when both parts were able to reach an agreement on August 30, 2010, after 25 days of cancelled classes (“Honduras: Maestros vuelven a clases tras 46 días”, 2010).

3.2 Methods

To explore possible reasons for differences in the rates of teacher absenteeism I conducted two case studies. By analyzing data from documents and interviews, I compared teachers’ working conditions in a school with low teacher absenteeism and one with typical rates of absenteeism within a single school district in a rural area in Honduras. The schools were located only 3 kilometers apart.

3.3 Sample

I selected a purposive sample of two schools in order to explore factors that condition teacher absenteeism in rural Honduras. On the basis of convenience, I selected a rural school district within driving distance of the nation’s capitol where I was lodging each night. To identify the schools within the district with varying rates of teacher absenteeism, I contacted the Honduran Ministry of Education. The Ministry does not keep school level data on teacher absenteeism, but officials there were able to provide the name of a school in the district that had lower than average rates of teacher absenteeism. I chose a second school within the same district that was not identified by Ministry officials as having low absenteeism levels and that was as close to the first school as possible. Each school was visited three days during the summer of 2010.

Participants included all educators at each school site along with a sample of parents whose children were enrolled there. Both schools had only one principal and one teacher. However, one of the schools had the community’s kindergarten classroom on the same site as the school. The kindergarten had its own teacher who was voluntarily teaching first grade too helping out the principal and the teacher who had to teach the other five grades. The principal at

both sites also had their own classroom. Parents were selected for interviews by the principals at each site. Principals reported selecting parents on the basis of convenience. Having principals select the parents was a necessary condition for access to the sites, but has potential for selection bias. Principals may be more likely to select parents who have favorable opinions with respect to themselves and/or the school.

3.4 Sources of Data

I conducted semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 30 minutes with the principal, the teacher and two parents in each school. Another interview was conducted with an official from the Honduran Education Ministry. Key questions for the principal included: What is it like for you to be a principal at a rural school? Which are the greatest challenges that you encounter as a principal? Teachers were asked, for example: How would you describe your work as a rural school teacher? How does a regular day of school go? Questions for parents included: How would you describe the school your children attend? How is your relationship with the principal and the teacher at the school? Interviews were recorded with participants' permission, translated from Spanish and transcribed. I also collected laws concerning Honduran education as well as news articles corresponding to the dates fieldwork took place, August 16 to August 20, 2010.

Table 1.

Key Documents Analyzed			
Policy Actor	Date	Title	Document Type
Honduran Congress	1966	Honduran Education Act/Ley Orgánica de Educación	Legislation
Honduran Congress	1997	Honduran Teacher Statute/Estatuto del Docente Hondureño	Legislation
Media	August 16-30, 2010	“Teachers call for a general meeting”/“Maestros realizan asamblea general” “Petition to declare and educational emergency”/“Pedirán declarar	News articles

		<p>emergencia educativa”</p> <p>“Protests and roads’ blockade in Honduras ”/“Protestas y tomas de carreteras en Honduras”</p> <p>“Parents ask for absent teachers to be fired”/“Padres piden despido de maestros que no van a clase”</p> <p>“Dispersion of Honduran teachers in rally”/“Dispersan marcha de maestros hondureños”</p> <p>“Honduras: teachers go back to school after 46 days of absence”/“Honduras: Maestros vuelven a clases tras 46 días”</p>	
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3.5 Analysis

Pattern coding of interview transcripts was done to identify the emerging explanations in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Forty-eight descriptive codes were assigned initially to the data for the different topics that the interviewees mentioned such as parents’ concept of education, supplies, mayoral support, etc. I then grouped the codes with common attributes into ten data categories: absenteeism, multi-grade teaching, parental support, resources, government support, teacher pay, recruitment process, union involvement and teachers’ attitude. Finally, those general topics were grouped under the sections described in the findings: absenteeism patterns, working conditions for teachers in schools with low and typical rates of absenteeism and reasons for absenteeism. Since the data came from two different schools in comparison, differences and similarities were identified. The interviewees’ responses were also compared to the parameters given by the law excerpts; at the same time all the data collected in general was contextualized with the events taking place as reported on the news articles.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Findings show that working conditions for teachers in schools with low and typical rates of absenteeism are very similar in some aspects but quite different in others. Principals, teachers and parents describe their schools in very similar ways except for certain aspects such as parental and mayoral support, union involvement and the embedded references to the teachers' attitude towards work. This section presents and compares the interviewees' descriptions with respect to the working conditions and general characteristics of their rural schools.

4.1 Absenteeism Patterns Observed

Both teachers at Rocky Bluff, the school with low rates of teachers absenteeism, were present from 6:30am to 12:30pm (the mandated hours of school are from 7:30am to 12m) the days I visited. They reported working the remainder of the week as well. I visited Green Hills, the school with more typical rates of absenteeism, the same week. Of the three teachers employed, one was present Monday morning, but left at approximately 10:40am. She was absent on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The second was present at the school on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday and was not at school on Tuesday. Whenever the teachers are absent, children are left with no school at all since there are no substitutes that will cover for the absent teacher, unless the other teacher in the school decides to watch for all of the grades together. The principal of the school was present at the school on Monday until 11am, was absent Tuesday, attended until 10am on Wednesday and did not attend Thursday or Friday for health reasons, as she explained on the phone.

The reasons given by the teachers at Green Hills for their absences were both health and union-related. According to local news articles the teacher unions had been on strike for two weeks and strikes were still ongoing the week I visited. The newspapers reported that strikes had been called in response to a financial crisis within the institution that manages teachers' pensions, INPREMA (Instituto de Previsión Magisterial). The principal at Green Hills described the conflict as follows:

The problem right now is that they are trying to portray INPREMA as if it was in bankruptcy, that it has no more economic capability to pay the retired teachers they already have and that they cannot afford to pay the retirement for those that are about to. They say that what they need to do is raise the interest rates of the loans that teachers have.... INPREMA was making loans to banks with very low interest rates, not sure if it was 2% or 5%, for us the interest rates are 12% and 18%, I mean, it's illogic what they are doing, the teachers are the ones paying for the mistakes they have done.

The patterns of teacher absenteeism observed match the information provided by the Ministry given that one school reported working the entire week in spite of the unions' activity and the other showed an irregular pattern of attendance due to union activity and health issues as explained by the teachers.

4.2 Working Conditions in Schools with Low and Average Rates of Absenteeism

Parents and school personnel gave general descriptions of the working conditions in their rural schools. Conditions were described across five dimensions: multi-grade teaching, parental support, resources, governmental support and teacher pay. Each will be discussed in turn below. Multi-grade teaching is a fact of life for educators and students in both schools regardless of rates of teacher absenteeism. Teacher absenteeism might exacerbate the challenges of multi-grade teaching since teachers who typically have to teach three levels have to take on six on days when counterparts are absent. Parental support is given to teachers in both schools. However, teacher absenteeism may condition that support since certain apathy is generated among parents

whenever teachers miss school for unjustified reasons. Resources, in general, appear to be an important issue to deal with in rural schools. Resources are scarce and represent a difficult challenge to overcome in order to teach in a rural school. However, in this study it was not found to be related to teacher absenteeism, although better resources could motivate teachers more and teachers' motivation and attitude did show to be related. With regard to government support all interviewees agreed that other than regular supervisions they received poor support from the government. This could be a condition similar to resources that does not condition teacher absenteeism directly but could help in teacher motivation and attitudes. Finally, teacher pay plays an important role here. The principals and teachers in both of the schools were regularly paid except for one that did not receive the amount she was supposed to receive. Furthermore, monetary issues were the reason for the strike to be taking place which caused most of the absences observed in the school with typical rates of absenteeism. The following are the findings reported in each of the working conditions explored in both schools.

4.2.1 Multi-grade teaching

Rural schools in Honduras are one-teacher or two-teacher schools. Students are all placed in classrooms regardless of their grade and the teacher must use multi-grade teaching techniques to instruct each student according to his/her level of schooling. The principals of both schools described the strategies they have adopted in order to practice multi-grade teaching. According to the Green Hills principal:

For instance if I have first, second and sixth grade I leave the sixth graders unattended because I believe they'll be able to work on their own. ... This is why I would sometimes schedule extra class sessions, like coming on Saturdays because I identify some deficiencies so if I have the time I stay and catch up.

The principal at Rocky Bluff described it this way:

I distribute the grades according to the number of students so that we both have the same amount of students since we both have to teach three grades. This year I have second, fourth and fifth and my co-worker has first, third and sixth.

Five out of the nine interviewees identify multi-grade teaching as a challenge. When asked about the challenges facing rural schools the Ministry official said:

I believe that the one-teacher schools must disappear and turn them into at least two-teacher schools. That is a goal that the Ministry has been struggling with, that the new teaching positions are opened in the rural schools so that the one-teacher schools turn into two-teacher schools when they have at least 50 students or 40.

To the same question, the principal at Green Hills answered:

One of the greatest challenges that I have is being able to handle the grades, keep their attention. . . . I would like to have only one grade so I can teach them all of the subjects well, one after the other one and I feel limited because I can't teach what I have to.

The Rocky Bluff School principal stated “of course in these schools we have many difficulties like teaching three grades at a time. I do all that I can to keep going but there are very tough difficulties.”

Multi-grade teaching was not brought up by the teacher in the Green Hills School, but she has been assigned to teach Kindergarten this year and, according to the parents and the school's principal, occasionally helps with first grade, so multi-grade teaching may not be as difficult for her as it is for the other teachers.

One teacher had a positive view of multi-grade teaching at Rocky Bluff, the teacher said:

You can see that we have to deal with three grades. For the kids it is also positive. Since the three grades are together even if they are classified in different grades they are listening to what the others are learning and they learn too. . . . I take care of first, third and sixth grades, so the third graders are also receiving what I teach in sixth grade. They somehow absorb it too and when they get there [to sixth grade] they already know a little bit of everything. That is something positive.

Finally, the parents at Green Hills School expressed their opinion too:

You see that's the issue that we have been working on: it is impossible for one single teacher to take care of three grades at the same time! The principal has three grades, the other teacher three as well and the kindergarten teacher has two only since she's helping out with first grade.

Given its nature, both principals and the Ministry official agreed that multi-grade teaching is already a challenge and is even a greater one for principals since they have to take care of administrative duties too. The Ministry official stated "they must administrate, direct, relate to the surrounding community and on top of that he/she must teach six grades. In this sense, their work is like a marathon." The Green Hills School principal also said:

Generally, [the teacher] works with her kids and I work with mine. ...Also parents show up and ask me to write a request for them ...Then I have to figure out what assignment I can give the students ... and then see how to write up the request the parents are asking for which is really hard to do with the kids around. If supervisors [from the Ministry] visit the school, I have to take care of that too, I mean, it is really difficult to have the principal job and the teaching one at the same time.

Similarly, the Rocky Bluff principal stated:

As principal I have to be taking care of everything because I have to see that all is going well with the kids, that there are no problems out of the school and solving anything that comes up.

Teacher absenteeism worsens the challenges associated with multi-grade teaching in one- or two-teacher schools. In the two cases analyzed, where there were two and three teachers, respectively, both principals made reference to what happens when teachers miss school. The Green Hills principal stated that "if the other teacher misses school I have to take care of the six grades... having six grades in one classroom is like a madhouse." She also added that the other teacher doesn't miss often. The Rocky Bluff principal stated "I coordinate everything with my co-worker. If she misses school for health reasons then I take care of the kids and vice-versa."

In discussing the challenge teacher absences create, the principals at the two schools differed remarkably in their statements about the support they receive among their co-workers.

The Green Hills principal reported little support from her co-workers, saying first that “my co-workers sometimes won’t cooperate” and then “sometimes [I get support] from the teachers, not always, sometimes they leave me alone.” On the other hand, the Rocky Bluff referred twice to the coordination and support she feels from her co-worker: “yes, you see, with my co-worker we’re only two and we work on everything in a tight coordination.”

According to the participants, teacher absenteeism can also exacerbate a problem that sometimes plagues multi-grade classrooms: violence and bullying. At Green Hills the principal reported:

Right now with the union meetings [the teacher] leaves early and I feel bad that the students show up, so I cover up for her; but generally she never misses school. She has the lower grades and I have the higher ones. The young students want to play and the big ones beat them up, there is where I get problems... But generally she works with her kids and I work with mine.

The parents also refer to this problem stating that “I do not like it when the teacher misses school because the other one leaves them in the classroom with the doors closed and the kids start fighting with each other.”

Both schools reported having one teacher taking care of six grades at a time whenever the other teacher misses school for any reasons. Given the nature of multi-grade teaching, taking care of six grades at a time complicates any kind of instruction the teacher gives to the children. This represents a greater challenge for principals since they have to take care of administrative matters too. The support that principals get from their co-workers did vary; the principal at Green Hills indicated having little or no support and the principal at Rocky Bluff stated that she found plenty of support in her co-worker. One last issue that varied from school to school was the problem of violence and bullying; teacher absenteeism in a multi-grade school caused problems of bullying among students according to the principal at Green Hills. This bullying problem was also reported at Rocky Bluff but it was attributed to other reasons.

4.2.2 Parental support

All of the parents interviewed in both schools appeared to have very positive thoughts about their children going to school and receiving an education. The Green Hills School parents used statements such as: “First of all the most important thing is that my children are educated, and then they’ll have a better future. The kid that doesn’t study stagnates.” They also said: “For me it is very important that we have the opportunity and not to let it go. As parents we have the obligation of making our kids come to school.” The Rocky Bluff School parents also replied “Well I feel satisfied... The teachers dedicate their day to the kids and they give them a good education.”

All of the parents interviewed were quite involved in the school through parent-teacher meetings, activities and celebrations. When asked how often they visited the school they all remarked that they practically lived there. The Green Hills parents stated “I like to be on top of everything, [I come] every day, since I live so close (laughs)”, and also the other mother said “(laughing) I believe that the teachers are bored of seeing us around because I like to be on top of everything.” The parents at Rocky Bluff had similar responses; one of them said “well there are times in which I think I come too much (she laughs).” Along the same lines another parent answered “very often... sometimes I come just to talk with the teacher. I ask about my daughter and since we are good friends now we just end up chatting.”

Parents in both schools meet with teachers very often; both schools’ parents and teachers indicated meeting once or twice a month in addition to constant communication by phone. However, when the parents and teachers were asked about the general topics addressed in the meetings the two schools had remarkably different responses. In the Green Hills School, both of the parents interviewed made several references to teacher absenteeism and school economic issues. They gave statements such as:

Each teacher earns a salary for them to comply with a schedule, I have said it before and I can say it wherever you want. Last time I told her ... ‘teacher, if you miss two months of school I’ll close the school’s door for you, and the other mothers help me locking the school up.’ She knows I told her, because they receive their salary with no deductions at

all. Who is the one losing the opportunity to learn? It is the children because they are the ones who are not going to school.

The parents stated that monetary issues were discussed in all meetings and for most of the time in the meeting. They said that the school is constantly asking for monetary contributions that they cannot afford. They also remarked that they have requested from the principal a statement of what has been done with the money, they described:

She never gives a report; she gets upset if we ask for it. For example last year I told her, ‘Principal, you are expected to give information of what has been given or not’, [she answers] ‘I have nobody to report to, I know what my numbers are and I’ll give them to you when I want and if I don’t want to I just will not.’ That just makes us feel bad and doubt about many things. It leads to thinking about many things.

Some tension between the parents and the principal regarding this topic was observed. When talked to the principal at Green Hills about the sixth graders she also referred to this interviewed parent in the same conflictive terms:

I am under the impression that a lady moved into the community, one of the ones you interviewed, Mrs. Isabella (mother interviewed), she is a person that says things up front strongly, and since she does that it has worked for her sometimes. For instance, right now in sixth grade... they were able to make the donation... but this lady kept arguing and made the rest of the parents argue as well. I am different, I say to myself that I cannot act like they do and I cannot insult like she has done already with me.

The situation at Rocky Bluff seemed to be different. The parents gave only positive statements about the school and the teachers, such as “ever since I have known the teacher she has been excellent and she has been a teacher who puts a lot of effort forward, she has fought for this school and she is an excellent teacher.” The other mother interviewed also said:

Well this school, I must be honest... I really love this school, I do. It is like a mother to me.... For me a school is a mother to a community. Here we learn to read and write. I have 5 children and all of them have come to this school.

The principal and teacher also had positive remarks with respect to the parents, such as “thank God I’ve been in this school for 16 years and I have never had any problem with parents. The teacher at Rocky bluff also said:

Out of the 26 [students] I would say I have like a 90% response. There is always one or other [parent] that does not respond, but they are few. People here in the rural areas are more accessible, they help more.

Parental support was found to be given and plentiful at both sites. All parents showed to be concerned about their children’s education and willing to cooperate in order for the kids to study. However, tensions were perceived at Green Hills that, according to the interviewed parents, were originated from the teacher absences in the school and from the principal’s style of managing the funds. This did not happen at Rocky Bluff; the parents actually praised the teachers constantly. It must be taken into account that the Green Hills principal provided the parents that happened to be on site during my initial visit at the school while the principal at Rocky Bluff had one extra day to choose the parents in her school that would participate in the interview. As mentioned before, this could have caused a selection bias. However, the responses showed that absenteeism may affect the teacher-parent relationships in a negative way conditioning the kind of parental support that teachers may receive in the schools.

4.2.3 Resources

All of the persons interviewed said that resources, such as supplies, the infrastructure of the school and human resources (personnel), were critically scarce in rural schools. All the interviewees also made constant references to the scarce financial resources of the families that live in the area. With regard to supplies, teachers and principals stated that supplies are critically scarce and that they have to figure out how to acquire them all the time. The principal at Green Hills stated:

We have no visuals, no materials, we don’t have the necessary resources. Right now I have one single science book for ten students in sixth grade, who can work like that? I have to write everything for them on the board, explain it to them, make concept maps or

make copies and then the parents complain that I am asking for too much money and other things.

The teacher in the same school said:

I've seen myself forced to get all materials on my own. Every single thing you see here is all material donated by a kindergarten from Tegucigalpa whose teacher is my friend and she has helped me.... I use my salary for this.

The principal at Rocky Bluff indicated "the [teachers] in rural areas do [their work] with more difficulty because sometimes we don't have even paper to write any report." Finally the teacher in the same school stated:

I think challenges are probably the materials. You know they are people with scarce resources, you cannot ask them to bring things because we know they are not going to bring them. That is sometimes a difficulty because we do not have the necessary materials. I believe that is a challenge because we have to accommodate to what we have.

Referring to infrastructural resources, the principal at Green Hills School indicated that serious problems exist with the school's building, she said: "the ceiling is completely deteriorated, the wood in it has termites that have gone on to the students' desks and to the archives.... We have tried to keep an image of the school although being honest, internally there are many things that are already broken." On the other hand, the Rocky Bluff School's principal explained that she began working at the school when it was still a little schoolhouse made with plastic sacks. However, even though the school has its own building now she also indicated infrastructural limitations, for her, space is a major problem of the school building, she stated: "You see, for example in my school the space is not enough. We only have one classroom and the space is little. There is no space for me to have an office as principal to store all that is related to my duties as principal."

While the principal at Green Hills talked about violence problems in relation to the multi-grade teaching, the principal at Rocky Bluff indicated that she has violence problems with her

students because of the constricted space, she said: “We have an issue with kids fighting too much but it’s because of the space, because they don’t have room to spread out.”

Both principals stated having problems with robbery too. The Green Hills School principal stated that the school has no electricity because all of the cable for the connection was stolen, she stated: “We have no electricity; four years ago they stole the cable from us. We have no apparatuses or any electric appliances because even the connections were stolen.” The principal in the Rocky Bluff School had robbery problems as well, however, mostly with supplies and materials, the principal said:

...Another obstacle too is that these schools are constantly being assaulted; they come in and steal our things. Those things discourage us from achieving what we want. For example we have been robbed for three times here. They have stolen little things from us that we have been able to get with a lot of effort for the school.

Lack of personnel as a scarce resource was mentioned by the principal at Green Hills. She referenced the need for a librarian in order to have a library at the school; she stated that “the library has also closed because we don’t have a librarian; we are teachers managing three grades, so it is almost impossible for us to manage having 71 students in elementary without the help of another teacher.”

Finally, seven out of nine interviewees made reference to the families’ scarce financial and material resources. The majority of the families in the area is poor and has little or no capacity to afford any materials for the school. For instance the principal at Rocky Bluff stated “even if the school has made an effort to have what is needed, it is still not enough, and the children are poor so we have to get additional aid.” When asked from whom she received her major support, the teacher at Rocky Bluff said: “to begin with it is always the parents but like I said, they have scarce resources.” The parents in the Green Hills School also expressed how limited their financial resources are and how they are unable to send money and materials to school. One parent clearly explained:

You know that sometimes, it is true, that there are some mothers who can give the money and others who cannot, so there are some of us who don’t understand that aspect. You

know well that there are people here that have to go to wash a load of laundry to be able to earn probably 200 Lempiras. With those 200 Lempiras you have to buy corn, beans, soap and everything, and you probably have three kids... and we have to give 50 Lempiras plus the money they are always asking for; add it up yourself and you'll see how much it is.

Principals and teachers at both schools agreed that the scarcity of financial and material resources seriously constrains teachers' work in rural schools. They all have to look for additional help in order to acquire the supplies and materials they need to teach. Both principals indicated having robbery problems which worsens the scarcity of resources since the few things they have are at risk. Finally, most interviewees made reference to the limited financial and material resources that families in rural areas have that complicates this issue since teachers cannot ask parents for help in sending any kind of material and/or monetary contribution to school. In relation to absenteeism, there was no data from the interviews that related the resources to teacher absences; moreover, the responses highlighted the effort teachers put forward in order to do their jobs under such circumstances.

4.2.4 Government support

Both schools appeared to have governmental support in the form of supervisions done by the Education Ministry but not through economic contributions. Principals and teachers from both schools made references to a lack of support from the central government. The principal at Green Hills explained how the government never helped with the school building but they do practice the regular supervisions, she stated "the school is almost 28 years old and it has never been repaired. They never helped us again. The government assumes that if it looks nice from the outside it's ok", then she added with respect to the supervisions: "they do come and visit when they come and see how we are doing with the kids; also to make the census done by the ministry to see how many teachers are actually working and if they are correctly assigned to this school."

The teacher in the same school makes constant mentions of not receiving any help at all from the government to get materials and supplies for the kindergarten; she states "I have not received one single thing from the government; nothing, nothing, nothing... They have given me

not even a pencil, which explains it all.” Answering the same question, the teacher at Rocky Bluff said that she believes that 60% of the support she has comes from the government.

It may be added that in terms of supplies the government has a program called the Free Enrollment Program. The principal at Rocky Bluff explains it as follows:

The government gives us approximately 100 Lempiras for every student we have; I am not that sure if it is 100 Lempiras but I know that it is proportional to the amount of students we have and that is how we receive that aid from the government. It varies from year to year but the total amount that I generally have is around 9,000 Lempiras. That money is invested in the school.

Later on both principals agree that the money they receive from the program certainly helps but is not enough for all they must cover through the year.

Another form of governmental support that rural schools tend to have comes from the mayor. The Green Hills School reported not having any help from the mayor at all; the principal said:

We have made requests with the mayor, he even went to see how much was needed and everything, but as soon as his political campaign was over he forgot. The school is actually a voting center but they don't care. Last year we tried again and no response at all. This year he said he was going to help and so far we have received nothing.... He makes promises during his campaign, but takes no action.

On the other hand, the parents at Rocky Bluff indicated having help from the mayor because of a close friendship they have. The mother stated as follows:

For instance the bathrooms were built and to tell the truth, I must be honest, my husband gets along with the mayor so whatever they tell me in the meetings we have in school I go then and tell it to my husband. He makes all the connections to get the help needed for the school.

Finally, both principals made references to international aids that help them significantly to be able to carry on with all the needs there schools have. External aids were reported too, as

stated above, by the teacher at Green Hills who received donations of materials from another kindergarten. The principal from this school explained “we were able to change the doors because the DELL Company came, an international aid that we were able to get. We were also able to put bars in the windows because the windows were broken and falling apart, so were the doors.” The principal at Rocky Bluff also stated “We have some Americans that come every year and they help us with materials like pencils, paper and notebooks. For instance right now that we ran out of it they bring paper to us.”

Green Hills and Rocky Bluffs indicated having little support from the government. The principals at both schools reported having regular supervisions and receiving the money allocated to schools through the Free Enrollment Program. Other than those two mechanisms, considered insufficient, the principals agreed that they do not receive any other support from the government. Also, both of the schools indicated having additional aid that came from international organizations or voluntary donations in order to manage to satisfy the needs that the schools have. The difference found between the two schools with respect to government support the assistance received from the mayor. Green Hills indicated having no help at all from the mayor, while Rocky Bluffs reported getting contributions from the mayor, clearly stating that it was due to a friendly relationship between the mayor and one of the parents. Once again, no responses with respect to government support showed any relation to teacher absenteeism. Similar to resources, it may not affect directly teachers’ decisions whether to attend school or not, but it may be indirectly related by affecting their motivation and attitude towards work.

4.2.5 Teacher pay

According to the Honduran laws, there are a couple of incentives that teachers receive in rural areas. The Ministry official explained:

Well, if the teacher works for three years in the rural area five years are recognized instead and they receive the five years of service bonus, which is a raise to their salary; while those in urban areas have to work five full years in order to get it. That is the only compensation, that for every year worked one and a half are recognized and once they reach five years they receive a monetary compensation for years of service. Once they

reach 15 years of service this bonus is paid every three years instead of every five. That means that when a rural school teacher reaches 15 years of experience they receive this bonus every two years and not every three like the rest. The teacher who works in the rural areas rapidly reaches the 30 years of service they need in order to retire. In reality they just work 20 and 30 years are recognized and paid... The other one is that in the moment of deciding upon a transfer request the years of experience of a teacher in a rural school has priority over one with experience in urban schools.

The principals in the schools did not mention these benefits at all, they just mentioned having problems receiving the corresponding salary as principals. The principal in Green Hills School said “For three years I was paid only as a teacher, not as a principal, when I was being both at the same time and the paperwork was all done for my placement here.” She explained how there was an irregularity going on in which she worked for three years as principal and teacher without receiving the fraction corresponding to principal. She continues to say that somebody else was getting that money for her and referring to the person in the office helping her she stated ‘what happened with that money? I was three years working there’, ‘it means somebody was stealing it’, ‘stealing’, that is what he said; it was something that corresponded to me.”

In the case of the principal at Rocky Bluff, she explained how she has worked for 16 years in the school as a principal and has never received the salary corresponding to a principal, just the one as a teacher. She states “I sometimes think that I do the same job as the principals in urban schools and as other principals in rural schools and I do not get paid as a principal, I do not get it.” She continues to explain that she was not able to comply with all the requisites that the Ministry was asking for to recognize her as a principal. However they expect her to respond as a principal although she’s not paid as one.

The principals at both schools reported having problems at some point with their pay. The principal at Rocky Bluffs clearly stated that it was discouraging for her to be performing the best she could as a director and not being recognized for that effort in her salary. The teachers did not mention anything about their compensations in any of the schools. The responses do not indicate any direct relation to teacher absenteeism. This can be a consequence of the

government's failure to deduce the missed days from their salaries to those teachers who are absent. Furthermore, although no responses indicated any direct relationship, the ongoing strike that was taking place was due to monetary issues. The government's inability to pay all the compensations described by the Ministry official, which are established in the Honduran teachers' statute, is the source of the unions-government conflict. This ongoing conflict is what causes the constant strikes that cause most of the teacher absences observed.

4.3 Reasons for Teacher Absenteeism

Having described the conditions in which teachers work in schools with low and average rates of teacher absenteeism this section turns to reasons why teachers are absent from schools. Specifically, it looks for whether there is evidence in the data for three of the factors the literature suggests lead to teacher absences: the recruitment process, location of the school and transportation access, union involvement and teachers' attitude towards work.

4.3.1 Recruitment process

The selection process of teachers in Honduras is the same for urban and rural schools. It is established in the law. The Ministry official explained it as follows:

The process is established in the Honduran teachers' statute. It is established by law in the regulations and sometimes it is also back upped by the Honduran Education Act and its regulations for elementary and high school.... The law establishes in the... Article 29 of the Honduran teachers' statute that vacant positions will be covered by transferring requests, that goes first, it is the priority in the process; ... [transferring requests] are those [teachers] who are already in the education system and have some years of service in rural or urban areas and wish to transfer to a school that represents better conditions for him/her.

As explained before in the methods section, the Honduran law establishes the procedure to follow in order to fill in a vacancy. Three priorities are determined, requests for transfer, teachers exonerated from contest and lastly those teachers who go through the contest. It was mentioned before that the requests for transfer are those teachers who want to change their working location

by requesting a change of school. The following explanation given by the official refers to the teachers exonerated from contest and the teachers who go through the selection contest. As stated above, teachers exonerated from contest are those who have been occupying a position for a short amount of time (at least 6 months) such as those who substitute other teachers or that are hired through temporary contracts. Finally, the teachers going through the selection contest, are those, mostly new ones, who present their paperwork in order to enter the system and occupy a position. Continuing, the official explained:

The article 89 states that after the transferring teachers, the next priority are those exonerated from contest. These are teachers who have been in the education system working for no less than 6 consecutive months, complying with all that is established by the law. Then, those teachers that have internally or temporarily worked in a position are not obliged to go through the contest to occupy a permanent position... Therefore the logic followed by the authorities is to go first with the requests for transfer, then the exonerated from contest, who have been in the system for six consecutive months in that position, and finally they refer to those undergoing the contest which are selected by a board of selection. It can be a departmental board of selection or a district board of selection. The process as always is a general contest, from that contest the candidates are selected after going through the transfer requests and the exonerated from contest.

As a result of this process, said the official, “Generally the newest teachers in the field are the ones assigned to rural areas; it is almost an obligation for new teachers to go to rural areas unless there are irregularities between the board and the authorities.” This happens because few teachers request for a transfer into a rural school, it is often the opposite which takes place and the teachers exonerated from contest few times have exercised their six months or more in a position such as rural school teacher. Therefore, rural school teacher positions tend to be the ones more available that end up being occupied by the new teachers who are just coming into the system and have no years of experience that count in order to get other positions.

All of the principals and teachers interviewed had met the requirements established by law to be working as teachers. In contrast to the Ministry official’s characterization, however,

educators in the two schools were not new teachers; they had an average of years of teaching experience of 13.

The teachers did not discuss the process of their assignment, but the principals shared their stories. The principal of Green Hills School explained:

I had approximately 15 years of experience teaching in rural areas so I had already the experience and years of service. Then I came to this school and the [principal] position was about to be vacant since the teacher occupying it was about to retire. She gave me the tracking number of the retirement process and that is how I ended up in this position.

Although it is not exactly clear how was she assigned to this position it may be assumed that according to the official's description of the process it must have been a transfer. For the principal at Rocky Bluff it was different; she explains:

I was working in a school of this district. I was assigned to a school, there were not enough students and we were three teachers. Since I was the last one to get to that school I secretly went to the Departmental Direction to say that I did not have students... In that time they told me then that they were going to open a school and that could possibly place me there.

It can be noted that irregularities in the system happen several times in the process of assignment. Both principals mentioned ways and processes that were not described by the Ministry official as established by the law.

School personnel responses did not provide any evidence in order to consider the recruitment process a reason for teacher absenteeism. Three of the four persons interviewed indicated in their answers that they actually wanted to work in the schools they were assigned to. Therefore, there was no faulty process that mismatched teachers to an undesired workplace. However, although none of the principals or teachers interviewed were new teachers, the official's explanation of the mandated process to occupy a vacancy may lead to think that in the cases where new teachers are assigned to rural schools the mismatching phenomenon may take place. More so, the new teachers may be willing to accept the assignment in a rural location in order to accrue the years of experience that will give them the benefits derived from them. In the

context of the working conditions described above, that might not be the best motivation for a teacher to work in a rural school and a wrong motivation may affect teachers' decisions to attend or not, in addition to other factors that will be described.

4.3.2 Location and transportation

There was no evidence in the interview data that teacher absenteeism in the sample school was related to the schools' location or access to transportation. When asked about how it is to teach in rural areas, the teacher at Green Hills said "not the distances, that is not a problem since it is quite accessible."

However, principals at both schools did identify the distance they had to travel to school in their previous rural teaching experiences as an obstacle to get to the school. For example the principal in the Green Hills School narrated:

I used to work in a community that was too far away, so I was forced to leave on Mondays like at 4 in the morning to be able to be in the community by 7am. ...I would leave and stay there the entire week; I would take clothes, food, sheets and a portable bed so that I could stay there with my son and my newborn daughter.

The principal at Rocky Bluff also described her previous situation, in reference to location and transportation she said: "before working in this school, I had to walk for an hour and a half on my own to get to the school; it was exhausting."

Even though these particular schools had no problems of location and transportation, it can be appreciated through the principals' previous experiences that there are rural schools in Honduras that have locations which are hard to reach and/or with considerable distances from urban centers. This may not be a problem for the teachers in the sample schools, but it may be a problem for teachers assigned to more remote schools.

4.3.3 Union involvement

As discussed earlier, teachers were embroiled in a labor conflict with the Government regarding the pension system during the week data collection took place. The observed patterns of teachers' attendance to school revealed that the teachers at Green Hills were quite more

involved in their unions' activity than the teachers at Rocky Bluff. However, some of their statements show it too. Both of them were asked if classes were canceled in their schools when there were union meetings in the city. The Green Hills School principal answered "Well... it depends on what it is about." At the same time she also affirmed that it is her responsibility to be in the school and that when the parents ask her to please hold the teachers in school in spite of the conflicts she tells them that she can't force them to stay and that she must let them go if they are willing to. On the other hand, the principal at Rocky Roads answered the following to the same question:

It [cancelling classes] is normally because I have a meeting with the board of principals, or because we have seminars and capacity-builders; we do not cancel classes for any other reason... You see I know that as a teacher I have to go and fight for my rights but I really do not like missing classes, that is just how I am.

The principals' responses and the absenteeism patterns observed provided evidence to believe that union involvement represents a reason for teacher absenteeism. While Rocky Bluffs, the school with reported low levels of teacher absenteeism, indicated canceling classes only for reasons of professional development and actually worked throughout the entire week in spite of the strike that was going on, Green Hills, the school with average absenteeism rates, indicated cancelling classes depending on the reason for the strike. Their patterns of absenteeism were irregular in comparison to Rocky Bluffs who did not cancel classes at all.

4.3.4 Teachers' attitude towards work

One last aspect to analyze is the teachers' attitude towards their work. Several answers of the personnel in the schools and of the parents revealed some attitudes that teachers have towards their work. In some cases it didn't only indicate the teachers' attitude towards work, but they clearly linked it to absenteeism.

The principal at Green Hills showed several attitudes may be appreciated in her responses. First she denoted having great difficulties handling multi-grade and being tired, "having six grades in one classroom is like a madhouse itself", or "I am already considering my retirement." Several times she repeated "it is hard, it is not easy, multi-grade teaching is not

easy.” She also mentioned repeatedly that she was having health problems “I end up the day with a terrible headache and I even have high blood pressure problems” or “if I had been able to visit a better neurologist I would be unable to be working but I am still here.” However, she showed herself as being responsible for her job “they [the teachers] complain to me that why I do not go to the meetings and fight for our rights, that why do I come to the school, and I tell them that my responsibility is different to theirs, I know that in any case I have to be here.” Her statements of responsibility for her job do not correspond to her absences observed during the week; according to her explanations her absences were due to both union meetings and health issues. Having health problems and feeling tired about performing her job, in addition to union strikes that the principal judges as reasonable, may be reasons for her to miss days at school.

In the case of the teacher for Green Hills School what is constantly picked from her responses is that she does a great effort to get the supplies needed for her job in order to do it well, she said, “No, I must say this kindergarten is working because of me, somebody else here would have quit already because it has been very difficult.... So here I am, with what I can, with what I have; I work with whatever I am able to get.... I use my salary for this.” Her motivation to work was clearly stated “Yes, I have had more rural [experience] because I know that these people need me more, always.” However she seemed quite concerned because of the lack of support getting the materials needed, she would repeat many times “I do not ask even for pencils, not even a pencil; they can tell you I do not ask for anything.” Commitment to her job and her students was perceived from this teacher’s responses, in addition to a serious concern for materials. Also, she was the teacher who missed the least amount of days during that week in comparison to the other teacher and the principal.

The principal at the Rocky Bluff made several clear affirmations too. She constantly stated her love for what she does, “I do my work with lots of enthusiasm because I love my job; I love the kids, I love my role as a principal and I love having the communication I have with the parents.” However, along with every statement like this one came one like “the job of a rural school principal has many limitations.” She appeared to be doing her job enthusiastically but concerned with the limitations they have. This principal also stated directly that, personally, she

does not like to miss school at all. Her high motivation to work in her position at that school may be linked to the low absenteeism rates her school reports.

Finally, the teacher at Rocky Bluff showed a positive attitude in her answers. Referring to her job as a teacher in a rural school she said “it is a greater experience, in my opinion. There are difficulties I must say, but I think it is a nicer experience, a greater one.” She was the only one who thought that the multi-grade system was beneficial for the kids. She concluded the interview stating “Well I can only say that I am happy with my job as a teacher in a rural school. I do not envy anything to those working in urban schools, in fact I have had the opportunity to leave but I chose to stay. We are doing our best here and I believe that the children in the rural areas need more support and more attention.” The attitudes perceived in the responses of this teacher remained positive throughout the interview. This high motivation may also be related to the low absenteeism rates that Rocky Bluffs reports.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The findings reported here suggest several conclusions. First, Ministry reports of high teacher absenteeism were evidenced in the study data. The absenteeism patterns observed matched the information provided by the Ministry. In the school identified as having average rates of teacher absenteeism, teachers were absent 70% of the time during the data collection week. Students in that school were thus without instruction 13.5 of the possible 22.5 hours in the week. But, in the school with low absentee rates, teachers were absent 0% of the time.

Among the working conditions studied, multi-grade teaching was found to be most affected by teacher absenteeism. In rural schools multi-grade teaching is the norm, with each teacher responsible for at least three grades. Whenever a teacher is absent the other teacher finds herself forced to take care of six grades at the same time. According to the participants in this study, when this happens, discipline becomes more of a serious issue and instruction is affected. Violence and bullying problems were cited by participants since teacher absenteeism results in older students coming in closer proximity with their younger peers. Principals at both schools reported multi-grade teaching as being more challenging for them since they have to take care of administrative duties at the same time. In relation to teacher absenteeism, multi-grade teaching becomes even more of a burden for principals since the additional teaching they are forced to do in order to cover for the absent teacher takes up their time to take care of administrative responsibilities.

Parental support was evidenced at both schools. According to participant reports, parents in the two schools were involved in parent-teacher meetings and in any school activities in which their help was requested. Participants spoke differently, however, about the nature of parent-

teacher meetings at each school site. Those I spoke to at the school with average levels of teacher absenteeism said that financial issues characterized meetings between teachers and school officials. They reported conflictive teacher-parent relationships due to perceptions of school fund mismanagement and rates of absenteeism whereas participants at the school with low rates of absenteeism said that meetings there mainly concerned academic topics and reflected a friendly teacher-parent relationship.

Participants also reported that resources were a serious limitation in both schools. The two schools indicated having scarce material and financial resources and being unable to ask the parents for contributions since their resources are limited too. In reference to infrastructure, the school with average rates of absenteeism indicated an urgent need to repair most of the school since many parts of it had deteriorated. The school with low levels of absenteeism indicated having limitations of space; the principal stated needing a bigger space so that the kids could spread out more than they can now. This school also had violence and bullying problems due to space limitations, according to the principal.

Government support was given to both of the schools through regular supervisory visits and the Free Enrollment Program. That program allocates money to the school in proportion to the number of students they enroll. Principals at both schools indicated that this amount of money is never enough and that they are forced to look elsewhere to provide for basic needs. Both schools had developed partnerships with international agencies that make donations and provide materials the government does not. The school with average rates of absenteeism reported having no help at all from the mayor while the school with low rates of absenteeism indicated having several contributions coming from the mayor, especially in infrastructure. The parents at this school also indicated that those contributions were possible due to a friendly relationship that a parent from the school had with the mayor.

Teacher pay was not reported as a current problem at the school with average levels of teacher absenteeism, but participants said it was a problem in the past. For example, the principal working there had to wait for three years to receive the raise corresponding to her promotion from teacher to principal. The principal at the school with low rates of absenteeism explained that she was not able to gather all of the requisites she needed to be recognized as a principal

and, therefore, after working 16 years as a principal and expected by the authorities to report as a principal, she has never been paid a principal's wage. None of the teachers at any of the schools discussed their salaries or payment issues.

In relation to absenteeism, there were no data indicating a direct relationship between teacher pay and absenteeism. Two data points suggested an indirect association: First, the strike taking place during data collection was spurred by economic motives around compensation and pensions, and it was that strike which justified most of the absences observed in the school with average levels of absenteeism. Second, at the school with low levels of absenteeism, the principal was discouraged by her corresponding payment problem, although she argued that it did not affect her attendance or performance as a principal.

Having discussed the working conditions teachers have in rural schools and how they relate to teacher absenteeism, the study turned to analyzed the possible reasons behind teacher absenteeism. Reasons considered included the teacher recruitment process, location of schools and access to transportation, teachers' involvement in union activity, and teachers' attitude towards work, (teachers' motivation).

The recruitment process in Honduras is established by the law. The Honduran teachers' statute establishes the procedures to follow and the set priorities there are in order to occupy a vacant position. Those priorities were first serving the requests for transfers, then the teachers exonerated from contest and last the teachers that go through the selection contest. According to the Ministry official interviewed, this process leads to the assignment of mostly new teachers to rural school positions. However, none of the principals or teachers interviewed was new. Indeed, the participants had an average teaching experience of 13 years. Moreover, three of the four educators interviewed indicated that they wanted to stay working in their current school.

Location and transportation were not identified as obstacles by participants in the sample schools. Both schools were located very close to the paved way. Previous experiences shared by the principals at both schools provided some evidence to suggest that absenteeism may be related to school location. They recounted their experiences working in schools located in very remote areas with little to no access to transportation; such cases, according to the participants, required

a great effort on the part of the teachers (e.g. walking several hours, staying in the village during the week and traveling home each weekend, etc.). Though it was not evidenced directly in this study, transportation demands like these may conceivably affect teacher absenteeism.

Findings suggest that union involvement is a reason for teacher absenteeism. Having the ongoing strike at the same time that the data collection took place was very convenient for this study since a recent report (Arcia and Gargiulo, 2010) pointed at union-government conflicts as the main reason for teacher absenteeism in Honduras. The patterns observed in both schools suggest that union activity (meetings, strikes, rallies, etc.) may exacerbate teacher absenteeism since the teachers in the school with average rates of absenteeism missed school in order to participate in union actions, with the exception of one principal's absence purportedly for health reasons. That principal also reported cancelling classes depending on the motives for the unions' meetings and strikes, and that, in general she could not hold her co-workers from attending if they chose to. On the other hand, the teachers at the school with low rates of absenteeism did not miss any day during that week and the principal also stated directly that she does not cancel classes in her school for any reasons other than professional development (meetings with the board of principals, capacity-builders, etc.)

Finally, I analyzed the data for teachers' motivation or attitude towards work. The principal at the school with average levels of teacher absenteeism appeared to be tired and having health problems, although trying to do her best to comply with her responsibilities. The teacher at that school appeared to be very concerned with the limited material resources and appeared responsible and committed to her children. The principal and the teacher were also involved in the union and chose to leave their school to attend union activities the week I visited. The principal and teacher at the school with low levels of absenteeism appeared to be motivated, and their attitudes tended to be positive with respect to both the conditions and challenges of their work. The principal was also concerned with resource limitations but also conveyed enthusiasm and effort despite the fiscal difficulties she faced.

The findings of this study have several implications. First, with respect to rural education, evidence suggests that multi-grade teaching and limited resources are the greatest challenges teachers face. The data indicates that the support received from the government is not enough for

the principals and teachers to satisfy the basic needs of the school. It also indicates that more technical support may be necessary to improve teacher management skills so that teachers can handle multi-grade settings without negatively affecting instruction and, consequently, student outcomes. Results of the study also imply that teacher absenteeism is exacerbated by union-government conflicts over pay and pensions. Low pay may be related to absenteeism since teachers are not incentivized to work, instead they are incentivized to advocate for benefits. Together with Arcia and Gargiulo's (2010) findings, results of this study suggest that the current education laws and statutes be revised. The right incentives need to be in place for teachers to respond, decrease absenteeism and perform better at schools. Teachers need to be paid what they were promised and the government is failing to deliver those promises and to pay the teachers appropriately for their work.

Teacher absenteeism is a serious concern for the Honduran education system; even more, teacher absenteeism related to union activity. This study has several limitations such as small sample size. Results of the study cannot be generalized to all rural schools in Honduras. There are also possible biases coming from the sample selection process. For practical reasons, I chose schools within a driving distance of the nation's capitol. Rural schools with such proximity to an urban center may be different than rural schools that are more remotely located. In absence of much systematic, scholarly attention to rural schools in Honduras, the study provides an opportunity to learn more about teachers' working conditions in these contexts, relationships between teacher absenteeism and those working conditions, and about some of the reasons that may explain teacher absenteeism in the country. Future research might be done on working conditions in rural schools, preferably with larger samples that can test just how widespread these phenomena are. Future work might also track rates of teacher absenteeism in Honduras over time and the reasons associated with it. Randomized control trials might be run to test whether various investments and reforms can increase teacher attendance. Getting to the causes of the teacher absenteeism phenomenon will allow the formulation and implementation of comprehensive policies to address the problem from its origins.

EPILOGUE

Despite efforts to be objective, researchers, like anyone else, are influenced by their lived experiences. It is no different with me. In this brief epilogue, I will discuss my personal background and experiences as well as the ways those experiences may have shaped the research project reported here.

My personal experience in Honduran education comes from being born, raised and professionally formed in Tegucigalpa, the nation's capitol. I attended a private school for my elementary and high school education and obtained a bachelor's degree in Education Administration in the National Pedagogic University (Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán), the public institution specializing in preparing Honduran educators. I decided to work and study at the same time. A year after I graduated from high school I was given the opportunity to teach in the same elementary school that I attended. I worked there for 7 consecutive years at the same time that I was studying my bachelor's. This, in my opinion, provided me with a rich experience of attending a public institution specialized on education and being in the field simultaneously. My experience was on a private school and private and public schools in Honduras are very different; the working experience obtained in each of them is hard to compare due to the circumstances involved in both settings. Public schools have less autonomy than private schools and are more sensitive to the political activity of the country; even though public and private school teachers are all required to be unionized, the teachers in public schools tend to be more involved in union activities. Therefore, public schools cancel more classes than private schools due to strikes and other official events. Among several differences between private and public schools, public schools have different schedules and a standardized curriculum to follow that gives individual teachers less control over their lessons, among many other differences.

The basic requisites established in the law, as explained above, to work as a teacher are: being Honduran, having an education degree (or in progress of getting one), join a union and join the pensions program. In order to start working, I just needed to join a union and the pensions program given that I am a Honduran and I was already enrolled in the university getting my bachelor's degree. I did not know how to choose which union to join, so I decided on the union most private school teachers join. Later on I learned, that most private school teachers join the union I chose because it is the only union that admits teachers in progress of getting their degrees, which were my case and the case of most teachers working in private schools. Like my coworkers, other than paying a fixed amount of money every month, I did not participate in union sponsored activities.

Teachers, especially those who teach in public schools, are not held in high esteem in Honduras. Indeed, I became an educator over the opposition of my family. The existing negative opinion of teachers is largely due to persistent and ongoing problems between teachers unions and government over monetary issues. In general, my perception is that Hondurans think that teachers care only about their own interests since they sacrifice the children's education to attend their long, and in my opinion, sometimes poorly justified, strikes and rallies.

The children in Honduras who attend public schools are more likely to come from homes with limited financial and human resources. Today, there are very few prestigious public schools in Honduras, and parents tend to make their best effort to send their children to any private school that they can afford. This is mainly a result, in my opinion, of the many days of school that public institutions miss in a year. Fewer school days and constant teacher absences are viewed by the public as indicators of poor school quality.

My own personal experiences working as a teacher have shaped my opinion of unions. For right or wrong, I have come to see union claims doing little to improve educational quality in Honduras, something about which I am very passionate. Indeed, I fear that union activity actually works to depress educational quality in my country. The most affected by this situation are the children whose only opportunity to be educated is attending a public school. I believe that teachers must be paid fairly and that incentives should be established for teachers to constantly

improve and perform well. However, I also think that it is necessary to evaluate teachers on their performance and supervised on their attendance.

I approached the field to collect data for this research with a general negative view of unions and teachers who leave for union activities. This may have influenced the way I treated the data and the conclusions I reached, especially in the school with average levels of teacher absenteeism where teachers reported cancelling classes to attend union activities. I made my best effort to leave my bias aside and remain loyal to the interview guides in order to guarantee that the same questions and the same tone were used in both schools with all the participants while collecting the data. However, it was hard to avoid the fact that I sympathized more with the school that had low levels of absenteeism. I must also say that I was impressed by the work done in both schools; regardless of teachers being absent or not, the challenges they all face are more overwhelming than I initially thought. In addition to what was reported, this research helped me get a better insight of the circumstances teachers have in their places of work and the motives that may lead to their actions.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Education Ministry Official

Introduction

1. Presentation and explanation of research project.
2. Explain the nature of the participation in the project and sign the consent form.

Interview

3. Could you describe for me, generally, how is the organizational structure of the education system in Honduras?
4. Do you know approximately how many rural schools and how many urban schools operate in Honduras?
5. Do you think there are any challenges for principals and teachers working in rural schools? If so, which ones do you think they are?
6. Generally, which are the requirements for a person to become a teacher and work in public schools?
7. Which is the process of selection and assignment of teachers to their schools? Does it differ when a teacher or principal is assigned to a rural school?
8. Which ones do you think are the challenges of the Honduran Education Ministry in providing an education to children in the rural areas?

Miembro del Ministerio de Educación

Introducción

1. Presentación y explicación del proyecto.

2. Explicar la naturaleza de su participación y firmar el formato de consentimiento.

Entrevista

3. ¿Podría describir de forma general cual es la estructura organizativa del sistema educativo de Honduras?
4. ¿Sabe aproximadamente cuantas escuelas rurales y cuantas escuelas urbanas operan en Honduras?
5. ¿Cree usted que los directores y maestros de escuelas rurales tienen dificultades particulares? Si es así, ¿cuáles cree que son?
6. En general ¿Cuales son los requisitos para que una persona trabaje como maestro o maestra en una escuela pública?
7. ¿Cuál es el proceso de selección y asignación de maestros y maestras a sus respectivas escuelas? ¿Se diferencia en alguna forma de los maestros y maestras asignados a escuelas rurales?
8. ¿Cuáles cree usted que son los retos que tiene el ministerio de educación de Honduras para proveer una educación a los niños en zonas rurales?

School Principal

Introduction

1. Presentation and explanation of research project.
2. Explain the nature of the participation in the project and sign the consent form.

Interview

3. What is it like for you to be a principal in a rural school?
4. Could you describe for me a regular day of school?
5. How did you become a principal?
6. Which are the greatest challenges that you encounter as a principal?
7. Do you have any support from your teachers, parents or community members?

Director(a) de Escuela Rural

Introducción

1. Presentación y explicación del proyecto de investigación.
2. Explicar la naturaleza de su participación y firmar el formato de consentimiento.

Entrevista

3. ¿Cómo es para usted el trabajo como director de una escuela rural?
4. ¿Me podría describir un día regular de clases?
5. ¿Cómo llego usted a ser director(a)?
6. ¿Cuáles son los desafíos más grandes que enfrenta como director(a)?
7. ¿Tiene usted el apoyo de sus maestros(as), padres de familia y miembros de la comunidad?

School Teacher

Introduction

1. Presentation and explanation of research project.
2. Explain the nature of the participation in the project and sign the consent form.

Interview

3. How would you describe your work as a teacher of a rural school?
4. How does a regular day of school go?
5. What do you like most about being a teacher in a rural school?
6. Which are the challenges that you face to be able to do your job?
7. How would you describe your students?
8. Do you keep any kind of communication with parents?
9. Who are the persons, or groups of persons, that you believe you can refer to whenever you need any kind of help for your job?

Maestro(a) de Escuela Rural

Introducción

1. Presentación y explicación del proyecto de investigación.
2. Explicar la naturaleza de su participación y firmar el formato de consentimiento.

Entrevista

3. ¿Cómo describiría usted su trabajo como maestro(a) de escuela rural?
4. ¿Cómo transcurre un día normal de clase?
5. ¿Qué es lo que más le gusta de ser maestro(a) de una escuela rural?
6. ¿Cuáles son los desafíos que enfrenta para poder realizar su trabajo?
7. ¿Cómo describiría a sus estudiantes?
8. Mantiene algún tipo de comunicación con los padres de familia?
9. ¿Quiénes son las personas, o grupos de personas, en las que usted considera que puede apoyarse cuando necesita cualquier tipo de ayuda para hacer su trabajo?

Parents

Introduction

1. Presentation and explanation of research project.
2. Explain the nature of the participation in the project and sign the consent form.

Interview

3. How would you describe life in a rural area?
4. What do you think about your kids getting an education?
5. How would you describe the school of the area you live in?
6. How is your relationship with the teacher and the principal of the school?
7. Do your kids like to go to school?
8. How often do you go to your kids' school? When you go, what do you go for?

9. Are there any challenges in sending your kids to school?

Padres de Familia

Introducción

1. Presentación y explicación del proyecto de investigación.
2. Explicar la naturaleza de su participación y firmar el formato de consentimiento.

Entrevista

3. ¿Cómo describiría usted la vida en un área rural?
4. ¿Qué opina de que sus hijos obtengan una educación?
5. ¿Cómo describiría la escuela del área en la que usted vive?
6. ¿Cómo es su relación con el director(a) y maestro(a) de la escuela a la que atienden sus hijos?
7. ¿Les gusta ir a la escuela a sus hijos?
8. ¿Qué tan seguido visita su escuela? Cuando va, ¿normalmente cual es el motivo de su visita?
9. ¿Tienen acaso alguna dificultad en mandar sus hijos a la escuela?

Leading Parent

Introduction

1. Presentation and explanation of research project.
2. Explain the nature of the participation in the project and sign the consent form.

Interview

3. How is it for you to live in a rural area?
4. How would you describe the community of people that live in this area?
5. How would you describe the school of this area?
6. Do you visit the school for any reason? If you do, how often? For what reasons?

7. Do you have any relationship with the principal and teachers of the school? If you do, how is that relationship?
8. Would you say that the community and the school of this area have a close relationship? If so, how?

Padres con Liderazgo

Introducción

1. Presentación y explicación del proyecto de investigación.
2. Explicar la naturaleza de su participación y firmar el formato de consentimiento.

Entrevista

3. ¿Cómo es para usted el vivir en un área rural?
4. ¿Cómo describiría usted la comunidad que vive en esta área?
5. ¿Cómo describiría usted la escuela de esta área?
6. ¿Acaso visita usted la escuela por algún motivo? Si lo hace, ¿qué tan seguido la visita? ¿Qué motivos acompañan su visita normalmente?
7. ¿Acaso tiene usted alguna relación con el director(a) y maestro(a) de su escuela? Si es así, ¿cómo describiría usted esa relación?
8. ¿Podría decir usted que la comunidad y la escuela de esta área tienen una relación cercana? Si es así, ¿cómo es esa relación?

APPENDIX B

HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE APPROVAL LETTER

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 8/13/2010

To: Marcela Murillo Fortin

Address: [omitted]
Dept.: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Working Conditions of Teachers in Rural Schools of Honduras

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Expedited per 45 CFR § 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 8/11/2011 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Lora Cohen-Vogel, Advisor
HSC No. 2010.4537

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

FSU Behavioral Consent Form

Working Conditions of Teachers in Rural Schools of Honduras

You are invited to be in a research study of the working conditions for teachers in the rural schools of Honduras. You were selected as a possible participant because your school is located in a rural area. We ask that you to read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. This study is being conducted by the master's student Marcela Murillo Fortin from the College of Education of the Florida State University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the working conditions of teachers in rural schools, any challenges they face and supports they receive as they complete their daily duties.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to participate in a 30 minute interview that will be audiotaped and then transcribed. I will schedule the interview at any time that is convenient for you between July 20 and August 10, 2010. The interview will be conducted in person. If this was not possible I would do it over the phone. Finally, only if necessary, I will contact you after August 10 if any clarifications or further questions are needed.

Risks and benefits of being in the Study:

The study has minimal risks and no direct benefits for the participants. If answers were revealed, subjects could be harmed; however precautions will be taken to protect confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Interview records and files linking names and pseudonyms will be destroyed by December 2010.

Compensation:

You will not receive any kind of compensation for your participation in this study. It is voluntary and you may withdraw or refuse to answer at any time with no penalty.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law. In any sort of report I might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you or any other participant. Research records will be stored securely and only I will

have access to the records. I will be the only person with access to the interview's recordings and they will be destroyed by December 2010 when the study is finished.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University, with the Honduran Education Ministry FSU or with your school. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Marcela Murillo Fortin, a master's student under the supervision of Dr. Lora Cohen-Vogel, Associate Professor in the College of Education of Florida State University. You may ask any question you have now. If you have a question later, you are encouraged to contact Marcela Murillo Fortin at the phone number [omitted] from July 18 to August 15, 2010, or at the Florida State University, phone number [omitted] from August 17 to December 12, 2010; or contact Dr. Cohen-Vogel at the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, 1209 Stone Bldg., Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306, phone number (850) 644-6777, lcohenvogel@fsu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu. You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Signature of Investigator	_____ Date

FSU Behavioral Consent Form

Working Conditions of Teachers in Rural Schools of Honduras

You are invited to be in a research study of the working conditions for teachers in the rural schools of Honduras. You were selected as a possible participant because of your relation to the Honduran Education Ministry and knowledge about the teacher selection process. We ask that you to read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. This study is being conducted by the master's student Marcela Murillo Fortin from the College of Education of the Florida State University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the working conditions of teachers in rural schools, any challenges they face and supports they receive as they complete their daily duties.

Procedures:

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Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University, with the Honduran Education Ministry FSU or with your school. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Marcela Murillo Fortin, a master’s student under the supervision of Dr. Lora Cohen-Vogel, Associate Professor in the College of Education of Florida State University. You may ask any question you have now. If you have a question later, you are encouraged to contact Marcela Murillo Fortin at the phone number [omitted] from July 18 to August 15, 2010, or at the Florida State University, phone number [omitted] from August 17 to December 12, 2010; or contact Dr. Cohen-Vogel at the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, 1209 Stone Bldg., Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32306, phone number (850) 644-6777, lcohenvogel@fsu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644-8633, or by email at humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu. You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

_____	_____
Signature	Date
_____	_____
Signature of Investigator	Date

Formato de Expresión de Consentimiento de FSU

Condiciones Laborales de Maestros y Maestras de Escuelas Rurales en Honduras

Usted está invitado a ser parte de un proyecto de investigación sobre las condiciones laborales de los maestros y maestras en las escuelas rurales de Honduras. Usted fue seleccionado como posible participante dado que su escuela está ubicada en una zona rural. Le pedimos que lea lo que a continuación se le presenta y que aclare todas sus dudas haciendo las preguntas necesarias antes de acordar ser parte de este estudio. Este estudio está siendo conducido por Marcela Murillo Fortin del Departamento de Educación de la Universidad del Estado de Florida como una estudiante de maestría.

Información de Contexto:

El propósito de este estudio es el de explorar las condiciones laborales que tienen los maestros y maestras en las escuelas rurales. Quisiera saber cuáles son los desafíos que tienen en el desempeño de sus funciones diarias, y a la vez conocer, si existieran, que sistemas de soporte existen para ayudarles a resolver las dificultades que afrontan.

Procedimientos:

Si usted acepta participar en este estudio, le pediré que sea parte de una entrevista de aproximadamente 30 minutos que será grabada y luego transcrita. La programaré en cualquier hora que le sea conveniente a usted entre el 20 de julio y el 10 de agosto. Esta entrevista será conducida personalmente, y solo en caso de que esto no fuera posible se haría por teléfono. Finalmente, solo si fuera necesario, le contactaré después del 10 de agosto en caso de que se necesiten aclaraciones o que surjan más preguntas con respecto a la información provisionada.

Riesgos y Beneficios de Participar en esta Investigación:

El estudio representa un riesgo mínimo para usted. Tampoco tiene ningún beneficio directo para quienes participen. Si la información compartida por los participantes en las entrevistas es revelada, podría causarle un daño a los mismo; es por eso que las debidas precauciones están siendo tomadas para proteger la confidencialidad y anonimato de los participantes. Los records de las entrevistas y los archivos identificando a los nombres y sus pseudónimos serán destruidos para diciembre del 2010.

Compensación:

Al participar en este proyecto usted no recibirá ningún tipo de compensación. Su colaboración es voluntaria y tiene toda la libertad de retirarse en cualquier momento o de rehusarse a contestar alguna pregunta sin penalidad de ningún tipo.

Confidencialidad:

La información compilada en este estudio se mantendrá privada y confidencial de acuerdo a la ley. En cualquier tipo de reporte que se publique con respecto a este estudio, no se incluirá ninguna información que facilite la identificación de ningún sujeto. Las grabaciones de las entrevistas e información recogida serán guardadas con seguridad y solo la investigadora tendrá acceso a ellas. Yo seré la única persona con acceso a las grabaciones que serán destruidas en Diciembre del 2010 cuando el estudio haya concluido.

Naturaleza Voluntaria del Estudio:

La participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Su decisión de participar o dejar de hacerlo, no afectará su actual o futura relación con la Universidad del Estado de Florida, con el ministerio de educación de Honduras o con su respectiva escuela. Si decide participar, usted es libre de no contestar cualquier pregunta o de retirarse cuando así lo desee sin afectar esas relaciones antes mencionadas.

Información de Contactos y Preguntas:

La investigadora conduciendo este estudio es la estudiante de maestría Marcela Murillo Fortin bajo la supervisión de la Dra. Lora Cohen-Vogel, Profesora en el Departamento de Educación de la Universidad del Estado de Florida. Usted puede hacer cualquier pregunta en este momento. Si tiene alguna otra pregunta más adelante, puede contactar a Marcela Murillo Fortin al número de teléfono [omitted] entre las fechas 18 de julio y 15 de agosto, o en la Universidad del Estado de Florida al número de teléfono [omitted] entre las fechas del 17 de agosto al 12 de diciembre; también puede contactar a la Dra. Lora Cohen-Vogel en el Departamento de Política y Liderazgo Educativo, 1209 Stone Bldg., Universidad del Estado de Florida, Tallahassee Florida 32306, al número de teléfono (850) 644-6777, lcohenvogel@fsu.edu. Si tiene alguna pregunta o alguna duda con respecto a este estudio y quisiera hablar con alguien más que no sea la investigadora, puede contactar al IRB de la Universidad del Estado de Florida ubicado en 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, al número de teléfono (850) 644-8633, o al correo electrónico humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu. Se le dará una copia de esta información para su registro personal.

Expresión de Consentimiento

He leído la información correspondiente. He aclarado mis dudas y recibido las respuestas a mis preguntas. Estoy de acuerdo en participar en este estudio.

_____	_____
Firma	Fecha
_____	_____
Firma del Investigador	Fecha

Formato de Expresión de Consentimiento de FSU

Condiciones Laborales de Maestros y Maestras de Escuelas Rurales en Honduras

Usted está invitado a ser parte de un proyecto de investigación sobre las condiciones laborales de los maestros y maestras en las escuelas rurales de Honduras. Usted fue seleccionado como posible participante dada su relación al Ministerio de Educación de Honduras y su conocimiento acerca del proceso de selección de maestros. Le pedimos que lea lo que a continuación se le presenta y que aclare todas sus dudas haciendo las preguntas necesarias antes de acordar ser parte de este estudio. Este estudio está siendo conducido por Marcela Murillo Fortin del Departamento de Educación de la Universidad del Estado de Florida como una estudiante de maestría.

Información de Contexto:

El propósito de este estudio es el de explorar las condiciones laborales que tienen los maestros y maestras en las escuelas rurales. Quisiera saber cuáles son los desafíos que tienen en el desempeño de sus funciones diarias, y a la vez conocer, si existieran, que sistemas de soporte existen para ayudarles a resolver las dificultades que afrontan.

Procedimientos:

Si usted acepta participar en este estudio, le pediré que sea parte de una entrevista de aproximadamente 30 minutos que será grabada y luego transcrita. La programaré en cualquier hora que le sea conveniente a usted entre el 20 de julio y el 10 de agosto. Esta entrevista será conducida personalmente, y solo en caso de que esto no fuera posible se haría por teléfono. Finalmente, solo si fuera necesario, le contactaré después del 10 de agosto en caso de que se necesiten aclaraciones o que surjan más preguntas con respecto a la información provisionada.

Riesgos y Beneficios de Participar en esta Investigación:

El estudio representa un riesgo mínimo para usted. Tampoco tiene ningún beneficio directo para quienes participen. Si la información compartida por los participantes en las entrevistas es revelada, podría causarle un daño a los mismo; es por eso que las debidas precauciones están siendo tomadas para proteger la confidencialidad y anonimato de los participantes. Los records de las entrevistas y los archivos identificando a los nombres y sus pseudónimos serán destruidos para diciembre del 2010.

Compensación:

Al participar en este proyecto usted no recibirá ningún tipo de compensación. Su colaboración es voluntaria y tiene toda la libertad de retirarse en cualquier momento o de rehusarse a contestar alguna pregunta sin penalidad de ningún tipo.

Confidencialidad:

La información compilada en este estudio se mantendrá privada y confidencial de acuerdo a la ley. En cualquier tipo de reporte que se publique con respecto a este estudio, no se incluirá ninguna información que facilite la identificación de ningún sujeto. Las grabaciones de las entrevistas e información recogida serán guardadas con seguridad y solo la investigadora tendrá acceso a ellas. Yo seré la única persona con acceso a las grabaciones que serán destruidas en Diciembre del 2010 cuando el estudio haya concluido.

Naturaleza Voluntaria del Estudio:

La participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Su decisión de participar o dejar de hacerlo, no afectará su actual o futura relación con la Universidad del Estado de Florida, con el ministerio de educación de Honduras o con su respectiva escuela. Si decide participar, usted es libre de no contestar cualquier pregunta o de retirarse cuando así lo desee sin afectar esas relaciones antes mencionadas.

Información de Contactos y Preguntas:

La investigadora conduciendo este estudio es la estudiante de maestría Marcela Murillo Fortin bajo la supervisión de la Dra. Lora Cohen-Vogel, Profesora en el Departamento de Educación de la Universidad del Estado de Florida. Usted puede hacer cualquier pregunta en este momento. Si tiene alguna otra pregunta más adelante, puede contactar a Marcela Murillo Fortin al número de teléfono [omitted] entre las fechas 18 de julio y 15 de agosto, o en la Universidad del Estado de Florida al número de teléfono [omitted] entre las fechas del 17 de agosto al 12 de diciembre; también puede contactar a la Dra. Lora Cohen-Vogel en el Departamento de Política y Liderazgo Educativo, 1209 Stone Bldg., Universidad del Estado de Florida, Tallahassee Florida 32306, al número de teléfono (850) 644-6777, lcohenvogel@fsu.edu. Si tiene alguna pregunta o alguna duda con respecto a este estudio y quisiera hablar con alguien más que no sea la investigadora, puede contactar al IRB de la Universidad del Estado de Florida ubicado en 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, al número de teléfono (850) 644-8633, o al correo electrónico humansubjects@magnet.fsu.edu. Se le dará una copia de esta información para su registro personal.

Expresión de Consentimiento

He leído la información correspondiente. He aclarado mis dudas y recibido las respuestas a mis preguntas. Estoy de acuerdo en participar en este estudio.

_____	_____
Firma	Fecha
_____	_____
Firma del Investigador	Fecha

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Marcela Murillo Fortin completed her Bachelor's Degree in Education Administration in the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán in Honduras by September, 2007. While studying her career she earned an expert's degree in Family Counseling through a distance program with the Centro Universitario Villanueva, under the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. She enrolled in the master's program of Education Planning and Analysis in the College of Education of the Florida State University in the fall of 2009 through a Fulbright Grant given by the Department of State of the United States of America. Marcela's research interests are rural education, community involvement and teacher quality within the context of developing countries, especially in Honduras, her home country.