REPORT

“EDUCATION SYSTEM IN HONDURAS”

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**STATE OF THE HONDURAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Honduras lacked a national education system until the late 1950’s. Before the reforms of 1957, education was the exclusive privilege of those who could afford to send their children to private institutions. The government of Ramуn Villeda Morales (1957-63) introduced reforms that led to the establishment of a national public education system and began a school construction program.

Data from the Program for the Development of the Organization of the United Nations (PNUD) reveal today that 51% of the matriculates finish primary school, in an average of 9.4 years, and that the number of dropouts increases each year. The acutest problem is that the basic educational system only covers 86.5% of school-age children, while the remaining 13.5% cannot get access to the education.

Although the Honduran Constitution formally stipulates that minors have to have their educations taken care of, many arrive at adulthood without learning to read or write, while the state tries to justify this by the insufficiency of resources at its command. Illiteracy encompasses more than half a million people in this country, which is the equivalent of the entire population between 15 and 40 years old. Good education is still largely the privilege of the few who can afford to send their children to private institutions.

Statistical information shows that the state of the public education system remains poor. Figures cited by the Ministry of Education suggest that Honduras suffers from widespread illiteracy (more than 40 percent of the total population and more than 80 percent in rural areas). A significant percentage of children do not receive formal education.

The statistics collected by the Ministry of Education reflect that no department in Honduras reaches, on average, the six-year minimum of primary education. According to recent data indicating educational efficiency, for every thousand graduates of the first grade in 1990, only 292 (29%) complete primary school in six years and 468 (46%) never finish. The situation with universities is much more worrying, since only 20% avoid failing out in universities such as the National Autonomous University of Honduras (Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Honduras, or UNAH).

The quality of instruction in Honduran public schools is greatly impaired by poor teacher training. The situation is worsened by the extremely low wages paid to teachers, lack of effective and up-to-date instruction materials, outdated teaching methods, poor administration, and lack of physical facilities.

Because of the deficiencies of public education, the years since 1970 have seen the proliferation of private schools. With few exceptions, however, private education is popularly viewed as a profit-making enterprise. Great skepticism remains regarding the quality of the education that private schools offer.

The UNAH is the primary institution of higher learning. Located in Tegucigalpa, it was founded in 1847 and became an autonomous institution in 1957. The university has approximately 30,000 students. There are two branches of the UNAH in San Pedro Sula and La Ceiba.

President Ricardo Maduro is attempting the change the educational system, but at the current rate of reform it would take at least 23 years to reach the level of the educational system in other nations in the area like Costa Rica and Panama. Evaluations performed by international organizations denounce the backwardness of the state’s investments in the sector with respect to the majority of countries in the region, and that the current educational model has reached its limits after more than a decade in Honduras.

**STRUCTURE OF THE HONDURAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

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| **ISCED level** | **Name** | **Ministry Responsible** |
| Pre-school | Educacion Pre-basica | Ministry of Education |
| Primary | Educacion Basica (Grades 1-6) |
| Lower secondary | Educacion Basica (Grades 7-9) including  EDUCATODOS |
| Lower secondary vocational | Formacion de Oficios (INFOP, Academias) |
| Upper Secondary (general) | Educacion media (academica) |
| Upper Secondary (vocational) | Educacion media (tecnica) |
| Tertiary, first stage | * Tecnico universitario (first certificate, short), * Bachiller Universitario (5A first certificate, long), * Licenciatura (second certificate), * Maestria (further certificate) | National University |
| Tertiary, second stage | Doctorado |

**1. Pre-school education**

Pre-school education covers a three-year period with the aim of adapting children to the social environment and developing their sensorial and other faculties. The program tries to provide adequate nutrition, eradicate parasites, vaccinate, give medical and dental care, and to educate parents in health, nutrition, hygiene and family welfare. Although planned for children between four and six-and-a-half years, the government has decided, in view of financial constraints, to provide these services only for six-year-old children, especially the less privileged ones. Teachers for pre-school education are trained at the Escuela Superior del Profesorado.

In the sixties, the pre-primary schools were concentrated solely in the urban areas. In the seventies, the system has been expanding to include rural areas. Because of its financial limitations, the government has decided to stimulate participation of the private sector in the development of pre-school education.

We see that the age of children receiving pre-school education in Honduras and in Ukraine differ. In Ukraine it is not actually set, and children start attending day nursery when they are 2 years old or go straight to the kindergarten at the age of 3 or 4. The graduation age is usually 5 or 6. The purpose of the Ukrainian pre-school education is somewhat similar to the Honduran one – the main stress is put on introducing children into the society and developing their communication skills, though much attention is also given to the basics of reading, counting, etc.

**2. Primary education**

Primary education is compulsory and lasts 6 years. This level consists of two cycles, each of three years duration. In order to democratize education and to improve the retention rate, examinations for promotion have been eliminated. The practical areas of learning receive special attention.

In Ukraine primary education is also compulsory, but it lasts 3 or 4 years and is not divided into cycles. Actually, primary education is not separated from the secondary one and is considered to be the first stage of it. During these years children mostly improve their reading, writing and counting skills.

**3. Secondary education**

Secondary education starts at age of 13 and is aimed at further development of the cultural, scientific and practical knowledge received at the primary level, and at preparation for higher education and training for work. To achieve these objectives, secondary education is divided into two cycles – the common cycle and the diversified cycle. The common cycle lasts for 3 years. Besides further cultural, scientific and practical knowledge, students receive vocational guidance similar to that of the education-apprenticeship. The diversified cycle lasts for 3 years, except for the Bachillerato course which lasts only 2 years. This cycle comprises several streams, namely: primary schoolteacher training (3 years); the Bachillerato (sciences and humanities) course; technical education – 3 years for bachilleros and 4 years for qualified workers (peritos) including the common cycle level. Peritos are trained in areas such as auto mechanics, general mechanics, carpentry, electronics, home economics, agriculture and cattle breeding, medicine (assistant nurses). On the bachiller level, courses are offered in agriculture, medicine, nurses training, arts, musical education, etc.

One of the most striking characteristics of secondary education is that almost 80% of the total enrolment was absorbed by private secondary schools in urban areas, and that the remaining 20% were in government secondary schools, also in urban areas.

Retention rates at this level are considerably higher than in primary education due to better organization and administration of the system and to an increase in investment in the education of those enrolled.

Teachers for secondary education are trained at the Escuela Superior del Profesorado in a three-year post-secondary course.

In Ukraine secondary education starts at the age of 10 or 11 which is the 5th grade and lasts until the age of 17 (the 12th grade). Pupils are taught a wide range of subjects, both humanities and sciences. Less attention is given to technical subjects, but after the 9th grade children can enter technical schools and study until the graduation age to receive special secondary education. Nowadays many schools have biases, for example there are schools with a foreign language bias, a mathematics bias, a medical bias and so on. Unlike the Honduran secondary education, the Ukrainian one is not divided into cycles. Most schools are maintained by the state, thought private schools are gaining more and more popularity. A lot of secondary graduates in Ukraine proceed to higher education.

**4. Higher education**

Higher education is of two types: Universidad (University) and Escuela Nacional (National School). The latter covers such areas as secondary school teacher-training, forestry, agriculture and medicine. Higher education is provided by public and private universities and specialized institutes and schools. The UNAH is autonomous and draws its funds from government grants, fees and gifts. It is responsible for higher education through the Claustro Pleno, the Consejo de Educación Superior, the Consejo Técnico and the Dirección de Educación Superior. The Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Public Education. There is a national school of forestry, a national school of agriculture and a school of music. There are 16 private universities, as well as a Catholic university that belongs to the Archidiocis of Tegucigalpa. The Escuela Agrícola Panamericana is a private international institution which is governed by a board of trustees, comprising members from different countries.

The first stage of higher education leads after three or four years to the first degree of Bachillerato universitario and Licenciatura or to a professional qualification. The Bachillerato universitario is mainly conferred in technological fields. The Licenciatura is awarded after four years in Nursing, five years in Economics, Business Administration, Accountancy, Law, Engineering, Journalism, Mathematics and Natural Sciences. All students at the UNAH spend the first year (for medical students, two years) in the Centro de Estudios Generales.

The second stage of university studies leads to the degrees ofMaestría and Doctorado (Profesional). The Maestría is conferred after two to three years’ study following upon the Bachillerato universitario or Licenciatura. A Doctorado (Profesional) is conferred in Pharmacy and Dentistry after six years and after seven years in Medicine.

The third stagelies in obtaining the degree ofEspecialidad. It is only conferred in Medicine to holders of the Título de Doctor. It requires 30 credits and three years’ internship. The University-level Doctorado PhD is conferred after two years of study and each university has a different specialty of PhD.

In terms of internal efficiency, higher education suffers from some of the same problems as does the rest of the educational system. The ratio between the number of enrolled students in a given year and the number of graduates six years later comes down to an average of 9.3 for a five-year period.

There are many more universities in Ukraine than in Honduras, and the level of higher education is higher in general. Universities are mainly located in large regional centers, and usually there’s more than one university in one city. Students get a Bachelor’s degree after 4 years of studying, and then they have to study a year more for a Specialist’s degree or 2 years more for a Master’s degree. Then they can continue their scientific career by writing a PhD thesis. Universities are mostly maintained by the state, and there are comparatively few private universities.

**5. Adult education and professional training**

Besides the formal education system described above, adult education and professional training are provided both by the Ministry of Education in 4-year accelerated primary education courses and by organizations such as the National Institute of Agriculture (INA), the National Institute for Vocational Training (INFOP), the National Junta for Social Welfare, the Army, radio schools, and others.

In the absence of centralized and systematic statistical data, it is difficult to analyze statistically the present situation in adult education and professional training. Instead, brief descriptions follow of programs carried out by the Ministry of Education and other agencies.

a) The Literacy and Adult Education Directorate in the Ministry of Education plans and implements various out-of-school education activities at the national level, including professional training in dressmaking, floriculture, carpentry, cosmetics, etc., functional education conducted by 3 regional teams in the rural settlements of La Ceiba, San Pedro Sula and Choluteca, and literacy programs.

b) PROCARA, a program of training for agrarian reform, is carried out by the National Agrarian Institute (INA) with the assistance of FAO. Funded by UNDP, it is aimed at training peasants in the social and technical aspects of the agrarian reform and providing incentives and skills needed to organize co-operatives.

c) The aim of the Institute for Vocational Training (INFOP) is to manage, co-ordinate, plan and control vocational training in all sectors of the economy, in accordance with the national plans for economic and social development.

d) The National Committee for Social Welfare is a semi-autonomous organization whose programs include community development, family protection, literacy, and health.

e) Radio schools (Escuelas Rafionicas) are operated by a private institution which coordinates its activities with the Literacy and Adult Education Directorate of the Ministry of Education. The content of the program includes literacy, techniques in agriculture and guidance in using the credit system operated by the institution.

f) Many other programs in the field of adult education and professional  
training are sponsored by various organizations, including the Ministry of National Resources, the Family Planning Association and the National University.

**CURRENT TRENDS IN EDUCATION**

Recognizing the existence of the shortcomings which have heretofore inhibited the development of the educational system, the Government of Honduras has embarked on the road to improvement of the existing situation. The National Commission for Educational Reform has elaborated a program of changes which are being gradually introduced into the educational system.

Development of education in rural areas has high priority. The program is designed to adapt the educational structure and content to the development process and the agrarian reform. Greet importance is placed on “nuclearization” which will enable incomplete primary schools which do not yet offer six grades to be gradually completed. It is also hoped that those schools, called “nucleos” will integrate formal and non-formal education activities and thus become community development centers.

The Ministry of Education has been implementing a project intended to create a national service of supervision and orientation of primary education which helps to improve the performance of primary school teachers and the quality of education at this level. Also there has been a significant reorientation of in-service training programs for primary school teachers. Greater emphasis is now placed on natural science and mathematics, hygiene, agriculture, artisan activities, and home economics.

The Ministry has also initiated the reorganization of secondary education to conform with the new structure of the whole system. The basic idea of this reorganization is to make the secondary education system more flexible, internally dynamic and functionally oriented, and to help students integrate themselves easily and productively into the economy. Also, the reorganization of secondary education is intended to enable students to re-enter school in any branch and on any level.

Significant efforts are being made in the field of technical and vocational education to increase its quality and responsiveness to the needs of industrial and agricultural development. These efforts include revision of curriculum, teacher and instructor training, research and improvement of educational materials, and the expansion of existing institutions.

At the same time in Ukraine there are new progressive trends in the system of higher education. In many universities, the Bologna process is being introduced. It’s influence on our higher education not evident yet, but in a few years, when teachers and students will understand its essence and will get used to it, it will bring the Ukrainian education closer to the European level. There are still some points in our system of higher education that need to be changed. First of all, Specialist’s degree, which is not recognized anywhere in Europe or other advanced countries, has to be cancelled, and only Master’s degree should be left instead. Then, Bachelor’s degree has to be accepted as the first degree of higher education, as it is everywhere in the civilized world. In general, the Ukrainian higher education needs to be relieved of the remains of the Soviet education system, and then it will be possible to upgrade it efficiently.

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