



Guatemala 2011:

The Indigenous Community and Education

Members of the 2011 AGBL Guatemala team:

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Abstract

In January 2011, AGBL sent a group of 14 Marquette students and faculty to Chinique, Quiche, Guatemala. Chinique is a low-income city in the state of Quiche, Guatemala. Education is an important component of economic development, and academic scholarships are offered through an organization called Caritas to qualified individuals in Chinique as well as other regions of Guatemala. Our question was: Should the money be going to scholarships today, even with a recent increase in government funding for schools; or, should the money be going to high school studies exclusively? Based on our research, our final recommendation to Caritas is to direct scholarship funds to the schools rather than the students. It is best to allow them the freedom to decide where the dollars are most needed for the individual school, and to focus individual scholarships on higher levels of schooling where distances require the most money for bus fares and supplies.



Introduction

Guatemala is a unique country with stunning landscapes, colorful marketplaces, and a personality bubbling with years of culture and history. However, it also has significant socioeconomic disparities, particularly involving levels of education. Compared to other Central American countries, education in Guatemala is lagging. With the highest indigenous population in all of Central America, and in the aftermath of a thirty-six year civil war, Guatemala struggles to educate its poorest people – the indigenous, who have inhabited the Guatemalan countryside for thousands of years.

Based on economic data and studies performed by organizations such as United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), this paper looks to prove that lower levels of educational achievement in Guatemala than in neighboring countries are the result of its having a higher indigenous population than the others. (This is based on the assumption, along with research that supports it, that the indigenous population is historically disadvantaged and has often lacked educational opportunities provided to the non-indigenous population.) This information will be compared against data collected by the Marquette University student group, Applied Global Business Learning, or AGBL, in January of 2011 in the rural town of Chinique in Quiché, Guatemala.

Applied Global Business Learning is a student organization at Marquette University within the Center for Global and Economic Studies. AGBL is a unique

volunteer opportunity that finds ways for students to assist in developing nations and experience firsthand the complexities of economic development. By providing micro-enterprise solutions, it is the hope of the organization to foster sustainable business practices while preserving cultural ideals. AGBL is an international student-led educational program that looks to connect Marquette students, faculty, and community leaders with communities and entrepreneurs in the developing world to grow opportunities and partnerships.

Background

On the surface, Guatemala looks very similar to its neighbors, El Salvador and Honduras. The tropical and mountainous region located in the heart of Central America is home to almost 28 million people in these three countries alone. These countries are rich in diversity, with more than twenty-five different native cultures residing within their borders. One characteristic that differentiates Guatemala from its neighbors is its large population of indigenous people. While the populations of El Salvador and Honduras countries are not devoid of indigenous people, the populations of these countries contain only 1% and 7% indigenous people, respectively. Guatemala, on the other hand, is home to the largest number of native people in Central America, with 40% of its residents claiming native descent. Despite other economic and regional similarities, Guatemala shows lower literacy rates and shorter education lifespans than Honduras and El Salvador, most likely a result of its larger indigenous population¹.

Guatemala's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measured \$70.31 billion USD in 2010, and GDP per capita was about \$5,200. Guatemala falls in between the measures of GDP per capita of El Salvador and Honduras, which reached \$7,300 and \$4,200 in 2010, respectively². Similar in composition, each of these three countries' GDP have a comparable contributing factor for agriculture, service, and industry

¹ United States. CIA. *World Fact Book*. Web. 3 May 2011.

<<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>>.

² *World Fact Book*

sectors. The greatest difference lies in the population and labor force. Approximately 50% of Guatemala's labor force works in agriculture, compared to 19% in El Salvador and 49% in Honduras.

With a population almost twice as large as those of El Salvador and Honduras, Guatemala houses 13.8 million people, of which approximately 51% live in rural areas. 72% of those living in rural areas are living at or below the poverty line, compared to 28% of those living in urban areas³. Additionally, 80% of all indigenous Guatemalans live in rural areas of the country⁴, and 86% of all indigenous Guatemalans live below the poverty line⁵. This means that the indigenous people who already experience higher levels of poverty than non-indigenous, or Ladinos, also experience the further impoverishment associated with rural living.

For many reasons, including those that follow, the above appears to be the first step in identifying the cause of discrepancies in education in Guatemala.

Literacy

The level of literacy is a measure of education that varies among these three Central American countries. El Salvador has an 81.1% literacy rate, and Honduras follows closely with a literacy rate of 80%. Alarming, Guatemala lags behind with an adult literacy rate of merely 69.1%⁶.

Currently, the level of youth literacy in Guatemala is at a level of 88% and is faring slightly better for urban Ladino students. Urban students, regardless of native background, have reached an average literacy rate of 95%. However, while Ladino students have reached a 96% literacy rate, urban indigenous students only

³ *Trading Economics*. Web. 12 May 2011.

<<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/guatemala/indicators>>.

⁴ *World Fact Book*

⁵ Minority Rights Group International, *State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2009 - Guatemala*, 16 July 2009, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a66d9b550.html>. 23 May 2011.

⁶ *World Fact Book*

have a literacy rate of 89%. In rural communities, the literacy rate is 81%, with Ladino students reaching a rate of 86% and indigenous students at a lower rate of 76%. Rural indigenous females have the lowest literacy rate, which stands at 68%. Indigenous male students and all Ladino students maintain approximately the same literacy rates respective to their urban or rural location⁷.

Although the current levels of literacy of indigenous youth are lower than those of their Ladino peers, literacy in Guatemala has increased significantly in the last decade. In 1998, urban indigenous students were at a literacy rate of 74.1%, and rural students were only at 50.9%⁸. During the same time period, Ladino students also had lower literacy rates. Only 89.5% of urban students and 66.2% of rural students were literate⁹.

While Ladino students have historically been associated with higher literacy rates, the rural students of a non-indigenous background have significantly worse literacy rates than urban students. As noted earlier, roughly 80% of all rural dwellers are indigenous, so the drastic jump in literacy among rural Ladino students may be the result of better schooling and more widespread access to education in rural Ladino areas. Since indigenous families are also more likely to experience poverty, it is possible that the large gap remains despite improvements made in education. Studies often find that students drop out of school because their families cannot afford the cost or because it is deemed necessary for the child to work, rather than go to school. Noting that Ladino families often have a higher income than indigenous families, their students may have had greater opportunities to attend without risking the quality of life of the entire family.

Education Lifespan

⁷ *Guatemala: Visualizing Rights*. Rep. Vol. 3. 2008. *Guatemala Fact Sheet*. Center of Economic and Social Rights, 2008. Web. 12 May 2011. <www.cesr.org>Rep. Vol. 3. 2008. *Guatemala Fact Sheet*. Center of Economic and Social Rights, 2008. Web. 12 May 2011. <www.cesr.org>

⁸ Anderson, Maria Elena. *Guatemala: The Education Sector*. Rep. Guatemala Poverty Assessment Program. Web. 12 May 2011. <<http://web.worldbank.org/>>.

⁹ Anderson, Maria Elena

The number of years a student spends in school is another area in which Guatemala falls short of neighboring El Salvador. Students in El Salvador average twelve years of schooling, whereas Guatemalan students, and in this case, Honduran students as well, only average eleven years¹⁰.

Despite a similar average number of years in school, the actual primary school completion rate for Guatemala is low compared to neighboring countries. Guatemala experiences about an 80% primary completion rate for its students¹¹. This means that only 80% of students ever finish what can be compared to grades 1-6 in the United States. Guatemala's primary completion rate is the second lowest in Latin America, only ahead of Nicaragua which had a 77% primary completion rate in 2008. In fact, Honduras, which has a lower GDP per capita, has a primary completion rate of 89.7%¹². Additionally, the ratio of female to male students completing primary education in Guatemala is the lowest in the region at 0.88. Honduras' ratio is third highest at 1.07, which means more females complete their education than male students¹³.

Furthermore, in 2000, Guatemala's rural students had only a 66.7% net primary enrollment rate, and only 18.5% of students enrolled in secondary education. As low as these numbers appear, the rates have actually increased significantly compared with those reported just four years earlier in 1996, (60.6% and 11.7% respectively¹⁴). The percentage of these rate changes could be the result of time passing after the end of the civil war; educational development in indigenous rural areas would no longer have been as stunted by war and conflict.

Disparity of Access

¹⁰ *World Fact Book*

¹¹ "Guatemala | Data." *Data | The World Bank*. The World Bank. Web. 5 May 2011. <<http://data.worldbank.org/country/guatemala>>.

¹² *The World Bank*

¹³ *Guatemala: Visualizing Rights*.

¹⁴ Anderson, Maria Elena

Guatemala spends a smaller percentage of its GDP on education than both El Salvador and Honduras. In 2008, only 3.2% of GDP was spent on education, up from 2.6% in 2006. During the same year, spending for education in El Salvador was 3.6% of GDP¹⁵. Though this data is not available for Honduras, another comparison can be made: social spending as a percentage of GDP in Honduras and El Salvador was between 11-12% in 2006, while social spending in Guatemala was only about 7.5%¹⁶. The largest economy in Central America, Guatemala had tax revenues of only 10.2% of GDP in 2008, compared to El Salvador at 13.4% and Honduras reaching as high as 17.9%¹⁷.

It is clear that education gaps in Guatemala are not going to be reduced at the current spending levels. Honduras and El Salvador allocate a larger percentage of spending to education and other social programs than does Guatemala, and the result is painfully obvious when examining the high levels of poverty and low literacy rates in Guatemala versus its neighboring countries.

Additional problems that plague Guatemala's education system include underprepared teachers and a language barrier in the classroom. Roughly 66% of indigenous primary students go to schools that are led by teachers who only speak Spanish and none of the students' native indigenous languages. There are over 23 recognized cultural languages in Guatemala, and only 19% of primary students have access to bilingual schools¹⁸.

Within Guatemala, educational disparities have already been proven between urban and rural areas. When comparing only urban literacy rates of Guatemalan youth to data of Honduras and El Salvador, Guatemala clearly excels with an 88% literacy rate, as previously noted. The issue appears to truly lie in the

¹⁵ *World Fact Book*

¹⁶ Menkos, Jonathan, Ignacio Saiz, and Maria Jose Eva. *Rights or Privileges: Fiscal Commitment to the Rights of Health, Education and Food in Guatemala*. Rep. Brooklyn, NY: Serviprensa, 2009. Center for Economic and Social Rights. Web. 17 May 2011.

¹⁷ *Guatemala: Visualizing Rights*.

¹⁸ *Increasing Education Access, Quality, and Equality in Guatemala*. Rep. United States Agency for International Development. Web. 18 May 2011. <www.usaid.gov>.

rural, and highly indigenous, areas of Guatemala. With this in mind, it appears that with an increase in educational spending in rural areas, Guatemala should expect to see increased literacy rates among rural students. Currently, rural schools are often located from students and frequently short of resources. Schools should be as easily accessible to rural and indigenous students as they are to urban and non-indigenous students in order to increase educational equality within the country and in Central America overall.

Scholarships

Since insufficient funding and resources seem to be the source of the education disparity, scholarships may be another method of increasing the attendance of students for poor indigenous families. At present, scholarships are often sought as donations from other countries, particularly the United States and Western European countries. Many foreign scholarship programs are directed specifically at indigenous students. Though all public schools are reportedly funded by the Guatemalan government, students are still often required to pay for their own supplies, books, uniforms, and bus fares. Thus, for many students, school is only possible with scholarships.

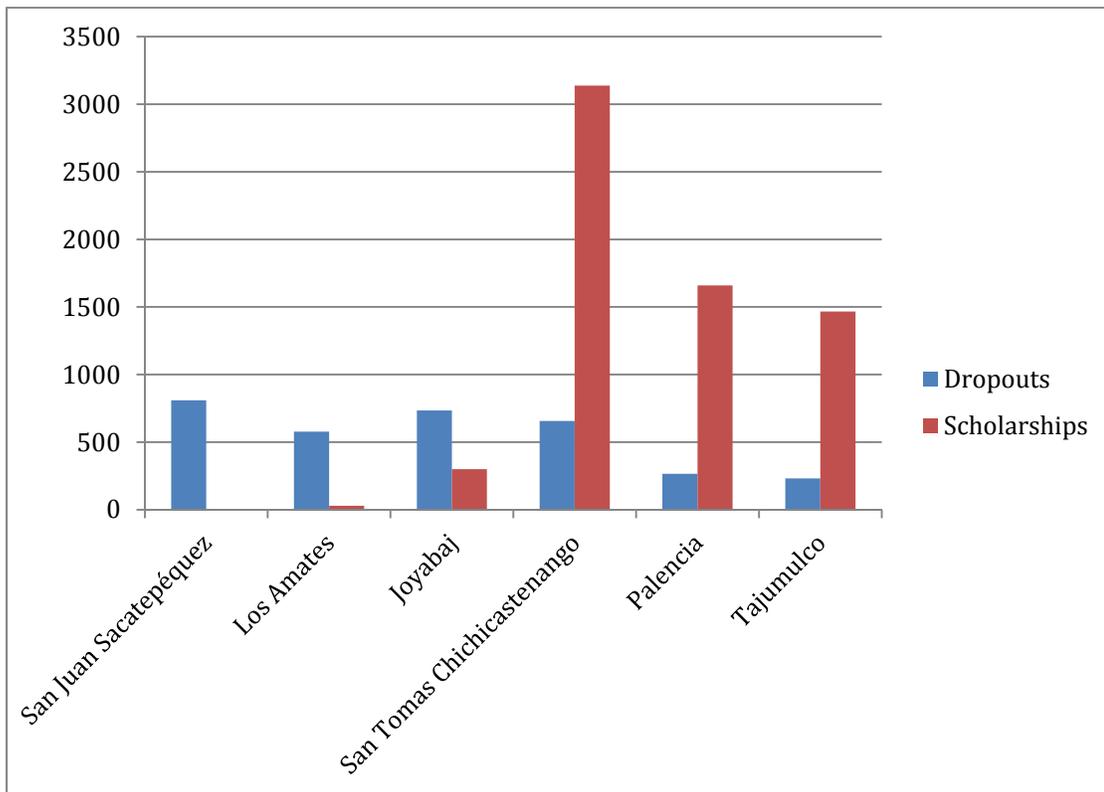
To note the impact of scholarships on attendance rates in indigenous communities, data is available for six primarily indigenous municipalities. The chart below compares the number of female students who dropped out of primary school and the number of scholarships for girls that were given in each region.

Municipality	# of dropouts	# of scholarships
San Juan Sacatepéquez	810	0
Los Amates	578	29
Joyabaj	734	300
San Tomas Chichicastenango	656	3138

Palencia	266	1659
Tajumulco	232	1466

Source: www.cesr.org

The strength of the relationship may be easier to see in this chart. It seems that scholarships reduce the quantity of dropouts in the municipality. The correlation coefficient between dropouts and scholarships is -0.35, suggesting that a significant negative relationship exists.



Applied Global Business Learning: Education in Chinique, Quiché, Guatemala

Over the course of a week in January 2011, eleven students from the Applied Global Business Learning program at Marquette University traveled to the rural town of Chinique in Quiché, Guatemala. While in Chinique, the students split up and stayed with families for five days to become completely immersed in the local

culture. In that time, students conducted interviews at ten local schools at the levels of primario and básico, which span the equivalent of grades 1-6 and 7-9 in the United States. Interviews were held with students, families, and teachers to discuss basic daily activities, such as homework and attendance, as well as more subjective topics including why children do not finish these levels of schooling or continue on to diversificado, grades 10-12.

What we discovered provided information about the culture and educational system and allows valuable inferences about the education system in Guatemala.

Most data was difficult to quantify, but prominent trends were noticed:

Students generally liked going to school. Families typically acknowledged the importance of education for their child's future, especially with respect to their children finding gainful employment.

Given the opportunity, most children would choose to continue to básico and diversificado. Though it was difficult to pinpoint a number, it seemed that approximately 50% of students and families thought their child might be able to continue.

A commonly cited reason for discontinuing education at any level was insufficient funds. Families simply were unable to financially support one or more of their children's education.

Children did not frequently miss school in order to work. Some outside data has suggested that indigenous students quit school to begin working, however most students interviewed either did not work, or did not admit to working, instead of attending class.

The most common reason given for missing days of class was illness, likely due to poor health care.

Many teachers lacked appropriate supplies for their classrooms. A multitude of reasons were given, including that government aid had not arrived and parents were "stealing" their child's school supply money.

While many schools reportedly require uniforms, few of the schools interviewed during this particular study had such a

requirement; this was an attempt to lessen the financial burden on the families.

From these trends, there were four specific themes that stood out. The literature review that follows ties those four themes to the work that has been done to date.

Literature Review

1. *Money is not the constraint in attending primary school. For all levels of schooling, time is more of a constraint. Particular to básico, costs for transportation are especially limiting.*

According to the survey of poverty in Guatemala conducted in association with the World Bank, the primary reasons students drop out of school include seasonal migration, child labor, domestic responsibilities and poverty (World Bank 99). The demand-side factors that limit either primary enrollment or attainment include gender of the student (females less likely than males), ethnicity (indigenous less likely to enroll regardless of age), parents' educational level (the higher, the more likely students will progress through the system) and poverty (the higher the total consumption per capita, the more likely the student will remain enrolled) (World Bank 103). Only in a few cases were supply-side factors – such as availability of school facilities—cited as reasons for lack of primary enrollment. In cases where lack of money was cited as a constraint, tuition to attend school were not as prohibitive as other associated costs. At the primary level, only 35% of the costs were attributable to fees. The remainder went to uniforms (9%), books and materials (33%), transport (8%), and other, including fundraisers and donations (15%). At the secondary level, slightly more of the total cost went to fees (41%). Books and materials increased to 38% of the cost, with the remaining three categories staying largely unchanged: uniforms (6%), transport (10%), and other (15%) (World Bank 106).

Diane Steele also considers the constraints on level of education attainment. In her analysis, she cites gender, ethnicity (indigenous or non-indigenous) and age as the primary determinants (Steele 106). Other factors that contribute include size of household, rural or urban household, and mother's schooling. The coefficient related to total household income is 0.0000; however, it is considered significant at the .01 level (Steele 110). This demonstrates the concept that money is not a major constraint on primary attendance.

2. *Money is a constraint on the schools themselves. Costs of facilities, books and supplies limit the teachers' ability to develop the students.*

Monetary constraints, as noted above, are not the major determinants of student enrollment or attainment in primary and básico. However, costs for the institutions themselves do limit the teachers' ability to develop the children. According to Ana Corbacho and Hamid Davoodi, in conjunction with the IMF, government spending on education in Guatemala is the lowest of the Central American countries, which is even lower than considering Latin America as a whole. On average, Guatemala spent about 1.5 percent of GDP whereas Central America (comprised of Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) averaged 2.9 percent of GDP from 1985-1998 (Corbacho and Davoodi 12). This indicates a lack of resources at teacher and administrator disposal overall. These figures also do not take into account the distribution of government education expenditures between levels of poverty, urban versus rural, or indigenous versus non-indigenous.

Joseph Shapiro discusses the social assistance programs provided by the government. Two programs conducted by the Ministry of Education in Guatemala have been seen as quite effective: the School Nutrition Program and the Pack of School Materials program. The first provides breakfast, snack and a glass of *atol*, to about one million students per year. The Pack of School Materials program reaches about 1.45 million primary students annually (Shapiro 142). While both of these programs are seen as effective, neither is able to consistently reach more than five percent of the population. These programs tend to target poorer students and

localities and, based on data, did not appear to discriminate between indigenous and non-indigenous individuals. Nonetheless, although these programs are effective in maintaining attendance, they are only provided to a very select and small portion of the population. While the government provides some services and funds, it is not adequate to maintain the facilities on a supply-side, especially when paired with the demand-side factors mentioned above that prohibit students from enrolling or remaining in school.

3. *Teachers breed teachers.*

The fact that many Guatemalan teachers' children grow up to be teachers is not highly unusual. According to the research of Christian Dustmann of University College London, "Parental background is strongly related to the secondary track choice of the child, and subsequent educational achievements." Similarly, "the schooling attainment of children is...highly correlated with that of their parents in Latin America" (Behrman, et al., 2001). It seems intuitive that if a child's educational attainment is correlated with that of his parents', his occupational attainment would also have a strong correlation.

4. *Underemployment and Education*

Underemployment is a common problem in the developing world. In fact, "in many poorer countries, the *underemployed* constitute a much larger segment of the labor force than the *unemployed*" (Köhler, 2010, p.6). Underemployment indicates a person who works less than full-time but desires to work more. In Central America, 46.5% of the employed population is actually underemployed (Köhler, 2010, p.7). Underemployment also occurs when a person has obtained skills that are not utilized to their fullest capacity in his or her job. In Guatemala, this appears to be the case with teachers who have obtained high educational degrees, yet are teaching elementary or secondary education, in which their degree is not being put to full use.

At the end of the day, education is vital for economic prosperity. The current quality and level of education children receive in Guatemala is entirely inadequate. The quality suffers due to “overcrowded classrooms and poorly prepared, undermotivated, underpaid teachers” and “memorized answers, lack of books and teaching materials, [and] absence of reinforcement at home or alternative places for reading and studying outside of the classroom” (Reilly, 2009, p.53). These conditions clearly do not lend to a high rate of student retention. One in ten students completes secondary education and one in one hundred graduates from college (Reilly, 2009, p. 52). Also attributing to poor completion is that parents rely on their children to earn income for the family, making “child labor [the] main cause of absenteeism and high school drop-out rates” (Burnell & Randall, 2008, p.489). It is a frustrating cycle: before children can afford to receive an education, the cycle of poverty must be broken; to break the cycle of poverty, people need an education to obtain jobs that allow them to earn a sufficient living.

Economic development is a multi-faceted, highly integrated series of problems. From many families we heard reports of too little work, too much alcohol, and too little food. The AGBL students realized on the first day of interviews how many issues would have to come together to allow the children they had just met to truly receive an education.

Methodology:

During our five days in Chinique, we visited a number of different schools in the surrounding area that varied in grade levels from kindergarten to básico. We went to primary schools which were Titzalal, Calvario, Parroxquim, Choaxan, and La Puerta and secondary schools that included one in the center of Chinique and one just outside the city. At each of the schools, we were welcomed enthusiastically by teachers, students, and their families who were all hoping for the chance to interact with a group of Americans. At some of the schools, the people numbered as many as over one hundred children and adults, showing how much they valued our presence.

While these turnouts would be remarkable regardless of the circumstances, it was even more so considering our visit occurred during the middle of their two-month vacation from school. Upon arriving at a school, we would be greeted and placed by the school directors in one or two large rooms, which more often than not, was the entirety of the school itself. From there, we split into six groups of two and would wait for our leaders to usher a family or teacher over to us. Depending on whom we were given, we would ask a series of questions from a pre-set list that conformed to the intellect and age of those we were asking.

To the children we asked questions about their overall feelings towards school and their basic school routine. This included questions about their favorite areas of study, when and how they go to school, and how they obtain the materials they use in school. In addition, we asked the children questions that would allow us to gain an understanding for the economic situation of both the child's family and the school and community. Whether or not the child had a job, brought lunch to school, or was able to obtain new school uniforms were all questions that revealed the financial conditions surrounding the child. Finally, to gain an understanding for the progress Guatemalan children make in the school system, we asked them about their desires to continue their education and what they dreamed they might specialize in one day.

To the parents and teachers, we were able to ask more sophisticated questions that delved deeper into finances and the everyday struggles that accompanied the structure of the school system. Many of these included the cost of school, books, uniforms, and any other expenses the families might face to provide an education for their children. These questions allowed us to understand the hardships the parents faced in sending kids to school and the subsequent hardships the teachers had in providing a consistent education to the students. Additionally, we asked the teachers about the physical conditions of the school and how it affected the learning environment. Finally, we explored the topic of scholarships,

how they were given out, the number of children that received them and their necessity for some children to continue their education.

After the interview was over, to show our appreciation, we gave the children little toys such as stickers, pencils, or balloons. Despite being remedial in nature, the children never failed to show their excitement and complete appreciation for the gifts we gave them. Before saying our good-byes with each person we interviewed, we were able to take pictures with them both for our documentation and their excitement at seeing themselves in a snapshot. When each interview concluded, we would be given another family or teacher and this process continued until every person that was there had given us the opportunity to interview them. By visiting a variety of schools in several of the nearby areas, we were able to expand our pool of potential interviewees and also gain a broader understanding for the overall picture of the Guatemalan education system.

Findings:

Based on the data from interviews with these different schools, we gained a broader understanding of the Guatemalan education system. On average, 220 quetzales are spent on each student for their primary schooling in this municipality, equating to about \$29.00 US dollars. While these statistics may be startling, our findings also show that money is not the constraining factor in students attending primary school. In fact, from our interviews, we found that the government funds are intended to provide classroom space, books, and even sometimes a breakfast meal for students (because students often come to school hungry and cannot focus on learning with an empty stomach). The problem is that a lack of funding results in inadequate classrooms and learning materials. For example, a school teacher at one of the one-room schoolhouses we visited brought out a book in poor condition, to explain that all of the students had to look on just a few of these copies in order to learn their lessons. The lack of sufficient materials is the result of spreading already meek amounts of funds amongst facilities, teachers, books, and supplies. Most

children have no problem affording their schooling, but the low funding from other sources is not able to provide necessary materials needed for a quality education.

The World Bank points out that “it is important to identify the key source of Guatemala's low social expenditures. In fact, as a percentage of total government spending, Guatemala's health and education expenditures are similar to those of other Latin American countries because it raises much lower taxes as a percentage of GDP than do its neighbors. This should be borne in mind in devising a poverty reduction strategy.”¹⁹ Our group saw firsthand the problem with education in poor rural communities. Since it is difficult for the government to engage in sufficient tax collection in rural areas, and the corruption that can ensue at all levels during the distribution of funds by the government, poor rural schools and communities tend to suffer. The teacher that was mentioned in the above paragraph is a perfect example both of the low tax rates and of an instance of corruption. Upon interviewing the teacher and community members at their school, our group was informed that since the community was poorer and gave less to the government in taxes compared to the surrounding villages, the government provided them with fewer funds for their schooling. In order to keep the school running, the already struggling families within the community needed to provide financial assistance. As if this reoccurring cycle of dependency wasn't enough, two students from our group found out while conducting interviews with the families of the community that the very same teacher explaining the taxing problem was accused of keeping a portion of government funds meant to meet the needs of the school for his own salary. Whether this particular accusation was valid or not, other members of the Guatemalan community in our home stays confirmed such claims that corruption is indeed an occasional occurrence.

For the most part in rural Guatemala, families are not responsible for providing the school with funds to remain open; however, this by no means relieves

¹⁹ World Bank Website:

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/EXTPA/0,contentMDK:20207581~menuPK:443285~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:430367,00.html>

all of the pressures these families find themselves under. In terms of opportunity cost, families are giving up the time that their son or daughter could be using to work and help provide for the family, in order to allow them to attend school. While Guatemala is not the only country addressing this issue, the lack of economic opportunity creates a concerning systematic cycle there. The age-old cycle begins when parents are struggling to make enough money. As a part of a poor family, staying in school rather than finding a way to support the family becomes less appealing and nearly impossible; as a result, the children do not have the motivation or resources necessary to receive a proper education. During the AGBL trip, nearly every school mentioned that some of their students simply cannot attend all five days of the school week because their parents need them to stay at home and work. Doris, a teacher interviewed at the Calvario school mentions, "Kids come to school tired because they have to wake up at 3 am to help their parents work." Therefore, to begin addressing the root cause of students missing or dropping out of school due to work begins with creating more economic opportunities for Guatemalan families.

Creating economic opportunities leads into our group's final key observation: that the underemployment of individuals with degrees has led to teachers breeding teachers. The underemployment means that Guatemalan teachers, who often have higher level of skills through their education, have nowhere to employ these skills in the current economy. The data shows that 25% of interviewed teachers went to University to get law and other degrees. Also consider that according to the data, more than half of the parents of teachers were also teachers. This is by no means a coincidence. The best explanation of Guatemala's inability to grow in educational and economic means (which we know to be innately intertwined) has to do with the structural deficiency of available opportunities in the market for students who graduate with degrees. Based on interviewee responses, teaching in Guatemala seems to be one of the most secure jobs in the current economy. Following this logic, because of the lack of economic structure, working as a lawyer or aspiring entrepreneur does not provide the same type of job security as teaching. Some may encourage the most educated individuals in their respective communities to teach

because it is a way for themselves to find success and stability; however, rather than teaching primary education, the most educated people should be using their education to work in fields that help to create jobs and opportunities for the other members of their communities. This may begin to break the cycle of poverty and help communities to grow economically. The interviews and resultant data provided our group with insight into this and other key cycles that are currently preventing Guatemala's education and economic situation from improving.

The community of Chinique recognizes the educational shortcomings it faces. Despite twenty-two schools within the municipality of Chinique, only 49.8% of adults in Chinique are literate. Additionally, Chinique recognizes that there is a shortage of teachers for its schools. The town notes that only 80% of teachers are budgeted full time positions, and the other 20% are contracted, which means the town is at risk of not being able to educate about 20% of its classes if its budget cannot afford the contracted positions²⁰.

The municipality of Chinique has claimed that it suffers from an attendance problem, which is the result of children leaving school to work nearer to the coasts of Guatemala where there are more opportunities to work in agriculture and earn more money²¹. This differs from the findings of the AGBL study, given that that most parents and teachers agreed that few students skipped school for work. It is possible that the schools that participated in the interviewing have not previously experienced attendance problems; however it is also possible that the information was falsified. While neither reason can be certain, the underlying issue of economic shortcomings has surfaced again.

A Brief Summary of the Civil War and the Effect on Education

²⁰ "Educación En El Municipio De Chinique, Quiché." *INFORPRESS CENTROAMERICANA Información Estratégica De La Región Centroamericana*. Municipio De Chinique, Quiche. Web. 24 May 2011. <<http://www.inforpressca.com/chinique/educacion.php>>.

²¹ "Educación En El Municipio De Chinique, Quiché."

The Guatemalan civil war began in 1961. During this time, many indigenous communities were massacred in what has been labeled a genocide. Over 200,000 were killed and many thousands more were displaced²². This event had many ramifications, including a notable effect on education. The indigenous people had a lower level of educational attainment than their Ladino peers prior to the civil war with 0.6 years of schooling compared to 4.6 years. By the end of the war in 1996, that four-year gap increased 7.5% to a 4.3 year gap. Indigenous children in communities affected by the war averaged just 2.4 years of schooling²³, compared to 6.7 years of schooling for children in Ladino communities that experienced little or no conflict.

While the above data refers to the indigenous population of Guatemala as a whole, a similar trend was found during the AGBL study in Chinique. Several parents who attended interviews noted that they had been forced to drop out of school during the war. Many reasons recounted typically involved the death of a parent. When a student's parent was killed in the war, he or she was often required to get a job to help support the rest of the family, or the loss of income of that parent meant the family could no longer afford to send their children to school. Another frequently cited reason for quitting school was the decision that the family could only afford school for one child, and the interviewee was not the child chosen to continue his or her studies.

Solutions

There is no easy solution to this problem of inequality between indigenous and Ladino students. Many models have been developed in an effort to solve social inequalities. Following the a few suggestions of Mahbub ul Haq in his book, *Reflections on Human Development*, Guatemala can begin by addressing more

²² CoEd - Poverty & Education." *Cooperative for Education*. Web. 25 May 2011. <<http://www.coeduc.org/guatemala/poverty.html>>.

²³ *The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education*. Rep. Paris: UNESCO, 2011. Web. <www.unesco.org>

general issues that affect economic growth and human development, and thus, education²⁴.

- 1) As previously noted, it is necessary that social expenditures be more appropriately allocated and better structured. Proper allocation of resources will help ensure that all students have the opportunity to attend school, regardless of heritage or rural or urban location.
- 2) It is important to ensure that parents and students alike are aware of, and motivated by, the long term benefits associated with education. If people learn how an education can benefit their future, and they become a part of the growth process, students will be more likely to complete their primary education.

The Municipality of Chinique has provided its own solution to the education problems it is currently experiencing. It suggests that large businesses that draw their students away from the classroom for work provide educational opportunities at schools nearer to the student's relocation²⁵.

While Chinique provides one possible solution, additional solutions might include increased funding for municipal schools. Taxes on the community could be reallocated, school supplies could be provided for families rather than families having to purchase their own, and parental assistance could be encouraged to help engage in the progress of students. Following Haq's model, Chinique can work toward educating its residents about the importance of education and the long term benefits that the community can experience if every student completes his or her schooling.

²⁴ Haq, Mahbub Ul. "The Human Development Paradigm." *Reflections on Human Development: How the Focus of Development Economics Shifted from National Income Accounting to People-centered Policies, Told by One of the Chief Architects of the New Paradigm*. New York: Oxford UP, 1995. 13-23. Print.

²⁵ "Educación En El Municipio De Chinique, Quiché."

Conclusion

Education in Guatemala is lacking compared to its neighboring countries, including El Salvador and Honduras. Evidence shows that Guatemalan students are behind in both the number of years of schooling as well as their literacy rates. The reason for the disparity is largely due to the significantly higher percentage of indigenous residents in Guatemala, with roughly 40% of their population descending from native inhabitants.

Urban, non-indigenous students are roughly equivalent to their El Salvadorian and Honduran counterparts in terms of education levels; however, the data for rural indigenous students is much lower. This again suggests that difficulties faced by the large indigenous population are at least part of the reason for the low overall average education levels in Guatemala.

Additionally, government spending in Guatemala is lower than it is in other countries. Schools have insufficient resources and often students of indigenous background are placed in classrooms that are not taught in their native tongue.

Years of civil war took a toll on indigenous societies in particular, disrupting growth and development for thirty-six years. Though the war ended in 1996, many communities are still suffering from the setbacks experienced during the war.

The indigenous community of Chinique was the subject of study of the Applied Global Business Learning group. The interviews provided insight to the education system of Guatemala and the areas in need of improvement. While some data collected from Chinique differed from other outside data, the recurring problem is funding. Schools and students need more financial resources to ensure proper and complete education. The rural and indigenous areas in Guatemala are not being properly funded, leading to their lower literacy rates and fewer years of education.

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