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**FINAL REPORT
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Mid-Term Evaluation of
NICARAGUA BASIC EDUCATION PROJECT
BASE**

**Presented to
USAID/Managua, Nicaragua**

**Presented by
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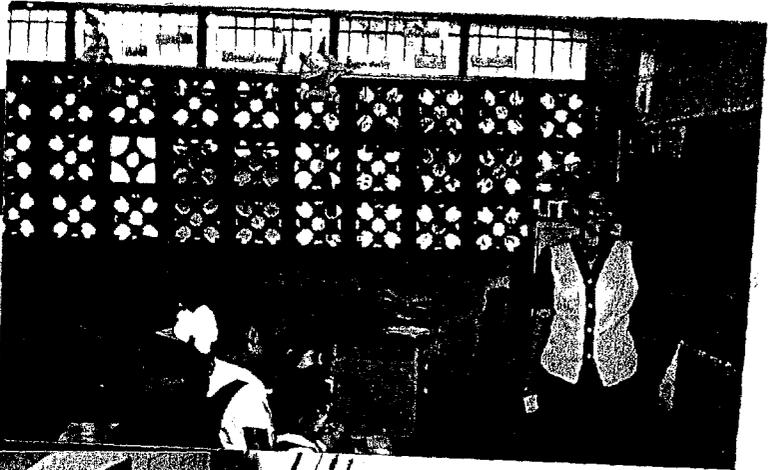


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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This is a mid-term formative evaluation of the Basic Education project (BASE), a six-year grant under Credit 2689-NI of the Agency for International Development (USAID) to the Government of Nicaragua (GON) to improve the quality and the efficiency of primary education. The grant agreement was signed in April 1992, and the five-year project initiated activities in early 1994.

The project supports the Ministry of Education (MED) in strengthening the central and decentralized government institution in order to more effectively provide services to almost 750,000 children at primary level. In the substantive area, special attention has been given to the development and distribution of an innovative child centered curricular approach in Grades 1-4 and the training of almost 20,000 teachers to put this curricular transformation into practice. A total of 426,000 textbooks have been reprinted, 46,000 guides and manuals distributed and over 14,000 teachers trained.

Heavy emphasis has been given to institutional strengthening in the first phase of the project and notable advances in budgeting, accounting, finance, human resource and evaluation are evidenced. The most advanced Management Information System (MIS) in the region has been installed to support these innovations and to provide agile mechanisms to deconcentrate and to decentralize MED. This component of the project has received considerable commodities support and over 120 person/months of short-term consultants. The success in this area has produced a more efficient Ministry which is reaching out for ways to support the local schools.

On the substantive side the strategy has been to create a series of experimental schools which could be used as "models" for the remainder of the educational centers in the country. These 68 model schools have received a large share of the attention of the project. Intensive training has been complemented with the provision of new furniture, classroom teaching materials and the guides, manuals and textbooks previously mentioned. The guides, manuals and textbooks have also been provided to the rest of the regular schools in the country, with lesser amounts of training.

Despite all of these advances, the evaluation team noted that a number of perplexing problems still persist:

- The current pace of the project would not permit an expansion by 1998 to all of the regular schools in the country (1,000), much less the rural schools (about 4,000).
- Teachers are in favor of the child-centered curriculum but do not know how to apply it. They continue to teach with traditional methodologies.
- Decentralization through the autonomous schools model has reached less than 500 schools and has not yet created solid community support for basic education.
- The guides and manuals for first and second grades have been distributed to a larger number of schools. However, if teachers are not shown how to use them in 1997 it is doubtful that they will ever be used.
- The 50,000 participant/days of training have been single goal oriented (to train teachers in the use of the guides, etc.), sometimes theoretical and quite expensive. A continuous plan for training, the use of distance materials and practical workshops are on the horizon.

- The potential multiplier effect of supervisors, directors and master teachers has not been fully utilized thus far.

Considering the advances already made and the problems which still persist in the project the evaluation team suggests that the second phase of BASE should consider the following:

On Project Re-orientation

1. Establish as the single project goal the improvement of the quality of learning at the classroom level.
2. Promote a more systematic development of community support for schools.
3. Initiate a continuous teacher training program using supervisors, directors and master teachers as change agents within the schools.
4. Develop simple pamphlets which show teachers how to use the rich variety of materials available in the application of the child-centered curriculum.
5. Strive for country-wide impact on curricular transformation, teacher training and decentralization with high impact interventions.

On Institutional Development

1. Plan for a smooth transition to a new government, i.e., adapting project activities in administrative reform to the priorities and programs of the new Ministry managers.
2. Develop, in cooperation with the new government and other donors, a viable strategy and work program for the consolidation of decentralization country-wide.
3. Orient central and regional level Ministry staffs in their new supporting roles of the decentralized educational system.
4. Assist Ministry staff at all levels take advantage of the capabilities of the computer system being installed. This will help them with the day-to-day operations of the Ministry as well as with human and financial resources management.
5. Help organize, in cooperation with other donors, especially the World Bank, means to encourage community support for local schools. Decentralization will remain a dream until effective community support is mobilized on a continuing basis.

On Curriculum and Materials Development

1. Develop and apply in the classroom simple introductory materials to facilitate use of the teachers' guides and all other available learning materials.
2. Elaborate a solid guide for child-centered education with a theoretical base and a clear statement of how curricular transformation is to take place at the classroom level.
3. Develop new materials for classroom use with practical orientations which support the teachers' movement toward the child-centered curriculum.
4. Elaborate curriculum materials for various specific classroom situations (rural, urban marginal, multigrade), using a modular format.
5. Organize a continuous training program, focused mainly upon supervisors, principals and teachers to ensure full development of the child-centered curriculum.
6. Ensure proper application of the curriculum guides by continuing to expand the systematic follow-up program now in process under BASE.

7. Develop instruments that will give reliable data on the quality of learning at the classroom level. This should complement more cognitive data coming from student achievement testing by MED.

On Teacher Training

1. Ensure that all primary school teachers in the country are constantly exposed to practical classroom applications of a child-centered curriculum. Activities might include:
 - a. Support to MED in the organization and development of mobile teams of master teachers who could give motivational demonstration classes in the classrooms.
 - b. Install in as many schools as possible activity-centered learning environments.
 - c. Support MED in the development of a distance training program utilizing the rich materials already available for that purpose.
2. Adapt official training programs to the special needs of different groups of teachers. Activities might include:
 - a. Special programs for teachers in the multi-grade schools.
 - b. Differentiated training for teachers in the Atlantic Coast region.
 - c. Distinctive training workshops for teachers with particular subject matter deficiencies.
3. Include simplified teacher classroom planning as a common core in all training:
 - a. Demonstrate that all training and all classroom teaching should be simple, to the point and achievable.
 - b. Promote school-level workshops to produce specific daily, weekly and monthly plans based on the new guides and materials from the local community.
 - c. Stress attitudinal change in all training activities.
4. Develop a network of training centers which can reach out to every school in the country. This would include:
 - a. Effective utilization of the 68 model schools as micro training centers (MICs).
 - b. Broader use of the Normal Schools as in-service training centers.
 - c. Renovation of the nucleus or cluster pattern for organizing the 2,875 multigrade schools around local training centers.
 - d. School level training organized by principals and supervisors as an established, planned follow-up action for all other training activities.
5. Provide wider support to the Normal Schools to ensure that new teachers are prepared to implement child-centered curriculum and ready to fit into an on-going system.
6. Design a student-centered teacher training delivery system that can be used by any incoming government.
7. Assist MED with a continuous marketing program in the communities with emphasis placed on family values, health, social skills, education, consensus building, democracy in action. This could be developed through the in-service teacher training programs.

While these recommendations are presented by components it is important that they be developed within an overall, coordinated project strategy for improving the quality of learning at the classroom level. All efforts should be to that end.

EVALUATION ABSTRACT

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Support under the Basic Education Project (BASE) in Nicaragua is derived from grant funds of USAID to the Government of Nicaragua. The 1994-98 \$16 million plus project aims at improving the quality and efficiency of education in Grades 1-4 while lowering the explosive repetition and dropout rates. It focuses on three areas: a) institutional strengthening, especially in the decentralization process; b) support for materials and development of the child-centered curriculum; and c) training of educators at all levels to support that change process.

This mid-term evaluation by DevTech Systems, Inc. found initial advances impressive, but restricted primarily to just 68 of the 5,000 primary schools in the country. These schools were developed as models and potential training centers for other teachers. Decentralization, which gives real power and funds to the community, has also advanced methodically in an autonomous school program which currently covers less than 500 schools. Parallel to that the Ministry of Education (MED), with BASE support, is deconcentrating functions from the central office to 19 departmental offices (DDEs).

The three-person evaluation team read thousands of pages of analysis in 113 documents, talked for hundreds of hours to 97 project and non-project personnel and visited about 100 classrooms in over 50 schools.

BASE has done well what it has tried to do. In addition to advances in decentralization and deconcentration, innovative solutions are now in place in budgeting, accounting, finance, teacher pay, evaluation, research and human resource development. These are supported by a sophisticated Management Information System (MIS) which reaches down into the DDEs. On the substantive side 46,000 new child-centered teacher guides and manuals are now in place, 426,000 textbooks are at school level and 18,000 teachers (almost 100%) have received some training. But teachers still do not apply the new curriculum, preferring rote teaching methods, the blackboard, textbook and copybook. Changing this is the central challenge of the second phase of the project.

Given these foundations BASE is now ready for expansion in the second phase. The evaluation team recommends:

1. That the project focus all of its energies and funds upon a single goal in the second phase: improving the quality of classroom learning.
2. To reach that goal three mechanisms are proposed:
 - a) Simplified, practical pamphlets which demonstrate to a largely untrained teacher how to plan for the use of a broad range of good materials available and to make learning more active, practical and participative at the classroom level.
 - b) A continuous teacher training program which combines visits of mobile teams to classrooms, the establishment of learning centers, distance training techniques and face-to-face training. A plan is suggested so that teachers in almost daily contact with the new curriculum ideas gradually assimilate this into daily practice. This program would use the 68 model schools, the Normal Schools and nucleus as training hubs. The target group includes supervisors, principals and lead teachers so that they can support the teachers.
 - c. A systematic development of community support for schools is proposed. All the administrative and technical forces of MED should be brought on this process.
3. The main strategy proposed is to move from micro to macro, to reach out from the 68 model schools with an expansion plan to include all 5,000.

I. BACKGROUND AND SETTING OF PROJECT

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A. The Nicaraguan Context

The Nicaraguan Basic Education Project (BASE) has been developed under challenging circumstances. Although Nicaragua terminated an extended civil war with the election of a constitutional government in February of 1990, tensions between polarized groups remained strong, erupting into political deadlocks, an economic slowdown and continuing social conflict. Education suffered a quality crisis. Many school buildings were in poor repair, with few materials, inadequately trained teachers and little community support. The Ministry of Education (MED) was highly centralized, over-staffed and autocratic.

In one of Central America's poorest countries, conversion from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented economy has been difficult. Initial progress in 1990-92, when inflation was reduced to less than 10% a year, was eroded in the turbulence of political struggles for control of power mechanisms in 1993. Attempts to promote strong economic adjustments were met by strikes and confrontations leading to further economic deterioration. Education was virtually at a standstill.

It is not surprising therefore that in the 1990s, poverty figures remained high and may have even increased. Unemployment reached 16% by 1993 and underemployment was in the 40% range, leaving over half of the population on the edge of poverty.¹ This not only created social unrest but became a strong pressure upon parents to take their children out of school early to assist with family work or to produce income.

B. The Basic Education Project

The project is a six-year grant under Credit 2689-NI of the Agency for International Development (USAID) to the Government of Nicaragua (GON) to improve the quality and the efficiency of primary education. The grant agreement was signed in April 1992, but project implementation began in early 1994 when the Academy for Educational Development (AED), institutional contractor, initiated activities.

Broad-based objectives for improving the quality and efficiency of education were closely aligned with USAID/Nicaragua Mission goals, especially the fostering of better educated, healthier and smaller families. (See Annex D.) These initial project objectives were refined through mutual agreement among USAID, MED and AED at the Selva Negra and the Linares conferences in late 1994 and early 1995. The three areas of project concentration, however, remained:

¹ Nicaragua. Poverty Profile. Preliminary findings of the 1993 Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS), World Bank, LA2HR, Paris, June 16, 1994.

- Institutional strengthening;
- Teacher training; and
- Curriculum and materials development.

Goals in each of these areas are presented in the discussions that follow and in Annex D.

The end of project status indicators (EOPS) established for Fiscal Year 1998 were both quantitative and qualitative:

1. Nicaragua's basic educational system will be expected to be managed by a strong MED, using an effective and relevant curriculum taught by an effective, well-trained cadre of career teachers.
2. The quality and efficiency of basic education in Nicaragua will have improved as measured by:
 - An increase from 22% to 30% of labor force with primary education;
 - 50% reduction in repetition in first four grades;
 - 20% increase in language arts and mathematics test scores;
 - Improvements in academic achievement;
 - An increase in primary school completion;
 - A decrease in years to produce a sixth grade graduate; and
 - A reduction in the dropout rate.²

Some of the EOPS are general. This is due to the lack of baseline data when the Project Paper was written. It led to the inclusion of data collection within the project itself.

As the project developed, MED expressed concern about other elements and requested their inclusion. The changes presented at the various meetings resulted in adaptations within the three components but did not alter the overall strategy.

But the story begins earlier. With the arrival of the constitutional government in February of 1990, USAID bolstered the educational system in three principal ways:

- Funding an emergency, stop-gap textbook production program;
- Subsidizing the early retirement of excess central MED staff; and
- Contracting for the "Nicaraguan Primary Education Subsector Assessment."

Nine areas were studied in that assessment report, which later crystallized into the three components of the BASE project. The study areas were: the current status of educational access and efficiency;

² USAID, Project Paper Summary and Technical Analysis, 1992.

the legal framework for educational development; the costs and financing of primary education; the MED administrative structure; curriculum and instruction; materials development; teacher training; adult education; and school-community relationships.

Key statistics from that period, as shown in Table 1, demonstrate the critical situation in Nicaraguan primary education at project inception. Table 1 also compares Nicaragua to other countries in the region in 1990 and presents progress made to date (when information is available) on these same indicators. It is important to note, however, that quantitative improvements are not necessarily attributable to the BASE project alone.

Although some information is incomplete and the variety of sources does not always permit a direct comparison, it is evident that the Government of Nicaragua (GON) has dedicated a considerable amount of its resources to education in the past two decades. The high percentage of the national budget devoted to education is not only above the Latin American average but has increased by about 2% in the past four years.

In general, indicators of educational advance in Nicaragua in the past five years were favorable. Net enrollment was up 3%, first grade repetition down 4% and the average number of years to complete primary school was 11 years in 1994. Student-teacher ratio descended by about one student in the period; however, when administrative personnel are not considered, the 1994 ratio remained over 35.

**Table 1 - Nicaragua, Key Indicators in Primary Education, 1990 and 1994,
Comparisons with 1990 Latin American Averages³**

KEY INDICATOR	LATIN AMERICAN AVERAGES, 1990	NICARAGUA, 1990	NICARAGUA, 1994
1. Net Enrollment Among 7-12 Age Group	86%	75.6%	78.6%
2. Brute Enrollment Among 7-12 Age Group	112.7%	98%	104.4%
3. Repetition Rate Among First Graders	45%	29.51%	25.56% *
4. % Students Who Enter First Grade And Will Complete 8 Years of Education	59.6%	55.4%	29.9% (For 6 Years)*
5. Average Number of Years Needed to Complete 8 Years of Education	15.5	14.9	9.9 (For 6 Years) *
6. Initial Enrollment, Grades 1-6	Not Applicable	632,882 *	747,759 *
7. Total Number of Teachers, Grades 1-6 (Includes Administrative Personnel)	Not Applicable	19,022	23,022
8. Student-Teacher Ratio (Includes Administrative Personnel)	Not Available	33.27	32.48 35.25 (Teachers Only)
9. Public Expenditure in Education as % of GNP	4.2%	6.2%	5.5% (Estimated)
10. Central Government Expenditures in Educ. (%)	10.2% (1991)	9.66% (1990) (Only MED)	11.76% (Only MED)

³ Data without an asterisk were from: UNESCO, OREALC. Situacion Educativa de America Latina y el Caribe, 1980-1994, April 1996.

Data with an asterisk were taken from: MED, Planning Office Nicaragua: Nicaragua: Datos Basicos (August 1995), Nicaragua: La Realidad Educativa, Borrador (December 1995) and the Bureau of Statistics, MED.

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II. METHODOLOGY AND REPORT FORMAT

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DevTech Systems Inc. was contracted by USAID to evaluate the Nicaraguan Basic Education project. The evaluators, Drs. Donald Lemke, Abel McBride and David Jickling, conducted the field study during June 1996 and presented the Draft Final Report at the end of their stay.

The principal goals of this formative evaluation were to:

- Indicate and describe major findings of progress toward achieving project objectives and end of project status indicators.
- Utilize these findings to present appropriate conclusions in reference to overall project development and the advances in each of the three components.
- Present recommendations for mid-term project adjustments.

A. Methodology

In gathering the information necessary to express the findings and present conclusions and recommendations, the team utilized the following methodological techniques:

- Technical analysis of key project documents and reports and of documentation from related projects and other MED accounts. (See Annex A.)
- Interviews with project personnel from USAID, AED and MED.
- Interviews with specialists from other projects or from outside education.
- Field observations in more than 50 schools.
- Review of existing evaluations.
- Experiences obtained in similar projects.
- Previous experiences of the evaluators in Nicaragua and Latin America.

The team conducted interviews in Washington with DevTech coordinators and with AED technicians responsible for the project. In Nicaragua extensive exchanges were held with the AED Project Director, AED Chief of Party; the AED, Juarez Associates, IDEAS and Clapp & Mayne field personnel; MED officials at central, departmental and school levels; and coordinators of associated projects. Field visits to schools and to departmental offices supplemented the information. (See Annex B.)

A small field office to centralize documentation and communication was set up at a Managua hotel. The team met daily to exchange information and then weekly reviewed progress and projections, sharing insights and ideas. As drafts evolved, they were exchanged internally and adjusted to ensure a uniform format and overall team projections.

The existence of two parallel projects, a new cadre of well-trained and idea-oriented leaders in the Ministry of Education and a seemingly favorable atmosphere for change in Nicaragua were all critical factors that contributed to the advances noted in the report. It is not possible to determine precisely how much of this progress can be attributed to BASE. Some of the conclusions and recommendations may be more a commentary on global advances by MED than suggested adjustments to the BASE project. Indeed, the two are interrelated.

B. Format of the Report

The format of the report was oriented mainly by the Scope of Work. (See Annex C.) In each of the three components, specific tasks as defined in the Scope of Work were used as a framework for presenting findings, conclusions and recommendations. The major sections include:

- An executive summary.
- The body of the report, including:
 - A description of the country context.
 - Methodology and report format.
 - Analysis of broad-scale mid-term adjustments.
 - Findings and presentation of conclusions and recommendations on each of the three components.
 - Analysis of procurement process.
- Appendices with the evaluation's Scope of Work, the project logical framework, a bibliography of documents and persons consulted and the field research instruments utilized.
- A one-page evaluation abstract.

III. PROJECT RE-ORIENTATION

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The mid-term evaluation team of BASE recommends a single focus for the second phase of the project:

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CLASSROOM LEARNING

All project interventions should converge on that single goal. Focus should be on broad project results, not small task deliverables.

Three priority mechanisms are recommended to achieve that central goal:

1. Simplified, practical pamphlets that demonstrate how to use the existing curriculum guides and materials.
2. A continuous teacher training program.
3. Systematic development of community-supported schools.

Three project strategies are also recommended:

1. Strive for country-wide impact on curricular transformation, teacher training and decentralization.
2. Link project activities to the goals and programs of the new government.
3. Coordinate project activities closely with other donors.

The elections this year make it inevitable that the Basic Education project will be re-oriented. No one can anticipate the priorities and guidelines of the new government. In order to facilitate that transition while maintaining the proposed single goal, four critical areas are discussed in this section.

A. Country-Wide Impact, Moving from Micro to Macro

Findings

Project goals related to an "effective and relevant curriculum taught by an effective and well-trained cadre of career teachers" cannot be met by concentrating on a very limited number of schools. Even though the EOPS have evolved with the project, they still relate to overall national improvements in

primary education. The project now spends the majority of its funds in the substantive area on about 1.4% (68) of the 4,714 (1993) primary schools, which have just 4.2% of the student population.

In some ways this is misleading. The strategy of MED to focus on a limited number of schools was to create model centers where teachers from other schools could be trained. The goal was not to create reproducible models which can be later applied to the remaining 98% of the schools. However, in practice, most of the energies since project inception of both MED and BASE personnel were spent in the creation of the 68 model schools. Inasmuch as these schools are in large and small urban centers, the 2,875 multi-grade schools in the rural areas were not included.

The term "model" does not seem to fit the entire group. Originally there were 42 demonstration schools and six laboratory schools under BASE. Twenty two come from the SIMEN project where they were called "escuelas guías." Each was designed with different goals, resources and challenges. Later 68 were grouped under the category of "experimental" schools, and more recently the name was changed to model schools. Schools selected in the original categories responded to specific criteria and set up concrete objectives. These do not necessarily relate to the new objectives for the model schools.

In addition, the idea of an experimental school as a model has been under heavy scrutiny in Latin America in the last decade. In studies done in Chile, for example, it was found that the selection and provision of additional resources to what was a typical school changed the nature of the school.⁴ A new learning environment was created, quite different from that present earlier. The amount of the resources dedicated to that change process in a single school made national replication virtually impossible.

Much depends on the presence and/or development of a true leader at the school level, not just a manager or administrator. In all cases where the evaluation team saw the beginnings of fundamental administrative or curricular change in a school, it was because of the presence of a dynamic school principal. This was also true in the Chilean experimentation. Leaders mobilize the community, inspire teachers and create that positive learning environment.

Giving resources and power to the local community has been generally accepted as a means of improving education at that level. The problem is in the organization of decentralization and the plan for its necessary expansion. The 100 autonomous schools originally selected could easily provide experience and information for eventual expansion to a larger number of communities. However, if MED hopes to complete the process in the foreseeable future, these lessons should be documented and an expansion plan adapted.⁵

⁴ These experimental projects were carried out largely by Gabriel Castillo at the "Centro de Perfeccionamiento" in the greater Santiago area. Initial results were published under the title of "Escuela para Aprender." Basic conclusions were that you could change one school by entering with different ideas and a variety of resources, but to reach a larger number of schools required a different strategy.

⁵ Present plans limit decentralization to schools with 500 or more students. Future consideration, it is hoped, will be given to adapting this model to groups (nuclei) of smaller rural schools.

BASE had reasonable success in penetrating the central MED and the Departmental Directorates of Education (DDEs) at the departmental level. The movement to a more macro impact within the project depends upon the successful establishment of decentralized schools and turning the higher levels of the Ministry around so that they become back stops for independent local school leadership. The evaluation team found the decentralization process successful but apparently moving at a very gradual pace.

In educational innovations much depends upon the selection of a point (or points) of entry. The only people who normally enter the classroom at the school level are the principal and the supervisor. Experience in Latin America indicates that any change strategy must center around these two professionals. The teacher alone is not in a position to initiate change. People in the community do not normally have the technical capacity to do it. So the change leader at the school level is the principal with the support of the supervisor. Those two professionals should receive the major part of project attention.

Given the ground work done in the first years of BASE, it is now possible to "think big," to go beyond the carefully controlled experimental experience and to reach out to the remaining 98% of the schools. If necessary, in order to go macro, it would be better to moderate project expectations at the individual school or community level and select priorities based upon what can be institutionalized in a reasonable time frame. As a minimum this should be establishing the decentralization process and developing a viable program for improving learning at the classroom level with the supervisor, principal and the teacher on center stage.

Conclusions

1. In order to reach project goals it becomes necessary for BASE to move from its experimental mode in the first phase to an expansive approach in the second; that is, to shift from micro to macro. This will require not only re-thinking of all project activities but also the shattering of certain paradigms held by MED and BASE personnel. Think big should be the new challenge.
2. Expanding the decentralization process, especially through the autonomous school model, should become a priority in the second phase of BASE.
3. At the classroom level, it is not reasonable to expect an overnight transformation. Moving from a teaching environment to a learning environment requires setting reachable goals in a multi-step implementation process.
4. Any change process needs a leader. The principal and the supervisor are essential targets for any strategy that promotes improvement of learning at the school level.

B. Coordination

Findings

Three aspects of coordination are reviewed:

- Internal project/MED coordination.
- Coordination with other major donors.
- Setting up a coordination process for the transition to the new government.

Internal coordination - The number of international contractors involved is perhaps unusual in a project of this nature. Although the Academy for Educational Development has the paramount role with Juarez Associates as the chief collaborator, IDEAS and Clapp & Mayne (C&M) each have special and very specific functions.

Early role clarification, particularly for the local Clapp & Mayne consultants, was not easy. Even though it was MED who expressed the desire to have more Nicaraguans involved in the project, when the C&M consultants arrived at operational levels in April 1995 for their integration in the daily work of MED, their role was not clearly defined. This was equally true of the relationship of the C&M technicians to the other consultants contracted by the project. As some communication difficulties still persist, coordination remains pending.

A continuing need is the full utilization of the long-term consultants in the substantive area. The yearly plans and, of course, their individual job descriptions help to clarify their tasks, but even larger contributions should be expected in the future. Shifts in project strategy to a classroom-oriented, macro projection will require broader role definitions for the long-term consultants. This second project phase will demand long-term consultants who can work with MED technicians within the framework of system-wide change, and not just on specific segments.

Strong leadership is required to facilitate this blending of the work of all short- and long-term project consultants into a team. That team members must have a single goal and a clear understanding of project purposes and their relationship to MED counterparts. Necessarily this involves a much closer integration and coordination of project activities between institutional strengthening and the substantive area.

This spirit of teamwork must also apply to relationships between consultants and MED technicians. It was the feeling of the evaluation group that key MED authorities did not see this project as their own. Conversations frequently expressed "our" and "their" responsibilities in relation to the project. That difficult transition to "we" is an essential step for the second phase of this project. It involves total MED commitment to the project. When all are striving toward common and accepted objectives and goals for the improvement of learning at the classroom level, the project will have solidified.

Other Donors - When this project began, it was the largest donor-supported reform program in MED. Now with the \$34 million four-year World Bank project and the continuation of the SIMEN project, there are major partners. Until now, the three projects have coordinated exceedingly well with each other. It will become imperative that early in the next government all sit down with the new MED officials to plan their work on a cooperative basis. This is especially true with World Bank in the institutional development component and with SIMEN in the substantive areas.

USAID's leadership in this process is critical, at both the institutional and donor levels. The Mission has given fundamental backing to MED through this project and other support at a decisive moment. This helped the educational system find its direction and orientation in a crucial transition period.

The presence of a large World Bank project changes USAID's role. Where in the past, the relatively small UNESCO project was the only other long-term effort with outside funding, now the World Bank's contribution looms large. Perhaps USAID's role moves toward that of strategic, innovative support. Beyond the Basic Education project, the role of the Mission in education might become more specifically targeted, centered, for example, on a single significant element, such as teacher training or the multi-grade schools or the isolated rural schools.

Transition - The new government will take office in January 1997. It can be assumed that the new authorities in the Ministry of Education will have different priorities and ideas. At a minimum they will want to set targets for their accomplishment during the 1997-2002 period. These may or may not coincide with the priorities of the current government or with the 1997 Annual Work Plan now being developed for BASE. Adjustments will be necessary.

Conclusions

1. In order to increase the effectiveness of long-term consultants, the continued improvement of team building, internal coordination and communication are necessary. Long-term consultants for the second phase of the project must provide broad leadership competencies in their specialty fields. Role clarification should be early and precise. Short-term consultants will be limited to specific areas of expertise.
2. The second phase of the project should be movement for building a strong team feeling among MED, USAID and AED based on the recommended single project goal.
3. It is important that cooperation established among the major donors to MED be continued and amplified in order to take full advantage of existing resources and assist the Ministry in the advancement of high impact activities.
4. USAID's role in the support of basic education during the 1994-98 period has been and will continue to be a cornerstone of the modernization of education in Nicaragua. This role will likely change from being broad based to supporting more specific areas after the conclusion of this project.

5. A discussion session should be scheduled as soon as feasible with the new government, bringing to the table a wide variety of projections, evaluations, goals and recommendations for project continuation. World Bank and UNESCO should be included in that session. Within the project, two things can be done at this point:

- a. Continue the implementation of the 1996 plan and the development of a flexible 1997 plan to be adapted to the goals of the new government.
- b. Prepare information, evaluations, clear options and sound technical advice for the new government.

C. Priority Focus

Findings

Times change. Nicaragua is a country that is evolving rapidly. The objectives initially outlined in the survey of the educational situation in 1991 and refined in the 1992 project paper were re-interpreted several times during the 1994-96 period. In part, this was because of MED's changing priorities and the urgencies of the moment. Under these pressures, the project responded exceedingly well.

This flexibility permitted the project to shift support to the autonomous schools project and weave it into the fabric of new priority objectives. Project design in 1992 could not anticipate the impact that decentralization would have on the whole institutional strengthening component, nor did it contemplate the continuing emphasis of MED on a relatively limited number of schools in the substantive area. The first half of the project went through a period of searching and testing of strategies that would lead to completion of project and MED goals.

In some ways, this was positive. It enabled the project to respond to Ministry needs. Flexibility permitted a BASE impact in decentralization, the building of a new evaluation unit, training that was not originally anticipated, the re-printing of textbooks and more. At the same time, it has resulted in a somewhat diversified approach to educational development.

Where the first phase stressed diversity, the second should give way to a relatively few high impact interventions that reach down to the local level. These targets should be visible, replicable and cost-effective. All actions in the project, including those carried out at central or departmental level, should be accountable to the single priority of improving student learning at the classroom level.

There are three additional considerations on project priority focus. MED receives frequent requests to support special activities on the Atlantic Coast. MED/BASE is capable of responding to these requests, but the cultural and linguistic diversity of the region demands a separate, multi-lingual program to fit their very unique educational needs. This is beyond the scope of BASE, especially in

a second phase where priority focus is needed. And yet over 5% of the population of Nicaragua live in that area. Eight of the MED/BASE model schools are there.

A recent study indicates this dilemma.⁶ Visits to the eight schools revealed that the teachers were trying to put in practice the principles of the curricular transformation, but still used the traditional approaches. Little integration and classroom participation was noted. Reading-writing presented the primary difficulty because of the diversity of languages. The majority of the children had Miskito, Sumo or English as their first language. In several schools the teacher utilized mimic or other children to communicate.

After discussing this issue in many of the interviews and reflecting upon its complexity, the evaluation team suggests that USAID and AED work with the Ministry in looking for another donor willing to formulate a special project for the region. The project should mirror the overall objectives of BASE but at the same time make those singular adjustments demanded by the cultural diversity of the Atlantic Coast. In the meantime BASE should continue to support the development of learning at the classroom level in the best possible manner within the overall constraints of the project. This is not a neat solution to a complicated problem but, in the medium range, it could provide the realistic educational backing which the region so badly needs.

A second area of concern is whether BASE should extend its coverage to the remaining two grades of primary education. Almost all project EOPS and goals are in terms of the complete six-year primary school. Still, the greatest need is in the first four grades where dropout, repetition and absenteeism rates are the most troublesome. The evaluation team discussed the pros and cons of this with a variety of project and non-project personnel, finally concluding that the greatest potential impact of the project remains in the first four grades. The major problem in education in Nicaragua is there. Project goals need to be consolidated at that level before moving on to the fifth and sixth grades. This does not override potential requests for assistance by MED to complement activities at that level.

The third area is also problematic. This involves the difficulty in reaching all primary schools in the country with a quality program that realistically supports student learning. There are many needs to be fulfilled. At the classroom level, baseline data are needed to determine both the point of departure and progress toward better learning. There is a need for training, more training and still more training of the supervisors, school principals and classroom teachers. Incentives will be required. Materials should be adjusted to fit different classroom realities. Parent involvement becomes critical. Decentralization/deconcentration will need to become more effective. Financing and budgeting should take their next steps. Real power and decision making should be moved from MED to increasingly lower levels. Project evaluation must be more finely tuned. Supervision needs to be strengthened. Information should be more readily available for decision making.

⁶ Valoración del Cumplimiento de los Siete Factores Básicos en las Escuelas Modelo de las Regiones Autónomas (RAAN-RAAS), MED, Dirección de Planificación Educativa, Junio de 1996.

All of these elements create pressures to maintain concentration on a limited number of schools, to ensure quality first in that population. The evaluation team suggests the project focus the large majority of its funds and energies in mobilizing resources that improve the quality of learning at the classroom level.

Conclusions

1. The Basic Education project has had the flexibility during the first phase to adapt to widely changing educational demands placed upon the system.
2. MED strategies for reaching broad project goals have been tested and refined and seem ready for implementation.
3. Careful attention should be given to the selection of a single project priority for the second phase and orienting major project energies and financing toward its completion.
4. If BASE hopes to set up a process for expanding quality programs to the remainder of the schools in the country, involvement at the fifth and sixth grades becomes difficult.
5. BASE is not equipped in personnel or funding to provide the needed priority attention for such a diversified cultural region as the Atlantic Coast.

D. Innovative and Effective Interventions

Findings

High impact strategies that can be maintained over time in the development of the project should be first priorities in the second phase of BASE. These should be simple, effective in reaching project goals and cost-sensitive.

Perhaps paramount among these strategies is the need to promote innovative ideas for involving civil society in the work of the schools. Giving more importance and power to the community in the decentralization process is a vital step. Some other ideas include:

- Requesting local businesses to "adopt a school";
- Persuading industries to give a percentage of their earnings to support the school(s) in the zone where they operate;
- Collecting cast-offs from local industry for the development of classroom learning materials;
- Securing parental support in campaigns that focus upon cleaning the community or resolving special local problems; and
- Involving church, civic and governmental groups from the community in the active support of the schools.

The only limit to civil society involvement in the local schools is the creativity and initiative of the community leaders. Chief among those leaders is the school principal. In the visits of the evaluation team, schools successful in promoting student learning had an active, innovative school director.

On a broader scale, the use of consultants in support of the project has been quite extensive. Perhaps because of the diversity of goals fixed by the project and the steady demand upon MED for quick solutions in relatively new areas, the project has used many short-term consultants. From January of 1994 through June of 1996, a total of 170 person/months of short-term consultants have worked with the project. Of this total, 127 person/months were in Institutional Development, 22 in teacher training and 21 in curriculum. That is equivalent to more than 14 years effort, or seven long-term consultants for two years each. In addition, the project is currently funding six long-term consultants, three international and three national consultants through Clapp & Mayne.

The short-term consultants have been of two types: a) those who return for several missions; and b) one-time consultants. The one-time consultants have been most active in training, very technical areas or with specific studies. Returning consultants have been largely in the area of Institutional Strengthening.

It is obvious that in the second phase the project will have different consultant needs, largely because the studies or technical missions will have a narrow focus. Also, with the evolution of the micro centers for training, demands for external short-term consultants in that area should be reduced or eliminated. Repeater consultants in key areas will likely continue to be needed, at least into 1997.

With the new focus of MED on decentralization and deconcentration, another requirement arises. A full-time person is needed to direct the project toward making achievable, sustainable contributions in these areas, especially training for educational leadership at departmental and local levels. This is beyond the role of the Chief of Party (COP) who would continue to integrate the administrative and substantive components of the project around coherent goals. Both the new long-term consultant and the COP would provide technical inputs to help move MED from a directive role to a more supportive function. Considering the cooperation now given by the World Bank in the decentralization area, the evaluation team feels that this could be a fundamental means for USAID to be a key contributor in this MED priority.

During the first term of the project emphasis, has been upon the development of rather sophisticated services and materials for improving the overall management in selected schools. This "searching" strategy has not always been cost-effective, nor does it appear to have completely achieved the impact desired.

In Institutional Strengthening the project has been significantly successful in:

- a. Helping MED articulate its goals in decentralization/deconcentration;
- b. Establishing a first class computer network linking Ministry offices and, in the near future, Departmental Offices of the Ministry; and

- c. Focusing attention upon creating a continuing evaluation process in both administrative and substantive functions of the Ministry.

In the modernization of MED, the project has promoted three important innovations fundamental to decentralization: a) an accounting system that integrates actions from central MED to the school, enabling the Ministry to decentralize funds with confidence; b) budgeting at the operational level based on program needs; and c) a payroll process with payment to educators according to their current qualifications. This latter is leading to a major re-organization of the Human Resource Office, freeing personnel to provide other services to the teachers.

These interventions are important and will, it is hoped, continue to provide future benefits to the educational system. For the second phase of the project it becomes crucial that base interventions be phased out in areas now fully operant. At the same time, MED will need support in completing other innovations, especially those which relate to changing the Ministry from a controlling to a policy setting, guidance institution, with real decision making at the school level.

From project inception, modernization needs have created strong pressures for sophisticated services under Institutional Strengthening. Noteworthy has been the establishment of the advanced Management Information System (MIS), and the provision of top-quality policy planning assistance. It is important to note that MIS was not an end in itself but a means for developing other modernization efforts which will come to fruition in the second phase of BASE.

In training, the need for innovative interventions is especially acute. The list of training activities for the first term of the project is extensive, and expensive. Until now the project has focused more upon face-to-face training, the least cost-effective. Justification has been that this is the best way of reaching large groups of teachers, a hypothesis that is not fully proven. Teachers have been given training in groups, sometimes with as many as 40 colleagues. Teachers come to the group with widely different backgrounds and levels of preparation. Some need to be helped with methodologies, some with specific subject areas, others with everything. But under these circumstances there really is little opportunity for individualizing that attention.

Several alternatives are available for some of the high-cost elements utilized in the first phase of the project:

- More extensive use of Nicaraguan consultants.
- Promotion of distance training techniques in combination with face-to-face instruction.
- Wider use of Nicaraguan instructors in the training programs.

Others will be presented in the discussions within the individual components.

Conclusions

1. There is a need to promote new and creative manners for civil society to participate more closely in support of the local schools.
2. The first phase of the project has been expensive, but with reasonably good results.
3. There exists a series of more cost-effective ideas which could be applied in the second phase.
4. The roles of and the needs for long- and short-term consultants will shift in the second phase toward specialists who can directly support the expansion process and the improvement of classroom learning.
5. The project has become complicated with diverse sections and relatively sophisticated technical activities. The second phase will need simpler and more concrete project interventions and publications focused upon a single objective, improvement of the quality of classroom learning.

IV. MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

A. INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

**B. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND
INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS**

C. TEACHER TRAINING

IV. MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTIVITIES

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Institutional Strengthening

This component of the project seeks to improve the institutional efficiency of the Ministry to carry out its educational functions. These improvements will be achieved through reform of its human resource, policy making, planning, budgeting, accounting, logistical, informational, organizational, training and evaluation systems. This will be done within a framework of administrative deconcentration of authority to regional offices⁷ with decentralization of decision making to the local communities.⁸

Deconcentration

Administrative functions, including control of personnel and finance, are being transferred from the central Ministry to the regional offices. This administrative deconcentration will enable the 19 field offices – the Departmental Directorates of Education – of the Ministry to perform a more effective support role for improved learning at the school level.

Decentralization

Decentralization, through the creation of autonomous schools, will promote wider participation by parents and communities in school management and school finance. The process began in 1993 with the creation of municipally managed schools in 10 municipalities. Political problems in some municipalities led to a change in the approach to decentralization. Now the emphasis is on the establishment of autonomous schools at the local level, independent of the municipal governments. Each autonomous school will have its own decision making power over personnel and finance. Support to curriculum development and classroom activities will be given to school professionals.

The project seeks to contribute to institutional strengthening in three areas:

1. Improving Central MED and Departmental Operations. The project is providing the MED with internal systems of management at the central and departmental levels needed to give sustained, effective leadership and support for basic education in Nicaragua.

⁷ There are 19 regional offices of the Ministry, each with a Departmental Directorate of Education.

⁸ There are three main types of decentralization in progress: delegation of authority to municipalities, the creation of autonomous schools in which the community signs an agreement with MED to assume control of specific school management functions and the return of responsibility to the private sector.

2. Improving the MED Policy Formulation and Implementation Capability. The project is supporting the MED's national level policy development and its efforts to improve more effective management of its limited resources.

3. Improving Management Information. The project supports the creation of an advanced Management Information System. This system will help activities under all project components achieve their objectives and enable the Ministry to improve its operations at all levels. Inter-office communications, statistical systems, personnel registers, accounting and budgeting are initial applications being installed.

TASK NO. 1 - Analyze the impact of the project on institutional strengthening efforts at the MED, on its policies and priorities and on its organizational structure.

Findings

Institutional strengthening efforts at the MED

The project has been particularly successful in adapting its activities to the Ministry's innovative priorities in decentralization and deconcentration. It has worked closely with the Ministry on clarifying the policy making process and articulating program priorities. It has also provided a system for the use of computer capabilities in support of better administration of the educational system. Analyses and first steps have been taken in helping the Ministry better manage its human and financial resources at all levels of the organization.

MED's policies and priorities

The project has been highly supportive of the Ministry's priorities for the decentralization of the school system and deconcentration of management functions to the departmental (regional) level. It has influenced both the establishment and achievement of these policies. An analysis of the Ministry's system for policy development and implementation was made in 1994. This led to workshops that had a major impact on policy development within the Ministry. The decentralization policy, for example, grew out of the conclusions of the project-supported Selva Negra conference in 1994. The deconcentration policy grew out of a similar conference in 1995 at La Palmera.

Policy formulation assistance has enabled the Ministry to define its strategic objectives and to move ahead toward those objectives, especially in the area of decentralization. Organizational functions and responsibilities as they relate to decentralization have been analyzed. The roles and relationships of supervision, planning, donor coordination and the departmental offices in the decentralization process have been clarified. Innovative accounting, budgeting and payroll systems have supported decentralization. More, however, needs to be done in this process. In 1996, the new General Directorate of Investigation, Development and Evaluation, with project support, will contribute

significantly to policy development. This will be done through research studies that lay out policy options.

Assistance to the Ministry in the preparation of a draft law for decentralization of the school system has been a significant contribution to furthering this basic policy in the Ministry. The Minister is well aware that decentralization is progressing ahead of its legal basis. This has raised questions about the new policy, especially as it affects the direction and financing of the autonomous schools with community/parent participation and contributions. Now, with the draft law in hand, it is anticipated that a firm legal basis for decentralized and autonomous schools will be established during the year ahead.

Organizational structure of MED

The project has been helpful in clarifying the organization of the Ministry at both central and departmental levels. It has helped the Directive Council of the Ministry set priorities for administrative reform and coordinate these activities. The creation of the General Directorate of Investigation, Development and Evaluation within the Ministry resulted from project recommendations. Strengthening the Departmental Directorates of Education in the field has been a special concern of the project.⁹

TASK NO. 2 - Review the impact of MED's changing environment on the BASE project.

Findings

Personnel turnover within MED

There can be no doubt that these changes have delayed project progress. During the first six months of 1995, every senior manager below the Minister left the Ministry or changed jobs. However, the continuity of the Minister and his principal assistant in their positions and their continuing support of the project have tended to compensate for these changes. New managers throughout the Ministry have come to their jobs with new energies and new demands upon the project.

Shifting organizational patterns within MED

The project itself has promoted the creation of new organizational units at both the central and regional levels. Their existence and effective functioning have become central to reform of the administrative systems, especially in evaluation, computer systems, personnel and finance.

⁹ A passing note: The General Directorate of Educational Supervision appears on one edge of the current organization chart of the Ministry. In fact, the Directorate is at the very center of Ministry management, between the two Vice Ministers and the Departmental Offices (DDEs).

Shaping the organizational structure to support deconcentration and decentralization is a continuing need within the Ministry and a challenge for the project. The role of the Ministry will, it is planned, shift from being a controlling agency to a support group for decentralized, autonomous schools. This change in the "culture" of the organization will be a continuing challenge to the Ministry for years to come.

Shifting policies and priorities within MED

The project has followed the Ministry's priorities in curricular reform, deconcentration and decentralization. It has positioned itself to help carry out these policies and to work out the systems and procedures that will support them. Some shifts in policies have placed increased demands on the project, calling for flexible responses to new priorities.

TASK NO. 3 - Evaluate the project's contributions to the following areas:

a. Development of a strategic plan for decentralization

Findings

Major change is underway in the administration of the Nicaraguan public school system. There are good prospects that the new century will find wide acceptance of community-supported, decentralized schools providing more resources, better management and improved teaching and learning throughout the country. The BASE project has been contributing significantly to this process. The World Bank is now pledging major resources to further this activity.

Decentralization

Although not a key part of the original design of the BASE project, support for a decentralized, community-supported primary education system has properly become one of the central objectives of the project. The Government of Nicaragua is committed to this fundamental reform of the educational system. The current Minister and his staff have provided dynamic leadership for this change and modernization in the public school system. Their 1996 goals stress the importance they give to furthering school autonomy and the deconcentration of educational administration. It is expected that the next government, which will take office in January 1997, will continue this commitment. It will make its own adjustments and give its imprint to the activity, but hopefully will maintain the basic thrust of decentralization.

Autonomous schools

There are presently 490 autonomous schools in the system. Another 120 schools are in process of becoming autonomous. By the end of 1996 it is projected that 750 of the nearly 5,000 public and private, primary and secondary schools will be autonomous. Looking ahead, the project seeks to achieve a 50% target for autonomy by the year 2000. This will mean that most of the 1,000 urban schools and nearly one-half of the 4,000 rural schools will be autonomous.

Autonomous schools within the decentralized system – especially urban secondary schools in better-off neighborhoods – have been successful in raising local funds to support local activities. They have, for example, been able to raise teachers' salaries by as much as 50% with their own funds. In one outstanding case, the Gaspar Garcia Institute, a secondary school in Muy Muy, Matagalpa, is raising 49% of its budget from local contributions.

Expanding their resource base has been a major benefit of decentralization for the autonomous schools. It has also enabled them to increase discipline over their teachers and has contributed to better teacher morale and teacher satisfaction. It can be assumed that improved teaching and learning are taking place in these schools.

Challenges

Now the decentralization process faces a series of challenges that must be addressed. Will decentralization unduly favor the better-off communities that are able to raise more funds for autonomous schools? How can equity be assured through increased subsidies to the poorer communities? How will teacher status and benefits be handled in a decentralized personnel system? How can parents and the local community, including businesses and social groups be encouraged to more actively support their schools? What controls will be necessary over the use of locally generated funds? How far will autonomy be given in matters of curriculum and teaching methods? Is decentralization a first step toward wider privatization of the educational system? These are important questions to be dealt with in the years ahead.¹⁰

Building support for decentralized schools

Building community support for the decentralized school system has received relatively little attention in project implementation. A USAID centrally funded project developed social marketing techniques to encourage local support for schools and has trained Ministry staff in their use. A recent USAID Mission-supported project with the Save the Children PVO has begun the process of seeking out and supporting innovative community self-help activities for better local schools. That project will work

¹⁰ It should be observed that Nicaragua is moving ahead with the decentralization of health services and water systems as well as education. These are all significant reforms in a political system that has a long tradition of highly centralized political control. They will not be achieved overnight, but to the outside observer they are important new directions.

with 300 schools to strengthen parent and community participation in local school management. A current World Bank project has funds to expand these efforts of building local support for decentralized schools throughout the county. This will be an important contribution to assuring the sustainability of these educational reforms in the future.

b. Design and implementation of a human resource development system

Findings

Policy, procedures and training for improved human resource development within the Ministry have received project attention. New leadership within the Ministry's Human Resources office has brought a new commitment to these efforts. They have included the establishment of an integrated human resource data base, procedures to develop a merit and job classification system and refinement of recruitment and selection processes, performance appraisal and promotion practices. A training needs assessment was carried out with emphasis on decentralization, budgeting, accounting and personnel management.

An extensive program of workshops and seminars has been carried out by the project in the past two years in support of institutional strengthening and other project purposes. Planning, data processing, budgeting, accounting, decentralization, evaluation and management capacity have all received significant attention. It has been observed that continuing follow-up training will be needed in these areas along with greater linkage between administrative training and the substantive functions of the Ministry, i.e., improved classroom learning.

An automated payroll system for the Ministry's 32,000 employees has been developed, which will be a critical element in facilitating the deconcentration of personnel functions to the departmental level. Matagalpa is the first departmental (regional) office of the Ministry to be administering its own payroll. In addition, seven municipalities, including Granada, are operating their own payrolls on a decentralized basis.

In 1996 the project will seek to more fully implement the Ministry's human resource development system. This will include training staff members at the central and departmental levels in the operation of the system. This training will place emphasis on developing the capacities to use the automated information system for maintaining personnel records and on changing the operational role of Ministry staff to that of establishing norms for a decentralized administrative system. The personnel system continues to need better job descriptions, effective staff evaluation systems for both teachers and administrators and better selection and contracting procedures for hiring staff for the Ministry.

c. Design and implementation of an accounting and budgeting system

Findings

The BASE-supported cash accounting system redesign has been approved by the Ministry of Finance and the Comptroller's Office and is being set up through the development of operational manuals, installing computer programs and staff training. Systems for inventory control and fixed assets have been revised. A simplified system for maintaining accounts is now being tested in selected autonomous schools.

After careful study of the alternatives, an advanced accounting software system – Platinum – has been purchased and will be installed in the central MED and the 19 DDEs. It is anticipated that this will have major benefits for the accounting system.

An integrated budget system, beginning at program level, has been designed for both planning and monitoring of programs throughout the educational system. It was used for the development of the Ministry's program plans for 1996. This budget resulted from the training of over 700 officials at all levels of Ministry and the incorporation of their inputs into the consolidated budget document.

In 1996 the project seeks to consolidate the new accounting and budget systems. Emphasis will be given to linking budgeting and accounting and to making the systems more operable. Staff will be trained at the central and departmental levels in their operation and in the use of the complementary automated systems. Automated accounting is further advanced but attention will be given as well to the development of software tools for improved budgeting.

d. Design of a formative and summative evaluation system

Findings

A General Directorate of Investigation, Development and Evaluation has been created as a result of project recommendations. The central office is being helped in the design and implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system for this new directorate. Ministry staff are being trained in both institutional development and educational program evaluation. In cooperation with the World Bank, an extensive evaluation of the decentralization process is presently being carried out. This will provide baseline data for measuring change in the management of decentralized schools in the future.

The project continues work this year on the establishment of an effective institution-wide monitoring and evaluation system. This system will support improved school supervision at the local level and better statistics and information for management decisions at all levels of the system. As a secondary benefit, it will also provide data for progress evaluation under the BASE project.

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e. Design and implementation of the Management Information System for the MED

Findings

Based on an MIS design completed in 1994, work has moved ahead with this segment of the project. Procurement problems were resolved and an advanced fiber-optic computer network and accompanying software have been installed in the central offices of the Ministry and in four departmental offices. It is currently being expanded to the remaining departmental offices. The system is designed to allow expansion as needed in the future.

Staff training on the operation of the software systems and use of the systems' potential for improving Ministry operations has taken place as the systems have been installed. Educational statistics was the first process to be put on the computer system. Human resource data are the next priority. Salary checks are now being produced by the computer system. Financial management systems will follow. Another donor bank is funding a consultant to help design a computer-based inventory system for the maintenance, construction and other physical requirements of schools.

During 1996 this computer network will be extended to 15 DDE offices. Both MED and DDE staff will receive training in the use of the automated systems. Priority will be given to training for the effective use of the MIS to improve decentralized school management. MIS systems, of course, do not assure that decentralization will take place. They can be used just as well to re-centralize control over the educational system. An MIS is a two-edged sword.

Conclusions for institutional strengthening

1. The Ministry of Education has enjoyed dynamic leadership under this government for the past five years. By general consensus, the Ministry is one of the better-managed public-sector organizations in Nicaragua today. The BASE project has contributed significantly to improvement in the policy making process within the Ministry. It has supported the major innovation being undertaken to decentralize the educational system. The project has introduced an advanced computer network that will facilitate communication between central and regional offices and provide the basis for better decision making at all levels of the educational system. A research and evaluation capability within the Ministry is being established with project encouragement. These are important accomplishments.

2. Within the idea of institutional strengthening, the BASE project has supported several other ambitious administrative reforms. These activities have focused on improving the operations of the Ministry with emphasis on the administration of its human and financial resources. Each of these activities has been provided technical assistance, training and in some cases, commodity support. They have produced analyses, norms, procedures and training materials to guide their implementation.

3. These administrative reforms, although valuable in themselves, need better integration and effective relationships to project objectives. Too often the emphasis has been on meeting deadlines for "project deliverables." Concerns for relating them to other reforms, e.g., budgeting to planning and

accounting, have not received enough attention. Although these linkages are often difficult to make, they are vitally important if the reformed systems are to achieve the desired results. Of equal – or greater – importance is to associate these reforms with improved teaching and learning in the classroom. This is the "bottom line" of the whole enterprise.

4. The institutional strengthening reforms supported by the BASE project have had a complex process of coordination. Their consolidation, their integration, and their sustainability in the future are properly of continuing concern for project management. The reformed administrative systems, to be successful, need to provide timely, practical information. They need to support decision making and decision makers within the system. Accurate, timely data on school dropouts and retention will be of value to central and departmental managers. They should also be useful in motivating school directors to improve the performance of their schools. The Minister of Education, in his meeting with the evaluation team, expressed his regret that this information was not currently available to him in a usable form.

5. Deconcentration of administrative systems, expanding the authority of departmental offices, is an important step, but it is not enough. To provide for substantive, sustainable change in the educational system, it will be necessary to create autonomous schools throughout the country. These schools will have an expanded decision making authority as well as the capacity to generate local resources, receiving only guidance and subsidies from the Ministry. Central and regional staffs must undergo a basic change in point of view and attitude, moving from being controllers to supporting facilitators of improved classroom performance and learning.

6. Community support – essential for the success of a decentralized school system – has received less attention than it deserves from the BASE project. The USAID/Washington-funded ERHTS project helped develop social marketing techniques for this purpose. The grant being made by the USAID Mission to the Save the Children PVO will encourage innovative approaches to community support. The current World Bank project will give priority to community-supported educational development. The BASE project should also be increasingly supportive of this vital objective. Without broad and continuing community support from parents, teachers, school directors and private-sector groups, the creation of autonomous schools will be just another unsuccessful experiment in the history of Nicaraguan education.

7. Staff turnover within the Ministry and the BASE project has complicated and delayed project implementation. In spite of these obstacles, the project has made remarkable progress on a broad front of institutional strengthening activities. Now the focus should shift to a consolidation of the gains achieved, relating reforms to improved classroom performance and expansion of the decentralized model.

Recommendations for institutional strengthening

1. Contract a long-term advisor to work, for the remainder of the project, on the integration and consolidation of institutional strengthening reforms and to assure their maximum contribution and impact at the classroom level. The work of this advisor will seek to clarify and focus the institutional strengthening activities of the project on achievable and sustainable results in support of decentralized, autonomous schools. This advisor would take a leadership role in:

- a. Cooperative planning with the new government for consolidating management improvements;
- b. Developing strategies for the acceptance and expansion of the autonomous school concept;
- c. Promoting the training of Ministry and field staff in their changing roles in a decentralized school system;
- d. Assuring effective utilization of computer capabilities for continuing improvement in management systems; and
- e. Furthering innovative approaches for building community support for autonomous schools.

2. Prepare a strategy, in cooperation with other donors, to be presented to the new government in January 1997, on how the decentralized school system reforms can best be consolidated and expanded country-wide in the coming years. This policy-level exchange could well be carried out in a retreat type setting once the new senior authorities of the Ministry are in place.

3. Use project funds to expand community involvement in improving the quality and efficiency of local schools as is now being done with the Save the Children grant. Consider, for example, additional matching grants for innovative community self-help activities to provide better schools for their children. Consider the preparation of videos or other training systems to explain to Ministry staff, school personnel, parents and community members what decentralization involves and how autonomous schools can contribute to better education. These messages would also seek to motivate parents and community leaders to become more involved in school management and improvement. Coordinate community-level social marketing and training with the World Bank to ensure complementarity and continuity with their work in support of this area.

4. Stress training and program development to ensure that computer capabilities are used for the better management of educational resources at the central, regional and local levels. Considerable resources have been invested in these modern systems. Now the project and the Ministry face the challenge of helping to assure their successful use to improve education at the classroom level.

B. Curriculum Development and Instructional Materials

TASK NO. 1 - Analyze the quality of study programs and guides for Grades 1-4.

a. The curriculum programs and supporting guides

Findings

The process

The project advanced quickly and well in curriculum and Instructional Materials Development:

- A feasibility study for cost recovery strategies was completed in the first year of the project.
- Recommendations for the development of learning kits were made and the kits are now being procured. Training on use will follow.
- Recommendations for the restocking of current (1991) textbooks were made, the books printed and 426,000 copies distributed to Grades 1-4.¹¹
- First and second grade curricular programs and teacher's guides were written and validated in the model schools in a preliminary edition. More than 45,000 copies were printed and distributed to the schools throughout the country. More will follow.
- Studies on family structure impact on school attendance, the variables affecting dropout and repetition and other academic and teaching quality factors were completed or are in process.

In the curriculum area, the project has made a strong contribution to MED in the development of key materials and guides to promote the curricular transformation process. While most of the deliverables were specified in the original project design, several have been added to accommodate shifting MED needs. However, the complete story of the current curriculum guides and supporting materials dates from 1990, long before the initiation of BASE.

The new government, anxious to erase the ideological orientations in some of the educational materials of the 1980s, hurriedly produced, with USAID support, new textbooks for all grades. These textbooks, distributed in 1991, remained largely within the traditional teaching approach. Books were supplied to all grade levels and became the unofficial curriculum. Teachers learned to teach to the book and not to the child.

¹¹ Prior to the project, in 1992-94, 1.4 million textbooks were distributed under the Aguirre International contract.

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At about the same time, MED took the modified programs of 1990 and "improved" them. These "improved programs" were ready for distribution and use in 1993, though they were never really intended to be permanent. Meanwhile discussion centered upon developing "curricular cores." Early documents of a new "Curricular Policy" and "Guidelines for an Educational Policy" for the improvement of education were examined in workshops and seminars. With support from the UNESCO/Holland SIMEN project, 22 new "leader schools" (actually called "escuelas guias ") were established to promote programs for the improvement of quality education and develop curriculum support materials. The classroom teacher then had both the textbooks and the improved curricular programs. This was part of an ambitious 1992-96 plan for improving the curriculum.

But the time was not quite right. Through the tumultuous 1993 period, various models and ideas were discussed. Profiles of graduates of fourth and sixth grades were formulated. Consultative workshops on the concept of curriculum were held. The escuelas guias changed geographical locations but continued to key their programs to the realities of the community, initiating activities with participatory diagnostic studies.

In early 1994 the BASE project was launched. However, it was not until June of 1994, at a meeting to examine curricular orientations, that decisions began to be made. In July of 1994 MED issued the approved "Curricular Design" document with a "humanism-constructionism" focus. The teacher was seen as the "facilitator" of the learning process. Stress was upon the student and his learning. Active participative methodologies were proposed. Evaluation was centered in the process. Mathematics and reading were the curricular cores for the first two grades. Integrated development of the child was the primordial goal. Curricular programs were formulated around these principles. This child-centered approach became known as the "Curricular Transformation."

Meanwhile, in 1995 the classroom teacher was beginning his/her fifth year with the earlier textbooks and the improved guides.

Because of the active nature of the new orientation, all materials were part of the series called "We Teach and Learn in An Active Manner." This stress upon active methodologies became so strong that many teachers associated the Curricular Transformation with dynamic classroom action. BASE took a leading role in promoting not only the elaboration but also the validation of the mimeographed drafts of the teacher's manuals in the 46 demonstration and laboratory schools set up in the BASE project. This validation was carried out chiefly by MED personnel but with technical support from BASE specialists. Five books were printed in the 1995-96 period, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2 - Curriculum Materials Published by BASE

PUBLICATION	NUMBER OF COPIES
1. Prácticas Metodológicas de Lenguaje, Primero y Segundo Grados, 1995	8,500
2. Prácticas Metodológicas de Matemática, Primero y Segundo Grados, 1995	8,500
3. Manual Didáctico, 1995	19,787
4. Programas, Primer Grado, 1996	5,000
5. Programas, Segundo Grado, 1996	4,000

The quality

The original objective of the new guides was to maximize the use of the textbooks. Inasmuch as there was a conflict in orientation between the curriculum materials and the textbooks, this was not possible. Instead, teachers used the textbooks but did not apply the guides. In the analysis that follows, the quality of the curricular documents is considered from two different perspectives:

- First, whether the guides respond to the fundamental orientations of the curricular transformation; and
- Second, whether they are relevant to the needs of the student and the teacher at the classroom level.

A third consideration, whether they are being properly applied, thus resulting in greater learning, will be analyzed in another section of this report.

Seemingly, the base document which orients the curricular transformation process is the "Approved Curriculum Design" pamphlet of mid-1994. Persons interviewed were not certain, but it is the closest to a MED handbook of fundamental ideas available. There was no curriculum model. Although written in a telegraphic form, the cited document indicates that:

- The fundamental objective of education is the integrated development of the child;

- The curriculum will center on the child;
- The teacher is a facilitator of learning;
- Contents should give emphasis to scientific and humanistic learning;
- Methodologies utilized should be active and participatory;
- Evaluation should be centered in the process; and
- The orientation of the new curriculum should have a humanism-constructionism perspective.

Perhaps more than the development of new educational guidelines, the curricular transformation is a reaction against the former behaviorist model. Few among those interviewed had a clear idea what the new orientation would bring. No central ideology prevailed. No leading ideologist was present. Catchphrases such as "active methodologies" or "integrated learning" or "the teacher as a facilitator" dominated. A full and realistic philosophical, psychological and epistemological analysis by MED was not found. By contrast, most of the teachers' training, thinking and vocabulary came from the earlier curricular model. At the grass roots level, teachers interpreted principles of the curricular transformation according to the behaviorist model.

On the practical level, the teacher could accommodate the textbooks within the orientations of the new curriculum guides. Most did the opposite. From what was noted by this evaluation team, the teacher does not have the skills necessary to make that rather sophisticated analysis and orient his/her students toward a learning environment. The end result is the continuing dependance upon the textbook and traditional methodologies.

The commissions that elaborated the curriculum materials, made up of MED and SIMEN technicians with support by the BASE specialist, did their job well. While many criticized the lack of classroom teachers on the commissions, the programs themselves developed Learning Units, which gave flexibility to the teacher to select proposed activities or to provide others. They are a faithful interpretation of the underlying principles.

Conclusions

1. The teacher does not yet have the skills necessary to plan for the use of the textbooks within the orientations of the new curriculum guides.
2. There is a need for a more complete baseline document to orient the curricular interventions and the production of materials in the project.
3. A simple information package on the Curricular Transformation process for distribution to teachers, parents and interested citizens is needed.
4. The basic education manuals and the curriculum guides faithfully represent the new orientation of the Curricular Transformation.

5. There is a single curriculum program for all teachers in the country. The wide variety of activity suggestions helps teachers make adjustments to their own unique situations.

TASK NO. 2 - Assess the usefulness of the guides for teacher application in the classroom.

b. Qualitative impact of the new curriculum at the classroom level

Findings

Definitions

According to the "Approved Curricular Design" of MED, a *Curriculum Transformation* is "to pass from one situation to another." Specifically, this means a change from "experiencing learning tasks in the classroom" to another situation in which "students internalize learning in a permanent manner so that it can be utilized in everyday life."

The quality of learning also had a new interpretation. In the earlier behavioral orientation, quality was almost exclusively related to what the student learned in the classroom as evaluated by tests at the end of specific periods (summative evaluation). Grades on these tests were the measure of the quality of learning. Learning was a somewhat passive process given over to memorization and the extensive if not exclusive use of the copy book. Curriculum programs were applied in the same manner in the entire country.

In the new curricular orientation, quality is the development of intelligence, knowledge and understanding. It is the promotion of critical thinking and reflection. The student gives significance to what he learns. He/she constructs his/her own intellectual, affective and psycho-motor processes. This is done within the context of a society with values. It promotes thinking in a reflexive, critical manner for decision making by the students. Learning is an active, participative process given to interaction with other learners and with members of the community. A multiplicity of materials, almost all available in the local community, are needed for the organization of a variety of learning situations. Contrary to what most teachers think, very few pre-fabricated, expendable materials are needed. Even though there is a national curriculum, its application is diversified to the regional, district, school and individual classroom levels.

Quality in the classroom

To evaluate quality at the classroom level in this context is not easy. Qualitative advancements are almost individual. They are affected by internal factors such as motivation, classroom organization, interaction with other students, even the personality of the teacher. But they are also affected by external factors such as family, social status, economic position and cultural values. In most dropout or repetition studies, when the above elements are low, the student is a prime candidate for early departure from the formal system.

Each teacher has a different situation. Rural teachers have a learning environment that is distinct from urban teachers. Teachers in multi-grade classrooms face dissimilar challenges than teachers with a single grade level. The curriculum materials in their present form do allow for these differences with a wide variety of activity suggestions, but the teacher needs help in the application stage.

These primary school curriculum materials have been developed largely by specialists in subject areas, well-trained university and secondary level teachers. The materials are organized according to disciplines. Notwithstanding, the teacher in the first four grades is more of a generalist than a specialist. This seems to have caused some difficulties in understanding and application.

For the classroom teacher the application of the programs is not a simple act. Curriculum development is much more than a program of study. It requires bringing together all the community, audio, visual, written (including the textbooks) and human resources available and weaving them into appropriate learning situations for the 35-plus children under his/her care. When this is accomplished, he/she is a true facilitator of the learning process.

From the comments made to the evaluation team it is apparent that the teachers need help in planning this learning process. Lots of help! Support should be given in constructing that bridge that will take them beyond the exclusive use of textbooks, blackboards and copy books. By themselves, the programs, the practical methodological guides, even the didactic manual do not provide that help. Simple practical plans for daily and weekly programming are needed, especially with a curricular orientation so distinct. The level of preparation of the Nicaraguan primary school teacher in this planning aspect does not permit the luxury of assuming that he/she will make that assimilation alone.

Conclusions

1. In the Curricular Transformation, the quality of learning is seen as the development of intelligence, knowledge and understanding. It is the promotion of critical thinking and reflection. The student gives significance to what he learns. He/she constructs his/her own intellectual, affective and psycho-motor processes. The usefulness of the guides must be considered in that context.
2. The teacher guides were developed by subject specialists and validated in most of the 68 model schools, which are in all departments but only 55 of the 142 municipalities in the country. Without some accompanying methodological pamphlet the materials cannot be immediately put into practice in all the 4,800 primary schools in Nicaragua.
3. The new educational materials were written by authors who have a higher level of preparation, perhaps even a different vocabulary, than the common teacher in the primary school.
4. The new curriculum programs and accompanying materials present a very different orientation to the learning process than what the teacher has been accustomed to up to this point. This is most visible in the daily teacher lesson plans.

5. The repetition studies done under BASE could be used to identify indicators of potential dropouts. If classroom teachers were assisted in the application of these indicators and given follow-up help, this could be a manner to help lower repetition ratios.

TASK NO. 3 - Assess the impact of the quality and effectiveness of the basic educational manuals and curriculum guides in the classroom.

c. Changes in teaching organization and teacher styles

Findings

This analysis of changes in teacher organization and styles was made almost exclusively at the classroom level. To determine whether such a transformation was taking place, this evaluation team:

1. Used observations already made by others in three different years during their visits to the classroom; and
2. Applied simple classroom observation guides (Annexes E, F.)

Even before the learning materials were distributed, a study was contracted in the first semester of 1994 by BASE to analyze "active teaching methodologies."¹² Elements considered were:

- a. use of didactic materials;
- b. student participation;
- c. learning reinforcement;
- d. group integration;
- e. development of oral and written expression;
- f. motivating activities;
- g. development of values;
- h. student-teacher interaction;
- i. classroom organization; and
- j. other indicators.

Findings were collected mainly from interviews with key technicians and visits to 12 schools that were applying active methodologies and six that were not:

1. Teachers were assembling students in groups but work remained individual.
2. The materials used were traditional: blackboards, copy books, textbooks.
3. Participation of students was essentially in answering questions.

¹² Instituto de Estudios Nicaragüenses (IEN). Investigación sobre Funcionamiento de las Metodologías Activas, August 1994. A BASE project study.

4. Formative evaluation consisted of asking questions at the end of the period.
5. Essential habits promoted were cleanliness, order and silence.
6. Very little positive stimulation for the student was noted.
7. Limited use of activities for cooperative work among students: circles, games, round tables.
8. Student-teacher interaction was largely superficial and with little expressed interest.
9. Teachers taught each subject separately; no integration was noted.
10. Individualized attention was limited to the troublemakers.

This was at the very start of the BASE project. At the end of 1995, the first and second grade guides were validated. Using a control group and the experimental classrooms, that study¹³ presented some conclusions on similar indicators:

1. About 65% of the experimental classrooms were not using group methodologies.
2. About 50% of the experimental schools were using traditional forms of classroom planning.
3. Even though most of the teachers interviewed supported the idea of "active methodologies," the majority still used traditional techniques: the blackboard, reciting in unison and dictation.
4. Teachers said that without further training it would be difficult to apply active methodologies.
5. The great majority of the teachers do not utilize material from their own environment.
6. Almost no teachers were capable of integrating subject areas.

A recently completed study (June 1996) of activities in all 68 of the model schools provided a more ample vision of the same factors.¹⁴ Some of the interesting conclusions of that study were:

1. There is no clear conception of how to work in groups.
2. Teachers have not internalized the constructionism/humanism focus, often confusing it with active methodologies or even activism.
3. Traditional classroom organization remains with the teacher as the center of all activities.
4. There is poor management of group work inasmuch as teachers are not clear on cooperative learning processes.
5. Little initiative or creativity in using local resources was noted.
6. Noteworthy was the influence a good technical and democratic principal had on the operation of the school.
7. In the majority of the centers didactic material was not used, except for decorative purposes.
8. A good number of teachers showed concern and interest in continuing the training programs in order to better apply the curriculum.
9. The evaluation system was frequently criticized because of the demands in the planning, evaluation and record keeping.

¹³ La Validación del Currículum Transformado, Primer y Segundo Grados. MED (Oficina de Planificación, Oficina de Educación Primaria), Proyecto BASE, Enero 1996.

¹⁴ Primer Informe sobre el Seguimiento y Apoyo a las Escuelas Modelo de Transformación Curricular, Dirección de Planificación Educativa, MED, 1996.

10. The teaching of reading-writing is in a mechanical and isolated manner.
11. There has been little advance in the improvement of school-community relations.
12. More technical support and follow-up attention should be given to teachers so that they can better apply the ideas of the curricular transformation.
13. Technical support received by the teacher is filled with theoretical elements and lacking in the practical.

In visits to about 100 classrooms in over 50 schools, the evaluation team used simple observation guides (Annexes E, F) to assess the situation. Some findings include:

1. With only one or two exceptions, teachers in the model schools were not using active methodologies.
2. The 1991 textbooks were still the chief classroom material visible.
3. No real use of local materials was observed.
4. When students were divided into groups it was to do individual work.
5. Teachers said they used the transformed programs in classroom planning with other teachers of the same level.
6. In very few classrooms were the suggested activities in the guides observed in practice.
7. Student participation was limited to rote repetition of sounds or words first expressed by the teacher.
8. Some decorations were seen on the walls of the model school classrooms, almost all of it made by the teacher.
9. No parents were observed visiting classrooms or even on the school premise, although principals said that their visits were increasing.
10. A high value was placed on order and cleanliness of the classroom, especially in the model schools.
11. Teacher lesson plans for two-week blocks of time were essentially the same from class to class, at the same grade level.
12. No evidence of teacher creativity in adapting the curriculum to the local context was noted.

It is apparent that more careful studies are needed. It is also evident that the impact of the curriculum changes on the quality and effectiveness of the classroom teacher is in a very tender, incipient stage. Like any young plant it will need lots of water (local materials) and sunshine (training) to develop.

Conclusions

1. Inasmuch as the curricular transformation proposals are part of a process, it is important to remember that any advances in the initial stages are crucial.
2. Curriculum transformation is a process that includes not only the use of active methodologies but the re-orientation of the focus of the classroom to center upon the child and his learning.
3. Teachers in the model schools have brightened their classrooms with some materials but are still generally dependent upon the textbook, the blackboard and the copy book for methodological organization.
4. Student participation, group work, the use of local materials and the application of the activities listed in the teacher's guides are still steps into the future at the classroom level.
5. The study guides and other materials have the potential to make a profound transformation of teaching methodologies and the application of the transformed curriculum in the classroom.

TASK NO. 4 - Analyze the training plan and the training carried out for teacher use of the study programs, guides and manuals.

d. Training for use of the curriculum materials

Findings

Between January of 1994 and May of 1996, BASE has given an estimated 50,539 participant days of training on the curriculum guides and manuals and related themes. Inasmuch as this was focused primarily on those involved in Grades 1 and 2, it is the equivalent of :

- About six full days of training for each first and second grade teacher in the country.
- About two and one-half days of training for every primary school teacher in the country.
- About 10 full days for each school director in the country.
- Over 100 days for each supervisor in the country.

Clearly the project has made a concerted effort to assist MED in the preparation of educators at all levels. These workshops and seminars have focused on study plans, curricular design, constructionism/humanism, evaluation of learning, individual subject areas and the utilization of the teacher's guides in the classroom.

Almost all of this training was on a face-to-face basis, sometimes in groups as large as 40, but normally in groups under 30. For each meeting lead teachers were contracted, training materials were elaborated, participant support was provided and facilities were prepared. When the topic was narrow

and the group small, workshops were for just two or three days. The large group sessions with teachers were for as long as eight days.

Two criticisms can be made. First, training sessions were not linked one with the other. There was no long-range plan, but rather short-range projections to tell classroom teachers how to use the new materials. Second, many of the sessions were more theoretical than practical. The teacher clearly needs help on the practical implementation of the curricular transformation.

Beginning this year, MED classified primary schools into three levels; Level I for the 68 model schools, Level II for the other schools with a principal and Level III for schools without a principal. In that last category are the 2,875 multi-grade schools. A 10-day training session was given to teachers on Level I, 5 days for those on Level II and 3 days for the Level III teachers.

It is difficult to be precise on training costs. Certainly at least 25% (\$1.5 million) of overall project costs were for training in the 29-month period. These costs would rise if they included the expenditure for consultants who directly participated in the seminars, the time of long-term consultants in the planning and regular project support for activities. In addition, MED provided personnel and facilities for each of the workshops.

Another criticism of the training has been the lack of follow-up. Training was given in relatively isolated events. As reported earlier, teachers who received the workshops were very much in favor of the principles of curricular transformation but needed more help in applying them. This is a fundamental need for the second phase of BASE. There are several follow-up models being developed in Costa Rica, El Salvador and the Dominican Republic which might be considered.

Conclusions

1. BASE support for the training of teachers in the use of the guides and manuals has been consistent, ample and continuous. Over 50,000 participant/hours have been given.
2. Almost all of the training has used face-to-face methodology, a high-cost form of preparing educators.
3. The lack of a systematic follow-up program for the training has inhibited teachers in the general application of the guides.

TASK NO. 5 - Assess achievement testing and student evaluation.

e. Achievement testing

Findings

This is one of those future-oriented tasks that will provide information to evaluate the overall progress of the educational system in Nicaragua and especially the BASE project. In fact, this information was not available at project startup and valuable resources of BASE were dedicated to that purpose. Inasmuch as the activity is still in its early stages, fairly reliable, comparable data will not be available until near the end of the project.

BASE has been involved in this activity from the beginning. In 1994, initial efforts to test students in the fourth grade produced some data. In 1995, tests on very basic learning elements in the first and second grades of the model schools added to the data. However, this activity is costly and highly technical. It is important for BASE and MED to take advantage of data which could be generated from other sources, especially the testing being done by the World Bank project.

Quality in learning has a new interpretation. It is the development of intelligence, knowledge and understanding, the promotion of critical thinking and reflection. Thus, even with the advances in achievement testing, it will still be necessary for MED/BASE to support other diagnostic studies to provide the variety of data needed to evaluate quality in the classroom.

f. Student evaluation

Findings

Almost everyone in primary education interviewed placed student evaluation as the number one problem. It is still linked to student knowledge. The new ideas of evaluation related to individual student growth have not yet permeated the thinking of the majority. Even teachers still conceive evaluation as that mysterious number or letter which is attached to each teaching activity.

There is a new evaluation concept in Curricular Transformation but there are few new instruments. Teachers are accustomed to the instruments they have used before. Inasmuch as their teaching styles have changed little, these older techniques serve them well. So until the teaching methodologies adjust it is hard to expect that the evaluation techniques will adjust.

The evaluation team worked with MED technicians in the development of a new concept related to student evaluation. It involved the simplification of existing documents. Essentially the idea is to view the training of teachers in evaluation as an interactive process. This is initiated with an interactive questionnaire in which teachers analyze the basic definitions and concepts they now use. It should be applied at school level by the principal. Attached to the questionnaire is a very simple, one-page (per class) evaluation form.

After analysis of the concepts and application of the form in his/her classroom, the teacher is ready for the second step. Here the central or district technicians would communicate with school principals, offering assistance and documentation on the evaluation process, according to the need. Additional steps would follow the same procedure: application of the new ideas, internal school analysis, further information, etc.

Critical in this process is the development of materials which the teacher can immediately put into practice without excessive training. Sophistication will come with time as the teacher and the school know better their own needs.

Conclusions

1. BASE has collaborated in the costly process of achievement testing, providing valuable data. The World Bank is also supporting MED in this activity. Coordination is needed.
2. Because of the different type of information needed to evaluate classroom quality with this new curricular program, additional diagnostic studies by BASE should complement the information received in achievement testing.
3. The student evaluation is seen by the teacher as being too complicated. A simple plan to start where the teacher is and to move onward from there is needed.

Recommendations for curriculum and materials development

1. The development and classroom application of simple introductory materials to facilitate use of the teacher's guides and other learning materials is needed. Inasmuch as the guides have already been distributed for Grades 1 and 2 and new textbooks are anticipated for early next year, this becomes an urgent recommendation. We cannot stress this enough. If the teachers do not have help very soon in the application of the new guides they are not likely to apply them. This could lead to a country with two sets of curriculum orientation within the schools, as happened in a neighboring country in the last few years.
2. MED/BASE should elaborate a solid guide for child-centered education with a theoretical base and a clear statement of how curricular transformation is to be applied at the classroom level. This guide should indicate the philosophical and psychological foundations of the transformation, clarifying constructionism and humanism in this context. However, it is critical that the guide also have very clear indications of how this curricular orientation is to be applied at the classroom level.
3. All new materials developed for classroom use should provide practical orientations to support the teachers' movement toward the child-centered curriculum. At this moment teachers have materials in the classroom with two very different curricular orientations. In addition, they have some documents that they have not been able to put in practice. New materials, especially the textbooks that are being

written at this time, should be in harmony with the principles of the curricular transformation. Then it will not be necessary for the teacher to make a choice between differing curriculums.

4. The development of curriculum materials for various specific classroom situations (rural, urban marginal, multi-grade) using a modular format is needed. At present the guides are mainly targeted at urban centers and do not consider the complexities of teaching in the rural environment. The original project contemplated the elaboration of these diverse materials in a modular form. Examples would be simple teacher's manuals for the multi-grade school or pamphlets on the integration of children with special learning problems into the regular classroom.

5. The organization of a continuous training program should be produced, focusing mainly upon supervisors, school principals and teachers, to ensure full development of this child-centered curriculum. This should combine face-to-face and distance training methodologies. Incentives, such as normal school or university credits and salary scale increments, should be considered. While this recommendation is elaborated in the teacher training component, it is mentioned here again because of its critical importance. Without it there is little chance of implementing the curricular transformation.

6. The continuation and expansion of the systematic follow-up program now being developed by MED/ BASE is another crucial recommendation. It is especially important that a network of training centers be established in all parts of the country to ensure proper application of the curricular guides. Once again this is mentioned here and developed more fully in the following section.

7. The development of surveys, research studies and diagnostic tests that will give reliable data on the quality of learning taking place at the classroom level are needed. To evaluate student progress with the new curricular orientation requires information on cognitive, affective and psycho-motor advances. Some of this can be taken from the cognitive data which will soon be coming from student achievement testing by MED in the World Bank project. But the remainder will have to come out of the diagnostic studies.

8. Simple student evaluation instruments should begin where the teacher is and move onward to more sophisticated techniques and formulas. They should take advantage of what the teachers currently know about summative evaluation but lead them to a more formative approach as defined in the curricular transformation.

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C. Teacher Training

TASK NO. 1 - Analyze the quality of teacher training for Grades 1-4.

Findings

BASE has cooperated with MED in the development of long-term strategies for meeting the needs of the teachers for Grades 1-4. This has taken the form of support to in-service training programs that respond to specific needs. In the first years of BASE, attention was given to the preparation of teachers in the first two grades.

Even more important has been the collaborative process in the development of a structure for teacher training. This involved the identification and organization of demonstration and laboratory schools in all parts of the country that could serve as centers for the training of teachers. In addition BASE has helped MED develop policies and organizational forms for the teacher training process.

To promote structures of this nature it is necessary to establish sound criteria. BASE has supported MED in the development of standards for the selection of the key person in the new training process: the "master teacher." Special attention and training have been given to this person so that he/she could serve as a model for other teachers.

When the Ministry of Education faced the problem of reaching out beyond the 68 model schools, BASE helped in the development of criteria for the identification of schools in priority one, two or three. First priority attention in terms of project focus was given to the 68 model schools. Second priority went to schools with a director and third priority to schools without a director. This became a critical factor in the development of training programs that were within the scope of BASE.

With BASE support, training has been given to over 14,000 supervisors, directors, master teachers, model school teachers and regular classroom teacher from schools in the three priority levels. The training focused upon: a) active methodologies, b) use of the curriculum guides, c) materials development and d) assessment and evaluation strategies.

Conclusions

1. The existing need in Nicaragua for teachers with strong professional foundations has been prevalent since the late 1970s. Baseline data regarding the number of non-certified/certified teachers have not changed during the last five years. Many of the empirically trained non-certified teachers utilized in the classroom in the 1980s are currently seeking professional status in the Normal Schools by attending weekend and/or summer sessions. Nevertheless it is estimated that up to 40% of the primary school teachers remain uncertified.

2. Considering the training deficiencies of teachers in Grades 1-4, BASE has collaborated with MED in the development of a set of training strategies that will meet their needs and those of the school directors and supervisors responsible for the education of the students at that level.

3. BASE has supported :

- Development of an administrative structure for teacher training;
- Identification of criteria for the selection and the elaboration of functions of demonstration and laboratory schools;
- Organizational and policy issues related to teacher training;
- Criteria for the selection of master teachers;
- Criteria for prioritizing schools for training purposes:
 - ▶ Priority I schools – 68 model schools.
 - ▶ Priority II schools – 1,000 schools with directors.
 - ▶ Priority III school – 4,000 schools without directors.

4. BASE has trained 14,000 regular classroom teachers, model school teachers, master teachers, school directors and supervisors from all three priority levels in:

- Active methodologies;
- Use of curriculum guides;
- Materials development;
- Didactic planning; and
- Assessment and evaluation strategies.

Even though these strategic training objectives meet specific needs and are planned, they still have a questionable effect on the Mission's goal of improving education for the student and reducing retention and drop-out rates.

5. The training plan is very well designed and developed to systematically cascade out from the center of the model/demonstration schools to the surrounding micro centers (MIC's) and into a self-activated distance training system. An excellent example is the newspaper "El maestro" and its associated inserts, delivered on a monthly basis along with the teacher's paycheck. The newspaper with the inserts is filled with information that the classroom teacher can utilize.

6. This intensive training program has increased the motivation of the classroom teachers and is producing for them and the school directors a high level of expectation from the student. The student on the other hand is also enthusiastic and very excited about being able to participate actively in the classroom process.

7. The spread effect, however, has been too thin and too sophisticated. In reality this has partially negated the strong effort at teacher training. One can only assume from such a short examination that the problem is that there are still many untrained teachers and that the first step is to train so that all begin on an equal level. To develop these high expectations one must first begin with this leveling process and then proceed to utilizing the cascade effect on training.

TASK NO. 2 - Assess the training as a direct application in the classroom.

Findings

As a result of visits to over 40 schools and discussions with school directors, assistant directors, teachers, supervisors and department level in-service coordinators, it is safe to say that the ideas behind the Curricular Transformation, especially active methodologies, are very much alive. Teachers tend to believe they are using the methodology and are being quite successful with it. This speaks well for the basic concepts of the curricular change and for the motivation shown by teachers to become involved with a delivery system that is good for the student.

The reality, however, is quite different. The mere fact that students are often organized into groups or circles and are active and vociferous speaks well for the training that was given by the BASE/MED trainers. It does not, however, indicate that active methodologies are being applied. Inasmuch as they are a vital part of the Curricular Transformation, it also raises the doubt as to the full extent teachers comprehend the underlying principles.

Personnel visited seem to accept the conceptual framework of active methodologies and curriculum transformation developed by MED with the support of BASE. They are excited about an innovation that will focus upon the student and his/her learning, bringing the schools and the community closer together for the welfare of that student.

Teachers see a direct relationship between project design, the introduction of new materials and the acquisition of active methodology skills necessary to successfully put this into practice. They are, however, concerned about the work overload resulting from the application of the new assessment and student evaluation methods.

Teachers also voiced concern regarding the lack of knowledge by departmental supervisors and/or municipal technicians related to the curriculum transformation model being used. This lack of training/information is often in direct conflict with the how of delivering services to the student.

Unfortunately, the in-service training provided under the BASE project was often theoretical or presented with traditional methodologies and lacked sufficient concentration on teacher organization and management skills. Teachers feel the need for more training in order to successfully use these new tools effectively. MED/BASE should include departmental supervisors and municipal technicians in all training that has an effect on how teachers teach in the classroom.

There is also a need to refocus the training efforts of BASE and MED to fill professional preparation voids. This can be done, as indicated in the first recommendation, by including useable education foundations and child development information and strategies during the delivery of the in-service training to insure that all teachers are trained and certified. One way of doing this is to develop 6 to 10 teams of six persons per team that can quickly be mobilized into master teacher training units.

They could go directly to the schools and deliver the needed training in a face-to-face, hands-on, show-them-how modality. The mobile Master Teacher Training Units would:

- Prepare all necessary materials for creating student activity learning centers in the classroom and be prepared to install and leave these materials in the classroom.
- Take over the classroom for a period of three days while the actual classroom teacher would receive three days of intensive training from:
 - a. the leader of the mobile unit;
 - b. the school's director;
 - c. Department supervisors and/or the technician assigned to the municipality; and
 - d. a lead teacher from the school.

The training would be oriented to the student, using active methodologies and filled with professional foundations information presented at a comprehensible level for the teacher-learner. A possible four-week schedule would include.

Week 1	
Mon.	AM Deploy via public transit all necessary materials. PM Install learning centers in classroom. All teachers, school directors, department supervisors and municipal technicians would help the master teacher set up the learning environments.
Tues.	Mobile Unit teachers take over the classroom and the regular classroom teacher observes.
Wed. and Thurs.	Training team interacts with classroom teachers with a "hands-on, do-it" approach to training.
Fri.	AM Regular teacher returns to classroom and is observed by the members of the mobile unit. PM Mobile unit returns to BASE/MED.
Week 2	Mobile master teaching units use this week for feedback follow-up and preparation for Week 3 activities.
Week 3	Field visits.
Week 4	Repeat cycle.

This process would leave at the school:

- A MIC team for intra-school in service;
- A combination supervisor/technical/ MIC team for inter-school in-service;
- A feedback loop for information and agenda item gathering by the Master Teacher Training Units; and
- A system for determining periodic face-to-face training.

In order to achieve definite implementation of training services, this cycle should be repeated as many times as necessary. A very positive product of this process is the development of more Master Teacher Training Units. As the plan progresses, a cadre of master-trained school directors, supervisors, advisors and lead teachers will begin to appear who can then multiply, with very little updating. The impact of the Master Teacher Training Units would soon be felt in surrounding schools, especially the 4,000 without directors. These are the schools with the greatest original need. An estimated time span to develop, put into practice and evaluate the results of this plan in Nicaragua is six years.

In visits to the Normal Schools, the evaluation team found that they were well organized and involved in establishing the use of active methodologies. Several indicated that the video equipment donated by the BASE project was being used in pre-service training for teachers. In addition, teachers completing certification requirements on weekends taped their weekday classes and then analyzed their own teaching styles.

Conclusion

1. Training for teachers should feature lesson plan development, deliverance and evaluation. For teachers to be confident with their skills in using these innovations, they must have additional and continuous training. They need a type of intense systematic delivery that will make the principles of the Curricular Transformation and the use of active methodologies a process as natural to them as their own breathing. This training must also include activities that will show them the way to apply this child-centered curriculum and model the assessment and evaluation elements and the conceptualization taking place within the student. Any behavioral change requires the change agent to provide and model the new guidelines.

TASK NO. 3 - Assess the impact and effectiveness of the teacher training on retention, dropout rates and years needed to complete the sixth grade.

Findings

It is early in the project to have data to make comparisons between retention, dropout, years needed to complete sixth grade and BASE interventions. The truth is that the guides have only recently been distributed for the first and second grades and, as we have seen, are not yet fully applied. At this point only empirical observations are possible.

Based upon the visits the evaluation team has made to the schools and other studies recently completed, it is safe to say that some advances on these three problems have been made. At the same time, it is evident that the problems have not disappeared. National statistics, for example, indicate that first grade repetition between 1990 and 1994 decreased from 29% to 25%. But in 1994 it still took an average of 9.9 years to produce a sixth grade graduate. Now, two years later, it may be possible to say that these have been reduced a bit more, but not much. The fact, however, is that they are still very serious problems.

Empirical studies once again indicate that there are two types of students who appear for the second time in the first grade. The first is the student who has not made sufficient academic progress to be passed to the next level. The second is the student who is taken out of school by his parents to work for a two- or three-month period and, upon return, must repeat the same grade. The first is an internal school problem which training activities can help prevent. The second is an external problem which requires understanding and support from parents and other members of the community.

MED is now gathering baseline data under BASE and with other international donors that should provide more specific information by project end. However, inasmuch as many variables contribute to these three problems, it will never be possible to state that BASE had the determining influence. A full cohort of students who enter first grade one year and finish primary school six years later is needed to have clear information.

As mentioned in another part of this report, what might be possible in BASE is to list the indicators of potential dropouts and develop a program with teachers in which they could identify these students early and work with them to alleviate the causes.

Conclusion

1. At present there is insufficient data to indicate that the training program has effectively contributed to lowering dropout rates, increasing retention or lowering the number of years required to complete sixth grade.

TASK NO. 4 - Analyze the training plans.

Findings

During the first part of 1996 BASE supported MED in:

- The elaboration and application of a plan to train more than 12,000 teachers through an in-service network that utilized the demonstration and laboratory schools.
- Developing and distributing basic education guides.
- Describing and developing the master teacher, who will deliver training services in model schools.

Conclusion

1. MED/BASE objectives for the training plan are well developed and well aimed. The problem can again be identified as not having teachers with enough professional preparation to be changed into master teachers after a short period of training. Without this master teacher it is difficult to develop even the best organized training plans.

Recommendations for teacher training

1. Ensure that all supervisors, principals and primary school teachers in the country are constantly exposed to practical applications of this child-centered curriculum. Activities should include but not be limited to:

- a. The continuation of face-to face training sessions but with a focus on supervisors, principals and master teachers as multipliers for the teachers in their jurisdictions.
- b. Support to MED in the organization and development of mobile teams of master teachers who could give more specialized attention with intensive week-long sessions in single schools filled with motivational demonstration classes in the classrooms. Specific details were presented earlier in this section.
- c. Install in as many schools as possible activity-centered learning environments. Nearby teachers could visit and study these learning centers, adapting them in their own schools.
- d. Support MED in the development of a distance training program utilizing the rich materials already available for that purpose. This would be a means for feedback, follow-up and follow-through at the school level.

On a chronological scale this might be planned as follows:

Continuous teacher training – work plan for one school year

Start of school year – Initial two-day workshop for target population by master teachers
Study visits by teachers to model schools. Mobile team arrives at selected schools. Teachers in study circles develop materials distributed in opening session. Principals organize additional training sessions for their staff. Learning centers installed in key schools. Other activities.....
Middle of school year – Workshop analysis of progress, problems, projections
Study visits by teachers to model schools. Mobile team arrives at selected schools. Teachers in study circles develop materials distributed in mid-year session. Principals organize additional training sessions for their staff. Learning centers installed in key schools. Other activities.....
End of year evaluation, projection – Target group analysis of progress, problems, projections

With this planning mechanism the project would refocus its efforts toward a massive training program, utilizing the better-prepared supervisors, principals and teachers as the target population. This shift from micro to macro would use the advances already made in the model schools. Personnel in MED could become part of teams of master teachers assigned to field work in each of the departments until all teachers and their respective schools have reached the same level of professional competence.

2. Develop a network of training centers to reach out to every school in the country including:

- a. Effective utilization of the model schools as micro training centers.
- b. Broader use of the Normal Schools as in-service training centers. The Training Department of MED already has a plan to reach 800 schools with in-service training through the Normal Schools in 1997.
- c. Renovation of the nucleus or cluster pattern for organizing the 2,875 multi-grade schools around local training centers. This would require extensive field work and logistical support from various administrative units of MED.
- d. School-level training should be organized by principals and supervisors as an established, planned follow-up action for all other training activities.

3. Include simplified teacher classroom planning as a common core in all training:
 - a. Demonstrate that all training, and all classroom teaching, should be simple, practical, to the point and achievable.
 - b. School-level workshops should produce specific daily, weekly and monthly plans based on the new guides, support from the local community and other available materials.
 - c. Stress attitudinal change in all training activities.

4. Adapt official training programs to the special needs of different groups, concentrating on supervisors, principals and classroom teachers. Activities might include:
 - a. Special programs for teachers in multi-grade schools.
 - b. Differentiated training for teachers in the Atlantic Coast region.
 - c. Distinctive training workshops for teachers with particular subject matter deficiencies.
 - d. A full-year in-country specialized training program for supervisors, combining face-to-face and distance training methodologies.
 - e. A full-year in-country specialized training program for selected principals, combining face-to-face and distance training methodologies.

5. Wider support to the Normal Schools to ensure that new teachers are prepared to implement child-centered curriculum and ready to fit into an on-going system. This support could be in special workshops related to the principles of curricular transformation, materials on that theme, follow-up visits and support to the libraries.

6. Prepare a training plan with a student-centered delivery system for consideration by the incoming government.

7. Assist MED with a continuous marketing program in the communities with emphasis placed on family values, health, social skills, education, consensus building, democracy in action. This could be developed through the in-service teacher training programs.

V. PROCUREMENT

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Findings

A. Analysis of the Process

Commodities occupy about one-third of the project monies spent to date. A total of \$2.5 million has been spent, or is in the pipeline, for items purchased in support of project activities. These include supplies for the teachers, educational materials, instructional materials, a computer system, vehicles, office equipment and other support supplies.

The three largest expenditures in this category were the school furniture, the Management Information System and re-publication of textbooks for Grades 1-4. Each item cost more than \$600,000, totaling over 70% of the overall disbursements in this component.

Most of the purchases have directly supported teachers at the classroom level, improving both the physical and the teaching-learning environments. Teachers have received a basic package of largely expendable materials, the instructional materials, the textbook reprints and the complementary materials used in training programs. Even the commodities or equipment acquired for use at the central level have been with the view of providing additional services to the teacher through the departmental offices or directly to the school. The MIS program, now reaching down to the departmental levels and with the capacity of supplying information to help improve the working conditions of the teacher, is a good example.

Almost all of the purchases were specified in the original project document. When changes were suggested, AED made the consultation directly with MED through the Chief of Party or long-term advisors. Certain flexibility in the procurement component made it possible for the project to respond to several additional requests of MED and to support new project activities.

AED has been chiefly responsible for the purchase process, following the specific USAID regulations. Modern and rapid communication between AED/N (Nicaragua) and AED/W (Washington) was established early at the project warehouse to expedite the process.

Once the specifications for purchases were identified in Nicaragua and agreed upon by MED, the requests were sent to AED/W, where the search began. After public requests for bids, offers were received from interested companies and carefully examined for price, quality and delivery time. In order to match the needs of the project, AED/W reorganized its procurement process, adding personnel to respond to the requests. When the purchased items were delivered in Nicaragua, training workshops followed with MED personnel to ensure proper use and maintenance.

Some items, notably the furniture, were purchased locally. Specifications were drawn by AED/N and MED. Once again the bidders were required to compete on price, quality and delivery time.

The procurement process had some initial delays as Nicaraguans were trained in the rather intricate procedures to be followed under USAID regulations. These delays, however, were minimal.

B. The Purchases

It is hardly necessary to review the broad range of purchases made under this component. In 1995, for example, the following critical items were delivered by the project for classroom teacher use:

- 13,550 student chairs and 6,775 student desks.
- Teachers' desks, chairs, bookcases and file cabinets: 271 of each item.
- Encyclopedias, dictionaries, maps, globes, crayons, storybooks, staplers, rulers, magnets, magnifying glasses, etc. Between 50 and 950 of each were delivered.
- Video, television equipment for Normal Schools.
- About 46,000 teacher guides and manuals.
- 426,000 textbooks in Spanish and mathematics for Grades 1-4.

To question the direct impact of other purchases on the Nicaraguan educational system is to raise the larger question of procurement selection in a project of this nature. The needs are many and any priority listing will have its supporters and opponents. Some have asked whether the level of sophistication in the MIS was necessary. Some questioned the advisability of re-printing textbooks which were soon to be replaced with others more in harmony with the curricular transformation. The purchase of vehicles is always an item for discussion.

Based on the existing records, this evaluation team found no anomalies in the purchase process. Most of the items in the original project agreement were purchased. Additional items responded to MED needs and requests. The majority of the purchases went directly to support the classroom teachers and the 68 model schools. Only the publications have been distributed to the majority of the regular primary schools in the country.

C. Delivery Process

In general the delivery of the purchases to their final destinations is the responsibility of MED. For insurance purposes, AED/N normally received the items to ensure that nothing was missing or broken, and then turned them over to the Ministry. This was the case with the 25 computers that arrived during the period of this evaluation. Once MED received the materials, they became their responsibility.

The Ministry of Education has three warehouses in Managua and one in each department. Some are in need of repair and upkeep. Most are small. In addition, some of the DDEs have small warehouses, while a corner of the principal's office or a special room serve as the storage space in the schools.

Before materials are delivered to the warehouses or the schools, an MED security inspection is made. The purpose is to ensure that the storage space for the delivery is adequate, dry and accessible. In practice this is complicated because schools do not have funds to fix leaky roofs and support from FISE is slow. Community funds for this purpose have also been slow in coming. The test for the system will come in early 1997 when the textbooks for all primary schools, funded by the World Bank, are delivered first to the warehouses and then to the schools. The repairs and the inspections are already in process.

While the general rule was that MED is charged with the delivery process, there was one noteworthy exception. This was the case of the school furniture, whose delivery was the responsibility of AED.

Deliveries have generally been on time, that is to say the period between the arrival of the goods in the country and the transfer to the schools has not been excessive. Slower has been the lapse between the first request for the merchandise and the arrival in the country. This is due to existing regulations. The project has done a good job in keeping MED informed on the status of each request. This is important because it enables AED and MED to make realistic plans for the early use of the commodities.

D. Remaining Procurement Funds

A considerable amount of money still is available for further commodity procurement. However, the large acquisitions are complete. Some funds will be needed for relatively small purchases to complete activities already started, especially in the Institutional Strengthening component.

In movement from micro to macro, a large-cost item will be in the training of the supervisors, principals and teachers. Even with distance training modalities there still is a need to print materials. As project focus shifts from 68 schools outward, a new concept is needed. The key question is: What are the priority materials needed to stimulate student learning? Obviously the project will not be able to do the same for the rest of the schools as for the models. A careful selection based on surveys of teacher needs should initiate the process.

Conclusions

1. The process of commodities procurement for BASE has been efficient and well managed.
2. Even though the in-country personnel of the contractor did not have much experience in the procurement area, they learned quickly and have set up a near model system.
3. About 70% of the procurement cost has been divided equally between three large items: furniture for the schools, the MIS system and the re-publication of textbooks. Teacher guides and manuals are a relatively low-cost item.

4. The Ministry of Education is basically responsible for the delivery of commodities, using its warehouse system in all departments of the country.
5. While some funds in this component will be needed for terminating on-going activities, the majority is available for the new demands of the second half of the project.

Recommendations on procurement

1. In projects of this nature it is important to have equipment and facilities available from the beginning for the prime contractor. USAID could support more fully that process or the contractor could make agreements with existing projects for temporary facilities.
2. From the beginning MED personnel should receive from USAID or the chief contractor a briefing and a manual on the procurement process.
3. USAID could offer training to the contractor's local person responsible for procurement so that early errors are avoided.
4. The remaining monies in procurement should be used almost exclusively on materials and training for teachers, principals, supervisors and parents at the local school level.

VI. RECAPITULATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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A review of the recommendations from the various sections of the document is presented here.

A. Project Re-orientation

The mid-term evaluation team of BASE recommends a single focus for the second phase of the project:

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CLASSROOM LEARNING

All project interventions should converge on that single goal. Focus should be on broad project results, not small task deliverables.

Three priority mechanisms are recommended to achieve that central goal:

1. Simplified, practical pamphlets that demonstrate how to use the existing curriculum guides and materials.
2. A continuous teacher training program.
3. Systematic development of community-supported schools.

Three project strategies are also recommended:

1. Strive for country-wide impact on curricular transformation, teacher training and decentralization.
2. Link project activities to the goals and programs of the new government.
3. Coordinate project activities closely with other donors.

B. Institutional Strengthening

1. Contract a long-term advisor to work, for the remainder of the project, on the integration and consolidation of institutional strengthening reforms and to assure their maximum contribution and impact at the classroom level. The work of this advisor will seek to clarify and focus the institutional strengthening activities of the project on achievable and sustainable results in support of decentralized, autonomous schools. This advisor would take a leadership role in:

- a. Cooperative planning with the new government for consolidating management improvements.
- b. Developing strategies for the acceptance and expansion of the autonomous school concept.
- c. Promoting the training of Ministry and field staff in their changing roles in a decentralized school system.
- d. Assuring effective utilization of computer capabilities for continuing improvement in management systems.
- e. Furthering innovative approaches for building community support for autonomous schools.

2. Prepare a strategy, in cooperation with other donors, to be presented to the new government in January 1997, on how the decentralized school system reforms can best be consolidated and expanded country-wide in the coming years. This policy-level exchange could well be carried out in a retreat type setting once the new senior authorities of the Ministry are in place.

3. Use project funds to expand community involvement in improving the quality and efficiency of local schools as is now being done with the Save the Children grant. Consider, for example, additional matching grants for innovative community self-help activities to provide better schools for their children. Consider the preparation of videos or other training systems to explain to Ministry staff, school personnel, parents and community members what decentralization involves and how autonomous schools can contribute to better education. These messages would also seek to motivate parents and community leaders to become more involved in school management and improvement. Coordinate community-level social marketing and training with the World Bank to ensure complementarity and continuity with their work in support of this area.

4. Stress training and program development to ensure that computer capabilities are used for the better management of educational resources at the central, regional and local levels. Considerable resources have been invested in these modern systems. Now the project and the Ministry face the challenge of helping to assure their successful use to improve education at the classroom level.

C. Curriculum Development and Instructional Materials

1. The development and classroom application of simple introductory materials to facilitate use of the teacher's guides and other learning materials is needed. Inasmuch as the guides have already been distributed for Grades 1 and 2 and new textbooks are anticipated for early next year, this becomes an urgent recommendation. We cannot stress this enough. If the teachers do not have help very soon in the application of the new guides they are not likely to apply them. This could lead to a country with two sets of curriculum orientation within the schools, as happened in a neighboring country in the last few years.

2. MED/BASE should elaborate a solid guide for child-centered education with a theoretical base and a clear statement of how curricular transformation is to be applied at the classroom level. This guide should indicate the philosophical and psychological foundations of the transformation, clarifying constructionism and humanism in this context. However, it is critical that the guide also have very clear indications of how this curricular orientation is to be applied at the classroom level.
3. All new materials developed for classroom use should provide practical orientations to support the teachers' movement toward the child-centered curriculum. At this moment teachers have materials in the classroom with two very different curricular orientations. In addition, they have some documents that they have not been able to put in practice. New materials, especially the textbooks that are being written at this time, should be in harmony with the principles of the curricular transformation. Then it will not be necessary for the teacher to make a choice between differing curriculums.
4. The development of curriculum materials for various specific classroom situations (rural, urban marginal, multi-grade) using a modular format is needed. At present the guides are mainly targeted at urban centers and do not consider the complexities of teaching in the rural environment. The original project contemplated the elaboration of these diverse materials in a modular form. Examples would be simple teacher's manuals for the multi-grade school or pamphlets on the integration of children with special learning problems into the regular classroom.
5. The organization of a continuous training program should be produced, focusing mainly upon supervisors, school principals and teachers, to ensure full development of this child-centered curriculum. This should combine face-to-face and distance training methodologies. Incentives, such as normal school or university credits and salary scale increments, should be considered.
6. The continuation and expansion of the systematic follow-up program now being developed by MED/BASE is another crucial recommendation. It is especially important that a network of training centers be established in all parts of the country to ensure proper application of the curricular guides.
7. The development of surveys, research studies and diagnostic tests that will give reliable data on the quality of learning taking place at the classroom level are needed. To evaluate student progress with the new curricular orientation requires information on cognitive, affective and psycho-motor advances. Some of this can be taken from the cognitive data which will soon be coming from student achievement testing by MED in the World Bank project. But the remainder will have to come out of the diagnostic studies.
8. Simple student evaluation instruments should begin where the teacher is and move onward to more sophisticated techniques and formulas. They should take advantage of what the teachers currently know about summative evaluation but lead them to a more formative approach as defined in the curricular transformation.

D. Teacher Training

1. Ensure that all supervisors, principals and primary school teachers in the country are constantly exposed to practical applications of this child-centered curriculum. Activities should include but not be limited to:

- a. The continuation of face-to face training sessions but focusing upon supervisors, principals and master teachers as multipliers for the teachers in their jurisdictions.
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from micro to macro would use the advances already made in the model schools. Personnel in MED could become part of teams of master teachers assigned to field work in each of the departments until all teachers and their respective schools have reached the same level of professional competence.

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7. Assist MED with a continuous marketing program in the communities with emphasis placed on family values, health, social skills, education, consensus building, democracy in action. This could be developed through the in-service teacher training programs.

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ANNEXES

- A. DOCUMENTS CONSULTED**
- B. PERSONS CONSULTED**
- C. SCOPE OF WORK OF EVALUATION MISSION**
- D. LOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR BASE PROJECT**
- E. CLASSROOM EVALUATION INSTRUMENT**
- F. EVALUATION GUIDE FOR TEACHER TRAINING**

ANNEX A - Documents Consulted

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ANNEX B - Persons Consulted

USAID - Nicaragua

1. Mark Silverman, Deputy Director
2. Karen Hilliard, Chief of the Office of Human Investment
3. Anthony Vollbrech, Education Development Officer
4. Joe Ryan, Economics Officer
5. Paul Greenough, Evaluation Officer
6. Cecile Kenyon, Education Coordinator
7. Isa Zúñiga, Evaluation office.

AED/Washington

1. John Gillies, Project Director
2. Paula Gubbens, Project support
3. David Cummins, Procurement
4. Elizabeth Shuba, Project Support.

BASE/Nicaragua

1. Nick Mills, Director of Project
2. Verónica Morales, Executive Assistant
3. Vilma Méndez, Curriculum Development Advisor
4. Jaime Chitiva, Teacher Training Advisor
5. Richard Hogeboom, Coordination Institutional Development
6. Silvio de Franco, Consultant Strategic Planning
7. Richard Kraft, Consultant Formative Evaluation
8. Antonio Osorio, Consultant in Decentralization
9. Mark Hanson, Decentralization Consultant
10. José Miguel Guerrero, Coordination Institutional Training
11. Gilberto de la Cruz, Responsible for Procurement
12. Mayela Díaz, Assistant Procurement.

Clapp & Mayne

1. Juan Alamo, Team Leader
2. Jorge Brenes, Consultant in Organization & Methods
3. Nora Gordon, Consultant in Evaluation.

Ministry of Education/Managua

1. Dr. Humberto Belli, Minister of Education
2. Aurora Gurdian, Vice Minister, Substantive Area
3. Cristobal Sequeira, Vice Minister, Institutional Area
4. Gloria DeFranco, National Projects Coordinator
5. Fiona Estrada, General Secretary of Education

6. Pedro Abarca, Supervision
7. Violeta Malespin López, Director of Basic Education
8. Glenda Marcia Reyes, Director of Primary Education
9. Juan José Montenegro, Director of Training
10. Marta Alicia Tenoria, Director of Curriculum
11. Ruth Marina Cruz Cortes, Curriculum Advisor
12. Faty Lagos, General Director of Post Basic Education
13. Daisy de Cordero, Director of Pre-Service Training
14. Manuel Rojas Ardua, Advisor in Training
15. Lorena Arguello, Director of Evaluation
16. Patricia Callejas, Advisor in Evaluation
17. Gertrude Mayorga, Planning Office
18. José Luis García, General Director for Administration
19. Gustavo Madriz, General Director of Human Resources
20. Ondina Morozán de Espinoza, Director of Strategic Planning
21. Noel Lindo, Director of Information Systems
22. Jairo Gutierrez, Information Equipment Specialist
23. Honorio Pichardo, General Director of Finance
24. Domingo Orozco, Director Finance
25. Laura Sánchez, Director of Budget
26. Orlando Osorio Fonseca, Director of Procurement
27. Raul Quintanilla, Advisor to the Vice-Minister.

Others

1. Orlando Ortega, Project Coordinator, World Bank
2. Jesus Ugaldé Viquez, Project Coordinator, SIMEN
3. Juan Arrién, Secretary, UNESCO Permanent Commission.

Field Visits

1. Ma. Lourdes Cordero López, Director
Josefa Concepción Boza C, Sub-Director
Jorge Matus Tellez School, Department of Carazo, Municipality of Jinotepe.
2. Doris Victoria López Gutierrez, Director
Carlos Humberto, Aburto School
Department of Carazo, Municipality of Jinotepe.
3. Sorayda Romero, Director
Angel Silva Romero, Sub-Director
San Francisco School, Department of Carazo, Municipality of Diriamba.
4. C lementina Narvaez Fonseca, Director
Martha Lorena Guadamuz, Sub-Director
Ruben Darío School, Department of Carazo, Municipality of Santa Teresa.

5. Silvia Casco Zamora, Director
Natalia Mairena Tinoco, Sub-Director
El Progreso School, Department of Matagalpa.
6. Amparo Gutierrez, Director
Chaguitillo School, Department of Matagalpa, Municipality of Sebaco.
7. Delia A. Sánchez F., Director
Apolinar Rivas Castrillo, Sub-Director
Ruben Darío School, Department of Matagalpa, Municipality of Ciudad Darío.
8. Isolda García Valenzuela, Director
Gloria Chavarría Chavarría, Sub-Director
Fray B. de las Casas School, Department of Matagalpa, Municipality of San Ramón.
9. Socorro Lumbi Díaz, Director
Carmenza Escobar Gutierrez, Sub-Director
José Mamerto Martínez Scholl, Department of Jinotega, Municipality of San Rafael del Norte.
10. Migdonia Vargas Sandino, Director
Auxiliadora Vanegas E, Sub-Director
Humberto Méndez School, Department of Rivas.
11. Gladys Alemán, Director
Juanita Rocha, Sub-Director
Dr. Pedro J. Quintanilla School, Department of Rivas, Municipality of Belén.
12. Socorro Flores, Director
Sidomira González, Sub-Director
Augusto C. Sandino School, Department of Granada.
13. Oma Sánchez, Director
Martha Lila Ruiz Poveda, Sub-Director
Monseñor Abel Ruiz School, Department of Granada, Municipality of Diria.
14. Ma. Magdalena Aviles M, Director
Conny Sandino Rocha and Ma. De Jesus Barberena, Sub-Director
Monseñor Velez School, Department of Granada, Municipality of Nandaime.
15. Rosa Argentina Rivera, Director
Johana Palacios, Sub-Director
Augusto C. Salinas School, Department of Granada.
16. Ramón Isaías Hernández, Director
Rosa Amalia Carranza G., Sub-Director
Carlos Mairena Galán School, Department of Masaya, Municipality of Nandasmo.
17. Carmen Dávila Cerda, Director
Trinidad Cerda Guevara, Sub-Director
Guillermo Ampie Lanuza School, Department of Masaya, Municipality of La Concepción.

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18. Esmeralda Brenes Alemán, Director
Ma. Asunción Cano, Sub-Director
Carlos Roméo School, Department of Masaya.
19. Gloria García Martínez, Director
Karina Torruño Cerda, Sub-Director
Joaquín Obregón Bravo School, Department of Boaco, Municipality of Santa Lucía.
20. Nidia Blandón Alvarado, Director
Nelly Pacheco Martínez, Sub-Director
Juana Sovalbarro School, Department of Boaco.
21. Angela Espinoza Q, Director
Ma. Antonia Ramírez T, Sub-Director
Simón Bolívar School, Department of Chontales, Municipality of Acoyapa.
22. Mirtha Ma. Cruz Pastora, Director
Leopoldina Báez G, Sub-Director
Rosa Lanzas School, Department of Chontales, Municipality of Juigalpa.
23. Elia Mairena Baca, Director
Ma. Nery Ortiz L., Sub-Director
Manuel de Jesús López School, Department of Chinandega, Municipality of Corinto.
24. Teodora Hernández Gallo, Director
Indiana Guerrero Tellez, Sub-Director
Remigio Salazar School, Department of Chinandega, Municipality of El Viejo.
25. Mercedes Adilia Rivas G, Director
Roger Sandoval School, Department of Chinandega.
26. Ana Ma. Lira Perez, Director
San Benito School, Department of Chinandega.
27. Mirna Gómez Mayorga, Director
Teresa Amparo Cary, Sub-Director
Hermanos de Salzburgo Scholl, Department of León.
28. Martha Munguía L. Director
Ma. Teresa López, Sub-Director
Department of León, Municipality of Nagarote.
29. Nibardo Rodríguez R. Director
Feliz M. Peralta Reyes and Albertina Soto Hernández Sub-Directors
11 de Junio School, Department of Esteli, Municipality of La Trinidad.
30. Arlin Ramón Umazor, Director
Gaspar García Laviana School, Department of Esteli, Municipality of Pueblo Nuevo.
31. Evelia Herrera Ubeda, Director
Féliz M. Peralta Reyes, Sub-Director, Oscar A. Romero School, Department of Esteli.
32. Rooselveth Obando, Director
Alma Ma. Paniagua and Neria Cruz González, Sub-Director
Ruben Darío School, Department of Madriz, Municipality of Somoto.

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33. Reyna Isabel Pérez M, Director
Ruth Andrea Gradiz, Sub-Director
San Martin School, Department of Madriz, Municipality of Ocotal.
34. Marina Gómez López, Director
Mozonte School, Department of Madriz, Municipality of Mozonte.
35. Martha Lorena Mungulo Linarte, Director
Ricardo Morales Aviles School, Department of León, Municipality of Nagarote.
36. Mario López, Sub-Director
María de los Angeles Cajuna Rojas School, Department of Managua, Municipality of Managua.
37. René Mondragón Salinas, Director
Normal School of Managua.
38. Carmen Rodríguez Ríos, Responsible for Practice Teaching
Normal School of Managua.
39. Conny Guerrero, Sub-Director for Administration
Normal School of Managua.
40. Rosario Rodríguez, Departmental Director of Education
Matagalpa.
41. Ofilio Altamirano González, Chief, Technical Office for Information Systems, DDE
Matagalpa.

ANNEX C - Scope of Work of Evaluation Mission - A Summary

A. Identification

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) project number 524-0329 provides for a mid-term evaluation of the Basic Education Project (Nicaragua).

B. Objectives

1. to evaluate the degree to which project activities are contributing to overall Mission strategic objectives in support of improving the quality and efficiency of primary education in Nicaragua.
2. to assess the management and implementation of activities under the three major components of the project (institutional strengthening, teacher training and curriculum development and instructional materials components); and
3. to identify its problems, strengths and to suggest corrective actions.

The evaluation will provide information on whether or not the objectives of the annual work plans for 1994, 1995 and 1996 have been met and on their impact.

C. Tasks

The evaluation will provide information on project design, management and implementation.

The project design evaluation will:

1. Review relevant documents, including the USAID Nicaragua Strategy for 2000, the R4 document, the project paper and the project contract;
2. Analyze the project design and contextual framework in order to identify flaws and necessary adjustments;
3. Assess whether or not the thrust of the project in each component, including objectives and goals is still relevant and viable; and
4. Determine if alternate approaches should be added.

The assessment of project management will focus on the three project components. In Institutional Strengthening the assessment will be of the level of improvement of Ministry of Education (MED) operations, MED's policy formulation and implementation capability and on the new Management Information System. Within Teacher Training component an evaluation will be made of the Basic Education Guide, training in appropriate methodologies, the use of instructional materials, the demonstration and laboratory schools and the broad training of primary school teachers and master teachers. In Curriculum review the assessment will focus

upon the guides for teachers, the learning kits and the cost recovery system for instructional materials.

In addition the evaluation will review problems, strengths and weaknesses of the project in reaching annual objectives between 1994 and 1996, as outlined in the work plans, the R4 document and the end-of-project status. An analysis of elements which have slowed project development will produce suggestions for important areas of involvement in order to reach adequately objectives not being addressed.

The evaluation will also focus on the management and the roles of the long-term and short-term advisors as well as the effectiveness of the two major Academy for Educational Development's (AED) subcontractors (IDEAS and Juarez & Associates) along with the Clapp & Mayne (C&M) long-term advisors.

Project implementation and impact assessment parallel project management. Focus will be upon project strategies and whether or not lengthy delays have affected implementation at the global level and within each of the three components. Specifically, the evaluation team will: a) assess whether the pilot and phased approach will achieve project purpose, outputs and objectives as outlined in the project paper and 3.41-2 of USAID framework; b) identify problems or processes that are interfering with implementation; c) assess the sustainability of project activities; and d) document the existence and effectiveness of skills transfer to MED personnel.

In addition the team will analyze project implementation in terms of: a) the effect of different management styles, personnel turnover and the MED backup of the project; b) MED's counterpart contribution to the project; c) functioning of the two technical and directive commissions; and d) the distribution of instructional materials.

In the specific components, the evaluation team will address the following implementation elements:

Institutional Strengthening - a) MED's national policies and structural reforms; b) the Ministry's shifting priorities, especially in the area of decentralization; c) MED's multiple staff turnovers at the highest levels; d) impact of MED's organizational structure on the project; e) project's contribution to policy reform in MED; f) effectiveness of technology transfer of the training plan; g) the strategic plan for decentralization; h) the design, development and implementation of a human resource organizational system; i) design and implementation of a formative and summative evaluation strategy for the 3 major components; and j) the design and implementation of the Management Information System (MIS) for the MED.

Teacher Training - a) The impact of the active methodology training at the classroom level; b) viability, effectiveness and sustainability of policy changes relating to the development of a training network and the model schools program; and c) the development of the training plan for

master teachers in the model schools. Appropriate recommendations on each of these themes will be made.

Curriculum Development & Instructional Materials: a) Usefulness, relevancy, cost effectiveness of the Basic Education manuals and curriculum guides for teacher classroom use; b) quality and impact of study programs and guides for Grades 1-4; and c) analyze the training plan and its implementation in terms of effectiveness and consistency with the MED curriculum.

Finally, the evaluation team will review AED's overall procurement plan in terms of: a) the effectiveness of AED Washington's procurement offices and its coordination with the field logistics support office; b) consistency of procurement of commodities and technical services with USAID/Nicaragua regulations; and c) how procurement processes might be improved and strengthened to avoid unnecessary delays in project implementation.

D. Methods and Procedures

The evaluation team will: a) meet with AED/Washington project support staff to evaluate the efficiency of home office organization, overall procurement support and field office management; b) interview USAID, AED, C&M and MED officials, other donors and non-project personnel to assess project advancement; c) review all pertinent documentation on the project and related MED interventions; d) conduct field visits to assess project implementation at base levels; and e) review existing evaluations and studies to incorporate their conclusions, when appropriate, in the evaluation study.

E. Reports and Briefings

The contractor will deliver the following reports or briefings:

- a) an initial workplan upon arrival in the country;
- b) a revised workplan within six days of arrival in country;
- c) a mid-way briefing of progress and initial findings to USAID personnel;
- d) a draft report and final debriefing 2 or 3 days prior to departure from Nicaragua; and
- e) a final report incorporating Mission comments and questions 2 weeks following receipt of comments on draft report from USAID/Nicaragua.

The evaluation report will contain the following sections:

- a) an executive summary of not more than three pages which incorporates the main points of all other sections and highlights the major findings, conclusions and recommendations;
- b) the body of the report including a description of the country context, evidence and analysis of central themes, short and succinct conclusions and recommendations;

- c) a statement of conclusions and recommendations under specific sub-headings and addressed to specific persons or agencies;
- d) a one page evaluation abstract; and
- e) appendices which include the evaluation's Scope of Work, the project logical framework, a description of the research methodology and design, a bibliography of documents and persons consulted, recommendations for future evaluations and other appendices as required.

Ten copies of the final evaluation report should be submitted with a computer diskette with the report in WordPerfect 5.1/5.2 format and tables and charts in either WordPerfect or Lotus 1-2-3 format.

F. Technical Directions and Terms of Performance

Technical directions shall be provided by the USAID Project Officer.

Work shall commence and terminate on the dates indicated on the cover page. Any extension, up to a maximum of 30 days and subject to the ceiling price of this delivery order, must have the prior written approval of the Project Officer.

All other terms and directions are standard to USAID contracts of this nature.

ANNEX D - Logical Framework for the BASE Project
 (As modified by "Results Framework for Education"&
 "Results Review and Resource Request (R4)")

Goal: Broad-based sustainable growth and improvement of quality of life of Nicaraguans.

Measurable Indicators:

1. Increased family income
2. Improved public health status
3. Reduced fertility
4. Increase from 22% to 30% of labor force with a primary education.

Project Purpose - Improve the quality and efficiency of primary school education in Nicaragua.

Indicators:

1. Primary school completion rate (% of 1st grade entrants who complete 6th grade)

		Planned	Actual
Baseline	1993	21%	23.5%
	1995	23%	26.8%
	1996	28%	
	1997	30%	
	1998	31%	
	1999	35%	
Target	2000	40%	

2. Primary school repetition rates (grades 1-4)

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
Baseline	40.7%	17.1%	11.3%	11%
Targets				
1995	26.3%	14.6%	11.8%	7.5%
1996	24%	13%	10%	7%
1997	22%	12%	8%	7%
1998	21%	10%	7.5%	6%
1999	20%	8%	5.5%	5%

3. Achievement test scores

Baseline established

Intermediate result: Improved teacher performance

Indicators:

1. % of teachers using interactive methodology at least 50% of the time

Target

1998 40%

2000 75%

2. Average number of hours spent teaching per day/week

Intermediate result: More effective curriculum implemented

Indicators:

1. Achievement tests designed and administered for two subjects
2. % of teachers using didactic guides and study programs

Targets: 1998 50%

2000 80%

Intermediate result: Educational system decentralized

Indicators:

1. % of primary schools functioning under Municipal Education Councils
2. % of primary schools achieving autonomy

Targets: 1997 5%

1998 20%

1999 40%

2000 50%

Intermediate result: Increased parent/community participation in children's' education

Indicators:

1. % of parents participating in school activities

2. % of students studying at home at least one hour per day

Targets:	Parents	Students
1997	10%	15%
1998	15%	18%
1999	20%	24%
2000	25%	30%

Project objectives

Institutional strengthening

- a. Strategic decentralization plan
- b. Model for institutional planning
- c. Human resources organizational system
- d. Accounting and budget system
- e. Training system
- f. Formative and summative evaluation strategy
- g. Management information system

Teacher training

- a. Training in active methodology
- b. Policy changes in teacher training
- c. Training network
- d. Demonstration/laboratory schools
- e. In-service training model
- f. Strategic training plan
- g. Training plan for master teachers

Curriculum development and instructional materials

- a. Basic education manuals and curriculum guides
- b. Repetition study
- c. Study programs for grades 1-4
- d. Training program
- e. Strengthening normal schools
- f. Other studies: family structure, dropout and repetition, academic and teaching quality

End of Project Status (EOPS) by 1998

- a. 50% reduction in repetition rates in the first four grades
- b. 20% increase in language arts and mathematics test scores
- c. Improvements in academic achievement
- d. Increase in primary school completion rates
- e. Decrease in years to produce a 6th grade graduate
- f. Reduction in the dropout rate
- g. Formalized student evaluation system established.

Project Inputs

BASE Project Budget	\$ millions
Technical assistance	\$ 3.4
Overhead	1.3
Subcontracts	4.2
Allowances	.6
Commodities	5.5
Participants	.95
Total BASE project expenses	\$ 15.972

USAID Support

- Unprogrammed TA
- USAID/N Project Coordinator
- Evaluations and audits

GON Contributions

- Counterpart personnel to project staff
- Salaries of teachers and staff in training
- Office space for project personnel
- Motocycles for school supervisors
- Fuel for project vehicles

95

ANNEX E - Classroom Evaluation Instrument - Indicators

Note - This instrument was used in field visits to quickly assess the level of penetration which the "Transformación Curricular" had in the daily activities of the teacher. It divides teachers in three overlapping groups: a) teachers who control the process, b) teachers in transition and c) teachers who stress the student and his learning.

Nivel I - Enseñanza (Traditional)

Indicadores

- Maestro habla 90-100% del tiempo.
- Maestro controla todo lo que pasa en la sala de clase.
- La participación de los alumnos en el trabajo es grupos controlados por el maestro.
- Metodología de exposición o discusión en asamblea.
- Los planes centrados en objetivos preestablecidos por los maestros.
- Siguen programas nacionales sin adaptaciones a las realidades locales.
- Aplica planes y programas únicos por todo el país.
- Disciplina es controlada por el maestro.
- El plan de clase diario depende totalmente del programa de estudio o libro de texto.
- El cuaderno del alumno y el pizarrón son los instrumentos didácticos únicos
- La comunidad participa solamente en la manutención del edificio de la escuela.

Nivel II - Transición (Transition)

Indicadores

- Maestro habla por lo menos 50% del tiempo.
- Maestro controla la sala de clase, pero pide colaboración de los niños.
- El trabajo en grupos es con guías para la organización.
- Metodologías variadas, buscando la incorporación de los niños.
- Se utilizan los materiales como medios a completar los planes de estudio.
- Los planes utilizan actividades para desarrollar objetivos preestablecidos.
- Hay intentos de adaptar los programas nacionales a las realidades locales.
- Maestro comparte responsabilidades y deberes con los niños.
- Los libros, programas y cuadernos se usan como apoyo al plan del clase.
- Algunos miembros de la comunidad colaboran al nivel de los maestros.

Nivel III - Aprendizaje (Learning environment)

Indicadores

- Maestro habla 25-30% del tiempo.
- Maestro es como facilitador del aprendizaje.
- Los niños trabajan en grupos, iniciando sus propias acciones con el apoyo del maestro.
- Se utilizan metodologías activas que incorporan los niños en el proceso.
- Los materiales de aprendizaje están contruidos básicamente por los niños.
- Los objetivos específicos evolucionan desde las realidades de los niños.
- El currículo nacional es adaptado a las realidades locales.
- Los niños inician acciones dentro del marco global proporcionado por el maestro.
- La disciplina es controlado por los alumnos.
- La comunidad participa en la organización, desarrollo y evaluación de las actividades.

ANNEX F - Evaluation Guide for Teacher Training

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION

CHILDREN

Learning Theory
Child Development
Learning Styles
Motivation
Culture
Intelligence
Critical Thinking
Socialization

TEACHING

Observing/Assessing
Record Keeping
Evaluation
Planning/Implementation
Strategies
Individualization
Integration
Researching

CONTENT

Philosophies of Education
Environment
Curriculum
Subject Matter
Math
Social Studies
Literacy
Other Resource

PROFESSIONAL DEMEANOR

INTRAPERSONAL

Reflecting
Analyzing
Synthesizing
Hypothesizing
Evaluating

INTERPERSONAL

Communicating
Collaborating
Respecting
Responsive to supervision

ORGANIZATIONAL

Prepared
Punctual
Participation
Initiative
Adaptable/Flexible