

**BEYOND BELIEF? A HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL
ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY SCHOOL REFORM IN
NICARAGUA**

by

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ABSTRACT

“School autonomy” began in Nicaragua in 1993 as a voluntary program, maintained through ministerial directive. In 2002, the newly passed *New Law of Education Program* extended ‘school autonomy’ to all public schools in the country. Essentially, the New Law introduces a new set of principles and rules for parental participation, local accountability, and local coordination in Nicaraguan schools. However, new rules and principles are nothing more than instructions that can be ignored- in fact, in Nicaragua, they often are. In this study, we problematize the one-to-one relationship between rules and behaviour that has been the cornerstone of contemporary change theorizing in the developing world. In contrast to the ‘change as rule-based’ perspective, we argue that a more effective approach is to study an actor’s motivation to follow the new rules. In this study, we suggest that an actor’s motivation to follow the rules is conditioned by their expectations about how others will behave in relation to those rules (behavioural beliefs). This attention to the relationship between rules, institutions, and behavioural beliefs represents a new way of studying change in the context of underdevelopment. We employ Avner Greif’s Historical Comparative Institutional Analysis (HCIA) to study school change in Nicaragua in order to demonstrate how stakeholders’ normative beliefs and behavioural beliefs condition their motivations towards the change initiative. By examining the evolution of these ‘normative beliefs and expectations’, we show how historical norms encapsulated in the country’s institutions, shape stakeholder responses to new initiatives, such as school autonomy. Our study reveals how change requires all aspects of the educational institution (its formal rules and organizations) to come together to perpetuate the new normative understandings associated with the new rules. However, in Nicaragua, our findings reveal that despite the introduction of new rules and principles for education, the organizations of education in Nicaragua have continued to perpetuate historical, normative understandings that are opposed to the norms of ‘school autonomy’ and the principles of good governance. Thus, the prospects and possibilities of change under the ‘school autonomy’ reform have been limited.

Keywords: Education reform; Decentralization; School-Based Management; Nicaragua; School Autonomy; Historical Comparative Institutional Analysis (HCIA)

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LIST OF TERMS & LEADERS

Alemán, Arnaldo	President of Nicaragua and Leader of the Constitutional Liberal Party (PLC) from 1996 to 2002.
APRENDE	A project of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, financed by the World Bank and implemented in 1995 to improve the coverage of preschool and primary education in Nicaragua by increasing parent and community participation in education, thereby improving the quality and efficiency of education.
Autonomous Schools Program	Nicaragua's Autonomous Schools Program, initiated in 1993, and embodies many of the ideas put forth by decentralization advocates through the implementation of a school-based management strategy that relies on local school councils that have a voting majority of parents, where the Council has responsibility for resource allocation, school fees, some curriculum, and planning functions. Under the ASP, local school councils also have broad powers over personnel decisions, including the hiring and firing of school principals and teachers.
Belli, Humberto	Chief Architect of the Autonomous Schools Program, Minister of Education for both the Chamorro administration (UNO) and Aleman administration (PLC).
Bolaños, Enrique	President of Nicaragua and Leader of the Constitutional Liberal Party (PLC) from 2002 to 2007.
Chamorro, Violetta	President of Nicaragua and Leader of the National Opposition Union (UNO) from 1990 to 1996.
<i>Consejo Directivos</i> (Council of Directives)	The governing council for autonomous schools in Nicaragua, consisting of a school principal, Consejo de Docentes, Esudientil Gobernatorial, and the Consejo de Padres. The Council has authority over an array of school functions that include internal administration, hiring and firing of staff members, school improvement plans, and some budgetary allocation functions. The Council is always presided over by a Parent representative, and the post of treasurer of the School Council is reserved for a Parent representative.
<i>Consejo de Docentes</i> (Teachers Council)	A representative Council of elected teachers. Teachers are elected to the council by secret voting of the teachers of the school. Once elected, the teacher representatives form part of the Consejo Directivos (the school council).
<i>Consejo de Padres</i> (Parent	A representative Council of elected parents. Parents are elected to

Council)	the Council by secret voting following a General Body Meeting of the parents of the school, with a quorum of 60% of parents. The law specifies that teachers or school administrators cannot be elected as parents' representatives, even if they have their own children enrolled in the school. Once elected, the parent representatives form part of the Consejo Directivos (the School Council), with a majority representation of the parents.
Decentralization	A policy strategy championed as the route to greater efficiency and accountability in the provision of social services. In terms of efficiency, decentralization in the delivery of education is expected to improve the financial management of the system, making it more efficient and improving the overall quality of education. This argument was suggested much early by Oates in his 'decentralization theorem' (Oates 1972), which states that decentralized governments are more responsive to local demands and are preferable when local outputs are not outweighed by economies of scales in central government provisions, which appears to apply to education.
<i>Estudiantil Gobernatorial</i> (Student Government)	A representative Council of elected students. Students are elected to the Council by secret voting of the students at the school. Once elected, the student representatives form part of the Consejo Directivos (the School Council).
FSLN (<i>Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional</i> - Sandinista National Liberation Front)	Left-wing revolutionary movement that loosely governed Nicaragua following the 1979 revolutionary war until 1990. Since 1990, the FSLN has served as the official opposition party in Nicaragua under the leadership of General Daniel Ortega.
Ministry Delegate	A person, appointed by the Minister of Education, who serves as the municipal representative and charged with responsibility and authority for administering educational services at the municipal level.
Municipalization	A program of the Nicaraguan government whereby municipalities receive fiscal transfers to administer school payrolls and other limited powers.
<i>Núcleos Educativos Rurales</i>	Groups of 4 to 12 rural schools, who together under the new law of autonomy share a principal and administrative function.
Ortega, Daniel	Leader of the revolutionary Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN)
School Based Management	A form of educational administration adapted from the corporate sector, in which the school becomes the primary unit for decision-making. The design feature of SBM promotes an organizational composition in which individuals within the school community, at the school site itself, become the primary decision-makers on matters related to that particular school.

SIMCEP

A project of the MECD established to support the process of educational decentralization through the direct participation of community members in the improvement of infrastructure in their schools.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANDEN	<i>Asociación Nacional de Educadores Nicaraguenses</i> (National Association of Nicaraguan Educators)
ASP	Autonomous Schools Program
EFA	Education For All
EFA-FTI	Education For All- Fast Track Initiative
FISE	Fondo de Inversion Social de Emergencia
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GON	Government of Nicaragua
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Country
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
MECD/MED	<i>Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deportes</i> (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NER	<i>Nucleos Educativos Rurales</i> (Rural Education Nucleus)
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PLC	<i>Partido Liberal Constitucionalista</i> - Liberal Constitutional Party
SBM	School Based Management
SIMCEP	<i>Sistema de Mejoramiento de Centros Educacion Primaria</i>
UNAN	<i>Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua</i> – National Autonomous University of Nicaragua
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNO	<i>Unión Nacional Oposición</i> (National Opposition Union)

CHAPTER ONE: STUDYING CHANGE IN THE CONTEXT OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Introduction to the Study

It would be impossible to understand the current state of Nicaraguan education without looking at the country's evolution over the past seventy years. The fact that Nicaraguans experienced numerous social and political upheavals throughout the twentieth century is no accident but rather the product of a long and tumultuous pathway in their social, political, and institutional formation. This historical legacy, encapsulated in the country's education institutions, also resides in the collective memories of contemporary education stakeholders, manifesting themselves in individual preferences, beliefs and actions.

The examination of contemporary school reforms in Nicaragua, and elsewhere in the isthmus, is largely characterized by this debate about the constraints of history. On the one hand, there are advocates of the New Public Management who seek to move education in Nicaragua forward, with inadequate regard for this historical legacy (see: World Bank, 1999). When school reform is viewed in this way, the outcomes are often seen as 'performance achievements' that are largely technical in nature. While this approach is useful in its ability to generate technologies, rules, and designs, it largely misses the point: namely, that beliefs and institutions inherited from the past constitute the foundation from which stakeholders interpret and engage with new technologies and rules of the game. On the other hand, there are numerous scholars who bind the

contemporary school reforms to the past in ways that severely undermine the credibility of any and all reform achievements (see: Ruiz de Forsberg, 2004). From this perspective, the actions of stakeholders appear as 'products' or 'extensions' of structures and inequities inherited from the past. As a result, change initiatives are often resigned to the shackles of history.

In this project, we advance a new way of thinking about institutional reform, which neither ignores the constraining role of history nor resigns any and all technical achievements to historical structures. The need for such a new understanding became particularly evident following our initial review of evaluations of the new school autonomy initiative in Nicaragua. We could discern no conclusive evidence that school autonomy has led to any improvement in school performance, achieving only minimal advances in school coordination and community participation in school decision-making. (see: Gunnarsson et al, 2004; Ruiz de Forsberg, 2003; King, Ozler & Rawling, 1999; Fuller & Rivarola, 1998) When viewed from a purely technical standpoint, these outcomes read as minor performance achievements. When viewed from a purely historical framework, these outcomes read as 'products' or 'extensions' of the neo-liberal project of the last 2 decades.

We read these outcomes differently. In a country characterized by political polarization, chronic institutional corruption, clientelism, and a legacy of social and political upheaval, the finding that rural peasants and some teachers (typically associated with the Sandinista) report improvements in community participation and school coordination, in addition to favourable evaluations of a Conservative government's initiative, is both impressive and noteworthy. This does not deny the constraining role of

history in this process, which has clearly limited the outcomes and shaped numerous conflicts surrounding the reform. However, it does suggest that Nicaraguans are not determined by their history; a point that seems to be missing in contemporary studies.

Thus, a strictly technical evaluation of these processes and achievements would fail to appreciate both the social and historical significance of these outcomes and, in addition, would overlook the broader social and historical legacies that shape the beliefs and motivations of school stakeholders. In contrast, a purely social and/or historical perspective at the macro-level might overlook the significant micro-level achievements occurring within autonomous schools, which are significant in their own right. Thus, for us, understanding current Nicaraguan education requires examining how the institution of education is moving forward not in spite of history, but rather in light of it. This means adopting a perspective that is both technical and historical in nature. We suggest Historical Comparative Institutional Analysis (HCIA) may provide such an alternative interpretation of these events.

The primary task of this project is to provide a comprehensive evaluation of school autonomy as it is occurring in five, rural Nicaraguan schools. Unlike previous studies, we rely upon stakeholder responses to both evaluate the reform and to identify key relationships between the practice of school autonomy and the historical, institutional, social, and economic conditions that define school environments. In that sense, we do not seek a strictly causal explanation of school performance under the autonomy program. Rather, we seek a broader understanding of the conditions that influence stakeholders' abilities to both interpret and implement newly proscribed rules and procedures in education. Our explanations and predictions regarding this process are

informed by the HCIA analysis, which focuses theoretical attention squarely on the expectations and *behavioural beliefs* of stakeholders and the institutions that shape those expectations and beliefs over time.

Our dependent variable is the behavioural beliefs of education stakeholders; defined as an actor's internalized normative belief about how others will behave in relation to the rules. Behavioural beliefs are measured through appeals to historical documents, content analysis, surveys, and interviews with Nicaraguan stakeholders themselves. Through these techniques, we are able to construct and re-construct the historical and contemporary behavioural beliefs of educational stakeholders. HCIA also predicts that behavioural beliefs are strongly influenced by institutions (consisting of formal rules, organizations, auxiliary transactions, and the institutional environment). Thus, our independent variables for this study are defined in these institutional terms. Specifically, we examine the formal rules of education, the behaviour of the Ministry of Education in relation to those rules, the behaviour of the central government in relation to those rules, and the socio-economic environment of schools to see if these conditions influence the dependent variable, the behavioural beliefs of stakeholders, in way predicted by HCIA. The independent variables are measured and identified by historical research, analysis of primary documents, other forms of content analysis, and interviews with key individuals. Overall, what we discover is a complex and evolving process of school change in these communities.

With these variables in place, our research questions can then be stated as follows:

1) How have Nicaraguans historically understood education; 2) How do the new rules and principles of school autonomy challenge these historical expectations and

understandings; 3) Does the current institution of education perpetuate historical understandings and expectations or, conversely, does it perpetuate new understandings and expectations more closely associated with the principles of school autonomy; 4) And finally, in light of this information, what can policy-makers do to better promote, motivate, enable, and guide individuals to take particular actions?

Background

The need for a change in contemporary Nicaraguan education is real and acute. The educational system itself has been wracked by social and political upheaval that has characterized the country's broader, political evolution since confederation. The result being that today adult literacy rates, youth literacy rates, and net enrolment rates in Nicaragua are well below the regional average for Latin America (World Bank, 2002). Achievement test results in Spanish and Mathematics, carried out for the first time in 2002, provide corroborating evidence about the low quality of Nicaraguan schooling (Porta, 2003). In addition to the accumulating evidence about the failure of Nicaragua to meet its basic educational goals, other studies reveal distressing social and political conditions, such as poverty, corruption, and political patronage, as characteristic features of a deficient educational system in Nicaragua. Given the prominent role assigned to education in determining a country's medium and long-term growth prospects in world competition (OECD, 1999: 1), these findings are cause for real concern amongst Nicaraguans and those with an interest in the country's future.

Against this historical backdrop, Nicaragua recently launched an ambitious effort to transform the daily practices of its local schools. The project first began on a

voluntary basis in 1993 under the Autonomous Schools Program (ASP) and was extended to all Nicaraguan public schools in 2002 under a *New Law of Education Participation*. The “autonomy” initiative, as it is known, is meant to be a new program of ‘democratic education’ in Nicaragua. Through *devolving* significant decision-making powers to local school councils, the autonomy program grants local school councils significant powers over the budget allocation, personnel, and some aspects of school planning and finances. In addition, the program specifies a voting majority of parents on the councils, the election of principals, fixed tenures for principals, and use of voluntary school user fees (*cuotas*). All of these measures mean to improve parental participation, local accountability, and school performance, essentially transforming and professionalizing an education system that has been characterized by a historical legacy of centralism, clientelism, corruption, and poor performance.

The autonomy reform in Nicaragua is illustrative of an emerging idea for how best to achieve performance outcomes in public administration and service delivery; an idea with roots in the *New Public Management* (NPM). NPM employs the basic ‘good governance’ organizational model predicated on the ideas of market efficiency, accountability, transparency, participation and decentralization. The ascendance of this approach is witnessed in the Nicaraguan schooling initiative in addition to numerous other governance initiatives in education, health and governance occurring throughout Latin America. While our examination in this study is limited to a derivative of NPM, known as *School-Based Management* (SBM), we believe the findings and insights from a study of SBM initiatives in Nicaragua may have broader application to the study of decentralization in general.

Since we are almost all advocates of participatory approaches to development in theory, one might think we should embrace the SBM approach to education and more broadly, decentralization, as method for improving public administration and policy outcomes in the developing world. In theory, decentralization, and SBM in the case of education, would mean that local stakeholders have more direct control over policy decisions and more direct access to policy decision-makers. In theory, this would mean that programs and policies could be tailored to local needs and specificities. However, while SBM reforms in education have produced clear and beneficial results in places like Chicago (Byrk et al, 1998), the U.K., and Australia (Simpkins, 1981), the benefits being derived from similar types of decentralization projects are less obvious in other places, as evidenced in studies of Bolivia (Faguet, 2002), Argentina and Mexico (Nickerson, 2002), various states in Africa (Bardhan, 2002), and Nicaragua (Gunnarsson et al, 2004; Ruiz de Forsberg, 2002; Fuller & Rivarola, 1998). In fact, in this study we hear from some stakeholders who tell us that, at times, the legislation of an ambitious school autonomy program at the national level registers as little more than a *'blip on the radar'* in the daily life of their schools. Others tell us that school autonomy leads to *'significant improvements'* in their schools. These reports point to the need for further investigation.

The General Problem of School Change in Latin America

Why has the new technology of “decentralization” failed to yield its promised benefits in Latin American education? We believe the problem is twofold. First, to a significant extent, the NPM technology fails to recognize that education serves a significant ‘political’ function in Latin America. An alternative approach is to recognize that national educational programs in Latin America consist of values, ideologies, and

images, which are intended to serve the interests of a particular ruling regime, class, or political faction. Viewed from this alternative perspective, new alternatives in education are seen as being tied to their social context and their political function.

To a significant extent, this alternative 'historical-political' perspective may explain the various forms of educational reform that have arisen in Latin American under the banner of 'decentralization' (See Table 1).

Table 1. Decentralization of Education during the 1980s-1990s

	Mexico	Chile	Argentina	Nicaragua
Key Reforms for restructuring administration	National Agreement for the Modernization of Basic Education (1992) National Educational Law (1993)	P900 program MECE-Basica (1990) Teachers Statute (1991)	Federal Education Pact (1994)	Autonomous School Program (1993) New Law of Education Participation (2002)
Cost Effectiveness				
(as measured by Public/Private Share of Education)				
Public Expenditure (% of GDP)	3.38 (1991) 4.21 (1998)	2.54 (1991) 3.73 (1998)	3.28 (1991) 4.04 (1998)	3.36 (1991) 4.99 (1998)
Private Enrollment share (% of primary)	6.3 (1991) 7.4 (1999)	39.1 (1991) 45.5 (2000)	N/A (1991) 19.5 (1999)	13.3 (1991) 16.4 (1999)
Local Level Administration				
(as measured by Sub-national Control over Specific Educational Functions)				
Personnel	National	Municipal & National	Regional	School District
Planning	National	National	National	School District & National
Resources	National & Regional	Municipal	Regional	School District & National
Curriculum	National	National	National & Regional	National
Level of Community Participation	Low	Medium	Low	High
School-Level Competition				
Features that promote competition for resources	None	Vouchers	None	User Fees
Extent to which policy reflects market ideology				
Level of consistency with neo-liberalism	Least consistent	More consistent	Little consistency	Most consistent

(Source: The indicators for this table are gathered from information presented in the following works: M. R. Kubal, 2003; D. Winkler, and A.I. Gershberg, 2000; Edstats, 2002)

As the Table above illustrates, there is significant variation in the educational decentralization initiatives across Latin American countries, despite the fact that each country claims to have embarked upon a significant ‘decentralization’ of education. In some cases, the majority of decision-making authority is given to central governments

(re-centralization) in cases such as Mexico; in others, to regional governments (regionalization) in cases such as Argentina; in still others, to municipalities (municipalization) in cases such as Chile; and, finally, to schools in cases such as Nicaragua (Winkler and Gershberg, 2000; Nickerson, 1999). Thus, despite embracing the merits of decentralization for education, decentralization is not exercised in uniform fashion between or within countries in Latin America.

As we have argued elsewhere, this variation in educational change policy is best understood when education is seen in political and historical terms, rather than purely technical terms; as implied by the NPM (McNamara, in press). In Mexico, for example, the negotiations of the ANMEB and the National Educational Law reflect the centralist tendencies that have historically defined Mexican political power and institutional party structures. The corporatist relationship between Mexico's hegemonic party (the PRI) and the Teachers Union (the SNTE) facilitated the negotiation of highly 'centralized' educational program. In order to maintain the necessary political capital for a larger modernization project, the PRI (under Salinas) was required to make significant concessions to the SNTE, which resulted in a program that transfers some responsibilities to the state level, while re-centralizing important decision-making powers (such as the negotiation of teachers salaries and curriculum decisions) at the national level.

In contrast to the reforms in Mexico, the educational reforms in Chile reflect the newly elected Aylwin government's attempts to maintain a fragile, democratic coalition in the wake of the Pinochet dictatorship. Prior to the reform, education in Chile was already significantly 'decentralized' with municipalities having responsibilities over several aspects of educational decision-making and financing. However, the fact that all

mayors, up until 1990, were appointees of Pinochet leads us to question the extent to which educational decisions were locally made in practice. Nevertheless, the new reforms of the Aylwin administration do not appear as an attempt for further decentralization. Rather, they appear as an attempt to maintain stability and support for the new, fragile coalition by appeasing previously disenfranchised groups. For example, the P900 provided special assistance to primary schools in poor areas (known as P900). The MECE-Basica targeted improvements in the equity of primary education, and sought to involve the school in educational planning. Finally, the Teachers Statute entrenched a minimum salary for teachers.

In Argentina, the Federal Education Pact covers the transfer of responsibility of educational services from the national to the provincial levels. The historical relationship between Argentina's levels of government, in large part, explains this outcome. For example, Argentina features a constitutional design and party system that has yielded a balanced system, where bargaining power fluctuates between national and provincial levels. The relative bargaining power of national and provincial politicians fluctuates, particularly in accordance with legislative majorities and minorities. The Federal Education Pact, in large part, reflects President Menem's political concession to the federalist faction (specifically, the governors) that helped Menem secure his leadership (and eventual presidential victory) as the Peronist's Partido Justicialista (PJ) candidate. Thus, the regional transfer of power outlined in the Argentine reform can be understood as Menem's obligation and commitment to his political supporters at the regional level (See: Willis, Garman, and Haggard, 1999).

Finally, in Nicaragua, school autonomy emerges as an attempt by the new UNO administration to reverse the educational programs of the Sandinista and to create its own, broader political vision of a 'new social contract'. Specifically, the Autonomous Schools Program appears as a direct challenge to the existing educational order, which stressed values of community, commonality and the revolution. Instead, the UNO was able to implement reforms in education that stressed the individual, democracy, religion and the market. As we shall see, the bargaining process was very limited (despite the claim of significant input from civil society). Additionally, the ASP was maintained through a series of directives, as opposed to legislation. Unlike the Mexican case, the dominant Teachers Union (ANDEN) was significantly weakened following the demise of the FSLN and, as such, was unable to provide a strong, unified opposition.

What these four cases show us is that when studying educational change in countries such as these, we cannot study the 'institution of education' independently from the broader history and society of which the institution is an integral part. Education programs in Latin America both reflect and constitute the cultural, social and political world of which Latin Americans inhabit, share, and internalize. Thus, change in national educational programs is not simply a technical process. Rather, it is infused with politics, ideologies, interests, conflict, and normative beliefs and expectations, which cannot be understood, accounted for, or planned by deductive investigation alone.

The second problem of educational change in Latin America flows from the first. Even when reforms are negotiated and legislated in this highly political and contentious terrain, the passage of national legislation or mandates (*de jure* autonomy) does not directly translate into practice in schools (*de facto* autonomy) (Gunnarsson, et al, 2004).

Previous research tells us that when new educational programs are introduced, some schools seem more capable of integrating the newly specified practices than others, which suggests the practice of new rules and laws also varies significantly between schools exposed to the same policy treatment (Wylie, 1999; Levin, 2001). This second problem flows directly from our earlier investigations (See: McNamara, in press) and serves as the primary focus of the present study. We examine the nature of this micro-level problem in the next section.

The Research Problem for the Present Study

In our previous work, we concentrated our efforts on explaining the different trajectories and outcomes of national education reform programs in Latin America. To a significant extent, this analysis highlights the important role of history and political institutions in shaping the prospects and possibilities of national reform programs in education. In this project, our critique of the dominant approach remains the same, as does our advocacy of inductive, historical and political analysis. However, our analysis of change in this study focuses on the process occurring at the local level and, in doing so, provides a new opportunity for generating insight into the complexities of change and constraining role of history, politics, and institutions.

As with studies of education reform that focus on the national level, numerous studies of local-level change have utilized an NPM approach to explain the event. To some extent, by setting up a model of change that explains cost-benefit calculations as the basis of change, the dominant NPM framework correctly points to incentives (motivations) as the impetus for change. This attention to incentives and motivations has been shown to be a useful starting point for understanding the process of change in the

context of underdevelopment (see: Bates, 1981; Arcia & Belli, 1999). However, by assuming a one-to-one relationship between formal rules and individual behaviour, the theory ignores historical factors, normative expectations, and institutional legacies. As such, the theory of NPM makes no distinction between change in the context of underdevelopment and change in the context of advanced, industrial society. As we attempt to show, ignorance of these historical factors may be particularly damaging when planning for change in the context of poverty, institutional weakness, corruption, and civil unrest.

According to the theory of NPM and SBM, any decision taken by the rational-actor is wholly contingent on the incentive structure presented in the current game. The theory assumes that individual incentives are structured by the formal rules governing the payouts. The NPM also assumes that actors have no prior knowledge of previous transactions/iterations and no *pre-existing* expectations about how others will behave in the current transaction. Thus, NPM explanations of change fundamentally ignore an actor's pre-existing, normative beliefs and expectation about how the current game will be played by others.

Consider the case of the Nicaraguan driver as a simple illustration of the dangers of ignoring normative beliefs, understandings and expectations when planning for change in the context of underdevelopment. Anyone who has ever driven in Nicaragua knows that a one-to-one relationship between the formal rule governing the speed limit and actual driving speed does not exist. In fact, in Nicaragua, there is a shared, cognitive understanding that the formal speed limit does not apply. This understanding is continually reinforced by a driver's interactions with other drivers on the road, who

continually violate the posted speed limit. Should a driver happen to be stopped by law enforcement for speeding, they rely upon another shared, cognitive understanding that a bribe is sufficient to escape punishment. Thus, the *formal rule* about driving speed does not determine how fast Nicaraguans drive. Rather, a driver's speed is motivated by a *shared, cognitive belief* about what everyone else will do (or, a *behavioural belief*). Changing the speed limit is then, not only a matter of creating a new set of rules and behavioural prescriptions, it also requires confronting historical understandings that are shared and reinforced among drivers and law enforcement. In short, a Nicaraguan's incentive and motivation to follow the rules of the road is not determined by the law itself, but is rather based on their expectation and anticipation about how others will behave in relation to the rule. This 'behavioural belief' is normative, historical, and relational; meaning, it is built and reinforced through repeated, social interaction and iteration. In short, these normative understandings are what motivate action and adherence to (or ignorance of) the formal rules.

Like the simple illustration above, we believe the issue of school change in the context of underdevelopment can be thought of in the same way- by focusing on the 'behavioural beliefs' of stakeholders in relation to the new rules. A focus on behavioural beliefs represents a new way of thinking about school change. It requires that we think about change 'inductively' and 'historically', speculating on where behavioural beliefs about education come from, how they are sustained, and how they evolve- rather than thinking of change 'deductively', as is often the case with standardized, NPM models. In addition, it would require that we stop thinking of change in terms of a one-to-one relationship between rules and behaviour. Instead, the question of why some rules are

followed while others are not becomes much more important. In short, we believe an approach focusing on behavioural beliefs (how they develop, how they are sustained, and how they change) may be a more useful strategy for explaining the mixed results of school change initiatives in the developing world.

Theoretical Framework: HCIA

Our hypothesis is then stated as follows: the prospects and possibilities of ‘school autonomy’ in Nicaragua can be explained, in large part, by reference to the ‘behavioural beliefs’ of stakeholders. If prevailing normative beliefs and expectations are reinforced and perpetuated within newly autonomous schools, then we expect the prospects of possibilities of change will be extremely limited. However, if stakeholders are sent strong ‘*normative signals*’ that the prevailing norms no longer apply, then we expect the prospects and possibilities of change will be greatly enhanced. Thus, identifying the source of these ‘normative signals’ is key in our analysis.

To uncover the source of these ‘normative signals’, we rely upon Avner Greif’s theory of Historical, Comparative Institutional Analysis (HCIA), developed in his seminal work “Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy”. The HCIA approach utilizes the ‘game-theoretic’ as its analytic framework and focuses on ‘institutions’ and ‘institutional components’ as the subject of study. The factors of interest in this study are then, ‘behavioural beliefs’ and the institutional elements that perpetuate behavioural beliefs. HCIA takes these ‘institutional components’ as *formal rules, organizations, and auxiliary transactions*.

At its core, HCIA is a theory of ‘institutions’ that seeks to explain both *transactions* and *motivations* towards transactions. Greif defines a transaction as “an action taken when an entity, such as commodity, social attitude, emotion, opinion, or information, is transferred from one social unit to another” (p. 46). The social unit is most commonly identified as ‘the individual’. What is central in Greif’s theory is an actor’s motivation (incentive) towards the transaction. Greif is particularly interested in the motivations that lead an individual to follow some rules, but not others.

What differentiates Greif’s theory from the NPM is the way the two theories conceptualize rationality. In HCIA, the rationality assumption is a fairly thin variant in which individuals act in relation to their preferences (see chapter two), whereby preferences are shaped by *behavioural beliefs* (expectations about what others will do). Following in the footsteps of rational theorists, such as Ostrom (1990), Ferejohn (1991), Levi (1991), and Denzau and North (1994), the HCIA approach explores the role of norms, mental models, and other ideational and cognitive factors in decision-making. Specifically, the HCIA model presents a departure from the narrow behavioural assumptions of the NPM and, consequently, explores the possibility that decision-making is contingent upon an actor’s cognitive expectation and anticipation of the behaviour of others. As such, HCIA is a theory of *motivation as behavioural belief* that is *inductive*, *relational* and *historical*. It is inductive because motivations cannot be taken as given by the formal rules, rather they must be discovered through investigation. It is relational because it is concerned with behavioural beliefs, which are expectations derived from the aggregation (and institutionalization) of individual choices over time. It is historical

because it requires a consideration of the evolution of the existing, institutional equilibrium that perpetuates behavioural beliefs.

HCIA takes behavioural beliefs as the linchpin for understanding change. The key to unlocking the puzzle of change is to uncover the factors that help perpetuate the behavioural beliefs of actors over time. For Greif, these factors are *institutional components*. Institutional components include formal rules, organizations, and auxiliary transactions. The implications of the HCIA approach are that, in change situations, an actor's motivations towards the new rules cannot be taken as given. Rather, they are identified and studied as products of these institutional components. Additionally, since institutions are likely to vary between cases (for example, the quality of institutional components in developing countries are likely to be different from advanced, industrial countries), we are required to consider the prospects and possibilities of change on a case-by-case basis. We take Nicaragua's unique institutional components as a point of departure for our present attempt to explain the contemporary prospects and possibilities of change in the context of Nicaragua.

Historical Institutions & Behavioural Beliefs

Scholars in political science, economics, and sociology use various definitions of institutions. Particular rules, beliefs, norms and organizations are central in these definitions, which helps illuminate why institutions have such a profound impact on behaviour. The perspective developed by Greif, and employed here, draws on the main traditions of sociological institutionalism; the tradition associated with Durkheim, which focuses on socially constituted codes of conduct and belief; the tradition associated with

Parsons, which focuses on normative behaviour; and the tradition associated with Weber, Berger and Luckmann (1967) and March and Olsen (1989), which focuses on social structures and relationships (Greif, 2005: 22).

Like most definitions of institutions, the HCIA perspective defines institutions as systems of interrelated rules, beliefs, norms, and organizations, each of which is a manmade, non-physical social factor (Greif, 2005: 39). However, the definition places motivation to follow rules, and consequently beliefs and norms, at the center of the analysis. In doing so, Greif's approach highlights the need to study rules and motivation to follow rules in an integrated manner.

The definition of institutions advanced by HCIA combines a structural and agency perspective by "recognizing the dual nature of institutions as both man-made and exogenous to each individual whose behaviour they influence." (p. 42). In that sense, an institution is a system of social factors that conjointly produce self-enforcing, regularities of behaviour. As Greif explains:

"Responding to the institutional elements that structure others' behaviour and expected behaviour, each individual behaves in a manner that contributes to motivating, guiding, and enabling others to behave in a manner that led to the institutional elements to begin with. In explaining such institutions, the analysis does not invoke as exogenous other institutions (e.g., political institutions) to explain them. Nor does the analysis rest on the assumption that institutions are determined by their function or environmental forces. Instead, it recognized that the structure-institutional elements- that each individual takes as given enables, motives, and guides the individual to take the actions that, at the aggregate level, contribute to creating the structure itself." (p. 53)

According to Greif, an actor's motivation towards a transaction is provided by their belief and the norms that mediate between the environment and behaviour. To

illustrate this relationship, consider once again the Nicaraguan driver who is stopped for speeding. One's behaviour in the current transaction (paying the bribe or taking the ticket) is generated by their behavioural beliefs and expectations about the other's response. The individual's normative belief about the transaction is associated with a socialization process through which the individual's worldview was developed and the belief about the other was formed. For example, the belief that law enforcement can be bribed is an internalized norm that has been incorporated into the individual's conscience, thereby influencing their actual behaviour within the current transaction (paying the bribe). If law enforcement accepts the bribe in the current game, this transaction serves to reinforce the driver's cognitive expectations about how law enforcement will play future games. In that sense, the belief that each individual takes as given (belief about the response of law to bribes) prior to the current transaction (the exchange between motorist and law enforcement) enables the subsequent transaction (paying bribe) and, in addition, reinforces the institution that gave rise to the transaction in the first place (future expectations that the law will accept bribes).

In contrast to the 'institutions as rule-based' perspective, an HCIA perspective explores why and how the past, encapsulated in institutional components, shapes one's behavioural beliefs and motivations towards the change initiative. According to Greif's model of HCIA, the properties of the social elements that make up an institution imply a *fundamental asymmetry* between newly introduced rules and the institutional elements inherited from the past. These historical institutional elements reside in individual memories, constitute their cognitive models, are embodied in their preferences, and manifest themselves in organizations (p. 188). As such, these beliefs constitute the

'default' when new rules and situations present themselves. Thus, a historical-institutional approach suggests that new rules are limited and constrained by historical institutions and prevailing beliefs.

Institutional Components

From the perspective of HCIA, understanding change requires asking how historical institutions perpetuate one's behavioural belief about the current transaction of interest. Change can be said to occur when one's prevailing belief, understanding, and expectation about the current transaction has been undermined. Such an understanding of change is significant for understanding the prospects for policy change in the developing world because it implies that new rules are insufficient for undermining normative beliefs, understandings, and expectations. Instead, *institutional components* have distinct roles in this process, each of which contributes differently to generating (or undermining) behavioural beliefs and the regularities of behaviour that are informed by these beliefs. In that sense, HCIA is a theory of *self-reinforcing institutions*. Understanding change requires investigating how institutional components perpetuate or undermine the norms and principles associated with the new rules. The institutional components of interest include: *institutional rules, organizations, and auxiliary transactions*.

Figure one operationalizes the model of HCIA to demonstrate how these institutional components fit together within an institution to perpetuate the behaviour (and behavioural beliefs) of educational stakeholders in Nicaragua. We define and discuss each component in turn.

Figure 1. The Institution of 'School Autonomy'

<u><i>Formal Rule</i></u>	<u><i>Organizations</i></u>	<u><i>Behavioural Beliefs and Internalized Norm</i></u>	<u><i>Implied Regularity of Behaviour</i></u>
New Law of Education Participation & the rules and prescribed behaviours for parental participation	Ministry of Education, Schools	Belief about how others will behave in relation to the New Law & given this, belief that parental participation is the optimal course of action	Parents participating in education in accordance (or not) with the rules of the New Law.
<u><i>Auxiliary Transactions</i></u> : Transaction between individuals occurring outside of 'autonomy procedures' (either within education or in other institutions) that facilitates the generation of beliefs about parental participation in education; including, corrupt, clientelist, legal, and labour transactions.			

Rules

Rules specify and prescribe normative behaviour and provide a shared cognitive system, coordination, and information. According to Greif, rules can be formal or informal, implicit or explicit, tacit or well articulated. Rules can consist of a legal rule, a constitutional provision, a moral code, or a legislative policy. For our purposes, we limit our consideration to formal, legislative rules and ministerial directives that prescribe behaviours for educational administration and personnel. However, as we saw in the case of the Nicaraguan driver, formal rules are nothing more than instructions that can be ignored. This point is illustrated particularly well in the context of underdevelopment, where many, formal behavioural prescriptions- governing human rights, property rights, contracting, policing, constitutional rights, labour practices, and driving for example- are repeatedly ignored by individuals in practice. In short, if formal rules are to have an impact, people must be motivated to follow them.

What then motivates an individual to follow the rules? According to HCIA, an individual's motivation to follow the rules is determined by their behavioural belief and

normative expectations that everyone else will act accordingly and, hence, it is in our best interest to do so. For example, the formal rule about parental participation in education school-decision making may not be what causes parents to show up at meetings and have their input considered. Rather, it may be the behavioural belief that it is beneficial for a parent to participate in education that causes the parent to show up at school meetings. In addition, it may be the same behavioural belief on the part of school staff and Council members (that parental participation is beneficial) that causes them to consider parental input in their decision-making. Combining these two reinforcing beliefs (that parental participation is beneficial and that parental input will be considered according to the rules) may be what causes meaningful parental participation in education to occur. Therefore, while formal rules specify and prescribe behaviour, it is an individual's behavioural belief that provides the motivation to follow the rules. Understanding change then becomes a matter of exploring how behavioural beliefs and normative expectations emerge, evolve and interact with formal rules.

Organizations

According to HCIA, behavioural beliefs are shaped and perpetuated, in part, by *organizations*. HCIA considers an organization to be an element of the broader institution, rather than an institution in itself. The HCIA perspective emphasizes that an organization can also be an institutional element, a component of an institution that motivates behaviour in various transactions. Organizations are thus a means for and a manifestation of the way a transaction is structured and carried out. Organizations can be

either formal, such as parliaments, firms, and ministries, or informal, such as communities and business networks. For the purposes of this study, we limit our focus to formal organizations of the educational institution, such as ministries, local ministerial offices, and schools.

Organizations have two, interrelated roles in perpetuating behavioural beliefs and expectations. First, organizations produce and disseminate information about the rules. For example, the Ministry of Education has the responsibility for disseminating information about the new rules for schools. It also sends clear 'normative signals' about how these new rules will be enforced. Principals can also be important representatives of the organization in fulfilling these same tasks. Stakeholders use the information and normative signals provided by organizations to formulate their beliefs, expectations, and strategies.

Second, organizations can also send stakeholders important normative signals through their own behaviour. For example, the Ministry of Education can send a clear normative message that parental participation is futile if it fails to reprimand a principal who ignores the advice of parents. This information will then be internalized by a stakeholder and will affect their strategic calculation about participating in education in the future. In addition, if the Ministry continues to engage in clientelistic and/or corrupt practices, despite the introduction of new principles of accountability, then it will greatly perpetuate prevailing normative beliefs and undermine those associated with the new rules. Understanding that organizations send important 'normative signals' that are internalized by stakeholders and used in strategic calculations may be particularly important for examining change in the context of underdevelopment- given the fact that

organizations in the developing world reveal a propensity for monitoring weaknesses, poor information systems, deficient rule enforcement, corruption, clientelism, and weak accountability systems (Bardhan, 2002).

Auxiliary Transactions

A third, institutional component that may send clear 'normative signals' to stakeholders is the *auxiliary transaction*. An auxiliary transaction is a transaction that is external to the transaction of interest, or the *central transaction*. Auxiliary transactions can occur in other areas and, perhaps, in other institutions. Auxiliary transactions help to perpetuate normative beliefs and generate regularity of behaviour in the central transaction. For example, a parent who experiences corrupt practices when dealing with the courts may internalize the belief that the state is a corrupt entity. As such, they may expect a similar response from the state in education. The normative signals from auxiliary transactions may be particularly important where teachers are concerned. For example, throughout the past decade, many teachers in Nicaragua believe the Conservative government has excluded them from negotiation process and treated ANDEN, the teachers union, very unfairly when negotiating labour contracts. These negotiations are auxiliary transactions. However, they facilitate and perpetuate normative beliefs among teachers, which have relevance for the current transaction- namely, school autonomy.

Additionally, social institutions can also be important 'auxiliary transactions', sending normative signals that have relevance for how a stakeholder interprets the central transactions. In a country like Nicaragua, where poverty, illiteracy, crime, and violence

are particularly high, these social institutions may send particularly strong ‘normative signals’ to stakeholders, which are internalized as ‘expectations about the behaviour of others’. For example, poverty and adult illiteracy may be send ‘normative signals’ to school stakeholders that parents do not have the capacity to participate in the central transaction; namely, school decision-making. This normative belief about the ‘limited capacity of parents’ may fundamentally shape the incentives, motivations, and actions of school staff. Where school staff does not believe parents have the capacity to hold them accountable, the incentive to ‘cheat’ is much stronger. Thus, actors are sent ‘normative signals’ from the environment, which are then used by actors in the formulation of strategies and actions in a central transaction.

In short, the beliefs internalized by individuals in auxiliary transactions condition their expectations for how the central transaction will take place. The normative influence of ‘auxiliary transactions’ is rarely acknowledged. However, these transactions may be particularly important in the context of underdevelopment- given the high levels of poverty, illiteracy, hostilities, tensions, and conflicts that emerge in these other arenas.

Institutional Change: An HCIA Perspective

Overall, HCIA is a theory of *self-reinforcing* institutions. It speculates upon the relationship between formal rules, organizations, auxiliary transactions, and behavioural beliefs. It seeks to demonstrate how normative understandings are informed and perpetuated by the structure of institutions that are derived from the aggregation of individual choices over time. In addition, it also seeks to demonstrate how normative

understandings give rise to the very institutional structures that created them in the first place. To some extent, this mutually reinforcing relationship between beliefs and institutional components reflects a 'path dependency' in institutional development because HCIA identifies various forms of expectations that coordinate action and, in some instances, give rise to organizations that influence future development. "The expectations arise out of the complex of economic, social, political, and cultural, as well as technological, features of society. The existence of a coordination point...makes change difficult since it requires considerable effort to locate and then move enough others to a different coordination point." (Levi, 1997: 29) In this sense, institutions have a self-enforcing quality.

However, HCIA also recognizes that a self-enforcing institution can undermine itself when changes in quasi-parameters of the institution (its formal rules, or organizations, for example) send the 'normative signal' that the prevailing, normative understandings no longer apply. In other words, a change in normative beliefs constitutes an institutional change. This change in belief occurs when the behaviour associated with the belief is no longer self-enforcing, leading individuals to act in a manner that does not reproduce the associated belief.

In the case of Nicaraguan education, HCIA would seek to identify the self-enforcing beliefs of educational stakeholders and institutions. For example, it would attend to the way in which 'normative beliefs' and behaviours have become self-reinforcing within Nicaragua's institutions of education. It would examine what beliefs and norms are perpetuated by the formal rules of education, the Ministry of Education, schools, and auxiliary transactions. Are the institutional components perpetuating the

same beliefs and behaviours? Are they sending the same 'normative signals' to stakeholders?

HCIA recognizes that beliefs can be undermined if changes within the institution provide significant, normative signals that prevailing beliefs and behaviours no longer apply. However, simply encoding these normative signals in formal rules is not sufficient for changing beliefs and practices of patronage. Rather, all aspects of the institution (its formal rules, its organizations, and, to some extent, auxiliary transactions) must come together to reinforce these new normative signals. Thus in terms of education, institutional change occurs when behavioural beliefs about education no longer become self-enforcing.

Overall, evaluating school autonomy from the perspective of HCIA requires that we go beyond analyzing the formal rule changes and new technologies. Rather, it requires inquiring into how the new rules and principles of school autonomy (namely, greater participation, local accountability, and local coordination) are undermined and/or perpetuated by the organizations and auxiliary transactions related to education.

Operationalizing HCIA for a study of School Change in Nicaragua

Ultimately, any study of policy change is concerned with policy outcome. In the case of school autonomy reforms in Nicaragua, we already know that the policy reforms have yielded only mixed results in terms of parental participation and limited results in terms of school performance (see: Gunnarsson et al, 2004; Ruiz de Forsberg, 2003; King, Ozler & Rawling, 1999; Fuller & Rivarola, 1998). Our own limited evaluations in this study would support these claims. To explain these mixed outcomes, HCIA predicts that motivations towards parental participation in education, which are inherited from and

reinforced by the past, are at the core of the problem. In this section, we operationalize the theory of HCIA for the present case study of school autonomy in Nicaragua.

Step 1: The Central Transaction of Interest: Game Theoretic Analysis of Parental Participation

The first step in operationalizing the theory is to identify the *central transaction* of interest. We take this central transaction to be *parental participation in school-decision making* (a parent's participation in school-decision making in exchange for better education for their child). We know this to be the central transaction of school autonomy by looking at the literature on NPM, SBM, as well as the rationale of reform architects. For example, Humberto Belli, the architect of the Nicaraguan school reform, tells us that school autonomy in Nicaragua is primarily targeted at improving parental participation in school decision-making (Arcia and Belli, 1999). In fact, he states explicitly that:

The change in government in 1990 marked the beginning of a new education policy focused on parental rights and responsibilities, and anchored on the decentralization of the public education system...To this end, school autonomy was a key instrument to achieve three operational goals: i) to include parents and civil society in school management- as a way to reinforce democracy and increase social accountability, ii) to give parents more voice and control over the education of their children, and iii) to increase operational efficiency in the face of scarce resources. In essence, by providing financial and operational autonomy to public schools, the MED sought coherence with the principles of equity, efficiency and accountability. Moreover, school autonomy was considered as a first step for improving education quality by nurturing the personal incentives of parents and teachers to work together, thus helping restore the social contract between them. (Arcia and Belli, 1999: 2-3)

Based on this information, we can operationalize the central transaction (and desired policy outcome) as parental participation in school decision-making. There is no question that greater accountability, improved performance, local coordination, democracy, resource allocation efficiency, and student learning are cited as desired and expected 'autonomy outcomes'. However, all of these outcomes flow either directly or indirectly from the principle of greater parental participation in school decision-making. This relationship is discussed further in chapter two.

Step 2: Historical Beliefs and Institutions in Education

The second step in operationalizing the theory is to identify the behavioural beliefs of stakeholders that might relate to the central transaction. In this step, we look at the historical evolution of these beliefs, considering how they have evolved over time. In uncovering these behavioural beliefs, we ask: what are Nicaraguans' shared, normative understandings about education? Where did these normative understandings come from? Based on previous experience, do stakeholders have any reason for believing others will uphold the new rules of autonomy? From our perspective, looking to the past is central to operationalizing the theory because HCIA builds on the argument that behavioural beliefs and institutional elements inherited from the past will influence contemporary change efforts.

In our scenario, we define 'behavioural beliefs' as a Nicaraguans' internalized normative belief about education in Nicaragua and specifically one's belief about how others will behave in education. We identify 'behavioural beliefs' by looking at the historical experiences of stakeholders and the 'regularities of behaviour' that have been

sustained within the Nicaraguan institution of education. Through our historical analysis in chapter four and five, we are able to identify three, interrelated normative beliefs about education that may have implications for how stakeholders perceive the new 'school autonomy' reform. These beliefs are: a shared, normative belief about the political nature of education, a shared normative belief that education is tightly controlled by the ruling party (including patronage practices and some forms of corruption), and a shared normative understanding that education is 'zero-sum' in nature; meaning that the gains and losses of one participant is exactly balanced by the losses or gains of other participants. We have selected to focus on these three behavioural beliefs for two reasons: 1) they emerge strongly within the story of education in Nicaragua and; 2) they undermine the normative principles of 'school autonomy' (namely, participation, accountability, and coordination).

Examining the historical evolution of these three behavioural beliefs and the institutions that perpetuated them accomplishes two, interrelated tasks. First, it establishes the existing, institutional and normative foundation wherein the 'school autonomy' reform must take root and grow. Second, it shows how institutional components (such as organizations and auxiliary transactions) feed into and reinforce shared, normative understandings of how education works and how stakeholders can and should behave. Against this historical backdrop, we can then better understand how the introduction of new rules and principles of 'school autonomy' interact with (and are undermined by) the existing, normative beliefs and expectations of educational stakeholders in Nicaragua. We discuss the historical evolution of Nicaragua's 'institution of education' (its formal rules, organizations, and behavioural beliefs) in chapter four.

Step 3: The Contemporary Institutionalization of New, Formal Rules: The National Level Analysis

The third step in operationalizing the theory is examine the new rules of ‘school autonomy’ (as specified by the *New Law of Education Participation*) in relation to these historical, institutional components and the prevailing behavioural beliefs. In chapter five, we examine the following questions: What are the new behaviours prescribed by the new rules? How do they challenge prevailing, behavioural beliefs? Do the organizations of the new institution perpetuate or undermine the normative behaviours and principles associated with the New Law? By looking at the legal specifications of the New Law, we are able to identify several newly, prescribed normative behaviours that stand in stark contrasts to historical, normative understandings and practices of education. We also comment upon the extent to which these new normative principles of the Law have been perpetuated or undermined by organizations and auxiliary transactions.

In order to make these determinations, we focus our analysis on several key events in the life of the reform. For example, we look at the negotiation process of school autonomy as an auxiliary transaction. We also use national news stories about corruption within the program (ex., the existence of Phantom Schools) as evidence of the failure of organizations to perpetuate a new, shared norm of parental participation and accountability in education. These news stories are interpretative illustrations of how organizations serve to perpetuate a broad, normative interpretation of the new rules, which at times, is inconsistent with the prescribed normative behaviours of the new rule. Stories of *phantom* schools (schools [or persons] whose names appeared on the payroll of government agencies but who appear only to gains funds), for example, are eerily

reminiscent of Somoza's *phantom schools*. These reports serve as normative signals to the public that the new rules will not be followed and, moreover, that it is business as usual. In effect, these transgressions within the reform shake the public's confidence in the new rules and reinforce traditional beliefs and behaviours in the face change legislation. In chapter five, we examine the New Law of Education Participation in relation to the historical institutions and prevailing behavioural beliefs of education stakeholders. Additionally, we consider key events in the life of the national reform that may have sent important 'normative signals' to local stakeholders.

Step 4: The Correspondence between New Rules and School Practice: Survey

Results in Specific Context

The fourth step in operationalizing the theory is to look more closely at the relationship between rules and behaviour within a specific context. While the national-level analysis reveals some important insights about how historical institutions influence the interpretation of new rules, it does not provide any clear evidence that such interpretations affect stakeholder practice, motivation, belief, and choice. In order to be certain that there is not a linear relationship between formal rules and behaviour and that institutional components are indeed mitigating factors, we need to be able to show that new rules are not being followed in the specified manner. In short, we need specific information about the practice of school autonomy by stakeholders in specific schools.

To determine this, we present and analyze survey results from our sample schools in chapter six. We examine the specific behaviours of autonomous schools (as specified in the survey results) against the prescribed behaviour of the New Law to determine if

school autonomy is being performed in accordance with the new rules. We interpret correspondence between practice and rules in one of two ways. First, correspondence is interpreted to mean that there is a direct, linear relationship between formal rules and behaviours. This first interpretation is advanced if other institutional components (such as organizations) are seen as failing to perpetuate the new behaviour (which would mean a failure of our hypothesis). Second, correspondence between practice and rules is interpreted to mean that the new rule has been fully institutionalized- that is, the new rule is supported and reinforced by all institutional components and is taken for granted by most stakeholders. This second interpretation is advanced if all organizational components are seen as perpetuating the new norm (which would lend some support to our hypothesis). We measure this by asking stakeholders directly whether others are acting in compliance with the newly proscribed rules. Conversely, we interpret practices that do not correspond with the new rules as evidence that stakeholders are not sufficiently motivated to follow the new rules. Such a finding would lend partial support to our hypothesis because HCIA predicts that such motivational failures are the result of prevailing, normative beliefs and the institutional components that condition these beliefs. In chapter six, we examine the regularities of behaviour as witnessed in five autonomous schools in order to make these determinations. Through the use of survey data, we identify the actual practices of autonomy in local schools in order to demonstrate the extent to which actual practice diverge from the specifications of the new rules of autonomy.

Step 5: The Contemporary Beliefs & Evaluations of Stakeholders: Micro-level

Analysis of Stakeholder Interviews

The fifth step in operationalizing the theory is to examine the motivations, beliefs and evaluations of stakeholders- in their own words. Can we say with relative confidence that the theory is correct and that the behavioural beliefs are what motivates most stakeholders to follow the rule? Can we say with relative confidence that behavioural beliefs are perpetuated and reinforced by organizations and auxiliary transactions? Have the behavioural beliefs of stakeholders changed under the New Law? Most importantly, is the school autonomy program working in the context of underdevelopment? In order to validate our hypothesis, we ask Nicaraguans themselves about these processes. We discuss the interview responses of stakeholders in relation to these questions in chapter seven of the study.

In our analysis of interview responses, we consider an actor's view of themselves and others in relation to school autonomy. First, we consider the responses from policy-makers. Our interviews with policy-makers provide an opportunity to examine their normative understandings of education, autonomy, and other key stakeholder groups in education. We are particularly interested in their normative constructions of education and others within education. Are they constructing others in traditional ways? Are they constructing the 'problems of education' and the 'lines of conflicts in education' in traditional ways? Senior policy-makers have a very important role to play in defining both the problems and solutions of education. Subsequently, examining the way in which these policy-makers normatively construct the problems and solutions of education can tell us a great deal about the content and rationale for the autonomy program in

Nicaragua. Specifically, our analysis of policy-maker responses reveals how the school autonomy reform emerged within the national context, as a distinct political project with pre-determined conflicts and intentional, political objectives. This explanation stands in stark contrast to the idea of educational reform as the product of neo-liberal, global forces.

In addition to the voices of key policy-makers, we consider the responses from parents in our five, sample schools. In examining these transcripts, we are particularly concerned with how parents construct themselves and others in relation to 'school autonomy'. Specifically, we are concerned with the extent to which parents construct other parents (and themselves) as active agents, or passive recipients in education administration. To a significant extent, our analysis reveals that parents have a very positive of autonomy, in theory. However, they also express two interrelated concerns. First, parents expressed numerous concerns about the social conditions defining their environment. These concerns, ranging from poverty, illiteracy, deficient local culture, and others, reflect a particular expectation about how others (specifically, parents) will behave under autonomy. For example, many parents questioned the extent to which others could participate and contribute meaningfully under such social conditions. Additionally and in some instances, these expectations seem to influence a parent's willingness to engage with the autonomy program (demonstrating a relationship between one's behavioural belief and their motivations to comply with new rules). We interpret these types of expressions to mean that environmental conditions can influence one's expectations about how others will behave when new rules are introduced, which in turn shapes their motivations towards the new initiative.

Second, several parents expressed concerns that powerful actors seeking to advance their own interests can easily manipulate the School Councils in light of these environmental and agentic deficiencies. For example, numerous parents raise concerns that parents do not have the capacity to hold powerful actors, such as principals, accountable and in check. As a result, they felt that autonomy might, and in some cases had, created new spaces for corrupt practices within the Council system. We interpret these responses to mean that corrupt behaviours and manipulative practices may flow directly from one's expectations about the how others will behave. Where actors believe others have the capacity to hold them in check, they will be less likely to engage in corrupt or manipulative practices. Where actors believe others do not have the capacity to keep them in check, they may be more willing to engage in these types of behaviours.

In addition to the responses from parents, we also conduct numerous interviews with teachers. In our interviews with teachers, several significant trends emerge, which relate to an HCIA theory of change. First, most teachers are very positive about school autonomy, in theory. Like parents, they believe that greater participation, local accountability, and local coordination are very worthwhile principles both for their school and, more generally, for the democratisation of Nicaragua. However, most teachers were very concerned about how autonomy was being implemented and practiced in their schools. We interpret this first trend to mean that stakeholders do not see a one-to-one relationship between rules and behaviour. Clearly, teachers are positive about the new rules but expect others will not act in accordance with the new rules. Technical models of change such as the NPM do not capture this trend.

Second, similar to parents, several teachers are concerned about the capacity of parents to participate and contribute meaningfully to educational decision-making. Rather than constructing parents as capable and active agents, we observe parents being constructed by teachers as ‘passive actors’ with a deficient capacity for meaningful engagement in school autonomy and educational decision-making. For example, several teachers mentioned high illiteracy rates and poverty when defining parental capacity for participation. Additionally, several teachers questioned the extent to which parents could become the active agent as perceived by ‘school autonomy’, in light of current environmental constraints. To a certain extent, the expectations teachers have of parents, based on these constructions, can be linked to their behaviour. For example, in some instances, teachers took it upon themselves to become more active and involved in school decision-making in order to compensate for the deficiencies of parents. In other instances, teachers avoided the School Councils altogether as they believed them to be a ‘waste of time’. In both instances, a teacher’s behaviour in relation to the new rules is shaped, in part, by their normative construction and expectations of parents.

A third trend that is evident within teachers’ responses is their negative views and expectations of the Ministry. Clearly, this negative view of the Ministry is influenced, in part, by their historical struggles and conflicts that have defined the contentious relationship between the Teachers Union (specifically, ANDEN) and conservative governments. These historical struggles can be conceptualised as an ‘auxiliary transaction’, which has an important, normative influence on one’s expectations for the central transaction. When talking about school autonomy for example, most teachers expressed serious concerns about the willingness of the Ministry to abide by and enforce

the new rules of autonomy. To a significant extent, the normative expectations that teachers project upon the Ministry in 2005 reflect the historical tensions and polarizations that have characterized Nicaraguan politics throughout the past several decades. ANDEN has been a significant power-base for the Sandinista and, to a significant extent; the marginalization of ANDEN from the negotiation rounds of the new reform reflects a broader attempt of the new administration to regain power from the FSLN. Thus, in light of these historical struggles between the conservative factions and the Sandinista (with ANDEN as a significant power-base), it is not surprising to find teachers projecting negative expectations upon the Ministry of Education, under the leadership of conservative factions. However, what is interesting about our cases is that despite this conflictual, historical relationship, many teachers support the principles of school autonomy and some appear willing to actively engage with the Councils and abide by the new rules. We consider the meaning of this support in our discussions.

In addition to the voices of policy-makers, parents, and teachers, we consider the interview responses of principals, Municipal Delegates, bureaucrats, and representatives of the local Mayor's office. In interviewing each set of actors, we are concerned with the way in which they interpret the new reform and the way in which they construct themselves and others in relation to the New Law. In all our interviews, we are generally concerned with the same sets of research questions (outlined in chapter three of this study). From the voices of these stakeholders, we can begin to understand how the introduction of new rules has (or has not) changed their normative beliefs and expectations about how education works in their communities. As we shall see in chapter seven, a one-to-one between rules and behaviour does not exist in Nicaraguan

autonomous schools. Rather, as we shall show in the interview portion of this study, one's motivations towards the new rules are significantly influenced by the normative signals they receive and internalize from the environment.

Step 6: Interpreting and Applying the Results: Conclusions

The last step in operationalizing the theory for the present study is to consider the applicability of the insights garnered from such an investigation for policy making in Nicaragua. In chapter eight, we ask the following questions: What should policy makers do in light of this new information? How can education move forward in light of history? What advantages does HCIA present when examining the prospects and possibilities of change initiatives in the context of underdevelopment? We argue that change initiatives stand the greatest chance of being realized when they are targeted and coherently linked with broader institutional transformations rather than limited to the introduction of new rules alone.

The Value-Added by HCIA

Overall, the view of institutions put forward by HCIA is relatively new way of studying change. HCIA suggests that individual behaviour is the product of a series of self-enforcing mechanisms, including the behaviour itself. At the heart of the analysis is the central transaction. In asking how individuals are motivated in the central transaction, HCIA points to the determining role of behavioural beliefs (shared, normative beliefs and expectations about what others will do). Rather than take these behavioural beliefs as given, endogenous to the formal institutional rules, or exogenous to

the explanation itself- HCIA argues that the structure- the institutional elements (rules, organizations, and auxiliary transactions)- that each individual takes as given enables, motivates, and guides the individual to take the action. In the process, the action itself contributes to creating and reinforcing the structured that enabled it in the first place.

In addition to being a new way of studying institutions, we believe the application of HCIA may be particularly important for the study of school change in the context of poverty, institutional weakness, and civil unrest. As we have argued, the NPM is a deductive approach to change that makes few considerations for how features exogenous to formal rules might feed into behaviour and the prospects of change. As a result, it makes no distinction between the culture, context, and institutions of advanced, industrial society and those of the developing world. However, such a position stands in stark contrast to a broad and diverse body of literature. In the field of education for example, the conditioning role of institutions on behaviour is well established in the traditions of Vygotsky (1962, 1978), Sarason (1971, 1990), and Fullan (1993, 2001). In sociology, the role of institutions figures prominently in the traditions of Weber, Parsons, Durkheim and others. In political science, the enabling/constraining role of institutions is demonstrated in the traditions of Katzenstein (1978), Thelan (1999), Steinmo and Longstreth (1992), and numerous others. In economics, institutions are widely recognized as having a mitigating influence on behaviour in the works of North (1990), Nelson (1994), Olsen (1982) and many others.

Despite these well-established traditions, what is largely missing from the analysis of contemporary school reform initiatives in Latin America is a study of how institutions (and their subsequent components) feed into and shape the prospects for

change. In our opinion, the argument being advanced here should have a particular resonance with scholars of development and education alike because it implies that it is hazardous for developing countries, like Nicaragua, to draw lessons about school change from the experience of advanced, industrial societies- where the quality and evolutionary development of institutions are clearly different. In sum, by illuminating the issues that arise from institutional development, we are advocating a departure from the standard NPM change literature in the hope of contributing to a theory of inductive change that is better suited to explaining the process as it is influenced by the histories and institutions of the developing world.

Remainder of the Study:

The central task of this study is to explain how Nicaraguans' behavioural beliefs about education evolved, were sustained, are reinforced, and are changed. At the heart of this explanation is the 'educational institution'. Thus, the remainder of the study is devoted to uncovering this evolutionary process and its contemporary effect on the current change initiatives underway in Nicaragua.

In chapter two, we examine the theory of HCIA as it might apply to the study of education in the context of underdevelopment. As yet, no study of education has applied the HCIA perspective. Thus, we must draw our insights from other studies and other works in appropriating the theory for the context of education.

In chapter three, we establish the methodological procedures for the present study. The theory of HCIA informs our key research questions and the methodological procedures selected for the present study. Because of the explicit requirements of HCIA, we were required to adopt procedures that would permit an inductive, historical, and

deeply contextual analysis of the case. These procedures and the subsequent rationale are thoroughly discussed in that chapter.

In chapter four, we begin our analysis of the case study by examining the historical foundations of institutional development in Nicaragua. Specifically, we examine how the institution of education in Nicaragua emerged as a political project that was designed from the outset to meet the state's requirements for political legitimacy. During this early formative period, political elites turned towards education as means for consolidating power and legitimizing their rule against potential rivals. From these early foundations, what emerged and evolved was an institution that was highly centralized, highly exclusionary, and highly politicized. Through our analysis of this historical trajectory, we show how each component of the institution evolved in relation to this political project and perpetuated a behavioural belief amongst Nicaraguans about how education works, and whose interests it serves. Ironically, even the Sandinistas' revolutionary plans for participatory education could not escape these centralist and political tendencies encapsulated within the institutional framework. While tremendous progress was certainly achieved, the existing institutions inherited by the Sandinistas created pressure for centralization and an exceptionally strong, top-down leadership that, in many ways, undermined the principals of a 'civil society organized from below'. This historical trajectory, which is reflected in the formal rules and organizations of education, can be said to have facilitated and reinforced a behavioural belief amongst stakeholders about how education works and, subsequently, their own role in schooling.

In chapter five, we examine the extent to which the newly assigned rules and procedures of school autonomy have served to undermine (or reinforce) the prevailing

beliefs about education in Nicaragua. Specifically, we examine the rules and behavioural prescriptions of the New Law of Education Participation in relation to the historical institutions established in chapter four. We show how the New Law provides important signals to education stakeholders. In fact, the New Law represents sweeping, formal changes to most aspects of the institution. Moreover, the rules and prescriptions outlined in the New Law stress some very positive and encouraging principles, such as community participation, accountability, and greater coordination in education- and thus, there is some cause for optimism. Is the broader institution of school autonomy providing the normative signals that would lead one to expect the norms associated with the New Law will be enforced and followed? By examining the new rules of school autonomy in relation to institutional components, our examination considers the extent to which the organizations of education and auxiliary transaction in Nicaragua have served to perpetuate or undermine the norms associated with the New Law.

In chapter six, we begin our micro-level analysis of the case. We ask the question: do the regularities of behaviour witnessed in 'autonomous' schools imply that the new norms of greater parental participation, local accountability, and local coordination have become institutionalized expectations? Or, do these practices imply that the traditional normative understandings of education prevail? To determine the regularities of behaviour occurring in autonomous schools, we use survey responses from stakeholders in five 'autonomous schools'. Our discussion of these responses revolves around two central issues: the extent to which behaviour in autonomous schools complies with the rules and prescriptions of the New Law and stakeholder evaluations of the New Law. By examining these issues, we analyze which rules are being followed and those

rules that are not being followed. By running statistical correlations with the survey data, we are able to advance some cautious ‘relational’ statements about the behaviour witnessed. The overall purpose of this chapter is to establish the regularities of behaviours in autonomous schools in relation to the New Law.

In chapter seven, we consider how individual stakeholders have internalized the normative beliefs associated with ‘school autonomy’. What are the behavioural beliefs of stakeholders under the New Law? Do these beliefs converge or diverge with the norms associated with greater participation, accountability, and local coordination? To answer these questions, we rely on interviews with a range of school autonomy stakeholders in Nicaragua. Our discussion and analysis of stakeholder responses revolve around four, conceptual issues: a stakeholder’s interpretation of the New Law; a stakeholder’s views and expectations of others (parents, teachers, and principals); a stakeholder’s views and expectations of the Ministry; and a stakeholder’s evaluation of autonomy outcomes. To some extent, our analysis reveals that actors view the rules and principles of the New Law in a positive light, but are speculative about whether other actors (including organizations) will comply with the new rules and principles of ‘school autonomy’. As we demonstrate, these speculations are the result of ‘normative signals’, resonating from one’s environment and can help explain the regularities of behaviour witnessed in autonomous schools.

In chapter eight, we offer our conclusions. Based on the insights from this study, we offer some recommendations for improving change planning in the context of Latin America and the developing world in general. In addition to these recommendations, we also offer some recommendations for moving the ‘theory of change’ forward.

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CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW OF HISTORICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS IN SCHOOL CHANGE

Introduction: Relevance of Study to Political Economy and Latin American Policy Literatures

How does one reinvent an institution? All founders deliberately design their institutions to achieve certain goals and objectives indefinitely. Education is no exception. As entities, educational institutions consist of people as well as rules, structures, procedures, norms, and hierarchies, which intend to direct human behaviours in ways that allow for the fulfillment of goals and objectives. When the institution fails to meet these goals or the goals themselves change, the institution must either change and adapt to the new demands or run the risk of becoming wasteful, erroneous and possibly abandoned.

The question of change is ongoing in the literature on International Relations, Comparative Political Economy, and Education. In international relations, this discussion is largely characterized by the debate between absolute gains and relative gains (see: Powell, 1991), the importance of international institutions (see: Katzenstein, Krasner, and Keohane, 1998), and discussions of power (see: Mearcheimer, 1995). In comparative politics, this discussion is characterized by the debate between rational choice (see: Tsebelis, 1995), institutions (see: North, 1991), ideas (see: Haas, 1990), and culture (see: Eckstein, 1988). In this project, while our discussion of education, schools, and educational institutions operate in an institutional rather than “anarchic”

environment, where conflict is defined by non-state actors as opposed to state actors, we believe this literature from political science is relevant for discussions of educational change.

For example, Jupille, Caporaso and Checkel (2003) argue that converging empirical and intellectual trends in the area of political economy increasingly undermine the distinction between comparative politics and international relations. Empirically, according to Jupille et al, trends now falling under the rubric of “globalization” (growing trade liberalization, the diffusion of values and norms, increasing capital mobility, and heightening regulatory competition) deprive state boundaries of at least part of their meaning, to some extent effacing the distinction between politics within states (comparative politics) and politics among them (international relations). Several intellectual trends, most notably increasing attention to domestic-international linkages (Caporaso, 1997), the role of education and schooling in global competition (OECD, 1989) and renewed attention to the creation, maintenance, and effects of institutions in the political economy have, together, rendered subfield distinctions increasingly anachronistic and potentially counterproductive. Milner (1998) argues that ‘institutionalism’ especially seemed to provide an intellectual bridge, promising, according to its advocates, a general theory applicable to comparative, international, and American politics.

In this chapter, our goal is threefold. First, we attempt to situate the present study of school reform in Nicaragua within the broader literature in political science dealing with rationality, institutions, and organizational change. Specifically, since the underlying model that produces the HCIA perspective derives from rational choice

theory, we explore three applications of rational choice analysis that help in the explication of the model in the context of education reform; namely, notions of rationality, the forms of constraint, and the search for equilibrium. Following this, we consider contemporary NPM school reforms against these three pillars of rational choice. Specifically, we show how the NPM approach applies a thick variant of rationality, considers the major source of constraint to be scarcity, where both of these assumptions inform the equilibrium solution for NPM. Following this, we argue for an alternative rational choice explanation of school change, which is predicated on the insights derived from the HCIA approach. Unlike the NPM approach, this alternative model employs a thin variant of rationality, posits institutions as the primary source of constraint, and, in doing so, propose an alternative equilibrium solution. We begin with this chapter with a consideration of three key pillars of rational choice.

Situating the Study in Comparative Political Economy

In political economy, empirical rational models have become a mainstay (see: Arrow, 1951; Downs, 1957; Olson, 1965; and North, 1990). The emphasis of these models is on rational and strategic individuals who make choices within constraints to obtain their desired ends. The rationality of these decisions rest on an actor's assessment of the probable actions of others, and whose personal outcomes depend on what others do (Levi, 1997). Rational choice, as Lichbach notes (1997), offers an approach that is methodologically individualist, yet focused not on individual choice but on the aggregation of individual choices. In short, it is a model that offers the microfoundations

of macroprocesses and events. Keys to the model then, rest on assumptions of rationality, the forms of constraint, and the search for equilibrium.

Thick vs. Thin Rationality

In political economy, the assumption of rationality is the subject of much criticism. Even among practitioners, there are series issues of what it means to rational and how much rationality matters (Levi, 1997). This debate amongst rational choice theorists can be characterized as a debate between ‘thick’ and ‘thin’ variants of the theory. In its ‘thick variant’, rational choice explanations bound individual behaviour to a strict utility function or wealth-maximizing calculation- as characterized by the path laid out by Hobbes, Adam Smith, Pareto, and other behaviouralists. The ontology of this thick variant is strictly individualist, whereby individuals act on the basis of their own individual, material self-interest. The advantage of the thick variant of rationality is that it is both parsimonious and extremely general. The disadvantage of this variant is that it can also produce tautology (Levi, 1997). Additionally, it demonstrates a preoccupation with variables that are limited to internal, ‘in the mind’, subjective variables, which are difficult to measure (Popper, 1967). Third, narrow behavioural explanations (of most ‘thick variants’) fail to adequately consider the possibility that ethical, normative, or cultural concerns also factor into decision-making (see: Denzau and North, 1994). This may explain why there are not as many ‘free riders’ in collective action exercises (such as voting) as narrow behavioural models would predict (Levi, 1997).

As a response to this third problem, being the narrow behavioural assumptions of most thick variants, new 'thin' variants of rationality have emerged. This new variant relaxes the strict assumptions of egoistic, material, self-interest inherent in traditional models. While this new approach retains the assumption that individuals act consistently in relation to their preferences, it has begun to explore the role of culture, norms, mental models, and other ideational and cognitive factors in preference formation and decision-making. For example, Levi's work reflects an effort to model actors as both rational and ethical beings (1991). Specifically, she argues that one's ethical consideration of the 'fairness principle' also factors into individual decision-making calculations, thereby increasing the complexity and difficulty of the rational choice explanation. Additionally, Ostrom has also stressed 'community standards' as an additional, non-egoistic consideration in decision-making (1990). Ferejohn goes as far as to advocate supplementing the analysis generated by rational choice with an analysis generated by an interpretive approach as a means to offer a more explanation of strategic decision-making and behaviour (1991). In short, a more flexible, thin model of rationality may be less parsimonious than those flowing from the strict assumptions of narrow self-interest, as posited by 'thick variants'. However, "where there are large-scale collective actions and ideologically driven decisions to change institutions, then a more complex model may be both necessary and right." (Levi, 1997: p. 35).

Constraints: Scarcity and Institutions

In the literature on rational choice and political economy, constraints are seen as having an influence on one's decision-making calculations. Here, it is generally agreed that there are two major sources of constraint. The first is scarcity; individuals maximize within the confines of available resources. For example, an individual who lacks a vote cannot directly influence who is in government, no matter how much it might be in her or his interest to do so. The second constraint is institutional or organizational. It is here that HCIA engages the literature.

Institutions are generally referred to as sets of rules that structure social interactions so as to produce certain outcomes. Institutional constraints can take the form of rules that structure the interaction amongst players (see: Krasner, Katzenstein, and Keohane; 1999). Additionally, institutions have been found to structuring the relative bargaining positions (or bargaining power) of actors so as to influence the outcomes of strategic interaction (see: Willis, Garman, and Haggard; 1999). A growing body of work has also recognized that 'organizations' and 'expectations', non-technologically determined components of institutions, can also work to constrain choice (Greif, 2005). Greif's HCIA study of the guild system in medieval Europe, for example, demonstrates how an actor's expectation about the choices of others- an expectation formulated overtime through one's observation of the previous choices made by others- affects both the rules and the payoffs that are available.

Institutional studies of this sort have made major contributions to our understanding of policy, government performance, and change. To paraphrase Hall (1997), acknowledging the importance of institutions in structuring and constraining interaction moves us beyond the tendency of conventional economic analysis to treat all

systems as if they were institutionally identical. Second, such approaches draw our attention to the way in which diverse institutional structures interact with one another to produce distinctive patterns of policy and performance. Finally, to the extent that institutional analysis posit rational actors operating within the matrix of sanctions, incentives, and expectations posed by institutions, the approach builds a set of microfoundations that provide fruitful points of tangency with contemporary work in mainstream economic analysis.

Change as Altered Equilibrium

A third key component of the rational model is its assumption of equilibrium. Equilibrium is, simply, a condition in which no one has an incentive to change his or her choice. However, it is obvious that, in the real world, choices change regularly and constantly and that to understand these changes, we “require a set of hypotheses concerning what exogenous shocks or alterations in the independent variable will have what effects on the actions of the individuals under study” (Levi, 1997: 28). Ostrom (1990), for example, is able to show how factors such as population pressures or state intervention can undermine a traditional set of arrangements for protecting common pool resources- in effect, disrupting the equilibrium by changing the incentives. Moreover, an understanding of these factors is particularly important under conditions whereby the logic of rational action produces sub-pareto-optimal equilibria- or the Nash Equilibrium. Levi (1991), for example, shows how volunteering, from the point of view of the military during a large-scale war, proved an inefficient equilibrium and that altering that

equilibrium took substantial political effort by legislators. Equilibrium analysis then, seeks a solution to the problem of sub-optimal equilibria; meaning, it seeks a solution (or intervention) in which “actors respond to each others’ decision until each is at a position from which no improvement is possible” (Levi, 1997: 23).

Although empirical rational choice analysis is still in its infancy, it has nevertheless become one of the leading paradigms in the field of political science and policy-making. Additionally, it has produced some major and influential explanations and models for educational reform in Latin America. Below, we consider one dominant explanation and model for educational reform derived from rational choice analysis; namely, the NPM model. Specifically, we consider how the dominant explanation of school change is informed by a thick variant of rationality, where constraints are conceptualized in terms of scarcity, and the equilibrium solution is conceptualized as ‘decentralization’. Additionally, we examine the potential weaknesses of these three assumptions when studying school change in the context of Latin America. In response, we show why relaxing the assumptions of rationality inherent in the NPM analysis can produce a better and more productive model of school change in Latin America.

Rationality, Constraints, and Equilibrium in the Contemporary Literature on School Reform

In contemporary Latin America, new models of public policy administration have been forwarded as the equilibrium solution to underperforming educational systems. The World Bank, accompanied by many scholars in American, British, Australian and Latin American research institutes have created both a qualitative and quantitative profile of the highly successful school, which is predicated on the idea of administrative

decentralization, local accountability and local participation. This profile, and the surrounding theoretical assumptions of schooling, can now be seen as the dominant view of education in contemporary Latin America, with at least 14 countries in the region engaging in some form of educational reform along these lines throughout the last two decades. This new research paradigm, known as the New Public Management (NPM), posits theoretical assumptions of the forces and influences at work in organizations, such as schools. These assumptions include a thick variant of rationality, scarcity as the primary source of constraints, and 'decentralization' as an equilibrium solution. Informed by these assumptions, the NPM develops a universal profile of the 'highly successful school' and, on the basis of this profile, makes specific recommendations for school improvement, school change, and school evaluation.

First, the NPM uses a thick variant of 'rationality' to explain the behaviour of individuals. According to the NPM framework, individuals, when faced with a decision, will seek to maximize their own self-interest and will not implement policies, programs or reforms if it means more work without corresponding benefits. Human behaviour in the organization is therefore informed and directed by *the rational, strategic calculations of self-interested individuals*. The placement of the individual (or agent) within the organizational hierarchy determines, in large part, the agent's strategic calculations. For example, when making a decision, a central bureaucrat has a different set of strategic calculations than a local official faced with the same decision. The bureaucrat may need to consider the position of the Minister, the position of his/her superiors, the position of the union, and/or the position of their co-workers in their calculations- where each consideration is likely to influence the bureaucrat's job security, job satisfaction, and

potential for promotion. The bureaucrat is less inclined to consider the position of parents and teachers in their strategic calculation, given that their hierarchical positioning in the bureaucracy insulates them from more local demands. The bureaucrat can be said to be accountable to others in the upper echelon of the bureaucracy, but not directly accountable to parents, teachers, or school principals. In contrast, a school principal, if charged with the same decision, may be more inclined *to consider the position and interests of parents* in their strategic calculations given their closer positioning to these individuals in the organizational hierarchies. Moreover, policy-makers can ensure principals are accountable to parents if they mandate or legislate the election of school principals by the school community. When school principals are elected, parents have much more control over the principal, given their power to affect the school principal's job security. As such, they are likely to have much more influence over the decision. While both bureaucrat and school principal make the same self-interested cost-benefit calculation (job security, satisfaction, and potential gains), their hierarchical positioning forces them to consider a different set of principals (upper echelon bureaucrats vs. parents and teachers) in their calculation. Hence, the issue of parental participation (the ability of parents to control decision-makers) becomes the central transaction in school based-management.

As a new technology for the organization, decentralization appeals to the notion of scarcity to explain why organizational improvement is likely to accrue. For example, by transferring decision-making authority downwards, from upper echelons to lower echelons, the intention is to improve decision-making accountability by providing local stakeholders with an opportunity to influence decisions through their votes and/or input

in decision-making; an opportunity which they were previously not afforded (scarcity). Essentially, the downward transfer of authority is expected to introduce a new set of interests and considerations into the strategic calculations of decision-makers. This is due to both the size effect and the dimensionality effect (Tommasi, 2002). The relationship between a decision-maker (an agent) and others (citizens and/or parents) within an organization is a common agency relationship, where others have an ability to influence the decisions of the decision-maker (agent). For example, citizens may have the power to vote the decision-maker (agent) out of office or to chastise them in the media. Under other arrangements, citizens may have little power to reprimand the decision-maker. In the case of a centralized bureaucracy in education for instance, parents have little ability to influence the top-bureaucrats (agents). By decreasing the ratio (or size) of parents to agents, parents can better exercise control over decision-makers, essentially holding them more accountable. The dimensionality effect operates on the same idea of this 'principal-agent' model of accountability to argue that decentralization will also increase the saliency of the issue under consideration. For example, if local communities make educational decisions, a voter might control macroeconomic issues in national elections and educational policy through their vote in local elections. This arrangement would increase the power of citizens to control decision-makers in the dimension appropriate to the decision at hand.

To consider how a thick variant of rationality and scarcity inform the equilibrium solution of decentralization, it is useful to consider the argument as forwarded by NPM advocates. In *Beyond the Center: Decentralizing the State*, Burki, Perry, and Dillinger (1999) argue the decentralization can facilitate the characteristics that have been found in

'high-performing schools' by involving parents more directly in the decision-making matrix. While there is no magic bullet for creating high-performing schools, several researchers have suggested that high-performing schools have a number of common characteristics. These include, but are not limited to: effective school leadership, high levels of collaboration and communication, frequent monitoring of learning and teaching, a supportive learning environment, a focus on learning, highly qualified and committed staff, high levels of family and community involvement, and responsibility for results (Office of Superintendent of Public Institutions, 2003; Mohrman and Wohlstetter, 1994; Creemers 1994; Darling-Hammond; 1997). Dalin (1994) argues that the essential ingredients of successful school reform for 'high-performance' are a sustained commitment to quality improvement, local empowerment to adapt programs to local conditions, support linkages between education authorities and the school via information, assistance, pressure and rewards.

On the basis of these characteristics, Burki, Perry, and Dillinger examine decentralization in relation to four variables typically associated with high-performing schools (leadership, excellent staff, focus on learning, and responsibility) in order to demonstrate how decentralization can contribute to and facilitate the specific characteristics of high-performing schools (See Table 2).

Table 2. High-Performing Characteristics stimulated through Decentralization

Characteristics of Effective Schools	Decentralization Variables that can Contribute to Specific Characteristics of Effective Schools
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School directors are selected by the community using transparent criteria • School improvement plans are developed locally • Resources are transferred to schools for the implementation of school plans
Skilled and Committed Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools are given the authority to make curriculum and pedagogical changes • Teachers have significant responsibility for developing school improvement plans • Directors are given the authority to provide substantive evaluation of teacher's performance. • Schools are given the authority (and resources) to make their own decisions about the type of training to be given teachers.
Focus on Learning Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school improvement plan emphasizes goals of improving learning (and associated results, such as reducing dropout and repetition). • Information on learning at the level of the school is transparent.
Responsibility for Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors have fixed-term appointments that may not be renewed if improved learning goals are not met.
<p><i>Adapted from:</i> Shahid Javed Burki, Guillermo Perry, and William Dillinger (1999). <i>Beyond the Center: Decentralizing the State</i>. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank. See Chapter four: "Empowering Municipalities or Schools? The Decentralization of Education"</p>	

Accordingly, the authors acknowledge that decentralization cannot convert school directors who are incompetent or passive into dynamic leaders. However, the authors argue that decentralization can and often does provide transparent, competitive selection process for school directors. When the power to elect and/or dismiss school leaders is in the hands of parents, such arrangements may help facilitate better school leadership by ensuring that the most qualified and talented individuals are selected to the post and, moreover, dismissed if they do not meet parental standards.

The authors also suggest that decentralization can contribute to excellent teaching in schools, a notable characteristic of the high-performing school. First, the authors suggest that when decisions on significant pedagogical matters are transferred to schools, teachers are empowered and motivated to work collectively to improve the services

delivered to students. When the school director is given the authority to carry out meaningful evaluations of teaching staff, teachers can focus their training on what they need to improve. Moreover, when resources for training and training decisions are given to the school, teachers and directors can purchase the training they need (demand-driven) rather than the supply-driven training provided by the education ministry.

The authors argue that decentralization can lead to a greater focus on learning results. In our discussion of the NPM, we demonstrated how, according to the theory, an individual's positioning in the organizational hierarchy determines their strategic calculations. It also determines what types of information are being considered in decision-making. Most often, it is parents and teachers who are best positioned to diagnose and find pedagogic solutions to a school's specific learning and administrative problems. Thus, by devolving decision-making powers to local levels, decentralization helps to a greater focus on learning by opening spaces for local information and solutions to specific problems. As a result, learning and administrative plans can be tailored to meet the specific and different learning needs of students. For example, poorer children may require school lunches and subsidized textbooks, while rural children may have a greater need for smaller class sizes and/or transportation.

Burki, Perry, and Dillinger argue that decentralization can also facilitate and reinforce a focus on student learning by providing the information required to assess learning problems, devolving appropriate pedagogic decision-making to the school, and allocating additional resources to schools with special needs. Information on student learning is essential to the diagnosis of learning problems, which are a fundamental part of school improvement plans. Information is also essential to monitoring progress

toward attaining learning goals. As such, the devolution of appropriate pedagogic decisions is critical to the local design of local solutions to local learning problems.

Establishing responsibility for results is also a key component of high-performing schools. Decentralization attempts to establish responsibility for results through several mechanisms. First, elections of school directors by parents can be an important mechanism for establishing responsibility for results. Second, when the power to hire, fire, and evaluate teachers is in the hands of parents, teachers can be held more accountable for their performance- being rewarded for performance achievements and punished, sanctioned, or dismissed when they fail to meet locally established standards and objectives. Finally, incentive mechanisms such as vouchers or school fees can be used to facilitate greater school responsibility and accountability for results. Parents can use these incentive mechanisms such as vouchers and school fees, to facilitate competition between schools, looking to attract and/or retain the additional financial resources that vouchers and school fees provide a school. Schools providing a better product are more likely to attract these additional financial resources, thus there is an incentive for the school to maximize the quality of its educational product.

The Nicaraguan autonomy reform is a close approximation of the plans and ideas put forward by the authors of the report discussed above. Since the World Bank is the publisher of the report and is closely involved in the formation and expansion of the Nicaraguan initiative, this close proximity should not be too surprising. To illustrate this proximity, Arcia and Belli, the architects of Nicaragua's SBM initiative, appeal to incentive mechanisms in order to gain compliance from teachers. The school fee was

meant to be an incentive for teachers to support autonomy in the potential of increased teachers' salaries using school fees. In their 1999 report, they claim:

Since personal incentives must be taken into account when designing a policy change that could affect the job stability and tenure of teachers, the MED (Ministry of Education) began discussing the salary issue with school directors from the very beginning. From these discussions, it became evident that to gain the support of teachers, the MED had to bring something in exchange for the possible loss in job stability: the potential for increased salaries. (Arcia & Belli, 1999: 11-12)

Accordingly, they suggest that:

Moreover, school autonomy was considered as a first step for improving education quality by nurturing the personal incentives of parents and teachers to work together, thus helping restore the social contract between them. For teachers, school autonomy could mean a better link to increased pay, recognition, and good performance. In addition, teachers in autonomous schools could be free from political interference from the central MED, and more opportunities for exerting educational leadership and for increasing their capacity for making decisions. For parents, autonomy could mean having a voice in their children's education, and some control over educational resources. (p.3)

Overall, according to this framework, there can be no accountability at the school level without the devolution of authority over pedagogy and resource allocation. As such, it is expected that parental participation in school decision-making can contribute to accountability at the local level by devolving decision-making, establishing performance contracts between schools and financing bodies that specify learning goals, inventing information systems, including standardized tests of students' knowledge, to permit contract enforcement, and creating performance related rewards and sanctions, including the dismissal of school directors.

Of course, the NPM framework has made several important contributions towards our understanding of school change. First, game theoretic and spatial modelling, inherent within the NPM, have been successfully demonstrated in highly institutionalised settings

such as Chicago (Bryk and Easton, 1993). Second, strict assumptions of rationality have been successfully applied to the study of organizational behaviour and change politics when it is rule governed. By assuming individuals to be rational actors affected by strict transaction costs and bargaining, NPM is highly effective in its application to well developed organizations, markets, stable legislatures, and voting in consolidated democracies. Third, the NPM's micro-foundational approach to the psychology of individual action (rational, self-maximization) and interaction, coupled with an institutional framework that facilitates it, produced empirically grounded theoretical work that accounts for current arrangements and possible alternatives. This aspect of rationality offers a causal argument that borders on tautology (everything is interest), yet produces generalizations that allow for a dramatic increase in the number of comparable cases, restricting the causal variables.

Yet, we can identify at least three features that are not accounted for by the standard assumptions of decentralization (and NPM in general) but which may nevertheless complicate the central transaction of interest; namely, parental participation in decision-making. Below, we discuss these qualitative characteristics and why they may render the basic and, at times, implicit assumptions of the standard decentralization literature much too stringent.

School Change: Thick vs. Thin Notions of Rationality

NPM and decentralization employ the assumption of strict rationality to explain human behaviour. On the basis of this assumption, the devolution of decision-making authority within the organization is seen as re-ordering the preferences and incentive structures of decision-makers and those working within the confines of the organization.

For instance, the idea expressed by Burki, Perry, and Dillinger that parental elections of school leaders lead to better leadership, is based on the assumption that parents will rationally select the superior candidate and that school leaders, being rational and self-interested, will exhibit better leadership for fear of reprisal and/or job loss works according to the basic principles of rationality.

However, in the context of poorly developed institutions, poverty, and civil unrest, the basic assumption of strict rationality becomes more problematic for two reasons. First, the principle of strict rationality assumes that parents are provided with information that can and will be used to help them order their preferences and select an appropriate course of action. Yet, the informational systems in underdeveloped countries are often much more deficient than the informational systems of advanced industrial societies. This deficiency is particularly problematic in impoverished, rural communities, which have little access to outside media and/or information. The high illiteracy rates that characterize many of these communities can also be an impediment to satisfying informational requirements for preference formation and ordering. In the context of schooling, this can mean that parents may want to hold principals and/or teachers accountable for their performances, but the basic information required to do so is missing. At its worst, underdevelopment may create a situation wherein stakeholder (parents) lack the basic literacy capacity for processing information even when it is made available to them. Moreover, institutional organizations (such as Ministry of Education) charged with distributing information do not always fulfill this task. Under such conditions, the information being made available to parents may be imperfect or unavailable.

Second, the meta-idea of instrumental rationality employed by decentralization advocates has been challenged on several accounts. Simon's ideas of bounded rationality have, for example, received considerable attention in the political science literature. Simon points out that most people are only partly rational, and are emotional and/or irrational in the remaining part of their actions. Bounded rationality is introduced by Simon (1986) to show the limits of individual rationality in formulating and solving complex problems and in processing information (receiving, storing, retrieving, and transmitting), suggesting that self-maximizing agents employ the use of heuristics to make decisions rather than a strict rigid rule of optimisation (cost-benefit calculations).

In the case of decision-making, the cognitive process of discovery becomes significant because agents must discover the information and the strategies for solving problems. Weber's axiological rationality introduces the idea that in some circumstances actors select a course of action not because they expect any desirable, self-interest benefit, but rather because they are convinced that the course of action is itself, good and worthy. For example, one votes in an election not because they are convinced that their vote will affect the outcome, but rather because they believe in the value of democracy. Boudon (1998) argues that individual action can, at times, be non-instrumental- meaning there is cognitive and normative dimension to the action. For Boudon, what is important in explaining action are the 'meanings' and 'interpretations' that motivate individual action. Boudon therefore suggests that instrumental rationality (strict cost-benefit calculation) is only one particular form a wider cognitive model of decision-making, which includes a normative dimension.

From an axiological perspective, this means, for example, that stakeholders may consider school initiative not on the basis of strictly material ends (such as utility, profit, or wealth), but rather on the basis of a social end, such as approval, status, power, or ideology (Granovetter, 1985). Additionally, the meanings and interpretations actors assign to objects, programs, and actions are significant for understanding an individual's motivations towards action. These meanings arise from within a normative context and, therefore, require a more detailed knowledge of the case.

Constraints in Educational Decision-Making: Scarcity vs. Institutions

In addition to problems of rationality, the NPM framework makes some assumptions about the constraints on decision-making. Here, the major source of constraint appears to be scarcity; namely, that individuals maximize within the confines of available resources. Simply stated, under centralized systems, parents cannot directly influence educational decisions because they lack a vote and/or a voice in decision-making. So, while decentralization represents an attempt to re-order decision-making structures within the institution- the assumption informing this re-ordering is predicated on the notion of scarcity.

What is missing from this analysis is a consideration of the quality of institutions and how this quality may also serve to constraint decision-makers and strategic calculations. For example, Huntington was one of the first scholars to conceptualise political development as institutionalisation. In *Political Development and Political Decay* (1965), Huntington paved the way for a diversified, analytic approach to the study of underdeveloped regions of the world. Although much has changed since the publication of Huntington's early work, comparativists have rediscovered the qualitative

importance of political institutions in development exercises. New bodies of work have shown that institutional arrangements as having a critical, patterning influence on the nature, extent and success of policy initiatives in Latin America. For example, the accountability structure of political parties is shown to have a critical patterning influence on policy implementation (Willis, Garman and Haggard 1999). The relative power of the political executive has also been demonstrated to determine the success of new policy ideas (Falleti 2003; Montero and Samuels, 2003). Other studies have shown how institutional organization may actually privilege some interests over others. (Thelan, 1999) Additionally, other studies of institutions in Latin America illustrate how the political and social quality of institutions structures the character, interactions and outcomes of rival, political group conflict over time (Katzenstein, 1978), so as to generate a distinctive national trajectories, which subsequently influence contemporary policy decisions (Hall, 1986). These studies suggest that individuals turn to familiar social and institutionalised patterns of behaviour to attain their purpose.

Hence, what is missing from the NPM approach is a full appreciation of the way in which institutions actually structure and order incentives in important, and at times, unpredictable ways. This is a particularly important finding for scholars of Latin America, where the quality of institutions has typically been low. For example, looking at the institutions of less developed regions, Huntington (1965) observes that:

Instead of a trend toward competitiveness and democracy, there has been an “erosion of democracy” and a tendency to autocratic military regimes and one-party regimes. Instead of stability, there have been repeated coups and revolts. Instead of a unifying nationalism and nation-building, there have been repeated ethnic conflicts and civil wars. Instead of institutional rationalization and differentiation, there has frequently been a decay of the administrative organizations inherited from the colonial era

and a weakening and disruption of the political organization developed during the struggle for independence. (p. 392)

In Latin America, political struggles were often resolved through the creation of a compromised system of exchange between political elite and the representatives of civil society, bureaucratic elite, whereby the bureaucratic representatives of civil society would provide political elite with electoral support and political legitimacy, in exchange for privileged access to government resources (Torres, 1998). This exchange relation was coordinated through the critical mechanisms related resource allocation within society; namely, its institutions. Specifically, the bureaucratic-political compromise of exchange was carried out through rigid, highly exclusionary, informal networks of resource coordination and policy-making, which, overtime, came to define the institutional mechanisms of the contemporary state. The structure of participation in Latin America, entrenched with the region's institutions, served to privilege elites. This arrangement stands in contrast to institutional development in advanced, industrial society, where power was much more diffused. This has had the effect of limiting network accessibility to outsiders by closing channels for wider, democratic participation in policy debates. In exchange, the bureaucratic elite provided the state with the required 'political legitimacy' to justify and maintain political control. Emerging from the wake of this historical development are the contemporary institutions of Latin America, which are often criticized as being weak, unaccountable, corrupt, clientelistic, and lacking the basic mechanisms for monitoring the behaviour of bureaucrats and/or political parties.

Decentralization advocates need to be wary of institutional deficiencies for several reasons. First, institutions are the primary mechanisms by which resources are transferred throughout education. While it is often assumed that allocated resources

reach their intended beneficiaries, this is not always the case when institutional mechanisms are weak or deficient. Second, reform programs, such as autonomy, are complex initiatives requiring administrative oversight and coordination to ensure their correct application. Once again, where institutional deficiencies and/or weaknesses are evident, coordination problems are likely to accrue in the implementation process. Finally, institutional mechanisms for monitoring the behaviour of bureaucrats are a necessary component for ensuring the professionalism of the public service. However, where these mechanisms are weak or deficient, corruption and capture are more likely to accrue. Under such conditions, devolving decision-making authority and resources to more local levels (in effect, addressing the problem of scarcity) may have an unpredictable effect on decision-making. In short, broad institutional mechanisms of accountability, monitoring, and coordination are an integral component of the administrative process in education, which are often overlooked by NPM advocates.

Additionally, the standard NPM literature also gives little attention to how cultural assumptions can influence a program such as autonomy. However, there is a large body of work pervading most of the social sciences, which suggest that culture is a key explanatory factor in explaining individual action and collective behaviour. Socio-cultural theories of learning, for example, have demonstrated the extent to which cultural environment significantly conditions the perceptions of decision-makers. Vygotsky understood the role of thought and language to be central in the formation of consciousness and human perception. He believed that cultural artefacts acted as psychological tools that played an integral, mediation role in shaping cognitive development (Davydov, 1995). Vygotsky's theory attributes a significant role to

dialogue, discourse and/or negotiation in the ‘meaning-making’/ ‘knowledge-construction’ process. In doing so, attention is given to the mechanism by which new meanings are created and sustained. Here, the social processes of *mediation, dialogue, and reflection* become particularly important. To help explain this mediation process, Vygotsky (1978) introduces the notion of the “*zone of proximal development*” to describe the mental space wherein the ideational negotiations between agents take place (the space in which knowing is mediated and negotiated through social interaction). These ideas gave rise to the notion of a learning environment that provided for cultural appropriation through dialogue and interaction (Rogoff, 1994).

In addition, the NPM and decentralization literatures typically assume that different levels of government within an institution have a similar level of technical and administrative capacity. This assumption is questionable in all countries, but it is particularly severe in the developing world where asymmetries in technical and administrative capacity may be acute. For example, schools in developing countries face their own unique challenges. Schools in the context of underdevelopment often have little administrative capacity, fewer resources, poorly trained staff, poor physical infrastructure, insufficient lighting conditions, an insufficient number of desks and teaching resources, and little if any communications technology. Moreover, the community that provides the school’s student population and staff is often characterized by higher rates of crime and corruption, low education, illiteracy, unemployment and, in Nicaragua, a long and difficult history of dictatorship, civil war and political repression. Yet, the standard NPM literature provides few, if any qualifications of these features of underdevelopment- despite the fact that numerous studies of North American schools

over the last several decades have shown that high stake accountability reforms cannot realize their objectives unless targeted schools have or acquire *the local capacity* to meet the functional requirements and prescribed performance standards (Malen and Rice, 2004; Hess, 1999). In fact, Fullan (2001) goes as far as to suggest that 'local capacity' is the key element for understanding change precisely because of the multi-level mobilization and coordination problems that occur under high-stake accountability reforms, which involve thousands of people throughout the organization. Given the difficulties of mass coordination in such an undertaking, it is critical that schools have the capacity to engage and adapt themselves to the new initiative.

An Interpretative Approach to Change: Historic Comparative Institutional Approach

In this study, we are concerned with the process and outcomes of educational decentralization efforts as they are currently unfolding in Nicaragua on the local level. While we cannot possibly account for all the factors that may feed into the change process, we believe much can be gained by examining the evolution and mitigating features of the education institution itself; including, its formal rules, its organizations (its bureaucracy) and its schools. Non-state actors, rather than state actors, confined within an institutional, rather than anarchic environment define the conflict we observe. While the concepts, outcomes and processes of this case relate powerfully to our understanding of political economy, neoliberalism and institutional reform in Latin America, decentralization, and education, they are, as outlined above, inadequate to the task. To answer the question at hand, more consideration of the comparative method, the notion of

rationality, the nature of institutions, and meaning of equilibrium is needed in the analysis.

In this section, we establish the particular conceptual framework and empirical methodology of Historical, Comparative Analysis as it pertains to education. While such an approach reflects a historical and comparative, institutional methodology, focused on micro-level events, we believe it nevertheless has important relevance for the broader study of comparative, national and international politics. Together, the insights garnered from such an approach indicate that a society's institutions are complex, wherein informal, implicit institutional features interrelate with formal, explicit features in creating a coherent whole. In our particular case, such a methodological approach reveals three, significant conceptual insights that relate powerfully to our understanding of three areas of study:

Insights from Historical and Comparative Institutional Analysis (HCIA):

- 1) **Comparative Variation:** HCIA is comparative in its attempt to gain insights through comparative studies over time and space. In the context of contemporary Latin America, such comparative analysis reveals important variations in both domestic (school) and state adaptations and responses to structural pressures- such as neoliberalism.
- 2) **The Nature of Institutions:** HCIA is an attempt to explore the role of history and culture in institutional emergence, perpetuation, and change, where 'institutions' are conceptualized as the relationally (non-technologically) determined constraints that influence social interactions and provide incentives to maintain regularities of behaviour.
- 3) **The Strategic role of Agents:** HCIA posits institutions as the self-enforcing *outcome* of strategic interactions and evolutionary processes. Such analysis opens the possibility that the forces of institutional change lie beyond the boundaries of structural pressure or formal rules and raises key questions about the social and relational forces that make (and re-make) rules that are self-enforcing.

Relevant Areas of Study:

- Policy Decentralization & Schooling in Latin America
- Latin American Politics & Development
- International Political Economy

We examine the assumptions of historical and comparative, institutional analysis (HCIA), which forms the basic methodological framework of our socio-technical investigation. Upon establishing this framework, we show the applicability of such a methodological framework for scholars across a range of disciplines.

Key Theoretical Components of Historical and Comparative Institutional Analysis (HCIA):

HCIA is an attempt to explore the role of history in institutional emergence, perpetuation, and change. It is comparative in its attempt to gain insights through comparative studies over time and space; and it is analytical in its explicit reliance on context specific micro-models for empirical analysis (Greif, 1998: 80). The key focus area of HCIA research is 'institutions', which are conceptualized as the non-technologically determined constraints that influence social interactions and provide incentives to maintain regularities of behaviour. According to Greif (1998), HCIA, as an approach that:

considers the relevant rules of the game that actually constrain behaviour in a society (as distinct from the technologically feasible rules) to be a self-enforcing outcome of forces, such as strategic interactions, evolutionary processes, and limits on cognition. These rules, in constituting part of a society's institutions, are complemented by self-enforcing constraints generated through interactions within these rules. An essence of HCIA is thus the examination of the factors determining the relevant rules of the game, the forces that make these rules self-enforcing, and the self-enforcing constraints on behaviour that emerge within these rules. State-mandated rules, values, or social norms that actually constrain

behaviour, for example, are considered as outcomes rather than exogenous forces. (p.80)

To advance such an examination of institutions, the HCIA often utilizes the lens provided by the study of equilibrium. On a rudimentary level, the notion of equilibrium relates to the static state of institutions. It is assumed that the institution is static, stable, satisfactory, and relatively productive. Yet, presumably, changes either from within or outside the institution will stimulate action by the institution, either static or dynamic. If the reaction is static, the system responds to keep the institution in its original state; whereby the status quo is maintained. Dynamic equilibrium is characterized by a rearrangement or re-organization of the institution in order to adjust to changing circumstances in the external environment; in other words, the system must adapt (See: Owens, 2004, chpt. 4).

Equilibrium thus provides the basis for examining institutional change as reflecting the interrelations among institutional members, and the evolving environment within which they interact. Unlike empirical-rational or power-coercive solutions for organizational change, HCIA assumes neither the appropriateness of using standard, rational choice solutions nor the prevalence of an institution with particular attributes, such as efficiency, accountability, or participatory. Rather, “at the heart of the HCIA’s research strategy is an inductive, empirical analysis regarding the relevance of particular institutions based on evaluating and synthesizing micro-level historical and comparative evidence and insights from context-specific, micro theoretical models” (, 1998: 80). By drawing attention to the historical, contextual and relational aspects of institutions, HCIA appreciates the ‘indeterminacy of equilibrium’; meaning, that institutions are continually subject to *non-technologically* determined forces, such as values, history, culture, and

societal norms, that influence social interactions as well as the stativity or dynamism of the equilibrium.

From the starting point that institutions are non-technologically determined constraints the influence social interactions, a key line of inquiry emerges from the HCIA perspective. This line of methodological inquiry considers the impact of strategic interactions and exogenous and endogenous cultural features, beliefs, social structures, and cognition on the set of relevant institutional rules. According to Greif, such a mode of inquiry:

concentrates on the origin and implications of (non-technologically determined) “organizations”, and the constraints implied by beliefs prominent in society regarding behaviour on and off the path of play. Organizations alter the set of the relevant rules of the game by changing the information available to players, or changing payoffs associated with certain actions... While these organizations alter the set of the relevant rules of the game in the societies in which they prevail... their emergence nevertheless represents actions taken, in the appropriate meta-game by those who established them. Conceptually, these actions differ from other actions by *potentially* having a ‘profound’ impact, implying a qualitative change in the set of possible institutional constraints relative to those possible in the same game in the absence of the organization under consideration (p.81).

Thus, the empirical methodology employed by HCIA concentrates on the identification of relevant *organizations* and their interplay with existing beliefs, norms and values on and off the path of play. The key point of departure of HCIA analysis from conventional, rational analysis is the identification of relevant institutions- beyond the formal structure of organizations- including the sets of self-enforcing expectations, behaviour, norms, values and social structures, as well as the relevant historical episode under consideration. Unlike much of conventional analysis, HCIA does not permit the rigid contemplation of theoretically feasible institutions or organizations based on deductive theory or criteria

precisely because the extent of knowledge, rationality, and cognition within the institution cannot be assumed according to the basic ontology of the approach. Rather, the analysis is inductive in order to evaluate and uncover the constraining role of strategic interactions and exogenous and endogenous cultural features, beliefs, social structures, and cognition on the set of relevant institutional rules. Recognizing actors as historically and culturally situated, implies studying institutional change and organizational innovations from a perspective beyond the confines of empirical-rational and power-coercive theories. Such a perspective draws attention to the limits of rationality and cognition, and the incentive for institutional change.

Since our speculations in this study concern the process of change occurring in Nicaraguan autonomous schools, the implications of Historical and Comparative Institutional Analysis are threefold. First, HCIA rejects a deductive approach to the study of change occurring in Nicaragua. Rather, it necessitates a more inductive, comparative approach in its attempt to gain insights through comparative studies over time and space. Such a comparative approach to our case shows that despite exposure to the same policy treatment, being the New Law of Education Participation, Nicaraguan schools have responded differently. Such a finding is notable in and of itself in that it challenges the basic assumptions of thick rationality. It also begs inquiry into the factors that have led to such outcomes. Moreover, such findings are common in both intra-state and inter-state comparisons of neoliberal reforms in Latin America- yet strictly rational, deductive approaches often fail to account for the various reactions to structural impositions and constraints, whether they be in the form of new, organizational rules for Latin American schools, or neoliberal policies and rules for Latin American states. On this account, the

distinction between school responses to neoliberal policies of the state and state responses to the neoliberal policies of the international community becomes less evident and begs a similar inquiry on both accounts.

Second, HCIA posits ‘institutions’ as the non-technologically determined constraints on action and actor response. Such a proposition draws the line of inquiry around the role of history and culture in institutional emergence, perpetuation and change. Not only does such a line of inquiry carry potential causal significance for our purposes, but it also mirrors the growing significance given to institutions and context in the study of international politics (Hall, 1986; Bates, 1981). Finally, by positing institutions as the self-enforcing *outcome* of strategic interactions and evolutionary processes, HCIA opens the possibility that the forces of institutional change lie beyond the boundaries of structural pressure or formal rules. HCIA raises key questions about the social and relational forces that make (and can re-make) rules that are self-enforcing. Not only does this suggestion have implications for our study of strategic, local leadership in the negotiation of autonomy in Nicaraguan school community, but it also reflects several other notable findings in the literature on epistemic communities and strategic leaders in the negotiation of reform politics at both the national and international level. We further explore the threefold insights of HCIA in the literature on decentralization and schooling below:

HCIA, School-Based Management & Schooling in Latin America

Our research in this study is firmly rooted in a body of literature seeking to evaluate the implementation of educational decentralization reforms in Nicaragua specifically, and Latin America in general. In addition to the literature and government

documents outlining the parameters of the SBM model of autonomy and reform in Nicaragua, there has been considerable academic research on local autonomy and decentralization conducted by international experts, independent scholars, and governments; a number of which have sought to evaluate and/or theorize the practice of autonomy by autonomous schools. In Nicaragua, some of these studies have been carried out by teams from the Ministry of Education and the World Bank (see: Fuller & Rivarola, 1998; King, Ozler & Rawling, 1999; MED, 2004; Gershberg & Jacobs, 1998; Gunnarsson et al, 2004), while others have been conducted by independent researchers and analysts (Ruiz de Forsberg, 2003; Asensio, Ruiz & Sequeira, 2001; Gershberg, 1998, 1999a, 1999b).

Based on this academic work focusing on evaluation, we know a number of things about how autonomy is working in schools. As a starting point, we know that the passage of national autonomy mandates in Nicaragua (de jure autonomy) has not directly translated into the effective practice of autonomy in all Nicaraguan schools enrolled in the program (de facto autonomy) (Gunnarsson, et al, 2004). Previous research also tells us that when new autonomy mandates are introduced, parents, teachers and students have had difficulties understanding, interpreting and integrating their new powers of autonomy in a uniform, comprehensive or meaningful fashion (Foro, 2002; Ruiz de Forsberg, 2002). We also know that when new autonomy technologies are introduced, some schools seem more capable of integrating these technologies and innovations than others, *suggesting the practice of autonomy varies between schools exposed to the same policy treatment* (Wylie, 1999; Levin, 2001). These comparative findings serve as the theoretical point of departure for the present study.

It is apparent that, in an era of administrative policy reform, schools must be able to adapt themselves to the pressures of change. Presently, we know very little about how Nicaraguan schools are accommodating and adapting to these pressures. Few studies have considered how local actors ‘interpret’ their new powers of autonomy within a cultural and historical context. While attention to issues such ‘student identity’, ‘self-image’, ‘student values’, ‘roles’ and ‘beliefs’ is more common in the literature dealing with learning and inclusive classrooms, these aspects of identity, history, meaning-making, beliefs, roles and identity are given less attention in the evaluations of contemporary decentralization in Latin America. This may be because policy-makers and politicians are often more concerned with immediate payouts and tangible, empirical outcomes such as student performance indicators, budget allocation, and resource efficiency. Nevertheless, HClA suggests these factors may have an important role to play in explaining the degree of change occurring at the school and classroom level.

De Forsberg’s (2002) evaluation of the Autonomous Schools Program in Nicaragua is among the few studies to acknowledge the importance of “meaning and interpretation” in the process of school autonomy reform and school change. For example, in an attempt to extrapolate local interpretations of the ASP initiative, Ruiz asks principals, parents, teachers and students about their understanding of ‘autonomy’ in Nicaragua. Her findings suggest that, despite a common policy blueprint for school autonomy, a number of different stakeholders conceptualize autonomy in a number of different ways.

Indeed, in our fieldwork, we found an underlying attitude among school-level participants regarding the new rules and meaning of school autonomy. This attitude is

illustrated by common language such as: “They changed the rules...now they’re telling us...”¹ Another common sentiment we came across in the course of our field research was “I know they changed the law, but I’m not exactly sure what I’m supposed to be doing.”² For us, these illustrations suggest that new policies may be having a limited influence on the behaviour of school-level participants precisely because school-participants do not understand, or are not interpreting or negotiating the meaning and responsibilities of the new law in productive or the intended way. Such findings suggest existing social, normative and informational constraints are having a significant influence on the social interactions, essentially serving to maintain regularities of behaviour in Nicaraguan schools.

By conceptualizing the challenge of policy reform as a matter of ‘interpretation’ and ‘meaning’ within the institution, HClA is oddly consistent with the language and rationale of reform minded policy-makers in Nicaragua. For example, policy reformers in Nicaragua looked to decentralization in order to give “parents a voice in the education content and process...[based upon]...an explicit recognition that parents have a natural right in determining the goals in the education of their children” (Arcia and Belli, 1999). Humberto Belli, the architect of the Autonomous Schools Program in Nicaragua, goes as far as referring to the Nicaraguan decentralization reforms as a ‘restoration of the social contract’.

Although neither Ruiz de Forsberg nor Arcia and Belli venture a conceptual model to explain the processes and variations in local interpretation of autonomy, we can

¹ These comments were noted by Lic. Yadira Rocha (IPADE) in her presentation at the Foro Sobre Decentralización y Participación Social en las Escuelas: “El Futuro de Reforma Educativa en Nicaragua”, November 2002, Managua, Nicaragua. Report Available at:

<http://www.milano.newschool.edu/cdrc/schoolreport/foroSobreDecentralizacionFinal.pdf>

² This comment was common in our discussion with parents in Matagalpa during our research.

nevertheless generate some important insights from this type of analysis. First, the results of Ruiz's study suggest that the process of change in Nicaragua under the ASP is a complex and dynamic process. These findings challenge more traditional interpretations of change as unproblematic, structural and achieved through organizational re-design alone. Rather, the ASP reforms can be seen to engage local agents in a process of social-interaction, where new behavioural beliefs, institutions and 'rules of the game' are negotiated. Secondly, these findings imply an important relation between 'behavioural belief' and 'behaviour', although Ruiz does not investigate this relationship.

Interpretations of autonomy may nevertheless be important in setting the parameters of local action and local participation in schools. For example, if parents interpret autonomy as a democratic reform, they may be more likely to exercise their new, perceived powers under autonomy. Conversely, if parents perceive autonomy as an extension of Ministry authority, they are unlikely to become more involved in decisions. Although rare in the evaluation literature, issues of behavioural belief may be important for understanding the process of school autonomy and change in schools. While Ruiz's study is useful in this regard, it does not provide us with an understanding of the conditions that facilitate processes of by which behavioural beliefs are created and sustained.

Thanks in large part to educational psychologists, sociologists and political scientists working in constructivist and/or psychological traditions, we know that institutional change does not automatically translate into a change in behaviour for those within the institution. We know that people are generally ambivalent about change regardless of whether it is sought or resisted (Fullan, 2001). We know that people

holding the same position in the organization (teachers, for example) can interpret the rules of change very differently (Ruiz de Forsberg, 2002) and we know that people make sense of change by mapping it to what they already know (Vygotsky, 1978). It is clear then that a focus on institutions, interactions, behavioural beliefs and relationships is one of the central issues in the study of any change process (Fullan, 2001).

How then is change accomplished? HCIA opens the possibility that institutional change can be achieved through strategic interaction and evolutionary processes. In terms of education and schooling, several studies have shown that the strategic role of the principal may be essential in making and re-making the self-enforcing beliefs surrounding schooling. First, by virtue of their position in schools, principals are the leaders and critical actors who are likely to have a significant impact on school operations and school culture. Given this unique position, their support and leadership is likely to be a critical factor for implementing new rules of the game. Elmore (in Fullan, 2001) summarize this important role of principals as one primarily concerned with:

“enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective” (p. 15)

Several theories, particularly developed in the United States and Canada, have sought to conceptualize organizational leadership and its importance in determining organizational performance. While these are too numerous to be fully elaborated here, Leithwood and Duke (1998) provide a map of leadership theory that demonstrates the extent of the research on leadership:

1. Managerial, transactional, or organization leadership. The focus of the managerial leader is on specific tasks and functions. It is also assumed that if these functions are performed well, the work of others in the organization will be facilitated.
2. Transformational, or visionary leadership. The focus of the visionary or transformational leader is on the commitments and capacities of the members of an organization. The transformational leader achieves organizational goals through inspiring others; building a school vision, modelling high expectations, and fostering structures for participation in school decisions.
3. Moral leadership. Moral leaders influence and inspire through modelling and transmission of core beliefs. Moral leadership focuses on the core values and ethics of the members of an organization, and how these shape school culture.
4. Instructional leadership. The focus of instructional leadership is on what goes on in the classroom between teachers and students. The instructional leader is familiar with curricular and instructional goals and techniques, keeps close tabs on student outcomes, and is able to offer specific instructional advice and support to teachers
5. Participative, or group leadership. In this leadership model, leadership does not rest with a single individual (such as the principal) but is rather shared among members of the organization. Advantages put forth by advocates of this leadership model include enhanced organizational effectiveness, as well as on the incorporation of democratic principals and values.

Moreover, the literature on instrumental role of principals is just as extensive, although the findings are largely restricted to studies of North America. Hart and Bredeson (1996) provide a brief summary of the findings on the role of principals as school leaders:

1. In their roles as leaders and through their daily work activities, effective principals positively affect student, classroom, and school outcomes
2. Principal instructional leadership, student outcomes, and school effects are complex, multidimensional, interactive phenomena that are not easily separable into discrete variables for conceptualization, observation, measurement, analysis, interpretation, and leadership preparation

3. The influence of principals on student and school outcomes is significant; however, these outcomes are the products of multiple sources of influence and the efforts of many individuals over time, not solely those of principals.
4. The concept of the 'principal's effect' on student and school outcomes as reported in much of the literature implies causality, although it is examined from distinct philosophical and methodological traditions.
5. Practitioners and scholars generally agree that principals' leadership influences such mediating factors as school governance, school climate, and instructional organization. There is also general agreement that these factors in turn affect student and school outcomes, despite inconclusive empirical findings and some methodological weakness.
6. Any representational rendering of principals' influence on student and school outcomes through narrative description, theoretical modelling, or causal mathematical equations is partial and therefore may underestimate principals' influence on student learning.
7. Any single managerial activity or principal leadership behaviour has the potential to ripple across the school, amplifying its effect on teaching and learning processes, and affecting student and organizational outcomes.
8. The instructional, leadership behaviour of principals affects student outcomes in school and beyond school. (p. 192)

Given the amount of work on leadership theory, it is surprising to note that when it comes to leadership and policy change in Latin America, the importance of school-level leadership is often overlooked. For example, the vast majority of World Bank project documents we reviewed for this study provide an extensive treatment of the importance of expanding roles for parents and teachers in decision-making. Moreover, several World Bank documents offered government implementations strategies for expanding the role of parents in decision-making. However, these documents did not establish a clear role for the principal as leader for the successful implementation of the reform initiative within the school (see: World Bank, 1999; King, Özler & Rawlings, 1999). Borden (2002) expresses these concerns, observing:

“What is surprising is that when we look at the details in education reform documents, strategy papers, project descriptions or research reports, there appears to be little consideration of how the reforms will be implemented at the school level and who will lead the process.” (p. 3)

It is clear that school improvement and high stake autonomy initiatives are much more than implementing top-down, structural policies. They involve changing meanings, behavioural beliefs, values and understandings within schools. Good leaders articulate and reflect upon their theories of change and forge a unified vision for the initiative (Fullan, 2001). Such a vision is essential for the creation of a unified philosophy and culture of effective practice and school improvement. Perhaps more importantly, the ability to negotiate a common vision for the school community may be the first and most important step towards the creation of new meanings and new school cultures.

Principals, given their positioning in the organizational hierarchy, are particularly well suited for providing this leadership function. The literature on school change and professional communities also demonstrates that a large part of school’s ability to implement high stakes reform initiatives, such as school autonomy, depends on school organization and culture. As the literature on school capacity has shown, a school’s ability to implement reforms is determined, in large part, by a combination of factors; such as its fiscal, human, social, cultural and informational capital. These factors are aspects of school culture that largely missing from contemporary analysis. Nevertheless, they may be significant for explaining how and why schools change.

Conclusion

The insights of a HCIA analysis indicate that society’s institutions are a complex, in which informal, implicit institutional features interrelate with formal explicit features

in creating a coherent whole. These insights are not limited to the study of domestic institutions such as schools and educational institutions. Rather, they are reflected in a wide and ranging scope of social science analysis. In the three bodies of scholarship reviewed, institutional change does not appear as a static optimal response to economic or social need. Rather, institutional change is a reflection of an institutional process in which economic, political, social, and/or cultural features interrelate and have a lasting impact. According to Greif (2005; 1998), HCIA thus reveals both the forces that lead societies to evolve along distinct institutional trajectories and the sources of the difficulties that societies face in adopting the institutions of more successful ones. It indicates the importance of examining a society's self-enforcing institutions as products of a process in which institutional, economic, political, social and cultural features interact in shaping the nature of contemporary institutions and their evolution.

Proceeding with our investigation into the process of change unfolding in Nicaragua's autonomous schools, we employ the insights of HCIA methodology. We utilize the comparative method to examine micro-level events occurring at the level of schools. Our dependent variables, first discussed on page three, deal with the extent to which educational stakeholders have embraced the new understandings and expectations associated with school autonomy. Our independent variables are developed from the insight that the constituting parts of society's institutions (its formal rules, norms, organizations, and environment) generate self-enforcing rules and behaviours. Prior to examine these relationships, we establish the methodology for the study in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study of Nicaraguan school autonomy is informed by both Greif's HCIA study of Medieval Trading Systems (Greif, 2005) and by Gershberg, Danenberg, and Sanchez's (2004) influential work, *Beyond "Bilingual Education: New Immigrants and Public Schools in California*. Drawing on the work of Greif, we employ a case study approach to examine the argument that institutional elements inherited from the past will influence change processes and possibilities. Such arguments imply a study that is inductive, context-specific, and focused on research questions and variables related to Greif's theory of historical institutions. Drawing on the work of Gershberg et. al. (2004), we employ specific methods for data analysis and interpretation. Combined, these methodological procedures enhance the reliability and validity of our interpretations and predictions.

In this chapter, we review the research questions and methods employed in this study. We demonstrate how the research questions and, to some extent, the methods flow directly from the theory HCIA. Following this, we outline the specific procedures employed for data collection, analysis, and interpretation, which are, as mentioned, are informed by the work of Gershberg (2004).

HCIA Methodology: Key Questions and Procedures Implied by the Theory

The method implied by the theory of HCIA is as follows:

“...a context-specific analysis that combines contextual knowledge of the situation and its history with theory and an explicit, contextual-specific model. The method interactively uses contextual knowledge, combined

with a context-specific model to *identify* the institution; to clarify why and how it established itself; and to understand its persistence, change, and implications” (Greif, 2005: p.21. Italics original)

Therefore, HCIA necessitates methods that are inductive and historical, focusing on the cultural, social, and organizational aspects (socio-economic aspects) of institutions in a specific-contextual setting.

Flowing from the theory then, our study of school reform in Nicaragua is primarily concerned with identifying key aspects of Nicaragua’s ‘educational institution.’ As mentioned in chapter one, we conceptualize institutions, in accordance with HCIA, as *rules/procedures, organizations, and behavioural beliefs*. The theory links these institutional components to ‘regularities of behaviour’. Thus, in our investigation of the Nicaraguan school reforms, we are primarily concerned with these institutional components of education; how they evolved, are sustained, relate to, reinforce one another, and perpetuate certain types of behaviour. Our investigation of this case is guided by the following, overarching research questions, which flow directly from the assumptions of HCIA:

1. What are the historically shared norms of Nicaraguan stakeholders regarding education? Where did these normative understandings come from and how are they sustained?
2. What are the new behaviours prescribed by the New Law? How do they challenge prevailing, behavioural beliefs? Are the organizations and auxiliary transactions perpetuating or undermining the norms associated with the New Law?
3. What practices has school autonomy given rise to in Nicaraguan schools? Are these practices consistent with the specifications and normative prescriptions of the New Law?

4. Have stakeholders internalized the normative beliefs and prescriptions associated with the New Law? Do they believe others are likely to follow the rules? Does this belief determine their participation in school decision-making?

We examine these sets of questions inductively, using various qualitative techniques, including historical research, content analysis, systematic observations, surveys, and interviews. Our interpretation and analysis of both the survey data and interviews are informed by Gershberg (2004). Below we provide a thorough discussion of these techniques and other methodological issues of data collection and interpretation that flow from the HCIA theory. First, we provide our rationale for case selection.

Case Selection

Our interest in education stems from our general interest in 'Latin American development'. In both the developed and developing world, education is widely recognized as a prerequisite for development. While there are many social, economic and political factors that influence opportunities in life, the ability to read and write as well as the social skills gained in schools are the foundations upon which both individual futures and modern democratic societies are built (Reimers, 2000). Several studies highlight the significance of education for a country's economic growth. For example, Loening's (2002) study of the impact of education on economic growth in Guatemala concludes that the effect of education is unequivocally positive on account of two mechanisms (Loening, 2002). First, Loening finds that a better-educated labour force has a significant positive impact on economic growth via factor accumulation where a 1 percent increase of the average years of schooling would raise output by worker by about

0.16 percent. Second, Loening found the average level of human capital appeared to have strong impact on the evolution of total factor productivity.

Unfortunately, Latin American systems of education remain deficient in a number of areas as articulated by the World Bank (1999).

- The gap in educational performance and competitiveness between Latin American Countries (LAC) and OECD countries is widening. Not only is the educational attainment of the labour force relatively low, but the rapid growth in secondary- and, especially, tertiary-level enrollments in OECD countries over the past two decades has not been matched in Latin America.
- Inequalities in access to schooling, school readiness, school attendance, and learning outcomes still pervade the Region. The rural poor and indigenous populations are at an extreme disadvantage relative to other groups. Education is not fulfilling its potential to improve social mobility. Indeed, the probability that poor children will complete basic school is lower in LAC than in some poorer countries in Africa.
- The quality of schooling and school achievement levels needs to be improved significantly. Latin American countries score far below Asian and European countries in international achievement tests like the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). While many factors contribute to this, most research points to the key role played by the low quality of teaching.
- The relevance of schooling, especially at the secondary level, for entering the labour market, fostering peaceful resolution of conflict, and encouraging civic participation is also wanting. While it is at the secondary level where enrollments will grow most rapidly in the next decade, it is also this level where curricula need the most revision.

These findings of the World Bank (1999) indicate the significant challenges confronting Latin American educational systems.

Upon our initial examination of contemporary change initiatives in Latin American educational systems, we noticed an interesting puzzle in the literature. Despite the existence of logical and well-planned change initiatives in Latin America, the

outcomes of the change initiative did not appear to comply with the predictions of NPM theory. In fact, our literature review of NPM reforms, such as school autonomy, shows the relationship between administrative decentralization, the local practice of school autonomy, and learning outcomes to be far from universal. For example, at times, we found a cross section of the literature supporting a positive relationship between decentralization policy, school autonomy and improved educational performance (see: King and Ozler, 2001). In other sections of the literature, the relationship between national reform policy, local autonomy and school performance was less evident (Gunnarsson, 2004). Another cross section of the literature revealed a significant tendency by which *the effective practice of school autonomy by individual schools* (what we call 'de facto autonomy') may actually vary more within countries than between countries (see: Gunnarsson, 2004). Upon completing our review, we concluded that the explanations and predictions posited by the NPM do not fully appreciate the complexities of school change in Latin America.

Thus, for us, the problem of 'change' in the developing world was well documented but was not fully explained by the literature. For us, this raised the possibility that change, in the context of underdevelopment, may present special issues. In fact, Douglass North was one of the first to propose 'change' as a special problem in the developing world. According to North (2001), when it comes to the developing world, "We know both economic conditions and the institutional conditions that make for good economic performance. What we do not know is how to get them." (p. 491) Real-world examples of change from the developing world appear to show us that new formal rules and models for change may be a necessary condition for improving performance.

However, if we expect to create and sustain lasting changes, we need to shift our attention from positivistic approaches that focus on ‘best policy practice’ towards an approach that provides a deeper insight into the process of change as it exists and occurs in the context of underdevelopment. To understand change in the developing world, “we need a body of theory that explores the process.” (North, 2001: 491) We believe HCIA may provide these insights.

Our specific rationale for examining school autonomy and the New Law in Nicaragua is based upon our identification of the program as a significant initiative for change. Unlike many other NPM reforms in Latin America, the school autonomy program in Nicaragua has two, special characteristics that make it worthy of special attention. First, the Nicaraguan initiative makes schools the target of the decentralization exercise, creating School Councils with broad powers over administrative matters. Many of the current governance initiatives in Latin America are characterized by a *delegation* of authority (where local governments act as agents for the central government, executing certain functions on its behalf) and/or by a *deconcentration* of authority (where responsibility over education is dispersed within a central government to local branch offices). However, the Nicaraguan initiative is unique in that it specifies a significant *devolution* of authority in which not only implementation but also the authority to decide is in the hands of School Councils. Second, the reform introduces a voluntary *cuota* (school fee) as an incentive for supplementing school budgets and fostering competition between schools. While the introduction of incentive mechanisms in education is not new in Latin America (ex. Chile’s use of school vouchers), nowhere in Latin America have incentive mechanisms asked parents to provide directly such a large portion of

school resources (Gershberg, 2004). In short, these two special features of school autonomy in Nicaragua distinguish it from many other instances of NPM reform in Latin American educational systems. Thus, we believe the program warrants special and sustained attention.

Another reason for choosing to examine school reform in Nicaragua is that while the country has over ten years experience with the ASP, it has no data showing how schools are responding to the New Law of Education Participation. Data on the new law would be significant for two reasons. First, the ASP was sustained through a legislative mandate, not as a law. This is significant because, as Gershberg (2004) explains, the program was not subjected to congressional debate. Since the new law was passed in Congress, political opponents would, for the first time, be afforded the opportunity to challenge and ratify its contents. Moreover, a study of school autonomy in Nicaragua after 2002 provides a unique opportunity to contrast the significance of legislative directive against reforms with legal backing. Second, school participation in the ASP has been voluntary. Therefore, Gunnarsson et al (2004) argue that previous evaluations of school autonomy in Nicaragua have been biased given that high performing schools were more likely to opt for participation in the program. Under the New Law, school autonomy has become mandatory for all public schools. Since school autonomy is no longer a choice, we have a unique opportunity of correcting for this bias by examining how newly autonomous schools, specifically those who did not exert the managerial effort to opt for the ASP program, are responding to school autonomy.

Nicaragua is also a very good case for investigating the explanatory power of HCIA given the tumultuous history of education and institutional development in

Nicaragua. Nicaragua is the Western Hemisphere's second poorest country, next to Haiti. It is characterized by low per capita income and widespread unemployment (officially around 22% and another 36% underemployed). Nicaragua also suffers from persistent trade and budget deficits and a high debt-service burden, leaving it highly dependent on foreign assistance, as much as 25% of GDP in 2001. In terms of health, life expectancy is 70 years, but infant mortality rates are continually high at 30.15/1,000. In terms of education, about 1 million, of the nearly 5 million adults in the age group of 13-45 are illiterate. Distribution of income in Nicaragua is one of the most unequal on the globe. In the Freedom House Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, the country scores as only "partially free" on both political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, 2005). Nicaragua was ranked 97 out of 146 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index. Political, judicial, and civic activities continue to be marked by political violence, corruption and partisanship. These characteristics highlight only a few of the qualitative characteristics that differentiate Nicaragua's political and social institutions from those of advanced, industrial society. We believe these qualitative, institutional differences may have important consequences for autonomy and reform.

The Schools

Nicaragua is a unitary state divided into 15 *departamentos* (departments) and 2 self-governing, *regiones autonomas* (autonomous regions). The 15 departments are divided into 145 *municipios* (municipalities). Education is administered through the *Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deportes* (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport-

MECD), which is a national Ministry under the jurisdiction of the central government. The President appoints the Minister of Education. Thus, it is a political appointment. Municipal Delegates are representatives of the MECD. They are charged with administering education and school autonomy in municipalities. Additionally, the Minister of Education, under direction from the governing party, appoints them to the post. Given our limitations in funding, time, and human resources, we decided to focus our specific-contextual analysis on one municipality. Such an approach does not permit comparisons between municipalities. However, it does hold several factors constant (such as the Delegate) and, in doing so, allows us to examine some of the differences between autonomous schools operating under the same Delegate, within the same municipality.

After speaking with several administrators and policy experts in Managua, we decided to initiate the study in the municipality of Matagalpa, which is the capital city of the department also called Matagalpa. The municipality of Matagalpa is a larger city in Nicaragua, boasting a population of approximately 127, 570 (2000 census). Our decision to choose Matagalpa was based on a number of factors. First, while several studies have focused specifically on other municipalities, such as Ruiz de Forsberg's study of Estelli, we have not yet found any studies that have focused analysis specifically on Matagalpa. Second, Matagalpa is a poorer, agrarian municipality and department. We believe this profile might yield some different issues that would not arise in more urban and developed municipalities like Managua. Third, the number of schools within the jurisdiction of the municipality (11) provided a sufficient sample size for investigation. Finally, we choose to investigate this municipality for several practical considerations.

Because the municipality is the capital of the department, its schools, neighbourhoods, and municipal buildings are located and condensed in one, central area. This feature meant that we could travel easily and on foot between the MED and the schools.

Moreover, we could also access the internet and other important amenities, which we could not have done in more rural settings.

Initially, we had intended to run our survey in all eleven autonomous schools in the municipality. However, for reasons of time and resources, this proved too ambitious and we were forced to limit our investigation to six schools. The six schools were selected on a geographical basis. Specifically, we choose three schools that were located centrally and three other schools that were located in the poorer, city periphery. We were also required to drop one of our six schools from the analysis (one of the periphery schools) because we could not generate sufficient data for that school. The schools for the analysis are as follows:

Table 3. Sample Schools

School Name	Area	Program	Total Students
School 1	Urban	Pre-school	79
		Primary	921
School 2	Urban	Pre-school	84
		Primary	792
School 3	Urban	Primary	853
		Secondary	1, 424
School 4	Urban	Pre-school	42
		Primary	501
School 5	Urban	Primary	682

Procedures and Techniques:

Historical/Secondary Research

To demonstrate the explanatory power of the HCIA approach to education, we begin by examining various aspects of the institutional foundation and institutional evolution of Nicaraguan education from the Somoza period, through the Sandinista era, to the present. These historical episodes lend themselves to examining the general nature of the education institution in Nicaragua, its dynamics, its evolution, and its implications for contemporary change initiatives.

The historical research presented here draws on secondary, academic sources, which document the political, social and institutional development in Nicaragua from the period of 1838-2000. Our reading of this literature was selective and directed by two central research questions related to the recent autonomy reform: What are the historically, shared, norms of Nicaraguan stakeholders regarding parental participation in education and education in general? Where did these normative understandings come from and how are they sustained? To help us organize this research, we focused particularly on institutional developments in education during two periods: the Somoza legacy (1927-1979) and the Sandinista era (1979-1990). This focused search was particularly important because, as HCIA predicts, the institutional elements inherited from the past appear to have contributed to the emergence of an educational culture in Nicaragua that is characterized by institutional weaknesses, political ideology, centralization, corruption, political patronage, weak accountability, a deep mistrust of educational officials, and a weak culture of learning in schools. In fact, we find that this historical legacy implies a behavioural belief that the gains from broad-based, parental

participation in schools are not sufficient enough to render such actions profitable. Rather, the particular historical configuration of education in Nicaragua- centered on political ideology, political partisanship, corruption, exclusion, and centralism- reinforces a behavioural belief that renders opportunistic behaviour most profitable. If, as HCIA predicts, institutional configurations are central to educational outcomes and institutional development is a historical process, then the prospects and possibilities of the contemporary 'school autonomy' initiative in Nicaragua may very well lie in Nicaragua's past institutions. Therefore, this historical examination is a necessary first step.

Content Analysis

Content analysis was also used in the study to help us answer the following questions: What are the new behaviours prescribed by the New Law? How do they challenge prevailing, behavioural beliefs? Are the formal rule changes coherently linked to broader, transformations of institutional components? Are organizations perpetuating the norms associated with the New Law? To help us answer these questions, we obtained a copy of the New Law itself, and used written records such as newspapers, conference transcripts, World Bank appraisal documents, and other government documents in an effort to understand the content of the New Law and, in addition, whether the content of the Law is coherently linked to broader aspects of institutional change.

Systematic Observations:

In addition to the analysis of secondary and primary documents, we also rely on systematic observations to help us answer the following question: What practices has

school autonomy given rise to in Nicaraguan schools? As a qualitative method, systematic observation encourages the researcher to immerse themselves in the day-to-day activities of subjects. As a technique, it requires the researcher to spend a large amount of time in the surroundings of the subject in order to document behaviours that occur naturally within the setting. Sommer and Sommer (1991) distinguish this approach from participant observation because as a systematic observer, the researcher does not take an active role in what is happening. To the greatest extent possible, we attempted to adopt a systematic observer role while in the field; meaning, we attempted to be uninvolved and detached, while passively recording behaviour, practices and surroundings of subjects in their natural settings.

To accomplish this, the researcher spent a total of 45 days in Nicaragua (16 days in Managua, 25 days in Matagalpa, and 4 days elsewhere in the country). The vast majority of the data collected from our systematic observations was gathered over the course of time spent in Matagalpa. During our time in Matagalpa, we were able to secure office space in the local Ministry of Education, with the permission of the municipal delegate. From that vantage point, we were able not only to work out specific, methodological details and findings for the study, we were also able to observe and record daily life at the Ministry. This information was particularly important for identifying how organizations (both the Ministry and the schools) functioned.

A typical day for us involved arriving at the Ministry in the morning and then travelling to a given school (one of our 6 target schools) in the late morning to conduct surveys and/or interviews with teachers, principals or parents during the lunch break change-over. These daily trips to our target schools provided us with a second, yet

equally important vantage point from which to record daily life in our target schools. In the early afternoon, we would return to the Ministry to organize and make notes on the collected data and to prepare materials for a second daily trip to one of our target schools, shortly before afternoon dismissal, for more data collection. Of course, this schedule was subject to change if an interview with a key stakeholder (such as a principal or delegate) had been pre-arranged or if a meeting of any School Council (target schools only) was taking place. On occasion, we would alter this daily schedule to arrive at one of target schools in morning, prior to classes, in order to conduct interviews with parents and teachers who might not otherwise be available. On other occasions, we would spend the day in the community, walking from door to door, looking for parents to complete the survey, who might not otherwise be available on school grounds.

Upon arriving in Matagalpa, we made a point of immediately introducing ourselves to the delegate and the principals of our target schools. As our familiarity with these key individuals increased through repeated iteration and interaction, a form of trust developed between researcher and subject, whereby we could gain access to the school grounds during the day, without appointment. This access allowed us to become a systematic observer; observing classes in progress, observing Council meetings in progress, observing teacher-student interactions, and conducting interviews and surveys with teachers and parents on the school grounds and at our leisure.

The methodological framework for the systematic observations of this study reflects Bickman's (1976) framework. Bickman identifies four primary features of systematic observation. Accordingly, he suggests that: 1) It serves a specified research purpose; 2) It is planned systematically; 3) It is recorded systematically and related to

more general propositions rather than simply being presented as a set of interesting curiosities; 4) It is subjected to checks and controls on validity and reliability. Hence, prior to immersing ourselves in the Ministry and our target schools, we developed a series of prearranged categories of interests, which were informed by HCIA and consistently applied over the course of our observations in Matagalpa. We found that we were able to record several items related to the following categories: the operation of Council Meetings (parents) and the administration of autonomy components at the school. Specifically, we found that we could record the following items in our exercise notebook without appearing conspicuous:

Key Question of Interest in systematic observations:

- *What practices has school autonomy given rise to in Nicaraguan schools?*

A) The Operation of Council Meetings:

- What time was the meeting?
- How long was the meeting?
- Where is the meeting being held?
- How many people are in attendance at the meeting?
- What types of people are at the meeting? (rough estimations by age, dress etc.)
- Who is leading the meeting? (teacher/parent/principal/other)
- Are the schoolchildren accompanying their parent/guardian at the meeting?
- How is the information being presented at the meeting? (orally, chalkboard, overhead...)
- What issues are being presented/ discussed at the meeting?
- How many questions did attendees ask?

B) The Administration of Autonomy Components at the School:

- Is the school's monthly financial report, specified by the law, visible in the Principal's office or elsewhere on the school property?
- Are flow charts or other information related to the school's student government visible in the Principal's office or elsewhere on the school property?

- Are flow charts or other information related to school Councils visible in the Principal's office or elsewhere on the school property?
- Is a written copy of the New Law readily available and/or accessible at the school upon request?

Are we consistently and accurately measuring the right concept/category?

Ideally, the reliability of systematic observations is improved through a qualitative technique known as 'cross-checking'. In this study, we were unable to rely upon this technique because there was only researcher. However, the reliability of most of our systematic observational measurement is improved through repeated observation and the recording of detailed field-notes. In most instances, we were able to measure and/or record the item over a period of time (several site visits). In terms of "the Operation of Council Meetings" we were not able to improve the reliability of our measurement, given the fact that these were the only two Meetings of the Parent Council to take place while we were in the field. To compensate for this, we developed a list of easily identifiable and observable items, most of which could be easily quantified through a series of 'ticks' in an exercise book. We also made a point of writing a detailed field report immediately following the meetings, informed by our recollections and the field notes taken during the Council meetings.

In terms of validity, we believe the items being observed and recorded, together, provide a close approximation of the broader categories/concepts they are intended to reflect. These systematic observations are intended to provide a more specific understanding of the relationships between key stakeholders in the performance and maintenance of autonomy in schools. The systematic observations of Council meetings provide us with some specific features by which to understand and evaluate the

contributions made by stakeholders in Council meetings. Since we are interested in mapping the experiences of autonomy stakeholders, the information yielded by this observational category can be a useful addition to the subsequent data collected through the survey and interviews. In other words, our systematic observations become a useful part of the study's methodological triangulation.

Surveys:

To deepen our data set, we also conducted a survey. Our survey helps us answer the following question: What practices has school autonomy given rise to in Nicaraguan schools? Are these practices consistent with the specifications and normative prescriptions of the New Law? The specific purpose of our survey was to collect information about these questions from a sample of individuals in each of our target schools. The information gathered included a number of variables, which were related to stakeholder beliefs, behaviour, attitudes and personal backgrounds. The method for obtaining responses to surveys in this study was personal interviews. This method was deemed to be the most appropriate as we anticipated our subjects would not have telephones or access to an efficient postal service that could guarantee survey distribution and return in a reasonable amount of time. All surveys were distributed and conducted under the direction of this researcher.

We surveyed parents, teachers and principals of our five schools in Matagalpa during the course of May 2005 to June 2005. The survey questions, included in the appendix, were informed by our theory and designed to give us a picture of stakeholder beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours in relation to the school autonomy program. The group

members in the sample set varied by school, but they were all responding to the same questions. To increase the rate of return for the survey, we conducted all surveys in person. As a result, we had a very high return rate.

We ran our survey in the five schools. Within these five schools, we surveyed 364 people. We issued three different surveys to parents, teachers and principals within these five schools. Specifically, we asked 221 parents to respond to 63 questions and ended up using completed surveys from 204 parents. We asked 98 teachers 65 questions and ended up using completed surveys from 89 teachers. We asked five principals to respond to 247 questions and ended up using completed surveys from five principals.

The specific items included on our survey were derived from our initial investigative framework. All of the questions, with the exception of a final question asking for comments, were closed-ended. We chose closed-end questions because we believed people were more likely to respond to these items. Respondents were provided with three sets of response formats. First, respondents were asked a series of yes or no questions. Second, respondents were asked to rank a series of items on a nominal, categorical scale. For example, we asked participants to identify their highest level of education through providing them with seven choices ranging from no formal education to post-graduate education. Using an ordinal scale, a third series of questions and answers were presented visually on a continuum with major points marked “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” and another continuum with major points marked “excellent” and “deficient”.

We acknowledge that the survey approach has several limitations. First, by trying to devise items that are minimally appropriate for a large number of people, the nuances

of participant responses and attitudes can be missed. In order to account for this, we gave respondents the option of providing comments and of contacting the researchers for an interview. Second, surveys are self-reports, which means that there is no way of knowing if the information respondents provide is accurate. Finally, surveys are seen as measures of public opinion, not objective measurements of truth. However, these limitations are greatly overcome by the additional qualitative procedures. The results from the survey are presented and discussed in chapter four and serve as the foundation for more substantive, qualitative analysis of the interview texts.

Interviews:

To compliment the survey data, we also employed a series of purposive interviews with a range of actors across the social and political milieu. Our interviews were intended to help us answer the following questions: Have stakeholders internalized the normative beliefs and prescriptions associated with the New Law? Do they believe others are likely to follow the rules? Does this belief determine their participation in school decision-making? The three sets of stakeholders included: a) national-level actors; including, senior bureaucrats and Ministry officials; b) Municipal-level actors; including, Ministry delegates, local bureaucrats, and officials from the Mayor's office; and c) school-level actors; including, principals, teachers and parents.

At the national level, we pre-identified and pre-selected several key policy-makers, politicians and senior bureaucrats as potential interviewees. The selection of these potential interviewees was based upon their known involvement in national policy negotiations, planning, the legislative process, the implementation process, and/or the

evaluation process. Upon selecting these high-ranking individuals, we then contacted their offices by telephone to request an interview. Where our requests were met, we proceeded with the interviews.

At the Municipal level, we identified three key groups of stakeholders that appear integral to the process. These three groups include the Municipal delegate, the bureaucrats at the MED, and the Mayor and his staff. In some instances, potential interviewees were pre-selected because of their posts (the Delegate and the Mayor). In other instances, potential interviewees were selected over time, as we became more familiar with people in and around the MED.

Finally, in each of our target schools, we interviewed the principal, at least four teachers, and at least five parents. Moreover, in our survey, we also included a section for respondents to make comments about autonomy. In this section, we received and used a total of 37 comments from parents and 30 comments from teachers in the 5 target schools, which we considered as 'qualitative text' in the analysis- excluding survey responses from school number 6, which, as explained elsewhere, was dropped from the analysis. We used these comments from the survey in tandem with our interviews to build the qualitative, textual data, which is analysed in chapter seven.

The interviews conducted for this study ranged from informal conversations to open-ended interviews. In our meetings with senior officials or delegates, we developed a list of specific questions beforehand, but were prepared to modify them as the discussion progressed. These meeting typically lasted about thirty minutes and were guided by the questions we had prepared in advanced. Interviews with parents and teachers typically lasted about ten minutes, but on few occasions lasted up to forty-five

minutes. These interviews were structured more loosely. At the beginning these interviews, the teacher or parents was asked to give their impressions of autonomy and the New Law in their school. At this initial prompt, interviewees would respond and subsequent prompts and questions would follow, depending on the initial response from the interviewee. Our interviews with principals took a similar form. However, we also had several informal conversations (not taped) with principals over the course of our numerous trips to the schools. The information from those informal conversations was recorded as a field-note when deemed relevant.

In addition to the 67 comments we collected through the survey, we conducted and used interviews with 14 teachers, 17 parents, and 5 principals from our 5 target schools. We interviewed 3 local bureaucrats from the MED and 1 representative from the Mayor's office. We had conversations with 2 Ministry Delegates. At the national level, we interviewed the Director General of Education of the MECD, the *Director General de Evaluacion y Prospeccion de Politicas*. We had several conversations with academics from the satellite campus of the *Universidad Nacional Academica de Nicaragua* in Matagalpa. We also had intense conversation with education consultants and representatives from the Canadian International Development Agency in Managua. The majority of interviews were audio taped for later transcription. The translation of the tapes was done both in Nicaragua and Canada with some assistance from several translators in both countries to ensure accuracy and reliability.

The interpretation of this large, qualitative dataset was based upon Spencer's (1993) framework approach, developed specifically for applied or policy relevant qualitative research in which the objectives of the investigation are shaped by the

informational requirements of the researcher. The application of Spencer's five-stage framework was a rigorous process that required us to repeat stages several times in the process of the analysis:

Familiarization: In the first stage of our analysis, we immersed ourselves in the raw data by listening to the tapes, reading transcripts, studying notes and so on in order to list key ideas and recurrent themes in relation to our primary research questions.

Identifying a Thematic Framework- Code Generation: In the second stage, we developed a long list of all possible key issues and *specific, conceptual codes* by which the data, by our estimation, could be examined and referenced. At this point, we created an accompanying list of 'key trigger words' for each concept code, which could serve as a reference point for a code's future application.

Indexing- Code Application: In the third stage, we applied the specific concept codes systematically to all the data in textual form by annotating the transcripts with the specific codes. To assist us in this exercise, we used ATLA-ti- QDA software. Using ATLAS, we were able to apply the codes to short and/or long passages of the text. We did not apply more than one code to a single piece of text. This strategy improved the integrity of our interpretation because it ensures that our data is not misrepresentative of single stakeholder interview, simply coded and annotated numerous times. The application of a concept code to a piece of text was the result of our interpretation of the text. While the presence of a key trigger word in the text helped us in our decision to

apply a concept code, it was not the only criteria we used. Rather, with each piece of the text, we considered what the respondent was referring to and the placement of the comment within the larger text. Thus, in applying the codes, we were required to treat each interview separately within the ATLAS program (See Appendix E for key trigger words and code applications). We also needed to decide how many times to apply the same code in each interview. Because our interviews varied from five minutes to forty-five minutes, the size of interview transcripts varied greatly. To overcome this problem, we decided to apply a code only once in each interview, despite the fact that the same individual may have mentioned the same concept (such as corruption, for example) numerous times throughout the transcript. In applying a code only once to each transcript, we were able to better ensure that one long transcript would not over-determine the balance of the texts and codes. During this third stage, we found it necessary to rework codes (return to stage two) and reapply codes (return to stage three) several time in order to ensure the codes reflected the content of the transcripts.

Charting- Validating Codes: In this stage, we rearranged the data according to the codes. ATLAS allowed us to print reports of all textual data by code. These reports enabled us to compare all pieces of textual data that had been grouped under a code. Analysis of these reports allowed us to determine if we had applied codes in a consistent and uniform manner. It also allowed us to determine if textual data being grouped together referred to the same overarching concept; namely, the code. Thus, at this stage, we found it once again necessary to rework and reapply codes (steps two and three) until we were satisfied.

What emerges from the coding process is a complex web of relationships among concepts. The overall view shows many of the substantive issues and themes emerging from the voices of stakeholders, which relate to our central questions of interest. In chapter seven, we provide a thorough discussion of this data.

Pilot Study:

In the social science literature on case study methodology, it is recommended that a proposed research instrument be first tested on a small sub-sample population before being applied to the subject sample as a whole (May, 1997). This trial, known as a pilot study, allows the research to test the intelligibility, soundness and comprehensiveness of the proposed instrument in a miniature, test case. After executing a pilot study, it should be possible for the researcher to identify and eliminate questions that have been found to be non-essential, irrelevant, or disconcerting to the subject. (Lewis-Beck, 1994)

Prior to launching our survey in Matagalpa, we conducted a pilot study in a school in Managua. The school shared its name with the barrio in which it exists: Centro Nacional Jerez Maximo. Within the pilot study, we surveyed one principal, surveyed 18 teachers, and surveyed 22 parents. Upon completing the survey, we interviewed several respondents and asked them to comment on their comprehension of the survey. Using this information, we made several modifications to the survey, including the deletion of several questions that were deemed redundant or erroneous.

Ethics:

It is important to recognize that all research exposes an individual to some degree of risk. Recognizing this fact means that researchers should take all precautions to

modify their experimental protocol to eliminate the potential hazards to the subject. Two procedures can mitigate the potential hazards to subjects and research participants. The first, informed consent, is one way of mitigating these potential hazards. Informed consent involves advising potential subjects, in clear and non-technical terms, of all aspects of the project that may affect whether they choose to participate. The second, confidentiality, is the assurance that information learned about a subject through the study be released to any other individual. Anonymity is the highest standard of confidentiality. Anonymity is the condition whereby a study's research method does not allow the individual's name to be linked to his or her response. In this study, we used the procedures of informed consent and anonymity to eliminate any potential hazards to the subjects. These procedures were reviewed and approved by Simon Fraser University's Board of Ethics prior to the field research.

Limitations:

Before proceeding with the study, we offer the following qualifications. The notable estimates and the other findings offered by this study were informed by data gathered during a two-month field research trip conducted by this investigator in the summer of 2005. As the sole researcher in this study, I was responsible for all data collection, data analysis, interviews and communications with subjects. This labour deficiency limited the number of people and number of communities to be surveyed and interviewed. In the methods section, we note that our survey sample does exceed the minimum requirements for an appropriate sample size. Nevertheless, we are somewhat limited in our ability to generalize. Because labour, time and financial resources were extremely limited, our research investigation focused exclusively on a representative

sample of schools in one medium sized, urban city, Matagalpa, in the Nicaraguan interior. Moreover, these deficiencies limited us to a consideration of only a few exogenous features. We expect there are countless other issues, such as the role of unions that have played a part in this story. While these issues are not considered in this study, we hope that this undertaking may encourage future investigations of these conditions. We also acknowledge that if our survey were administrated in more rural communities, such as San Ramon, or more rural departments, such as the Atlantic Region, or conversely, if the survey was administered in major urban centers such as Managua and Leon, the findings could differ. In the future, we hope to be able to return to Nicaragua and distribute the survey more widely and to consider other components of the change process.

CHAPTER FOUR: INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EVOLUTION

The view of institutions as rule-based emphasizes that new institutions reflect the interests and inductive reasoning of political agents (Greif, 2005: 187). In contrast, this chapter explores why and how the past, encapsulated in institutional components, shapes the prospects for contemporary institutional change in ways that are often unclear. We examine the historical development and evolution of the 'educational institution' in Nicaragua with a particular interest in answering the following questions: What are the historically shared norms of Nicaraguan stakeholders regarding education? Where did these normative understandings come from? How are they sustained? This historical examination is necessary because, according to HCIA, the properties of the social elements that make up an institution imply a *fundamental asymmetry* between new rules (and technologies) and the institutional elements inherited from the past. These historical institutional elements reside in individual memories, constitute their cognitive models, are embodied in their preferences, and manifest themselves in organizations (p. 188). As such, behavioural beliefs, norms, and organizations inherited from the past constitute the 'default' when new situations and rules present themselves. Thus, a historical-institutional approach predicts that new initiatives for institutional change will be limited and constrained by the institutional legacy of the past.

We begin this chapter by discussing the institutional foundations of education in Nicaragua. Specifically, we argue that three historical facts conditioned the development

and evolution of the educational institution in Nicaragua. The first is that education in Nicaragua has been used largely to serve distinct political projects. The education reform projects in Nicaragua (whether they be the projects of Somoza, the Sandinistas, or the Conservatives) reflect a distinct political ideology, where reforms in education are often used as a means for accomplishing a broader political vision of state-society relations. These new visions frequently give rise to policy changes, positing a new set of role assignments and expectations for agents. Second, to a great extent, the various governing regimes in Nicaragua have viewed themselves on a 'permanent crisis footing' (McConnell, 1997). This perception of 'political crisis' created pressure for centralization and exceptionally strong, top-down management of the educational institution, in spite of more formal plans for democratic, bottom-up participation in education. The third factor affecting the formation of the educational institution is the political polarization that has characterized Nicaraguan politics from its beginnings. Each successive regime in Nicaragua has believed that it is battling against episodically resurgent forces. As a result, education has often been framed in zero-sum terms, where everyday conflicts of interest around issues such as school budgets and labour contracts take on symbolic value. With so much perceived to be at stake, political parties in Nicaragua were unable (or unwilling) to channel grassroots participation and local demands for education through routine, institutional, and democratic procedures, in the Weberian sense. Rather, they have relied upon patronage and clientelism to maintain tight control over the institution. Overall, this historical analysis shows how the behavioural beliefs surrounding education have been shaped by institutions and, in turn, have served to perpetuate the institution that gave rise to the belief in the first place.

The Institutional Foundation of Nicaraguan Education

The simplest ‘game theoretic’ view of education is that of a transaction between the state and its citizenry. Within this view, the state agrees to provide its citizenry with education and educational resources in exchange for political legitimacy, political support at the ballot box, taxes, and/or human capital resources from the citizenry. In providing the state with these valuable political and economic commodities, the citizenry receives valuable educational resources that can be used to improve their life chances.

This simple view of the transaction between the state and the citizenry poses the following problem for education: a state with sufficient power over the distribution of educational resources also has the power to withhold resources or to direct them in ways that meet the requirements of the state, which may (or may not) undermine the foundations of an educated citizenry. Thus, one of the central issues about the institutional foundation of education in Nicaragua concerns the role, power, ideology, and political requirements of the governing party. The historical analysis advanced in this chapter is that the institutional foundation of education in Nicaragua is a manifestation of the state’s requirements for ‘political legitimacy’ and ‘consolidation of power’. Specifically, in the historical struggle to consolidate power and legitimize its rule against potential rivals, the Nicaraguan state frequently turned towards education.

Torres (2002) illustrates this mutually reinforcing relationship between politics and education in his theorizing of education in Latin America. He suggests “the definition, interpretation, and analysis of educational problems and their solutions depend to a large extent on theories of the state which justify and underlie the diagnostic and the solution” (p. 367).

“Theories of the state, the nature of the state, and the nature of public policy have substantive importance for understanding the political nature of education as public policy and the connections between citizenship, democracy, and multiculturalism. The definitions of what are the ‘real’ problems of education and what are the most appropriate solutions depends greatly on the theories of the state that underpin, justify, and guide the educational diagnoses and proposed solutions.” (Torres, 1998: 9)

Carnoy (1985) has also argued that the educational institutions in Latin America have been shaped by:

“...the power relations between different economic, political and social groups. How much education an individual gets, what education is obtained and the role of education in economic growth and income distribution are part and parcel of these power relations. For political economists, no study of the educational system can be separated from some explicit or implicit analysis of the purpose and functioning of the government sector.” (Carnoy, 1985: 157)

If we view education in Nicaragua from this perspective, education and the formation of the educational institution is not a neutral exercise, but rather it is infused with elements of ideology, power, and interest- and we cannot help but think these elements have fundamentally shaped the behavioural beliefs of education stakeholders. In our examination of the institutional formation of education in Nicaragua, we adopt Henderson’s (1996) perspective; namely that the study of educational institutions cannot be isolated from the politically charged arena from whence education emerges.

Henderson argues instead that:

“Approaches to instructional design not only reflect differing world views, but they consist of values, ideologies, and images that involve inclusions and exclusions that act in the interests of particular cultural, class, and gendered groups. Instructional design and the designer are inextricably tied to their societal context and thus infused with cultural, class, and

gendered influences from the subtle and intricate interplay of these factors.” (Henderson, 1996: 85)

Drawing on this perspective, our historical analysis of institutional development in Nicaragua reveals how the institution has been shaped, and continues to be shaped by, distinct political ideologies and the nature of political conflicts in Nicaragua. As we shall see, this feature of the educational institution has a distinct influence on both the institutional evolution and the behavioural beliefs of education stakeholders.

The Foundations of Institutional Development: (1821-1936)

Competition for influence and institutions has been a prominent feature of Nicaraguan politics since before independence. Under Spanish rule, the colonial government was characterized by frequent conflicts between Leon’s Liberals and Granada’s Conservatives. However, as a Spanish colony, these conflicts were largely refereed by the Crown. When the country finally achieved its independence, first from Spain, as an appendage of the Mexican Empire in 1821, and shortly thereafter from Mexico in 1823 as part of the new Central American Federation of independent states, the country erupted into civil war almost immediately. According to Booth (1982), the long-standing Liberal-Conservative sectarian clash intensified and became more violent once no strong central authority restrained it. In the absence of the Crown, the Liberal and Conservative factions, who were already divided along both regional and ideological lines, continuously confronted each other with arms. Full-scale civil war was frequent from 1824-1857 and sporadic factional rebellions punctuated the 1858-1909 era. These conflicts, together with a heavy reliance on agriculture, combined to keep Nicaragua

economically stagnant and institutionally weak throughout its first hundred years (Booth, 1982).³

In 1921, when Liberal patriot Benjamin Zeledon rebelled against the ruling Conservative government of the day, U.S. marines intervened and began an occupation of the country that would last until the end of 1932.⁴ It was against this backdrop that another patriot, Cesar Sandino, waged a guerrilla war that essentially ended with the withdrawal of U.S. forces in 1932. As the U.S. withdrew its forces, command over the National Guard was transferred, for the first time, to a Nicaraguan: Anastasio Somoza Garcia. Once in command of the Guard, Somoza was able to consolidate power over the country and its institutions, including education. Following the assassination of Sandino in 1934, a military coup and the rigged elections in 1936, the caudillo was formally inaugurated as president on January 1, 1937. Thus began the longest-lived dynastic dictatorship in Latin American history. Anastasio Somoza Garcia would rule the country until his assassination in 1956. His eldest son, Luis Somoza Debayle, would then rule until 1967. Anastasio's youngest son, and Luis's brother, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, would then hold the reigns of power in Nicaragua until the Sandinista victory in 1979.

Institutional Development under the Somoza Dictatorship: (1936-1979)

In the absence of legitimate, democratic institutions and in the presence of deep political polarization and factional fighting, the Somoza dictatorship faced the initial problem of consolidating power and legitimizing its control over the Nicaraguan

³ John Booth (1982). "The End and the Beginning: The Nicaraguan Revolution". Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

⁴ With the exception of a brief interval in the mid 1920s.

citizenry. What institutions, if any, could help mitigate this problem? In response to this challenge, Somoza Garcia turned to the country's public institutions. These institutions became the means through which the dictator sought to consolidate power and, in effect, the Nicaraguan government, law and its public institutions, including education, became the personal domain of the dictator. Booth's (1982) study of Nicaragua during this period gives us some indication of how the public institutions of the country evolved under the dictator:

“Crooked elections supplied a pliant Congress that legislated and appointed judges according to Somoza's whim. The bureaucracies and courts repressed Somoza's enemies. Nicaragua was under a state of siege (with suspension of all constitutional guarantees) during all of World War II, mainly to control political opposition. Even in normal times, opponent's freedom and livelihood suffered from denials of government permits and licenses and from seizures of their property and imprisonment through the manipulated courts...Somoza expanded the government and its functions and thus increased the resources available for his personal enrichment and for the patronage he used to buy loyalty.” (Booth, 1982: 61).

Because the National Guard constituted the core of Somoza Garcia's political power in Nicaragua, one means of enhancing loyalty and effectiveness of the Guard was to cater to their institutional interests. Thus, the National Guard assumed control over an extraordinarily broad array of public institutions in the country, becoming the organizational guardians and enforcers of the new rules of the dictatorship.

“It operated the national radio and telegraph networks, the postal service, and the immigration service. It controlled customs, taking special interest in the importation of arms, munitions, and explosives. It conducted all police functions and controlled the National Health Service (Direccion General de Sanidad). The Guard collected taxes and operated the railways...This diversity of function made the Guard virtually omnipresent in Nicaraguan life, enhancing the sense of important of its

functionaries. This all-pervasiveness also extended the dictators vigilance over citizen's affairs, ranging from business to private correspondence to personal movements." (p.55)

Education, like most public institutions during this time, became a means through which the dictator sought to secure personal loyalties- rather than facilitate an educated citizenry. The most preferred method of securing these personal loyalties was patronage rewards. Collaborators and supporters of the dictatorship received lucrative public contracts, concessions, tax exemptions, free utilities, public jobs, and access to bribes without the threat of punishment. A classic mode of graft involved 'fantasmas' (ghosts); "persons whose names appeared on the payroll of government agencies but who appeared only to pick up their pay checks" (p.61). However, despite the expansion of public institutions, corruption served to weaken the institutional quality of public institutions, such as education, because the patronage system reduced income, diverted expenditures from legitimate public ends, and ensured administrative incompetence and mismanagement.

After more than three decades of the dynastic dictatorship, the National Guard, as the managers and enforcers of the country's public institutions, became progressively more plagued by its own internal contradictions. Ever better trained, armed, and willing to perform its repressive function, the Guard became still more corrupt and less disciplined. It continued to expand through Nicaraguan society, retaining and, to some extent, expanding its multiple public functions (policing, customs, postal services, health, the administration of education, etc.). However, in the process, not only did the Guard begin expanding at an alarming rate, growing from six to seven thousand troops from

1970-1975 (Booth, 1982: 91), it also became more corrupt and un-disciplined in the process.

“Personal loyalty to the director in chief usually outweighed competence in promotions and assignments. Favoritism led to the protection of corruption to the point that internal discipline suffered. Manipulation of the command structure went on constantly...Corruption made major customs, police, or departmental commands extraordinarily lucrative” (p. 92).

Although education in Nicaragua, and elsewhere, has always been politicized, throughout the Somoza dictatorship, the institution in general underwent three main changes. First, the educational institution in Nicaragua (its formal and informal rules, and organizations) was fully conscripted into the service of a distinct, political project of a one party, dictatorial state. Second, the educational institution became more extensive and integrated within the state, but always as a function of the interests of the ruling dictator and his collaborators. In this sense, education became a zero-sum game wherein any and all opposition groups (real or perceived) were effectively excluded from (and, at times, repressed by) the institution. Third, the educational institution, particularly its organizational components, became thoroughly corrupt as innumerable petty and grand perversions of its functions served myriad private interests.

The principal legacy of this institution was that it failed to provide basic education for the majority of the population while simultaneously offering extended education for largely urban elite. The result was that half the nation was illiterate, with more than three quarters (76%) of rural populations unable to read or write. There were under 25, 000 students enrolled in adult education programs, many of which were the responsibility of the private sector and church groups. (Arnove and Dewees, 1991) Higher costs and the

geographic location in the urban centers made private school unaffordable except for a privileged minority. Due to a lack of trained personnel, geographic inaccessibility, and additional hardships such as malnutrition and child labour, the majority of the population was effectively either deprived of any formal school education or left to public schools, which had little relevance with everyday needs or future job prospects. Consequently, notoriously high dropout rates were suffered.

Institutional Evolution during the Sandinista Era (1979-1990)

The Sandinista leadership that came to power in 1979, after more than a decade of insurrection, inherited an institutional legacy that was totalitarian and exclusionary in nature. Thus, under the Sandinista leadership, education became central in the effort to transform Nicaraguan society from 'totalitarianism' to 'socialism'. To initiate this transformation, the Sandinistas launched two, sweeping reforms to facilitate bottom-up planning in education with broad based participation from grass-roots organizations derived from the revolutionary period. The introduction of these new, formal rules for education, specifically outlined in the Sandinistas Popular Basic Education program and the Literacy Campaign, were accompanied by the introduction of new formal organizations in education, such as new leadership in the Ministry of Education, the Sandinista Youth Association, and the National Association of Nicaraguan Educators (ANDEN). In addition to these efforts to transform the educational institution, the Sandinista also launched extensive reform programs aimed at overhauling the country's constitution, health systems, child welfare systems, agrarian policies, and judiciary. Thus, from our perspective of HCIA, this reform initiative reads as totalizing effort to

transform all aspects of the educational institution: its formal rules, its organizations, and its auxiliary organizations/ transactions.

However, the development of a new, democratic educational institution in revolutionary Nicaragua was conditioned by several historical facts. First, the attempt to build a new, democratic, and participatory education institution in Nicaragua was conditioned by the existing normative-political context, which meant that the educational initiative was inherently tied to the existing, political struggle. As a result, those perceived to be in opposition to the vanguard party of the FSLN were largely excluded from the new order and from the new institutional structure. Therefore, while the new institution was designed to include those who had been previously excluded, the design of the new institution continued to be cast, normatively, in 'zero-sum' terms. Second, like the Somoza regime, the new Sandinista leadership perceived itself to be on 'crisis footing'. This perception was accurate given the wartime context and the U.S.-funded counterrevolutionary forces that sought to destabilize the regime. In terms of education, this perception of 'a crisis' created strong pressure and justification for centralization and top-down management of education, despite the more formal rules for broad-based, grassroots participation in education. Third, much of the Nicaraguan population was both illiterate and agrarian at the time of the revolution. Given the exclusion of such large numbers of people from education under the previous dynastic dictatorship, much of the populace either lacked a basic, normative commitment to education as means for improving their life chances and/or lacked the basic competencies for implementing the ambitious initiatives of the Sandinista. Thus, while the transformation of education in revolutionary Nicaragua required an overhaul of existing institutional components (rules,

organizations, and auxiliary organizations/transaction), existing behavioural beliefs and capacities of local stakeholders also needed to be considered and accounted for. We discuss these three historical facts in turn.

In terms of a political project, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) viewed education as a key in promoting social and political change. As such, the new institution of education was cast in terms that were largely political, ideological, and, to some extent, 'zero-sum'. Ideologically, education was expected to foster the formation of a "new person", a more critically conscious and participatory citizen motivated by collective goals, and also to promote the transmission of the skills and knowledge necessary to overcome decades of underdevelopment and set the nation on the path of self-sustaining growth (Arnové and Torres, 1995). For example, the first year following the revolution was declared the "year of literacy". The national education budget grew from 2.9% of GDP to 6%. Accompanying these spending increases, the FSLN government introduced revised national textbooks, a revised curricula and new instructional methods that promoted the values affiliated with the revolution.

In addition to these curriculum changes, the new regime delineated a political-economic philosophy and formulated a set of policies that would set the country on a more independent and non-capitalist path to development. According to Miller (1985: 30):

"Concerned with more than simply equity and growth, the leaders of the Frente Sandinista shared a general development orientation that was socialist in character...According to this view, attainment of such a society required economic growth, extensive redistribution of power and wealth, and broad-based citizen participation."

According to Arnove and Torres (1995), this new project for education then, represented the case of a revolutionary state attempting to use education as a principle means of effecting radical social change and overcoming the historic traits of a “conditioned state.” Thus, congruent with the socialist model of development, the new guidelines for educational policy set for these principles:

1. The emergence of the great majority of the people formerly dispossessed and socially excluded, as the active protagonists of their own education.
2. The elimination of illiteracy and the introduction of adult education as priority tasks of the revolution.
3. The linking of the educational process with creative and productive work as an educational principle, leading to educational innovation and promoting the scientific and technical fields.
4. The transformation and realignment of the education system as a whole, so as to bring it into line with the new economic and social model. (UNESCO, 1983: 35)

In shaping the education system to be an integral component of the revolution, the leadership of the Ministry of Education (MED) envisioned the expansion, improvement and transformation of education as, respectively, contributing to the democratization of basic social services, the independence of the Nicaraguan economy from foreign domination, and the development of a new model of capital accumulation based on different social relations of production and forms of public and cooperative ownership. The overriding goal of education was to “contribute to the formation of the new man [and woman] and the new society” (MED, Nicaragua, 1980). Moreover, the MED suggested the entire system of education was “essentially and necessarily linked to the strategic political project of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN)...for the building of a new society.” (MED, 1986) In this sense, education (and participation in education) continued to be cast in ‘zero-sum’ terms; meaning, those perceived to be at odds with the

principles of the new institution and the broader regime were essentially excluded from participating in the institution.

Because education was cast in revolutionary terms, and given the pressures created by the perceived 'crisis' of a wartime context, the new institution of education continued to evolve along lines that were top-down, where education was tightly directed and controlled by the vanguard party, here being the FSLN. To some extent, this top-down control is not surprising given the fact that the Sandinista inherited a one-party, totalitarian state, where the country's institutions were already at the disposal of the ruling party. While the lack of established democratic mechanisms, a professional bureaucracy, and routine, institutionalized procedures are seen to be part of the devastating legacy of the Somoza dictatorship, this legacy may be what allowed to the FSLN to launch its overhaul of the country's institutions. The institutional inheritance of the Sandinista gave them, as the ruling party, complete control over the country's institutions. As such, although the programs of the Sandinista created broad-based, grassroots participation in education, the historical context and institutional inheritance of the Sandinista gave the vanguard complete sovereignty over Nicaragua's institutions. This created the ironic situation whereby a bottom-up grassroots movement in education was to be managed through top-down leadership and tight control over the system by the vanguard.

To carry out its transformation, the Sandinista leadership launched a 'literacy crusade', within fifteen days of coming to power in 1980. The Sandinista argued that high illiteracy rates were keeping the vast majority of the population ignorant and was itself, a product of the feudal system of the Somoza dynasty. The message of the literacy

crusade was carried in twenty-four themes contained in the Sandinistas primer, entitled “Dawn of the People.” The crusade targeted the total mobilization of the population around education and literacy. Arnove and Torres (1995) state that:

“Out of a total population of 2.4 million, of whom 717,000 were at least 10 years of age and literate, over 250,000 youths and adults volunteered to teach. Of this number, 55,000 youths served as ‘brigadistas’ who went to the countryside to work with, learn from and teach the largely illiterate peasantry. In the cities, 26,000 People’s Literacy Teachers (volunteers) taught in work sites and neighborhoods.” (p. 319)

The leadership targeted efforts towards the decentralization of resources and decision-making powers to the regions “in order to tackle regional inequities with regard to income by encouraging regionally-based development planning and to developing the productive potential of each region (Wilson, 1987; as referenced in Ruiz de Forsberg, 2003).

In terms of new ‘organizations’ of education, the Sandinista regime sought to move from a centralized system of administration towards a decentralized system- where power would be shifted towards regions (regionalization). This decentralization strategy was not restricted to education, but reflected a more general policy trend towards decentralization across social services. In terms of education, regional authorities were given more control over allocation of educational resources and programs. However, the regional authorities were themselves extensions of the FSLN party structure. Nevertheless, the decentralization strategy (regionalization) achieved the collective mobilization of popular organizations with regional authorities executing administrative and political functions (Wilson, 1987; as referenced by Ruiz de Forsberg, 2003).

In terms of 'institutional change', these developments are clearly significant. From the perspective of HCIA, change is an evolutionary process whereby prevailing beliefs are undermined and new normative understandings emerge. The Sandinista initiative then, when viewed from this perspective, clearly accomplished significant, normative changes in Nicaraguans institutions and stakeholders alike. In fact, beyond the 400,000 Nicaraguans who had learned to read and write during the Sandinista campaign, the literacy campaign and EPB contributed to a number of institutional and normative changes in education (see: Torres and Arnove, 1995). First, the Sandinista initiatives led to a mobilization and 'winning' of youth, particularly those students who worked as "brigadistas" in the revolutionary effort. Second, the mobilization strategy integrated rural populations into national life in ways that had never before been achieved in Nicaragua. Third, the Sandinista strategy led to an improvement in the status of women, who viewed the campaign as vindication for their formerly inferior status in education and public life. Fourth, the Sandinista initiatives created a strengthening of mass organizations such as the Sandinista Youth Association and the National Association of Nicaraguan Educators (ANDEN)- who would prove to be a new and powerful force in Nicaraguan education and politics to this day. Fifth, the Sandinista initiative was an important beginning in the efforts to bridge the social and cultural gaps between the Atlantic and Pacific coast regions. Finally, the Sandinista crusade established a new normative framework for education- a framework that equated the devolution of powers with social justice and citizen's rights- the legacy of this new normative framework is witnessed in the contemporary reforms.

While the Sandinista programs clearly achieved many positive, institutional changes, they also perpetuated many of the prevailing beliefs about education in Nicaragua. First, the projects and programs were clearly cast in 'political terms'. In addition, although a significant devolution of authority and decision-making power did occur under the Sandinista programs, it is equally important to consider who the recipients of these new powers are. In most instances, the recipients of the new powers were sympathizers with the revolution or, as was more often the case, they were FSLN party cadre. In reflecting upon the new administration of institutions in revolutionary Nicaragua, Fagen, Deere and Coraggio (1987) suggest that there was a strong temptation for the vanguard leadership to view itself as the sole representative of the popular classes, and consequently to downplay or repress autonomous mass action (Fagen, Deere and Coraggio, 1987). In that sense, the new institution of education did not contribute to the creation of a professional bureaucracy and routinized, institutional mechanisms, in the Weberian sense, but rather perpetuated the highly political, patrimonial, and top-down nature of Nicaragua's educational institutions, despite achieving significant results in literacy, program coverage, and, ironically, broad-based participation at the grassroots level.

The Sandinista attempt to create a new institution of education was also constrained by the existing capacity and normative understandings of a citizenry that had been largely excluded from education under the dictatorship. We can only speculate as to the behavioural beliefs of educational stakeholders prior to the revolution, as there is no substantive evidence from which to make any definitive claims. However, given the fact that education in Nicaragua had never before been a means by which one could improve

their lot in life, we can assume that educational stakeholders had little reason to place a high value on education prior to the revolution. Rather, if the past has any bearing on one's normative understanding of how to succeed in society, Nicaraguans must have been under the impression that 'political connections', not education, was the most direct route to financial reward and personal success in Nicaragua. In addition, education is often undervalued in agrarian communities whose populations often perceive themselves as having little need for it. In fact, this point is reported in our own discussions with contemporary education stakeholders from rural, agrarian communities. In short, in an effort to mobilize and engage large segments of the rural population in education, the Sandinistas faced the difficult challenge of confronting the existing, behavioural beliefs of individuals with limited capacities and resources.

The constraining influence of this third historical fact is illustrated through the Sandinistas' program of Popular Basic Education (EPB). The Sandinista, as a follow-up program to the Literacy Crusade, launched the EPB. The EPB called for an organizational redesign of education administration. It mandated the creation of education collectives (Colectivos de Educacion Popular, or CEPs). This new model of education administration relied on mass organization and non-professionals as the agents of education. (Arnove and Torres, 1995). However, because the new model of educational collectives relied on mass mobilization, approximately half of the CEP instructors had less than a complete primary school education, and the majority of these teachers were under 25 years of age.

The efforts to increase participation resulted in a more participatory approach to educational planning, and included periodic meetings between various stakeholders from

the national, regional, local and school level. According to Arrien, these participatory forums provided the opportunities for everyone to be involved and informed in a systemic fashion; with the regional authorities responsible for issues of pedagogy, hiring and firing of school staff, technical issues, and implementation of specific educational projects (Duran and Arrien, 1996). However, according to Arnove and Torres (1995), the structural changes implemented through the EPB did not reflect the realities of local schools and did not consider the capacity of local school systems to implement such an ambitious program. For instance, most educators lacked sufficient training, adequate training, and a basic understanding of the meaning of the new initiatives. In fact, Arrien and Lazo's (1989) evaluation of the Sandinista project suggests that, as a result of the ambitious efforts to collectively mobilize the population towards this common national vision, most educators were only one step ahead of their students.

Thus, despite substantial improvements in the numbers of people receiving and participating in education, the initiative proved difficult to sustain as the capacity of local school-level participants to carry out such an ambitious project was largely ignored by designers. While the move towards mass, collective mobilization in the literacy effort may have enhanced the scope of education it also failed to consider the competency of local agents who were charged with carrying out the program. Although there exists little empirical evidence from which to judge the quality of teaching and instruction that occurred within the program, the strategies of collective mobilization leads to natural speculation regarding the quality of education received. Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that local agents lacked the capacity (physical, human or social) to sustain such ambitious efforts. For example, by 1988, attendance in adult education

programs had reached a low point to 83,797 (Arrien and Lazo, 1989). Sustaining the interests of learners five nights a week, week after week also proved extremely difficult (Arnove and Torres, 1995). Above all, high drop-out and burn-out rates for both students and teachers (with less than half the students completing the program and one-third of teachers leaving annually) meant that the illiteracy rate increased from what the Sandinistas claimed to be a low of 12.96% at the end of 1980 campaign, to over 30% by 1990 (Arnove and Torres, 1995). The failure to consider local capacity reflected a problem in design that was exacerbated by the civil war during the 1980s. Nevertheless, the reform initiative and outcomes during this era demonstrate the historical difficulties inherent in the redistribution of power and resources in education.

Conclusion: The Lead up to ‘School Autonomy’

What were the behavioural beliefs of educational stakeholders when the newly elected conservative president Violeta Chamorro was inaugurated in 1990? Through our historical analysis of the evolution of the educational institution in Nicaragua up until that time, we may be able to develop some idea about the motivations and shared, normative beliefs of Nicaragua’s educational stakeholders prior to the introduction of the ‘school autonomy reform’. First, decision-makers and the citizenry alike must have shared a normative understanding that education was directly linked to broader political projects and ideologies. While the political nature of education was implicitly understood during the Somoza dynasty, it became much more explicit during the Sandinista era, where the FSLN stated openly that education was the key instrument in the formation of the socialist vision of “the new person”. If the average citizen had not been made aware of the political and ideological nature of education through these slogans alone, they most

certainly would have noticed a drastic shift in the values and ideologies presented in school texts. For example, the Morals and Civics textbook series of the Somoza-era, which promoted conservative, Christian values, were quickly replaced by the history of Sandinismo, which stressed the values and ethics of the revolution- values that were deemed to be fundamentally at odds with those of the previous regime.

In terms of individual motivations to participate and engage in new, educational initiatives for change, the shared, normative understanding that education is tied to political projects and ideologies may be seen as a conditioning motivation. Just as those affiliated with values and ideologies of Sandinista during the period of insurgency in the 1960s would not have supported any group or program affiliated with the dictatorship, those who sympathized with the conservatives would have been equally unlikely to support the programs and policies of the Sandinista. As in the past, these political and ideological divisions would shape the contemporary conflicts surrounding the negotiation and implementation of school autonomy in the 1990s.

Second, the citizenry and politicians alike must have a shared normative understanding that the organizations of the educational institution are extensions of the ruling party's apparatus. In fact, Nicaraguans in 1990 had never known any other system wherein the Ministry and other key personnel in education, such as principals, were not affiliated with the governing regime. Thus, the shared, normative understandings of educational administration in 1990 must have been informed by a belief that job appointments, tenure, hiring, firing, promotions, and all other administrative issues related to education are inherently political. Thus, the educational institution and the

bureaucracy specifically had yet to become professionalized and routinized by the time the conservatives took power in 1990.

Third, given the deep political polarization within the country and the ‘zero-sum’ approach to educational management that accompanied this polarization, educational stakeholders and politicians alike must have understood that all aspects of the institution are subject to change when control over the regime change; namely, when the regime itself changes. In that sense, many of the current initiatives of the day must have seemed to be tentative and precarious- indeed, they proved to be so. With each regime transition, Nicaraguans would have witnessed the disappearance of the old curriculum and the appearance of a new curriculum- with a distinctly different set of values. In addition, they would have also witnessed the disappearance of the old educational personnel and the appearance of new personnel more closely aligned with the new regime. At the individual level, this perceived ‘precariousness’ must have created short-term incentives for cash-grabs and other corrupt practices amongst school officials who most likely saw their current position as short-lived.

However, the education institution evolved significantly under the Sandinista leadership. For the first time in history, the public had been incorporated into the institution. Specifically, the revolutionary movement had clearly activated a normative belief that ‘the public has a right to participate in governance and education’. As we shall see, this new normative belief also shaped the basic principles of the conservative’s new ‘school autonomy’ program.

CHAPTER FIVE: HISTORICAL-INSTITUTIONAL INHERITANCE AND CONTEMPORARY SCHOOL CHANGE UNDER THE NEW LAW

As we saw in the last chapter, several shared, normative understandings of education existed at the time the conservative National Opposition Union (UNO) took power in 1990. These normative understandings were informed, in large part, by the structure of previous institutions of education in Nicaragua. In addition, these normative understandings also gave rise to newer institutions of education that would end up perpetuating the beliefs that gave rise to the new structures in the first place. To some extent, the mutually reinforcing relationship between beliefs and institutions highlighted in the previous chapter is reminiscent of a 'path dependency' in institutional formation and development. Yet, while HCIA recognizes this self-reinforcing nature of institutions, it also recognizes that a self-reinforcing institution can also undermine itself when changes in the quasi-parameters of the institution (formal rules, for example) imply the newly prescribed behaviour will be self-enforcing in a smaller set of situations. In other words, a change in beliefs constitutes an institutional change; "it occurs when the associated behaviour is no longer self-enforcing, leading individuals to act in manner that does not reproduce the associated belief." (Greif, 2005: 167) To some extent, the formal programs of the Sandinistas moved the institution forward in this way. While some new ideas and beliefs took root, other prevailing beliefs persisted.

In this chapter, we examine the extent to which the newly assigned rules and procedures of school autonomy have served to undermine (or reinforce) these prevailing

beliefs about education in Nicaragua. Clearly, the rules outlined by the New Law signal new forms of behaviour for education stakeholders. In fact, the New Law reflects many of the new, normative principles for education- introduced by the FSLN. These rules and prescriptions include community participation, accountability, and greater coordination in education. Do stakeholders have any reason to believe that others will comply with these new norms and prescriptions? Is the institution itself providing the normative signals that would lead one to believe this might be true? By considering the new rules of school autonomy in relation to institutional components, our examination considers the extent to which the organizations of education and auxiliary transaction in Nicaragua have served to perpetuate or undermine the norms associated with the New Law. We begin our discussion in this chapter by considering the new rules and behaviour prescribed by the New Law of Education Participation. Following this, we discuss how the new rules themselves might undermine or reinforce prevailing beliefs about education in Nicaragua. Specifically, these behavioural beliefs, established in the previous chapter, are restated here as: the political nature of education, the educational institution as a tightly, controlled extension of the ruling party, and the 'zero-sum' nature of education. Consistent with the theory of HCIA, we believe these shared normative understandings may have a significant influence on the motivations and behaviours of all actors within the institution and that institution change is dependent upon changing these beliefs. We pursue this hypothesis further in the next chapters. Here, we consider how these beliefs are perpetuated or undermined by the new institution of school autonomy.

Following our discussion of the New Law, we consider the role of organizations in perpetuating or undermining the normative behaviours associated with the New Law.

We look at the form, structure, and behaviour of the organizations of 'school autonomy' with the intention of identifying the normative signals they are providing to stakeholders. In addition, we also consider several auxiliary transactions that have provided stakeholders with normative signals about how school autonomy works and whether the principles of the New Law will be enforced and followed by others. Auxiliary transactions, such as policy negotiations between the government and teachers, provide stakeholders with clear normative signals about the principles of school autonomy and, perhaps more importantly, they provide signals to stakeholders about how such principles will be applied. In subsequent chapters, we consider how these normative signals have shaped the motivations of autonomy stakeholders at the local level.

The New Formal Rules of School Autonomy (1993-2007)

The specific policy features of the UNO's initial, school change initiative were a reduction in the role of the bureaucracy, the implementation of user fees, and the decentralization of administrative authority; wherein the school was given new decision-making powers over curricular and personnel matters. While several initiatives were implemented (for ex. the Municipalization program), the major policy reform was the Autonomous Schools Programs (ASP). The ASP adopted the principles of school-based management and provided for the creation of school sites councils with a system of school/user fees paid by parents. As well, the program provided schools with central ministry grants to cover teacher salaries. Parents were given a strong voting majority on school councils. School councils were given powers over budget, personnel and planning functions. They also were given the authority to determine the level of fees charged to

parents for attendance and/or examinations, the proceeds of which were to be used to raise teacher salaries or to cover other costs.

The ASP was initially introduced as a pilot program that transformed public school councils into school management boards. In March 2002, the program was scaled up to cover primary school through the Ley de Participacion Educativa y Reglamento (The New Law of Education Participation). The New Law was the product of a stipulation in 2000, issued by the World Bank under Proyecto Aprende, which required that school autonomy be legalized. Thus, the New Law ratified the status of the ASP. The National Assembly adopted the New Law after sustaining 'school autonomy' as a ministerial directive for more than a decade. The New Law was legislated by the Partido Liberal Constitucionalista (PLC) under newly elected President Enrique Bolaños, who superseded former PLC president Aléman. In effect, the New Law expanded the autonomy program, specifying that all public schools would be converted into autonomous schools by the year 2006. In addition, the Law provided a legal codification for 'school autonomy'.

Under the New Law, school autonomy is legally based on three elements: (i) a fiscal transfer to schools based on a non-discretionary formula of capitation financing; (ii) administration of the school by a local school council, with authority to enter into contracts with teachers (hiring and firing); and (iii) election of the school principal by the local community. We describe each of these in turn.

1) Formula Financing: The financing of autonomous schools is made based on a non-discretionary capitation formula that provides a direct incentive to schools to enrol more

students and to retain enrolled students. The school year in Nicaragua runs from February through November and enrolment is measured at three points in the year; at the beginning of the year in February, at the middle of the year in May, and at the end of the year in November. The formula transfers funds based on initial enrolment of each school at the beginning of the school year minus the intra-annual drop out of the year before. Thus, a school that increases its enrolment from one year to the next benefits by receiving proportionately more resources, as long as the students enrolled at the beginning of last year did not drop out without finishing the year. The formula thus provides an incentive for schools not just to enrol more students, but also to retain them through the school year (retention rates).

The calculation of the per capita amount to be transferred is based on an estimation of the number of teachers required (based on the students/teacher ratio), plus an additional percentage (5%) for administrative and operating costs. The amount of the per capita transfer therefore varies according to size of the school, as well as by level of education. In order to benefit rural schools that are typically small in dimension, the institutional arrangement is for the schools to be organized in a cluster of small schools called NERAs (*Núcleos Educativos Rurales Autónomos* or Autonomous Rural Education Centers). A motivation for equalizing compensatory transfers requires a higher per capita transfer for NERAs. The following Table shows the monthly per capita amounts to be transferred according to the educational level and size of school:

Table 4: Per capita transfer to Autonomous Schools (in \$ Nicaraguan Córdoba)

	Category A More than 1,000 students for primary; more than 1,500 for secondary	Category B 401 to 999 students for primary; 501 to 1,500 students for secondary	Category C Less than 400 students for primary; less than 500 for secondary
Primary	C\$ 77.00	C\$ 85.00	C\$ 95.00
Secondary	C\$ 65.00	C\$77.00	C\$ 95.00
NERA			C\$ 95.00

(Exchange rate calculated at 1 US dollar/ 17.2 Córdoba)

2) *Administration by School Council*: The parents of children attending the school have the primary responsibility for the school. Parent representatives for each section and grade are elected by secret voting following a General Body Meeting of the parents of the school, with a quorum of 60% of parents. The elected representatives form a Parent Association (Consejo de Padres). The new law of 2002 specifies that teachers or school administrators cannot be elected as parents' representatives, even if they have their own children enrolled in the school. Similar associations are formed by elections amongst teachers (Teachers Council) and students (Student Government). The elected representatives of the parents, teachers, and students form the School Council, with a majority representation of the parents. The School Council is always presided over by a parent representative, and the post of treasurer of the School Council is also reserved for a parent representative. The Law provides more details about the composition of the council; it includes many instances of useful clauses such as that a member of the Student Government cannot be a repeater, or that the aspirants to membership in the association of teachers cannot be members of a teachers union.

Council members are supposed to be provided with a comprehensive training program about the autonomy law and its implications for each of the actors. It is

important to note that once a school becomes autonomous, the MECD is required to hand over the financial and administrative responsibility to the school council. Funds are transferred directly to a Bank account in the name of the council, whose job it is to hire the teachers, pay the teachers a salary in accordance with the national teachers' statute, and to cover other administrative expenses. The council is responsible for the administration of the school, including the teachers, and the council is empowered to take disciplinary action against teachers for infractions such as repeated absences. The council can determine not to pay the teacher for unexplained absences from school, and repeated non-performance can also lead the teacher to be fired. The council to cover teacher salaries, for school maintenance, purchase of materials, and any other operating expenses, can use the resources from the capitation grant.

The council has limited ability to determine salaries except indirectly through teacher selection as teacher salaries are linked to years of experience. A school council is allowed to engage in fund-raising and to have other sources of income such as grants or donations from companies or from individuals, but the school may not charge an obligatory fee. Each month, the council must publish a report on incomes and expenditures and post it where all the parents can see it. The formats of the financial accounts are laid out in ministerial dispositions accompanying the autonomy law. Copies of the monthly school reports are made available to MECD through the municipal delegations of MECD.

3) Election of Principals by the School Community: The New Law mandates the community election of the principal for a two-year term, with re-election in the same

school permitted a maximum of two times. The election of school principals by the community is a specification that is intended to increase the accountability of the Principal beyond the accountability exercised through the Principal's membership in the School Council. Not only is the Principal elected, but also there are other measures that seek to improve the quality of the applicant pool. A vacancy regarding a Principal's position has to be advertised by MECD in the national teacher's magazine and a newspaper of national circulation. In the case of non-performance of an elected Principal, the principal could be fired with a minimum 80% of members voting from the School Council, though the Council's decision is subject to ratification by the larger school community. Interestingly, one of the grounds for a possible firing of a Principal is if he refuses the application of standardized testing of students.

Overall, the New Law contains numerous rules and prescriptions that represent a new form of educational administration in the country. The new rules and prescriptions are predicated on the notion of greater parental participation, accountability, and community coordination in the provision of educational services. These principles are outlined in Article 2 of the New Law, which identifies the principles of 'school autonomy' as being:

- 1) Participation: Education is to be a shared exercise of the community, where parents and students have decision-making capacity and are involved in the elaboration, management and evaluation of school programs and the operation of Education Centers, conforming to the regulations dictated by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports.
- 2) Educational community: Integrated by the parents, teachers, and students.
- 3) Educative centers: These Centers are to serve as the basic unit and executor of basic education, including the goals, aims and objectives of education.

These three principles comprise the institution's normative rules, rights, duties and expectations for educational stakeholders (article 2.1). They explicitly call for the creation of an integrated, educational community consisting of teachers, students and parents (article 2.2); and the creation of Education Centers, with Local School Councils functioning under the supervision of the Minister of Education (article 2.3). The normative emphasis is community participation, a right guaranteed for parents, students and teachers through the school advisory boards. The Law specifies that school advisory boards work as a collective group. The Law stipulates that the school advisory board is the maximum authority in the school, but the MECD maintains its roll as the governing body. One of the main roles of the school advisory board and the school principal is to follow the politics, norms and rules set by the MECD. The educational community, as defined by the New Law, is made up of parents, students and teachers. Moreover, the Law states that the MECD is at the service of the community and the community is not at the service of the MECD.

The Law also clarifies some other key points of the autonomous school. In terms of school fees, the Law states that schools must be voluntary. Chapter 6, article 14 states that the MECD is to provide a monthly, fiscal transfer that is adequate to cover the expenses of the school. A more controversial aspect of the Law is article 33, which states that teacher representatives of the school advisory cannot be union members. As a departure from the ASP, the New Law stipulates that the principal is no longer named by the school advisory board, but is now elected by the school community- teachers, parents and students through the student government. In cases where there are no available

candidates a person can be appointed in the position. Moreover, the law places a six-year restriction on the term of principals. In terms of capacity, article 21 stipulates the MECD is to provide school councils with sufficient resources for the suitable administration of the Council.

The following table summarizes the key aspects of Nicaragua's school autonomy program:

Table 5. Gershberg's Framework of Autonomous Schools

Framework Aspect	Comment and Summary Judgment
1. Finance	Significant transfer of central authority to schools. Though the Education Ministry continues to finance the system centrally, contributions to schools from parents play a growing role in resources available to schools for the first five years. Now, their role appears to be diminishing. Schools have greater control on the expenditure side; principals and school councils have increased discretion over spending patterns. Councils altered centrally suggested levels of contribution; however, there is a strong, if not transparent, central role in financially supporting poor autonomous schools over poor state schools. Regarding grants-in-aid, the ministry uses newly developed grants to autonomous schools to transfer resources for salaries, benefits, maintenance, and utilities based on capitation principles and average costs at the school before autonomy. But transfers are not truly formula driven.
2. Auditing and Evaluation	Moderate transfer of central authority. Very little change in central functions regarding financial audits, which rely on a small number of random audits and analysis of departmental performance reviews. Some increased vigilance on the part of parents and teachers due to interest in financial contributions to schools. Schools and municipal councils perform program evaluations but may be ineffective due to lack of sufficient training. Strong recentralization of evaluation as the central government began a new and much more comprehensive method of quantitative and qualitative evaluations concomitantly with the Nicaraguan Autonomous Schools Program.
3. Regulation and Policy Development	Little change in central authority. Norms, standards, textbooks, and basic curriculum still developed centrally. New centrally developed curriculum has proven popular. Local Councils have some leeway in 1) developing curriculum, though they have done so little in practice; and 2) text selection, though the Education Ministry only pays for their own. Little or no attention by local actors to improving teaching methods.
4. Demand-Driven Mechanisms	Significant change in some schools. Required, voluntary, and (in some cases) extorted fees reflected parental demand for schooling, especially at the secondary level. Participation of parents in local councils provides community input to provision of services.
5. Democratic Mechanisms	Significant transfer of central authority de jure; varied results de facto. Where school Councils function according to norms, parents, through elected representatives, are given significant voice in school policy including budget, personnel, and curriculum. Principals are elected by the school councils.
6. Service provider choice/mix	Little change. Although autonomous schools represent a significant change in school administration, the public sector is still responsible for service provision. Parents do not have increased capacity to choose schools via vouchers or other mechanisms. Nongovernmental organizations and private organizations do not run autonomous schools.
7. Civil service and management systems	Very significant change in central authority. Principals and the school councils gain considerable control over management of personnel and budget. Municipal-level Education Ministry delegates are the front line, having gained primary responsibility for recruiting and overseeing autonomous schools, training participants, and resolving disputes.
Source: Framework developed by Gershberg (1999b)	

In total, the New Law encompasses a new set of rules, roles, organizations, offices, and normative expectations that did not previously exist in Nicaraguan education.

The New Law of Education Participation presents a new set of formal rules for educational administration in Nicaragua. Beyond this, it also represents new normative principles for educational administration; the principles of local participation, local accountability, and local coordination. In that sense, the New Law of Educational Participation represents a new initiative for institutional change. But, as we shall see, the mechanisms that bring about institutional change (the internalisation of new normative understandings amongst stakeholders) depend on the nature of the institutional and environmental parameters that delimit institutional self-enforcement. To a significant extent, the following discussion demonstrates that many aspects of school autonomy in Nicaragua reflect and perpetuate the traditional normative understandings and practices of the educational institution in Nicaragua, which are contrary to the principles associated with the New Law.

The New Law and Behavioural Beliefs:

To what extent do the new rules of 'school autonomy' challenge prevailing normative beliefs about education in Nicaragua? As was the case during the Sandinista era, the newly elected Chamorro government seemed to share the belief that education should shape societal values, although the new regime had a different view of what those values should be. Towards that end, like the Sandinista before them, the Chamorro government cast 'greater participation' in terms that were largely political and ideological- essentially reinforcing the prevailing, normative belief that education in Nicaragua is, largely, a political project.

During the 1990s, the dominant groups of the new, ruling coalition included modernizing industrial, commercial, and financial elites as well as technocrats oriented toward reintegrating the country into the world capitalist economy. Such a neo-liberal coalition was a stark contrast to the socialist, revolutionary cadre that characterized the previous regime. However, like the previous regime, the new agenda of the Chamorro government featured a major restructuring of the public service that was in line with their political-economic philosophy. In terms of education, the new agenda was to diminish the state's central role in the administration of educational services; to excise political content from the school curriculum (sandinismo); to reintroduce traditional values into schools; and to reduce the power of the Sandinista-affiliated mass organizations, such as the National Association of Nicaraguan Educators (ANDEN) and the Federation of Secondary Education Students (FES). As well, the new agenda called for an increased role for parents in school decision-making, where the costs of education were to be borne by its users, particularly at the university level. (Arnove & Torres, 1995) Through such an agenda, the UNO set out to use education to consolidate its neo-liberal vision of society. In contrast to the socialist philosophy of the Sandinista, this new vision accorded priority to market mechanisms, traditional values, and parliamentary- rather than mass-based- forms of democracy (Arnove & Torres, 1995). In short, such a vision was the replacement of the logic and values of the socialist revolution with the logic of the market and the values of Christian-inspired principles.

Viewed in this historical and ideological context, school autonomy presents a stark contrast in terms of its political vision of education- but the vision is, nevertheless, deeply political and ideological. This neo-liberal vision is reflected by the regime's

advocacy of decentralization and the autonomy model; where the logic for the reform can be summarized as being:

First, it brings the consumer closer to the producer and permits better matching of supply and demand conditions... Secondly, decentralization facilitates competition, which in turn leads to more efficient delivery of services... Thirdly, decentralization opens up the opportunity to break the monopoly of labor unions in the social sectors... Lastly, and very importantly, decentralization facilitates reaching the very poor through social spending focused on specific situations and locations. (IDB, 1994: 195)

At the outset, the policy architects of 'school autonomy' envisioned the program as a means for consolidating its political ideology of state-society relations. Humberto Belli, the conservative Minister of Education under Chamorro government and chief architect of the ASP, has referred to the decentralization initiative as a mechanism for restoring the social contract between parents and teachers- based on the explicit recognition that parents have a natural right in determining the goals of education for their children. (Arcia and Belli, 1999). Accordingly, the authors state that:

During the Sandinista government there was a significant diversion of accountability away from parents, weakening the social contract; teachers depended on the union and the ministry for their paycheck, and did not have to account to parents. The loss of this link has been found to be a significant- but often overlooked- problem in Nicaragua and in other countries... As a consequence a weak social contract between parents and teachers, there was a steady decline in the teaching of values in school- values that parents want their children to learn and practice in school, followed by a steady loss in the social position of teachers in the community and a corresponding loss of personal commitment to education quality. (Arcia and Belli, 1999: 1)

The change in government in 1990 marked the beginning of a new education policy focused on parental rights and responsibilities, and anchored on the decentralization of the public education system... To this end, school autonomy was a key instrument to achieve three operational

goals: i) to include parents and civil society in school management- as a way to reinforce democracy and increase social accountability, ii) to give parents more voice and control over the education of their children, and iii) to increase operational efficiency in the face of scarce resources. In essence, by providing financial and operational autonomy to public schools, the MED sought coherence with the principles of equity, efficiency and accountability. Moreover, school autonomy was considered as a first step for improving education quality by nurturing the personal incentives of parents and teachers to work together, thus helping restore the social contract between them. (p. 2-3)

In a later discussion on autonomy, Belli further articulates the initial impetus for the reform, wherein he stresses the critical need to ‘depoliticize education’:

It was believed that autonomy would lead to improved learning however it was promoted for other reasons...autonomy and participation in the schools were seen as a right of the community to vote and have a voice in the policies that affect their lives.... There was also a need to depoliticize and liberate the educational system, increasing its stability. The political nature of the system has caused great damage and has hurt many past reforms. This reform has depoliticized the system through taking power from the state and transferring it to the community. For example, after presidential elections [Dr. Belli] received phone calls recommending people for positions as school principals. Because of the reform, he no longer had the power to name principals- they were now elected by the community (Foro, 2002)

The ‘depoliticization’ of the appointment process for school principals is an important step towards changing the prevailing normative belief that education, and specifically the organizations of education, are highly politicized. Clearly, if the educational institution, and specifically the bureaucracy, is to make any headway in becoming more routine and professional, the political nature of the institution (reflected in patronage appointments) must be rooted. However, the irony of Belli’s comments is that in attempting to ‘depoliticize’ education, the changes under New Law and the new regime were deeply ‘political and ideological’.

The introduction of an explicitly neo-liberal model of education administration (school autonomy) was not the only way in which the new regime reinforced the political and ideological nature of education. In addition, the new regime sought to inculcate their political/ideological vision through significant changes in the curriculum. For example, in replacing the school texts of the Sandinista, the new regime introduced a new Morals and Civics series that stressed traditional family values, the value of legal marriage, as well as the evils of abortion. In the new series, “happy mothers were pictured cooking or cleaning in their middle-class kitchens; happy fathers were shown sitting in overstuffed chairs or engaged in paid employment” (Kampwirth, 1997: 121). Ironically, Belli himself explained the need for the Morals and Civics series, stating: “Education [under the Sandinistas] was devoid of a lot of traditional family values that Nicaraguans had known under the Somozas...Christian values were lost.” (p.121)

Overall, the New Law itself and the curriculum changes that accompanied it provide fairly clearly, normative signals to stakeholders that the new institution of education, like the old one, is the product of a broader, political and ideological project. In addition to reinforcing this belief, the sweeping changes introduced by the new regime also reinforce the precious ‘zero-sum’ nature of education and educational change. Specifically, with each successive regime change, the new administration engaged in a complete overhaul of the previous institution. With each regime transition, jobs were lost, programs were dismantled, and the curriculum was changed. In the end, nothing of the previous institution remained. Rather, the personnel, programs, and ideologies of the new administration replaced it. These transitions translated in clear victories and rewards for sympathizers with the new order, and clear and substantial losses for those associated

with the old regime. We cannot help but think that one's motivation to participate and engage with the programs of the new regime is greatly conditioned by their normative understanding of these processes.

The New Organizations of School Autonomy

In addition to the normative signals given by the New Law itself, what are the normative signals being given to stakeholders by the organizations of the new educational institution? Do these signals perpetuate or undermine the normative prescriptions for greater participation, accountability, and coordination in education? In addition to reinforcing the prevailing belief that education serves a broader political and ideological project, the organizations of school autonomy also perpetuate a belief that the new institutions of school autonomy are highly political and tightly controlled extensions of the ruling faction.

In order to carry out the changes introduced under the school autonomy program, the new ministry created the office of the 'municipal delegate.' In fact, the New Law specifies the role of municipal delegates and charges them with responsibility for administering the autonomy program at the municipal level. Currently, the Ministry has about 1100 people appointed as municipal delegations. The municipal delegate receives his or her pay from the central ministry and is not answerable to the local schools. At the same time, the municipal delegate is located away from the central offices of MECD, which leads one to question the extent to which delegates are monitored. However, what is most revealing about the office of the municipal delegate is that they are political appointees. Therefore, accountability in this office flows along political lines; lines

which run counter to the principles of community participation and local accountability in educational administration.

In fact, every municipal delegate we encountered during our 2005 field research was an appointee and active member of the ruling PLC party. In Matagalpa, this arrangement created a very volatile 'zero-sum' situation in the municipality, given the fact that the mayor of Matagalpa was from the FSLN. In fact, our interviews with these individuals, discussed in chapter seven, reveal an extremely volatile relationship between the FSLN mayor and the delegates. In Matagalpa, the FSLN mayor and the local ministry delegate are often working at cross-purposes, and sought to undermine each other at every turn.

In addition to providing normative signals to stakeholders that the new organizations of school autonomy remain highly politicized, the behaviour of the organization itself, namely the Ministry, have provided very disturbing signals about how the new rules will be followed and enforced. Specifically, several 'fantasmas' have reappeared under the new school autonomy regime- ghosts, which are reminiscent of the Somoza era. These 'phantom schools' have recently appeared in various municipalities since the New Law was passed. *La Presensa*, the nation's national newspaper, reports the existence of five 'phantom schools' in the state of Esteli, which have no physical infrastructure but had been receiving 420 million Cordoba annually in educational transfers. According to Jose Antonio Zepeda, Secretary General of National Association of Educators of Nicaragua (ANDEN), "these phantom autonomous schools have become a route for extracting personal gains". In addition phantom schools, *La Presensa* also reports that payments have been to 3,500 teachers in the state, where only 1,945 exist.

According to the report, “that’s 1,555 ghost teachers!” The depth of these anomalies within the organization remains under investigation. However, the reappearance of these ‘ghosts’ sends some very clear, normative signals about how the new rules of autonomy will be enforced and applied by the institution’s organizations.

HCIA suggests the organizations of the institution have the important role of enforcing the rules and perpetuating the normative beliefs associated with the new rules and principles. On this account, the organizations of the new institution of school autonomy have failed miserably. Rather than perpetuating norms that are consistent with the new rules, such as greater participation, local accountability, and greater coordination, the organization (and specifically, the Ministry) has sent some clear normative signals through its structure and through its actions. The highly politicized office the ‘municipal delegate’ reinforces the highly politicized nature of education in Nicaragua. In addition, it sends a clear message about the Ministry’s commitment to the principles of greater participation, local accountability, and greater coordination- that message being these principles should apply to individual schools, but they will not be applied to the Ministry itself. In addition, the behaviour of the organizations associated with school autonomy has also undermined the principles associated with the New Law. Specifically, the reappearance of ‘fantasmas’ reaffirms normative understandings and expectations of corruption within the new educational institution.

Auxiliary Transactions

How have auxiliary transactions served to undermine or perpetuate the normative prescriptions associated with the New Law? While there are countless auxiliary transactions that could be considered here, we concentrate our discussion on the

negotiations of the reform. We believe the negotiation process of 'school autonomy' (an auxiliary transaction) would send some clear, normative stakeholders to stakeholders about what school autonomy actually means, and how it will be applied in the future.

The negotiations of the school autonomy reform served to reinforce several prevailing beliefs about education in Nicaragua. The irony of this situation is that in attempting to forge a new participatory and accountable relationship with 'civil society' (in the words of Belli, 'a new social contract'), the new regime sought to relate to a civil society that was organized and constructed from above- that is, by the Ministry itself (Kampwirth, 1997). For example, the new ministry of education fundamentally rejected the previous government's relationship with the National Association of Educators of Nicaragua (ANDEN) and excluded ANDEN representatives from the process of formulating new textbooks. Instead, the representatives of civil society that oversaw the Ministry and participated in the formulation of new institution were either individually selected by the ministry itself or appointed according to some impersonal mechanism (seniority, in the case of teachers, or their child's grades, in the case of parents). The selectivity of this process leads Kampwirth to suggest that the Chamorro administration's conception of civil society at the time of the reform was "based on individuals who are appointed by the very state agency they are to oversee."(p.122) As a result, the negotiation of what was to be a 'participatory reform' for rebuilding the social contract with civil society ended up marginalizing key segments of civil society. This marginalization provoked anger and resentment amongst many civil society factions and teachers' strikes were a regular part of life in Nicaragua during the first few years of school autonomy.

HCIA theory predicts that an actor is involved in auxiliary transactions (such as negotiations) provides that same actor with important normative signals and understandings that can be employed in the transaction of interest; or the central transaction. In the case of school autonomy, why should we believe that teachers, who were fundamentally excluded from the initial negotiation process, would support and engage in a program that was launched by the very government who excluded them? In this instance, HCIA theory would predict that the marginalization of ANDEN from the initial, 'auxiliary' dialogue would fundamentally shape their normative expectations and motivations for participating and engaging in the school autonomy program in the future.

Discussion: Perpetuating or Undermining Prevailing Beliefs?

Overall, in attempting to create a new participatory and accountable institution for education in Nicaragua, the new ministry ended up perpetuating many of the prevailing, behavioural beliefs of educational stakeholders and policy-makers alike. In that sense, school autonomy did not emerge from a strictly technical rationale- but rather was the product of the prevailing normative and ideological beliefs held by the new regime. Additionally, the new rules and organizations of school autonomy ended up reproducing the very normative understandings that gave rise to them in the first place- demonstrating the self-enforcing relationship between beliefs and institutions and the path-dependent nature of institutional evolution. Thus, to a great extent, our analysis reveals how the 'school autonomy reform', despite introducing new rules and principles for education, served to reinforce pre-existing, normative understandings about how education works in Nicaragua. In that sense, school autonomy has not translated into a radically new institution of education in Nicaragua. Ironically, the effort at rebuilding the educational

institution (and the social contract with civil society) ended up reinforcing the prevailing belief that education is political and ideological in nature; that the education institution itself, and specifically its organizations, are extensions of the ruling faction; and that education is a 'zero-sum' game that is tightly controlled from the top-down.

To a certain extent, previous evaluations of school autonomy in Nicaragua would support this path-dependent interpretation. For example, several evaluations of the ASP suggest that school-level participants have had a great deal of difficulty in negotiating clear, concise and collectively held meanings of autonomy (Fuller and Rivaroli, 1998; Ruiz de Forsberg, 2003). From the perspective of HCIA, this finding would be interpreted as the failure of the organization to distribute the necessary information to stakeholders and the failure of the organization to enforce and perpetuate the new normative behaviours associated with the principles of the autonomy. To some extent, this failure on the part of organizations is illustrated by stakeholder statements such as: "They changed the rules...now they're telling us..."⁵ Another common sentiment we came across in the course of our field research was "I know they changed the law, but I'm not exactly sure what I'm supposed to be doing."⁶ For us, these illustrations suggest that organizations are failing miserably in perpetuating the new rules and principles of school autonomy.

Other evaluations of the ASP have shown that many participants actually acquaint school autonomy with the broader, political and economic logic that informs it. For example, Arnove suggests that, from the perspective of the teacher union, the

⁵ These comments were noted by Lic. Yadira Rocha (IPADE) in her presentation at the Foro Sobre Decentralización y Participación Social en las Escuelas: "El Futuro de Reforma Educativa en Nicaragua", November 2002, Managua, Nicaragua. Report Available at:

<http://www.milano.newschool.edu/cdrc/schoolreport/foroSobreDecentralizacionFinal.pdf>

⁶ This comment was common in our discussion with parents in Matagalpa during our research.

implementation of user fees is seen as a move towards the privatisation of education (Arnove, 1994). Rivarola & Fuller suggest that in the view of parents, the ASP is associated with economic policy aims and school fees (cuotas) such that “many parents see the push for higher cuotas as among the most salient connotations of *autonomia*” (Rivarola & Fuller, 1999: 513). These findings fall well within the parameters of HCIA’s theory of behavioural beliefs.

How have the new formal rules and normative signals provided by the institution combined to shape the daily life of schools in Nicaragua? What regularities of behaviour have the new rules and normative signals produced at the micro-level? In the next chapter, we consider the extent to which the New Law of Educational Participation has produced new behaviours in individual schools. Specifically, we attempt to uncover if (and how) the practices in individual autonomous schools converge or diverge with the specifications of the New Law. We are able to demonstrate how schools (more specifically school stakeholders) selectively comply with some rules while ignoring others. To a significant extent, this selective compliance with the rules and specifications of the New Law is conditioned by actors’ normative expectations and the failure of the Ministry to act as both enforcer and perpetuator of the new rules and normative principles of school autonomy. Selective compliance with the rules also means that schools can maintain regularities of behaviour (such as top-down management) in spite of new rules for local participation and accountability.

CHAPTER SIX: REGULARITIES OF BEHAVIOUR AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Do the regularities of behaviour witnessed in ‘autonomous’ schools imply that the new norms of greater parental participation, local accountability, and local coordination have become institutionalized and taken for granted? Alternatively, do these practices imply that the traditional normative understandings of education prevail? Have the new rules of school autonomy become fully institutionalized in ‘autonomous’ schools? Or, are the new rules simply selectively followed? HCIA predicts that traditional behaviours are likely to prevail in the face of legislative change when the new institution perpetuates prevailing normative understandings, beliefs, and behaviours. As we saw in chapter five, the normative signals being provided the new ‘school autonomy’ institution severely undermines the new norms and principles associated with participation, accountability, and coordination. What has this meant in terms of behaviour at the school-level?

In this chapter, we begin our micro-level analysis of the case. Specifically, we examine the practices of school autonomy in five Nicaraguan schools in order to determine which rules are being followed. In chapter seven, we examine the behavioural beliefs of stakeholders in order to explain these outcomes and behaviours. However, the information presented in this chapter is significant for understanding how formal rules are selectively followed in Nicaragua.

To determine the regularities of behaviour occurring in autonomous schools, we use survey responses from stakeholders in five ‘autonomous schools’. Our discussion of

these responses revolves around two central issues: the extent to which behaviour in autonomous schools complies with the rules and prescriptions of the New Law and stakeholder evaluations of the New Law. By examining these issues, important information can be garnered about which rules are being followed, and which rules are not being followed. To some extent, by running statistical correlations with the survey data, we are able to advance some cautious 'relational' statements about the behaviour witnessed. However, the overall purpose of this chapter is to establish the regularities of behaviours in autonomous schools in relation to the New Law.

We begin with a brief discussion of the methodology used in this chapter. Following this, we provide an in-depth examination of the specific behaviours occurring in our sample schools in relation to the specifications of the New Law. Upon considering which rules of autonomy are being followed in our sample schools, we examine stakeholder evaluations of the school autonomy program. Thereafter, we run basic correlations with the survey in order to identify relational trends between the variables.

Methodology: The Survey

The information presented in this chapter relies on surveys that were conducted and collected by the researcher over a three-week period in Matagalpa during the summer of 2005. These surveys were distributed to parents, teachers, and principals in our five sample schools. The researcher designed the content of the survey and employed the help of several individuals in Matagalpa and Managua to ensure that the language, grammar, phrasing, and presentation of the survey are consistent with the local, Spanish dialect. Separate surveys were distributed to parents, teachers, and principals in six schools in Matagalpa. As explained in chapter three, for reasons of insufficient survey

response, we were required to drop School 6 from the analytical sample. The survey asked parents to answer 63 questions, teachers to answer 65 questions, and principals to answer 247 questions. In the analytic sample of schools, 221 parents were surveyed, 98 teachers were surveyed, and 5 principals were surveyed. From that sample, we were required to exclude several cases because the respondent either did not answer key sections of the survey or did not answer questions in a way that could be understood and interpreted by the researcher (for example, circling numerous responses on a scale). After filtering out several cases, we ended up using the survey responses from 204 parents, 89 teachers, and 5 principals.

All surveys were distributed directly and in person by the researcher. Typically, we approached potential respondents at their school and asked them to participate in the survey. We would then wait for them to complete the survey and provide clarification of questions if required. On occasion, we were able to organize larger groups of participants. Most principals allowed us to use a school classroom for these group meetings. These group meetings were particularly useful for parents as it allowed us to go through each question with the group- which we believed, would be useful for parents whose literacy skills were low. These group meetings allowed us gather more data over a shorter period. Principals, on the other hand, were allotted several days to complete the survey- given the size and informational requirements of the questions. Typically, principals completed the survey within a week.

Parents and teachers were asked many different questions. However, both groups were asked to answer questions related to: their participation and involvement with their respective Councils and the School Council; their attitudes towards the school

administration; their satisfaction with school performance; and their attitudes and impression of the school autonomy and the New Law (see Appendices A-C for surveys). Principals, given their unique position in a school, were asked more specific questions related to: their educational background; the degrees of influence in school decision-making; financial operation of the school; school conditions; School Councils; and the specific impact of autonomy on the school.

There were numerous practices and stakeholder characteristics identified in survey responses. However, we narrow our focus to behaviours that are associated with the rules and principles of the New Law. The procedural rules of the New Law are quite clear- and therefore compliance with the procedures of New Law is easily discerned. However, the substantive principles of school autonomy (such as parental participation and accountability) are more difficult to discern. Therefore, we treat these to behavioural aspects separately (procedural compliance and substantive compliance). In addition, we also consider stakeholder evaluations of the New Law. These three areas serve as the central focus in this chapter. They are conceptualized as follows:

Procedural Aspects of Autonomy: In this focus area, we attempt to discern behavioural patterns about the procedural aspects of autonomy. In particular, we are interested in the operation of Councils and other features of autonomy such as elections and school fees. Do the Councils exist? Are stakeholders voting in Council elections? Are stakeholders attending Council meetings? Are stakeholders participating in Council meetings? Are stakeholders utilizing the Councils to address their grievances and advance their interests? Are principals elected? Are school fees voluntary? Are stakeholders getting the information about school finances? School autonomy and the theory of decentralization rest on the assumption that by devolving authority to local levels, school decision-makers will be held more accountable. Burki, Perry, and Dillenger have suggested that accountability is a key step towards facilitating the characteristics of high-performing schools. As demonstrated in chapter five, School Councils are one of reform's primary mechanisms for creating participation and accountability. Thus, we believe questions about the operation of Councils and other procedural matters

are an important first step towards understanding the regularities of behaviours occurring in autonomous schools.

Substantive Aspects of Decision-Making: In this second focus area, we attempt to discern patterns in the substantive practices of decision-making in autonomous schools. Which actors exert the most influence over staffing decisions? Pedagogical decisions? School improvement plans? School finances? Burki, Perry, and Dillenger have argued that when school-level actors assume financial and administrative control, accountability will be more direct and resources will be allocated more effectively and efficiently. Throughout this study, we have raised several concerns about constraints to this process in the context of underdevelopment. This focus area provides an opportunity for examining the actual levels of influence exerted in school decisions. This is a vital piece of information for understanding how autonomy is substantively realized in schools. While responses to these questions do not provide any clear causal explanation for divergence between Law and actual practice, they may nevertheless provide an important foundation for understanding how schools in Matagalpa implement and practice autonomy.

Stakeholder Evaluations: In this focus area, we ask stakeholders to evaluate autonomy. While the evaluations of parents do not tell us a great deal about the specific practices of autonomy stakeholders in these schools, they nevertheless give us some indication about how stakeholders interpret and manage the reform. These evaluations and interpretations form the foundation for more qualitative interpretations and analysis in the remaining chapter of this study. However, the evaluations of principals provided in this section give us a more specific and detailed picture of how the normative signals being provided by the new institution are internalized by key stakeholders.

From the data, we are unable to make any definitive conclusions about autonomy's impact on the daily life of schools. Nor are we able to make any clear statements about the behavioural beliefs of stakeholders and the internalization of normative signals- though we provide information to this question in the next chapter. Nonetheless, in this chapter, we are able to advance some clear evidence about how schools implement and practice autonomy. The picture emerging from the survey data reveals:

Key Similarities between Schools: The survey responses from parents and teachers reveal several common trends between the five sample schools. First, the Councils

exist and meet regularly in each school. Second, despite minor between-school variations, both parents and teachers appear as relatively active voters in Council elections. Survey respondents also appear to attend Council meeting on a regular basis. School fees (cuotas) appear to be voluntary in most of the schools. Many parents and teachers share a favourable view of autonomy. However, this view also varies between schools.

Key Differences between Schools: Several differences also appear between schools. Most significantly, the degree of influence School Councils exert over decisions varies significantly between schools. In some schools, the School Council appears to exert significant influence over a decision. In other schools, it is the principal or Delegate who exercise influence over the same decision. The evaluations of autonomy we received from principals also reveal some significant differences in school practice, since the school became autonomous. Some principals report that conditions have become much better at the school since it became autonomous. Other principals report that these same conditions have become much poorer at their school since becoming autonomous. In addition, our systematic observations reveal some important differences about the information that is made available to stakeholders in each school as well as the structure and quality of the meetings of Councils. While we cannot be certain about the causal nature of these substantive differences, we offer some speculative claims regarding these differences observed in the analysis.

Key areas of Convergence & Divergence with the Law: From the data, it appears that schools are provided with a large degree of discretion when implementing autonomy. We can identify areas of convergence between the practice of autonomy within the sample schools and intentions and specifications of the New Law. We can also identify several, key areas where the implementation and practice of school autonomy diverges significantly from the specifications of the Law. For example, the limited-tenure for principals has not been enforced in at least one school, parents do not have a voting majority on Councils in at least two schools, and Councils do not exercise a significant degree of influence over the school decisions they are meant to, according to the Law. These divergences not only illustrate the discretionary powers schools have over implementation, but they also expose how the principles of accountability are compromised when the Law is misapplied.

Overall, we can identify several important findings, trends, and relationships within the survey data. Below, we offer a thorough discussion of this information before turning our attention to more qualitative data in chapter seven.

Analysis

We begin our discussion by detailing some contextual differences between schools in the survey sample. It is into these settings that the autonomy program attempts to take root. Table 6 below provides some details of the schools in the sample, including contextual features and issues that characterize each school. The table displays a selected representation of evidence drawing on the responses of stakeholders and Ministry documents. The discussion that follows provides a backdrop for the sample schools and illustrates how autonomy has prompted changes in the daily life of the sample schools.

Table 6. School Profiles

School Name	Area	Program	Total Students	Year of Autonomy	Security (mean)	Parent Educate (mean)	Income (mean)	Principal (# of yrs)	Principal (yrs. at school)
School 1	Urban	Pre-school	79	1995	1.94	3.12	3.81	13	13
		Primary	921						
School 2	Urban	Pre-school	84	2003	3.00	3.44	3.61	14	3
		Primary	792						
School 3	Urban	Primary	853	1999	2.62	3.04	3.71	6	1
		Second	1,424						
School 4	Urban	Pre-school	42	2001	3.10	2.49	3.97	8	5
		Primary	501						
School 5	Urban	Primary	682	2003	4.32	2.05	4.76	10	4

We begin our discussion by looking inside five different autonomous schools. In many ways, School 1 displays the optimal conditions for the implementation and practice of autonomy. School 1 became autonomous in 1995. Of all the schools in the sample, it is located closest to the city's core. The school's primary student enrolment was 921 in 2004, the largest in our sample. Parents who participated in the survey generally ranked

the security of their community as good to excellent (a mean score of 1.94 on the scale, where 1 represents excellent community security and 5 represents pessimistic/poor community security). This mean score was the lowest of the schools in the sample. School 1 parents who completed the survey had, on average, more than a secondary education level (a mean score of 3.12, where 1 represents no schooling, 2 represents primary, 3 represents secondary, and 4 or higher represents a form of post-secondary education). The household income of School 1 parents is, on average, considered to be regular for meeting their household needs (a mean score of 3.81, where 1 represents excellent, 2 represents good, 3 represents regular, 4 represents deficient, and 5 represents poor/pessimistic). The director (principal) of School 1 is more experienced and has the longest tenure at their school than another director in the sample.

The contextual features that characterize School 6 in the sample stand in stark contrast to those features that characterize School 1. School 5 became autonomous under the New Law in 2003. Of all the schools in the sample, School 5 is the most distant from the city's core, situated in small, barrio on the outskirts of town. The school's primary student enrolment was 682 in 2004, one of the smaller schools in our sample. Parents who participated in the survey generally ranked the security of their community as pessimistic/poor (a mean score of 4.32). This mean score was the highest (or worst) of all sample schools. School 5 Parents who completed the survey had, on average, little more than a primary education (a mean score of 2.05, the least amount of education in the sample). The household income of School 5 Parents is, on average, the most deficient of all parents in the sample (a mean score of 4.76). The director of School 5 is experienced, but has a comparatively shorter tenure at the school.

School 4 in the sample is located in a neighbourhood adjacent to School 5. Parental responses to the survey demonstrate some similar characteristics between these communities; namely, a relatively low level of education amongst Parents (2.49), a comparatively deficient household income (3.97), and poorer community security (3.10). School 2 on the other hand, shares many of the contextual characteristics that define School 1; namely, higher levels of education among parents (3.61), more sufficient household incomes (3.44), and comparatively better community security (3.00). This is not surprising given that the two schools are located less than 10 blocks from one another. School 3 is a mid-range school in terms of its distance from the city core. It scores, on average, in the middle of the sample on security, education, and income scores. However, the principal at School 3 is, comparatively, the least experienced with the shortest tenure at their current school.

All five schools in the sample fall within the jurisdiction of the City of Matagalpa. As such, the municipal delegate for Matagalpa has jurisdictional authority over all five schools. In accordance with the New Law, each school receives a non-discretionary capitation grant, calculated on a per capita level and transferred to the school based on its student/teacher ratio, plus an additional 5 percent for administrative and operating costs.

Procedural Aspects

In this section, we look at the procedural aspects of school autonomy as they are implemented in schools. By 'procedural aspects', we are referring to the formal rules and specifications of autonomous schools as outlined in the New Law of Education Participation. Procedural aspects include Council meetings, Council elections, stakeholder attendance and participation in Council meetings, the size of Councils, the

election of School principals, and the voluntary nature of school fees. All of these aspects have been formally outlined in the New Law and are discussed in chapter five of this study. Here, we are particularly interested in how schools have transformed these procedural aspects of the formal law into practice. Through this information, we intend to demonstrate that behaviours do not flow directly from formal rules and laws. Rather, as our examination demonstrates, formal rules are selectively followed in Nicaraguan autonomous schools. This finding lends support to the HCIA claim that factors exogenous to formal rules shape behaviour. We begin our examination with a consideration of Council meetings.

In all five schools, there was clear evidence that all the Councils (Parents, Teachers, Student Government, and School Council) were operating and meeting regularly. In the Principal survey, for example, we asked principals how often the School Council met in 2004. Table 7 below illustrates their uniform responses:

Table 7. How often School Councils met in 2004

School	Responses
School 1	Monthly
School 2	Monthly
School 3	Monthly
School 4	Monthly
School 5	Monthly

In addition to meeting regularly, the parents and teachers who were surveyed appear to vote regularly in elections for Council representatives (Tables 8 and 9 below). This finding supports the idea that Councils do exist and are selected on a representative basis, in compliance with the Law.

Table 8. Have you ever voted in a Council Election (parents)?

Response	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>								
Yes	56	76.7	20	76.9	21	75.0	23	62.2	33	82.5
No	17	23.3	6	23.1	6	21.4	11	29.7	7	17.5
Missing	0	0	0	0	1	3.6	3	8.1	0	0
Total	73	100.0	26	100.0	27	96.4	34	91.9	40	100.0

Table 9. Have you ever voted in a Council Election (teachers)?

Response	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>								
Yes	20	95.2	15	78.9	11	91.7	12	80.0	19	86.4
No	1	4.8	4	21.1	1	8.3	3	20.0	3	13.6
Total	21	100.0	19	100.0	12	100.0	15	100.0	22	100.0

In addition to the vast majority of respondents voting in Council elections, parents and teachers appear, for the most part, to be regular participants at meetings of their respective Councils (Table 10 and Table 11). These participatory aspects of school autonomy and the council mechanism appear in most sample schools. However, some exceptions are note worthy. First, while the responses of most parents support a participatory and representative view of the councils, School 3 represents an exception. In School 3, only 28.6% of respondents told us they had participated in a meeting of the Parent Council. Initially, we thought these parents might be attending the School Council as an alternative. However, additional survey questions reveal that they are not participating, in great numbers, in these meetings either (Table 12). In fact, only 35.7% had ever attended a School Council meeting.

Table 10. Have you ever participated in a meeting of your Council (parents)?

Response	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	Freq	%								
Yes	58	79.5	20	76.9	8	28.6	26	70.3	25	62.5
No	15	20.5	6	23.1	18	64.3	9	24.3	14	35.0
Missing	0	0	0	0	2	7.1	2	5.4	1	2.5
Total	73	100	26	100	26	100	37	100	40	100

Table 11. Have you ever participated in a meeting of your Council (teachers)?

Response	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>								
Yes	15	71.4	12	63.2	8	66.7	5	33.3	12	54.5
No	6	28.6	6	31.6	2	16.7	10	66.7	10	45.5
Missing	0	0	1	5.3	2	16.7	0	0	0	0
Total	21	100	19	100	12	100	15	100	22	100

The teachers we spoke with in Schools 1, 2, and 3, appear to be participants in Council meetings. Yet, in Schools 5 only slightly more than half the respondents have ever attended a Council meeting. In School 4, only 33.3% of respondents had attended a meeting of the Teachers Council. At this point, we cannot wager reasons as to why these percentages differ between schools. However, critiques of school autonomy have pointed to the problem of broad based, parental participation in education, particularly in poor countries. First, there is a general concern that in poor communities, parents do not have the time or resources to participate in school decision-making. The second concern, related in part to the first, is that decision-making apparatuses, like School Councils, can be co-opted by a particular group. The third concern is that parents may not have the capacity (educational, literacy, or otherwise) for contributing to discussion, and therefore avoid attendance. The fourth concern is that parents and teachers do not see a benefit in attending and participating in these meetings. There is insufficient evidence (at this point) to support these critiques. However, the differences between schools in terms of

'levels of participation in Council meetings' is a significant starting point for our analysis of how autonomy is playing out differently in the five schools.

Table 12. Have you ever attended a meeting of the School Council (parents)?

Response	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	<i>Freq</i>	%								
Yes	50	68.5	9	34.6	10	35.7	21	56.8	9	22.5
No	22	30.1	17	65.4	17	60.7	15	40.5	31	77.5
Missing	1	1.4	0	0	1	3.6	1	2.7	0	0
Total	73	100	26	100	28	100	37	100	40	100

Table 13. Have you ever attended a meeting of the School Council (teachers)?

Response	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	<i>Freq</i>	%								
Yes	9	42.9	4	21.1	7	58.3	7	46.7	11	50.0
No	10	47.6	13	68.4	5	41.7	8	53.3	11	50.0
Missing	2	9.5	2	10.5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	21	100	19	100	12	100	15	100	22	100

Our systematic observation of Council meetings also sheds additional light (beyond that demonstrated in Table 12 and 13) on function of the Councils and, perhaps why levels of participation have varied between schools. During our time in Matagalpa, we were fortunate enough to be able to attend meetings of the Parent Councils in School 1 and School 3. We note that participation and attendance of School 3 Parents (as per survey responses) is significantly lower than School 1. In School 1, approximately ninety parents were in attendance. The meeting was informative, providing information on school expenditures, school improvement plans, school financing and the autonomy program itself. The meeting was coordinated and conducted by a panel of parents and a representative from a local university. The material was presented on an overhead and there was ample feedback, questions and discussion amongst parents in attendance following the panel's presentation.

In contrast, School 3's Parent Council meeting had only twenty parents in attendance. These differences are magnified by School 3's larger enrollment (Table 6). In terms of the conduct of the meeting, a teacher, rather than parents conducted the meeting. There was no discussion, no feedback, and parents did not ask any questions. This observation raises concerns about the substantive quality and representative nature of the Council mechanism in School 3. For parents, the utility to be derived from attending Council meetings appears comparatively better in School 1.

To shed some insights on the representative nature of the Council mechanisms and the extent to which parents turn to Councils to represent their interests, we asked parents and teachers if they had ever spoken to their Council members about their concerns at the school (Table 14 and Table 15). Since the Councils are to serve as the mechanism for representing community preference, we believe this was an important question for ascertaining if Councils were being used by stakeholders in order to represent their interests and address their grievances. In several schools, participants responded that they had indeed spoken to their representative about their concerns. However, this was not the case in all schools. The responses from parents in Schools 2, 3 and 5 suggest that the majority of parents had not spoken to their representative about their concerns. This is not to suggest that alternative mechanisms for addressing problems do not exist in these schools. Yet, the data collected from our surveys suggests that, in some schools, the system of representation that the New Law seeks to establish does not appear to be utilized in way such that parents turn to Council representatives in order to represent and advance their interests and concerns.

Table 14. Have you ever spoken to a Council member about your concerns (parents)?

Response	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	<i>Freq</i>	%								
Yes	59	80.8	10	38.5	11	39.3	21	56.8	10	25.0
No	14	19.2	16	61.5	15	53.6	13	35.1	30	75.0
No Response	0	0	0	0	1	3.6	0	0	0	0
Missing	0	0	0	0	1	3.6	3	8.1	0	0
Total	73	100	26	100	28	100	37	100	40	100

Table 15. Have you ever spoken to a Council member about your concerns (teachers)?

Response	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	<i>Freq</i>	%								
Yes	14	66.7	8	42.1	6	50.0	10	66.7	14	63.6
No	7	33.3	11	57.9	6	50.0	5	33.3	8	36.4
Total	21	100.0	19	100.0	12	100.0	15	100.0	22	100.0

So far, we are beginning to see some significant divergences between schools, in terms of their implementation and utilization of autonomy technologies. These divergences are further witnessed by looking at the structure and size of the School Councils in Table 16. The structure of the Schools Councils does not appear uniform across the five schools. Additionally, despite Ruiz de Forsberg's (2002) concerns that women may be excluded from decision-making procedures under the Council system, our data demonstrates that females are significantly represented on the Councils in all five of our sample schools. Additionally, the size of the Councils appears to vary significantly across the schools, with as many as 17 members sitting on the School Council in School 2, despite its significantly smaller enrolment numbers. Ironically, the School with largest number of students (School 3) has the fewest number of Council representatives.

In addition to discrepancies in the size of School Councils, serious concerns arise about the representative nature of the Councils themselves. The New Law is clear about

the need to give parents a greater voice in education. As such, the New Law utilizes the Councils' mechanisms to ensure that parents have a voting majority over school decisions. However, as Table 16 demonstrates, School 1 is, in fact, the only school where parents have a voting majority on the Council. In School 4 and 5, parental representation is exactly 50%; while in School 2 and 3 parents have less than 50% voting representation.

Table 16. The Structure of the School Councils in 2004

Actor	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	Male	Fem								
Director		1		1	1			2	1	
Parents	2	3		8	2	1		4	1	3
Teachers		2		4	2			2		2
Students		1		4		1		1		1
Other										
Total (m/f)	2	7		17	5	2		8	2	6
Total	9		17		7		8		8	

School fees are another important procedural aspect of autonomy. As explained throughout this study, the voluntary *cuotas* (or school fees) are a means of supplementing school budgets and teacher salaries. They also serve to foster competition between schools for the financial resources of parents. This incentive mechanism and competition, it is thought, can foster performance improvements. To discern how school fees are utilized, we asked principals to tell us the monthly amount they received from students in the form of school fees. Table 17 below shows their responses.

Table 17. 2004 monthly cuota contributed per student

School	Responses
School 1	Between 1 to 5 Córdoba
School 2	Nothing
School 3	72 Córdoba (primary students) 68 Córdoba (secondary students)
School 4	Nothing
School 5	Nothing

(Exchange rate calculated at 1 US dollar/ 17.2 Córdobas)

In four out of five schools, school fees appear to be minimal and/or voluntary. However, the response from School 3 is problematic. \$72 Córdobas is an exorbitant amount of money for Matagalpinos to pay each month for their child’s schooling. It is so exorbitant that we are forced to consider the possibility that the respondent did not correctly understand the question. If the answer is accurate, than it is severe violation of the voluntary nature of the school fee mechanism. Unfortunately, we do not have data to crosscheck the participant responses to this question.

Another procedural aspect of autonomy is the election of school principals. The New Law mandates the community election of the school principal for a two-year term, with re-election in the same school permitted a maximum of two times. This measure is meant to increase the accountability of the Principal beyond their membership in the School Council and to improve the quality of Principal applicant pools. Table 5 at the beginning of this chapter outlines some of the characteristics of each school and includes the current tenure of the principal at each school.

In addition to the finding that School 1’s principal has long exceeded the four-tenure limited specified for autonomous schools (13 years), we also asked teachers if they had elected a new school principal in the last three years (Table 18).

Table 18. In the last three years, have you elected a new principal at this school? (Teachers)

	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	Freq	%								
Yes	3	14.3	6	31.6	11	91.7	4	26.7	12	54.5
No	18	85.7	12	63.2	1	8.3	11	73.3	8	36.4
Miss	0	0	1	5.3	0	0	0	0	2	9.1
Total	21	100	19	100	12	100	15	100	22	100

We are unable to discern if all schools in the sample comply with this aspect of the Law, given the fact that some schools have only recently become autonomous. However, the

data indicates that School 3 and School 5 have recently elected principals. This data supports the view that principals, at least in some schools, are elected and not appointees of the Ministry.

The election of school principals is a key mechanism by which school autonomy seeks to achieve its objectives. Humberto Belli, for example, tells us:

It was believed that autonomy would lead to improved learning however it was promoted for other reasons...autonomy and participation in the schools were seen as a right of the community to vote and have a voice in the policies that affect their lives.... There was also a need to depoliticize and liberate the educational system, increasing its stability. The political nature of the system has caused great damage and has hurt many past reforms. This reform has depoliticized the system through taking power from the state and transferring it to the community. For example, after presidential elections [Dr. Belli] received phone calls recommending people for positions as school principals. Because of the reform, he no longer had the power to name principals- they were now elected by the community (Foro, 2000)

The power to choose principals is exercised in at least two of our sample schools, which supports the view of a *depoliticization* of education. However, does the 13-year tenure of School 1's principal compromise this intention? Clearly, this finding raises some additional questions about the quality of centralized coordination and monitoring of school autonomy in our sample schools. However, this discretion (intentional or unintentional) has also afforded School 1 a degree of flexibility whereby the schools could tailor the technical features of autonomy to meet its own needs and interests. For example, a teacher from School 1 explains that: "*We have not elected a new principal at our school because our current director is very efficient.*"

The discretion, evidenced above, presents a problem for school autonomy. On the one hand, schools require flexibility to tailor decisions to their own needs and

requirements. In School 1, this has meant retaining an efficient director beyond the fixed term. On the other hand, the flexibility to deviate from the limited term specification could potentially lead to a situation where principals, who exert significant influence over Councils, could exercise that influence to retain their position. The limited-term for principals then serves an important ‘check and balance’ on the power of principals. At this point, it is not clear how policy-makers will choose to balance the conflicting requirements of flexibility and the need for ‘checks and balances’.

In addition to the elections of principals, the New Law specifies that the School Council must publish a report each month on incomes and expenditures and post it where all the parents can see it. The formats of the financial accounts are laid out in ministerial dispositions accompanying the Law. Copies of the monthly financial reports are also to be made available to MECD through the municipal delegates. To determine whether this was occurring in our sample schools, we asked parents if they had ever seen the monthly financial report of their school (Table 19).

Table 19. Have you ever seen a monthly financial report (parents)?

Response	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	Freq	%								
Yes	10	13.7	8	30.8	15	53.6	9	24.3	8	20.0
No	62	84.9	17	65.4	13	46.4	25	67.6	31	77.5
Missing	1	1.4	1	3.8	0	0	3	8.1	1	2.5
Total	73	100	26	100	28	100	37	100	40	100

The responses illustrated in Table 18 reveal that few parents in School 1, 2, 4, and 5 had ever seen a monthly financial report, as specified by the Law. In addition to these responses, in our systematic observations, only three schools (1, 3, and 5) had their financial reports in plain view, where an observer, such as this researcher, could see the reports.

So far, this glimpse into five schools demonstrates how autonomy plays out quite differently in each school. Clearly, councils exist, hold elections, and meet regularly in all five schools. However, significant differences in the form, content, and practice of autonomy can be witnessed between the five schools. Difference in the size and structure of Councils, the principal's tenure, and financial reporting support the view that schools have a significant amount of discretion in implementing and practicing autonomy. In Matagalpa, it appears as though centralized, administrative monitoring and coordination are largely missing. In terms of implementation, School 1 appears to be the most successful in dealing with school autonomy, while Schools 3, 4, and 5 appear to have struggled with the reform.

This information regarding to the procedural aspects provides two key insights to the process by which Nicaraguan autonomous schools transform formal rules into practice. First, the basic elements of Councils are in place in each school. For example, School Councils appear to meet regularly, the school community appears to elect Council representatives, parents and teachers appear to regularly attend meetings of their respective councils, and school fees appear as voluntary in most schools. These basic, procedural mechanisms are meant to serve as the foundation for greater participation and accountability in education. Thus, this finding is encouraging for reform advocates.

A second trend emerging from this data is that certain Council procedures are only selectively followed in these schools. For example, the size and structure of the School Councils vary significantly between schools, diverging from the specifications of the formal law in key areas. Parents have a voting majority in only two schools, despite the specifications of the New Law. Diverging from the law on this aspect (voting

majority of parents on Councils) significantly restricts the ability of parents to exert significant influence over school-decision making. Additionally, the tenure of principals (as specified by the New Law) is selectively followed in at least one of schools (School 1). These mechanisms are intended to establish responsibility for results. However, these schools appear to be afforded the flexibility to selectively comply with these mechanisms and procedure, which (as discussed) can significantly undermine the intentions of the policy. In the next section, we consider how the ‘substantive aspects’ of school autonomy have been transformed into practice in our sample schools.

Substantive Aspects: Degrees of Influence

In addition to the procedural aspects of autonomy examined above, we are also interested in the degrees of influence Councils exert over school decisions. Given the complexity of schools, we are unable to make any definitive statements about performance. Rather, our goals are more modest. In this section, we seek to discern the relative level of influence actors exert over school decisions when powers are devolved to local School Councils. In the principal surveys, we asked principals which actor (Central government, Department, Municipal Delegate, Council, Principal, or Student Government) exercised the most influence over a particular school decision. Table 20 illustrates their responses.

Table 20. Degrees of Influence over School Decisions

Who has the most influence over...	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5
In naming and dismissing teachers	Council	Council	Council	Dept/ Delegate	Council
In naming the director	Council	Council	NA	Dept/ Principal	Council
In naming and dismissing the administrative personnel	Council	Council	Central	Council/ Principal	Council
In defining the annual plan for the educative centre	Council	Council	Central	Delegate/ Principal	Council
In determining the goals of the centre	Council	Council	Central	Principal	Council
In the planning and preparation of the budget & expenditures	Council	Delegate	Central	Delegate/ Council	Council
In determining the stimuli for the students	Council	Council	Principal	Principal	Council
In the formulation of new infrastructure projects for the school	Council	Central	Delegate	Principal	Council
In creating the periodic reports to the community	Council	Council	Principal	Principal	Council
In determining how to spend the money collected by the centre	Council	Council	Principal	Principal	Council
In the formulation of new pedagogical projects	Student Gov't	Central	Delegate	Central	Principal
In determining performance incentives and goals for the teachers	Central	Council	Principal	Delegate/ Council/ Principal	Dept/ Delegate
In dismissing the director	Council	Delegate	NA	Dept/ Principal	Delegate
In the maintenance of the school	Principal	Council	Central	Principal	Principal
<i>In the evaluation and pedagogical supervision of the teachers</i>	<i>Principal</i>	<i>Principal</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Principal</i>	<i>Principal</i>
<i>In the design of the curriculum</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Delegate</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Central</i>
<i>In the selection of text books</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Delegate</i>	<i>Principal</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Central</i>
<i>In the distribution and the provision of text books and materials</i>	<i>Delegate</i>	<i>Delegate</i>	<i>Principal</i>	<i>Dept/ Delegate</i>	<i>Central/ Dept/ Delegate</i>
<i>In providing financing for additional teacher training</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>NS/NR</i>	<i>NA</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Central</i>
<i>In determining the number of days in the school year</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Central</i>
<i>In determining the work and class schedules</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Central</i>	<i>Central/ Dept</i>	<i>Principal</i>
(No Shading- Bold type) Denotes decisions that have been devolved to the School through the reform (Light Shading) Denotes decisions that are not clearly delineated (Heavy Shading- Italics) Denotes decisions that have not been devolved to the School through the reform					

As is the case with the procedural aspects of school autonomy, several areas of divergence between schools (and from the Law) are noteworthy. In Table 20, the non-shaded rows denote areas where the School Council has authority over decision-making,

as specified by the Law. In these areas, the Council of School 1 appears to exercise a significant and consistent degree of influence over all these decision areas. The same appears to be true for Schools 2 and 5. A key difference between School 1 and Schools 2 and 5 is in the 'dismissing of the director'. In Schools 2 and 5, this appears to a decision of the Delegate (which would be in accordance with the fixed tenure specified by the New Law). In School 1, the dismissal of the principal, as noted, is a decision of the Council (which diverges from the specifications of the Law). Again, this point highlights some of the discretion schools are afforded when practicing school autonomy.

As is the case with more procedural aspects, Schools 3 and 4 stand in stark contrast to the other schools in the sample. According to the principal in School 3, the Council exercises authority over the hiring and dismissing of teachers alone. In School 4, the Council appears to have discretion over matters of administrative hiring/firing and in the planning of expenditures and budgets only. These findings raise serious concerns about the very meaning of Councils in these schools. Despite the significant powers devolved to the School Council through the New Law, the Councils appear to exercise little influence. Rather, the principals emerges as the significant actor in these decision areas, which raises concerns about accountability and the participatory nature of school autonomy in these schools.

These significant differences again highlight the problem of monitoring, enforcement and implementation of school autonomy in our sample schools. Clearly some schools (notably, 1, 2 and 5) have been able to implement the reform relatively consistent with the reform. Yet, even in these schools, there is a deviation from the reform in terms of size of the Councils, voting majority on the Council, and/or fixed

terms of principals. In Schools 3 and 4, the Councils appear to exhibit little influence over any, substantive decision-areas, despite the devolution of authority to the Councils specified by the Law. This finding leads us to question several aspects of autonomy: if Councils exercise little authority, what is the significance of autonomy? What accounts for these differences between schools? If a central, administrative authority is not ensuring the correct implementation of school autonomy, who is? Who has the responsibility and power to make autonomy work in schools? Before considering these questions, we consider the impact autonomy has had in our sample schools.

Substantive Aspects: Stakeholder Evaluations

Principals' Evaluations

In the principal surveys, we asked school principals about how certain practices and conditions at the school have changed since becoming autonomous. In Table 21, we illustrate their responses on a scale ranging from: much better, better, same, poorer, and much poorer.

Table 21. Principal evaluations of school changes since becoming autonomous

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5
Academic yield of the students	Same	Much Better	Much Better	Better	Better
Participation of the parents in activities	Same	Better	Much Better	Poorer	NR
Participation of the teachers in activities	Better	Better	Same	Better	Much Poorer
Student participation in activities	Much Better	Better	Much Better	Same	NR
Level of communication between teachers, director and council	Much Better	NA	Much Better	Better	Same
Infrastructure and physical training conditions	Much Better	NA	Much Better	Better	Much Poorer
Labour/Staff discipline	Better	Better	Much Better	Better	Poorer
Attendance and punctuality of teachers	Much Better	Better	Much Better	Much Better	NR
Student discipline	Better	Better	Much Better	Same	Poorer
Attendance and punctuality of students	Much Better	Better	Much Better	Same	Poorer
Fix wages for the teachers	Better	Same	Better	Same	Same
Labour stability of the teacher	Better	Better	NA	Better	Same
Ethical behaviour of the teachers	Same	Poorer	NA	Better	Same
Ethical behaviour of the students	Same	NA	NA	Poorer	Much Poorer
Text availability and didactic material	Much Better	NA	Same	Much Poorer	Poorer

One might expect school autonomy would lead to improvements in a number of key areas. First, one might expect autonomy to produce improvements in stakeholder participation and coordination. The School Council system encourages participation and coordination between stakeholders. New channels for stakeholder participation and involvement exist through the Council mechanisms. Thus, the theory of autonomy (and the NPM) predicts and expects that autonomy will lead to improvements in the participation of parents, teachers, and students in school activities as well as improvements in the level of communication between school staff.

Second, one might also expect autonomy would lead to improvements in school planning. By devolving authority over school planning and infrastructure, the theory of autonomy (and the NPM) expects improvements in planning as the authority to decide is

now in the hands of locals (those with a deeper knowledge of local need). It also predicts that improvements in outcomes will accrue when powers over school planning are in the hands of the local school community and its teachers, who are positioned to diagnose and find solutions to a school's specific learning and administrative problems.

Third, one might expect autonomy to lead to improvements in the behaviour and performance of school staff. Since the power to hire and fire school staff is the hands of locals, school autonomy assumes that teachers will be held more accountable for their actions and performance- rewarded for achievements and punished, sanctioned, or dismissed when they fail to meet expectations. Thus, school autonomy (and the NPM) expects that autonomy would lead to improvements in the performance, attitudes, and behaviours of school staff.

School 1 appears to be realizing these expectations and predications. The principal reports significant improvements in most of these areas. Likewise, these improvements appear in Schools 2 and 3. However, it is difficult to comprehend these improvements in School 3 through the logic of autonomy. As the evidence in the previous tables suggests, the principal of School 3, rather than the Council, appears to have the influential role in school decision-making under autonomy. Moreover, the survey data and our own observations of School Council meetings at School 3 indicate that parents participate little in the Councils and exercise little authority over the firing/hiring of school staff.

The responses from Schools 4 and 5 deviate significantly from these expectations and predications in several key areas. In School 4, the principal responds that since becoming autonomous, the participation of parents in school activities is actually poorer.

The principal in School 5 has responded that the participation of teachers is actually much poorer since becoming autonomous. In terms of staff behaviour, School 4 appears to have experienced some improvements since becoming autonomous, while staff discipline at School 5 appears to be poorer since becoming autonomous. Moreover, the principal at School 5 reports that, since becoming autonomous, infrastructure/ physical conditions at the school have become much poorer, student discipline is poorer, the attendance of students is poorer, the behaviour of students is much poorer, and the availability of texts and teaching materials is poorer. We note that this evaluation contrasts, to some extent, with the evaluations of other stakeholders in the school. We consider the reasons for this deterioration at School 4 and 5 in the next chapter.

Overall, since becoming autonomous, the conditions in our five sample schools appear to have changed in several ways- some positive, some negative. According to principals, the predictions of autonomy appear to have taken root in several schools. Yet in other schools, the reality of autonomy appears to diverge significantly from the expectations of the theory. Below, we look at the evaluations of teachers.

Teachers' Evaluation

In the survey, we ask teachers to rate several aspects of school improvements and school autonomy in their schools. First, we ask teachers to rate the school-level programs introduced into their school over the last three years (question D3 of the survey, Appendix A- responses, Table 22). We choose to include the qualification 'over the last three years' because it accounts for the period of time since the New Law was introduced. In addition, we ask teachers if positive changes to the study plan in their school over the

last three years (D7 of the survey, Appendix A- responses, Table 23). We also ask teachers to rate how autonomy is working at their school (question F3 of the survey, Appendix A- responses, Table 24). Finally, we ask teachers if their experience at their autonomous school has led to their appreciation of democratic participation (F5 of the survey, Appendix A- responses, Table 25).

Table 22. Teacher Evaluation of New School Programs

	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	Freq	%								
Excellent	11	52.4	2	10.5	-	-	-	-	4	18.2
Very good	7	33.3	5	26.6	3	25	5	33.3	8	36.4
Good	2	9.5	-	-	3	25	2	13.3	5	22.7
Neither y/n	-	-	2	10.5	1	8.3	-	-	-	-
Deficient	-	-	3	15.8	1	8.3	6	40.0	1	4.5
Pessimistic	-	-	1	5.3	1	8.3	-	-	-	-
D/k, N/r	1	4.8	4	21.1	2	16.7	2	13.3	3	13.6
Missing	-	-	2	10.5	1	8.3	-	-	1	4.5
Total	21	100	19	100	12	100	15	100	22	100

Table 23. Teacher Evaluation of School Study Plans

	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	Freq	%								
Excellent	15	71.4	3	15.8	2	16.7	-	-	6	27.3
Very good	6	28.6	6	31.6	4	33.3	6	40	8	36.4
Good	-	-	6	31.6	1	8.3	3	20	3	13.6
Neither y/n	-	-	1	5.3	2	16.7	1	6.7	-	-
Deficient	-	-	-	-	1	8.3	2	13.3	1	4.5
Pessimistic	-	-	-	-	1	8.3	-	-	-	-
D/k, N/r	-	-	2	10.5	1	8.3	3	20	3	13.6
Missing	-	-	1	5.3	-	-	-	-	1	4.5
Total	21	100	19	100	12	100	15	100	22	100

Table 24. Teacher Evaluations of Autonomy

Response	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Excellent	9	42.9	1	5.3	0	0	1	6.7	5	22.7
Good	10	47.6	5	26.3	4	33.3	4	26.7	7	31.8
Regular	1	4.8	9	47.4	2	16.7	4	26.7	6	27.3
Deficient	0	0	1	5.3	2	16.7	2	13.3	2	9.1
Poor	0	0	0	0	1	8.3	0	0	0	0
D/k, N/r	1	4.8	3	15.8	3	25.0	3	20.0	1	4.5
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6.7	1	4.5
Total	21	100	19	100	12	100	15	100.0	22	100.0

Table 25. Teacher Evaluations of Autonomy as Democracy

	School1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Excellent	15	71.4	6	31.6	6	50	3	20	10	45.5
Good	6	28.6	9	47.4	2	16.7	4	26.7	11	50
Regular	-	-	2	10.5	3	25	4	26.7	1	4.5
Deficient	-	-	1	5.3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pessimistic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
D/k, N/r	-	-	-	-	1	8.3	3	20	-	-
Missing	-	-	1	5.3	-	-	1	6.7	-	-
Total	21	100	19	100	12	100	15	100	22	100

As the results from our survey show, teachers are generally positive about the new school programs being implemented in their schools over the last three years. In School 1, for example, more than 85% of respondents rate the school programs as ‘very good’ or better. In School 5, 76% of respondents rate the school programs as ‘good’ or better. However, 40% of respondents in School 4 rate the school programs over the last three years as ‘deficient’.

Respondents are comparatively ‘more positive’ about the study plans that have been introduced in their schools over the last three years. In the survey, at least 50% of respondents in each school rate the ‘changes in the school’s study plan’ as good or better. It should be noted that improvements in ‘study plans’ and ‘new school programs’ are not necessarily related to the implementation of school autonomy technologies. However,

we believe this data is an indication that, according to teachers, these aspects of school administration and pedagogy have not deteriorated since the school became autonomous. In addition, we believe this data also supports the view that positive program and planning improvements are being realized in school that are autonomous, with the notable exception of 'school programs' at School 4.

In terms of their evaluations of the autonomy program, respondents in School 1 are, again, overwhelming positive, with more than 90% of respondents rating the program as "good" or better. These positive evaluations of the program are supported by their principal's positive evaluations of autonomy discussed in Table 21. In addition, respondents in School 1 also equate their experience at the autonomous school with democratic participation, with 100% of respondents rating the realization of democratic participation as "good" or better.

The evaluations of autonomy from respondents in School 2 reveal a different picture. In terms of new school programs, more than 37% of respondents rated the programs as 'very good' or better. However, an additional 21% of respondents rate the new programs as 'deficient-pessimistic'. We cannot account for these differences. While respondents are not pessimistic in their evaluation of the autonomy program, almost half of those surveyed (47.4%) rated the program as "regular". We interpreted this finding to mean that, according to teachers, the autonomy program has not had a significant influence in the daily life of School 2. This interpretation is supported by our interviews with stakeholders in School 2, which are discussed in chapter five. As we shall see, several stakeholders in this school tell us that autonomy has not had a significant impact on the performance of their school. Interestingly, the same respondents tell us that their

experience at the school has given them an appreciation of democratic participation, with 79% responding 'good' or better to this survey question. We interpret this finding to mean that, in some schools, autonomy may enhance stakeholders' democratic and participatory experiences without having a significant influence on school performance. Although the principal of School 2 has noted several school conditions as 'better' or 'much better' since the school became autonomous, the evaluations presented here suggest that teachers do not attribute the reform with significant school improvements.

The responses from teachers in School 3 and 5 are similar. Teachers in those schools are generally positive about the new programs being implemented in their schools over the last three years. In addition, they are also, comparatively 'more positive' about changes in the study plan. They also suggest their experience at the school has given them an appreciation of participatory democracy. Interestingly, School 5 teachers are positive about the workings of autonomy in their school, with more than 54% of respondents rating the program as 'good' or better. However, teachers in School 3 are divided in their evaluations of the autonomy program, with 33.3% rating the program as 'good' while an additional 25% rate the program as "deficient" or "poor".

The responses from stakeholders in School 4 stand in stark contrast to the evaluations of their colleagues in other schools. 40% of respondents rate the 'new school programs' over the last three years as "deficient". Participants are generally positive about the school's study plans. However, a significant number of respondents rate autonomy as regular (26.7%) and deficient (13.3%). Similar to the findings above, we interpret these findings to mean that, in some schools, autonomy may enhance democratic

and participatory experiences (more than 47.7% responding good or better to the democracy question) without having a significant influence on school performance.

Before considering the broader meaning and trends within these evaluations, we consider the evaluations of parents below.

Parents' Evaluations

In addition to the evaluations of principals and teachers, we also ask parents to rate several aspects of school autonomy in their schools. First, we ask parents to rate how autonomy is working at their school (question F3 of the survey, Appendix B- responses, Table 26). We also ask parents if their experience at their autonomous school has led to their appreciation of democratic participation (F5 of the survey, Appendix A- responses, Table 27).

Table 26. Parental Evaluations of Autonomy

Response	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	<i>Freq</i>	%								
Excellent	30	41.1	6	23.1	7	25.0	7	18.9	26	65.0
Good	10	13.7	11	42.3	8	28.6	14	37.8	9	22.5
Regular	2	2.7	3	11.5	6	21.4	4	10.8	3	7.5
Deficient	0	0	0	0	2	7.1	2	5.4	0	0
Poor	5	6.8	0	0	2	7.1	3	8.1	1	2.5
Don't know, no response	24	32.9	4	15.4	1	3.6	2	5.4	0	0
Missing	2	2.7	2	7.7	2	7.1	5	13.5	1	2.5
Total	73	100	26	100	28	100	37	100	40	100

Table 27. Parental Evaluation of Autonomy as Democracy

Response	School 1		School 2		School 3		School 4		School 5	
	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>								
Excellent	64	87.7	9	34.6	12	42.9	12	32.4	19	47.5
Good	5	6.8	10	38.5	6	21.4	12	32.4	16	40
Regular	1	1.4	2	7.7	2	7.1	2	5.4	3	7.5
Deficient	-	-	-	-	2	7.1	-	-	-	-
Poor	1	1.4	-	-	2	7.1	-	-	-	-
Don't know, no response	-	-	2	7.7	2	7.1	7	18.9	-	-
Missing	-	-	3	11.5	2	7.1	4	10.8	-	-
Total	73	100	26	100	28	100	37	100	40	100

As illustrated in these tables, parental respondents in all five schools are overwhelmingly positive about the reform. More than 50% of parental respondents in each school say that autonomy is working ‘good’ or better. In addition, parents also tell us that their experience in the school has given them an appreciation of participatory democracy, with more than 50% of respondents in each school responding to this question as “good” or better.

Overall, the majority of stakeholders we spoke with (parents, teachers, and principals) were positive about school autonomy. These positive evaluations of autonomy pertained to both performance improvements and broader, social achievements, such as democracy. These positive stakeholder evaluations appear across all five, sample schools, but are more evident in some schools, such as School 1. However, not all stakeholders share this positive view of autonomy, as evidenced by the responses of several key actors (namely, principals) in schools 4 and 5.

Several trends emerge from the survey data on stakeholder evaluations. First, autonomy appears to have had a different impact on the five schools in the sample. School 1 clearly stands out as an exceptional case of school autonomy. Meanwhile, other

schools appear to have struggled with autonomy. The responses of School 4 respondents emphasize this point particularly.

Second, stakeholder evaluations of the program appear to vary between actors within the same school. Parents appear to be the 'most positive' about the reform. However, teachers also appear to be generally positive about autonomy's impact at their school. This finding is somewhat surprising given ANDEN's strong opposition to the ASP initiative throughout the 1990s. In addition, teachers are also generally positive about the 'new school programs' and the 'study plans' of their schools since becoming autonomous. However, there is insufficient evidence for suggesting that these positive improvements are attributable to autonomy technologies. Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that school autonomy programs may significantly enhance people's appreciation of democratic participation, without contributing to significant school performance improvements.

The diverging evaluations of principals are particularly noteworthy within the data. Despite the fact that parents in School 5 are very positive about school autonomy, the principal in School 5 tells us that numerous conditions at the school have deteriorated since becoming autonomous. To a lesser extent, this is also true in School 4. This critical evaluation stands in stark contrast to the evaluations of other principals in other schools.

It would appear that since becoming autonomous, the poorer schools in our sample have struggled with certain aspects of autonomy. Schools 4 and 5 are distinguished from the other schools in the sample on several accounts: their general level of parental education, their level of parental income, the security of their communities, by

their principal's evaluations of autonomy, and (to some extent) by the autonomy evaluations of other stakeholders. Is the finding that poorer schools are also the ones whose principals report poorer conditions since becoming autonomous coincidental? The poorer schools have implemented autonomous technologies, at times, more consistently than the other schools in the sample (voluntary school fees, stakeholder attendance at Council meetings, school financial reports, etc.) Moreover, in School 4, some aspects of school life appear to have become better since becoming autonomous. Yet overall, the survey data suggests that these schools have struggled with autonomy more than the others.

Correlations

What explains the difference between these experiences? To some extent, the principles of school autonomy (greater participation, accountability, and coordination) appear in all five of our sample schools- although they have clearly become more institutionalized and routine in some schools over others. HCIA suggests that regularities of behaviour are the product of behavioural beliefs, which are encapsulated and perpetuated by historical institutions. Thus, in explaining the regularities of behaviour witnessed in this chapter, HCIA would explain these outcomes in one of two ways.

First, the prevailing beliefs of stakeholders in these schools (prior to school autonomy) may have been different. HCIA accepts the possibility that exogenous, social institutions send 'normative signals' (through auxiliary transactions) that reinforce and perpetuate beliefs relevant to the central transaction. Therefore, stakeholders from poor, less educated, and communities that are to be 'less safe' by stakeholders, may have

different views and expectations about the behaviour of others. This may explain the different behaviours between schools.

Second, HCIA also suggests that institutional components, endogenous to education, provide important normative signals and information about the New Law. These 'normative signals' are important in the perpetuating the new normative behaviours associated with the New Law. Therefore, HCIA might also explain these 'between school' differences by referencing the 'normative signals' being provided to stakeholders. Because these five schools exist within the same municipality (hence, they share the same Delegate) we can assume that, to a certain degree, the Ministry is providing the 'same normative signals' to all five schools. Thus, the school principal (as actor in the organization and, thus, a key source of 'normative signalling' and information) may explain these differences.

To examine these two hypothetical explanations, we turn to an examination of the existence, significance, strength, and direction of relationships involving some of the variables measured in the survey, using nominal and ordinal data. While we cannot determine any causal relationships from this procedure, we believe conducting such a procedure may nevertheless shed additional light on the difference experiences of these autonomous schools. The Spearman's rank order coefficient (Rho) is used in the bivariate analysis in Tables 28-31.⁷ To create the correlation matrix for the variables, we use SPSS for Windows. The program allows us to represent the intersection of the variables, giving the correlation coefficient, the significance, and the number of cases. The correlation coefficient is important in the statistic's interpretation as it measures the

⁷ The study uses the formula for Spearman's rho as: $\rho = 1 - [(6 * \text{SUM}(d^2) / n(n^2 - 1))]$, where d is the difference in ranks.

strength of the relationship between variables. For the purposes of this study, the coefficient is determined to merit further analysis if it is greater than .30 or -.30. The direction of the correlation (+/-) tells us how the two variables are related. For example, a positive correlation (+) is interpreted as a relationship whereby increases in the value of one variable are related to increases in the value of the second variable. Conversely, a negative correlation (-) is interpreted as a relationship whereby increases in the value of one variable are related to decreases in the value of the second variable. The significance tells us whether the variables in question share a statistically significant relationship. For the purposes of this study, significance of a relationship between variables for the Spearman's Rho was determined at both the .05 level and the .01 level.

The first table in the correlation (Table 28) contains 8 variables that represent parental responses to the survey questions. These responses are measured using an ordinal and/or nominal scale. Of the 8 variables in the first table, 5 pertain to school autonomy features and 3 relate to socio-economic conditions. These variables are informed by HCIA hypothesis 1, advanced above. We have discussed the measurement and scores on these variables throughout this chapter and, as such, we forgo a discussion of this information here.

Table 28. Parental Participation/Evaluations and Community Characteristics

		Sufficient Money	Education	Security
Vote Council	Correlation Coefficient	.174(*)	.120	.083
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.098	.255
	N	193	192	188
Part Council	Correlation Coefficient	-.112	.086	.204(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.124	.237	.005
	N	191	193	187
Speak member	Correlation Coefficient	.103	-.095	.380(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.154	.190	.000
	N	193	192	189
Attend directivos	Correlation Coefficient	.049	-.092	.339(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.496	.202	.000
	N	193	194	190
Autonomy Works	Correlation Coefficient	.038	-.069	-.011
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.603	.351	.877
	N	186	186	189

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Of the relationships identified in the first correlation matrix, only one relationship (*speak to members and community security*) is positively correlated above .35, with a significance level greater than .005. While the strength of this relationship is moderate (.380), there exists a significant relationship between the two scores (.000). We interpret this finding to mean that as the score for ‘parents speaking to their Council representatives’ rises, so too does the parental evaluation of community safety.

What might explain the relationship between these two scores? HCIA accepts the possibility that broader, social environment may feed into a stakeholders behavioural belief about how others will act. Parents in unsafe communities, for example, may be distrusting of others. Alternatively, unsafe communities may reflect a broader culture that does not place a high value on education. Additionally, unsafe communities may

lack the necessary social capital for substantive interaction and coordination. Regardless of the scenario, the relationship between these variable is predicted, in part, by theories of change that account for the way in which environmental conditions shape and perpetuate one's belief and expectations of others.

The second correlation matrix (Table 29) contains 11 variables that represent parental responses to the survey questions in addition to principal survey responses. These responses are measured using an ordinal and/or nominal scale and they relate to HCIA hypothesis 2, advanced above. Of the 11 variables in the second matrix, 5 pertain to parental responses about school autonomy features, 5 pertain to the principal's characteristics, and 1 pertains to the year the school became autonomous. Specifically, the variables relating to the principal's characteristics include the principal's highest level of education achieved (*highest edu*), the number of courses a principal has completed in autonomy training (*courses in autonomy*), the principal's total number of years as a principal (*years as principal*), and the principal's number of years at their current school (*years in this school*).

Table 29. Parental Participation/Evaluations and Principal Characteristics

		highest edu	courses in autonomy	courses in admin	Years as principal	years in this school	Year of autonomy
Vote Council	Correlation Coefficient	.073	.011	.101	.023	.026	.011
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.303	.883	.188	.747	.718	.876
	N	200	173	173	200	200	200
Part Council	Correlation Coefficient	.226(**)	.112	.003	.245(**)	.251(**)	.134
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.144	.966	.000	.000	.060
	N	199	173	173	199	199	199
Speak members	Correlation Coefficient	.305(**)	.363(**)	-.040	-.144(*)	.389(**)	.233(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.604	.042	.000	.001
	N	200	173	173	200	200	200
Attend Dirctivos	Correlation Coefficient	.265(**)	.274(**)	-.073	-.092	.316(**)	.199(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.336	.193	.000	.005
	N	201	174	174	201	201	201
Autonomy Works	Correlation Coefficient	-.090	-.189(*)	.095	.053	.090	-.158(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.212	.015	.222	.463	.213	.029
	N	192	166	166	192	192	192

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Of the relationships identified in the second correlation matrix, two relationships positively correlate above .35, with a significance level greater than .005. The *speak to members* and *courses in autonomy* scores are correlated at the .363 level (we note that the negative score in the correlations in this matrix reflect the structure of survey responses—not the conceptual relationship). Although this relationship is of moderate strength, the relationship is significant at the .000 level. Additionally, the *speak to members* and *years in the school* is correlated at the .389 level. The magnitude of this relationship is slightly greater and the relationship is significant at the .000 level. We interpret this first relationship to mean that as the parental responses for ‘speak to Council representatives about concerns’ rises, so too does a principal’s autonomy training. We interpret the second relationship in this matrix to mean that as the parental responses for ‘speak to

Council representatives about concerns' rises, so too does a principal's tenure at the school.

What might explain the relationships between these two sets of scores?

Throughout the study, we have argued that the integration and utilization of new technologies is, in large part, contingent on 'normative signals' from the organization.

According to the theory of HCIA, principals, by virtue of their position within the organization (at the school level) have a critical role to play in providing information, enforcing rules, and perpetuating 'normative signals'. Their leadership style, qualifications, training, and abilities are critical in determining their capacity to perform these functions. Thus, 'leadership capacity' of principals (as key organizational representatives) may be a critical factor in the change experiment. To some extent, this may explain the relationship between *courses in autonomy* and *speak to members*.

Simply stated, well-trained principals may be better prepared to induce and perpetuate new behavioural beliefs about autonomy.

The third correlation matrix (Table 30) contains 7 variables that represent teacher responses to the survey questions. These responses are measured using an ordinal and/or nominal scale. Of the 7 variables in the third matrix, 5 pertain to teacher responses about school autonomy features, and 1 pertains to teachers' evaluations of community security.

Table 30. Teacher Participation/Evaluations and Community Characteristics

		community security
partic in council	Correlation Coefficient	-.010
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.930
	N	85
speak to members	Correlation Coefficient	.109
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.310
	N	88
attend directivos	Correlation Coefficient	-.138
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.211
	N	84
Autonomy works	Correlation Coefficient	.382(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	86
Democracy	Correlation Coefficient	.227(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.036
	N	86

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Of the relationships identified in third correlation matrix, one relationship positively correlates above .35, with a significance level greater than .005. The relationship between *security* and *autonomy* positively correlates at the .382 level, with a significance of .000. We interpret this finding to mean that as the teachers score for “autonomy work” improve, so too does the teacher evaluation of community safety. We have speculated as to the nature of this relationship above.

The fourth correlation matrix (Table 31) contains 8 variables that represent teacher responses to the survey questions in addition to principal survey responses. These responses are measured using an ordinal and/or nominal scale. Of the 8 variables in the second matrix, 5 pertain to teacher responses about school autonomy features, 1 pertains to teacher evaluations of the teacher-principal relationship at the school, and 2 pertain to characteristics of the principal.

Table 31. Teacher Participation/Evaluations and Principal Characteristics

		years as princ	years in this school	teacher/ principal
partic in council	Correlation Coefficient	-.108	.079	.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.322	.472	.289
	N	86	86	85
attend directive	Correlation Coefficient	.184	.037	.099
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.093	.733	.360
	N	85	85	87
speak to member	Correlation Coefficient	.074	.169	.062
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.488	.114	.578
	N	89	89	84
Autonomy works	Correlation Coefficient	.180	.405(**)	.405(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.094	.000	.000
	N	87	87	85
Democracy	Correlation Coefficient	.159	.162	.481(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.141	.133	.000
	N	87	87	86

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Of the relationships identified in the fourth correlation matrix, three relationships positively correlate above .35, with a significance level greater than .005. The *autonomy works* and *years in this school* scores correlates with a magnitude of .405 and a significance of .000. We interpret this finding to mean that as teachers evaluation of autonomy rise, so too does a principal's tenure at the school (we note again that the negative score in the correlations in this matrix reflect the structure of survey responses-not the conceptual relationship). The *autonomy works* and *teacher/principal* scores correlate at the level of .405, with a significance of .000. We interpret this finding to mean that as teachers' evaluation of autonomy improve, so too does their evaluation of the teacher-principal relationship at the school. Finally, the *democracy* and *teacher/principal* scores positively correlate with a magnitude of .481 and a significance level of .000. We interpret this finding to mean that as teachers realization of

participatory democracy through their experience at the school increase, so too do teacher evaluations of the teacher-principal relationship.

Overall, the four correlations illustrate several relationships between our survey scores. While these relationships are not sufficient grounds for implying causality, the relationships provide further support to the trends identified by HCIA; namely, that environmental conditions feed into the normative beliefs and expectations of others in ways that structure their behaviour and that principals may be an important source of information and 'normative signals'. Specifically, the finding that community security and school principal characteristics relate to the autonomy experience is supported by the theory of HCIA. We discuss these relationships further in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we use the survey data to show some important trends. Specifically, we have considered how schools implement and utilize autonomy technologies and whether these practices conform to the specifications of the New Law. Our analysis reveals several significant trends, which we briefly recap here.

First, the five schools in the sample have employed the basic elements of school autonomy in accordance with the Law. Councils exist in all schools and meet regularly. Parents and teachers vote for their respective Council representatives. Several schools have elected their principals. The principles of school autonomy appear to making headway in our sample schools- although they have yet to become fully institutionalized and routine. Clearly, the norms of 'school autonomy' are still evolving.

The second trend in the analysis is that schools utilize and implement technologies in different ways, which at times deviate from the specifications of the Law.

The survey data reveals that schools practice and implement autonomy differently. The size of School Councils is different. In addition, not all schools have a voting majority of parents on the Council. Some stakeholders are utilizing Council representatives to advance their interests, while others are not. Between schools, Councils do not exercise the same degree of influence over school decisions. Clearly, schools and school stakeholders have chosen to follow some rules, but have also chosen to ignore others rules- a finding that can only be fully recognized by theoretical approaches (like HCIA) that do not posit a one-to-one relationship between rules and behaviour.

The third trend shows how schools in Matagalpa have significant discretion in determining how autonomy will be implemented, and which aspects will be implemented in the school. Discrepancies in Council size, Council representation supports this claim. In addition, the finding that at least one principal has drastically exceeded the tenure limit outlined by the New Law is further evidence of the discretion schools in Matagalpa are afforded. We take this as evidence that the organizations of ‘school autonomy’ (specifically, the Ministry and municipal offices) are failing in their formal role as ‘information provided’ and ‘rule enforcer’.

The fourth trend in the data is that autonomy influences schools differently. The data suggests that autonomy is working very well in School 1. In contrast, the data also shows how other schools (such as School 4 and 5) have struggled with autonomy. In addition, autonomy appears to have a different effect upon schools. Again, the evaluations of stakeholders in School 1 clearly show autonomy as having a positive effect on the daily life of the school. In contrast, the evaluation of principals in Schools 4 and 5

show how conditions at the school have actually become poorer since the school became autonomous.

Fifth, the data shows how these different outcomes may be contingent upon the context and school setting. In Table 6, we illustrated the differences between school communities in terms of parental income, parental education, and community security. We note how schools 4 and 5 are deficient in these areas, relative to the other schools in the sample. The data generated from our examination of both procedural and substantive aspects, as well as stakeholder evaluations, illustrates that autonomy may present a greater challenge for poorer schools, where the community is seen by its residents to be 'unsafe'. Additionally, the correlations in this chapter would support this claim. This finding would suggest that 'social institutions' (such as poverty, security, or other aspects of social capital) constrain the implementation of change initiatives, a finding that is consistent with the predictions of HCIA.

Sixth, the correlations within this chapter also reveal how the characteristics of principals relate to the practice of autonomy in schools. To a significant extent, this finding also supports the view that factors exogenous to formal rules exert a significant influence over the interpretation and implementation of new rules. Yet, such a finding cannot be appreciated by positing a one-to-one relationship between rules and behaviour. In contrast, HCIA opens the possibility that change can be achieved through strategic interaction and leadership. In the data presented in this chapter, the strategic leadership of the principal appears significant.

These six findings suggest that the relationship between formal rules and behaviour is not clear or direct. Rather, as we have argued, the implementation and

practice of new rules is conditioned by several factors external to formal rules. Through the use of several procedures, we have been able to expose some of these conditions. We find that community characteristics appear to constrain the practice of school autonomy, whereby poorer communities (like schools 4 and 5) face greater challenges. We also have some evidence of a relationship between principal characteristics and school autonomy, yet the precise nature of this relationship is not yet known.

The information and findings presented in this chapter yield support for an HCIA in several respects. First, HCIA posits the argument that the relationship between formal rules and behaviour is neither direct nor clear. Rather, one's motivation to follow the rules is determined by their behavioural belief about how others will act in relation to the rule. By showing how Nicaraguan schools have only selectively followed the New Law, we have provided significant support for this explanation. While we have yet to make any statements regarding the 'behavioural beliefs' of stakeholders, we have nevertheless taken an important step towards this understanding by documenting the divergent practices of school autonomy in these five schools.

Second, we have also given support to an HCIA explanation of change by demonstrating several key relationships between context and practice. HCIA argues that one's behavioural belief and motivations are influenced by one's environment and social context. From the data utilized in this chapter, we are able to illustrate a relationship between community security, principal characteristics, and autonomy practice. While we are unable to provide any qualitative support or strong rationale for these relationships, we nevertheless believe identifying a relationship between context and practice in Nicaraguan schools is an important first step towards an HCIA explanation of change.

Overall, HClA predicts that the regularities of behaviour within an institution are conditioned by institutional components, only one of which is formal rules. We have taken significant steps forward in this HClA explanation of school change by illustrating how the regularities of behaviour witnessed in autonomous schools both converge and diverge from the formal rules of autonomy. Additionally, we have demonstrated important relationships between the environment, social context and formal rules. However, we have yet to consider how 'behavioural beliefs' mediate between behaviour, environment, historical institutions, and policy reform. This is, then, our objective in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN: STAKEHOLDER EVALUATIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

In chapter five, we saw how the new institution of 'school autonomy' has perpetuated many of the prevailing, normative understandings of education- despite the introduction of new formal rules and principles for greater participation, local accountability, and local coordination in education. In chapter six, we saw how the regularities of behaviour produced under the New Law both converge and deviate from the principles and rules of the New Law. However, from the perspective of HCIA, the most pressing issue remains: has autonomy led to a shift in the normative, behavioural beliefs of stakeholders? Have stakeholders internalized the normative beliefs and prescriptions associated with the New Law? Do they believe others are likely to follow the rules? Does this belief determine their participation in school decision-making?

In this chapter, we consider these questions by examining the normative beliefs of individual stakeholders in relation to 'school autonomy'. HCIA suggests that an individual's belief about education and others in their community is the key to understanding the institutional stability and institutional change. According to the theory, behavioural beliefs are products of social interaction- a process through which normative signals are provided and internalized by individuals. It is these normative beliefs that produce regularities of behaviours within an institution- the behaviour that is followed (and expected to be followed) in a given social situation by (most) individuals. Therefore, understanding the regularities of behaviour witnessed in chapter six requires

an examination of the prevailing normative beliefs of stakeholders. Additionally, understanding change requires analyzing how (and if) new normative beliefs have been internalized by stakeholders.

We examine these beliefs throughout this chapter. We rely on interviews from parents, teachers, and principals in our five ‘autonomous schools’. We also use interviews from key stakeholders with the Ministry of Education. Through these interviews, we intend to identify the extent to which the prevailing normative beliefs of ‘autonomy’ stakeholders are undermined or perpetuated by the new ‘school autonomy’ institution. Our discussion and analysis of stakeholder responses revolve around three issues: a stakeholder’s interpretation of the New Law; a stakeholder’s views and expectations of others (parents, teachers, and principals) in relation to the New Law; and a stakeholders’ views and expectations of the Ministry.

These central issues allow us to identify the behavioural beliefs of autonomy stakeholders and, in addition, to evaluate the extent to which the norms of participation, local accountability, and local coordination (the normative principles of autonomy) have become routine in autonomous schools. To some extent, we can link these normative beliefs to the regularities of behaviour witnessed in the previous chapter. Additionally, by positing behavioural beliefs as a significant ‘motivator’ for behaviour (belief-to-behaviour- as opposed to rule-to-behaviour), we can establish and recommend a framework for improving ‘school autonomy’. This framework, employed in the concluding chapter of this study, builds upon our understanding of the relationship between behavioural beliefs, ‘normative signalling’, and behaviour. In short, by recognizing these relationships between beliefs and behaviour, we are better positioned to

design formal rules and institutions that perpetuate the normative beliefs and behaviours we are trying to instill.

We begin this chapter with a discussion of the methodology used in this chapter. Following this, we proceed with an examination of the normative beliefs and expectations of different ‘actor groups’ (parents, teachers, principals, bureaucrats, delegates, mayors, and senior policy-makers). Our analysis reveals that actors view the rules and principles of the New Law in a positive light, but are sceptical about whether other actors (including organizations) will comply with the new rules and principles of ‘school autonomy’. To a significant extent, stakeholders’ expectations of others explain why autonomy has yet to yield significant normative and technical advancements in local participation and accountability in Nicaraguan schools.

Chapter Methodology:

The information presented in this chapter relies on interviews collected by the researcher in May through June 2005. To examine the normative understandings, expectations, and anticipations of stakeholders, we conducted a series of interviews with a range of actors across multiple levels. We interviewed three sets of stakeholders, including national-level policy-makers, municipal-level actors (delegates, bureaucrats, and people from the Mayors office) and school-level actors (principals, teachers and parents). Through open-ended conversations and interviews with these actors, we have attempted to identify their normative beliefs about the New Law and their expectations about how others will act in relation to the New Law. Here, it is important to recognize that we are not starting at ‘ground zero’; meaning, at the time of these interviews, many

interviewees had at least five or more years experience in autonomous schools. Therefore, we must acknowledge that their expectations and evaluations of the program are informed by *their actual experiences*, rather than their anticipated experience. But this does not compromise our understanding. Rather, it provides us with an opportunity to see how stakeholders have experienced autonomy and to examine how these experiences have served to undermine or perpetuate their cognitive understandings of education in Nicaragua.

The interviews with all parents, teachers, and principals were collected from the five autonomous schools identified in chapter three. In the interest of confidentiality and anonymity, we have omitted the names of the schools in this study. We forgo a thorough discussion of data collection procedures in this section, as we have discussed these procedures in chapter three. Rather, our methodological point of departure in this section is data organization.

Having collected, translated, and transcribed the interviews, we faced an initial challenge: how does one display and digest the abundance of data collected across numerous interview sessions with numerous types of actors? With a reform like school autonomy, different actors have different normative understandings, depending on what is required of them and their position in the organizational hierarchy. In short, autonomy may mean different things to different actors. For parents, it may mean a greater chance for participating in their child's education. For teachers, it may mean scrutiny of their performance. For principals, it may mean more work while for bureaucrats it may mean having to deal with a new administrator (the delegate). Because of the potential for multiple meanings and interpretations, our first step in treating the data was to separate

the data according to actor groups; namely, parents, teachers, principals, bureaucrats, municipal delegates, and the mayor's office. Thus, we sorted the data and transcripts into each of these actor categories.

The vast majority of the data was collected from teachers and parents. In order to make sense of this data, we employed Spencer's (1993) framework approach. We began processing the interview data from parents and teachers through a familiarizing ourselves with the data. We listened to the tapes countless times. We also read the transcripts numerous times. We looked at interviews separately, making notes along the way. Following this, we looked at the interviews together, comparing our margin notes for each interview transcript. Through this exercise, we were able to observe several, themes emerging from the texts of both parents and teacher interviews.

Following this, we developed a codebook that would capture all the relevant themes related to the theory of HCIA; namely, a stakeholder's normative interpretation of the New Law; a stakeholder's belief about others; a stakeholder's belief about the MED; and a stakeholder's evaluation of autonomy outcomes. Specifically, we developed a list of all the possible codes that related to these four beliefs. Once satisfied with our codes, we developed several 'key trigger words' (see Appendix E) that could serve as a guide for code application to the text. However, these 'key trigger words' served as a guide only; meaning, they were not the only basis for a code's application. This loose application of trigger words allowed for greater, interpretative flexibility and a contingency approach to code application.

Upon developing our codebook, we began the process of code application. We used ATLAS-ti to assist us in this exercise of code indexing. During the indexing stage,

we applied the specific codes systematically to all the data in textual form by annotating the transcripts with the specific codes. We were required to repeat the indexing several times, trying a number of different codes until we were satisfied that the code accurately reflected the idea being conveyed by the interviewee. For reasons mentioned in chapter three, we decided to apply a code only once in each interview.

In order to illustrate the types of issues stakeholders (parents and teachers) were most concerned with, we display the comments according to their code frequency in the table below. This table illustrates the number of times a code was applied in interview transcripts of parents and teachers. In Table 32, we list the code frequencies by actor group as well as the combined total. Table 33 displays the code frequencies by the actor group in each sample school. The code-to-school ratio displayed in Table 33, in part, reflects differences in data collected from each school. Simply stated, where more people are interviewed, more codes are likely to be applied and, thus, code counts/frequencies are likely to be higher in schools where more interviews were conducted. In School 1, we used transcripts from interviews with 11 parents and 9 teachers. In School 2, we used transcripts from interviews with 6 parents and 6 teachers. In School 3, we used transcripts from interviews with 9 parents and 12 teachers. In School 4: 15 parents/ 8 teachers. In School 5: 12 parents/ 9 teachers.

Table 32. Code Frequencies (by actor groups & combined total)

Themes (by Frequency)	Parents	Teachers	Combined (Parents & Teachers)
Good Reform/Law	13	9	22
Improved Accountability/ Participation	8	12	20
Law's Application	2	15	17
Good School	11	2	13
Corruption	2	7	9
MED Interference	1	8	9
Capture	4	3	7
Improved Performance	2	4	6
Lack of Resources	3	3	6
MED Resource Provision	1	5	6
Poverty	4	2	6
School Infrastructure	3	2	5
Improved Administration	1	3	4
Security	3	1	4
MED- Information Provision	1	2	3
Lack of Interest	3	0	3
Lack of Redress	3	0	3
Law's Significance	1	2	3
Home Setting	2	0	2
Privatisation/ Off-loading	0	2	2
School Fees	2	0	2
Local Culture	1	0	1
Bad Law/ Bad Reform	1	0	1
Total	72	82	154

Table 33. Codes by School and Actors

Themes	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	Parents Total	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	Teachers Total	Combined (Parents & Teachers)
Good Reform/Law	5	3	2	-	3	13	3	2	3	-	1	9	22
Improved Accountability/ Participation	4	1	1	-	2	8	3	2	3	1	3	12	20
MED's Application	-	1	1	-	-	2	5	4	5	1	-	15	17
Good School	4	1	-	-	6	11	-	-	-	-	2	2	13
Corruption	-	-	1	1	-	2	-	1	3	3	-	7	9
MED Interference	-	-	-	1	-	1	4	1	3	-	-	8	9
Capture	-	1	-	3	-	4	-	-	1	2	-	3	7
Improved Performance	2	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	2	1	-	4	6
Lack of Resources	-	-	-	2	1	3	-	-	-	2	1	3	6
MED Resource Provision				1	-	1	-	-	1	2	2	5	6
Poverty	-	-	-	2	2	4	-	-	-	1	1	2	6
School Infrastructure	-	-	1	1	1	3	-	-	-	2	-	2	5
Improved Administration	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	1	-	-	3	4
Security	-	-	-	1	2	3	-	-	-	-	1	1	4
MED- Information Provision	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	2	3
Lack of Interest	-		2	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	0	3
Lack of Redress		1	2			3	-	-	-	-	-	0	3
Law's Significance	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	2	-	-	2	3
Home Setting	-	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	0	2
Privatisation/ Off-loading	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	-	2	-	2	2
School Fees	-	-	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	0	2
Local Culture	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	0	1
Bad Law/ Bad Reform	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	0	1
Total	16	9	12	17	18	72	18	10	24	17	13	82	154

These tables illustrate a great deal of variation in the frequency of code application; illustrating the various types of issues stakeholders were likely to raise when discussing

autonomy in their schools. The codes represent specific issues in the textual analysis, which are then used to answer questions about stakeholder views of the New Law, of others, and their evaluation of the program. We provide a conceptual definition and brief discussion of each code used in the analysis in Appendix D and an additional discussion of the key trigger words in Appendix E.

As the codebooks above demonstrate, when given the opportunity to talk about school autonomy, parents and teachers in our school sample mentioned a wide variety of issues. These issues covered a range of different topics. These issues include the school itself, the school staff, the Law, the role of the Ministry in education, the central government, training, children, families, poverty, and numerous other issues- some of which had little to do with the autonomy program itself. From the exhaustive list of issues brought up by stakeholders, we are able to categorize the codes into the following four categories:

Stakeholder Beliefs about the New Law and School Autonomy: When asked to comment on autonomy, the vast majority of stakeholder comments gave favourable mention to the principles of school autonomy. These favourable mentions pertained to the theory of autonomy itself; namely, local participation, local responsibility, and local accountability. In this category, we include the following codes: ‘good law/reform’, ‘privatization/off-loading’, and ‘school fees.’

Stakeholder Beliefs about Others in relation to School Autonomy: When given the opportunity to speak about autonomy, stakeholders often bring up their views, concerns,

and expectations of others in relation to the New Law. These comments could relate directly to parents, teachers, and principals. They could also relate to others indirectly, through reference to the environment. For example, several respondents mentioned 'the issue of poverty'. For us, these types of mentions reflect the individual's concerns and expectations about the behaviour others; being, that in a condition of 'poverty' (or illiteracy) others are may be unable/unwilling to act in ways specified by the New Law. Although indirect, these statements project 'expectations' and 'anticipations' upon others, internalized through 'normative signalling' from the environment, which can shape one's own motivations towards the central transaction. Like stakeholders, the academic literature on school autonomy in the developing world repeatedly projects similar 'expectations' onto others by assuming that 'poverty' and 'illiteracy' constrain a stakeholder's capacity for meaningful involvement (in fact, our survey findings in chapter six suggest that 'education levels' and 'poverty' are not actually related to participation!) Thus, in identifying a stakeholder's beliefs and expectations about others, we include statements related to the environment (amongst other statements), which are seen by the respondent to inhibit the meaningful participation of others. These include: 'good school', 'corruption', 'capture', 'lack of resources', 'poverty', 'school infrastructure', 'security', 'lack of interest', 'lack of redress', 'home setting', and 'local culture'.

Stakeholder Beliefs about the MED in relation to School Autonomy: Several stakeholders mentioned the Ministry of Education (MED) when talking about school autonomy. These mentions often related to the behaviour of the MED under school autonomy. At other times, they related to the extent to which the MED, as a key institutional

organization, was fulfilling (or failing to fulfill) its obligations as ‘rule enforcer’ and ‘informational provider’. HCIA predicts that key organizations, like the MED, are vitally important in perpetuating or undermining change- hence, examining the ‘normative signals’ provided by the MED is vital for an HCIA explanation. Here, we included a consideration of the information encapsulated in the following codes: ‘MED’s Application’, ‘MED interference’, ‘MED resource provision’, and ‘MED-information provision’.

Stakeholder Evaluations of School Autonomy: When asked to evaluate the program, respondents often accredited the Law with an improvement at the school; including, but not limited to, greater community participation in school decision-making, greater local accountability, and/or some aspect of improved school administration and performance. Only seven of the 154 coded comments emerge as negative evaluations of the theory of autonomy and the New Law itself. In contrast, at least fifty-two of the 154 coded comments can be interpreted as favourable mentions of the Law itself and/or its impact on the school. Here, we consider the information presented in the following codes: ‘Improved Accountability/Participation’, ‘Improved Performance’, ‘Improved Administration’, ‘Law’s significance’, and ‘Bad Law/ Bad Reform’.

The responses from principals, bureaucrats, delegates, the mayor’s offices, and policy-makers are not included within this codebook. As will be made clear in our discussion, these groups of stakeholders clearly dealt with different issues and, as such, we have decided to allow the response from these individuals to stand individually.

Readers will note that we are assuming interview participants spoke honestly in the interviews. Thus, respondents' comments are taken by the author at face value. However, we can imagine both political and psycho-social reasons why a respondent might be less than honest in interviews. As a result, our interpretation of responses may be somewhat limited by these mitigating circumstances. Nevertheless, the assumption that participants spoke openly is necessary in the interest of incorporating such a large dataset in the analysis. While our application and interpretation of codes does not account for the possibility of mitigating political and psycho-social influences on participant responses, we have attempted to consider the possibility of such influences in our interpretations of non-coded responses; namely; interviews with principals, delegates, and members of Ministry, as well as our examination of the context and documentary evidence.

Constructing and Re-constructing Behavioural Beliefs of Stakeholders through School Autonomy:

Behavioural beliefs are at the core of the HCIA perspective. According to Greif, behavioural beliefs fundamentally determine our motivations towards transactions- and thus, are the source of the regularities of institutional behaviour. Additionally, behavioural beliefs fundamentally influence the selection among alternatives in new- not yet institutionalized- situations. As such, behavioural beliefs are both the product of previous institutions and the source of new institutions- reflecting the self-enforcing nature of institutions and behavioural beliefs.

Viewed from the perspective of HCIA, change means addressing the normative worldviews of Nicaraguan stakeholders, not just performance outcomes. It requires asking if and how ‘school autonomy’ has reinforced and/or undermined not only the way Nicaraguans perform educational tasks, but also the way in which Nicaraguans construct themselves and others in relation to education. Institutions, like education, do not merely influence behaviour and outcomes at a given moment in time. Rather, as we have argued, they have a significant role in the construction and perpetuation of these worldviews. From the HCIA perspective, they are both the product and source of these worldviews- a position that leads Greif to call the institution: ‘the engine of history’.

Has the new ‘school autonomy’ institution in Nicaragua become an engine of change in Nicaragua? Has it undermined or perpetuated the prevailing worldview and normative constructs of Nicaraguan stakeholders? In this section, we examine the extent to which school autonomy has influenced the normative understandings of key stakeholders. We look at the voices of stakeholders to examine how they construct the Law, themselves, and others within the new, formal institution of school autonomy. Our analysis begins with a consideration of the ‘policy-maker’.

The Policy-Makers

Humberto Belli is most often recognized as the chief, policy architect of ‘school autonomy’ in Nicaragua. Although we did not interview Belli himself, we have significant texts from which to extract his diagnosis of the problems of education in Nicaragua. Belli was instrumental in the creation of reform during the early 1990s under

the Chamorro administration. His diagnosis of the 'real problems' of education in Nicaragua reveals a particular worldview that contains its own inclusions and exclusions:

During the Sandinista government there was a significant diversion of accountability away from parents, weakening the social contract; teachers depended on the union and the ministry for their paycheck, and did not have to account to parents. The loss of this link has been found to be a significant- but often overlooked- problem in Nicaragua and in other countries...As a consequence a weak social contract between parents and teachers, there was a steady decline in the teaching of values in school- values that parents want their children to learn and practice in school, followed by a steady loss in the social position of teachers in the community and a corresponding loss of personal commitment to education quality. (Arcia and Belli, 1999: 1)

As we see in this text above, Belli's definitions of the 'real' problems of education in Nicaragua and the most appropriate solutions depends greatly on his normative understandings of the state and others, which underpin, justify, and guide the educational diagnoses and proposed solutions. Belli's diagnostic reflects a particular, neoliberal worldview that stands in sharp contrast to the Sandinista diagnostic, a distinction that cannot be fully appreciated outside of the historical context. Not only does this worldview stand in contrast in to the socialist principles of the Sandinista, it also posits the Sandinista as 'responsible for the problem'- and, by doing so, perpetuates the polarization between socialist and conservative factions.

In fact, Belli's interpretation and solution to the problem of education can be read as a broad (yet particular) understanding of Nicaraguan society:

It was believed that autonomy would lead to improved learning however it was promoted for other reasons...autonomy and participation in the schools were seen as a right of the community to vote and have a voice in

the policies that affect their lives.... There was also a need to depoliticize and liberate the educational system, increasing its stability. The political nature of the system has caused great damage and has hurt many past reforms. This reform has depoliticized the system through taking power from the state and transferring it to the community. For example, after presidential elections [Dr. Belli] received phone calls recommending people for positions as school principals. Because of the reform, he no longer had the power to name principals- they were now elected by the community (A conference transcript summarizing Belli's presentation to the attendants. See: Foro, 2000)

Within these scripts, several 'constructions' are noteworthy. First, it is clear that, at least in the eyes of Belli, 'school autonomy' was created and promoted in the service of a larger social project, aimed at transforming Nicaraguan society. In fact, the mention of the 'social contract' has significant social and political overtones in Nicaragua, which cannot be fully understood within the technical confines of education. As such, the 'school autonomy' program cannot be fully understood, let alone studied, independently from the policy-makers broader understanding of society. Although the principles of neo-liberal ideology are clearly reflected in this understanding- the selection and promotion of autonomy in Nicaragua cannot be understood in neo-liberal terms alone. Rather, the reform emerges within a distinct, historical context- wherein the conflicts between actors (conservatives and socialist factions) are pre-determined and, to a significant degree, condition the selection of alternative policy solutions.

Belli's interpretation of education also reinforces traditional 'battle lines' of Nicaraguan education. By constructing the Sandinistas and the teachers, particularly the Teachers Union (ANDEN) as the reason for 'weakening the social contract', Belli perpetuates the zero-sum nature of the educational institution in Nicaragua. These fault lines were, and continue to be, a defining feature of education in Nicaragua. In fact,

several stakeholders told us that the real (some say, the only) reason for the conservative government's promotion of school autonomy is to break the power of ANDEN. The perceived marginalization of ANDEN and the Sandinista provoked considerable anger from many union members- resulting in numerous teachers strikes- where Belli himself became the frequent topic of graffiti. In fact, the slogan "Get out, Belli" decorated walls all over the capital of Managua (Kampwirth, 1997: 123).

What these scripts demonstrate is that the selection of new school autonomy institution in Nicaraguan is not informed solely by a politically neutral or strictly technical rationale. Rather, the selection of 'school autonomy' is informed, in large part, by the behavioural beliefs of 'policy-makers'. These beliefs are not simply the product of global forces, external to the national context. Rather in this instance, they emerge as part of an ongoing political struggle in the country. The selection of policy alternatives appears to be shaped around the well-defined and pre-existing political and ideological fault lines. As such, the selection and definition of new institutions and rules reflect, constitute, and perpetuate the cultural, social, and political worlds and conflicts that policy-makers share and internalize.

To a significant extent, the individual policy-makers that defined the initial conflicts in the implementation phase are no longer part of the dialogue. Most, like Belli and Chamorro, have retired from political office. The individuals defining the policies, procedures, and implementation strategies of the New Law of Education Participation in 2005 are clearly different personalities, but the current government (the PLC) shares the UNO's conservative bent. To a significant extent then, the battle lines of today are the same as they were in the early 1990s.

During our field research in 2005, we had the opportunity to interview the Director General of Education, a significant senior policy-maker in Nicaragua. In that interview, the Director General defined several of the key issues and objectives of the New Law:

The New Law is an extension of the ASP...The application is broader (to all schools) and clarifies several aspects of the previous program, such as school fees, and nature of the Councils and the purpose of the initiative...The emphasis of the New Law, formerly the Autonomous Schools Program, is fundamentally on autonomy. The idea is that what was previously central is now to become local (autonomy)... The objective of this program is to make/create an infrastructure that permits decisions to be made locally...

Autonomy is very important in a country like Nicaragua...because capacity is very limited in our communities. Resources are deficient in our communities and the institutional fabric has traditionally been deficient. The original idea of autonomy, which continues today, is the development of democracy through the autonomous schools.... The MECD is trying to make this experience in Nicaragua.

Again, like the script from Belli, what is immediately apparent is the association of school autonomy with a broader, social objective: *the development of democracy*. Here, there are significant parallels to HCIA, which posits change as a normative process of shifting worldviews, rather than a strictly technical process for performance achievement in education.

The specific layout of the New Law rests upon the same principles and technologies of the initial 'autonomy program'- relying on the Councils as the principle mechanism for improving accountability and participation in education. As the Director General informed us:

The councils rest upon an educational community of parents, students, teachers, directors and the Ministry. At the nucleus of this community is the parents council, which consists of representatives of parents from the community...the student government makes a contribution in the representation of one member in directives councils. These representatives, together with representatives of the Teachers Councils make up the Directive Council, where the director (principal) is the head. The function of the director is to organize. This is much better way since the diagnostic is improved as the priorities are made locally...Previously, this diagnostic was centralized and too far removed to be responsive to locals...

This script is highly consistent with the general principles and understanding of the NPM.

However, the Director General also recognizes the supportive role that the Ministry must play in order to make the reform work properly:

The role of the Ministry is to create the appropriate support infrastructure/networks. For the point, we have Centro Aprende and the Centro Educativos that are to serve as support networks for the schools. The purpose of these organisms is to create a supportive environment for education. In many communities, there is no 'culture of learning' to compliment the rights of children, their right to learning. The intent is to create a spirit of learning...This is where progress begins. The substantial impact for math and Spanish (language) is fundamental for a country in transition...Along these lines, the government assembly has established an initiative for making these transformations in the NEP (National Education Plan), which provides an overall strategic framework to guide sector-wide reform.

From this script, several significant ideas emerge. First, the Ministry of Education in Nicaragua clearly recognizes decentralization (and school autonomy) as process that necessitates a continued and active role of the central government. Specifically, the Director General sees the Ministry as having an active role in managing

and facilitating the process. This view stands in contrast to the neo-liberal image of a state retreating and vacating the policy domain through decentralization.

Moreover, in the view of the Director General, the central government (and the Ministry) has not only an active, facilitation role- but it is the chief protagonist in defining the problems, strategies, and solutions of education within the country. While the transfer of decision-making to local School Councils is a significant attempt at improving accountability, many of the problems, priorities, and strategies continued to be defined from above. In fact, a review of the New Law reveals that while School Councils are given significant powers to define how education is to be administered, they have no power to define curriculum or broad educational objectives. In the Nicaraguan case, we can see how, to a significant extent, the values and objectives of education continue to be defined from the top-down, despite the fact that responsibility for task assignment and fulfillment has been transferred to local schools.

In our discussions, the Director General mentioned the creation of a 'culture of learning' as a key objective of the contemporary Ministry effort. For our purposes, this mention is significant in that it casts 'change' in 'non-technical terms':

Autonomy is an important part of that [democratic] transformation, but it is not the only part. Here, in Nicaragua, the effort has been to develop democracy, a new culture. Education has an important role to play in creating the capacity for this transformation.

The Ministry has launched a (television) Channel 6 as the education channel, with educational programs for children...this replaces the many images of violence that fill the television programming in Nicaragua. We have enlisted some support and leadership from Mexico for this initiative....

What is encouraging about these scripts is the extent to which the systemic nature of the Nicaraguan institution is recognized. Here, the institution of education does not appear as a series of rules only. Rather, the Director General openly acknowledges the importance of integrating all aspects of the institution (its rules and organizations) towards the promotion and perpetuation of new, normative understandings in Nicaragua; in the words of the Director General, to create a new 'culture of learning'. Not only are these new normative understandings being prescribed through the introduction of new formal rules, but also it appears that the Director General openly acknowledges the role of the 'organizations' and 'media' in perpetuating this new institutional objective.

Overall, several important trends emerge from the voices of these key policy-makers. First, autonomy appears as a 'social' project. Although policy-makers clearly recognize gains in technical efficiency to be derived from school autonomy, both Humberto Belli and the Director General suggest the reform is being promoted for other reasons. Here, Belli mentions the 'de-politicalization of education' while the Director General mentions the creation of a 'democracy' and a 'culture of learning' as the primary objectives of the reform. The objectives are normative, rather than technical in that they involve a fundamental shift in beliefs and values within the populace. A strictly technical approach to school autonomy would miss these broader objectives.

Second, to a significant degree, both Belli and the Director General see the Ministry (and the state) as having an active role in the autonomy program and the promotion of the new normative principles associated with school autonomy. This image of the 'active state' stands in stark contrast to the neo-liberal view of a retreating state.

Ironically, in promoting bottom-up participation in education, the Ministry has taken a top-down, leadership role. In fact, the new rules of school autonomy specify a significant transfer of operational powers (the means by which institutionally determined goals are achieved) without a concomitant transfer of criteria powers (the means which equates to organizational problems being defined from below). The top-down nature of this transfer is evident both in the specifications of the New Law, discussed in chapter five, and the voices of senior policy-makers discussed above.

Finally, the voices of key policy-makers discussed above reveal how policy-makers continue to define both the problems and solutions of education in traditional ways, despite introducing new principles for the educational institution in Nicaragua. Throughout history, Nicaraguans citizens have always appeared as ‘passive recipients’ of education and the social projects of governing regimes. Within these contemporary transcripts, parents once again appear as ‘passive recipients’ of the government’s new social project in education. The problems and solutions continue to be defined from above. Additionally, the problems and solutions themselves appear to perpetuate divisions and conflicts that have characterized Nicaraguan politics over the past several decades. In the following sections, we consider how stakeholders at the local level have internalized these normative signals and the new rules of school autonomy.

The Parent

When talking with parents about ‘school autonomy’ and the “New Law”, it is surprising to note the disparity in understanding and knowledge surrounding the reform.

In our interviews with parents, we informed interviewees that the government had recently (in most cases, with the exception of school 1- autonomous since 1995) created a new program for education that meant a change in the way their child’s school functions. We also informed them that this involved, in part, the introduction of ‘school councils’ with some authority over decision-making. We then proceeded to ask the interviewee if they were aware of these changes. If the interviewee responded that they were aware of these changes, we then proceeded with a follow-up question, asking them if they could identify aspects of principles of the new initiative beyond the ‘new school councils’. A significant number of interviewees responded that they were able to identify aspects of the new initiative, beyond the new councils. In most instances, these interviewees proceeded to speak about ‘school autonomy’, ‘the New Law of Participation’, and/or some aspect of the initiative’s broader principles of ‘parental participation’ and ‘local accountability’ in education (see table below for responses).

Table 34. Parental Interviewees awareness of the New Law

Parent respondents by school	Unaware, Do not recognize/ acknowledge any change	Aware, Recognize the presence of ‘new school councils’	Very Aware, Recognize aspects of New Law and/or principles of ‘school autonomy’ (beyond new councils)
School 1	0%	45%	55%
School 2	16%	33%	50%
School 3	22%	33%	44%
School 4	26%	60%	11%
School 5	16%	42%	42%
Total % of stakeholders interviewed	17%	46%	36%

As the table demonstrates, the vast majority of interviewees recognize at least some aspects of the changes introduced in their child’s school under the ‘autonomy’ initiative. What is surprising is the extent to which many interviewees were able to

identify key aspects or principles of the autonomy reform, with some School 1 interviewees even referring to the New Law as *Law 413*. These findings are significant in that they demonstrate the amount of information locals have received about school autonomy. Such a finding should serve to debunk claims that parents have little to no information about the program.

As demonstrated in our codebooks above, those who were ‘aware’ or ‘very aware’ of the changes often had a favorable view of the principles of ‘school autonomy’ as specified within the New Law (see: “Good law/Good reform”).

Law 413 is a very good law. The idea of participation and accountability has been missing in this community...[and]...autonomy is significant in the creation of these noble principles. The community has a right to be heard, but in this country, we have historically been silenced. So, this reform is about more than schools. It is about the democratization of our community and the development of our community. (Parent, School 1)

Autonomy ensures that parents have a say in how the teachers make their decisions. While this is a good school, it is still better that parents are given an opportunity to participate in the education of their child. (Parent, School 1)

The councils are a good idea. They provide a chance for the community to come together and discuss the problems/deficiencies of schooling and our children’s problems. We all help out. (Parent, School 3)

Autonomy ensures that parents have say in how the school makes decisions. (Parent, School 5)

A significant number of interviewees made some positive mention about the Law and/or program of autonomy. What is encouraging about these responses is the extent to which parents seem to share a favourable view of the principles of school autonomy; namely, greater participation and local accountability. Additionally, parents seem to share the view of the policy-makers discussed above, equating the principles of autonomy with the

democratization of Nicaragua. In this sense, school autonomy takes on a much greater, normative and political significance than can be appreciated by technical study alone.

As our codebook also demonstrates, very few interviewees were likely to complain about the Law itself (see: “School Fees”; “Bad Law/Bad Reform”). Where they did, the comments were usually directed at school fees:

Schools are always independent for the people who do not have possibilities of paying. How can we be expected to pay for our child's education when we cannot afford so many other necessities? I think the school fees need to be done away with because people have no way of paying them. (Parent, School 3)

Despite the positive response of parents to the theory of ‘school autonomy’, the prospects of ‘school autonomy’ in Matagalpa became much more problematic when we asked interviewees about their views and expectations of others in relation to the New Law. What is surprising about interviewee responses is the extent to which a parent’s perception and expectations of others in the community differed between schools. For example, numerous parents from School 1 mentioned significant improvements and contributions from the community in school decision-making (see: “improved accountability/participation” and “improved performance”:

School autonomy is a very good program. The community has come together to help build important programs for the children. We all help out in our own way and attend the meetings when we can. (Parent, School 1)

This is a very good school and very good community. Most people here are concerned about the future and they see this [autonomy] as an opportunity to help shape the future...The teachers are very supportive of our input and take the time to explain most aspects of pedagogy. Because of there is dialogue, the community has the opportunity to come together and be heard...This is important for our democracy. (Parent, School 1)

HCIA predicts that one's motivation towards the central transaction (here, being the participation of the interviewee/parent in the School Council) is significantly influenced by their expectations and anticipations of others- beyond their feelings towards the theory of the New Law. In School 1, it appears that parents have both internalized and projected positive expectations of the others in the community.

However, the construction of the 'active and involved community' illustrated in School 1 contrasts significantly with the image and expectations projected by parents in other schools. For example, as the codebook above and the comments below demonstrate, despite their positive evaluations of the 'theory of autonomy', several interviewees in School 3, 4, and 5 expressed significant concerns about the behaviour of others in relation to the New Law.

In this community, parents do not have much of an interest in education. There is little if any communication between the school and the household. As I have observed, most parents do not know what their child is learning. When they [the child] does poorly, parents do not care. The bridge between the school and the home does not exist for most families. (Parent, School 3)

The community is very poor. Parents have no work and no resources... The security of the community is also lacking. There are many vandals and it is dangerous for children...Here at this school, the infrastructure is lacking. There is not electricity, no water, no gymnasium, no library, the school needs painting. These are many of the problems of the school which autonomy does not address. Parents and teachers do not have capacity to address these problems. Therefore, directors have great influence over school decisions. (Parent, School 4)

The changes mean very little for us here because things are very deficient. There is much poverty and violence. Parents, the older people, do not take much interest in schooling. They do not care very much about education. There is much gaming and drinking in the homes...children are subjected to (violence) poor physical treatment in many of the homes...many children are left on their own and their parents do not care/worry about their homework. (Parent, School 4)

This is a very poor community. Most people struggle to survive everyday. Therefore, they do not have the time or the interest to attend school meetings. Most of the parents in this community are very poor, they cannot read, and have no education. How are they supposed to decide what is best for the children's future schooling? (Parent, School 5)

These comments were common concerns amongst parents and they pertain to the social conditions defining their environment. Specifically, these concerns range from mentions of poverty, illiteracy, deficient local culture, and others (see: 'corruption', 'capture', 'lack of resources', 'poverty', 'school infrastructure', 'security', 'lack of interest', 'lack of redress', 'home setting', and 'local culture').

What is evident in these statements is the way in which parents are constructing themselves and others in relation to education- in light of these social deficiencies. Specifically, within these types of comments, parents appear to construct other parents as 'passive agents' in education- who lack the capacity (or interest) for meaningful contributions in education. In fact, the texts suggest that parents question the extent to which others (and perhaps themselves) could feasibly participate in education, given such social conditions. From the perspective of HCIA, we can interpret these constructions as the 'expectations' that parents have for others in relation to the New Law.

To a significant extent, these contrasting constructions of the 'active community' (in School 1) and 'capacity deficient parent' (in Schools 3, 4, and 5) is reinforced in our own systematic observations of a School Council meeting at School 3- where the attendance was low and where parents appeared as passive, uninterested listeners rather than active participants. In our observations of this Council meeting, parents listened to a teacher's presentation about school activities. No questions were asked and no

discussions were had. Additionally, the image of the 'passive, uninterested parent' is reinforced in our interviews with teachers and delegates, discussed below.

Additionally, several parents expressed concerns that powerful actors seeking to advance their own interests can easily manipulate the School Councils in light of these environmental and agentic deficiencies. For example, numerous parents raise concerns that parents do not have the capacity to hold powerful actors, such as principals, accountable and in check. As a result, they felt that autonomy might, and in some cases had, created new spaces for corrupt practices within the Council system.

In Nicaragua, the money [for autonomous schools] disappears, it strays on government paths, it never reaches the autonomous schools. (Parent, School 3)

Directors are corrupt. (Parent, School 3)

Several teachers treat the children badly, physically and psychologically. (Parent, School 3)

Directors have not been held accountable. (Parent, School 3)

In fact, several parent interviewees expressed serious concerns about the practice of school autonomy in their child's school- making mention of numerous behaviours that have been a cornerstone of educational administration in Nicaragua throughout the past several decades. These concerns included incidents of fraud, corruption, and manipulation on the part of powerful local actors (see: "corruption" and "capture") and they were limited exclusively to interviews conducted with parents in School 3 and School 4. We interpret these responses to mean that corrupt behaviours and manipulative practices may flow directly from one's expectations about the how others will behave.

Here, parents in some schools appear particularly concerned about the capacity of other actors to hold powerful actors, such as principals, in check.

Overall, the responses from parents demonstrate significant between-school differences. First, in School 1, parents generally have a very positive view of others as ‘active and involved agents’. This ‘view of others’ contrasts significantly with the normative expectations for others articulated by parents in Schools 3, 4, and 5. In fact, the ‘capacity deficient’ view of parents being articulated by numerous parents in these schools diverges significantly from Belli’s image of the ‘social contract’ under autonomy. To some extent, these contrasting normative constructions and expectations may explain why Council attendance and participation rates amongst parents (as discussed in the previous chapter) are higher for parents in School 1. Additionally, it may also explain why the overall ‘autonomy’ evaluations of parental stakeholders (also discussed in the previous chapter) are also comparatively better in School 1.

What is also disturbing in these accounts is the frequency with which parents mention incidents of corruption or capture of the Council within the autonomy program. We point out that these mentions of corruption and capture are limited to Schools 3 and 4. We interpret these findings to mean that traditional practices continue in local schools, despite the introduction of new formal rules and specified behaviours. Additionally, the finding of corruption and capture within 2/5 of our sample schools supports the claim of our previous chapter; namely, that the organizations of education (namely, the Ministry and local ministry offices) are failing to enforce the new rules. This failure to enforce the rules combined with an expectation that parents lack the capacity to hold decision-makers accountable, creates a strong incentive for abuse of

school funds, resources, and Council mechanisms in general. Simply stated, under such conditions, the incentive to cheat remains.

The Teacher:

In most instances, teachers, like parents, share a favourable view of the theory of school autonomy (see: “Good Reform/Law”).

Autonomy allows for the civic integration of people...it allows for decision-making according to the necessities of the school. (Teacher, School 5)

Democratisation of Nicaragua. In theory, this can lead to the empowerment of local communities and the removal of power from the bureaucracy, placing it instead in the hands of the citizens. (Teacher, School 2)

These types of comments were common in our interviews with teachers. What is surprising about many discussions is the extent to which teachers were likely to connect ‘school autonomy’ with a ‘social value’, such as the ‘democratization of Nicaragua’, rather than a technical value, such as improved school performance (mentioned by 4 teachers in our interview sample of teachers). Additionally, at least 12 teachers we spoke with attributed the reform as having led to some form of improvement in accountability or community participation in their schools (see: “improved accountability/participation”). These positive evaluations from teachers are very encouraging, especially considering the deep divisions that have characterized the contentious relationship between teachers and Conservative governments in Nicaragua.

However, these positive evaluations need to be read with caution. In fact, although teachers were ready to attribute numerous improvements to the reform,

they are also deeply concerned about the way ‘school autonomy’ is being applied in their schools (15 mentions falling under “MED’s Application”; see codebook 2). As such, their positive evaluations of the theory of autonomy were often qualified- as demonstrated in the following comments:

I believe that when the autonomy works as the New Law indicates it, is best. But, I have seen the ignorance of the law. Often the MECD does not respect the agreements of the Council or the advice of the directive. They [the MED] are the ones who control what is done with the funds for the centre [school]. (Teacher, School 1)

The MECD does not allow directors to exert autonomy over the execution of projects and administration. All directors (principals) are not treated the same. The efficient director is questioned and the deficient one is awarded...[additionally] the MECD does not provide the texts that the children need. (Teacher, School 1)

Autonomy in theory, in the law, is good. But, autonomy is not applied correctly. It does not exist in our schools. The law does not stimulate the performance of teachers, nor do directors become more accountable under Law 413. I lack the knowledge to give a full account of article 20 of Law 413... but a detailed format of the law is clearly missing at this school. The only thing autonomy has produced is the monthly financial reports...But there is not much more to autonomy. Nowhere in the schools is the advice of teachers and parents taken into account in accordance with law 413. (Teacher, School 2)

Although the standard literature on NPM and decentralization assumes that laws and rules are followed, these comments from teachers suggest that such assumptions need to be drastically qualified in a community like Matagalpa. Clearly, several teachers we spoke with are deeply concerned about the way in which school autonomy is being applied and implemented in their schools. Some of these concerns pertain to the Ministry itself, suggesting that the Ministry has exceeded its jurisdiction by ‘not respecting the advice of the Council’. In fact, these types of comments are indicative of a power struggle that appears to be emerging between schools (the School Council) and the

Ministry over education. The idea of an emerging ‘power struggle’ between the school and the Council was particularly evident in the interviews we conducted with teachers in School 1 and, to a lesser extent, Schools 2 and 3. In fact, numerous teachers suggested that the Ministry was not applying the Law correctly and many teachers complained about Ministry interference in Council affairs (8 mentions). From the perspective of decentralization, what is interesting about these complaints is that they suggest these stakeholders are actually looking for greater autonomy over school decision-making and resources, not less- or, at the very least, they request that the powers transferred to schools, as specified in the New Law, be respected by the Ministry.

Of course, the problem as expressed in these scripts appears to be one of compliance and enforcement of the rules of school autonomy. From the perspective of HCIA, organizations (such as the Ministry of Education) have a very significant role in both enforcing the new rules and perpetuating the new normative beliefs associated with the new rules; here being, local participation, local accountability, and local coordination. To an extent, these scripts above suggest that the Ministry is failing to fulfill this function. In our discussions with teachers, teachers did not clarify what Council requests, advice, and decisions they felt were not being respected or considered by the Ministry. Thus, we cannot say with any confidence whether teachers are looking to exceed their jurisdictional authority, or simply have the specified jurisdictional boundaries respected. What we can say with relative certainty is that a significant number of teachers we interviewed *believe* that the Law is not being applied properly in their schools (a criticism raised by at least 15 of our teacher interviewees) and that the Ministry detrimentally interferes in Council affairs (a criticism raised by at least 8 teacher interviewees).

In our interviews with teachers, the issue of ‘parents’ did not figure prominently. In fact, most interviewees made no mention of parents at all, which is surprising given the fact that ‘school autonomy’ is a reform predicated upon the principles of *parental participation*. When attributing autonomy with improvements in accountability and participation, teachers seem to take a parochial position on the issue- seeing themselves as the active agents. To illustrate this, consider the following statements collected:

This provides us with a chance to have a much greater say in what goes here. (Teacher, School 3)

This reform has provided me with the opportunity to express my opinions. (Teacher, School 4)

We all helped out. (Teacher, School 5)

Interestingly, when parents are mentioned specifically (and this is not often), they appear as ‘capacity deficient recipients’. The following comments are an illustration of this:

You can’t have real autonomy in a country where you don’t have economic autonomy. Without economic autonomy, you cannot have any real changes... What is the purpose of having people pay for education, when they are getting nothing in return? (Teacher, School 3)

Most parents have a low academic level and that makes easy to manipulate by the director. There are also many decisions that the director makes alone. This is a major problem in our school. (Teacher, School 4)

High rates of illiteracy amongst parents mean that parents are unable to participate fully in the Council (Teacher, School 5)

The construction of parents as both ‘active agents’ and ‘passive recipients’ is fundamental to understanding the normative changes associated with school autonomy. Clearly, school autonomy as a reform and as an institution, is predicated on the notion of active parental agents in education. Yet, in the interview transcripts with both parents

and teachers, parents (in most instances) continue to be portrayed as passive recipients who lack the basic capacity to full their function under the New Law.

Like the comments of parents above, what is most disturbing about our interviews with teachers is the extent to which interviewees (particularly those in School 3 and 4) mentioned incidents of corruption (mentioned by 7 interviewees) and/or manipulation (mentioned by 3 teachers) of the Council systems. For example, several teachers raised serious concerns about the following issues:

“missing money”

“fraud”

“manipulation of the Councils by the directors for personal gain”.

(Teachers, School 4 [survey comments])

Autonomy in some schools is a difficult problem because the directors (principals) handle decisions and tailor these decisions and resources to their own tastes. Thus, embezzlement of resources can be seen as a problem. This is a severe problem in a country like Nicaragua, where poverty is very great. A second problem pertains to the first...the current form of the councils is such that if a director decides to dismiss a teacher, the committee is sufficiently swayed by the director. Third, there are ‘phantom/ghost’ students...There is also bad use of the school equipment. Like transportation, for example. These are used outside of work, during non-labour hours. Another problem with the autonomy program is that it allows for a monopolization of the council. There are cases where directors cohort with students, through bribes, because they are not in danger in of losing their jobs.... There is no accountability of the director.” (Teacher, School 3)

I think that school autonomy, according to the theory, is about the participation of the community through representatives. However, in many cases, directors are only who have voice and vote. They mandate and they do not take into account to parents, since they manipulate them as well as students. The teachers speak, but are not listened to. The teacher is something null in the advice. (Teacher, School 4)

Again, it is important to note that these complaints and criticisms pertain almost exclusively to stakeholders in Schools 3 and 4. To us, this reinforces several emerging trends in our analysis. First, schools experience autonomy differently. Second, the Ministry does not fully enforce the rules of autonomy. Third, principals/directors do not appear as being held accountable in at least two of our sample schools. Finally, this lack of accountability has created (or at least sustained) spaces for corrupted practices in education.

The Principal

Over the course of our field research in Matagalpa, we conducted in-depth interviews with two principals from our five schools (School 1 and School 5) in addition to surveying all five principals in our sample schools. Our interviews with these two principals gave us significant insights into what ‘school autonomy’ has come to mean in each school. What is surprising about the principals’ responses is how differently ‘autonomy’ has been perceived and received.

For example, the principal of School 1 was quick to point out several of the benefits of the autonomy program. The principal told us that:

Since becoming autonomous, parents and teachers have taken on a much more significant role in school activities...[but] their willingness to do so is, in part, dependent upon their ability to recognize the advantages to be derived of their active participation. (Principal, School 1)

When asked about how parents and teachers come to recognize these advantages, the principal acknowledged their own role in this process, stating:

The job of the principal in an autonomous school is not only to administer the day-to-day activities of the school, it is also to serve as a manager and coordinator for the school's community...including the parents, teachers, students, and the ministry...[The principal] must ensure that people are aware of the opportunities available to them and the principal should be willing to enable them to take advantage of the opportunities that have now become available. (Principal, School 1)

As a follow-up, we asked the principal how autonomy had affected them personally:

There is a lot more work for me now...my days are much longer...and...the scope of my responsibility has grown. (Principal, School 1)

This script is surprisingly consistent with Rodriguez and Hovde's (2002) discussion about the shifting role of principals in education. In *The Challenge of School Autonomy: Supporting Principals*, Rodriguez and Hovde discuss at length how autonomy requires a shift in the role of principals. According to their study, autonomy has several important implications for principals:

Most obviously, the [principal's] job becomes more complex and there can be a lot more work. True budgeting and accounting systems need to be put into place...Principals in autonomous schools are called upon to constantly negotiate between top-down demands...and internal, or bottom-up demands...To be successful, the principal of an autonomous school needs a support network that addresses both types of demands. (Rodriguez and Hovde 2002: 10)

The principal of School 1 also highlights another important aspect of school autonomy is largely overlooked by previous evaluations. In one interview, the principal spoke at length about the advantages of 'student government', which is specified in under the New Law. The student government (and student representatives on the School Council) enables students to gain "*a deeper understanding of the democratic process*". The principal introduced us to the current student representative, a twelve-year old student, who was very knowledgeable about the autonomy process. The student told us

about the active role of students in school governance and Council meetings. The student also told us how popular the student government is among the student body. When asked who was responsible for setting up the process, the student informed us that it was the joint responsibility of students and the principal.

In contrast to the positive evaluations and interpretations of 'school autonomy' advanced by the principal in School 1, the principal in School 5 had a very different interpretation of the reform:

I consider that the general law of education has to be consensual, has to be a product of all Nicaraguans- adapted to a national reality of the very poor. But people are being forced to pay for the walls, the books, and the libraries. But, here in Nicaragua, there are no chemistry labs, no libraries, and no culture of learning. There is nothing. Why? Because the government does not want to contribute to these things but rather transfers the responsibility for education onto the poor...what does this signify? It signifies that the families in poor neighbourhoods can't pay for education, or their books, or even provide their ways to schools because parents are too poor or unemployed and below the poverty line. That is the reality of autonomy in Nicaragua. (Principal, School 5)

The principal continues:

...Because this structure of education was only thought out and planned for first world country [referring to school autonomy], it was not planned for third world countries with economic deficiencies. These are countries that plan for the short-term, never the long-term term. Here in Nicaragua, there may be a plan for development in 20 and 30 years- a plan of the National Assembly of Nicaragua. But, there is not an institution for development planning- there doesn't exist any instance of a formal economic development plan that will benefit communities like ours. The plan that does exist will only make a country like ours more poverty stricken. Therefore, we have to come up with new method, nationally, to create secondary and primary and, of course, college education. There has to be changes in every aspect of education...

...In reality, [referring to autonomy] the state has un-obligated itself from any of its responsibilities..But it is the state's obligation to ensure that people learn how to defend their principles and ethics..that is education's potential in a country like Nicaragua. (Principal, School 5)

This vignette reflects a sense of ‘abandonment’ that ‘school autonomy’ can inspire among some stakeholders. These comments stand in stark contrast to the sense of ‘empowerment’ that autonomy appears to inspire in other schools, like School 1. School 5 is the poorest, least safe, and hosts the least educated parents in our school sample. Here, stakeholders appear to be looking to the state for some relief from their conditions- rather than greater degrees of freedom.

Additionally, if school autonomy is not working well at School 5, it does not appear to be because of a lack of effort on the part of the principal. In our observations at School 5, we found monthly spending reports posted in plain view; pictures of student elections posted on the wall; diagrams of the student government; meeting schedules of the Teachers and Parents Council; and copies of the New Law of Education Participation readily available. The Councils were in operation and parents and teachers appeared to be active participants in meetings. Moreover, we were surprised to find that when provided with an opportunity to talk about autonomy, School 5 respondents were more inclined than other group to compliment the director and/or teachers. In fact, 6/12 parents made complimentary remarks about the director and/or staff, while 2/9 teachers made a complimentary remark about the director. There are no mentions of corruption and/or capture in relation to the director and/or staff. Rather, parents were more likely inclined to tell us:

I only want to say that this school is very good and that my child is appreciated- I am grateful to God for good teachers and that my child knows how to read. I am also gracious for a good and honest director.

Again, these statements support the critical role that directors and staff have to play in education in general. In addition, they contrast significantly with the mentions of corruption and manipulation on the part of directors/principles in other schools.

The Delegate

Although we did not have an opportunity to speak at length with the Municipal Delegate of Matagalpa, we were able to secure an interview with another Municipal Delegate. In that interview, the delegate reveals several of the challenges confronting communities and decision-makers under autonomy:

Autonomy is a very good program. It makes sense that parents and teachers have a right to participate in their schools. Through this program, it is expected that principals and teachers can be held accountable. My role [the role of the delegate] is to make sure that this takes place...

On a regular day, we deal with problems and grievances of staff, make sure that funds are distributed, and make sure that schools are informed about new ministry developments. Often, I am required to travel to the schools in my jurisdiction to ensure they are operating properly and have what they need.

One of the main problems is that parents are not intelligent. In my community, the people are farmers and so they can't read...they lack the capacity or interest to participate in their child's school and education...There exists a deficient culture in our communities that does not value education. Many parents think school is a waste of time for their child and would rather have their child help them on the farmer or in the field...Men make fun of young boys for going to school [machismo], laughing at them. This discourages the boy student from continuing his education.

If we are to fix education in this community, we need to address this culture. This is a very difficult task. If autonomy is to work, we need to change the culture to one that values education. Right now, leaders are

left by themselves to manage education...they are the only one's who take an interest in education.

Within this script, we once again witness the portrayal of the 'capacity deficient parent', reliant upon top-down leadership to address the problems of the schools. As we have demonstrated throughout this chapter, this construction of the 'parent' is common amongst stakeholders and, additionally, has been the dominant attitude towards parents historically. Towards that end, rarely (with the exception of School 1) do we witness parents being constructed as 'active' and 'capable' agents in accordance with the normative principles of school autonomy. Ironically, in a reform meant to improve parental participation in education, it is the parent who is constructed as the 'problem'.

Our interview with the delegate also shed important light on the political nature of school autonomy:

You know I am a party member [PLC]. But you need to think about it from my point of view. Ask yourself, from what you see, what does it take to get ahead in Nicaragua?...I am concerned for my family and myself. We need to make a living under very difficult circumstances...You can't get ahead in this country without politics. This is a sad reality, but it is true...one does what one can to survive. For me, I am a delegate, but you should know that I get paid very little and others get paid much less than me- so it is very difficult to survive.

To a significant extent, this script reveals the self-perpetuating nature of behavioural beliefs and institutions in Nicaragua. Here, the belief that political connections are how 'one gets ahead in Nicaragua' is both the product of previous institutions in Nicaragua and the source of the new institution of 'autonomy'. Clearly, autonomy has not undermined this normative belief. Rather, it has perpetuated the belief to a significant extent by politicising the role and position of the Municipal Delegate.

The delegate also shed important light on how poverty as served to reinforce and perpetuate institutional corruption in Nicaraguan education:

Of course this situation of poverty creates an incentive for corruption. Corruption is the 'cancer of Nicaragua'. If you are poor, no one is looking, and money is available, most people take it. This is what we see everywhere in this country. It is the way things are done here...Sure, we try to stop it, but it is everywhere. (Delegate, outside of Matagalpa)

This script calls into question the 'incentive' for lower level bureaucrats (such as delegates, principals or those with in the Ministry) to abandon the old institution. As we have seen throughout this study, administrative positions have been opportunities for personal advancement and individual wealth accumulation through a deeply entrenched system of patronage and corruption. While this was particularly true during the Somoza era, it was also true (although to a much lesser extent) during the Sandinista era. Additionally, it also appears to be true during the contemporary era (as illustrated by political nature of the delegate position). What incentive then do bureaucrats have for abandoning the present order? Clearly, the conditions of extreme poverty only make the incentive to retain the traditional institution stronger. From the position of this delegate, this appears precisely as the problem: there is no incentive for lower level bureaucrats to abandon the current institutional equilibrium in Nicaragua.

The Bureaucrat

The comments and concerns of the delegates are strongly supported and reinforced in our discussions with a bureaucrat in the local Ministry of Education. In the interview, the bureaucrat sheds significant light on several of the emerging trends in this chapter. First,

the bureaucrat suggests that education, even under the autonomy system, remains tightly controlled from the top-down and the institution remains highly clientelistic and political:

Autonomy is not precisely about improved school performance. It is about changing the way education is administered, but this has little to do with the quality of education received. Most people would be aware of this here. You only need to look at the Law. There is nothing significant in the Law that relates to the pedagogy of education. In reality, these measures [pedagogy and curriculum] remain controlled by the Ministry and the government... To understand autonomy one needs to understand the politics behind the Law. To demonstrate this, consider that all delegates are party members, which is very concerning for someone like myself, who works here. Because, if the governing party loses the national election [the PLC, at the time of the interview], the delegates will all be replaced by members of the new party. We will then be at risk of losing our jobs. What will we do then?

Autonomy itself is good in principle, but it is limited law. The people in the community like idea and the idea that they can participate. They see this as important for democracy..But, the central ministry remains very involved in school operations and heavily dictates what it to happen. They continually change the rules and this makes things very difficult for us to understand and practice at this local level. (Bureaucrat, MED)

What is evident in this script is that, in the eyes of this individual, the new institution of school autonomy retains several of the features of the previous institutions. In fact, education appears tightly controlled from the top-down, highly political, and clientelistic. These sentiments suggest that despite introducing new rules for administration, the institution remains in its original equilibrium.

The Mayor's office

To a significant extent, we have focused throughout this study upon the deep polarization that both inform and underlie the 'school autonomy' reform in Nicaragua. In our

interview with a representative from the local Mayor's office (FSLN, at the time), the depth of these polarizations became immediately apparent:

The Municipality of Matagalpa has a consultant role with the social civil and the institutions of government. This is the committee of Municipal Development and it is meant to create dialogue, to allow us to talk. The Committee of Municipal Development of Matagalpa has about 80 organizations that are involved. There is the municipal government and representatives of civil society, who want to work, construct and convey a direction and plan for our municipality, a specific path.

Under the central governments plan, a Committee of Social Participation was created around the themes of education and health. This Social Committee included the Ministry of Education, Churches, and other representatives from civil society to be involved in consultative process. When the central government issued the proposal for education to the Municipality of Matagalpa for the decentralization of education, the Mayor solicited the opinion of the Committee of Municipal Development- because this is a process of constructive, positive dialogue. After the analysis of the exposition [the proposal for decentralization], the Mayor, upon receiving the opinion of the Committee of Municipal Development, did not give consent to establish the process- therefore Matagalpa does not have a [recognized] process of decentralization in education...

The Municipal Committee offered a plan to change the education system in this specific municipality that was not accepted nor considered by the central government or the Social Commission that was supposed to represent civil society. Whose civil society is this, then? They [the Social Commission and the central government] sit at the table of civil society, but want a concrete plan that is standard for education...The only thing the government is going to accept from civil society is things that benefit the government...Because of this current system, there does not exist any decentralized form of education in Matagalpa today.

The potential polarizations and conflicts between mayors and delegates are cause for concern. Every municipal delegate we encounter in our investigation was an active member of the ruling PLC party, a problem compounded by the fact that the mayor in our case was from the FSLN. This arrangement created a very volatile situation in the municipality. While, previous evaluations have suggested a close and productive

working relationship between mayors and delegates, for example, “[d]elegates consistently said that they received more backing from the mayors in the execution of their responsibilities” (Gershberg 1999b: 28), our investigations revealed an extremely volatile relationship between the FSLN mayor and the delegates, who were PLC appointees and party members. The mayor’s office and the Ministry (including the local MED office) are working at cross-purposes, and seek to undermine each other at every turn. Not only does this create coordination problems in terms of service provision and resource sharing (we found the two offices refused to work together), it also creates a deep fear among MED bureaucrats who felt their jobs would be lost if the FSLN gained control of the central government and the power to appoint a new delegate. Moreover, the conflicts between the MED and the mayor’s office serve to deepen political divisions and further polarized the community along political lines. Several individuals we spoke to expressed deep concerns about this situation, suggesting that the region and the country was so polarized, that it was only one step away from slipping back into civil war. In fact, the depth of these polarizations are captured in the representatives final warning to us in the interview:

The government does not want people in this area of the country to be education...[because]...The worst enemy of the government is an educated citizen.

Discussion:

HCIA posits the argument that one’s normative beliefs (and hence behaviour) are the both the product of previous institutions and the source of new institutions, thus demonstrating the self-enforcing nature of institutions. Institutional change is therefore

the result of a normative shift among stakeholders, whereby the prevailing belief is no longer seen to be self-enforcing. Has this ‘normative shift’ occurred amongst the populations in our sample schools? From the information presented in this chapter, we have significant cause for believing that a normative shift has not occurred amongst stakeholders. Here, we discuss the rationale for this claim.

First, consider that ‘school autonomy’ is predicated on the concept of an active and involved parental agent who is empowered to hold decision-makers accountable. Yet, in these interview transcripts, parents rarely appear in this light- despite the fact that they may show up at Council meetings. Rather, they are constructed by most stakeholders as ‘passive recipients’ who lack the capacity (or interest) for meaningful contributions in education. To a significant extent, this normative construction of parents is informed by the social conditions (poverty, illiteracy, and community values) that define the school communities in our sample. Consider that both NPM and school autonomy rely upon on the basic notion of ‘rationality’, which assumes self-interest motivates human action and that individual preferences (a rank order of interests) can be defined. Thus, the model relies on technical and structural changes within education to re-order the preferences and incentive structures for individual actions. School autonomy attempts to accomplish this through the creation of the Councils (with decision-making authority), the use of elections, and the use of *cuotas* (school fees). Yet, from the voices of stakeholders discussed in this chapter, we hear how the assumption ‘rationality’ becomes problematic in Matagalpa, as most stakeholders *do not believe* that parental agents have the capacity for making these decisions or for holding other actors accountable. Thus, the concept of *substantive rationality* (the idea that the calculus in

optimizing preferences is constrained by incomplete information and norms) figures prominently in our story. We have heard, for example, how the local culture does not value education and, as such, members of the community are often unwilling to exert the necessary effort to participate in School Councils. We have also heard that numerous stakeholders *believe* that high rates of illiteracy mean that parents lack the capacity for meaningful contributions and, subsequently, subject parents to manipulation by informed and/or powerful actors. In short, these behavioural beliefs about parents may render the basic assumptions of ‘instrumental rationality’ too stringent in a community like Matagalpa.

Second, this ‘capacity deficient’ view of parents becomes very problematic when parents are charged with the responsibility for holding powerful actors accountable, as in the case of ‘school autonomy’. When powerful agents (such as school principals) expect their principles (here, being parents) lack the basic capacity to hold them accountable, the incentive to engage in self-interested behaviour becomes much greater. In some schools, stakeholders have told us clearly that this has indeed occurred. For example, one of the unintended consequences of autonomy to figure into stakeholder accounts is the theme of *capture*. In political science and specifically public choice theory, capture refers to a situation wherein bureaucrats and/or politicians, who are supposed to be acting in the public interest, end up acting systematically to favour personal interest. Several stakeholders were quick to mention manipulation, coercion, and cooptation of the Council by directors. Additionally, mentions of *corruption* also appear in stakeholder responses. Corruption is conventionally understood as the private wealth-seeking behaviour of a representative of the state and/or public authority. Corruption can include,

but is not limited to, the misuse of public goods for private gains, the abuse of public power for private benefit, and the illegitimate conversion of collective goods into private payoffs. In the stakeholder accounts discussed above, we found numerous mentions of bribes, fraud, and embezzlements, which we take to be indicative of corruption, another negative, yet unintended, consequence of school autonomy.

Third, we can interpret many of the stories above as an indictment of the country's institutional mechanisms of accountability and monitoring upon which reform implementation depends. Accountability mechanisms are institutional features that enable citizens to pressure their government, to resolve disagreements regarding resource allocations, and to reduce the occurrence of conflict by encouraging public dialogue. Yet, what is clear in the accounts of some Matagalpinos is that money for schools often goes missing (corruption), rules are often broken (MED's Application), jurisdictional authority is perceived to be overstepped (MED interference), and guilty parties are rarely held accountable. Here, it appears that the institutional organizations (such as the local MED offices) charged with enforcing the new rules and perpetuating the new normative signals are failing to complete these tasks. Moreover, monitoring weaknesses have created the space for repeated violations of public authority, which have in turn shaken the locals' faith in school autonomy as a viable reform. Not only is this claim supported in the accounts of stakeholders presented in this chapter, it is also supported by the findings in chapter six; namely, that individual schools are afforded the flexibility to select which rules they will follow, and which rules they will not follow.

Fourth, from the voices of stakeholders discussed above, we get a picture of an educational institution that remains highly politicized, clientelistic, and tightly directed

from the top-down. Despite transferring 'operational powers' to School Councils, several stakeholders, including policy-makers, reveal how the problems and solution of education in Nicaragua continue to be defined from the top-down. Additionally, there is clearly a political element to the diagnostic, suggesting that the behavioural beliefs of policy-makers are both the product of previous institutions and the source of new ones.

Fifth, despite the numerous problems identified in the accounts of stakeholders, numerous stakeholders are positive about the theory of 'school autonomy' and made mention of improvements in parental participation and accountability in school decision-making under autonomy. In their accounts, stakeholders often mentioned greater participation, greater accountability, improved coordination, and greater parental influence when referring to autonomy and its impact on their school community. The survey responses discussed in chapter six corroborate these positive, interview responses. Though not as prominent or frequent as the mention of improvements in accountability and participation, mentions of performance improvements also appear throughout the text. There are several mentions of improved academic strategies and improved academic yields. Yet, there is little available empirical data to confirm and/or corroborate these accounts of performance improvements. It is also significant to note that nowhere do mentions of poorer academic performance appear in the text. However, it should be noted that the positive evaluations of autonomy vary significantly between schools. In some schools, the response to autonomy was overwhelmingly positive from parents, teachers, and the principal. In other schools, the response was mixed. In fact, as the evidence in both chapter six and seven suggests, conditions in some schools (namely, School 5) can be interpreted as being much worse under autonomy.

How can we rectify these seemingly conflicting accounts of ‘school autonomy’ in these schools? To begin, the evidence presented above and in chapter six clearly suggests that the prospects and possibilities of school autonomy vary significantly between schools. To an extent, drawing on the data presented in this study, we are able to suggest that this variance can be explained, in part, by the conditions that define individual school communities (namely, poverty, security, and to some extent, parental education). Additionally, there is some cause for speculating about a relationship between a principal’s skills and tenure and the practice of school autonomy- although this relationship requires further investigation. Second, HCIA is fully consistent with the idea that the introduction of new rules can usher in technical improvements, without facilitating a significant normative shift amongst stakeholders. For example, if parents are now attending school meetings, even if only as ‘passive recipients’, this should still be viewed as a significant achievement and improvement- in light of Nicaragua’s history. While parents have yet to become the ‘active agents’ anticipated by the New Law, the fact that they are now sitting at the table of dialogue should be seen, and indeed is seen by they themselves, as a significant improvement and achievement.

Overall, there appears to be a self-enforcing equilibrium in Nicaragua’s educational institution that persists, despite the introduction of new formal rules and normative principles. Many of the normative principles and behaviours of the previous institutions remain. Subsequently, these normative beliefs have themselves become the source of the new institution of school autonomy in contemporary Nicaragua. Here, the sentiments of the Delegate discussed above are most telling: under the current institutional arrangement, key stakeholders (policy-makers, delegates, bureaucrats,

Mayors, and principals) have little reason to believe that deviating from the current order is in their best interest.

In the last chapter, we consider some general insights to be garnered from the insights presented here. Additionally, we consider the lessons that policy-makers should take from the findings presented in this study and the general theory of HCIA. Finally, we consider the value-to-be-added by an HCIA perspective on change for the study of developing communities like Matagalpa.

CHAPTER EIGHT: HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONS AND SCHOOL CHANGE

Since gaining independence in 1823, Nicaragua has been a country characterized by poverty and deep political polarization. These characteristics have engrained themselves in the country's institutions and in the normative beliefs and expectations of Nicaraguans. When studying educational change in a country like Nicaragua, we argue that it is not possible to understand the contemporary 'institution of education' and contemporary 'education change initiatives' without reference to the broad and historical society of which the institution is an integral part. As this study demonstrates, the components of the contemporary educational institution in Nicaragua (its formal rules, procedures, norms, organizations, behavioural beliefs) both reflect and constitute the historical, cultural, social, and political world of which Nicaraguans inhabit, share, and internalize.

From a historical, institutional perspective, school change is not simply a technical process. It is not achieved only through the introduction of new formal rules and new incentives, as NPM would predict. Rather, school change is a complex process; conceptualized in this study as a matter of shifting worldviews and normative understandings about education; including one's belief about how education works, whose purposes it serves, and how educational stakeholders will behave. As we have argued, 'institutions' have a significant role to play in creating these behavioural beliefs,

which are the centrepiece of 'behaviour'. Given this capacity to influence behavioural beliefs, institutions can be seen as 'the engines of history' (Greif 2005, p.380).

In this final chapter, we consider how this view of institutions helps to explain the mixed results of 'school autonomy' in Nicaragua. Our discussion in this final chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, we provide a summary of the key findings of this study. Several of the findings support claims made by previous scholars working in the area of school reform in Latin America. Additionally, we also discuss several of the new findings uncovered by this investigation. These new findings have implications for research on the topic of 'school change' in Latin America.

In section two, we re-examine our hypothesis in light of this new information. In chapter one, we introduced the hypothesis that the prospects and possibilities of 'school autonomy' in Nicaragua can be explained, in part, by referring to the 'behavioural beliefs' of stakeholders. We suggested that if prevailing normative beliefs and expectations of educational stakeholders are reinforced and perpetuated within newly autonomous schools, then we expected the prospects of possibilities of change would be extremely limited. However, we also suggested that if stakeholders believe that the prevailing norms no longer apply, we would expect that the prospects and possibilities of change would be greatly enhanced. We examine the explanatory power of this hypothesis in this section.

In section three, we broaden the scope of our discussion in order to consider how the historical institutional perspective developed in this study can be adapted and applied to a broader study of school change in Latin America. We acknowledge that HCIA makes a strong case for a historical, inductive, and case study approach. Nevertheless,

because Latin American countries share similar histories and institutional trajectories, we believe this study of Nicaragua may yield some important insights that can be broadly applied to the region.

In the final section, we consider a specific set of recommendations for sustainable school change in Nicaragua. This plan is informed by these broader insights and may be used to improve the prospects and possibilities of school change.

Summary of Key Findings

Throughout this study, we several key findings are revealed. Each finding relates to the practice of ‘school autonomy’ in our sample schools. While some of these findings confirm previous work on this subject, other findings are new. We discuss each finding in turn.

Weak Monitoring and Selective Compliance with Formal Rules

Our survey data reveals that the basic elements of autonomy are present and operational in all schools in our sample. School councils exist, meet regularly, and have representatives who are elected by the community. Additionally, a significant number of parent and teacher respondents had attended and participated in at least one council meeting. School fees appear to be voluntary in most schools and many of the School Councils (*consejo directivos*) exert significant influence over school decisions, in a manner specified by the New Law of Education Participation. These findings are very encouraging, especially when considering the logistical difficulties of mobilizing large

segments of the community in poor, rural municipalities such as Matagalpa.

Additionally, they lend support to the “formal rule-behaviour” linkage, which is posited by the NPM.

However, our survey data also reveals that several schools are in compliance with only certain aspects of ‘school autonomy’, and not others. In the literature dealing with school autonomy in Nicaragua, this finding is new. For example, our survey data reveals that the principal of at least one school has significantly exceeded their tenure. We also found that the size of the School Councils in our sample schools deviates, at times significantly, from the specifications of ‘Council size’ outlined by the New Law. Additionally, parents had a voting majority on the School Council in only two schools. These findings raise questions about the extent to which the specifications of the New Law are being enforced in autonomous schools. Additionally, these findings raise questions about the quality of ‘local accountability’ in autonomous schools.

These findings indicate ‘selective compliance’ with the formal rules and specifications of the New Law. Burki, Perry, and Dillinger (1999) have argued that decentralization and school autonomy can facilitate the characteristics that have been found in ‘high-performing schools’ by involving parents more directly in the decision-making matrix. However, by complying with only certain specifications of the New Law, the principles of ‘local accountability’ and specifically ‘parental participation and accountability’ appear to be undermined.

These findings also indicate ‘weak monitoring’ and ‘enforcement’ of the New Law in Matagalpa. The local Ministry office (the office of the Municipal Delegate) is assigned the role of ‘rule enforcer’, but appears in our case to be over-stretched in its

capacity to fulfil this role. For example, the local Ministry office in Matagalpa is, by our own observation, a beehive of activity- where local bureaucrats and the Delegate are occupied with numerous projects, meetings, and activities. However, the local office also appears to lack the resources and/or capacity to enforce formal compliance with all aspects of the new rules. This appears to be particularly true for more peripheral schools in the department, which the data indicates are the least 'compliant'. In light of the Ministry's 'capacity deficiencies', schools appear to be afforded some flexibility to follow certain rules, while ignoring (or at least misinterpreting) others.

Overall, 'selective compliance', 'weak monitoring' and 'enforcement issues' raise questions about the relationship between formal rules and behaviour. Clearly, several of our sample schools are not in compliance with certain aspects of autonomy, as specified by the formal rules of the New Law- leading to speculation about the quality of 'local accountability' in autonomous schools. Additionally, these findings raise questions about the relationship between formal rules and behaviour in the context of underdevelopment.

Positive Stakeholder Evaluations of the New Law

A significant and new finding to be derived from this study is that almost every stakeholder we surveyed and/or interviewed in Matagalpa had a favourable view of 'school autonomy' and the New Law, in principle- despite the issues and concerns raised above. In their accounts, most stakeholders told us that they agreed with 'school autonomy' in theory. Several stakeholders mentioned greater participation, greater

accountability, improved coordination, and greater parental influence when referring to autonomy and its impact on their school community. Though not as prominent or frequent as the mention of improvements in accountability and participation, mentions of performance improvements also appear throughout the text. There are several mentions of improved academic strategies and improved academic yields. Yet, there is little available empirical data to confirm and/or corroborate these accounts of performance improvements.

It is significant to note that mentions of poorer performance also appear in the text, specifically in the evaluations of two school principals from the 'poorer' and 'peripheral' schools in the sample, although such mentions are not as frequent and/or prominent. It should be noted that evaluations of autonomy vary significantly between schools. In the relatively 'wealthy' and 'safe' communities, respondents are positive. In the relatively 'poorer' and 'unsafe' communities, respondents are less enthusiastic. Nevertheless, nowhere is the overall stakeholder view of 'school autonomy' negative.

In our opinion, contemporary discussions of 'school autonomy' in Latin America often miss and/or overshadow this finding. A great deal of theoretical work and analytic effort has been exerted to demonstrate educational decentralization and school autonomy in Latin America as a "neo-liberal" reform, guided by a particular political-economic logic (Montero and Samuels, 2003). Additional discussions have sought to demonstrate educational decentralization as the product of a broader, structural and/or normative process of globalization- drawing attention to the critical, patterning influence of international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and OECD, on domestic policy in Latin America (Torres, 2002). We strongly agree with much of this analysis,

particularly as it pertains to the school autonomy reform in Nicaragua. This is particularly evident when considering the role of USAID and the World Bank in promoting and enabling the initiative. Yet, we nevertheless believe that such discussions fail to consider the real possibility that people in local schools agree with decentralization, at least in principle. Moreover, the majority of autonomy stakeholders we spoke with interpret the reform as yielding at least some benefits for their communities. In our opinion, acknowledgement of this finding is one of the first steps towards overcoming the ideological debates that have characterized the contemporary discussions about school change in Latin America.

Negative Stakeholder Evaluation of Reform Implementation

School autonomy does have the potential to unleash positive gains in schools, but the realization of this potential is constrained during the implementation phase. This finding is supported by the numerous stakeholder mentions of improper implementation of the reform, corruption, local capture, and external interference on the part of the Ministry. In fact, the data presented in this study reveals how a well-designed formal plan can be co-opted and/or diverted during the implementation phase if institutional mechanisms for monitoring and enforcement are weak or deficient. Additionally, this finding supports a growing body of literature on the topic of school reform, arguing that the institutional context matters (see: Owens, 2004; Fullan, 2001).

In light of such information, the picture of school autonomy becomes much more complex in Matagalpa. Clearly, many Matagalpinos perceive the reform as having led to

positive gains in their schools. Yet, they are equally willing to acknowledge the numerous failings of the program. We interpret these evaluations as evidence of the program's 'mixed results'. In Matagalpa, school autonomy emerges as neither a 'complete failure' nor a 'complete success.' Rather, Matagalpinos see autonomy as a complex process, which can be undermined, diverted, and/or constrained during various stages of the implementation phase. What this means is that reform programs, such as school autonomy, need to be studied from multiple angles and at multiple stages of the policy cycle (ex. Design, legislation, implementation, evaluation, etc) in order to identify where and when the program is being constrained, diverted, and/or undermined.

Between School Differences in Practice Linked to Socio-Economic Condition

This study also introduces the finding that the practice and interpretation of school autonomy reform varies significantly between schools exposed to the same policy treatment. In Matagalpa, we find that the relatively 'poorer', 'unsafe', and 'peripheral' schools tended to struggle with autonomy to a greater degree than their counterparts. This is evidenced, in part, by the negative evaluations of school autonomy provided by the principals of these 'peripheral schools', which contrast significantly with the overwhelmingly positive evaluations of the principals in others schools. Additionally, respondents in Matagalpa's 'peripheral schools' raised concerns about poverty, security, and parental capacity, which do not appear with the same frequency in the transcripts of their counterparts in relatively wealthier and more developed communities. These findings support previous studies of school change, which suggest that the 'socio-

economic' context influences a school's capacity for change (see: Gunnarsson, 2004; Levin, 2001).

Perceptions of Parental Capacity

This study also finds that the attitudes and values of educational stakeholders are important to the change exercise. This is particularly evident when considering the 'roles' and 'expectations' Matagalpinos assign to 'others' (specifically, parents) in school autonomy. Our qualitative data reveals that despite the creation of new decision-making spaces in education, numerous stakeholders in Matagalpa still question the 'capacity of parents' to make meaningful contributions in those spaces. Throughout this study, we have witnessed parents in Matagalpa being constructed as 'illiterate', 'uneducated', 'disinterested', 'incapable', and 'manipulated'. In fact, in our qualitative data, rarely do we see parents being constructed as 'active participant' or 'substantive contributor'. Rather, the image of parent as 'passive recipient' figures much more prominently in stakeholder responses.

Clearly, the construction of 'parents' in this way is closely tied to practical realities and situations of parents in these communities. In fact, this link may explain why the socio-economic context appears to be related to the practice and interpretation of school autonomy in our sample schools. However, the finding that normative views of 'parental capacity' figures prominently in this story needs to be analyzed separately because it is a normative evaluation rather than a material condition (ex. socio-economic condition). As such, when 'normative expectations' are considered in the analysis, the

challenge of 'parental participation' and 'accountability' becomes both procedural (ex. the creation of school councils) and normative (ex. getting principals and staff to value the input of parents in school council meetings). Only when this distinction is made can we appreciate why parental attendance at Council meetings in School 3, for example, has failed to produce significant changes in school operations.

In Matagalpa, one of the primary challenges to making 'autonomy work' appears to be the need to overcome this normative expectation of the 'parent'. In many schools, we witness how this construction leads to parents being treated as a 'passive recipient' of information during Council meetings. This is a problem of 'behavioural belief'. If a program like 'school autonomy' is to maximize its desired outcome in terms greater 'parental participation' and 'local accountability', parents must be normatively (re)-constructed at the local level as an 'active participant' - rather than 'passive recipient' as is the case in many of our sample schools.

Corruption/Capture

Another significant contribution of this study is the finding that capture and corruption exist within the autonomy reform. In political science and specifically public choice theory, capture refers to a situation wherein bureaucrats and/or politicians, who are supposed to be acting in the public interest, end up acting systematically to favour personal interest. Our qualitative data reveals that several stakeholders were quick to mention manipulation, coercion, and cooptation of the Council by directors. Mentions of corruption also appear throughout the qualitative data. Corruption is conventionally

understood as the private wealth-seeking behaviour of a representative of the state and/or public authority. In our study, the mentions of corruption included the misuse of public goods for private gains, the abuse of public power for private benefit, and the illegitimate conversion of collective goods into private payoffs. In several schools, we found numerous mentions of bribes, fraud, and embezzlements. The presence of these deleterious behaviours can be explained, in part, by the absence of institutional accountability and monitoring mechanisms and, subsequently, by a behavioural belief that individuals committing such actions will not be punished or held accountable.

“Political Nature” of School Reform

Finally, our study supports the work of previous scholars who argue that education in Latin America is a deeply political exercise (see: Torres, 1999). Although the civil war in Nicaragua has been over for more than fifteen years, we find that the divisions, atrocities and injustices of the war are still fresh in the minds of Matagalpinos and, to some extent, have manifested in the realm of education. For example, a deep mistrust remains between the FSLN and the PLC, and many public officials and educators are caught in the middle. In several conversations, interviewees were hesitant to speak to issues of politics and were cautious with their criticisms. Moreover, many individuals were fearful of losing their jobs should the political landscape change through national or municipal elections. The fact that municipal delegates are political appointees of the PLC serves to compound the problem. In Matagalpa, deep divisions existed between the MED and the FSLN mayor’s office. Neither side was willing to work with

the other; both were highly critical of the others actions and motives. This situation led to major problems of coordination in the delivery of services.

However, on a positive note, these divisions did not seem to appear within school systems themselves. Rather, they appear restricted to the bureaucratic level. We found very little evidence of political overtones within school systems. Moreover, party membership did not seem to be a determining factor in terms of job appointments, selections or elections at the school level.

At the bureaucratic level, our discussions with key individuals also support the claim that school change is not a politically neutral and a-historical exercise. Rather, the daily activities of educational bureaucrats appear mediated by political struggles and historical projects. In such a context, the introduction of new educational initiatives tends to exploit existing tensions and disagreements, exemplified in the struggle between the Municipal Delegate and the Mayor's office in Matagalpa. However, a deductive approach to change planning misses many of these realities. As a result, they can end up deepening community divisions and exploiting existing volatilities; essentially doing more harm than good.

A Review of the Hypothesis

The findings above shed significant light on the process of change occurring in Matagalpa's autonomous schools. As we have argued throughout this study, understanding school change requires understanding the dynamics of the educational institution. Our analysis of daily life in Matagalpa's autonomous schools reveals that educational institutions are comprised of more than formal rules and specifications. They

are comprised additionally of norms, expectations, and procedures that constitute much of the structure that influences behaviour. In Matagalpa, the introduction of new formal rules for schools has had a limited effect on the behaviour of local school stakeholders precisely because the introduction of new formal rules has not significantly undermined prevailing norms, expectations, and procedures that are internalised by local autonomy stakeholders. As demonstrated, the introduction of the New Law has led to the creation of School Councils in all schools, where most councils exercise some decision-making authority. This achievement is significant because the creation of the council system yields new opportunities for 'parental participation' and 'local accountability' in school operations. Nevertheless, despite the formal creation of school councils, the utility of these new decision-making spaces has been greatly constrained by the historical norms and expectations held by stakeholders, which are perpetuated rather than undermined through the school autonomy program.

At the school level, we witness traces of corruption and capture, which have been historical features of education in Nicaragua since the time of independence. We also hear how local stakeholders internalised national level events (such as political struggles and the existence of *phantom schools*), which shakes their faith in school autonomy as a viable reform. Additionally, we hear how local stakeholders continue to project traditional expectations upon others within the autonomy program by continuing to construct parents as 'passive recipients' lacking the basic capacity for meaningful contributions in education. Such normative constructions not only undermine the practice of 'parental participation' and 'accountability' in local autonomous schools, but

these constructions also perpetuate traditional expectations and incentives for powerful actors looking to co-opt the process.

At the bureaucratic level, we hear from several actors who attest to some significant achievements of the autonomy program. Nevertheless, these actors (bureaucrats, delegates, and representatives from the mayor's office) also highlight the prevailing norms and expectations that have been perpetuated through the autonomy program. Specifically, these bureaucrats convey normative beliefs and expectations for autonomy that pertain to the political nature of the reform. Additionally, we hear how clientelist practices and patronage appointments are perpetuated through the reform. Finally, we hear how many of these individuals question the 'capacity' of parents to make meaningful contributions in education. Each of these normative beliefs appears to significantly influence the way these individuals interpret the reform and its potential for real change at the local level.

At the national level, we witness how the normative expectations of policy makers inform the design and negotiation of the school autonomy program. Additionally, we see how such expectations serve to perpetuate existing struggles, divisions, and expectations about the purpose and function of education in Nicaragua. Specifically, we witnessed how the design and negotiation of school autonomy in Nicaragua was informed by a particular logic and political ideology, which perpetuated political divisions and conflict between existing factions. Additionally, the appearance of phantom schools has served to shake the public's faith in school autonomy as viable reform, providing important normative signals that are internalised by stakeholders.

Overall, recognizing that institutions provide the cognitive, coordinative, informational, and normative micro-foundations of behaviour highlights the factors that cause institutions (and behaviour) to persist in marginally changing environments (Greif, p. 384). What is evident in this study of school autonomy in Matagalpa is that despite the introduction of new formal rules and principles for parental participation and accountability in education, the regularities of behaviour in the educational bureaucracy and local schools has remained largely unchanged precisely because the new principles have not been conveyed to others through action. In asking Matagalpinos about school autonomy in their communities, we find that their cognitive understandings of education remain highly intact- despite the introduction of new rules, principles, and procedures. In fact, we take the incidences of corruption witnessed at both the national and local levels, the political nature of the delegate position, continuing concerns over job loss in the wake of political elections, and the view of the 'capacity deficient parents' held by many stakeholders as evidence that the new principles of participation and accountability are not being conveyed to Matagalpinos.

Historical Institutional Perspective on School Change in Latin America

According to the Historical Institutional perspective, behaviour generated by an institution will prevail as long as the relevant parameters of the institution are supported. Thus, the challenge of institutional change is to bring about changes in the institutional parameters that cause the traditional behaviour (associated with the institution) to no longer be self-enforcing. How can such a change be accomplished in the context of

Nicaragua's school system? Additionally, how can such a change be accomplished in the context of Latin American schooling? In this section, we consider several issues derived from a historical institutional perspective that can be useful when studying and planning for change in places like Nicaragua and Latin America in general.

To begin, the Historical Institutional perspective carries important methodological implications for the study of policy change in Latin America. When studying socially beneficial policy aimed at beneficial institutional change in Latin America, we need to recognize the dynamic relationship between institutional components and individual behaviour. Specifically, incentive and motivation to comply with change legislation is not determined by the formal rules alone, but is rather based on one's expectation and anticipation about how others will behave in relation to the new legislation. Therefore, understanding change means recognizing how 'behavioural beliefs' are built and reinforced by institutions- and the institutional components that structure social interaction. This relationship between institutions and behaviour is particularly important when examining change in the context of Latin America because the process of institutional formation in Latin America has been qualitatively different from what has been experienced in more advanced industrial societies. Here, the definition of 'the institution' advanced by the Historical Institutional perspective says little about the conditions under which a particular institution is effective in generating a particular behaviour. Instead, the advantage of this approach is that it highlights what has to be studied, pointing out that we need to study Latin America's institutions of education as endogenous- in the sense that they are self-enforcing. Thus, the study of institutional

change initiatives needs to be conducted from an inductive, historical, and social perspective.

In the context of Latin America, such an approach to the study of change may be particularly warranted. In explaining why the new technology of “decentralization” failed to yield its promised benefits in Latin American education, we have previously argued that school reform serves a significant ‘political’ function in Latin America (see: McNamara, in press). We have argued that an alternative approach is to recognize that national educational programs in Latin America consist of values, ideologies, and images, which are intended to serve the interests of a particular ruling regime, class, or political faction. To a significant extent, the findings from this study support our previous work in Latin America by revealing how education is tied to the social and political context. However, the HCIA perspective encourages a more complex analysis of the relationship between historical institutions and contemporary behaviour.

Overall, the historical institutional perspective entails recognizing that institutions are more than rules. Rather, it entails recognizing that institutional development is a sequential process in which past institutional elements matter. Successful reform requires much more than changing rules; it requires creating new systems of interrelated institutional elements that motivate, enable, and guide individuals to take particular actions. Therefore, in pursuing institutional reform, developmental assistance will have to shift its focus. Rather than focusing only on helping countries specify rules, it will have to seek to change organizations, beliefs, and intertransactional linkages (Greif, p. 403). Specifically, the challenge for development aid is to create new ‘self-enforcing institutions’ so that when aid ceases, the institution will persist.

In this section, we consider the general recommendations such an approach might yield. We believe these recommendations may assist development planners and policy-makers in their efforts to enhance the prospects and possibilities of change initiatives in the context of underdevelopment. Combined, we believe these policy recommendations can contribute to a comprehensive strategy for sustainable school change in the context of underdevelopment.

➤ Approaching School Change as a Broad, Seamless Development Strategy

In *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, Michael Fullan (2001) argues that while School Based Management initiatives have a structural element, “it is *culture* that is the primary agent of change” (Fullan and Watson, 1999, p.11). In his analysis of technology integration in the United States, Fullan finds that innovations were adopted only superficially, while traditional teaching practices remained unchanged, despite mild changes in language and surface structures (Fullan, 2001). This review highlights a central problem in the change literature; that organizational innovations do not appear to be altering individual behaviour in classrooms as expected. To a significant extent, Fullan’s findings are supported by this study. In light of this problem, a more advantageous approach may to shift our conceptual attention away from the structural elements of school reform (ex. Formal rules) and towards the wider social, cultural, political, and institutional dynamics of the change process itself.

Such an approach means conceptualising 'change' in a new way, where change becomes a matter of shifting worldviews and normative understandings about education. Fullan is at the forefront of this new approach to change, suggesting that:

Real change, then, whether desired or not, represents a serious personal and collective experience characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty; and if the change works out it can result in a sense of mastery, accomplishment, and professional growth. The anxieties of uncertainty and the joys of mastery are central to the subjective meaning of educational change, and to success or failure thereof- facts that have not been recognized or appreciated in most attempts at reform. (Fullan, 2001, p. 32)

From this new perspective, school change is seen to be *cultural and social*, as well as structural. Change cannot simply result from a top-down rules alone. Rather, school change (being a change in behavioural beliefs, relationships, values and interpretation) resonates from within the culture of educational system. While the introduction of new rules may prompt such re-evaluations, it is not sufficient for securing the outcomes of such normative shifts.

What this means is that educational change initiatives stand a greater chance of success when they are coherently and seamlessly linked to broader initiatives for social and cultural development. In fact, the Director General recognizes this challenge, citing the need to build a 'culture of learning' in Nicaragua. Yet, such a cultural transformation cannot be achieved by narrowly defined school change initiatives. Rather, as previous work has shown, such the transformation of schools is best realized when they are supported by broader measures for transformation. Below, we consider how changes in the 'institution of education' can facilitate such transformations.

➤ Institutional Accountability and Monitoring Mechanisms

In the context of underdevelopment, the prospects and possibilities of school change will be enhanced if the school initiative is coherently linked to broader strategies for institutional reform. Although the standard literature on NPM and decentralization assumes that laws and formal rules are followed and allocated resources will automatically reach their beneficiaries, this assumption needs to be drastically qualified in underdeveloped communities, like Matagalpa. As illustrated in the accounts of parents and teachers, we hear repeated mention of missing money, bribes, fraud, *phantom schools*, *phantom students*, and *phantom teachers*. We also hear how some stakeholders view the government as repeatedly overstepping their jurisdiction. Therefore, a key step in creating a new 'self-enforcing' and sustainable institution of education in Latin America is to address weaknesses in institutional accountability and monitoring.

Accountability mechanisms are institutional features that enable citizens to pressure their government, to resolve disagreements regarding resource allocations, and to reduce the occurrence of conflict by encouraging public dialogue. In many parts of Latin America, such accountability measures are weak and/or deficient. In our own case, what is clear is that money for schools often goes missing, rule are often broken, jurisdictional authority can be overstepped, and guilty parties are not always held accountable. Such behaviours can be clearly linked to these institutional weaknesses, demonstrating a fluid and dependent relationship between school reform plans and institutional monitoring mechanisms. As a result, programs such as autonomy can serve to replicate traditional behavioural patterns and perpetuate conventional normative

expectations, which undermine the principles of accountability and participation in education.

In the context of underdevelopment, what is required then is the creation of a rigorous external accountability system that addresses bureaucratic corruption and traditions of clientelism and patronage that have plagued the institutions in many parts of Latin America. Such institutional reform measures might include performance-based hiring practices, the establishment of corruption working groups, the creation of independent monitoring agencies, the legislation of anti-bribery conventions, and/or the formation of a local complaints commission with the power to investigate allegations. Additionally, such a system needs to both top-down as well as bottom-up. While local council system can be a useful strategy for monitoring the behaviour of local-level decision-makers, it is not sufficient because local councils are themselves prone to capture and manipulation by powerful individuals. Additionally, local councils have no jurisdictional authority beyond the school and thus, they lack the power to address corruption within the bureaucracy. In short, if accountability and parental participation in education are contingent upon one's normative expectations about how others will act in relation to the formal rules, then stakeholders must be shown that the rules and procedures associated with accountability and parental participation will be enforced and upheld at all levels. The formation of a rigorous external accountability system is a key step towards perpetuating new understandings about 'rule-enforcement' and 'rule-compliance' in the context of underdevelopment.

➤ Building Local Capacity for Change in the Context of Underdevelopment

The NPM and decentralization literature typically assumes that schools and governments have an appropriate level of technical and administrative capacity to manage their new responsibilities. This assumption is questionable in all countries, but it is particularly severe in the context of underdevelopment, where asymmetries in technical and administrative capacity between schools and municipalities are acute. Because of asymmetries in the personnel capacity of municipal and school staff, a program like autonomy has the capacity to effectively broaden performance gaps between municipalities and schools.

Additionally, the theory of NPM and school autonomy requires that local stakeholders are able to both identify and choose an optimal course of action. Yet in the context of underdevelopment, informational systems are often deficient. In our own story, we hear that agents do not often have access to all available information necessary for holding other actors accountable. Thus, the concept of *bounded rationality* (the idea that the calculus in optimising preferences is constrained by incomplete information, norms, and emotion) figures prominently in our story. We hear from some stakeholders, for example, how the local culture does not value education and, as such, members of the community are often unwilling to exert the necessary effort to participate in School Councils. We hear from others how high rates of illiteracy make some parents the subject of manipulation by informed and/or powerful actors. We also hear how some parents are unable to hold teachers accountable because they lack the basic information for doing so. These accounts raise concerns that cultural values, high rates of illiteracy

among the adult population, and severe deficiencies in informational systems may render the basic assumptions of 'instrumental rationality' too stringent in a community like Matagalpa. We take these challenges to be related to the issue of 'local capacity'.

Numerous studies of school change initiatives have shown that high stake accountability reforms cannot realize their objective unless targeted schools have or acquire *the local capacity* to meet the functional requirements and prescribed performance standards (Malen and Rice, 2004; Hess, 1999). In fact, Fullan (2001) suggests that 'local capacity' is a key element for understanding change precisely because of the multi-level mobilization and coordination problems that occur under high-stake accountability reforms, which involve thousands of people throughout the organization. Given the difficulties of mass coordination in such an undertaking, it is critical that schools have the capacity to engage and adapt themselves to the new initiative; this is where local capacity becomes important.

Local capacity has been defined in several different ways throughout the literature, but the taxonomies for identifying the resources that schools require to carry out their instructional functions are largely complimentary. Malen and Rice (2004) propose a framework for analysing school capacity that includes fiscal, human, social and cultural capital, as well as informational resources and productivity dimensions. This framework is discussed in chapter two of this study. To varying degrees, all 5 of these components have been shown to be influential in determining the implementation of high stakes accountability reforms in the context of Matagalpa, highlighting the need to consider aspects of local capacity when planning for change in the context of underdevelopment.

In our study, it appears that the schools in our sample would benefit from commensurate capacity building strategies within the autonomy program that include; additional fiscal allocations to poorer schools that are less likely to be able to generate school fees, additional teacher training programs and school autonomy training programs for staff and council members, broad based community engagement and participation programs, and comprehensive information campaigns pertaining to school autonomy and education in general. These measures may be particularly important for generating the new norms associated with accountability, parental participation, and a 'culture of learning' in the context of underdevelopment.

A Brief Plan to be Considered by the New Government (2007-beyond)

On 5 November 2006, Nicaraguans returned to polls to elect a new President of the Republic. Daniel Ortega, presidential candidate of the FSLN and former president of the republic (1985-1990), won the race with 37.99% of the vote over Eduardo Montealegre of the ALN (28.30%) and Jose Rizo of the PLC (27.1%). Ortega's return to the presidency raises significant questions about the future of 'autonomous schools' in Nicaragua. In addition, it provides us with an opportunity to speculate further upon the predictative quality of the HCIA approach. We begin with the latter.

As we have argued throughout this study, education and educational decision-making in Nicaragua is deeply shaped by the behavioural beliefs and expectations of Nicaraguans. These beliefs and expectations relate powerfully to one's understanding about how education works, what purpose it serves, and how others will behave in relation to the rules of education. Additionally, we have argued through HCIA that such

beliefs have a self-enforcing quality; reproducing and institutionalizing them overtime. At first glance, the new Sandinista administration appears to have perpetuated some traditional beliefs about education, at least as they pertain to the political and ideological use of education in Nicaragua. For example, several individuals interviewed in this study (who wish to remain anonymous) have since lost their positions with the Ministry; replaced by individuals perceived to be more sympathetic to the philosophies of the new Sandinista administration. As predicted by HCIA, this action serves to perpetuate the 'zero-sum' politics of Nicaraguan education.

In terms of the program itself, it is perhaps too early to tell if the 'school autonomy' will survive under the new administration. In January 2007, the new Minister of Education, Miguel de Castilla, effectively declared "the end of school autonomy" in Nicaragua (Americas Program Policy Report, March 29, 2007: 2) by passing ministerial resolution 018-2007. This resolution officially eliminates the use of school fees in Nicaragua and additionally, calls for the employment of independent school monitors to ensure students and their families are not charged school fees. Despite this significant resolution, little has changed under the Sandinista leadership in terms of the devolution of decision-making authority in education and it appears that the School Council system established through the school autonomy program will continue under Sandinista rule and personnel.

De Castilla's decision to abolish the school fees has raised serious concerns amongst several civil society groups in the country, such as *Coordinadora Civil*, about how the Ministry will get the extra money required to cover the expenses that parents previously financed through school fees (La Prensa, February 9, 2007). This is

particularly troubling in light of the IMF's imposition of a cap on Nicaragua's public spending. As the new administration begins talks with the IMF, it remains to be seen if the government will be able to successfully negotiate more education funds to cover the lost revenue from school fees, or will once again be restrained by an IMF-imposed ceiling for social spending.

At a much broader level, the new administration is confronting many of the same educational challenges, institutional constraints, and material temptations of its predecessors. Contemporary Nicaragua remains a country characterized by political polarization, chronic institutional corruption, clientelism, and a legacy of social and political upheaval and it is difficult to comprehend how any government can achieve significant and lasting improvements in education. However, we believe positive gains can be made by examining and conceptualising school change initiatives not in spite of Nicaraguan history, but rather in light of it. This means adopting a change program that is realistic and uniquely adapted to the social and political realities of Nicaragua's history.

We suggest that Historical Comparative Institutional Analysis may yield significant insights for the new government's attempt at school reform. From the HCIA perspective, successful change requires creating new systems of interrelated institutional elements that motivate, enable, and guide individuals to take particular actions. Rather than focusing only on helping Nicaragua to specify formal rules and change plans, we believe a more advantageous approach is to seek to change organizations, beliefs, and intertransactional linkages in Nicaraguan education. The following are some brief recommendations for how such objectives could be advanced by the new government:

- 1) **Accountability Reform:** The prospects of school autonomy in Nicaragua can be enhanced if accompanied by broader institutional reforms targeting corruption, clientelism, and patronage practices in Nicaraguan education. Specifically, the Ministry of Education in Nicaragua may want to consider the implementation and enforcement of performance based hiring practices, elections for the Municipal Delegate post, and establishing a local, independent ombudsmen office with the power and authority to investigate complaints. Such reforms can help to generate new normative understandings and expectations about rule enforcement and compliance in Nicaragua education.

- 2) **Transparency and Monitoring Mechanisms:** Our study reveals that several schools in the sample are not in compliance with specific aspects of the New Law. The Ministry may want to consider closer monitoring and scrutiny of autonomy practice in local schools to ensure that schools are in compliance with all aspects and that decisions are made in a transparent manner. Such mechanisms might include closer Ministry monitoring and evaluation of principal tenures, principal elections, and school financial plans.

- 3) **Clarity and Coordination Mechanisms:** Our data suggests that the prospects and possibilities of school autonomy in Matagalpa can be enhanced if program implementation is better coordinated at all levels. This includes ensuring that the New Law is made available at each school, that schools clearly understand the

size and specifications of the council system, and that reform training programs are made available to staff and council members on an on-going basis. Such measures can help to ensure that each participant has a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, alleviating jurisdictional conflicts that are prone to arise.

- 4) Promoting a 'Culture of Learning': The values and cultures of local communities are identified by many in this study as key obstacles to school autonomy. Thus, the Ministry may want to consider its broader efforts at transforming these cultural values by continuing to promote the 'value of education' through television programs and national informational campaigns.
- 5) Promoting a 'Culture of Participation': The principles of parental participation and local accountability associated with school autonomy can be enhanced if coherently linked to a broader social project for community engagement. This involves linking the school council to broader efforts to transform the relationship between communities, the state, and education. Here, such efforts might include linking school councils to broader, participatory councils for municipal governance.
- 6) Limited Scope: Ambitious projects are doomed to failure. Policy-makers must then be aware of the limits of people on the ground and make policy-decisions

with these limits in mind, approaching change as an incremental and evolutionary process.

Overall, the challenge of fostering social welfare in Nicaragua through institutional reform is to render corrupt and rent-seeking practices counterproductive; to render mutual cooperation most profitable; and to encourage parental participation as a 'self-enforcing' behaviour. Responding to these challenges requires identifying and confronting historical practices and normative beliefs in Nicaraguan education, essentially creating new systems of interrelated institutional elements that motivate, enable, and guide individuals to take more productive forms of action.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Teachers Survey

Escribir por favor el nombre de su escuela en esta caja:	
A. Sobre usted y su casa...	
A1. ¿Cuántos años usted ha sido profesor en esta escuela? (escribir su respuesta en la caja...)	→
A2. ¿En qué barrio o vecindad usted vive?	
A3. ¿Cuántos niños/ as estan en su clase?	
A4. ¿Cuántos kilómetros hay de su casa a la escuela?	
A5. ¿Cuántos años usted ha vivido en Matagalpa?	

B. Sobre su escuela... Instrucciones: Encerrar en un círculo por favor el número para indicar su repuesta a las aseveraciones	1= Excelente 2= Bueno 3= Regular 4= Deficiente 5= Pesimo 6= no se/ no responde
B1. ¿Cuál es la condición de la iluminación en su clase?	1 2 3 4 5 6
B2. ¿Cuál es la condición de la seguridad en su escuela?	1 2 3 4 5 6
B3. Cuál es la condición de la higiene/de la limpieza en esta escuela	1 2 3 4 5 6
B4. La calidad de los textos en esta escuela es...	1 2 3 4 5 6
B5. El número de los libros de texto disponibles para los estudiantes es....	1 2 3 4 5 6
B6. Los recursos disponibles para mí en la sala de clase son (tiza, las pinturas, los lápices, otra)	1 2 3 4 5 6
B7. El funcionamiento académico de estudiantes en esta escuela es...	1 2 3 4 5 6
B8. La comunicación entre los profesores y los padres en esta escuela es...	1 2 3 4 5 6
B9. La comunicación entre los profesores y el directoro es...	1 2 3 4 5 6
B10. La ayuda de la comunidad para esta escuela es...	1 2 3 4 5 6
B11. La ayuda del ministerio para esta	1 2 3 4 5 6

escuela es...	
B12. Los sueldos del profesor en esta escuela son...	1 2 3 4 5 6

C. En esta sección, deseamos saber la autonomía trabaja en esta escuela	
Instrucciones: circundar su respuesta	
C1. ¿Es usted miembro, o ha sido, un miembro del consejo docentes?	Sí no
C2. ¿Usted ha sido siempre un candidato en una elección para el consejo docentes?	Sí no
C3. ¿Usted ha votado siempre en una elección por el consejo docentes?	Sí no
C4. ¿Usted ha participado en una reunión del consejo docentes?	Sí no
C5. ¿Usted sabe quiénes son los miembros del consejo de docentes en la escuela?	Sí no
C6. ¿Usted ha hablado siempre con un miembro del consejo de docentes sobre las funciones de esta escuela?	Sí no
C7. ¿Usted ha asistido a una reunión del consejo directivos?	Sí no
C8. ¿Usted ha recibido capacitaciones del ministerio sobre escuelas autónomas?	Sí no
C9. ¿Usted se ofrece voluntariamente tiempo para las actividades extracurricular en esta escuela?	Sí no
C10. ¿Usted vota en elecciones presidenciales?	Sí no
C11. Usted vota en elecciones municipales?	Sí no
C12. ¿Es usted un miembro de organizaciones voluntarias, los equipos de equipos deportivos, o clubs sociales?	Sí no
C13. ¿Usted ha visto siempre un informe mensual sobre gastos financieros de esta escuela?	Sí no
D. En esta sección, deseamos saber sobre sus experiencias con la autonomía (circundar su respuesta)	1= sí, Excelente 2= sí, Muy Bueno 3= sí, bueno 4= regular 5= no, deficiente 6= no, pesimo 7=no se/ no responde
D1. Desde llegar a ser autónoma, la calidad de la educación en esta escuela ha mejorado	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D2. Usted en los últimos 3 años, ha sido más activo en esta escuela	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D3. Usted en los últimos 3 años, ha hecho los nuevos programas se han introducido en esta escuela	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D4. En los últimos 3 años, he desarrollado a nuevos amigos en la comunidad de la escuela	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D5. En los últimos 3 años, la administración de esta escuela ha mejorado	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D6. En los últimos 3 años, las condiciones físicas en esta escuela han mejorado	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D7. En los últimos 3 años, hemos realizado cambios positivos al plan de estudios	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D8. Los padres en esta comunidad están interesados en la educación de su niño	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D9. Hay buena relación de funcionamiento	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

entre profesores en esta escuela	
D10. Estoy libre expresar mis opiniones a la comunidad	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D11. Soy vida feliz en Matagalpa	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D12. Nuestra renta de la familia es suficiente satisfacer las necesidades de esta casa	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D13. Tengo tiempo libre en mi disposición	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D14. A esta comunidad respetan a los profesores	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D15. El ministerio respetan a los profesores	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D16. Quisiera continuar en mi profesión como professor	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

E. En esta sección, requerimos una cierta información adicional que pueda ayudarnos a identificar a ciertos grupos en necesidad

E1. ¿Sexo/género?	a) F b) M
E2. ¿Edad?	a) menos de 20 b) 20-30 c) 30-40 d) 40-50 e) 50 o más viejo
E3. ¿Estado civil?	a) Casado b) No Casado c) Separado d) acompañado e) otros
E4. ¿Cuántos niveles de la educación usted tiene?	a) no b) Primaria c) Secundaria d) Universidad e) Licenciado f) post-graduado g) maestría h) instituto tecnico f) otros
E5. ¿Tiene Usted servicio telefonico activo?	a) sí b) no
E6. ¿Usted posee una computadora?	a) sí b) no
E7. ¿Es usted empleado de tiempo completo?	a) sí b) no
E8. ¿En los últimos 3 años, han elegido a un nuevo director?	a) sí b) no
E9. Usted lee el periódico	a) sí b) no
E10. ¿Cuántos libros tiene usted en su casa?	a) 0 b) 1-3 c) 4-6 d) 7-9 e) 10-12 f) 13-15 g) 16 o más
E11. ¿Cuántos niños viven en su casa?	a) 0 b) 1 c) 2. d) 3 e) 4 f) 5 g) 6 o más
E12. Cuantas personas viven en su casa?	a) 2 b) 3 c) 4 d) 5 e) 6 f) 7 g) 8 h) 9 o más

F. Sobre autonomía...	1= excelente 2= bueno 3=regular 4=deficiente 5= pesimo 6= no se, no responde
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F1. Como es la seguridad en us comunidad?	1	2	3	4	5	6
F2. Los personas que viven en su comunidad son amigable?	1	2	3	4	5	6
F3. La autonomía está trabajando bien en las escuelas de Matagalpa	1	2	3	4	5	6
F4. Le gustaria continuar trabajando en esta escuela?	1	2	3	4	5	6
F5. Con mi experiencia en esta escuela, estoy aprendiendo sobre la participación democrática	1	2	3	4	5	6

¿Usted tiene otros comentarios acerca del proceso de autonomia? (escribir por favor en su respuesta)

Appendix B. Parent Survey

Escribir por favor el nombre de la escuela de su niño en esta casilla :	
A. Sobre su casa...	
A1. ¿Cuál es su representación de este niño/a en la escuela autónoma?	→
A2. ¿En qué barrio o vecindad usted vive?	
A3. ¿Cuántos niños/as están en su casa?	
A4. ¿Cuántos kilómetros hay de su casa a la escuela?	
A5. ¿Cuántos años usted ha vivido en Matagalpa?	
B. Sobre la escuela Instrucciones: Encerrar en un círculo por favor el número para indicar su respuesta a las aseveraciones	1= Excelente 2= Bueno 3= Regular 4= Deficiente 5= Pesimo 6= no se/ no responde
B1. Esta escuela responde a las necesidades de mi niño/a	1 2 3 4 5 6
B2. Mi niño/a está demostrando buen progreso en esta escuela	1 2 3 4 5 6
B3. Mi niño/a asiste a la escuela diariamente.	1 2 3 4 5 6
B4. Me informan suficientemente sobre qué se enseña en la aula de clase de mi niño/a	1 2 3 4 5 6
B5. Me informan suficientemente sobre gastos financieros en esta escuela	1 2 3 4 5 6
B6. Soy miembro valioso de la comunidad de la escuela	1 2 3 4 5 6
B7. Mis opiniones son valoradas por las personas que toman decisiones en esta escuela	1 2 3 4 5 6
B8. Si tuviera un problema con la educación de mi niño/a, sabría con quién hablar	1 2 3 4 5 6
B9. Si tuviera un problema con la escuela de mi niño, sería resuelto rápidamente	1 2 3 4 5 6
B10. Soy una persona activa en mi comunidad local	1 2 3 4 5 6
B11. Los que toman decisiones en esta escuela son responsables ante los padres	1 2 3 4 5 6
B12. Tengo suficiente información para participar en decisiones en esta escuela	1 2 3 4 5 6
C. En esta sección, deseamos saber sobre como la autonomía trabaja en esta escuela.....Instrucciones: circundar su respuesta	
C1. ¿Es usted miembro, o ha sido, un miembro del consejo de padres?	Sí no
C2. ¿Usted ha sido siempre un candidato en una elección para el consejo de padres?	Sí no
C3. ¿Usted ha votado siempre en una elección por el consejo de padres?	Sí no
C4. ¿Usted ha participado en una reunión del consejo de padres?	Sí no
C5. ¿Usted sabe quiénes son los miembros del consejo de padres en la escuela de su niño?	Sí no
C6. ¿Usted ha hablado siempre con un miembro del	Sí no

consejo de padres sobre la educación de su niño?	
C7. ¿Usted ha asistido a una reunión del consejo directivo?	Sí no
C8. ¿Usted ha recibido capacitaciones del ministerio sobre escuelas autónomas?	Sí no
C9. ¿Usted ofrece voluntariamente tiempo en la escuela de su niño?	Sí no
C10. ¿Usted vota en elecciones presidenciales?	Sí no
¿C11 usted vota en elecciones municipales?	Sí no
C12. ¿Es usted un miembro de organizaciones voluntarias, de equipos deportivos, o club sociales?	Sí no
C13. ¿Usted ha visto siempre un informe mensual sobre gastos financieros de esta escuela?	Sí no

D. En esta sección, deseamos saber sobre sus experiencias con la autonomía (circundar su respuesta)	1= sí, excelente 2=si, muy bueno 3=si, bueno 4= ni bueno, ni malo 5=no, deficiente 6=no, pesimo 7=no se/ no responde
D1. Al llegar a ser autónoma, la calidad de la educación de mi niño/a que recibe ha mejorado	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D2. Usted en los últimos 3 años, ha sido más activo en la escuela de mi niño	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D3. Usted en los últimos 3 años, ha hecho un miembro más activo en la comunidad de la escuela	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D4. Usted en los últimos 3 años, ha desarrollado a nuevas amistades en la comunidad de la escuela	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D5. En los últimos 3 años, la administración de esta escuela ha mejorado	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D6. En los últimos 3 años, las condiciones físicas en esta escuela han mejorado	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D7. Usted en los últimos 3 años, ha hecho más activo en las decisiones de esta escuela	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D8. Los padres en esta comunidad están interesados en la educación de su niño	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D9. Hay buena relación de funcionamiento entre los profesores y los padres	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D10. Soy libre expresar mis opiniones a la comunidad	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D11. Mi vida es feliz en Matagalpa	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D12. Los ingresos económicos de la familia son suficiente para satisfacer las necesidades de mi casa	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D13. Usted Tiene suficiente tiempo libre	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
D14. Mi niño/a mira mucha television	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

E. En esta sección, requerimos una cierta información adicional que puede ayudarnos a identificar a ciertos grupos en necesidad			
E1. ¿Sexo/género?	a) F	b) M	
E2. ¿Edad?	a) menos de 20	b) 20-30	c) 30-40
	d) 40-50	e) 50 o más viejo	
E3. ¿Estado civil?	a) Casado	b) No Casado	c) Separado d)

	acompañado e) otra
E4. ¿Cuántos niveles de la educación usted tiene? ¿(primario, secundario, universidad, otra)?	a) no b) Primaria c) Secundaria d) Universidad e) Instituto Técnico f) Otros
E5. ¿Tiene Usted Servicio Telefónico activo?	a) sí b) no
E6. ¿Usted posee una computadora?	a) sí b) no
E7. ¿Es Usted Empleado de tiempo completo?	a) sí b) no
E8. ¿Usted le ayuda su niño a realizar sus tareas escolares?	a) sí b) no
E9. Usted lee el periódico?	a) sí b) no
E10. ¿Cuántos libros tiene usted en su casa?	a) 0 b) 1-3 c) 4-6 d) 7-9 e) 10-12 f) 13-15 g) 16 o más
E11. ¿Cuántos niños viven en su casa?	a) 0 b) 1 c) 2 d) 3 e) 4 f) 5 g) 6 o más
E12. Cuántas personas viven en su casa?	a) 2 b) 3 c) 4 d) 5 e) 6 f) 7 g) 8 h) 9 o más

F. Sobre sus impresiones generales.	1= excelente 2= bueno 3= regular 4= deficiente 5= pesimo 6= no se, no responde
F1. Como es la seguridad en su comunidad?	1 2 3 4 5 6
F2. Los personas que viven en su comunidad son amigable?	1 2 3 4 5 6
F3. La autonomía está trabajando bien en las escuelas de Matagalpa	1 2 3 4 5 6
F4. Quisiera mantener a su niño en esta escuela.	1 2 3 4 5 6
F5. Con mi experiencia en esta escuela, estoy aprendiendo sobre la participación democrática	1 2 3 4 5 6

¿Usted tiene otros comentarios acerca del proceso de autonomia? (escribir por favor en su respuesta)
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Appendix C. Principals Surveys

Sección 1. Características Personales

Para empezar, le vamos a hacer algunas preguntas personales y profesionales

1. Escriba La Nombre de esta escuela	6. ¿Cuál es su área de especialidad profesional? _____
2. N/A	
3. ¿Cuál es su edad ?	7. Por favor dígame con respecto a los siguientes temas, cuántos cursos de capacitación recibió usted durante el año 2004 y el número de días que duraron en total. (leer opciones)
4. Anote el sexo del entrevistado (anote por observación) 1. Masculino 2. Femenino	Temas de curso # de cursos - días de duración en total
5. ¿Cuál es el último año de estudios que usted aprobó? 1. Primaria Grado: 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 2. Secundaria Año: 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 3. Universitaria Año: 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 4. Post-grado Curso = 1 Maestría = 2 Doctorado = 3	a. Relacionado con autonomía escolar b. Administración c. Áreas académicas d. Otra capacitación. ¿Cuál es? _____

8. Ahora voy a leerle una serie de actividades. Por favor dígame cuánto tiempo en HORAS invierte en cada actividad por día semana, mes, semestre o año durante 2004 (leer opciones)	
Actividades	Unidad de tiempo Diario = 1 Semanal = 2 Mensual = 3 Semestre = 4 Año = 5
a. Planificación de actividades del centro	
b. Reuniones con consejo directivo / consultivo	
c. Enseñanza	
d. Elaboración de informes	
e. Atención a padres de familia	
f. Atención a estudiantes	
g. Atención y reuniones con docentes	
h. Participación en capacitaciones	
i. Actividades administrativas	
j. Otra actividad que realice y no le haya mencionado? Cuál?	

9. ¿Quién o quiénes tuvieron mayor influencia en la decisión de integrar al Centro en la Autonomía Escolar? (*leer opciones*)

1= Si 2= No 8= NA (No aplica por pase)
9= NS /NR

- a. Solamente el Director
- b. MECD a través de sus canales de autoridades
- c. Iniciativa de los maestros
- d. Consenso entre padres y personal docente y administrativo del Centro
- e. Consejo Escolar o Consultivo del Centro
- f. Padres de Familia

10. Con qué frecuencia el consejo consultivo /directivo informó a la comunidad educativa sobre la administración de los ingresos del centro durante el 2004-5? (*anote el número de respuesta*) _____

- 1. Nunca
- 2. Cada semana
- 3. Dos veces al mes
- 4. Mensualmente
- 5. Bimestralmente (cada dos meses)
- 6. Trimestralmente (cada tres meses)
- 7. Semestralmente (dos veces al año o cada 6 meses)
- 8. Anualmente
- 9. NS / NR

11. Cuántos miembros en el consejo Consultivo/ Directivo representaron a cada uno de los siguientes grupos en 2004-5 (<i>leer opciones</i>)	2004-5	
	Masculino	Femenino
a. Director		
b. Padres de familia		
c. Maestros		
d. Estudiantes		
e. Otro: A qué grupo representaba? _____		
f. Total		

12. Con qué frecuencia el consejo consultivo /directivo se reunió durante el año 2004-5? (<i>circule el número de respuesta</i>) _____
1. Nunca
2. Cada semana
3. Dos veces al mes
4. Mensualmente
5. Bimestralmente (cada dos meses)
6. Trimestralmente (cada tres meses)
7. Semestralmente (dos veces al año o cada 6 meses)
8. Anualmente
9. NS /NR

Opinión sobre la Condición de la Escuela

13. Ahora quiero preguntarte sobre la condición física y existencia de ciertas instalaciones en el centro durante este año. Por favor, dígame si existe o no y en qué condiciones se encuentran los siguientes elementos: (<i>leer opciones</i>)	Existe Sí o No?	En qué estado se encuentran
	Existe =1 No Existe =2	Muy bien = 1 Bien = 2 Regular = 3 Mal = 4 Muy Mal = 5 NA = 8 NS /NR = 9
a. Edificio	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
b. Mobiliario de oficina	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
c. Pupitres	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
d. Laboratorio	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
e. Biblioteca	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
f. Talleres	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
g. Servicio eléctrico	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 8 9

h. Servicio de agua potable	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
i. Servicio telefónico	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
j. Sanitario o letrina	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
k. Bar	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
l. Áreas deportivas	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
m. Áreas verdes, reforestación	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
n. Muro o malla	1 2	1 2 3 4 5 8 9

14. Referente a este centro <u>dígame por favor: (A) en que estado se encuentran los siguientes aspectos durante el 2003 (B) y ahora dígame por favor si usted piensa que la situación del centro cambió a como se encontraban antes que ingresara el centro a la autonomía escolar .</u>	A) En qué estado se encuentran los siguientes aspectos Excelente = 1 Bueno = 2 Regular = 3 Deficiente = 4 Pésimo = 5 NS /NR = 9	B) Dígame por favor si usted piensa que la situación del centro cambió con respecto a como se encontraba antes que ingresara a la autonomía escolar. 1 = Muchísimo mejor 2 = Mejor 3 = Lo mismo 4 = Peor 5 = Muchísimo peor 8 = NA (No aplica por pase) 9 = NS /NR
	a. Rendimiento académico de los estudiantes	1 2 3 4 5 9
b. Disciplina laboral	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
c. Disciplina estudiantil	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
d. Asistencia y puntualidad de los maestros	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
e. Asistencia y puntualidad de los estudiantes	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
f. Participación estudiantil en las actividades del centro	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
g. Participación de los padres en las actividades del centro	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
h. Participación de los maestros en las actividades del centro	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
i. Salarios de los maestros	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
j. Estabilidad laboral de los maestros	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
k. Comportamiento ético de los maestros (abuso de bebidas alcohólicas, venta de notas, maltrato a los alumnos, etc)	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
l. Comportamiento ético de los estudiantes (robos, violencia, abuso de drogas, etc.	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
m. Infraestructura y condición física de la escuela	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
n. Condición física de las aulas de clase, incluyendo la disponibilidad y condición de mobiliario	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
o. Disponibilidad de texto y material didáctico	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
p. Nivel de comunicación entre maestros, el director y el consejo	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9
q. Piensa Ud. que haya alguna otra cosa que agregar a estos aspectos, cuál? _____	1 2 3 4 5 9	1 2 3 4 5 8 9

Para todos los Centros

15. Y en relación a la autonomía escolar, usted piensa que esta ha sido: (leer opciones)					
1. Muy beneficiosa	2. Beneficiosa	3. Sin efectos	4. Dañina	5. Muy dañina	9. NS /NR

Nivel de Decisiones

<p>16. Para cada uno de los tópicos o áreas que le voy a leer, por favor dígame la instancia que tiene más influencia, sea la Sede Central, la Delegación Departamental, la Delegación Municipal, el Consejo, el Director o la Comisión Electoral de Ética y Fiscalización.</p> <p>Además, por favor indíquenos el nivel de influencia que tiene usted en las decisiones de esa área, sea muchísima, mucha, alguna, poca o ninguna influencia.</p>	<p>Instancia que tiene más influencia:</p> <p>1= Sede central 2= Delegación departamental 3= Delegación municipal 4= Consejo 5= Director 6= Gobierno Estudiantil 9= NS /NR</p>	<p>A nivel personal usted tiene:</p> <p>1= Muchísima influencia 2= Mucha influencia 3= Alguna influencia 4= Poca influencia 5= Ninguna influencia 9= NS /NR</p>
1. En nombrar y despedir maestros	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
2a. En nombrar al director	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
2b. En despedir al director	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
3. En nombrar y despedir al personal administrativo y de apoyo	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
4. En definir el plan anual del centro educativo	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
5. En determinar las metas del centro escolar	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
6. En el control de matrícula por aula de clases	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
7. En la evaluación y supervisión pedagógica de los maestros	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
8. En el diseño del curriculum	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
9. En la selección de los libros de texto usados en el aula de clase	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
10. En la distribución y el suministro de libros de texto y materiales didácticos	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
11. En la selección de maestros a ser capacitados en programas específicos	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
12. En la planificación y preparación del presupuesto	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
13. A la hora de determinar los salarios	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
14. En determinar incentivos para los maestros, personal administrativo y de apoyo	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
15. En determinar quienes de los maestros y el personal administrativo y de apoyo recibirán incentivos	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
16a. En financiar los incentivos económicos para los maestros y el personal administrativo	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
16b. En financiar los incentivos económicos a maestros por asistir y retención escolar	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
17. En determinar los estímulos para los estudiantes.	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
18. En el mantenimiento de la escuela	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
19. En determinar el número de días del año escolar	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
20. En determinar los horarios de clases y de trabajo	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
21. En la formulación de nuevos proyectos pedagógicos	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
22. En la formulación de nuevos proyectos de infraestructura de la escuela	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
23. En los informes periódicos a la comunidad	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
24. En establecer el valor de la cuota mensual	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9
25. En cómo gastar el dinero recaudado por el centro escolar	1 2 3 4 5 6 9	1 2 3 4 5 9

Appendix D. Definition of Interview Codes

1. **Good Reform/Law {22}**: This code was used to capture all positive statements that refer directly to the autonomy program and the New Law, without mention of any specific, identifiable improvement. It was necessary to create this code to capture numerous, general statements such as: *autonomy is a good/excellent program, it assists in school development, autonomy has led to better progress at the school, the Law is a good one*, etc. Numerous stakeholders, especially teachers, were quick to compliment the theory of decentralization and autonomy—suggesting that the problem of autonomy was not with theory, but rather with the application. Positive ‘in theory’ mentions of autonomy were included in this category while the latter negative segment of the comment ‘but in reality’ were coded under “Law’s Application”.
2. **Improved Accountability/Participation {20}**: This code was used when a respondent referred to specific improvements in participation or accountability that could be directly attributed to the reform. Numerous respondents spoke at great length about how the reform has improved their own participation in school events and decision-making. Others spoke more generally about how other stakeholders have become more involved in the school community. We decided to group accountability and participation in a single code because of the difficulty of distinguishing between the two concepts when interpreting the text. Statements such as: *“the reform ensures that parents have a say in how teachers make their decisions”* reflect both a degree of greater participation and greater accountability. Thus, we decided to collapse the two concepts into a single code to ensure we accurately captured the sentiments of stakeholders and, moreover, the reciprocal relationship between accountability through participation. This code reflects positive comments about life in schools that can be attributed to the reform, such as: *we are more important members of the school, decision-makers must assert themselves, parents have more of a say, schools are more free to choose what is best for them, the advice of parents is taken into consideration, more responsible decisions, parents are consulted, we all work together, greater democratic participation*, etc.
3. **Law's Application {17}**: This code was used to capture all statements that refer to problems in the Law’s application in schools, without mention of the specific nature and source of the problem. It was necessary to create this code to capture numerous, general statements such as: *autonomy is falsehood in our schools; it is not interpreted/applied correctly; not fulfilled; the advice of teachers/parents is not taken into account; there is ignorance of the Law; the Law is not respected; does not work well in our schools*; etc. As mentioned, numerous stakeholders spoke positively about the theory of autonomy and the Law, but added a qualifying statement ‘in reality...’ These qualifiers were also included in this code category.

4. **Good Education/School {13}**: This code is applied to capture all positive mentions of the school and its staff, which do not relate specifically to the autonomy reform. Numerous respondents had several complimentary things to say about their schools and we felt it was important to have code that could capture these comments. The code includes statements such as: *school is good/excellent; I am very contented with this school; the staff is very good; the director is very helpful; my child does very well at this school, etc.*
5. **Corruption {9}**: This code was applied to all, specific mentions of *corruption, misappropriation* of money/funds, *bribes, embezzlements, stray money, and dishonesty* in administration. The vast majority of these comments and criticisms (8/9) were directed at school principals.
6. **MED Interference {9}**: Numerous respondents spoke directly to problems of Ministry interference in Council decision-making and a school's practice of school autonomy. This code was applied to all, specific mentions of unwanted interference from the Delegate, the Ministry, or the Central government in a school's practice of autonomy. This code captures statements referring to the MED/MECD or Delegate such as: *does not allow...to exert total autonomy; does not respect the agreement/decisions; always violates; interferes; intervenes; decisions depend on what the MECD wants; etc.*
7. **Capture {7}**: This code is applied to statements wherein the respondent mentions unfair manipulation and/or domination of the Council and/or school decision-making process on the part of an actor other than the MED/MECD or Delegate, such as: *directors do not consult the opinions, many abuses take place, directors tailor decisions to their own interests, do not account for others, manipulates others, etc.*
8. **Improved Performance {6}**: This code was applied to all statements that referred to a specific improvement in school performance only, such as: *better academic strategies, better education, improvement in the quality of education learning, educative development, etc.* It does not refer to specific improvements in administration, participation, or accountability.
9. **Lack of Local Resources {6}**: This code was applied to all statements citing a fiscal/human/material resource deficiency at the school or in the community. This includes statements such as: *schools lack some resources, resources/money in short supply, parents have no work and few resources, investment in human resources is lacking, etc.*
10. **MED Resource Provision {6}**: This code was applied to all specific statements mentioning insufficient material/pedagogical provisions by the MED/MECD to the school. This includes statements such as: *does not provide the texts that children need, there is no musical band, no chemistry labs, texts are inadequate, have not received adequate training, etc.*

11. **Poverty {6}**: This code was applied to all references to poverty in the community such as: *poverty is very high, parents are very poor, people don't have economic autonomy*, etc.
12. **School Infrastructure {5}**: This code was applied to all mentions of school infrastructure and physical conditions, including the school's *building, water, electricity, gymnasium, classrooms, and roads*.
13. **Improved Administration {4}**: This code was applied to all statements that referred to a specific improvement in school administration only, such as: *better physical plans, improved monthly reports, better planning*, etc. It does not refer to improvements in statements about improvements in educational performance, participation, or accountability.
14. **Security {4}**: This code was applied to all statements that include the words: *violence or security*.
15. **Lack of Information {3}**: This code was applied to all statements mentioning a lack of information, such as: *we do not have information about the expenses, parents confuse their role, do not have necessary information*.
16. **Lack of Interest {3}**: This code was applied to all statements mentioning a lack on interest in education on the part of the community and/or parents, including: *do not take much interest in schooling, do not care about education*.
17. **Lack of Redress/Complaint {3}**: This code was applied to all complaints about teachers that were not directly related to the reform, such as: *teachers are not very understanding; teachers treat the children badly*.
18. **Law's Significance {3}**: This code was applied to all comments that question the significance of the content of the reform itself. It is not applied to issues of application. These include statements such as: *the changes mean very little; it is meaningless; the Law doesn't matter*.
19. **Home Setting {2}**: This code was applied to all mentions of problems in a child's home, such as *abuse*.
20. **Privatization/Offloading {2}**: This code was applied to all statements mentioning the *privatization of education* in reference to school autonomy.
21. **School Fees {2}**: This code was applied to all mentions of *school fees*
22. **Local Culture {1}**: This code was applied to mentions of *gambling and drinking* in the community

23. **Worse off {1}**: This code was applied to any explicit negative evaluation of the reform itself, such as: *it makes things worse in the community and school*

Appendix E. Key Trigger Words & Code Applications

Codes & Some Key Trigger Words	Actual Words & Phrases from the transcripts signaling Code application
Capture (in referring to decision-making and authority at the school): mislead, their own interest, don't listen, do what they want, do not consult, do not account for, manipulate, ignore, don't consult	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...directors choose not to work with advice... • ...do not consult the opinions of ...the Councils... • ...does not consult opinions or advice of... • ...do not listen and many abuses can take place... • ...tailor these decisions and resources to their own tastes... • ...only ones who have voice...they manipulate them... • ...bad administration of the leaders...do not listen...
Corruption (in referring to the administration/ utilization of resources at the school): bribes, corrupt, fraud, cheating, dishonesty, embezzlement, misappropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...money depends on the handling... • ...bribes... • ...embezzlement of resources... • ...it (money) strays on ...paths... • ...corrupt... • ...dishonesty... • ...with better morals and ethics...dishonest practices...
Good Education/School (in referring to school /education): good, excellent, development, productive, contentment, helpful, useful, beneficial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...excellent... • ...good school... • ...good education • ...very contented... • ...good operation in all the areas of educative work...
Good Reform/Law (in referring to Law/Reform itself): good, excellent, productive, useful, helpful, beneficial, progressive, democratic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...-is excellent... • ...assists in our development... • ...a very good program... • ...more progress and organization... • ...good... • ...very good... • ...more pleasant environment... • ...is beneficial... • ...participation law educative is best... • ...given to good results...
Good Staff (in referring to teachers or principals): helpful, good, excellent, efficient, nice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...director and teachers take a great interest in the children... • ...teachers produce a good academic yield... • ...professors are very good... • ...professor is very good with students... • ...gracious for a good director... • ...director...(does) efficient work...
Home Setting (in referring to student home environments): problems, mistreatment, violence, abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...problems in homes... • ...poor physical treatment in many of the homes...
Improved Accountability/ Participation (in referring to decision-making and educational practices at the school): more involvement, participation, consideration, advice, responsible, accountable, freedom, integration, listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...become important members in the school... • ...requires teachers assert themselves... • ...ensures that that families/parents have say... • ...need to consider parents... • ...(school) is more free... • ...because all we help... • ...parents help out more... • ...advice of parents is taken more... • ...directives advise and decides, not the Ministry... • ...Councils are responsible and can have a say... • ...involves more of the family/parents... • ...decision making now includes the three sectors parents, students, teachers... • ...parents involve themselves in the education... • ...participation of the community... • ...greater educative participation... • ...integration of the civil people... • ...much more participation... • ...arrive at that participatory democracy...
Improved Administration (in referring to school plans/planning): better, improved, more efficient, more effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...plans for a better school... • ...improved monthly reports... • ...physical (plants/infrastructure) has been improved...

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...progressed... (with)...physical plans and materials...
Improved Performance (in referring to improvements in teaching, student performance, educational outcomes): better, improvements, support, more, development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...a better education... • ...improve the school... • ...academic strategies...improve the yield... • ...teachers are supported with didactic materials... • ...improvements in the quality of the process education learning... • ...more educative development...
Lack of Information (in referring to information regarding school operations and/or autonomy): missing, lack of information, don't know, confusion, transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...missing information of the expenses... • ...confuses the their role in education... • ...lack information...
Lack of Interest from community (In referring to attitudes of others regarding education/ schooling): lack of interest, don't care, no concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...if there was a little more interest... • ...do not take much interest in schooling... • ...parents do not care about education...
Lack of Redress (in referring to stakeholder complaints about staff at the school that are unresolved): mistreatment, poor performances, bad staff, abusive, violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...some teachers are not very understanding... • ...teachers are not very understanding... • ...treat the children badly, psychological and psychically...
Lack of Resources (in referring to school/community resources and capacities): lacking, deficient, poor, non existent, unsatisfactory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...schools lack some of the resources to make it work... • ...lack resources to be independent... • ...but resources, money and other things are in short supply... • ...it is not fulfilled because it cannot make its own decision...no educational economic aid... • ...Parents have no work and no resources... • ...the educational capacity that is deficient...and practically it doesn't exist... • ...this is deficient but is necessary for people to learn...
Law's Application (in referring to the actual implementation and practice of the Law in schools- the difference between the theory and practice of the Law): in theory, in reality, actually, application, functions, interpretations, workings, fulfillment, promises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...it is a falsehood... • ...this is not the case in Nicaragua... • ...the MECD does not allow directors to exert... • ...autonomy can be very good mainly when utilize and interprets... • ...in theory...but actually... • ...is not applied correctly... • ...is the ignorance of the law... • ...does not function correctly... • ...Respect the laws of autonomy • ...What is promised with autonomia is not fulfilled... • ...autonomy in our scholastic center still lacks... • ...process is very good, but it does not work very well... • ...regulations are not fulfilled... • ...in reality, do not have the freedom for disposition... • ...have not taken advantage...
Law's Significance (in referring to negative evaluations of the substance and meaning of the Law): meanings, accomplished, significance, importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...the changes mean very little for us here... • ...little meaning because parents are too poor... • ...it has done little...
Local Culture (in referring to community, social behaviours and practices): gambling, gaming, prostitutions, drinking, culture, drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...gaming and drinking...
MED Interference (in referring to the MED, MECD, and local delegate): interferes, lacks respects, violates, intervenes, does not allow, does not respect, blocks, dominates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...decisions depend on what the MECD... • ...MECD does not allow directors to exert the total autonomy... • ...always depends on the Delegacion de Educacion... • ...MECD does not respect the agreements... • ...MED always violates the agreements... • ...delegate practices the autonomy... • ...the MECD not to intervene... • ...MECD does not allow...
MED Resource Provision (in referring to the adequacy of school supplies and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...there is no musical band... • ...the MECD does not provide the texts that the children

resources): texts, pedagogical materials, capacities, teaching materials, chalk, desks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need... • ...there are no chemistry labs, libraries, no gym... • ...have not received a qualifications or training... • ...not received the proper capacities from the MECD... • ...texts are inadequate...
Poverty: poverty, money, finances, paying, economic, class, economic status, poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...poverty... • ...money and other things are in short supply... • ...do not have many possibilities of paying... • ...don't have economic autonomy... cannot have any real changes...
Privatization/ Off-loading: privatization, offloading, obligation, free education, social welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...privatize the education... • ...the state is neglecting its obligations...
School Fees: school fees, paying for schooling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...who do not have many possibilities of paying... • ...do not have possibilities of paying school fees...
School Infrastructure (any reference to physical conditions at the school): electricity, water, infrastructure, building, painting, roof, gates, windows, road, furniture, classroom conditions, bathrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...no electricity... • ...there are bad roads... • ...school needs painting... • ...infrastructure is lacking... • ...no water...
Security (any reference to community wherein the school is situated): violence, security, safety, crime, threatened, threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...violence... • ...security...
Bad reform/ Bad law (in referring to autonomy reform/law): worse, horrible, terrible, bad, wrong, poor, awful, unjust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...it makes things worse...

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